

General Subjects Section  
ACADEMIC DEPARTMENT  
THE INFANTRY SCHOOL  
Fort Benning, Georgia

ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS COURSE  
1948 - 1949

OPERATIONS OF COMPANY "C", 41ST ARMORED INFANTRY  
REGIMENT (2ND ARMORED DIVISION) AT GELA, SICILY,  
12 JULY 1943 (SICILY CAMPAIGN)  
(Personal Experience of a Company Executive Officer)

Type of operation described: ARMORED INFANTRY COMPANY  
ATTACKING DISMOUNTED IN MOUNTAINS

Captain Martin A. Shadday, Infantry  
ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS CLASS NO 2

15927 117

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE</u>
Table of Contents.....	1
Bibliography.....	2
Introduction.....	4
The General Situation.....	7
Terrain and Weather.....	8
The Enemy.....	8
The Detailed Situation.....	10
The Attack Order.....	12
The Approach March.....	15
A New Attack Order.....	18
The Attack.....	19
The Results.....	23
Analysis and Criticism.....	24
Lessons.....	28
Map A - Strategic Importance of Sicily	
Map B - The Allied Landings	
Map C - Gela - Events First Two Days	
Map D - The First Plan of Attack	
Map E - Mount della Lapa - Situation 0800 12 July 1943	
Map F - The Second Attack Plan	
Map G - The Attack	

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- A-1 Routes into Europe, Part II  
By Colonel Conrad H. Lanza  
Field Artillery Journal, July 1943, page 510  
(TIS Library)
- A-2 Sicilian Campaign (July 10th to 22nd, 1943)  
By Colonel Conrad H. Lanza  
Field Artillery Journal, September 1943, page 654  
(TIS Library)
- A-3 Operations in Sicily and Italy (July 1943 to May 1945)  
Department of Military Art and Engineering  
US Military Academy, West Point, N.Y., 1945  
(TIS Library)
- A-4 Report of Operations, US Seventh Army in the Sicilian  
Campaign (10 July - 17 August 1943)  
Seventh US Army, 1943 (TIS Library)
- A-5 Biennial Report of the Chief of Staff United States  
Army to the Secretary of War (July 1, 1943 - June 30,  
1945)  
US War Department, 1945 (TIS Library)
- A-6 Danger Forward (The Story of the First Division in  
World War II)  
By H.R. Knickerbocker and others  
Society of the First Division, 1947 (TIS Library)
- A-7 Remarks of Lt. Col. Darby, 12 October 1943  
Army Ground Forces Board Report No. 62  
G-3 Section, Allied Force Headquarters, North African  
Theater of Operations, US Army, 1943 (TIS Library)
- A-8 Use of the 4.2 inch Chemical Mortar in the Invasion of  
Sicily, by Major William S. Hutchinson Jr.  
The Military Review, November 1943, page 13 (TIS Library)
- A-9 2nd Armored Division Combat Loading, Part II  
By Lt. Col. F.M. Muller  
Armored Cavalry Journal, September - October 1947,  
page 9 (TIS Library)
- A-10 Darby's Rangers  
By Lt. James J. Altieri  
Ranger Book Committee, 1945 (TIS Library)
- A-11 U.S. Seventh Army in Sicily  
By Christine Harbour  
Cavalry Journal, September - October 1943, page 10  
(TIS Library)

- A-12 Statement of Lt. Col. Morin  
Army Ground Forces Board Report No. 70  
G - 3 Section, Allied Force Headquarters, North African  
Theater of Operations, US Army, page 22, 4 November  
1943 (TIS Library)
- A-13 History of the 67th Armored Regiment :  
Published by Georg Westermann, Brunswick, Germany,  
1945 (TIS Library)

OPERATIONS OF COMPANY "C", 41ST ARMORED INFANTRY  
REGIMENT (2ND ARMORED DIVISION) AT GELA SICILY,  
12 JULY 1943 (SICILY CAMPAIGN)  
(Personal Experience of a Company Executive Officer)

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this monograph is to explain the operations of Company "C", 41st Armored Infantry Regiment, 2d Armored Division, in the expansion of the beachhead at Gela, Sicily on 12 July 1943. So that the reader will understand the situation at the beginning of this action a brief review is necessary.

In the spring of 1943 Sicily was strategically very important to both sides in the war. (See Map A) To the Germans and Italians it was a close base for their ground forces in Tunisia and their air forces attacking Allied shipping in the Mediterranean. In addition it was a bastion for the defense of Italy. To the Allies it was a target for the advantages it afforded the Axis, (1) as well as a "stepping stone" for the future invasion of southern Italy. (2)

In January 1943 at the Casablanca Conference the leaders of the United States and Great Britain decided to invade Sicily after the Tunisian Campaign was successfully ended. (3) Shortly thereafter the United States Chief of Staff, General Marshall, wired General Eisenhower, commander of Allied Forces in the Mediterranean Theater of Operations, that the invasion would be launched during a "favorable moon" in July. (4) The strategic purpose of the invasion was to establish Allied control of the Mediterranean sea lanes and provide a close base for the sub-

(1) A-3, p.2; (2) A-3, p.2; (3) A-3, p.2; (4) A-5, p.14.

sequent invasion of southern Italy. (5)

British General Sir Harold R. G. Alexander was appointed General Eisenhower's deputy to command the ground forces in the invasion. (6) The Allied plan was to assault the beaches in the southeastern portion of the island then advance north and west to capture the whole island. (7) The British were to take the southeastern tip of the island, and the Americans were to land farther west on the southern coast. (8)

In order to conserve shipping, American troops in the invasion were organized into several task forces composed of only essential personnel and equipment. The following table is inserted for the orientation of the reader and for a reference. The table is simplified by omission of units not mentioned in this monograph.

#### Allied Forces in the Invasion of Sicily

<u>UNIT OR</u>	<u>TASK FORCE</u>	<u>LANDING AREA</u>	<u>ASSIGNMENT</u>	<u>ATTACHMENT</u>
		<u>ARMIES</u>		
	Eighth British	Pozzallo - - Syracuse	---	15th Army Group
	Seventh U.S.	Licata - - Scoglotti	---	15th Army Group
		<u>TASK FORCES (U.S.)</u>		
	JOSS 3d Inf Div (Reinf.)	Licata	Seventh Army	---

(5) A-3, p.2; (6) A-3, p.5; (7) A-3, p.5; (8) A-2, p.654.

UNIT OR

<u>TASK FORCE</u>	<u>LANDING AREA</u>	<u>ASSIGNMENT</u>	<u>ATTACHMENT</u>
<u>TASK FORCES (U.S.) CON'T.</u>			
SHARK IICorps	Gela - - Scoglotti	Seventh Army	---
KOOL 2d Arm'd Div (-) (Reinf.)	Licata - - Scoglotti	Seventh Army (Reserve)	Committed piece- meal at Gela
<u>SUB TASK FORCES (U.S.)</u>			
WOLF 82d Abn Div (-)	Gela (Ponte Olivo)	---	SHARK
DIME 1st Inf Div (-) (Reinf.)	Gela	---	SHARK
GENT 45th Inf Div	Scoglotti	---	SHARK
<u>REGIMENTS (U.S.)</u>			
Ranger Force	Gela	---	DIME
*	*	*	*
<u>BATTALIONS (U.S.)</u>			
1st Rngr Bn	Gela	Ranger Force	---
4th Rngr Bn	Gela	Ranger Force	---
83d Cml Mort Bn	Gela	---	Ranger Force
1st Bn 39 Engr	Gela	---	Ranger Force
1st Bn 531 Engr	Gela	---	Ranger Force
*	*	*	*
1st Bn 41st Arm'd Inf Regt	Licata - - Scoglotti	2d Arm'd Div	KOOL (Ranger Force after 111630 Jul)
*	*	*	*
<u>PLATOONS (U.S.)</u>			
1st Plat Co "H" 67th Arm'd Regt	Licata - - Scoglotti	2d Arm'd Div	KOOL (Ranger Force after day- light 12 Jul)
*	*	*	*

## THE GENERAL SITUATION

The Allied 15th Army Group, commanded by British General Sir Harold R. G. Alexander, invaded the beaches of southern and eastern Sicily at 0245 hours 10 July 1943. (9) On the next day troops in all beaches but one were advancing rapidly to accomplish the initial mission of capturing key airfields and ports. (10) (See Map B) On the left Lieutenant General George S. Patton's Seventh U.S. Army was well established on its right and left flanks, but in the Gela sector the progress had been slow.

At Gela the II Corps' 1st Infantry Division held Gela and a narrow stretch of beach extending about 4 miles east. (11) (See Map C) The mission of II Corp in the Gela sector was the capture of Ponte Olivo Airport by daylight, 11 July. (12) To assist II Corps in this mission two parachute regiments of the 82d Airborne Division were to drop north and east of the airport. (13) A high wind blew the airplanes off course causing the troops to be scattered far from the drop zone. These troops were not assembled in time to fight as organized units during the period covered by this monograph.

On the left flank the U.S. Ranger Force captured and occupied Gela. (14) The Ranger Force, which consisted of the 1st and 4th Ranger Battalions with the 83d Chemical Mortar Battalion and two engineer battalions attached, was attached to the 1st Infantry Division. (15)

On the beach east of Gela the Army floating reserve, (KOOL TASK FORCE), consisting of the 2d Armored Division (minus Combat Command "A") plus a regimental combat team of the 1st Infantry Division, had been landing and assembling since 1830

(9) A-5, p.14; A-3 p.5,7; (10) A-3, p.6,7,12,13,; (11) Personal knowledge; (13) A-3, p.9,10; (14) A-7, p.3; (15) A-7,p.2; A-10, p.48



the day before. (16) All the infantry landed before daylight, 11 July. (17) The mission of the floating reserve was to be prepared to land in support of any assault force. (18)

#### TERRAIN AND WEATHER

Before going on with the situation any farther it is desirable to present some information about the terrain and weather. Sicily is generally a mountainous island. The few plains are mostly on the southern coast. One of these plains, at Gela, is the scene of this monograph. (See Map C) The Gela plain, roughly triangular in shape, is about fifteen miles wide by eight miles deep, ending abruptly in hills averaging 600 feet in elevation. The hills were covered with scattered bushes about four feet high, and the plain was bare except for a few vineyards and orchards. (19) The plain is split by the small rivers Gela and Muroglio. The beach, about six miles long and fifty yards wide, slopes gently under water. The town of Gela is a communications center, connecting two inland highways with the coastal highway and railroad.

The summers are generally hot and dry. the two days mentioned in this monograph, 11 and 12 July, were typical sunny days. On the night of 11-12 July the moon was full, but shortly after midnight it disappeared. (20)

#### THE ENEMY

The next development in the situation concerns the enemy. In the eastern half of the island the enemy had two infantry

(16) A-9, p.10; (17) A-9, p.12,13; A-6. p.104; (18) A-9, p.10; A-3, p.7; (19) (20) Personal knowledge.

divisions and one armored division held in mobile reserve. Elements of this mobile force closest to the Gela area were the Italian 4th Infantry Division at Caltanisseta and a Battle Group of the German Hermann Goering Armored Division at Caltagirone. (21) (See Map B) The beach defenses at Gela were manned by the Italian 134th Coastal Regiment, which was spread from Licata to Scoglotti. (22) These coastal troops were killed or captured the first day.

Early in the morning of 11 July the enemy launched a series of piecemeal counterattacks against the 1st Infantry Division in a battle which lasted all day. All the artillery, mortars, and tanks on the beach plus naval gun fire were used to beat off these attacks. (23) (See Map C)

Shortly after dawn twenty tanks of the Battle Group Hermann Goering, followed by infantry, attacked down the Ponte Olivo road. (24) The infantry was contained by small arms fire, but the tanks broke through and attacked Gela and east of Gela. At Gela the Rangers drove the tanks off at noon, and in the east the 1st Division's light artillery helped to drive the tanks off with direct fire early in the afternoon. (25)

Just a few hours after the attack was launched from Ponte Olivo the enemy struck again, this time down the road from Niscemi. (26) This attack was stronger than the first one and consisted of forty tanks from the Hermann Goering Battle Group accompanied by some infantry. (27) Although the second attack was the stronger it met more resistance, and only limited pene-

(21)(22) A-4, p.b-3; (23) A-8, p.15; A-11, p.10; A-4, p.b-4; A-6, p.106; A-5, p.16; A-8, p.15; (24) A-3, p.11; A-8, p.15; (26) A-3, p.11; A-4, p.b-4; A-6, p.106; (27) A-3, p.11;

trations were made. Some of these tanks at one time penetrated as far as the road junction on the coastal highway.

(28) (See Map D) An infantry element of this attack swinging around the east flank, threatened the 1st Division Command Post and was repulsed by the defense platoon of division headquarters.

(29) Despite the opposition of every effort the defenders could muster, the attack was not repulsed that day.

(30) Tanks of the 2d Armored Division, KOOL Task Force, were committed as they landed throughout the day. By nightfall

this force amounted to a battalion. (31) Available artillery and antitank guns were committed in direct fire roles, and

even the fire of the warships standing off the beach was mass-

ed on the German tanks. Still the Germans counterattacked

repeatedly all day long, and were not repulsed until the 1st

Division attacked after midnight. (32)

Meanwhile on the west flank of the beachhead an Italian infantry regiment approached Gela from the northwest. Shortly before 1630 hours this regiment, while marching in close formation, was destroyed by the massed fire of artillery, mortars, and naval guns. (33)

#### THE DETAILED SITUATION

It has been mentioned previously that the tank elements of KOOL Task Force were committed as they landed on 11 July. The infantry elements were also committed that day. One of these elements, the 1st Battalion, 41st Armored Infantry Regiment was attached to the Ranger Force and closed into an assembly area in west Gela at about 1630 hours. (34)

At this time the 1st Battalion was critically under-

(28) Statement of Major James L. Pence, then a captain in the 16th Inf., 26 Nov 48. (29) A-6, p.107; (30) A-6, p.106 (31) A-9, p.13; A-6, p.106, 107; (32) A-6, p.106; (33) A-4, p.b-4; A-8, p.15; (34) Personal knowledge.

strength and short of equipment for three reasons. (35)

First, "A" Company was detached on a separate mission. (36)

Second, the battalion had become dispersed in landing the day before and had not yet assembled all units. Third, only a few essential vehicles had been permitted to sail with the unit, and none of them were ashore yet. (37)

The battalion was especially short of heavy weapons elements. Headquarters Company, which was also the battalion heavy weapons company, could support the rifle companies with only one section of machine guns. In assault elements the battalion was better off with "B" Company fully assembled and "C" Company missing only one platoon. The absence of vehicles seriously impaired the battalion communications system. The radios of the battalion command net were mounted in  $\frac{1}{4}$  ton trucks which were still aboard ship. A substitute net was established with SCR 536's (Handy-talkies). (38)

*How about  
a plat?* The effective strength of Company "C" included the Company Headquarters section and the 2d and 3d Platoons. (39)

There were three officers present: the company commander and the leaders of the 1st and 3d Platoons. The leader of the 1st Platoon was also the company executive officer. The status of equipment in "C" Company was commensurate with its strength. No internal communications equipment was available. (41)

The Company had had ample time to train for the Sicilian Campaign. During the month of May it had participated in the amphibious training of the battalion. During the following month training was conducted on a company level stressing use of weapons, and physical hardening. Night training was

(35)-(38) Personal knowledge; (39) An armored infantry rifle company at this time had three similar platoons; the platoons each had three rifle squads, a light machine gun squad and a 60 mm mortar squad.; (40)(41) Personal knowledge.

not emphasized. It was during this second phase of training that the company executive officer had joined as a replacement. (42)

The troops of "C" Company had never been in action before, but most of them had been overseas since December 1942 and were restless to gain some combat experience. (43)

#### THE ATTACK ORDER

*what was situation at this time*

Prior to darkness on 11 July 1943 the Commanding General, 1st Infantry Division, ordered the division to resume the attack at midnight. (44) At 2300, in Gela, the commander of the Ranger Force issued his order which called for a night attack on the hills to the north by the 1st Ranger Battalion and the 1st Battalion, 41st Armored Infantry Regiment. He ordered the 4th Ranger Battalion to guard the left flank of the force from positions west of Gela. (45) (See Map D) The purpose of this attack was to protect the left flank of the troops attacking Ponte Olivo Airport and to expand the beachhead. (46)

*Company situation*

The plan of the Ranger Force was to capture Mount del Zai and Mount della Lapa. The formation was battalions abreast, 1st Rangers on the right. The route was the Butera road for both battalions, and the line of departure was the present front line at the edge of Gela. The 1st Ranger Battalion was to lead, followed by the 1st Battalion, 41st Infantry. The 1st Ranger Battalion was to capture Mount del Zai, and the 1st Battalion, 41st Infantry was to capture Mount della Lapa. Both objectives were to be taken before daylight. (47)

Subsequently the commander of the 1st Battalion, 41st

(42)(43) Personal knowledge; (44) A-6, p.106; (45) A-8, p.15 A-7, p.3; (46)(47) Personal knowledge.

Infantry, issued his attack order. His plan was to take the objective from the right flank. The battalion was to advance in column of companies, in the order: "C", "B", and Hq, to an attack position on the east flank of Mount della Lapa. Then "C" and "B" Companies were to assault the objective abreast, "C" Company on the right. The companies were to sweep down the whole objective together and then take up defensive positions. "C" Company was to defend the east half of the mountain and "B" Company the west half. The assault was to be made with fixed bayonets, and great stress was laid on the necessity for surprise. There was to be no firing unless ordered by an officer. When the enemy discovered the attack, the troops were to charge making as much noise as they could. The leading company was to cross the initial point at the road junction, Butera road - coastal highway, at 0400. (48)

*which C Attack?*

Nothing was known about the enemy strength or dispositions on the battalion objective. However the battalion staff did know about the Italian counterattack down the Butera road on the afternoon of 11 July. It was expected that the survivors of that attack, and any reserves the enemy might have had, would be on Mount della Lapa and Mount del Zai. The maximum possible enemy strength on Mount della Lapa was estimated to be a battalion. (49)

After receiving the battalion order the "C" Company commander formulated his plan and issued his order at midnight. The company plan differed from the battalion plan only in details.

The formation for the march to the attack position was a  
(48)(49) Personal knowledge.

column of platoons, the 2d leading. The troops were to close up tight to not more than two paces distance between men because it was a very dark night. Platoons were to be in column of twos on either side of the road. The company was not to pass any Ranger columns which might be ahead on the road. (50)

Upon arriving in the attack position at the east end of Mount della Lapa the formation was to change to a line of platoons in line, 2d on the right. The company would then clear the north half of Mount della Lapa from east to west. The battalion commander's orders in regard to fixed bayonets and firing were disseminated. Responsibility for contact was designated from right to left, or toward the center of the battalion. If any unit lost contact it was to halt until contact could be regained. (51)

After assaulting clear to the west end of Mount della Lapa "C" Company was to move to its defense sector at the east half of the mountain. There the company was to be disposed to defend Mount della Lapa to the north. Both platoons were to be on line, 2d on the right. (52)

The company executive officer was ordered to take command of the 3d Platoon. This officer will hereafter be referred to as the 3d Platoon leader. During the march to the attack position this officer was to be at the rear of his platoon and have the additional responsibility of preventing straggling in the company. (53)

The troops were to leave their packs in the assembly area and carry one "K" Ration meal in the attack. (54)

(50)-(54) Personal knowledge.

## THE APPROACH MARCH

At 0300 "C" Company was alerted, and preparations were made for the movement. At 0400 the head of "C" Company passed the initial point. It appeared that the operation was beginning favorably. There were no lights, or unnecessary noise, and the company was marching at a steady, easy pace. (55)

When the 3d Platoon leader came opposite the paved side road a few hundred yards north of Gela the column had to stop; there was some delay up front. The lieutenant moved his platoon off the road and waited. They waited there perhaps ten minutes. The lieutenant could hear no shooting up front. (56)

The march was resumed and continued for about thirty minutes without interruption except for a little "accordion" action. At 0445 the column halted with the 3d Platoon now about twenty eight hundred yards from the objective. The platoon leader moved to the head of the column to see the company commander. He found the captain with the head of the company on the bend where the road curves sharply to the west. Some scattered shots could be heard faintly from the front. The lieutenant asked, "What is the delay?" The captain answered, "They (The Rangers) have halted in front of us". The lieutenant then commented on seeing a dead Italian soldier in the ditch, and the captain answered, "Didn't you see them back down the road? There were hundreds of them". The lieutenant had not seen the bodies, but he assumed that they were the casualties from yesterday's counterattacks. Everything was now quiet up front. It was beginning to get lighter, and visibility had increased to about fifteen yards. (57)

(55)(56)(57) Personal knowledge.



In about ten minutes the column moved out again with the two officers near the front. After they made the next right turn, about two hundred yards up the road, they entered a cut with banks about fifteen feet high. (See Map F) Machine gun tracers could be seen flying down the road waist-high and overhead. Instinctively the men jumped into the ditches. The machine gun continued to fire. After a brief pause the order was passed back to get behind the cut. The leading elements of "C" Company pulled back behind the cut and dispersed on either side of the road. (58)

It was now about 0510, and daylight was approaching fast; visibility was about fifty yards. The machine gun ceased firing after about ten bursts, but some other firing could be heard up forward. At this time Company "A" 83d Chemical Mortar Battalion came up and went into position on the east side of the road just behind and right of the crest. (59) The lieutenant <sup>(2nd Platoon)</sup> moved his platoon across the road where they remained for several hours. Around 0600, the five tanks of the 1st Platoon of Company "H", 67th Armored Regiment, moved up behind the mortars east of the road. (60) It was now daylight. (61) (See Map E)

The mortars fired a few rounds on Mount della Lapa for registration; but could not fire on Mount del Zai because they had no communication with the Rangers. (62)

At about 0800 the tank platoon advanced around the right of the crest to the foot of Mount del Zai and provided close support for the Rangers. (63) Sometime later, around 0900, the tanks withdrew behind the crest on the right of the mortars.

(58) Personal knowledge; (59) A-8, p.15; (60) A-13, p.238;  
(61) Personal knowledge; (62) A-8, p.15; (63) Personal knowledge.

From this position in hull defilade the tanks fired on Mount del Zai. The mortars and tanks had been firing perhaps fifteen minutes when a round of high explosive light artillery landed near the tanks. Two more registration rounds landed closer, and then about two four-round salvos landed among the tanks. Although undamaged, the tanks ceased firing and withdrew down the slope about a hundred yards. (64)

The mortars continued to fire, and a few minutes later the enemy artillery traversed right to land on the mortars. This was only a hundred yards away from "C" Company. The 3d Platoon leader started digging a slit trench. The other men were already digging. (65) The digging was difficult. The ground was hard dry mud, cracked in drying to cakes eight inches thick and one to two feet in diameter. Underneath the mud was hard dry dirt. The old type intrenching shovel would not dig effectively in this soil. The lieutenant used his shovel in the cracks to pry up cakes of mud which he used for a parapet. In this manner he made a prone shelter eight inches deep with an eight inch parapet in five minutes. By that time the artillery was upon "C" Company. When the first lull in firing came the captain ordered the company to the left where the crest curved back toward the sea. There were no casualties from the artillery fire. (66)

The time was now about 0930. "C" Company moved to the west end of the crest where the captain ordered the platoons to dig in disposed to defend the crest against attack from the north and west. The 3d Platoon was assigned to the left sector

(64)-(66) Personal knowledge.

with the 2d Platoon on its right. The 3d Platoon leader disposed his three rifle squads in line on the forward slope from right to left in numerical order. He put his machine gun in the center of the line with principal direction of fire northwest toward the right front of the platoon. He put his 60 mm mortar just behind the crest covering the platoon's left flank and the draw to the front. (67)

Meanwhile a Ranger officer on Mount del Zai spotted the gun positions of the artillery firing on "C" Company. By relay through the Ranger Force Commander and his naval spotting party this officer adjusted fire on the six inch guns from one of the cruisers on the enemy battery. The enemy fire stopped suddenly, but the naval gun fire continued sporadically throughout the morning. (68)

#### A NEW ATTACK ORDER

Shortly before noon the 1st Battalion Commander called his company commanders together and issued a new attack order calling for a daylight attack at 1300 to capture Mount della Lapa. The new plan was for a double envelopment by "B" and "C" companies with "C" Company on the right. (See Map F) Each company was to capture half of the mountain, Company "C" the right or east half. The 4.2 inch mortars were to support the attack by fire on call. The tank platoon was to support the attack, upon request, by fire from positions in the vicinity of Mount del Zai. The crest running southwest from the road cut was designated the line of departure. Upon capture of the objective the companies were to prepare to defend on the north slope. Company "C" was to establish contact with the Rangers

(67) Personal knowledge; (68) A-7, p.3.

on the right. (69)

Without delay the "C" Company Commander assembled his platoon leaders and issued his attack order. The plan was to follow the same route that was to be used in the night attack. The formation was to be a column of platoons, 3d leading, the 2d Platoon was to follow the 3d by two hundred yards in company reserve. After the objective was taken the platoons would be disposed in line for defense, 3d Platoon on the right. The 3d Platoon was to establish contact between the two mountains with the Rangers. (70)

After receiving his company commander's order the 3d Platoon leader looked up at Mount della Lapa and saw American tanks high up on the slope in the right half. The tank platoon was on the company objective. While he watched, one of the tanks advanced to the crest and fired its cannon at targets beyond the mountain. It was now nearly 1230. The lieutenant assembled his platoon sergeant and squad leaders to hear his platoon attack order. The detailed plan for the 3d Platoon designated a platoon wedge formation with the 2d Squad leading and the 1st and 3d Squads on the right and left respectively. The machine gun and mortar squads were to follow in that order behind the 2d Squad. Because the lieutenant did not know the men of this platoon very well he ordered the platoon sergeant to remain near him in the attack. (71)

#### THE ATTACK

At 1255 the company commander and 3d Platoon leader at the head of "C" Company reached a point at the near end of the road cut. Suddenly a concentration of enemy artillery

(69)-(71) Personal knowledge.

landed on the leading elements of the company. While the company radio operator was shouting into his SCR 536 for the 4.2 inch mortars to return the fire, the 3d Platoon leader was thinking that something had to be done quickly. (See Map G)

The lieutenant jumped to his feet shouting, "Let's go", and ran through the cut. More slowly the 3d Platoon followed him to the left side of the road beyond the cut. The lieutenant signalled, "As Skirmishers", but no more than a wedge was formed because the platoon was still running to get out of the shell fire. When a wedge had been formed by the 1st and 2d Squads the platoon leader signalled, "Forward", and, "Double Time", because the artillery was following them up the road. The lieutenant then selected two scouts to precede him by two hundred yards. Because the platoon was running these scouts were able to get only fifty yards ahead of the lieutenant. At this time Mount della Lapa could be plainly seen to the front. (73)

The mountain presented a steep cliff in the left half and on the right flank a conical knob with a saddle connecting the two. The slope of the saddle was not so steep as that of the hills on either side, but in the lower half there was a slide of large boulders which would be difficult to climb over. There was a small stone structure resembling a pillbox on top of the cliff, and in the saddle was a stone cabin with a horse standing nearby. There appeared to be a wagon trail leading up from the right flank of the mountain across the slope to the cabin. At the base of the cliff there was a

(72)(73) Personal knowledge.

small path leading up and right to the smooth ground of the saddle. There was no sign of any activity to the front. The tanks were no longer in sight anywhere. (74)

About three hundred yards beyond the line of departure the 3d Platoon leader changed the captain's plan. He decided to swing left and take the footpath into the saddle. A messenger was not sent back to the captain because there were not enough men up front to spare one. (75)

There was some difficulty getting the troops to advance. The lieutenant wanted to get out of the lead, but every time he slowed down the troops did too. After moving a few hundred yards he noticed that his scouts were no longer out front. Because he didn't know who they were; the lieutenant had to send out two more. (76)

By this time the platoon was safely out of the artillery impact area. The mortars had smoked the enemy observation post on Mount Nicola. (77) At the same time the warships assisted by firing at targets in the vicinity of Mount Nicola. The enemy ceased firing soon afterwards. (78)

The 3d Platoon reached a small stream shown crossing in front of the mountain. (See Map G) The stream was in a gully about six feet deep and six feet wide. Momentarily the platoon leader considered the gully for a possible covered route of approach. However he rejected the consideration because he was not receiving fire. The platoon crossed the gully. (79)

The 3d Platoon continued on to the path at the foot of the mountain. There the platoon leader realized that his scouts were no longer in front of him but somewhere to the rear.

(74)-(76) Personal knowledge; (77) A-8, p.15; (79) Personal knowledge.

2d Platoon stopped at the line of departure, unwilling to pass through the enemy fire. The only officer with this rear portion of "C" Company was the 2d Platoon leader; this officer made no effort to get the troops to advance. After some delay it was necessary for the company commander to go back and lead these troops forward. (83)

At about 1400 an Italian machine gun at the base of the knob opened fire on Battalion Headquarters Company which was crossing the plain. (84) About ten Headquarters Company men could be seen running toward the machine gun. "C" Company's 3d Platoon Sergeant volunteered to take his 1st Squad down to knock the gun out. (85) About twenty minutes later the sergeant returned saying, "They were in a pillbox, two Italians with a machine gun; they surrendered when we threw a grenade in at them". Headquarters Company took the prisoners, but one of "C" Company's men brought back the machine gun with ammunition. The Italian machine gun was put in front of the knob to strengthen the defensive position. (86)

About this time a wounded Italian soldier and his aid man climbed the forward slope to surrender to "C" Company. (87)

At 1500 the men of "C" Company were dug in, contact with the Rangers had been established by the 1st Squad leader, 3d Platoon, and the overlay of the company dispositions had been sent to the battalion commander. The position was now secure. (88)

#### THE RESULTS

The results of this operation for "C" Company can be stated briefly. The objective was taken with exceedingly small losses, but several hours late. Four enemy soldiers and one

(83) Statement of Capt. John F. Goodman Jr., on 12 July 1943, then commanding Co. "C", 41st Arm'd. Inf. Regt. (84) A-12, p.22; (85)-(88) Personal knowledge.

machine gun were captured. "C" Company lost one soldier in the attack, wounded by artillery. (89)

#### ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

The terrain in this operation favored the enemy. He had good observation to his front and flanks. Most of the area in front of his line was flat and bare extending more than a thousand yards forward. Thus the enemy had excellent fields of fire for flat trajectory weapons, and observation for his indirect fire weapons. There was one covered approach to the enemy position, the gully across his front. This gully may have been mined. From the viewpoint of the 1st Battalion, the terrain favored the enemy during daylight and indicated that a night attack was the best means of crossing the bare ground south of Mount della Lapa.

Information of the enemy on Mount della Lapa was meager. On the cliff in "B" Company's sector our troops found a wire leading to the pillbox which suggested an observation post. On the knob the enemy had left a broken carbine and some mortar ammunition. The machine gun captured at the base of the knob has been previously mentioned. No intrenchments were found in the "C" Company sector, and only four prisoners were taken. No known enemy were killed. Based upon these facts the obvious conclusion is that Mount della Lapa had been weakly occupied. This position was probably a point on the Italian general out-post line.

The enemy relied heavily upon his artillery to delay or stop the attack, but the effect of this fire upon the supporting weapons was slight. While receiving fire on their position

(89) Statement of Capt. John F. Goodman Jr., on 12 July 1943, then commanding Co. "C", 41st Arm'd Inf. Regt.



the mortar crews continued to man their guns. Although the tanks withdrew from the shellfire once, they were undamaged. However, the enemy caused some damage to "C" Company. As a result of the artillery fire, Company "C" became disorganized at the line of departure, and split into two groups. The rear elements of "C" Company allowed themselves to be pinned down by artillery and suffered a casualty. However, the advance elements by running through the fire, were exposed for a much shorter time and suffered no casualties. Experienced troops  
2  
in the attack continue to advance when they are receiving fire.

The planning for this operation was faulty primarily for not providing closer coordination between the two assault battalions and with the supporting tanks and mortars. In the approach march both battalions used the same route to reach different objectives. The presence of the Rangers on the road ahead of the 1st Battalion, 41st Armored Infantry Regiment prevented it from reaching the attack position before daylight. In the daylight attack the supporting fires of the tanks and 4.2 inch mortars were entirely uncoordinated with the assault of the 1st Battalion.

2  
How  
Detailed planning of "C" Company's night attack was excellent. Maximum attention was given to the principles of surprise and concentration of effort. Control was insured by the order to hold fire and the order to halt if contact was lost.

In the daylight attack the "C" Company commander probably chose the route along the road to take advantage of his protected flank. He could reasonably believe at the time he issued his order that the Rangers had either captured the enemy machine

gun or forced the enemy to withdraw. However the other available routes took advantage of Mount della Lapa to cover the advance of the company from enemy on Mount Nicola. The execution of the attack proved that the originally selected route was the more dangerous.

The 3d Platoon leader failed to put someone at the rear of his platoon to prevent straggling and thereby permitted his command to become split.

The leadership in this operation was at fault principally due to lack of aggressiveness. In the approach march the company commander marched well forward leading his company. When the march was delayed the captain should have begun to worry. Although the company commander could not change the plan of attack without approval of the battalion commander, he could have made recommendations to change the plan. In general there were few opportunities for the company officers to exercise their leadership in the approach march. In the attack, however, several incidents should be discussed.

In one of these incidents the 2d Platoon leader lacked aggressive spirit. When "C" Company's rear elements were halted on the line of departure, this platoon leader should have gone forward to find the cause for delay. Instead he did nothing. The battalion commander later stated that he had found this lieutenant standing on the line of departure, "with his hands on his hips, chewing gum", and making no effort to take part in the attack of "C" Company. It was not surprising that a few weeks later this officer was recommended for reclassification.

The 3d Platoon leader did not enforce discipline when he failed to identify the two scouts he first sent out. It appears that the men soon believed the platoon leader did not care whether the scouts performed their duty or not. The platoon leader should have insisted that the same two scouts, who were first sent out, returned to complete their mission.

The 3d Platoon leader made another mistake when he delegated his responsibility for establishing contact with the Rangers. He should have checked that arrangement personally.

*Point not fully developed*

The failure of "C" Company to clear its zone of advance was an accident. Since "C" Company had received no machine gun fire in its attack the leaders reasonably thought the route was safe.

Tank-infantry coordination in this attack was almost entirely lacking. Since the enemy had no antitank guns it was proper for the tanks to lead the attack. However they should have remained on the objective until relieved by the infantry. After the tanks abandoned Mount della Lapa the enemy had an opportunity to reoccupy their position. Fortunately the enemy did not take advantage of this opportunity.

*2*

Control and communication within "C" Company were greatly hampered by lack of a company command radio net. Without radio communication the company commander could not control more than one platoon at a time after his company crossed the line of departure, and foot messengers were too slow to be effective.

The equipment of Company "C" in this operation was generally the best available under the circumstances. The lack of radios has been discussed in the previous paragraph. Another

item, the old type intrenching shovel was inadequate for hard clay or rocky soil. A combination pick and shovel, such as is now issued, was needed.

*why  
what was  
the effect  
on the*

The training received by "C" Company prior to this action did not stress night operations. More training in night operations should have been given the company in spite of the fact that it expected to fight in support of tanks, and to have its vehicles available. Experience in Tunisia had shown the advantages of night attacks across open terrain which was swept by fire during daylight. (90)

Replacement officers should not join units just prior to an operation, but should be given an opportunity to train with their commands and become familiar with them before combat. The 3d Platoon leader ~~in this monograph~~ had little opportunity to learn his men's capabilities. He had never commanded his platoon on a tactical exercise other than a road march, and in his first action he was required to lead a different platoon. (91)

#### LESSONS

Some of the lessons to be learned from this operation are:

1. A general outpost supported by artillery often fools the attacker into thinking he has met the main line of resistance.

2. Artillery can effectively neutralize a target only when employed in mass. Battery salvos are good only for harassment.

(90) Statement of Maj. Gen. Hugh J. Gaffey in June 1943, then commanding 2d Arm'd. Division. (91) Personal knowledge.

3. Attacking troops must keep moving when fired upon.  
The number of casualties can be reduced if the troops move quickly.

4. Attack routes should be reconnoitered whenever time is available.

5. An officer or noncommissioned officer must be appointed to follow assault platoons and companies to prevent straggling.

6. Available cover should receive first consideration in the selection of routes for daylight attacks.

7. In the attack, leaders must be curious to find out the situation to their front and must be alert to investigate all unscheduled halts.

8. Disobedience of orders is an infectious habit which can be stopped only when leaders adequately supervise their execution.

9. Contact between adjacent companies or larger units in the defense is ~~an officer's~~ <sup>the company's</sup> responsibility which cannot be delegated.

10. Infantry companies should train intensively for night attacks, to include rehearsals on terrain similar to that over which the attack is to take place.

11. All junior officers should train with their own units prior to combat.

12. Rifle companies in the attack require a radio for each platoon to insure adequate communication.

13. The old type intrenching shovel was inadequate for hard soil.

14. Armored infantry <sup>when</sup> can <sup>is</sup> expect to be employed (in certain situations) without tank support. (When this is done) the lack of supporting fires must be compensated for.