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THE OPERATIONS OF COMPANY A, 330TH INFANTRY (83D INFANTRY
DIVISION) AT BASSE CONTES, FRANCE (ON THE FRENCH, LUXEM-
BOURG, GERMAN BORDER) 4 - 6 NOVEMBER 1944.
(RHINELAND CAMPAIGN)
(Personal Experience of a Platoon Leader)

Type of operation described: INFANTRY COMPANY ATTACKING
A PROMINENT TERRAIN FEATURE.

First Lieutenant Gerald C. Schnelker, Infantry
ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS CLASS NO I

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INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operations of Company A, 330th Infantry, 83d U. S. Division, in the assault and capture of Le Stromberg Hill, a prominent terrain feature on the west side of the Moselle River and northeast of Basse Contes, France. At this time Company A was under the command of Captain James M. Wamble and the battalion was commanded by Lt. Colonel Lloyd R. Fredendahl.

In order to orient the reader it is necessary to present briefly the major events leading up to this action.

By September of 1944 the crushed German armies poured across France to seek the shelter offered by the Siegfried Line, with the allied armies in pursuit. The mad dash by the combined American, British, Canadian, and French Armies, under the command of General Dwight D. Eisenhower, resulted in lengthening supply lines and widened frontages to such an extent that regrouping, resupplying, and replanning was necessary. (1) In early November the Allied Armies were on line, from north to south, as follows: (See Map A)

1. Canadian 1st Army
2. British 2d Army
3. American 1st Army

(1) A-1, p. 37,38; A-2, p. 10, 11; A-4, p. 53.

4. American 3d Army

5. American 7th Army

The French 1st Army was in position southwest of the American 7th Army. (2)

Allied strategy at this time called for the continuation of the offensive, on the western front, with a dispersal of power. The initial operation envisaged was to close to the Rhine River and inflict a decisive defeat upon the enemy. (3)

THE GENERAL SITUATION

The order to the 3d U. S. Army was three fold: first, to envelop the Metz defensive works from the north and the south and to destroy the enemy in his withdrawal from this area. Secondly, to advance northeast within the army zone to seize the Mainz-Frankfurt-Darmstadt area and, finally, to be prepared for further action to the northeast. (4)

General George S. Patton assigned this plan to the XX Corps: it was to envelope Metz and simultaneously cross the Moselle River in the vicinity of Thionville with the mission of securing a bridgehead and jump off position for the advance to the northeast. (5) (See Map B)

The U. S. 90th Infantry Division on the left flank of the XX Corps and Third Army was ordered to cross the Moselle north of Thionville and attack southeast, to meet the 5th U. S. Infantry Division somewhere east of Metz, and thus form the northern arm of the envelopment. The 10th U. S.

(2) A-2, p. 766; A-3, Map No. XI; (3) A-4, p. 54;

(4) A-5, p. 124; A-3, p. 67; (5) A-5, p. 124; A-3, p. 67.

Armored Division was to cross behind the 90th Division and advance to the northeast. (6) (See Map B)

The 90th Division selected two crossing sites, one at Malling and the other at Cattenom. In making plans for the crossing the 90th Division learned, through information from friendly civilians and foot reconnaissance, that the prominent hill immediately to their north and on the west bank of the Moselle was occupied by the enemy and afforded excellent observation of the crossing sites. This prominent terrain feature was in the 1st Army zone and so would have to be taken by another unit. (8) The mission of capturing and occupying Le Stromberg Hill was assigned to the 83d U. S. Division, commanded by Major General Robert C. Macon, which was located immediately north of the 90th Division (See Map C) and was under the operational control of the 3d Army's XX Corps. (9)

In the meantime the 32d Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron had been attached to the 83d Division on 19 October 1944 and was assigned positions on line, relieving elements of the 1st Battalion, 330th Infantry from their positions on the west side of the Moselle River from Remerschen to Basse Kontz (inclusive). (10) (See Map D) Shortly after taking their positions on line a unit of the 32d Cavalry reported that it was occupying Le Stromberg Hill. It later developed that the positions they reported held were on the west slope near the bottom, the Germans occupied the top and apparently were satisfied with the observation this

(6) A-6, p. 168; A-7, p. 33,34; (7) A-7, p. 34; (8) Statement of Major O.C. Talbot, Regt'l S-3, 359th Inf., 90th Division; (9) A-5, p. 124; A-9, p. 57; (10) A-9, p. 55,56.

afforded them as they permitted the 32nd Cavalry unit to remain in their positions at the bottom of the hill for several days before firing on them and forcing their withdrawal to more favorable positions. (See Map D) (11)

Upon receiving the XX Corps order to seize the high ground at Basse Kontz, the 83rd Division ordered Company B of the 308th Engineer Battalion, 83rd Infantry, to join with the 32nd Cavalry Squadron to capture the hill. The attack was launched at 0900 on 4 November 1944, and moved across the open terrain to the edge of the objective where the Germans made use of their excellent observation atop Le Stromberg hill to bog down the attack with small arms, artillery and mortar fire. (12) (See Map D)

Shortly after noon it became apparent that the attack was not succeeding and Division issued a warning order to the 330th Infantry to be prepared to move through the 32nd Cavalry and Company B, 308th Engineer, and take the hill. By early evening it was definitely established that the attack had failed and Division ordered the 330th Infantry to jump off the following morning. (13)

THE BATTALION PLAN

The mission fell to the 1st Battalion which was in regimental reserve at Burmerange. The battalion was to move under cover of darkness to positions in the rear of the line of departure and to attack at 0800 the following morning. An enveloping maneuver was planned with Company

(11) A-9, p. 55, 56, 57; Personal knowledge; Statement of Bn. Exec. Officer; (12) A-9, p. 57; Statement of Bn. Exec. Officer; Personal knowledge; (13) A-9, p. 57; Statement of Bn. Exec. Off.; Personal knowledge.

B on the left jumping off from the high terrain west of Le Stromberg Hill in a holding attack. Company A on the right was to attack northeast from Basse Kontz around the slopes of the hill and Company C, in reserve, prepared to follow Company A on order. The attack was to be preceded by concentrated artillery and mortar fire upon Company B's objective and the top of the hill. (14) (See Map D)

At 1730 the battalion commander, Colonel Lloyd R. Fredendahl, Jr., received the order from regiment to move into position and prepare to attack at 0800 hours, 5 November 1944. Captain Eugene P. Fritts, Battalion Executive Officer, immediately alerted all companies to be prepared to move in 30 minutes and ordered the company commanders to bring two guides and report to the battalion Command Post at once. Upon arriving, the guides were collected, oriented as to their respective company locations, and moved out to meet their companies on arrival and guide them into position. (15)

An operations overlay was given to each company commander and the following oral order was presented: (16) (See Map D)

1 Bn 330th Inf
Burmerange, Luxembourg
041730 Nov 1944

Opn O --

Maps: Luxembourg 1:25,000 Mondorf

1. a. An estimated reinforced company of Germans are occupying positions on the west bank of the Moselle River

(14) A-9, p. 57; Statement of Bn. Exec. Off.; Personal knowledge; (15) Statement of Bn. Exec. Off.; Personal knowledge; (16) This order has been reconstructed from information given by the Bn. Exec. Officer and personal knowledge of the situation.

and hold a line extending from the southeast end of Basse Kontz through the west side of Le Stromberg Hill to Schengen inclusive.

b. (1) I and K troops of the 32d Cavalry Squadron and Company B, 308th Engineer Battalion are now in position on the western slope of Le Stromberg Hill and are occupying the major portion of Basse Kontz.

(2) 2d Battalion is on our left: 90th Division is on our right.

(3) 324th Field Artillery Battalion (Medium Battalion organic to 83d Division) is in direct support.

2. a. The 1st Battalion will seize Schengen, Le Stromberg Hill, and that portion of Basse Kontz in enemy hands.

b. (1) The attack is to be made from the present front lines with B Company on the left and A Company on the right.

(2) Boundaries are on the battalion overlay.

(3) Attack will begin at 0800 hours 5 Nov. 1944.

3. a. A Company will attack southeast to the end of Le Stromberg Hill then sweep northeast in an envelopment move.

b. B Company (plus one machine gun platoon, Company D) will attack the left portion of Le Stromberg Hill in a holding attack and continue on order.

c. D Company (minus one machine gun platoon) 81 mm mortars will be in general support: one machine gun platoon will be in general support initially and will displace on

order.

d. C Company in reserve will prepare to follow A Company.

x. (1) The western slope and crest of Le Stromberg Hill is heavily mined with anti-tank and anti-personnel mines.

(2) Attacking units will report the location of minefields.

(3) The 32d Cavalry will assist the 1st Battalion.

(4) Company B, 308th Engineers (organic to 83d Division) will assist by clearing minefields.

(5) The 324th Field Artillery Battalion will fire a preparation at H minus 5 on B Company's objective and on the top of Le Stromberg Hill.

(6) D Company's 81 mm mortars will fire a preparation at H minus 5 on B Company's objective and on the top of Le Stromberg Hill.

4. a. Kitchens will remain with battalion train in Burmerange.

b. Baggage guards will remain in battalion train.

c. Battalion ammunition supply point shown on battalion overlay.

d. Battalion aid station shown on overlay.

e. A hot breakfast will be served at 0600 hours.

5. a. (1) Battalion will lay wire to all the company Command Posts with priority to Company A and Company B.

(2) Radios will be silenced until 0800: current

SOI in effect.

(3) Attacking companies will signal for lifting artillery fires with a red star parachute flare when their movement becomes masked.

b. (1) Battalion Command Post will remain in Burmerange.

(2) Battalion Observation Post located as shown on overlay

(3) As soon as company Command Posts are established battalion is to be notified of their location.

Lloyd R. Fredendahl, Jr.
Commanding

DISTRIBUTION: A

THE COMPANY SITUATION AND PLAN

When the commander of A Company returned the men moved out carrying full field packs and headed due east to take advantage of the concealment afforded by the woods between the Germans and the route of march. Darkness had fallen by the time the open area was reached and the company proceeded toward Basse Kontz unobserved. Able Company was at the head of the column, followed by B Company, D Company, and the battalion Observation Post party in that order. C Company had a separate route of march as its destination was Gandren. (17) (See Map D)

The men were in high spirits as they moved and morale was excellent. Company A had been fortunate during the past six weeks in keeping its casualties to a minimum. The company mission in Luxembourg up to this time had been to maintain an aggressive defense from positions along the (17) Personal knowledge.

Moselle River through extensive patrolling action into German territory. Although the men had participated in numerous reconnaissance patrols, the company had lost only six men in as many weeks. (18)

The company was slightly above full strength with approximately 190 enlisted men and 6 officers. Three of the officers had been with A Company since the division was activated and the remaining three were replacements who had as yet seen no combat. Of the enlisted men, 30% had trained with A Company in the states while 40% were combat seasoned replacements who had seen action with other units. The remaining 30% were completely green troops who had been rushed from the states as replacements and had received the bulk of their training since joining the company. (19)

As the head of the column approached the trail junction on the high ground northwest of Basse Kontz. (See Map D) Captain Wamble, the company commander was met by the guides who recommended that the company proceed into town along the trail as the hard surface road was the object of sporadic mortar fire. The march continued laboriously along the muddy, slippery trail down the steep slopes of the hill and, outside of a few spills followed by soft cursing in the darkness, the company arrived in Basse Kontz without mishap. (20)

The A Company Commander planned to use the second and third platoons in the attack so he took the platoon leaders

(18) (19) Personal knowledge; (20) Personal knowledge; Statement of T/Sgt Edward J. Clement, 3d Platoon Sergeant.

to the Cavalry Command Post in order to coordinate plans for the jump off in the morning. In the meantime the executive officer moved the company into the buildings that had been designated by the company guides. The 1st Platoon proceeded to the southeast end of town and flushed out a German patrol which had entered the houses that afternoon and had not been dislodged. (See Map D) The platoon then set up positions in the buildings the Germans had occupied. (21)

By 2000 the location of the Company Command Post had been reported to battalion, local security was posted, and the company settled down for the night. The company order was given at 2015 hours. The 2d Platoon on the right was to attack southeast from Basse Kontz and swing to the northeast upon reaching the end of Le Stromberg Hill. The 3d Platoon on the left would move along the top and the west slope of the hill to protect the left flank of the 2d Platoon. (See Map E) The 1st Platoon in support would follow the 2d Platoon by approximately 150 yards and be prepared to give any possible assistance. The light machine gun section was to be in direct support of the 2d Platoon and the 60 mm mortar section in general support. The Company Command Post would remain in Basse Kontz, as would the aid station and the ammunition supply point, while the company observation post would be initially in the southeast end of town. A hot breakfast would be served at 0600 hours. (22)

(21) Personal knowledge; (22) Personal knowledge; Statement of 3d Platoon sergeant.

When the order was complete a thorough map study was made because time would permit no foot reconnaissance in the short period of daylight prior to the attack at 0800 hours. (23)

The following morning platoon runners awakened the men at 0530. Breakfast was eaten, platoon orders given, and as the first gray rays of dawn appeared on the horizon the platoons moved to the line of departure. (24) (See Map E)

The prospect was a grim one. The bald top, the steep slopes, and the sparse trees of Le Stromberg Hill afforded little opportunity for cover. The previous days had been cloudy and raining, but the morning of 5 November was perfect for the enemy: it was clear and crisp and visibility excellent. (25)

THE ATTACK OF LE STROMBERG HILL

At H minus 5 the prearranged artillery fires were laid on the objective and at 0800 hours Companies A and B crossed the line of departure. Shortly after jumping off Company B was pinned down by artillery fire from enemy positions across the Moselle River (See Map E) and ordered smoke to cover its advance. (26)

The enemy's attention appeared to be occupied with B Company and A Company moved up the slope without being fired upon. The 3d Platoon on the left, which had the

(23) (24) Statement of 3d Platoon Sgt.; Personal knowledge; (25) Personal knowledge; (26) Statement of Battalion Executive Officer.

mission of moving along the long axis of the hill to protect the left flank of the 2d Platoon, made contact with elements of the 32d Cavalry Squadron located below the military crest. The 3d Platoon continued up the hill and reached the military crest and the edge of the minefields where it was pinned down by small arms fire. (27) (See Map E)

In the meantime the 2d Platoon, moving on its mission and meeting no opposition, rounded the end of the hill and swung to the northeast. (See Map E) Hearing the firing and believing that the enemy was occupied with the 3d Platoon, the 2d Platoon confidently moved forward in a platoon column with the three rifle squads leading and the machine gun section following in the rear. (28)

At this time the 2d Platoon Leader, with some thought of assisting the 3d Platoon, dispatched one squad from the platoon to strike out in the direction of firing and to engage the enemy on his flank, (See Map E) thus providing a small diversionary force which would both draw the enemy's attention from the 3d Platoon and at the same time provide flanking protection for the maneuver of the 2d Platoon. The remainder of the platoon, still unopposed, swung to the left and moved to the rear of the German positions atop the hill. (See Map E) It may be said here that the terrain was very steep and upon coming in to the rear of the German positions the platoon saw cliffs on its left. Jerry was presumed to be above them. (29)

Moving more rapidly now, the platoon struck deeper

(27) Statement of 3d Platoon Sgt; Personal knowledge;

(28) (29). Personal knowledge.

with the intention of striking the enemy in the center of his rear positions. At this time fire erupted from the top of the cliff and from three or four caves at its base which had not been noticed because of their natural camouflage. Simultaneous fire was delivered from the front and the right flank. The platoon had walked into a trap. The men were pinned down from the fire overhead, from the caves, their front, and their right flank. The machine gun section which had been in the rear all through this maneuver was unable to employ its weapons properly. Because of this ambush, casualties were heavy and the remainder of the troops surrendered. (30) (See X Map E)

Sgt. Glassman, the platoon sergeant, feigned death until after the Germans had moved away with the captured men. He then retraced his route until he met the 1st Platoon, in support, which had been following at a distance of approximately 200 yards and because of the terrain had been neither able to observe the capture of the 2d Platoon nor aid in their support. (31)

The company commander arrived at this point and hearing of the 2d Platoon's misfortune ordered the 1st Platoon to extend its line downhill and hold these positions until further orders. (32) (See Map E)

While this was taking place the men of Company B moved under cover of smoke across the open terrain, down the hill, across the short valley, and reached the western slope of the hill where they immediately ran into a heavily

(30) (31) (32) Personal knowledge.

planted anti-personnel minefield. (See Map E) They received no fire at this point. (33)

The A Company Commander reported the situation to battalion and then had the 3d Platoon withdraw to Basse Kontz from whence it was to proceed along the same route as that followed by the 2d Platoon and move through the positions now held by the 1st Platoon. It was to carry out the orders which had previously been given to the ill fated 2d Platoon. The squad of the 2d Platoon which had been sent to the aid of the 3d Platoon and thus spared, was now dispatched to fill the gap between the 32d Cavalry and the 1st Platoon. (34) (See Map E)

A forward observer from the 324th Field Artillery had been sent by battalion. He and the company commander accompanied the 3d Platoon and established an observation post in a position in close proximity to the line held by the first platoon. While the company commander was coordinating the plan of attack with the forward observer and the 3d Platoon Leader, a German sniper's bullet found its mark and the company was again without the services of a forward observer. (35)

The platoon leader proceeded to a vantage point and signaled his squad leaders forward to receive the platoon order. Two squads abreast were to be deployed as skirmishers, the second on the left and the third on the right, with the mission of sweeping around the slope of the hill

(33) Statement of Battalion Exec. Officer; Personal knowledge; (34) Statement of 3d Platoon Sgt; Personal knowledge; (35) Personal knowledge.

to the enemy's rear. The second squad, upon clearing the cliffs, was to sweep up the slopes and attack the enemy positions on the crest. The first squad was to follow in squad column formation and protect the flanks and the rear. (36) (See Map E)

To keep the enemy on the cliff from observing and firing upon the troops employed in the maneuver four men of the 1st Platoon were assigned the mission of covering the advance by firing upon the cliff. The signal was given and the men of the 3rd Platoon moved out using assault fire and yelling as loudly as they could. The enemy was startled by this sudden maneuver and several prisoners were taken as the advance steadily progressed. (37)

The platoon was halted when it reached a heavily mined area well beyond the 1st Platoon's covering fire. (See Map E) There it was pinned down by machine gun fire from the top of the hill and within seconds mortar fire from across the river was blanketing the area. (38) (See Map E)

Movement along the river bank drew the platoon leader's attention and he was able to discern Jerries moving laterally along the line of advance. Their intent was obvious: if they could get behind the platoon and cut them off from the remainder of the company they would have more casualties and prisoners to report. The platoon leader immediately attempted to contact the company commander by radio but the hill mask made the SCR 536 ineffectual. (39) (See Map E)

(36) (37) Statement of Plt. Sgt. 3rd Plt; Personal knowledge; (38) (39) Statement of Plt. Sgt. 3rd Plt; Personal knowledge.

The platoon messenger was dispatched with an urgent request to move the 1st Platoon into position to block this threat but when the messenger arrived at the jump off point where the company commander had established his observation post he was informed that the company commander had returned to the command post at Basse Kontz. The messenger placed the situation before the 1st Platoon leader who refused to act without orders from the company commander. (40)

When the messenger returned to his platoon, the platoon guide was sent with a second urgent request in hopes that he could convince the 1st Platoon of the necessity of blocking the Heinie move. He was no more successful than the first messenger and the 3rd Platoon was forced to give up its hard won ground and retreat. (41)

Heavy machine gun and small arms fire was raining upon the platoon from positions on top the hill, from across the river, and from German occupied ground beyond the mine fields. Under this heavy hail of fire the men became excited and withdrew toward the nearest cover which was in a small draw located just in front of the first platoon positions. The withdrawal was covered by the platoon leader, the platoon sergeant, and the third squad leader. They reached the draw just in time to be greeted by a heavy concentration of mortar fire from the vicinity of Sierck. (See Map E) Instead of running out of the draw the men

(40) (41) Statement of Plt. Sgt. 3rd Plt; Personal knowledge.

became panicky and hugged the ground. This was disastrous and casualties were heavy. The platoon sergeant and guide quickly herded the survivors from the draw and sent them to positions in the rear of the 1st Platoon, while the platoon leader and 3rd squad leader covered this movement by keeping the Germans on the cliff from getting into position to fire upon them. (42)

By this time it was late afternoon and Company B was also having its share of trouble. It was being harassed by small arms and mortar fire and was finding it difficult to move through the mine fields. Battalion ordered both companies to halt the attack and continue at daybreak. Darkness afforded Company B the opportunity to clear a path through the mine field where they halted and dug in for the night. (See Map E) Under darkness the wounded were evacuated and the men of A Company's 3rd Platoon, disorganized and demoralized by the day's events, were withdrawn to Basse Kontz for reorganization and a comfortable nights rest before resuming the attack. (43)

The German's cleverly planned reverse slope defense had taken a high toll of Company A. It had lost a machine gun section, two full squads from the second platoon, and 28 men from the 3rd Platoon, including the second squad leader and all of the assistant squad leaders. The 3rd platoon leader replaced key personnel and divided his remaining men into two squads of seven men each and one squad of six. (44)

(42) (43) (44) Statement of Plt. Sgt., 3rd Plt; Personal knowledge.

Company A realized the great importance of Le Stromberg Hill that night as the pressure from corps headquarters upon battalion was passed on down to the companies. The following morning was established as a deadline for taking the Hill and the companies were ordered to resume the attack at 0800, 6 November 1944. (45) The battalion plan remained the same, and Company A merely changed a few details in carrying out its mission. The 3rd Platoon moved as on the previous day, the 2nd Platoon replaced the 1st Platoon as company support, and the 1st Platoon was ordered to make a frontal assault upon the Hill. (46)

Several factors combined to transform A Company's demoralization of the previous night into grim determination and white fury. Added to the general hell raising from Corps on down was the information obtained from men who were being evacuated as casualties during the night. They reported that when the enemy over ran the platoon positions and rounded up prisoners several non-walking casualties were deliberately shot when they were unable to get to their feet as ordered. (47)

This determination paid off. Company B was late jumping off but Company A hit the line on time and, in spite of depleted numbers and absence of machine gun support, put up a furious battle against the enemy's entrenched positions. Fortunately 6 November 1944, was cloudy and the enemy did not have the previous day's

(45) (46) (47) Statement of Bn. Ex. Off; Personal knowledge.

great advantage of observation and fire support. The engineers had cleared a path through the mine fields during the night and the 1st Platoon swept through the enemy in a frontal assault. The Germans attempted to withdraw down the rear slopes of the hill toward Rudling (See Map E) but the 3rd Platoons flanking movement forced them into B Company's area where they were taken prisoner. Judging from the number of casualties and prisoners taken, the Germans had withdrawn their main force during the night and left a holding force of approximately 30 men. A Company occupied the hill at 0930 and B Company continued on to clear Schengen. (48)

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

In the final analysis, securing Le Stromberg Hill was of the utmost importance. It provided the enemy with an excellent observation post from which he could direct fire on the Noselle River crossing to the south, which was part of the Third Army coordinated attack initiating the Allied winter offensive. The enemy was also very aware of the importance of the hill and established an extremely clever defense which completely stopped the 32nd Cavalry Squadron and Company B, 308th Engineer Battalion, and led A Company, 330th Infantry, to the brink of disaster before the tide of battle turned.

In spite of the ultimate success of A and B Company, the outstanding feature of this action was the way the enemy out planned and out maneuvered our forces to the

(48) Statement of Bn. Ex. Officer; Personal knowledge.

extent of making his defensive action in fact offensive. He not only had the advantage of terrain and weather but he utilized them to their fullest extent. The clear sky and lack of growth which afforded our forces no concealment gave him excellent observation of our activity and his artillery across the river was quick and accurate in laying on fire which caused heavy casualties.

The Germans were thoroughly familiar with the terrain and were able to anticipate our plans completely, even to the extent of guiding the 2nd Platoon into their trap. They utilized the natural cliffs in channeling the route the 2nd Platoon would follow and lulled the platoon into a false sense of security by withholding all fire until the pincers of their trap snapped shut, enveloping the platoon with complete success. They placed mine fields so strategically that they knew exactly where we would be forced to stop and their artillery support was zeroed in upon those positions.

In contrast, A Company jumped off with no terrain reconnaissance and with meager information concerning the position and strength of the enemy. No patrols were sent out prior to the attack and aerial photographs (which would have been of great help) were not available. The German positions on the military crest of the hill deprived us of observation, and we had no supporting fire after the initial preparation at H-5. Also in our disfavor was the fact that we had no means of communication with the command post

after we crossed the line of departure because the hill mask made the SCR 536 radio ineffective.

The enveloping maneuver that Battalion ordered was the obvious approach and a poor choice because it was what the Germans expected and prepared for. The A Company commander further increased the risk by initially splitting his attack force when he might have utilized the 32nd Cavalry to assist the action by firing on the top of the hill, thus leaving A Company to attack the enemys' rear in full strength. Another approach which might have kept casualties to a minimum would have been to move into position under cover of darkness and clear paths through the minefields for a frontal assault upon the enemy. A frontal assault was made on 6 November 1944, and succeeded in capturing the objective but it should be noted that the enemy artillery across the Moselle did not support the action as it had on the previous day and it was apparent that the enemy had withdrawn during the night, leaving behind a small holding force.

On the platoon level we had two opposite examples of assuming leadership and making decisions; one erred in being overly aggressive while the other was unwilling to accept responsibility. In the first case, the 2nd Platoon leader led his men directly into a trap after sending one of his squads to the assistance of another platoon. His purpose is questionable but it appears that the lack of opposition made the platoon leader over-confident. The other platoon

leader was in support but failed to maintain contact with the assault platoons, failed to protect their flanks, and did not plan for the movement of his platoon to aid the action of the assault elements. He refused to act without orders from the Company Commander and this was another contributing factor in the loss of control. The Company Commander should have remained at the observation post, to direct the action instead of returning to the command post.

The heaviest casualty loss outside of the capture of the 2nd Platoon occurred when the 3rd Platoon found itself threatened with envelopment and the support platoon refused to move into the breach. The 3rd Platoon withdrew under heavy fire and the men followed their natural inclination to seek cover in the nearby draw. When the enemy "zeroed-in" ^{on} that area the men didn't react properly to mortar fire and instead of quickly moving away from impact areas, they hugged the ground with disastrous effect.

The determination of the individual soldier was the biggest contributing factor in the success of this operation.

LESSONS

- Not clear -*
1. A well organized defense may be a good offense.
 - ✓ 2. A well organized reverse slope defense supported by artillery and mortar fire ^{is} costly to the attacker.
 3. Patrols are essential to gain knowledge of the enemy ^{of terrain}.

Not well brought out

4. Counterbattery fire is necessary to silence enemy guns.

✓5. Smoke should be used to screen movement over open terrain in a daylight attack.

Sup -

6. The Company Commander should be in a position which will afford the best possible observation and control of his company during the attack.

*where where
for whom*

7. Support platoons should furnish flank security.

✓8. The support platoon should be located and disposed so that they can be rapidly engaged to influence the battle.

✓9. Personnel must move rapidly through mortar and artillery impact areas.

✓10. Observation is essential for the employment of mortars in the attack.

✓11. Communication is necessary to insure success in battle.

*not exactly a
good lesson as
stated*

12. Avoid the obvious -- use the element of surprise whenever possible.