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THE EMPLOYMENT OF THE 2ND PLATOON, COMPANY M,  
333RD INFANTRY, 84TH DIVISION, 24 DECEMBER-26 DECEMBER 1944  
ARDENNES CAMPAIGN  
(Personal experience of the Platoon Leader)

Type of operation described: The Machine Gun Platoon  
in Defensive Combat  
Against Armor

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ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS CLASS NO I

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INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operations of the 2nd Platoon, Company M, 333rd Infantry, 84th Division, during the Ardennes Campaign. Three days of the campaign, the 24th, 25th, and 26th December 1944, are chosen as I feel that these three days highlighted the participation of the 2nd Platoon in the defensive phase of the campaign.

To give the reader a clear picture of the platoon and help in understanding some of their actions, let us go back to their entry into combat.

The first action of the platoon was in the Siegfried <sup>Line</sup>. The 3rd Battalion, 333rd Infantry, had been ordered to pass through the 1st Battalion, attack and capture the town of Wurm, Germany. The platoon had the mission of supporting Company I in the attack. As a result of this attack, the platoon lost approximately 40% of its strength in four days. The objective was not taken at this time, as the area proved to be too heavily defended against a unit of battalion size. (This objective was taken by a coordinated attack of two battalions, with artillery support 18 December 1944.) (1)  
(Map A)

Despite the loss in strength, the platoon benefited in learning the difficulties of an attack against a fortified position and also just how strong a coordinated defense can make an area. It also learned that regardless of the diffi-

(1) A-1, p. 45,46,47,78.

culties involved, communication must be maintained.

The non-commissioned officers of the platoon bearing the brunt of the attack gained the respect not only of the platoon but also the remainder of the 3rd Battalion.

After a few days' rest the platoon was again in the line, this time a defense mission. No one who was in Lindern, Germany, during this defensive period will ever forget it and the men of the 2nd Platoon will never forget the "Orchard" on the eastern end of the town. The town itself was a recognized "hot spot" and the "Orchard" was the "hottest spot" in town. This orchard formed a slight salient in the line and the German artillery and mortar fire sought to eliminate the salient. If a man was to crack under the strain of combat, the "Orchard" would be the place where he'd crack. Communication by wire was impossible but now the platoon had an SCR 300. Needless to say, this radio was frequently used in calling for mortar and artillery fire and all non-commissioned officer personnel became familiar with calling for and adjusting artillery fire. One of the section leaders had the rare experience of being an infantryman and directing corps artillery, when the corps observer had to be evacuated from his position in our platoon defense area. (2) (Map A)

It was also in this same orchard that the platoon had their first real experience with direct fire weapons. All foxholes and gun positions were covered, but every day the top of at least one hole would be removed by these direct fire weapons. (3)

The casualty rate suffered by the platoon during this

(2) A-1, p. 63; (3) A-1, p. 65.

defensive phase bears out the fact that here the platoon learned to dig their holes deep and then cover the top. This learning is borne out in the fact that despite the length of time on line, and the concentration of enemy artillery, one casualty was suffered.

When word was received that we were leaving the area there wasn't a man in the platoon who didn't heave a deep sigh of relief. Nothing could be as rough as the "Orchard" so a change of location sent morale soaring to new heights.

#### THE MOVE TO BELGIUM

The move south to Belgium was fast and efficient. We entrucked at 1000 hours on the 21st of December and were "digging in" in Belgium that same night. (4) Rumors were being spread as rapidly as we were moving. Since the official destination was unknown to us, these rumors had the 84th Division assigned to a variety of missions that ranged from pulling guard at an Army Headquarters far to the rear, to being sent to the most luxurious rest center ever imagined. Rumors of combat; since there could be no combat outside of the "Orchard at Lindern" combat was far away. After passing through Liege, Belgium, rumor had the 84th Division relieving another division in the line. The proposed relief failed to materialize but the line was a stark reality. Instead of a relief, the 84th Division was to form a line and relief was out of the question for the next several weeks.

#### THE GENERAL SITUATION

After what seemed to be endless moves, and endless "digging in", a line was established. The 84th Division in the center

(4) A-1, p. 87.

defending Marche, and the Marche-Hetton Road; the 2nd Armored Division on the right flank, and the 3rd Armored Division on the left flank. The positions in our area formed defenses around towns or important road junctions as the area of responsibility was too great to set up a continuous defensive line. <sup>By Holding</sup> Defending these towns and road junctions *we* controlled the network of roads and as long as we had control of the roads the use of German armor would be controlled.

(5) (Map B)

Four Belgian villages were to be the scenes of the German attempts in their effort to gain control of the roads. These villages, Verdenne, Marenne, Menil, and Bourdon, were so located that possession of any one would facilitate an attack on Marche, or an attack to cut the Marche-Hetton Road. (6)

(Map B)

#### DEFENSE OF KEY POINTS

The first of these villages to be attacked was Verdenne. At 1500 hours, 24 December, a German assault force consisting of five tanks, three armored personnel carriers, and approximately one hundred infantry troops, drove through Verdenne and gained control of the town. The 3rd Battalion, 333rd Infantry, was assigned the mission of retaking Verdenne. Bourdon was selected as the assembly area for the counterattack and the units of the battalion began the move to Bourdon. (7)

(Map B)

Company M arrived in Bourdon, from Waillet, at 2130 hours, *and* the platoons <sup>the</sup> moved into houses along the road where they waited for the attack order. While waiting for the order

(5) A-2, p. 14; (6) A-2, p.18,20; (7) A-1, p.97.

the evening meal, prepared and ready to be eaten at Waillet, was fed. (8)

The attack order was received at 2200 hours, 24 December, and set the time of the attack at 2400 hours; the objective, restore the defensive lines held by Company L, 334th Infantry, before the German assault on Verdennes. (9) (Map B)

Companies K and L would make the attack supported by a platoon of heavy machine guns, one section in direct support of each rifle company. Guides from Company L, 334th Infantry, would lead the companies to the line of departure.

Company I and the balance of Company M would set up a perimeter defense around Bourdon. (9)

The 1st Platoon of Company M was selected to support the attack. The manner of selection was by tossing a coin and the 2nd Platoon, calling the toss, won the job of the road blocks. However, due to the expected difficulty of controlling the fire of the machine guns at night, Captain Burns, Commanding Officer of Company M, decided to strengthen the 1st Platoon with additional men from the 2nd Platoon. This additional strength gradually evolved into each section being commanded by an officer, with a two-man radio team, plus three additional ammunition carriers. (10)

The balance of the 2nd Platoon went to work setting up road blocks on the Verdennes-Bourdon Road, and the Hatton-Bourdon Road. Each road block consisted of a section of machine guns, a bazooka team, and a daisy chain of antitank mines. Two men were assigned to the daisy chain, two as the bazooka team; the remaining men of the section furnishing

(8) Personal knowledge; (9) Personal knowledge, Statement of Captain S. E. Burns, C.O., Co. M; (10) Personal knowledge.



local security and manning the machine guns. (11)

The guides from Company L, 334th Infantry, reported to the Battalion CP and Companies K and L moved out toward Verdennes (2300 hours), Company K leading. The formation in each company was the same; a rifle platoon, a reinforced machine gun section, two rifle platoons and the weapons platoon. The Company Commanders of both companies were well forward in the lead platoon of their company. <sup>SP</sup> The rear of the column had just reported that it had cleared Bourdon when the head of the column was fired on and stopped by a burst of machine gun fire from a German tank. (12) (13)

The guide had taken the wrong road and led the column into some German tanks. Lt. Leinbaugh, Commanding Officer of Company K, withdrew his men from the tank fire, then informed the Battalion Commander of the situation. At this time the number of tanks was unknown and speculation ran both high and low. A hurried reconnaissance revealed that there were at least six tanks, plus some half tracks in the area. (14) (Map B)

Plans were changed to the extent that Company K would remain on the hill and in visual contact with the tanks, and Company L would move to Verdennes, making the attack at 0100 hours, 25 December. Captain Means, Commanding Officer of Company L, then moved to Verdennes without the aid of the guides, ~~turning up German armor in places it shouldn't be.~~ (15) No change was made in the disposition of the machine guns except to send back the ammunition bearers for more bazooka ammunition.

(11) Personal knowledge; (12) Personal knowledge; (13) A-1, p. 97; (14) A-1, p. 98; (15) A-2, p. 20.

Bazooka teams were also formed from the A & P platoon to reinforce the defensive position Company K was preparing on the western rim of the enemy pocket. (16)

Initially it was thought that artillery fire on the tanks would reduce the position. This plan was to prove more difficult to perform than could be safely attempted at this time. The artillery had not registered on this area; <sup>then</sup> the difficulty of adjusting fire at night and the shape of the terrain brought on the decision not to fire artillery on the target at this time. The deployment of our own troops was the big factor in postponing the artillery fire. A "short" round would land on the positions of Company K; to get a round over the hill mass was a simple adjustment, but the terrain sloped downward from the crest to Verdenne, thereby putting the over rounds on Company L attacking Verdenne. (17)

The defensive positions of Company K were then further strengthened by a section of machine guns from the 2nd Platoon of Company M. This section was taken from the road blocks, <sup>and</sup> putting spare guns <sup>were put</sup> of the platoon in their places and <sup>manually</sup> ~~all road blocks by~~ <sup>the remaining</sup> one section. The section reinforcing Company K was emplaced in the center of Company K's position. Here they used one set of holes at night and another set during daylight hours. Why weren't bazooka's used against the tanks? A shrub growth on top of the hill stopped the use of bazooka's; the thick branches either deflecting the rounds, or causing premature bursts. (18)

For the sake of clarity it is necessary to review the disposition of both machine gun platoons of Company M. The

(16) Personal knowledge; (17) A-1, p. 99; (18) Personal knowledge.

1st Platoon had one section of guns supporting Company L at Verdennes, the other section was on the left flank of Company K's defensive position.

The 2nd Platoon had one section in the center of Company K's position and the other section manning road blocks on the perimeter defense of Bourdon. These dispositions remained unchanged during the daylight hours of Christmas Day. (19)

Christmas Day was expected to be on the interesting side but instead it seemed rather calm and peaceful in Bourdon. Two German tanks came forward long enough to knock out two tank destroyers that were in Bourdon but outside of that one venture the German tanks were quiet. Company L had retaken Verdennes and was sending the prisoners captured there through Bourdon. This was the only German activity in Bourdon. (20)

In the early afternoon hours Captains Mitchell (KIA 7 Jan 45) and Burns of Companies I and M decided to see what the Germans had in the pocket, and possibly get a tank while on the reconnaissance. They succeeded in getting to the crest overlooking the pocket but a few well thrown German hand grenades ended the reconnaissance. Fortunately neither Company Commander was wounded. (21) The next big feature of Christmas Day was the Christmas dinner. The 2nd Platoon being close to and in Bourdon made it possible to bring most men inside for their big meal and this was the main event of the day. Since the 2nd Platoon had missed the Thanksgiving dinner due to a more pressing engagement in the Siegfried Line, the turkey and all the trimmings were doubly appreciated. (22)

(19) Personal knowledge; (20) A-1, p. 98; (21) Personal knowledge; (22) Personal knowledge.

With the tenseness concerning the German tanks increasing it looked as if another night would be spent in Bourdon. The feeling wasn't too comfortable as the tanks were not only looking down our throats, but also breathing down them, and it seemed our necks were stretched a little too far should the German armor decide to break out of the pocket.

#### MENIL, BELGIUM

This feeling was short lived, as orders moving us to Menil were received. From a German prisoner of war, division learned that there was to be an attack on Menil on 26 December, with the objectives of cutting the Marche-Hotton Road and seizing the bridge across the Ourthe River. As a result of this information the order received was "To reinforce the defenses of Company E, 334th Infantry, by defending the western approaches to Menil" and "Hold at all costs". (23)

In deciding what elements of the battalion would move to Menil it must be remembered that Company I and a section of machine guns had a perimeter defense established around Bourdon; Company K, with two sections of machine guns, were containing the southern rim of a pocket of German tanks; Company L with a section of machine guns <sup>was</sup> were in Verdennes; Company M had its two platoons of machine guns deployed with the rifle companies and its mortar platoon in the town of Bourdon. (24)

The order from Battalion called for Company I and Company M, less one machine gun platoon, to go to Menil. (25) (Map C)

In forming Company M for the defense of Menil, Captain Burns attached the section of machine guns in the center of Company K's positions to Company K, and withdrew the section

(23) Statement of Capt. S.E. Burns, C.O. Co. M; (24) Personal knowledge; (25) Statement of Capt. S.E. Burns, C.O. Co. M.

of guns on the left flank. He also attached the section of guns in Verdanne to Company L. This formed a platoon of machine guns comprised of a section of guns from the 1st and 2nd Platoons. (26)

This was the first time we had tried working sections of the two platoons as a unit and at the time it didn't sound too feasible. Since the arrangement was dictated by the positions of the sections attached to Companies K and L, there was nothing to do but make it work. (27)

*what route*  
The move to Menil was made without incident. All the weapons carriers of the 2nd Platoon were used on the move and with a small overload on each vehicle the platoon made the move without any men of the platoon in the walking elements of the two companies. (28)

Upon our arrival in Menil we were met by the platoon leader of Company E, 334th Infantry, who had his platoon in the area Company I and Company M would defend.

There was no time lost in going on the reconnaissance. As soon as the vehicles stopped, the men were assembled by the Platoon Sergeant, taken to a house close by and security posted; the vehicles were dispersed and under cover as soon as the men unloaded. These two jobs helped in cutting down on the confusion at the end of a move and the men were available when called with no need to go looking for them. (29)

The reconnaissance party consisted of the Platoon Leader, Company E, 334th Infantry, who was to show us his positions, Captain Mitchell, Commanding Officer, Company I, the Platoon

(26) Personal knowledge; (27) Personal knowledge; (28) Personal knowledge; (29) Personal knowledge.

Leader and two section sergeants of the machine gun platoon.

The positions of Company E were well set up and covered a minefield that extended half-way across the field on the western edge of Menil. After showing us his positions and the minefield, he rejoined his company which was responsible for defending the eastern approaches to the town. (30) (Map C)

Captain Burns, Commanding Officer, Company M, now joined the reconnaissance party and the detailed reconnaissance of the area began. The reconnaissance was aided by a bright moon which permitted visibility of the entire area. The final selections for the gun positions were made defending the field in front of Menil. The actual positions were selected as follows: One section of machine guns 20 yards west of the minefield; the other section, to the rear, about 250 yards from the first section position. (31)

The front position, on the main line of resistance, would have grazing fire to an embankment on the left flank of the Battalion Area. This embankment was formed by a road running from Menil to the woods south of the town. To the front the ground rose gradually to the line of woods, then increased in the rise. Since the position was at the base of the gentle slope, the field of fire was excellent. To the right flank, Company I was setting up its defenses, and this was to be our final protective line, exchanging fires with two light machine guns of Company I. (32) (Map C)

The rear section was along the Menil-Marenne Road. This position was concealed from enemy observation by a hedge

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

running along the road and being on the high side of the road would take care of any troops entering Menil on this road. Its field of fire to the front was good. With an observer near the gun or communication with the front section, it could fire to the front, covering the front section of guns, and right to the trail entering Company I's position. Should the attack come from the east, an alternate position located on the low side of the road would be the firing position for this section. No alternate position was selected or prepared for the front section. (33) (Map C)

During the early morning hours work on the positions progressed slowly. The ground was frozen and made digging quite difficult. When the frozen top soil was removed, a soapstone rock formation proved even more difficult. However, the combination of the frozen ground and the rock made the gun emplacements and fox holes quite formidable. By breakfast all the digging had been completed and all that remained to be done was cover the emplacements. At 1000 hours, 26 December, the positions were ready. The artillery and mortars registered their barrages and concentrations. In the final protective fires the mortars covered the area in front of the minefield and the artillery the area in front of Company I. (34) (Map C)

During the early afternoon hours no activity was reported. Just before sundown, Lt. Braley, an observer of the mortar platoon, picked up a target in the woods east of the town. Several rounds of HE were fired, followed by a mixture of HE

(33) Personal knowledge; (34) Personal knowledge.

and W.P. The W.P. was fired in an attempt to burn away some brush concealing what was thought to be a German patrol, and also as a screen covering a machine gun that was firing on the target. No assessment of casualties could be made as the patrol went deeper into the woods. Their retreat was followed by two rounds of artillery fire, coming into Menil and landing rather close to the CP of Company I. No casualties were suffered but Company I informed Lt. Braley and myself about drawing fire on their CP. This patrol returned to the edge of the woods after a lull of about 15 minutes. This time the services of a tank destroyer (part of a reconnaissance patrol passing through Menil) were gladly loaned to us to fire the mission. He fired two rounds of armor piercing ammunition and a round of HE. The armor piercing ammunition was used to knock down the camouflage covering the patrol. No return fire was received and this ended the activity to the front. (35) (Map D) *Information not shown on Map D*

An early supper was fed and the crews on the guns replaced with the regular gunners and assistant gunners. Each section was organized similarly with two machine guns (20 boxes of ammunition per gun) and a bazooka team (8 rounds of ammunition). Wire had been laid to all positions, and in developing the positions a second wire line had been run to the positions and all wires connected to the phones. These phones were tied in to the Company CP through a single wire line located at the platoon billet in Menil. Since the platoon had turned its 300 radio over to the mortar platoon, the SCR 536 was to be used for radio communication should the wire lines be

(35) Statement of Lt. Braley, <sup>observer</sup> Mortar Observer. Personal knowledge.



knocked out. (36)

At 1850 hours a radio message was received at Company M's CP, stating that a German armored column had just blasted its way through Marenne and was headed for Menil.

(37) Word of the impending attack was sent to all units in the town and all units of the platoon checked. The communications were in good shape except for the radio, which just wouldn't function. (38)

By this time the column could be distinctly heard and all positions were warned again to insure that none would assume the tanks to be friendly since they were approaching from the right flank and through what was considered friendly territory. (39)

The defense had been carefully planned to stop an attack from the west. Would the defenses hold on the attack from a new direction?

The German armor was on its way into Menil. For a tank to get into Menil using the road didn't seem possible, but the tank was on the way. The lead tank would have to cross two "Daisy Chains" (10 antitank mines), pass within fifty yards of a 57-mm antitank gun that was bore sighted on the turn in the road, then get by the bazooka team of the machine gun section. (40) (Maps C and D)

The lead tank was making its last turn leading to Menil when it was stopped by a terrific blast. (The first part of the line functioned, so how about the remainder.) The German armor turned to the right when the knocked out tank blocked

(36) Personal knowledge; (37) Statement of Capt. S.E. Burns, C.O., Co. M; (38) Personal knowledge; (39) Personal knowledge; (40) Personal knowledge.

the road. (41) One of the tanks in the column fired a round into the barn, at the turn, and the barn was going up in flames. The antitank gun prime mover and ammunition stored in the barn added to the blaze. The bursting shells kept the German column moving and forced them up the trail with no hesitation. (42) The column now started across the open field. A tank, followed closely by a personnel carrier, was headed down the line of fox holes. (43) The bazooka, now handled by Sergeant Scanlon (later appointed Second Lieutenant), came into operation. One round hit the lead tank, and then the machine gun manned by Section Leader, Staff Sergeant Hightower, opened up on the tank. The bazooka and machine gun didn't do any damage to the tank, but it was now swinging toward the gun position. The guns were just pulled into the holes in time to save the guns. Only damage as the tank and personnel carrier overran the holes, was one smashed tripod. (44) The rear section of guns now opened up on the column and then bedlam broke loose. The mortars, artillery, machine guns, bazookas, mines, and individual weapons were truly a final protective line. The tank and personnel carrier that had tried to crush the men in the holes were stopped about 15 yards in front of the position. (45) The remainder of the column crossing the field in rear of the positions now turned to the right, heading for the woods, but ended in the minefield. Mortar fire continued to be placed on the minefield and the artillery was shifted to the woods. The action ended as suddenly as it began. Menil was then searched for Germans who may have decided that the town was safer than

(41) A-2, p. 22; (42) Personal knowledge; (43) A-1, p. 101; (44) Personal knowledge; (45) Personal knowledge.

attempting to cross the field. Several prisoners were taken in the town, none putting up any resistance. (46) (Maps C and D)

Ammunition was taken to the gun positions and the men on position relieved by the crews that had been on during the afternoon. The 2nd Platoon hadn't suffered a casualty during the brief but hectic encounter and the men on position earned a night of rest. (47) The count at daylight showed 25 German vehicles knocked out. These included 6 tanks, half tracks, weapons carriers, motorcycles, and one American jeep. (48) (Map D) *What happened to German in vehicles*

#### ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

In piecing together the details of the defense, it was found that several factors dominated the action. Three battalions of artillery were controlled from the front line positions, and brought to bear with their full effect on the tanks. Those calling for the fire on their own positions did it as they knew the job it would do for them. Control of the fire was by wire to the Company CP, radio to Battalion Headquarters, and then to the artillery. Despite these repeats, the fire came as called for with a minimum delay in changes of range or deflection.

Communication between the two machine gun sections left no room for any guesswork. The section on the front line wanted fire on the tank to its front and got it. The adjustments were being made from a fox hole located not more than 30 feet from the target.

(46) Personal knowledge; (47) Personal knowledge; (48) A-2, p. 22.

The absence of casualties was proof of the strength of the gun positions and fox holes. The shelling was quite heavy, the mortar platoon firing over 900 rounds; and the volume of artillery was heavier than the mortars, but the men in the holes were not affected in any way. (49) It is also proof that these men were battle tested, and would stick regardless of the odds against them.

Placing <sup>of</sup> the rear section of guns was due to the insistence of Captain Burns, Commanding Officer, Company M. The platoon leader and Captain Mitchell wanted the section to be on the main line of resistance, but as Company Commander he refused all recommendations for this section except the position he had spotted while on his way to join the reconnaissance. This selection and putting the gun there was the key to the defensive position, as when the main line of resistance was being hard pressed by the tanks, this section was the only small arms firing on the column, keeping all tanks buttoned up and all infantry in the personnel carriers.

Another factor was the "Daisy Chain" that stopped the lead tank. As this tank attempted to round the bend it was stopped, and stopped with a terrific blast. After the action one member of the antitank crew was treated for cuts and sand that had been blown into his face. He then informed us that the daisy chain had not been pulled across the road. He was on his way to pull the daisy chain, but the tank was there first. Luckily the tank had driven into the shallow ditch and exploded seven of the ten mines, the tank itself then forming as solid a road block as any road block could be.

(49) Statement of Lt. Braley, Mortar Observer.

The mines not only blew the track but also the front suspension, and actually pierced the hull of the tank.

The antitank gun crew at this curve in the road never reached their gun. They waited just a little too long inside the house and the gun was never fired. These two failures, even though not affecting the defense, could have led to serious trouble in trying to hold Menil. The fact that luck formed the road block isn't too dependable, as another tank driver may have been able to stay on the road. This daisy chain was backed up with another chain that was pulled, but I still sweat thinking what might have happened.

The volume of fire placed on the column as it crossed the field made the tankers forget that their mission was attack. In this volume of fire, no real damage was done to the tanks or half tracks but I feel the damage was done when they headed for the woods. Had any armored vehicle turned left, it would have gained the shelter of the town and missed the minefield, so this fire even though not damaging the tanks did have the effect of turning the attack.

#### 25 December

The decision not allowing the artillery to fire on the tanks in the pocket <sup>where</sup> was sound. Had this mission been fired, I am quite sure the attack on Verdennes would have suffered, if not failed entirely. Likewise, Company K would have suffered casualties as I don't believe the artillery could have fired the mission without getting some "short" rounds and some "overs". If this had been fired and casualties resulted from it, I doubt if the 2nd Platoon would have had the confidence

to call for fire on its own position. Therefore, to me, this decision not only affected the results of the action on the 25th but also carried over to the defense of Menil.

Reinforcing defenses on the strength of a POW interrogation may sound like taking unnecessary chances but instead it was taking added insurance. Since information up to this stage was simply the information you dug up, I believe that the <sup>G-2</sup>~~two~~ sections of the division performed better here than in situations where the information was supposed to be complete and reliable. During this phase all members of the command were information minded and as a result the situation was developed on the information received by the small units.

#### 26 December

On checking the failure of the 536 radio to operate immediately prior to the attack, it was discovered that the radio was not to be blamed. The radio had been taken to the Company CP to have a new battery installed; the new battery was installed but the radio taken back to the position didn't contain a battery. The wrong radio had been taken to the position.

#### LESSONS

1. Communication is so vitally linked with the success of any operation that it must receive the same attention as the detailed plans for the attack or the defense. Without ~~communication the best of plans are worthless, as the commander has no control.~~ The control of the platoon was effective because communication was maintained.

2. Defensive combat is a tiresome, boring, and nerve straining job that the infantry soldier must be accustomed to in order to conduct an effective defense. The long periods of inactivity and the concentrated artillery that is usually placed on the position tend to lower morale and reduce effectiveness. To combat the mental fatigue, reliefs within the small unit should be made whenever possible. If the positions in a platoon area are manned with skeleton crews or squads, when the time comes for the actual assault the platoon will be ready for the assault.

3. By proper use of vehicles, the heavy weapons companies can accomplish resupply of ammunition, weapons, food and clothes more readily than the rifle companies. This resupply is a burden for all rifle company commanders to shoulder and should be solved by increasing the vehicles of the rifle company by one  $\frac{1}{2}$ -ton truck and trailer per platoon. If this were done, the Commanding Officer's worries would be lessened and he'd have more time available to fight his company.

4. A machine gun platoon can hold a sector of any line without the immediate local protection of rifle platoons. If the platoon is willing to fight, they should be given an area of responsibility and not merely coordinated into the defensive fires. Coordinate the fires, but also give them an area to hold.

5. Machine gun sections are adaptable to many changes. They can be given support missions or attached with no loss of efficiency. This capability suggests the formation of Machine Gun Companies. With a machine gun company in each

battalion, training would be more centralized and the men would become specialists at their job. When the need for use in combat dictated, these guns could be sent down to the rifle platoons or rifle squads or, as in defensive situations, used as platoons or sections.

6. The 30 caliber water-cooled machine gun is as mobile as its users will make it. It may have a heavy tripod, a problem of ammunition resupply, but these factors can be overcome by well trained troops.