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THE TACTICAL TRAINING, EMPLOYMENT AND CONTROL OF MACHINE
GUN PLATOONS, COMPANY "H", 222D INFANTRY, (42D DIVISION)
IN THE COMBAT ZONE, 24 DECEMBER 1944 - 31 MARCH 1945
(ALSACE-ARDENNES AND RHINELAND CAMPAIGNS)
(Personal Experiences of a Platoon Leader)

Type of operation described: TRAINING OF MACHINE GUN PLATOONS
IN THE COMBAT ZONE

1st Lieutenant Dixon G. Rogers
ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS CLASS NO I

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- R-6 Notes, maps, and personal knowledge of author.
- R-7 Interview with Lt. E.E. Astroth (Possession of author)
- R-8 FM 7-15 (Note: No direct reference is made to this manual because the actual concept of the understanding of the principles as practiced by Company "H" is intended.

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INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the tactical training, employment and control of Machine Gun Platoons, Company "H", 222d Infantry, 42d Division, in the combat zone during the Ardennes-Alsace and Rhineland Campaigns from 24 December 1944 to 31 March 1945.

Tactical training is teaching men to use weapons and teamwork in the successful prosecution of a battlefield mission.

The employment and control of a unit is the science of positioning that unit and conducting its actions to the successful completion of a mission; in short, the tactics of the unit.

Company "H" was the Heavy Weapons Company of the 2d Battalion, 222d Infantry. The 222d Infantry was a standard infantry regiment with three battalions. Each battalion was organized into three rifle companies, a heavy weapons company, and battalion headquarters company. For the details of organization of the infantry battalion see Chart 1. For a comparison of the infantry battalion of World War II with the present day battalion see Chart 2.

The organization of the machine gun platoons of Company "H" is shown in Chart 1. The principal weapon of this platoon was the Browning Machine Gun Model 1917-A-1. This gun was a .30 caliber, belt fed, water cooled, recoil operated machine gun with a cyclic rate of 550 rounds per minute.

MISSION MACHINE GUNS

The mission of machine guns was to deliver a sustained volume of accurate small arms fire in support of the rifle units of the battalion.(1)

(1) R-8 Note: No direct reference is made to this manual because the actual concept of the understanding of the principles as practiced by Company "H" is intended.

In accomplishing this mission the machine guns fired on enemy automatic weapons, grouped personnel, and known or suspected locations of the enemy. Machine guns were one of the means available within the battalion to establish fire superiority.

Besides a large volume of fire, the machine gun had certain capabilities which distinguished it from the light machine gun and other automatic weapons organic within the infantry battalion. Its heavy tripod made its firing mount consistent with high accuracy. The stable firing mount made the problem of overhead firing in support of friendly troops merely a safety problem that could be solved by the application of ballistic formulae. It also gave the gun the capability of indirect fire from the protection of a mask that could be cleared. The water cooling system augmented these capabilities by reducing the operating temperature of the gun, thus reducing barrel wear and erosion. (2)

The greatest limitations of the gun were its weight and the inherent noise, characteristic of automatic weapons. Other limitations were the flash and smoke of the ammunition. One further limitation was that the platoon was not capable of independent action, such as taking and holding an objective. (3)

To accomplish their mission of close support of the rifle elements of the battalion, the machine guns were employed in mass -- ^{sub}two or more guns on the same target -- firing along the flanks, through gaps in the line, or over the heads of friendly troops. The normal employment was by section or platoon. The section or platoon was placed in general support of the battalion, in direct support of a rifle unit, or attached to a rifle company. (4)

The considerations governing the method of employment of machine guns were the battalion commander's plan, the battalion's mission, (2), (3), (4), R-8. See (1), p. 3.

the tactical situation, the terrain, and the status of supply. The battalion commander made the basic decision on the employment of machine guns based upon the recommendations received from the heavy weapons company commander. (5)

Although it has been pointed out that the machine gun platoon was not capable of independent action such as taking and holding ground, it must be emphasized that each leader from the platoon leader to the squad leader was responsible for the security of the crews and their guns being coordinated with other friendly troops in the area. If no other troops were available, it then became the leader's responsibility to provide the necessary security from the platoon. (6)

The only organic communication equipment within the machine gun platoon was the platoon leader's two messengers and arm and hand signals. Other means of communication were pooled in company headquarters and issued to platoons on a need basis. The company normally issued the platoon leader a SCR 536, and enough sound power telephone equipment to enable him to be in the company wire net, and to have a platoon fire control net. (See Chart 1) *for what*

EMPLOYMENT IN ATTACK

In the attack, the platoon was either in general or direct support, or attached to a rifle company. The platoon leader carried out his mission by using overhead fire, firing along the flanks of advancing rifle troops, or through gaps in their lines. He made the necessary coordination with the commanders concerned, and he made sure that adequate means of communication existed to enable him to lift and shift fire when it was masked by friendly troops. He planned for the displacement of his platoon to the objective in order to support the troops on it ^{obj.} in repelling a counterattack or in continuing the attack. (7)

(5) R-8: (6) R-8, although not specifically stated, this was the practice and concept in Company "H"; (7) R-8.

EMPLOYMENT IN DEFENSE

In the defense the machine guns were employed in sections along the main line of resistance. In the defense, unlike the attack, machine guns were normally employed in front line platoon areas in general support of the battalion. The battalion commander exercised very careful supervision over the guns and their positions. The machine guns were employed in sections in such a position on the ground that they could get the maximum amount of grazing fire as well as a sector of fire of at least ninety degrees from the final protective line (line of grazing fire roughly parallel to the front or main line of resistance). The platoon leader designated squad firing positions and closely supervised the emplacement of the guns as well as designating alternate and supplementary positions for use by the squads. The platoon leader coordinated the security of the guns with the rifle unit leader in the vicinity. He placed the sections in a position so that each final protective line interlocked with another final protective line along the main line of resistance. (8)

Other suitable missions for machine guns in the defense were long range fires, either from the outpost line of resistance or from suitable positions in rear of the main line of resistance; positions to fire in support of a counterattack, or to limit the enemy penetrations in the main line of resistance. (9)

In the defense the platoon leader controlled the fire of his platoon particularly to see that only those guns in the area under attack fired. The guns in those sectors not actually under attack fired only when they were attacked. He directed the movement of the platoon to alternate or supplementary positions or into positions to limit penetrations or to support a counterattack. (10)

(8), (9), (10) R-8.

MISCELLANEOUS EMPLOYMENT

Machine guns were used to support raids and patrols in a manner similar to their employment in the attack. The conduct of firing, and the coordination was the same as for the attack except that normally the machine guns used did not displace from their original positions. (11)

The technique of relieving other machine guns in the line was the same as that of any other relief. One factor cannot be over-emphasized. The missions, firing positions, and other details of the relieved unit were taken over completely, and nothing was changed until after the relieving platoon leader had assumed the responsibility for those missions and had coordinated the changes with everyone concerned. (12)

TRAINING

Training can be accomplished quickly and more efficiently if it takes place in a location remote from the actual scene of hostilities. However, the War Department set forth doctrines for training both in the combat zone and the zone of the interior.

Training within the zone of the interior was divided into the following phases; individual training, unit training, maneuvers or field exercises, post maneuver training, and preparation for overseas movement. This training usually lasted a minimum of one year for units, however the thirteen week basic course was usually considered as sufficient training for replacements. (13)

The machine gun platoon followed the same general trend of training. During unit training, such subjects as crew drill, application of fire, figuring firing data, observation of fire, and field firing were given particular attention. In the rest of the training, emphasis was given to the squad, section, and platoon in the employment and

(11), (12) R-8; (13) R-6 and notes from an address by Major General Arnold, AAF, presented in April, 1948, to Advanced Classes and Faculty, TIS, Fort Benning, Georgia.

control of machine gun units in all types of actions, and with all of the rifle units of the battalion. Thus at the end of unit training, the riflemen and machine gunners were familiar with each other. They worked as a team, and each knew what could be expected of the other in any type of combat situation. (14)

Because the United States and her Allies were short of shipping space, and because, as lines of communication became longer units were needed for security duty, the theaters in conjunction with the War Department developed a doctrine for training troops in the overseas theaters. The units to be used in this training were to have completed their individual training, some unit training (normally squad training), and individuals were to be PQM qualified.

This training doctrine envisaged the training of the unit under an Army's supervision in the following phases; intensified unit training, line of communication duties, and battle indoctrination in a quiet sector of the line either under the control of a combat experienced division or under the control of a separate corps. (15) The unit training would follow in general the unit training program that was in effect in the United States. The line of communication duties involved security of rear areas, and gave the troops experience in moving quickly, in defense against airborne attack, and in preparation of strategic defense positions. Finally the battle indoctrination gave the troops experience in the line, with a limited amount of attack experience being gained from raids of from squad to company size. Although this program was primarily designed for infantry units, it could be applied to all types of units used within a theater. (16)

THE 42D DIVISION

The 42d Division was reactivated at cadre strength, and on 4 August 1943 had received its full complement of officers and men.

(14) R-6; (15) R-1, p.495; (16) Assumption based on R-1, p. 495.

The individual training period was started on that day, and was successfully completed by the first week in January 1944. At that time the unit training program was started, but continual requests for reinforcements, particularly infantry reinforcements, drained the Division of officers and men. By September 1944 the Division had sent out over 15,000 officers and men as reinforcements. In July 1944 the Division was given the mission of completing its training program within 26 weeks, but on 14 October 1944 the Division was given three weeks to have its infantry regiments in complete readiness for overseas shipment. (17)

STATUS OF TRAINING COMPANY "H"

The status of training in Company "H" was critical. Although all persons were POM qualified, and had completed their individual training, Company "H" had participated in only a regimental and a battalion field problem. However, during the POM qualification stage, additional crew training and field firing had been given. It must be emphasized that these two parts of unit training were by no means complete, but because the personnel in general were cadre from activation, Army Specialized Training Program veterans, or transfers from the other arms and services, they had taken maximum advantage of the minimum training. (18)

Company "H" sailed for the European Theater on 25 November 1944. During the unit's trip overseas and during the whirlwind staging process in Marseilles, nothing was said to the unit about its mission in the theater. From the lack of definite information it was deduced that the unit would be given training in an army area and then used as occupation (line of communication) troops until the remainder of the Division arrived. (19)

(17) R-2, p. 3; (18), (19) R-6

Purpose

The purpose of this monograph is to study the tactical training of Company "H" in the combat zone. Three examples of the training in a quiet sector will be discussed, and the fourth example will show the results of this training.

When it arrived overseas, Company "H" became a part of Task Force Linden. This unit was composed of the 222d, 232d, and 242d Infantry regiments of the 42d Division, a small provisional headquarters, and miscellaneous service units. On 24 December 1944, Task Force Linden was ordered by Seventh Army to relieve the 36th Division. The situation and dispositions of Seventh Army and Task Force Linden at the completion of the relief are shown on Map A. (20)

Seventh Army was on a defensive mission, and on 29 December the Army G-2 estimated the enemy capabilities as shown on Map B. The Army plan to counter these capabilities is shown on the same map as Phases I, II, and III. Phase I line was to be occupied by 2400, 31 December, 1944, and the other lines in order. (21) On 2 January 1945, Task Force Linden was attached to the 79th Division. (22)

GENERAL SITUATION, GAMBESHEIM BRIDGEHEAD

The 79th Division ordered several changes in dispositions of Task Force Linden. The situation of 5 January on the 79th Division Zone is shown on Map C. (23)

When the 222d Infantry moved to the sector shown on Map C, on 3 January, it was ordered to leave the 2d Battalion in the city of Strasbourg until relieved by the French. This relief was to be completed at 0600, 5 January. At this time the battalion was to close on the regimental area in the vicinity of Soultz sous Forêts.

The 2d Battalion, 222d Infantry, less Company "G" which was the regimental reserve, was defending a section of the city facing the Rhine River that is known as the "Island". The battalion was in a perimeter defense with only the first platoon, Company "H" and one

(20) R-2, p. 14; (21) R-1, p. 498-499, 580-584; (22) R-1, p. 592;

(23) R-1, p. 592-595.

platoon of Company "F" actually occupying positions facing the Germans across the Rhine River. (24)

The battalion commander issued his orders to the companies about 1200, 5 January. Company "E" was to assemble and move out immediately, while Company "F", the 2d platoon, mortar platoon and foot elements of the first platoon of Company "H" were to assemble at the Battalion Command Post on battalion order as soon as the French Advance party arrived. The First Platoon, ^{C.O.H.} less foot elements, was to remain on position until actually relieved by the French. It was then to proceed independently along the route indicated for the other elements of the battalion to La Wantzenau. From that point on, the first platoon leader was free to pick his own route.

The mission given the platoon leader was to meet the French at the Battalion Command Post, conduct them on their reconnaissance, furnish guides if necessary for the relieving elements, and show them the areas the battalion had considered necessary to defend. His men were to be relieved only after the French had physically placed men and automatic weapons on position. If the relief was not completed by 2400, 5 January, the platoon leader was to report this fact to an American representative who would be at the French CP. Secondly, the route from La Wantzenau might be unsafe because of a report that heavy enemy patrol action was taking place in that area. The platoon leader was not to become involved in any action that would prevent him from closing in the regimental area with the greatest possible speed. Company "H" would leave him a guide in La Wantzenau at a Battalion Command Post of the 232 Infantry that was reportedly there. In case of unforeseen developments the platoon leader was to back track to Strasbourg and report to the Advance CP of Task Force Linden which was in Haguenau. (25)

(24) R-6; (25) R-6.

The platoon leader returned to his platoon, assembled his leaders, and organized the men who were to remain with him. The remainder of the platoon was ordered to assemble with the company at the company CP. The platoon sergeant was designated as the commander of this group, and he was told to request the company commander to leave either the instrument corporal or messenger at La Wantzenau. The twenty men who were to go with the platoon leader were the squad leader, gunner, assistant gunner, and driver from each squad. In the platoon headquarters vehicle were to be the transportation corporal, the section leader of the first section, and the driver. (26)

The organization accomplished, the platoon leader dispatched the men who were to leave to the company command post. He then turned the platoon over to the section leader of the first section and reported to the Battalion Command Post to await the French Advance Party. He was able to learn nothing more of the situation around La Wantzenau prior to the departure of the battalion. The French arrived about 1400, and the battalion left soon thereafter. The relief was accomplished by dark, and the first platoon moved out for La Wantzenau at

5:30-1800. what day
(27)

NIGHT 5-6 JANUARY

At about 1900 the platoon was in the outskirts of La Wantzenau. There were several trucks parked along the side of the road, and the platoon leader moved his five $\frac{1}{4}$ -tons around them to continue into town. As he came to the head of the column he heard someone shout his name, and when he went back to find out what was up he ran into the company commander who ordered him to pull into a courtyard off the road and put his men into the house there. Then he was to report for instructions. As he was accomplishing this task, he heard someone up the street say, "Second Platoon is attached to Fox Company. Follow this road about (26), (27), R-6.

1000 yards and you will find them". The voice he heard was that of the 2d Battalion Executive Officer. (28)

When he reported for orders, the first platoon leader was oriented by his battalion commander. "The enemy holds Gamsheim, Kilstett, and an undetermined area between these two towns and Weyersheim and Hoerd. His patrols are active all around us. Company "E" has been attached to other units of the 232 and 242 Infantry someplace along the Gamsheim-Weyersheim Road. Company "F" is attached to other companies of the 232 and is in the vicinity of Kilstett along the main road you just came in on. The second platoon of Company "H" is attached to them. They will attack sometime in the morning. I am trying to get permission to attach you to Easy Company". (29)

what was TFA - which mission
At that time another officer who later turned out to be the commander of Task Force A came up to them and said, "You are the platoon leader who was in Strasbourg? Good, I want you to patrol the rear area from the railroad to the creek, contact all FFI and Gendarmes and arrange to have them patrol all back roads, check and secure all isolated buildings with FFI and have them secure any railroad bridges in the area. Also find the King Company Commander, Starr Jones. We have had no word from him or King Company since 1600. The first patrol will proceed on foot and check all bridges in the area and as you find bridges that will allow you to, send out other patrols by motor. Keep up the patrolling all night. I think your battalion commander oriented you on as much as we know". (30)

The patrol routes, positions of troops, and order of battle, both enemy and friendly at 1900 are shown on Map D. However, that information was not available to the patrol leader at that time, and some of the information on the enemy forces, the organization and composition of friendly forces was learned some months later. (31)

(28), (29), (30), R-6; (31) R-2, p. 18; R-4, p.12; R-6.

*Major of patrol
not to shoot*

The platoon leader returned to the platoon and gave them the order after a short map orientation. In order to have the greatest number of rifles and carbines in the first patrol, the eight ammunition bearers of the first section, the platoon sergeant, and the section leader of the second section were chosen to accompany the platoon leader. Two men were designated as scouts, and each other man was given a mission of flank or rear security and observation. The patrol moved out in a squad column with the three leaders moving in the center of the column, in order, platoon leader, second section leader, and platoon sergeant.

The patrol had traversed about half of its route when it met two FFI and a Gendarme at A. (32) They were on their way to report to the Task Force A commander that they had accomplished their mission as given to the first platoon leader. They had met no other American Patrols, and no enemy soldiers. The patrol continued on its route and at B met a patrol of Company "L", 232d Infantry which was patrolling the area between the first platoon's route and the Rhine. They also had contacted no other troops, had no information on Company "K" and had met no enemy. The remainder of the route was covered without incident. This patrol terminated, and the platoon sergeant and the second section leader organized the second patrol from the second section. In view of the negative results of the first patrol it was decided to send this one on foot to cover the same area. (33)

The time was now 2330. The first platoon leader reported to the Task Force A Commander and was told to continue the patrols, that he was not to lead any of the others, but to make a reconnaissance of the town and its approaches. He was not to move north of the last east-west street in town. He was also to use only one $\frac{1}{4}$ -ton truck mounting a machine gun on the patrols unless the second patrol encountered the enemy. (32) FFI - French Forces of the Interior, a semi-military French Militia Organization; Gendarme - French policeman. (33), R-6.

He was to be prepared to recommend positions at 0400 to protect all approaches to the town from the North. The third patrol and all others were to be motorized and only one vehicle was to be used. (34)

The platoon leader relayed this information to the platoon sergeant and section leaders. ^{he} These persons took over the job of running the patrols. The platoon leader and his messenger proceeded on reconnaissance, covering the town from the railroad crossing in the northwest corner of town to the east on the last street. About half way across the town, he met elements of Cannon Company, 232d Infantry, but he could not contact any of the officers of the company. From the guards in the Cannon Company area he learned that the ground in the northern edge of town extending to Kilstett was very flat and devoid of cover. In the eastern sector of the town he ran into members of "L" Company who confirmed this fact. He then returned to his CP where the company commander told him that he was to report to the Commanding Officer of the 232d Infantry at 0500. A hasty check revealed that except for the four men on the motorized patrol, the platoon was getting some sleep and all would be available for duty soon after 0500. (35)

The reconnaissance had revealed that the town could be covered from positions along the railroad embankment to the northwest, north, and northeast. From positions on the other side of the town, the eastern section could be covered. As a result he planned to use a section to block the railroad and road in the northwest, and a section in the northeast tip of town could extend this protection. All men would be required to secure the gun positions and patrol the areas between since it was not known how many riflemen, if any, were in the area. That plan seemed satisfactory if daylight confirmed the ground and map reconnaissance. (36)

6 JANUARY

At 0500, 6 January the platoon leader reported to the Regimental Commander, 232d Infantry. At that time he was brought up to date on (34), (35), (36), R-6.

the situation and told that Task Force A was to attack at 0600 from present positions to seize Gamsheim. The first platoon, "H" Company was to be the nucleus of a reserve he hoped to collect, and it was to protect the northern edge of town from any enemy that slipped out of Gamsheim under the pressure of the attack. Since Task Force B was attacking then, it was expected that some enemy would try to drift southwest. Enemy armor was active. The defense would be coordinated with Cannon Company. The tentative plan of the platoon leader that had been relayed to him from Task Force A was approved. Positions were to be reported after they had been confirmed by daylight reconnaissance. (37)

The platoon leader assembled the platoon and explained the tentative plan. Then he ordered the first section to occupy those positions in the northwest edge of town near the crossing of the railroad and main road with a mission of covering from the west to the northeast. The second section was to occupy the buildings in the northeast section of town covering a sector from the east to the northwest. At daylight each section leader was to coordinate with the troops in the area, particularly any of the Cannon Company gun sections, and they were to furnish their own security so that they would have a strong point protected by the rifles organic in the section.

*Section not
used.*
Daylight confirmed the areas with a few changes in section position and gun positions until they were disposed in the areas as shown. By this time Cannon Company's Commander had been contacted, and the .50 caliber machine guns he had protecting his position were tied in with the Company "H" strongpoints. The platoon leaders CP was as shown. Map D. (38)

When the platoon leader reported to the 232d Commander, his positions were approved, and he was directed to have the road block in the first section area stop all vehicles, dismount all individuals, and (37), (38), R-6

make them identify themselves. When this information was relayed to the platoons, the platoon leader was to reconnoiter the area from the first canal west of town along the Hoerdt road east to the end of the railroad spur. In this area he was to pick positions to meet any attack that might come along from the northeast, and be prepared to move his platoon to any threatened area. If and when the time came he would also have available for his defense any stragglers and nonessential CP personnel. However that number would probably be no more than twenty to thirty men, and no anti-tank weapons other than 2.36 inch rocket launchers would be available. Finally, the platoon was to be prepared to move to the vicinity of Weyersheim on order for the same mission as it had at La Wantzenau, but reconnaissance west of the first canal and in the vicinity of Weyersheim was prohibited. (39)

The platoon leader asked to have a wire line strung to his CP, and the Regimental Commander agreed to have this done by Cannon Company. After informing the Regimental Commander of his proposed route of reconnaissance, the platoon leader left for his CP.

At the platoon CP the platoon leader informed his subordinates of the orders, and set out on foot with his messenger on reconnaissance. The reconnaissance was completed by 1500 and the Regimental Commander approved the platoon leader's plan as shown on Map D. The platoon leader was informed that the attacks of that day had failed, and that defensive positions of the night before were being occupied until the French could relieve all units south of Kilstett. (40)

At dusk (1730) the platoon leader received an order to proceed to Weyersheim, and by 1745 he had the platoon assembled and on its way. All members of the platoon were moving on organic transportation. As they approached the bridge over the first canal on the Hoerdt road the platoon leader was overtaken by a messenger and informed that he

(39), (40), R-6.

Two plans not shown on map D. Same plans already appeared

was to occupy positions that he had previously reconnoitered between the canal and the Kilstett road to protect the withdrawal of Easy and Fox Companies of the 222d Infantry. } They were expected to close in his area } by 2400. The positions were occupied, and at 0130 both companies had passed through his lines and assembled in billets within La Wantzenau. At 0200 he was ordered to withdraw his platoon to the area occupied during the night of 5-6 January. (41)

The morning of 7 January the 2d Battalion, 222d Infantry assembled, and they moved out on Army transportation for Soultz about 1300. (42)

CRITIQUE, GAMBSHEIM

During the time that passed while the first platoon was waiting for the order to move out, some time was spent questioning officers and men of the second platoon, Easy, and Fox Companies. It was from these people that several things were learned that was hoped could be put into effect.

From the second platoon, we learned that they had joined up with Fox Company during the night of 5-6 January about halfway up the road to Kilstett. The platoon leader was told to join the weapons platoon of the company. He was told nothing of the first attack until he heard about it from the weapons platoon leader at 0545, 6 January. When he reported to the Company "F" Commander, the second platoon leader learned that he was to stay with the weapons platoon leader for the attack since he could make no reconnaissance. For "F" Company, this attack never got off because other elements of Task Force A were stopped just across the line of departure by intense artillery and small arms fire. The lead elements withdrew, and another attack was scheduled for 1200. At this time "F" Company was to be one of the lead companies. Again the second platoon was not given a mission, but this time the second platoon leader had plans to support the attack. Again he was turned down on the grounds that his help would not be needed. When he tried to show the "F" Company Commander that it would be safe to fire overhead from his position to (41), (42), R-6.

Gambshheim, he was told that under no circumstances was he to fire. The second attack also failed, and it was the opinion of the second platoon leader that he might have helped it succeed, or that at least forty casualties suffered by "F" Company might have been lessened if they had had the cover offered by the fire of his platoon. (43)

The Easy Company Commander had a different story. He said that while he could have used machine guns to advantage, he did not think that they would have enabled him to stay in Gambshheim longer. However, their support would have lessened the casualties, and made it easier to break contact when that had to be done. (44)

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM, GAMBBSHEIM

In this engagement, the first platoon had been given several missions; holding the "Island" in Strasbourg with twenty men until relieved by the French, making an independent motor march during black-out, rear area security and patrols, organizing and defending a sector of 2800 yards with no support except troops who would fight if and when an attack was eminent. Protecting a night withdrawal of troops with whom which no contact was available to the platoon.

Throughout the accomplishment of these missions, the platoon (1st platoon) leaders had little or no information of friendly or enemy troops in the area. Communication with any friendly unit was with messenger until about noon on 6 January. Much of the information secured was by actual reconnaissance of the friendly area.

During the whole engagement period the platoon had to work with ^{what is strange} strange units, even though they were from the same parent division. It was not until after the whole engagement was over, and men in the other companies contacted that they realized that the ^{what} (whole thing) was a gigantic makeshift affair that lacked all except basic coordination.

(43), (44), R-6 and R-7.

All of the missions assigned to the platoon indicated that they were being required to perform missions that normally would require a reinforced rifle company. The consensus of opinion among the men and officers was that the job would not have been quite so difficult had they had four or five additional machine guns to strengthen their position. In particular when it was realized that during the night of 5-6 January that the first machine gun platoon would have gone into action minus the key members of the squad on patrol, and with only three guns it was deduced that in the future at least six machine guns of various types should be available to the platoon. The reports of enemy light reconnaissance vehicles gave confirmation to the belief that one of these guns should have been a caliber .50 machine gun with a ground mount and a pedestal mount for a platoon vehicle.

The apparent misunderstanding and lack of coordination in the second platoon and "F" Company made all the men in the first platoon resolve that they would prove to the riflemen of the battalion that they were capable of giving continuous support in a situation where the rifle companies distrusted them.

The number of missions assigned and accomplished gave the key members of the platoon experience in management, and confirmed the idea that when employed conventionally, at least a part of the platoon could be trained even when the rest of the platoon was in positions facing the enemy. However, all agreed that when an attack was imminent, all men would be required to perform the required fire support.

LESSONS LEARNED. CAMBSHEIM

1. Information of the enemy and friendly troops is essential in order to make intelligent decisions.
2. Communication between units is vital to secure information.
3. Proper management can make men available to accomplish many missions in an emergency. However, the men who are trying to accomplish these missions must have proper equipment.

4. Rifleman and rifle unit leaders ^{do} did not appreciate the support that machine gun units could give them.

5. Reconnaissance at night can be accurate provided maps of the area are also accurate.

DEFENSE OF SCHWEIGHAUSEN

The 79th Division plan for Phase II defense line is shown on Map C. The 222d Infantry plan is also shown on this map. (45) *How did 222nd get here?*

The 2d Battalion received the regimental plan on 15 January. The battalion's dispositions are shown on Map E. When he received this plan, the battalion commander assembled the heavy weapons company commander and the first platoon leader of "H" Company, and they proceeded on a *what about 2nd platoon leader?*

reconnaissance of the proposed area. Tentative plans were made for the occupation of the battalion defense sector, and the platoon leader was directed to continue the support of "G" Company with the least amount of men, and to continue the organization of the Schweighausen area by pinpointing machine gun positions for all machine guns in the battalion. He was not to withdraw his troops from their present positions to dig emplacements, but he would be allowed to take all section leaders to their position and show them the plan for the automatic weapons support of the battalion. (46)

This mission posed a problem. Through the battalion S-4, the platoon had succeeded in getting four additional heavy machine guns and eight caliber .50 guns, either through battle salvage or requisition. They had also received enough telephone equipment to have a wire net *what* including every gun. At that time six of the fifties were employed with "G" Company. Careful coordination with the company commander of that company allowed the platoon leader to put his detachment there to 15 men. These men were rotated daily so that the men not in line, including the drivers, could be given mechanical training with the guns not in use. (45) R-1, p. 613; (46) R-6.

Thus, every section and squad leader was taken on at least one reconnaissance of the Schweighausen area he was to occupy. The plan that was finally approved is shown on Map E.

WITHDRAWAL, 20 JANUARY

At 1200, 20 January, the order was given to withdraw ^{from where} at 2000 that day. Positions on the MLR were to be complete with wire at 2400, 21 January. The 36th Division was covering the withdrawal after contact had been broken. Because it was expected that the enemy might follow up the withdrawal very quickly, the first platoon of "H" company was to infiltrate the day's relief at 1600, and commence its occupation of the Schweighausen area as soon as it could move there. The platoon was not to occupy its positions on the MLR, but it was to set up road blocks at two secondary bridges in the battalion zone. Map E (47)

Bridges not shown clearly
At 1300 it began to snow quite heavily, but for the first platoon it was an unexpected turn ^{how and why} because the relief was accomplished speedily without being discovered by the enemy who had a habit of throwing quite heavy artillery concentrations during the relief period. While the relief was being carried out, the platoon leader made arrangements with the "G" Company commander for the withdrawal of the .50 caliber guns and the men manning them. (48)

Darkness was at 1730, and at that time the first platoon left for Schweighausen ^{from where}. The storm was so bad by this time that control of even five vehicles was almost an impossibility. It was necessary to stop at each crossroad and dismount to check ^{to ensure} that the vehicles were still in convoy. At 2100 the platoon arrived in Schweighausen and by 2200 they had occupied the road block positions shown on Map E. These positions were occupied until 1000, 21 January when all elements of the battalion closed in Schweighausen. When a check was taken of the first platoon, however it was learned that only eight of the fifteen men had (47) R-6; (48) R-7.

arrived. "G" Company had not notified the men of the withdrawal of the riflemen until the rifle troops had assembled. They had had to destroy the six guns and ammunition on position. The other seven men arrived late in the afternoon. (49)

ORGANIZATION 21-24 JANUARY

The positions were occupied and dug in for the rest of the day. Each position that was not in a stone house was dug in with two feet of tamped earth put overhead to protect from artillery bursts. While the platoon members were preparing the positions, the platoon leader inspected the OPLR to determine if machine guns could be used on it. Because of dense woods in the area, it was decided that it would be extremely difficult to do this, and that the rifle companies who were outposting would use their organic light guns and automatic rifles on this line.

The positions were completely dug in, wire communication strung, and ammunition on position by darkness, 21 January. Early in the morning darkness of 23 January much activity was heard around the factory which faced the first platoon position, and about 0800 the OPLR began to arrive back at the MLR. Their reports indicated that the enemy's advance guard was closing in and securing assembly areas in the woods just beyond the railroad. At 0900, all remaining bridges over the Moder were blown. (50)

Now that the OPLR in the 2d Battalion sector had been driven in, a new evaluation of the terrain in the battalion area was in order. The defense had been set up on the south bank of the Moder River which at this point was nothing more than a meandering stream, about fifty feet wide. However, through the lack of trees in a space about two hundred yards wide, it was assumed that at flood stage the river was from one hundred fifty to two hundred yards wide. Because of this, the MLR ran along the edge of the woods in the "E" Company sector, and along

(49) R-6 and R-7; (50) R-6, R-7 and R-5, p. 19

enemy moved to factory area defended

the northern sector of town in "F" Company's sector. The factory on the north side of the river, and the cross roads near there were considered critical to both sides. However, the enemy infantry during the night had moved in behind them, and the OPLR although they had covered routes of withdrawal ^{and} was unable to maintain their positions in the factory and house by the crossroads. Now, the enemy had an ideal assembly area.

The results of this analysis showed that the large stone house that dominated the approaches to town from the factory should be heavily fortified with machine guns and riflemen. This mission was given to the platoon leader of the first platoon. He put two heavy machine guns and one .50 caliber machine gun there. Two squads from "F" Company were in support. (51)

At 1200, the organization of the strong point began, and at 1400 it was learned that an attack by the 25 th Panzer Grenadiers was to be expected at 1500. This attack did not materialize, but the buildup in the factory area continued as enemy artillery fell in the town. Because there had been no knowledge of the enemy since the withdrawal of the OPLR, a reinforced platoon of "F" Company was to make a combat patrol of the factory area, and if possible, reestablish the factory area, as an outpost. (52)

what route

The platoon was to proceed along the route shown on Map E. Machine gun support was arranged for the raid as follows: the right section was to fire along the left flank of the patrol as it proceeded across the open ground into the woods, and along the railroads to the factory; the three guns in the strong point were to fire along the front and right flank of the platoon until the factory masked the view of the guns, then the platoon was to concentrate its fire on the south end of the factory, the road, and the house opposite the factory. If the patrol was forced to withdraw it was to signal with a white star cluster and withdraw down (51), (52), R-6 and R-7

the road into the strong point. During a withdrawal, the supporting weapons would concentrate fire on located enemy weapons. (53)

At 1600, the patrol jumped off. The plan worked without incident until about 1700 when the white star cluster went up. The withdrawal was accomplished without incident. During the withdrawal the machine gunners had a field day with from eight to ten enemy machine guns which opened up from along the railroad embankment. The gunners thought they probably were the same machine guns that they had neutralized during the initial stages of the raid, but the patrol leader reported that the effect of the machine guns had been devastating, and that they found many enemy dead when they entered that area. Every man was very favorably impressed with the effect of machine gun support, so much so that when routine patrols encountered trouble during the rest of the build-up by the enemy, they would call for and get machine gun support. (54)

The defense shown on Map E was complete. During the night of 23-24 January, the Anti-tank Platoon of Battalion Headquarters Company laid a small minefield opposite the strong point. All day on 24 January the build-up continued, and our probing patrols met increased resistance. Often it was necessary to use machine guns in positions along the northern edge of town to cover withdrawals across the open ground between the town and the woods. These guns were fired from alternate or supplementary positions within houses or dug in at the base of the houses. Enemy artillery became more frequent, and although it did not hamper movement, its intensity was increasing.

During that same day, the Battalion S-4 made another heavy .30 machine gun available to the first platoon. The platoon leader then proceeded to reorganize the platoon by putting two men on each gun (53), (54), R-6 and R-7.

and using a section and squad leader to control the guns. The remaining members of the platoon were put in reserve in the southern edge of town. The plan was to have these men get more mechanical training on the guns. Each man was to be on the MLR one day and rest one day. The men in reserve patrolled the roads to Ohlungen and Neubourg to maintain rear area security. In case of a direct assault on the town, they were to occupy the positions shown and cover the withdrawal of the rest of the platoon and the riflemen in town. Also they planned to occupy positions in the western edge of town on which any stragglers could rally during an attack. The situation did not change during the day of the 24th of January. During the whole time thus far, the enemy had not sent out probing patrols to probe the first platoon and "F" Company's sector. There had been some patrolling in the "E" Company sector, but the machine guns and riflemen had taken care of them. (55)

THE ENEMY ATTACK

At 1800, the enemy turned loose all the artillery that he had in the sector on Schweighausen.[?] The weather was bad, and snow flurries were falling. At 1900, after checking the men in reserve, the platoon leader made his way to the strong point. While he was reporting to his company, his wire line went out. After checking gun positions, he found that all lines were out. No amount of artillery or small arms[?] fire could prevent his control over the right gun section and the strong point, but he would be unable to control the left section without wire. To rectify this situation, he sent the section leader who was with him at the strong point to the Company CP for wire communication, and also to notify the company commander that communication would temporarily have to be by radio. He also requested that the left section be wired in direct with the company as a fairly well covered wire route existed. (56)

(55), R-1, p. 619; R-2, p. 26-27; R-6; R-7.

(56), R-6 and R-7.

At 1930 when the section leader left, artillery fire became extremely intense, centering on the strong point and in the northern section of town. At 2000, the signal to fire MPL's in Easy Company's sector went up, and the artillery centered on the town itself. The platoon leader by that time had given up the section leader, and he tried to contact the company by radio. Each time the radio was opened for transmission, a heavy concentration came down on the strong point, and reception was impossible because of interference. The platoon leader alerted all hands, and settled down to await the attack. (57)

At 2400, according to the sound and direction of firing, the platoon leader judged the enemy had broken into the town. He then disposed the riflemen, covering the strong point in all directions. (58)

no enemy at the door
About 0030, an extended five minute concentration on the strong point brought everyone to his feet. Looking out into the darkness, they saw a group of enemy in white camouflage and battle formation approaching the mine field. The first ten or twelve men continued into the mine field and started probing, and the others took up positions on either side of the road to protect them. The platoon leader ordered all men who could pick up targets to open fire, and he directed that only the .50 caliber machine would fire. The first burst of the fifty got all of those in the mine field, and then turned to those along the road. A number of enemy fell, but the rest escaped under the protection of the shadows of the factory wall. About that time a messenger got through from the company and reported that Easy Company and part of Fox Company had been driven in. The platoon leader was to continue to hold the strong point. The left gun section had been withdrawn to the northwest corner of town.

About 0230, the small arms fire to his rear warned the platoon leader that he might be attacked from the rear so he turned the automatic rifles and one machine gun on the right ~~hand~~ side of the strong point. (57), R-6 and R-7; (58), R-6.

point in this direction. No one was to fire at anyone approaching until he was challenged. While he was doing this, enemy artillery again laid down a ten minute concentration on the strong point, and when it lifted, the men in the strong point discovered that the enemy had found a path through the minefield, and that they were about fifty feet away from the strong point. All ~~heads~~^{guns} opened up, and after a fire fight of about twenty minutes, the enemy again withdrew. This time they withdrew under artillery and direct fire of self-propelled artillery. (59)

The small arms fire intensified to the rear, and many of the men in the strong point wanted to withdraw because the houses which comprised the strong point were gradually disintegrating under the artillery fire. The platoon leader decided that as long as they had basements for protection, and as long as the enemy did not come under the fire of the reserve section to the rear that he could not withdraw. He believed that a daylight withdrawal, if necessary, could be accomplished in an orderly fashion under the cover of alleys and courtyards.

Except for artillery fire, the rest of the night passed without incident. The small arms fire to the rear ceased, and at daylight, although a particularly heavy artillery concentration fell, the strong point was not attacked. At 0700 when daylight arrived, the platoon leader turned the gun that had been facing the rear to the front, and ordered all machine guns to fire on all targets that moved along the railroad to the west of the factory. Until 0900, this fire was quite effective because the enemy had been sending columns of troops down the railroad to the west. About that time, the enemy ceased this practice, and only an occasional group of enemy could be seen. At 1000 the strong point was ordered to withdraw. ^{by gun} This was accomplished in good order without interference from the enemy. (60)

At the Company CP the platoon leader was oriented on what had happened. Easy Company had been overrun, and with it, much of the second (59), (60), R-6.

platoon had gone. When he had collected the remainder of his platoon, and what stragglers he could gather, the second platoon leader had attempted to reestablish the MLR. This effort had failed, and all but four persons in the attack had been either killed, wounded, or were missing. The reserve section of the first platoon had held the northwestern edge of town until about 2400 when they had been driven back to the CP area for lack of rifle support, and finally the first platoon drivers had organized a motorized raid that went as far as the southwestern edge of town, where for half an hour they engaged the enemy in a fierce fire fight enabling part of Fox Company to withdraw within the How Company perimeter. (61)

A quick count of noses revealed that ~~How~~^H Company had fifty of its machine gun personnel, and its mortar platoon intact, and that they held the greatest part of the town. Accompanying them were about thirty shaken members of Fox and Easy Companies. When the first platoon leader recommended against leaving the strong point unmanned, the company commander agreed to let him return there with six men. Those six men were to man two heavy .30 caliber machine guns and a .50 caliber machine gun. (62)

The strong point was reoccupied at 1145, and about that time a messenger arrived from the company commander stating that another attack was developing in the northwest corner in town. The platoon leader could see an enemy column moving along the trail in the hook of woods opposite his platoon. He took those enemy under flanking fire from the rear. ^{How} For those in the strong point it was like shooting ducks in a barrel, but after firing two belts from each gun, the enemy opened up with a self propelled gun and that time they had the target pinpointed. The result was that the platoon leader was blown down by the blast, and four of the men were wounded. Two of the three guns were disabled. The platoon leader sent one man with the four wounded in the ammunition jeep to the battalion aid (61), R-6; (62, R-6 and R-7;

station in Ohlungen. With the remaining man, he took the self propelled gun under fire. However by stopping the deadly fire, the German gun was satisfied with its mission and withdrew. The platoon leader called the Company Commander on the radio to report what had happened, and the platoon leader was ordered to withdraw. (63)

Go down to
The perimeter ^{what perimeter} was strengthened, and the reserve positions occupied. By that time it was deduced by reports from straggling riflemen and the platoon leaders knowledge of the situation that the enemy held the area shown on Map F. This deduction was surprisingly correct in view of the fact that there had been no communication with battalion in Ohlungen. (64)

About 1400, battalion was contacted on the radio, and they reported that the wounded that had been sent through had arrived and that two vehicles that had been carrying the wounded had been sent back with more ammunition, particularly the bazooka type. "H" Company was ordered to hold all crossroads within the town as the enemy was confined to the wooded areas. They were also notified that a counterattack was underway to relieve them. (65)

By 1900, 25 January, the counterattack proceeded close enough to allow the rest of Fox Company to infiltrate into town. The first platoon received riflemen from the company commander to form strong points around the positions of the machine guns. The platoon then reoccupied its whole section of the MLR and instituted patrols to connect these strong points. No contact was made during the night, and after the counterattack restored the MLR in the Easy Company sector at 1200, 26 January, the rest of the second battalion sector passed to the control of the 232d Infantry. (66)

CRITIQUE, SCHWEIGHAUSEN

not enough out.
Following the same routine as that at Gamsheim, the first platoon discussed the action with the second platoon. Two factors were present in their situation as it developed on the evening of 24-25 January. First, the staggered feeding plan, arranged between the platoon leader of the (63), (64), (65), R-6; (66), R-2, p. 30-31, R-6 and R-7.

second platoon and the Easy Company commander, caused the men from "E" Company to be out of their foxholes returning from chow at the time the artillery would hit at 2000. Those men who did not get back into their holes were killed or seriously wounded, and the intensity of the fire was such that it was impossible for the riflemen in other nearby positions to fill in around the machine guns to give the close-in protection needed. Second, when the enemy infantry started across the open ground, the machine guns took a very heavy toll, and twice they succeeded in beating off the attack. The third rush carried enough enemy across the river to infiltrate back of the guns so that during the intervals of putting in new belts, they could get close enough to throw hand grenades into the gun emplacements. Even this did not cause all four guns to go out of action as ammunition bearers and riflemen that were near filled in for wounded or dead gunners. The final contributing cause was the gun stoppages that the replacements could not reduce. The net result was that all four guns were captured or destroyed on position. One factor that the second platoon personnel reported was the inability for the assistant gunner to keep the enemy away from the gun during a stoppage reduction. They felt that an automatic weapon of some sort for close-in protection was needed. (67)

On 27 January, the first platoon leader was directed to take over command of the second platoon in addition to the first platoon. The two platoons at that time figured the results of the battle were thirty men killed, wounded, and captured; five guns destroyed, and an unknown toll of enemy dead. A later count in the 2d Battalion area revealed some eight hundred enemy dead, and the two machine gun platoons were given credit for a great number of that total. (68)

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM, SCHWEIGHAUSEN

The defense of the 2d Battalion area had had adequate planning time. The second platoon of "H" Company had been in the most dangerous area (67), R-6; (68), R-2, p. 33, and R-6.

from the standpoint of automatic weapons since they were required to emplace their weapons in a thickly wooded area. This required every man to be on the gun positions during alert periods. Because prior experience with artillery fire had been in open areas, it was considered that the woods, in addition to giving concealment, would give at least enough cover from artillery fire to move to alternate or supplementary positions. Although their emplacements gave adequate cover from artillery fire, they did not allow gunners and their assistants adequate freedom of movement, particularly when the riflemen protecting them could not close in to aid the guns until the artillery had lifted and the enemy assault was launched. Finally, there was not adequate protection to the rear to secure the guns when stoppages occurred, and stoppages could be expected when guns had been exposed to the elements for a week's time.

On the other hand, in the first platoon area, stone masonry buildings offered adequate cover and concealment, and even direct self-propelled artillery fire could not dislodge a determined defender. The cover within the town allowed the first platoon some freedom of movement, and thus it could afford to have some of its men in a reserve position adding to the depth of the defense.

A revaluation of the terrain in the first platoon area allowed the defense to hold a position that might have been extremely sensitive, had the enemy infiltrated during the night into the unoccupied houses jutting out to the north at the blown bridge site. This position was extremely valuable during daylight hours on the 26th of January because it forced enemy groups, moving to reinforce the penetration in the line, to come under intense fire and to suffer casualties from effective enfilade fire from the rear.

The reserve positions of the first platoon were especially valuable in limiting the enemy penetration into the town, and the training of all the personnel, including drivers in the platoon, in the employment of machine guns paid off, particularly when the drivers of the platoon took up their positions in the southwest corner of town and held them

in the absence of instructions.

8. Communication difficulties can be overcome under the most adverse conditions only by a thorough briefing of each man and his assignment to a definite mission. Then the man can intelligently carry on, in the absence of contact, with the leader who usually gives him orders.

9. Stone masonry buildings offer excellent cover when used properly.

DEFENSE OF WINGEN

Task Force Linden was relieved from its positions on the Moder River on 27 January. It was scheduled for Army Reserve to receive intensive unit training, and to reform with the other elements of the 42d Division who were then in the Seventh Army Area.

The 2d Battalion of the 222d Infantry conducted intensive unit training in order to indoctrinate its many replacements. During the period from 27 January to 16 February, the machine gun platoons of "H" Company received some 30 replacements, and conducted an intensive period of training which included range firing, field firing, and firing in support of rifle troops in their field firing problems. Every man was given training in the mechanics of the heavy and light .30 caliber machine guns and the .50 caliber machine guns. In accordance with the recommendations of the platoon leader, each squad was equipped with two Thompson Sub-machine guns. Extensive training was conducted with this weapon. (69)

RELIEF OF 45TH DIVISION

On 15 February an order was received to relieve the units of the 45th Division. Division Field Orders and Operation Instructions were very explicit on the relief. The 222d Infantry was to relieve the elements of the 179th Infantry, and other units were to relieve units of the 45th Division in their zone as shown on Map G. (70)

This relief was accomplished without incident, and on 19 February, the 222d Infantry was employed in Wingen with its battalions on line in the following order from east to west; 1st Battalion, 2nd Battalion, and (69), R-7 and R-7; (70), R-3, OI No. 1, 14 Feb 45; PO No. 1, 15 Feb 45; OI No. 2, 14 Feb 45; OI No. 3, 16 Feb 45.

word up center of location of relief moved up

who carried some

3rd Battalion. The 2nd Battalion had placed "E" and "G" Companies on line, and three sections from the machine gun platoons. This was in accordance with the details of the relief order which stated that the battalion was to relieve the elements of the 2d Battalion, 179th Infantry, on a man for man, gun for gun basis. The battalion was to take over the missions of the 179th elements, and no changes were to be made until after 20 February. The positions occupied by the machine gun platoons, "H" Company are shown on Map H. The disposition of the battalion is also shown. (71)

Densely wooded terrain was apparent in the zone occupied by the machine gun platoons in the southern portion of the Hardt or Low Vosges Mountains. The positions generally were along high ground, and the terrain ran fairly level for a few hundred yards toward the enemy, then it sloped steeply downward for from seventy five to one hundred feet to a narrow cleared valley floor. The valley was from fifty to two hundred yards wide with a good road and a small mountain stream. At the end of the level valley floor the ground rose steeply for about the same height as on the friendly side, and the enemy was firmly entrenched on this high ground. The area was cut by many small mule and foot trails which were wide enough to hold a jeep, but spring thaws made the roads difficult to use.

From the elements of the 179th Infantry, information was gained about the enemy and the minefields shown on Map H. (Note: Trails follow ridge and stream lines). From them, it was also learned that although the battalion in that area was opposed by elements of the Sixth Mountain SS Division, they were very quiet except for occasional patrols which ran along the valley floor into the "G" Company sector.

It was not necessary materially to change the dispositions that the machine gun platoons had taken over from the 179th men. However, emplacements were enlarged, fields of fire cleared a little more, and all-round protection to gun crews coordinated with the riflemen in the area. (72)

(71), R-3, OI No. 1, 14 Feb 45; FO No. 1, 15 Feb 45; OI No. 2, 14 Feb 45; OI No. 3, 16 Feb 45. (72); R-6 and R-7.

To all intents and purposes, this area looked like the quiet sector that had been rumored for the men of the machine gun platoons for some time. However, the platoon leader ^{felt who ordered some.} decided that this was the time to continue the field firing, and indoctrination of the rifle elements of the battalion to the support that could be expected from machine guns.

FIELD FIRING

A reconnaissance for a position that included observation and fields of fire that would support a field firing problem was started. While searching for such a position, the platoon leader found an old rock wall with a dirt platform some ten feet wide, and a cave behind it. After carefully checking the position and its routes of approach, the platoon leader requested permission to dig in a .50 caliber and a .30 caliber machine gun position and to give the platoons field firing problems there both day and night. His plan was to give daylight instruction in computation of firing data, and prior to darkness move men into position, let them register on their targets to see how accurate the computations were, then during darkness they would fire on the targets that had been registered. Thus one more phase of training could be completed. An ulterior motive was worked out with the "G" Company commander. The line of fire was over the heads of all members of "G" Company except one squad. Targets were chosen from information supplied by the patrols of that company, and since there was night patrolling in the area by the enemy it was hoped that the men would indicate these targets to the gunners by firing tracer at enemy groups. In order to facilitate this additional project a direct line was hooked in between the firing point and Company "G". For position, targets, and fields of fire, see Map H.

This plan was presented to the company and battalion commander, and it was wholeheartedly approved. In order that every man could have the maximum training, the reserve section at Kohlhutte was to receive training for two days, and then relieve one of the units in the line for two days. (73)

An intensive review of the gun mechanics was given, and every man was required not only to strip and assemble the gun, but he was also required (73), R-6.

to reduce artificially induced stoppages while blindfolded. Then the section was given a review of map reading and shown the location of the firing point, and each man figured the firing data that would enable him to hit the target. Finally an hour before darkness he was taken to the position, oriented, and last minute corrections in data made. At this time he was required to confirm whether or not his target was safe to take under fire over the heads of friendly troops. Then registration took place, and those firing waited until dark to fire their targets. Finally, each gunner was required to regulate his fire evenly during the problem. (74)

After targets had been assigned, the platoon leader notified the "G" Company Commander of the specific areas to be fired, and he in turn notified each squad of the time firing was to commence and cease.

The first night that the platoons fired from their area, the riflemen in spite of all of the plans and forewarning were rather suspicious. However, when those who had been on patrols into the enemy lines saw that the gunners were hitting the targets, they began experimenting by calling up the machine gun platoon leader and asking to have the fire brought in closer to them. The fortunate arrival of an enemy patrol about fifty yards in front of one squad area brought a call, and when told to fire a tracer string from the squad leader's rifle, the squad was delighted to see the patrol dispersed by a sudden effective burst of machine gun fire. As more enemy were fired on from the firing point during the next nights, all riflemen took a hand in pointing out targets and adjusting the fire. (75)

While the reserve section was carrying out this program, the men on the line were given individual training on position, in adjustment of artillery and mortar fire. This program was carried on by the artillery and mortar observers in the area. (76)

In his original approval of the project, the battalion commander had forbidden any reconnoitering by group in the area of the MLR. And, for the (74), (75), (76), R-6.

time being, he prohibited the firing in support of patrols and raids. However the success of this program, and the resistance offered to the patrols and raids caused him to change his mind. His altered plan gave the platoon leader permission to coordinate fire with outgoing patrols so that they could have support if fired upon, if the platoon leader would approve the support positions picked by his subordinates, and if the platoon leader would insure that these positions were at least fifty yards forward, or more than one hundred yards in rear of the MLR. This plan was put into effect on 25 February. (77)

On 23 February, the 242d Regiment which was in reserve had been directed to furnish one platoon for a full-sized platoon combat patrol. The mission of this patrol was to capture, destroy, and kill any enemy in the zone. One platoon was to carry out this mission in the 2d Battalion sector each day. The 2d Battalion was directed to furnish machine gun and mortar support, and the artillery was to fire in support of the raid. In effect it was a full-scale dress rehearsal for the inevitable attack. (78)

The machine gun platoon leader was designated by the battalion as the coordinating officer for the supporting fires that the 2d Battalion could give. To accomplish this, on a typical patrol, the patrol leader and platoon leader made a joint reconnaissance. When the patrol leader decided on his route, line of departure, and whether or not fire support was needed, the platoon leader told him general firing positions that would support the patrol, the areas that could be covered by mortar and artillery fire, and suggested alternate routes of withdrawal. Finally, detailed signals for opening, lifting and shifting of fires were agreed upon. Then this information was relayed by the platoon leader to the section that was to support the raid. The section and squad leaders were required to solve these problems; troop safety, amount and type of ammunition required, gun positions and time of occupying them, and firing data for all known targets to be engaged. When these problems were

(77), R-6; (78), R-3, OI No. 7, 23 Feb 45; OI No. 8, 24 Feb 45; OI No. 9, 26 Feb 45.

solved, and approved by the platoon leader, the section or squad leader made the final coordination with the patrol leader. To insure that nothing went wrong in fire support, both the platoon leader, and the "H" Company Commander were in a radio net with the patrol leader, and from an observation point, they could control the two or three guns that were firing, either by telephone, messenger, or hand and arm signals. (79)

The route of a typical patrol, and the positions and fire control data for the supporting machine guns are shown on Map H. *Not very clear on map*

When it became apparent that the 42d Division was going to attack from its present positions on March 15, the supporting guns were required to be hand carried over trails from Kohlhutte. By doing this the men again became physically hardened, and they learned to adjust the number of guns and ammunition to be fired to the long supply route. Finally, a selected number of men were sent to a battalion mule trainer's school. On the 10th of March, the 2d Battalion was relieved by the 2d Battalion of the 242d Infantry.

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM, WINGEN

The relief of the elements of the 45th Division posed a new problem to the machine gun platoons. For the first time, they were in a quiet sector, and maximum attention could be devoted to training men who were not essential to manning the positions on the MLR.

Although there was an enemy facing the platoons, he was not active, and his fires and actions were harrassing rather than aggressive. The training program directed by regiment and division served to keep the enemy continually fighting off small unit actions, and as a result, the area between lines belonged to the most aggressive patrol.

The training in this area, unlike training around Schweighausen was designed to make everyone attack-minded, and the training was pointed to those things that were essential to the attack.

The field firing succeeded in its two purposes; first, every man was given the essentials of computing and firing the data he could get from a map and reconnaissance, and second, the rifle troops of the bat-

The two platoons moved out, and after a careful reconnaissance of the battalion area, it was found that there were positions for eight guns available, but the route over which the platoons were to travel would cut the number of guns to be displaced to two per platoon. This was because the obstacles to motor vehicles precluded any route for carriers. It was estimated that it would be at least eight hours before carriers could get within supporting distance of the objective. This information was passed on to the "H" Company Commander and he approved the plan in part. Because the first platoon was to support "F" Company and "E" Company, they would be within supporting distance of the carriers in two hours, and therefore they could hand carry enough ammunition even though they carried all four guns. (83)

The target data was figured, and the details of the fire plan disseminated to the battalion. Communication was to be by both SCR 536 and 300, but the signal for displacement in case of radio failure was to be eight tracers fired by the second platoon instrument corporal who was to be with the command group of "G" Company. (84)

Four thousand rounds of ammunition were allotted to each gun to support the initial phases of the attack, and in the displacement, the second platoon was carrying five thousand rounds. When the platoon displaced, the transportation corporal and drivers were to take the guns out of action. (85)

THE ATTACK

At 1900 21 March, a group of the XII Tactical Airforce P-47's dive bombed the fortifications along the Division front. At 1915, a squadron sortie dropped napom bombs into the woods behind the forts setting the woods on fire. At 1916, a thirty minute artillery preparation was fired, and at 1945 the attack jumped off. (86)

(83), (84,) and (85), R-6 and R-7; (86), R-6.

to the objective to contact "G" Company. "G" Company was not on the objective, but better positions were available to defend the heavily laden platoon that was at the small knob between the two objectives, so the platoon leader sent for them." (90)

When the platoon arrived, the platoon leader set up a perimeter with "G" Company's machine guns on two corners, and the second platoon's two guns on two corners, with the 60 mm mortars in the middle. Each man dug in around the guns, and security patrols constantly moved along the perimeter. All efforts failed to contact anyone on the radio so a patrol of five men was sent out to contact "G" Company. The patrol succeeded, and at 2400 "G" Company closed in on its objective. (91)

*action continued
next*
In the confusion that had resulted in finding the enemy fleeing, "G" Company had sent one platoon to take the objective, and with the other two platoons it continued the pursuit in order to secure any advantage that could be gotten from it. The one platoon had been the one that was in the fire fight, and the other two platoons of "G" Company had cut around to the rear and annihilated the enemy. It was there that the second platoon patrol from "H" Company had found them. (92)

During the night, the 1st Battalion and the 3rd Battalion passed through "G" Company, and "G" Company continued to occupy and strengthen the hills. When daylight came on March 22nd, the 2d Battalion was ordered to continue to hold its hills and to mop up resistance in the area. The second platoon continued on its mission. About 1200 that day, word was received that the second line of Siegfried Defenses had been breached, and a tank battalion and motorized infantry battalion of the 42d Division were closing in on the final Division objective. (93)

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM, SIEGFRIED LINE

Any intelligent analysis must make [?]not of the fact that the German Troops facing the 42d Division did not make a determined effort to hold the Siegfried Line. Had they made such an effort, the attack could not (90), (91), (92), (93), R-6.

the unit is explained to every man, and if every man is given a particular mission to perform that is consistent with his ability and state of training.

4. Every opportunity must be taken to train men, even during combat. An especially valuable adjunct to training is an informal critique by all concerned after each engagement.

8w 5. Control is vital to the proper performance of duties. Control is tighter when communication is good, but in the absence of communication, each unit should give a mission to perform.

9w 6. Training must include every man in the platoon, including the drivers.

7. Estimates of ammunition requirements should be made by every leader so that an adequate supply is assured during the continuation of a battle. The leader must make every effort to resupply ammunition, and to control fire so that he is prepared for emergencies.

8. All round security is vital to the machine gun. If other troops in the area cannot furnish this protection, the gun squad must furnish its own protection.

9w 9. Mechanical training in automatic weapons must reach the point where the soldier can reduce stoppages under any conditions of visibility. It should be an immediate reaction with him. The action should not require thought.

10. A strong point defended aggressively can be reduced only by direct assault. The automatic weapons employed in such a position must be able to shift fire quickly to any direction.