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THE OPERATIONS OF THE 505TH PARACHUTE INFANTRY REGIMENT  
(82D AIRBORNE DIVISION) IN THE AIRBORNE LANDING  
AND BATTLE OF GROSEBEEK AND NIJMEGEN, HOLLAND  
17 - 23 SEPTEMBER 1944  
(RHINELAND CAMPAIGN)  
(Personal Experience of a Company Commander)

Type of operation described: AIRBORNE INFANTRY REGIMENT  
IN ASSAULT BEHIND ENEMY LINES

Captain Jack Tallerday, Infantry  
ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS CLASS NO 2

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THE OPERATIONS OF THE 505TH PARACHUTE  
INFANTRY REGIMENT (82D AIRBORNE DIVISION)  
IN THE AIRBORNE LANDING AND BATTLE OF  
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INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operations of the 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82d Airborne Division, in the airborne landing and battle in Holland, 17 to 23 September 1944.

In order to orient the reader, it will be necessary to discuss briefly the major events which led up to this action.

The Allied Armies, which had successfully invaded the Normandy Peninsula on 6 June 1944, had swept across France to the West Wall defense.

(1) (See Map A)

During the period 26 August to 15 September 1944, the American Third Army had advanced east to a line extending from Epinal, France, north to Luxembourg. (See Map A)

The American First Army had pushed northeast, on the left flank of the American Third Army, extending the front lines north from Luxembourg to Maastricht, Holland. (2) (See Map A)

On 5 September the American Ninth Army became operational in Brittany, with the mission of reducing the isolated enemy strongholds and protecting the south flank of the Allied Armies along the Loire River line. (3)  
(See Map A)

The British Second Army, in their thrust across northern France, had reached Antwerp, Belgium, pinning five German Divisions against the south side of the Scheldt Estuary. (4) (See Map A)

(1) A-1, p. 57; A-1, p. 49; (3) A-1, p. 53; (4) A-1, p. 50.

Following the coast line north along the English Channel, the Canadian First Army had encircled three German Divisions at Le Havre, which was captured on 11 September, and had surrounded and then by-passed a large number of enemy troops at Boulogne, Calais, Dunkirk, in France and Bruges, Belgium. They now held a line from Bruges to Antwerp. (5)  
(See Map A)

The 17th of September 1944 found the German Army trying to withdraw back across the Scheldt Estuary but stubbornly holding key Dutch ports, thereby preventing any improvement in the Allied supply situation. In the battle of Normandy, the German forces had been badly broken up and depleted, and as a result, the troops, in the line in front of the British Second Army, were not thought to constitute a formidable military fighting force. (6)

Thus, with the capture of Le Havre, the second largest supply port in France, the capture of numerous rocket launching sites, and the mere token resistance of the hastily retreating German Seventh, Fifteenth, and Nineteenth Armies, visions of Allied victory were starting to present themselves.

#### THE GENERAL SITUATION

It was evident to the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force that advance to the east would be a difficult task. It was decided to facilitate this advance by moving the 21st Army Group to the north beyond the Lek River in Holland to outflank the strong fortifications and effect a decided break through in the West Wall. (7) A maneuver in this area had successfully been accomplished by the Germans earlier in the war using the same tactics.

The scheme of maneuver was for the British Second Army to launch the main offensive around the northern flank, then swing east and southeast

(5) A-1, p. 50; (6) A-2, p. 9; (7) A-1, p. 57.

behind the West Wall. The Canadian First Army would protect the northern flank of the British and secure the ports of Antwerp and Rotterdam for Allied shipping. In addition, they were to contain and destroy the remaining German Divisions along the coast of France. (8) (See Map B)

To carry out this plan, the British Thirty Corp would spearhead a drive on a narrow front with their center along one road: Eindhoven - Grave - Nijmegen - Arnhem to the plains of Germany. (9) (See Map B)

The First Allied Airborne Army, recently formed, and composed of the American 82d and 101st Airborne Divisions, British 1st Airborne Division, and the 1st Polish Brigade was to assist in this operation. These units were stationed in England under the command of Lt General Lewis H. Brereton.

The mission of this Army was to seize and hold important highway and railroad bridges, road junctions, and key terrain features favorable to the 21st Army Group route of advance in flanking the northern end of the West Wall. (10) (See Map B) "This operational plan was to be known as Operation Market - Garden. Operation Market was the airborne operation that would cooperate with the ground effort, Operation Garden."

(11)

During this period of time, the 12th Army Group was to support the British attack by preparing to launch an offensive, at a given time, to penetrate the West Wall and link-up with the 21st Army Group beyond the Rhine River deep in Germany. (See Map B)

Prior to D-Day, 17th September, the RAF Bomber Command was to strike at airfields in Holland and Germany from which enemy fighter planes were in a position to strike the gliders and C-47 aircraft carrying the Airborne Divisions. These attacks were to be followed by the American Eighth Air Force bombing the Eindhoven Airfields.

(8) A-1, p. 57; (9) A-7, p. 72; (10) A-1, p. 58; (11) A-7, p. 71.

On D-Day air <sup>force</sup> cooperation was to provide fighter escort cover for the transports; provide protection over the DZ and LZs, and perform antiaircraft patrol. Bombers of the Allied Air Force were to bomb flak positions and coastal defense batteries in the Walcheren area. (12)

Close coordination with the Allied Navies in the form of air - sea rescue and guiding beacons for cross channel crossings was to be rendered. This proved to be most effective and efficient service.

These events, situations, and decisions now led up to the next operation participated in by the 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment as part of the 82d Airborne Division.

#### THE 82D AIRBORNE DIVISION SITUATION

The 82d Airborne Division, a battle tested division, had returned from Normandy on 19 July 1944 to their home bases in England in the Nottingham - Leicester area. They were now training, resupplying, and having showdown inspections in preparation for future assignment of another operation. (See Map A)

During the period 1 August to 9 September 1944, the division had been alerted several times for airborne missions in France and Belgium, but due to the rapid advance of the Allied Armies, airborne operations were cancelled. (13)

On 10 September, at 1800 hours, a conference of key officers of the 52d Troop Carrier Wing, whose mission it was to transport the 82d Airborne Division on combat flights, and airborne officers met to discuss a fragmentary mission order received from the First Allied Airborne Army. Details such as time needed for preparation, routes, photo coverage, disposition of forces, departure airfields, and drop zones were discussed. (14)

The 82d Airborne Division, under the command of Major General James M. Gavin (then Brigadier General), was given the mission to:

(12) A-9, pp. 11 and 12; (13) Personal knowledge; (14) A-2, p. 10.



"Land by parachute and glider commencing D-Day south of Nijmegen; seize and hold the highway bridges across the Maas River at Grave, and the Waal River at Nijmegen; seize, organize, and hold the high ground between Nijmegen and Grosebeek; deny the roads in the division area to the enemy; and dominate the area bounded on the north by a line running from Beek, west through Hatert, thence southwest to Eindschestraat, south by River Maas and the Mook-Riethorst highway east by the Cleve-Nijmegen highway and the Reichswald Forest, and west by line running north and south through Eindschestraat." (15) (See Map C)

General Gavin decided that the 505th, 504th, and 508th Parachute Infantry Regiments would be dropped on DZs "N," "O," and "T" respectively. (See Map C) The 325th Glider Infantry Regiment was to reinforce the division on D plus 2. The rest of the first echelon, consisting of the 307th Airborne Engineer Battalion, 376th Parachute Field Artillery Battalion, a battery of 57-mm gliderborne antitank guns, Division Signal Company, Division Artillery Headquarters, and Headquarters of the Division were to land by parachute and glider on the infantry regiments' DZs and LZs. (16) The remainder of the supporting units were to come in piecemeal as weather and planes became operational. (See Map C)

In giving the parachute regiments definite missions and sectors to hold and defend, the pattern resembled a large circle divided into three parts. After the initial objectives were taken, further assignment of the division's mission was to be executed on division order. (See Map C)

Two pathfinder teams were to be used by the division. Each team was to be composed of one officer and eleven enlisted men. They were to be dropped on DZ "O" twenty-five minutes prior to the arrival of the main body on that DZ. Pathfinder's drop time was set for 1245 hours. Serials of other units were to guide on DZ "O" and continue on to their respective DZs. (17) (See Map C)

(15) A-3, p. 1; (16) A-7, p. 88; (17) A-13, p. 1.

Various plans, decisions, and other coordinating factors concerning tactics, resupply, air support, and evacuation were gone over by the Division Commander and his staff. On the afternoon of 11 September, unit commanders were called to division to receive orders for their missions, DZs, and departure airfields.

In order that we may get a better picture of this operation, let us look at the objective area.

#### OBJECTIVE - HOLLAND

Holland is popularly known as a low-lying country northeast of Belgium. There are no natural frontiers. Three large rivers, the Maas, the Waal, and the Lek, along with the Scheldt Estuary, give the southern portion of the country its specific character of deltas and estuaries. Crisscross drainage ditches surround nearly every field; however, little or no water is in the ditches at this time of the year.

The outstanding elevation in the area, and in all Holland, is the Nijmegen-Grosebeek Ridge, rising in places to above 300 feet. The clay soil is damp but intensely cultivated. Woods are thick but with very little underbrush. Roads are all embanked and vehicular movement off them in low portions is almost impossible. Lines of communications are dictated by these roads.

The waterways previously mentioned are formidable natural obstacles. Concealment and cover is fair to good. Fields of fire are good to excellent for all weapons. Observation is excellent from Nijmegen-Grosebeek Ridge. Fire towers and flak towers provide additional observation posts. (18)

Rainfall in September is frequent. The average for the month is about 2.5 inches. Winds generally from the southwest are seldom of great intensity. Cloudy and foggy weather is common with an average temperature of 60°F. On 17 September sunrise was to be at 0613 hours and sunset at (18) A-4, Annex 1b to FO 1, p. 1.

1847 hours. These weather conditions of rain, clouds, and fog are not too favorable for air operations.

Nijmegen has a population of 98,000; Grosebeek and Grave are much smaller. The police of the cities and towns were under the German Feldgendarmerie (Military Police) and the Sicherheit Splizei (the Gestapo). Holland is divided into eleven provinces, each of which has its own legislative and administrative body. There are considerable differences between dialects spoken in different parts of the country due to ancestry and the influence of neighboring countries.

German repression had been severe. There was some passive resistance by factory workers. <sup>note</sup> It was thought that popular sympathy would be pro-Allied rather than pro-German. (19)

The enemy was believed to have about eight battalions fairly well organized and disposed in the vicinity of all bridges and the wooded heights near Nijmegen and the Reichswald Forest.

Approximately four thousand SS Troops comprised the main body of these forces, and in addition, scattered troops of the 719th, 347th, and 70th German Divisions were known to be in this area. Photographs indicated a build-up in flak positions. Antiaircraft guns were sited for ground roles in addition to their primary missions. (20)

#### REGIMENTAL SITUATION AND PLAN OF ATTACK

The 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment was located in the central part of England, in the small town of Quorn, which is between Leicester and Nottingham, England. (See Map A)

This regiment had made combat jumps in Sicily, Italy and Normandy. To these veterans, preparations for such operations were becoming SOP.

Casualties from the Normandy operation were gradually returning from hospitals, small unit training was being conducted, and supplies, weapons

(19) A-4, Annex 1a to FO 1, p. 1; (20) A-4, Annex 1c to FO 1, p. 1.

and equipment were being carefully checked and inspected in expectation of being given another mission. (21)

On the evening of 11 September 1944, the Regimental Commander, Colonel William E. Ekman, returned from division with orders for the coming operation. The mission of the 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment was to:

"Land on DZ "M" seize and hold Grosebeek; seize, organize, and hold key terrain west, southwest, and southeast of Grosebeek; clear, secure, and mark LZ "N" for subsequent glider and resupply lifts; mop up area within regimental sector of responsibility; establish designated road blocks and be prepared to occupy with one battalion, high ground to the southwest on division order; establish and maintain contact with the 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment at crossings over the Maas-Waal Canal and, if necessary in order to gain contact, assist in the seizure of these crossings; establish and maintain contact with the 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment at designated points." (22) (See Map D)

After a careful study of the situation, battalion commanders and staff, separate company commanders, and liaison officers were assembled and the Regimental Commander issued the following order:

The 1st Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry was to:

*Butter*

"Land on DZ "M" seize, organize, and defend area indicated; send reconnaissance patrol to OPL indicated; establish road block at point "A," seize and hold railroad bridge at point "B" and be prepared on regimental order to occupy high ground to southeast; mop up regimental area within its sector; establish and maintain contact with 2d Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry at points "C," "D," and "E," and 3rd Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry at points "E" and "F;" establish and secure road blocks and minefields indicated; outpost with a maximum of one (1) company, OPL indicated along high ground to south and southeast." (23) (See Map D)

(21) Personal knowledge; (22) A-4, p. 1; (23) A-11.

- The 2d Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry was to:

"Land on DZ "N;" seize, organize and defend area indicated; mop up regimental area within its sector; establish and maintain contact with the 504th Parachute Infantry at canal crossings at points "J" and "K;" and, if necessary in order to gain contact, assist in the seizure of these crossings; establish and maintain contact with 508th Parachute Infantry at point "L;" 3rd Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry at point "E;" and 1st Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry at points "C," "D," and "E;" establish road blocks and minefields as indicated; outpost along OPL indicated; include in lead plane of serial one, pathfinder team prepared to mark DZ "N" with green smoke and a white "T." Duplicate marking equipment would be carried to insure marking of DZ "N" for following parachute lifts." (24) (See Map D)

The 3rd Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry was to:

"Land on DZ "N;" seize and hold Grosebeek. Send reconnaissance patrol at once to ridge line to southwest of Grosebeek; clear and secure LZ "N" for glider and resupply lifts; mop up regimental area within its sector; establish and maintain contact with 508th Parachute Infantry at points "H" and "I;" 1st Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry at points "E" and "F;" 2d Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry at points "E" and "G;" establish and secure road blocks as indicated after seizing Grosebeek; outpost, with a maximum of one company, OPL indicated along high ground to southwest." (25) (See Map D)

In addition to their mission orders, the following instructions were disseminated to all commanders:

"No demolitions of any kind and no destruction of signal communications (except German field cable) will be allowed except by express permission of the Regimental Commander; weapons will be jumped without a round in the  
(24, 25) A-11.

chamber. Weapons will not be fired on DZ except on order of a commissioned or non-commissioned officer; SCR 300 radios and antitank rocket launchers will be jumped in leg packs on individuals. Two (2) rds antitank rocket launcher ammunition (one (1) in each section) will be carried with ATRL in leg pack; rifle platoon will contain three (3) rifle squads, skeletonized if necessary; antiaircraft defense will be passive. Small arms fire will not be used against aircraft; seize immediately all lookout towers within regimental sector; each battalion will establish a clearing party of at least one (1) officer and four (4) enlisted men. This party will be completely oriented and will have the duty of directing stray personnel in the proper direction; all requests for artillery support will be cleared through Regimental S-3; marking of LZ "N" for subsequent glider ~~will~~ resupply lifts will be controlled by 3rd Battalion." (26)

Preparations went into high gear on 12, 13, and 14 September. Last minute showdown inspections, muster roll calls, and bundles were rolled. A base camp was organized to be left at Quorn, consisting of a detachment of administrative personnel and of those individuals still handicapped by injuries. (27)

A land tail was formed, consisting of organic vehicles and drivers, and a few non-airborne personnel. This land tail would move under division control to a seaport, be transported across the English Channel and join their respective units after a link-up with ground forces was made. (28)

By dark on 15 September, the regiment closed into its departure airfields where they were "sealed." The 1st Battalion was to takeoff from Cottesmore Airfield and the 2d and 3rd Battalions along with Regimental Headquarters were to takeoff from Folkingham Airfield. (29) (See Map B)

(26) A-4, p. 2; (27, 28) Personal knowledge; (29) A-4, Mvt O. 1 to Adm O. 1, p. 2.

At the departure airfields, troops were quartered in hangars surrounded by barbed wire fences and adequate guards patrolled these fences to preserve secrecy and prevent any sabotage. (30)

On 16 September troops were issued ammunition, rations, maps, and orders. Detailed briefings at all levels, using sandtables, maps, and air photos, were conducted. Every battalion commander knew the other battalion commander's mission and plan of attack; likewise, company commanders within a battalion knew the other company commander's mission and plans.

Members of the Dutch Underground, attached to division, visited each unit, giving valuable details of terrain, enemy locations, weapons, communications, state of enemy morale, and part of the political situation. Captain A. D. Beste Breurtije, whose home was Nijmegen, Holland, was the main informer. (31)

During the day, equipment bundles were rolled, rerolled, and loaded on the planes. Gliders were loaded and all aircraft parked and marked for clockwork precision takeoff the next day. With the completions of briefings and check of recent air photos received, the troopers were given a hot meal and they went to bed to await the eventful day approaching, that of 17 September 1944. (32)

#### D-DAY

(17 SEPTEMBER 1944)

The weather was favorable for airborne operations. Fog over the airfields and North Sea was to lift by 0900 hours. At 0830 hours a last minute jumpmaster-pilot conference took place.

Church services were conducted for those desiring to attend, and troopers were loaded into the C-47 aircrafts by 1000 hours. One hundred

(30) Personal knowledge; Statement of Major R. M. Piper, Regimental S-1, 2 January 1949; (31) A-4, Annex 1a to FO 1, p. 1; (32) Personal knowledge.

and twenty-six C-47s, piloted by the 313th and 316th TC Group of the 52d Troop Carrier Wing, took off with the 505th Parachute Infantry at 1020 hours. (33)

After the planes became airborne, a 9-plane vee of vees was formed. Five of these vees were flown in trail making 45 aircraft to a serial. Altitude of 1500 feet at 150 miles per hour was chosen for the flight from England to the DZs. The drop altitude was to be 500 feet at 120 miles per hour. These altitudes were selected to avoid small arms fire, heavy antiaircraft fire, and minimum safe altitude for dropping of the troops. (34)

Planes carrying the 505th Parachute Infantry followed a northern route across the English Channel to the IP just south of Hertogenbosh, Holland, and then to their DZs. (See Map B) This was a distance of approximately eighty miles over enemy held territory to a DZ forty miles behind the enemy front lines.

As the Air Armada flew over Holland that Sunday morning, one looking at the terrain below saw that it had taken on a new look. The Germans had flooded much of the countryside, and only road on top of the dykes, isolated high points, and some vegetation were visible. (35)

Enemy fighters appeared in small groups but our escort of fighters and bombers easily drove them off. Several Allied planes were seen to go down due to the heavy anticraft fire received, but such losses were small. Flak from a flak tower and a barge on the Maas-Waal Canal greeted the troopers just prior to exit from the planes. (36)

At 1306 hours the first elements of the regiment jumped on DZ "N." This being a daylight jump in combat, the reorganization of units was rapid and well executed. It was only a matter of minutes until battalions were moving out to accomplish their missions. A mixup in marshalling (33) A-5, p. 1; (34) A-9, p. 7; (35, 36) Personal knowledge.



after take-off caused the 2d Battalion and Regimental Headquarter serial to be dropped two thousand yards northeast of their scheduled drop zone.

(37) (See Map E)

Due to the psychological effect of the airborne landings, enemy opposition was scattered but harassing. Local enemy troops were committed in a piece-meal fashion. This piece-meal build-up continued until the initial shock wore off when a coordinated attack was made on the 1st Battalion at Mook by the German 6th Parachute Division.

By 2000 hours the 1st Battalion had cleared and secured the division area to the south and southeast and had occupied the high ground in the vicinity of Riethorst and Bisselt. (38) (See Map E)

The 3rd Battalion occupied and secured the southern portion of Grosebeek at 1500 hours, and by 2200 hours had cleared and secured the area designated in their zone of responsibility. At approximately 2345 hours, a most unusual, but yet amusing, incident took place. A long shrill whistle of a train was heard throughout the Grosebeek area. A German train entered the area from the northwest and passed through the area of Division Headquarters on through the 3rd Battalion's area, and continued on its way unhindered into Germany. Not a shot was fired. Troops were alerted, the track mined, and to the satisfaction of the 2d Battalion, another train soon arrived. A bazooka man scored a direct hit on the locomotive, stopping the train. This train was loaded with soldiers and labor construction men (todt workers), and a few German Army women. They were all rounded up shortly after daylight the next morning. (39) (See Map D)

The 2d Battalion seized the northern portion of Grosebeek at 1545 hours and continued on to the west and seized the high ground west of Grosebeek; here they established a perimeter defense and patrols were (37, 38, 39) Personal knowledge.

sent to contact the 504th Parachute Infantry at the two canal crossings. Contact was established at both crossings at 1930 hours. The bridge at point "K" had been blown by the enemy but the bridge at point "J" was intact. (See Map E)

Division Headquarters dropped shortly after the 505th Parachute Infantry. The Eighteenth Airborne Corp Headquarters landed later in the afternoon and their headquarters were established in the wooded area south of Grosebeek. (See Map E) Elsewhere in the division area, the 504th, who dropped at Grave, and the 508th, which jumped northeast of Grosebeek, were progressing satisfactorily. All initial missions of the division were accomplished by 2000 hours D-Day. (40)

D PLUS 1

(18 SEPTEMBER)

On 18 September weather was favorable for flying, and gliders consisting of the supporting elements, less the 325th Glider Infantry, landed on DZs "N" and "T."

In the 1st Battalion zone of action, a counterattack <sup>at R.</sup> was repelled by two platoons at Riethorst at 1300 hours. An enemy company was seen moving from east to west toward Mook late that afternoon. Antitank guns were sent to Company A to reinforce their road blocks at Mook in anticipation of an attack. (41)

Being in regimental reserve, the 2d Battalion encountered little enemy activity. Patrols were sent to all contact points. The battalion was alerted to move to the south and assist the 1st Battalion, or to the east to support the 3rd Battalion, depending on how the situation developed.

Meanwhile the 3rd Battalion was having a busy day. They attacked and cleared DZ "N" for glider landings and repelled counterattacks at Buuk, Breedeweg, and Grafwegen. At 1455 a 3rd Battalion OP reported eleven  
(40) A-12, p. 7; (41) A-5, p. 1.

German tanks or flak wagons in the Reichswald Forest. (42) (See Map E)

At 1500 hours gliders began coming in, some over-shooting the LZs that were marked for them and landing behind the Germans in the vicinity of the Reichswald Forest. Surprisingly, many of these troopers got back to our lines that night and some even brought their guns and ammunition with them.

Captain Beste Breurtije, the Dutch Agent, had now contacted underground agents in his hometown of Nijmegen, and arrangements were being made to supply them with weapons taken from the wounded and dead troopers. (43)

Darkness on D plus 1 found the 508th on the north had gotten within 400 yards of the main highway bridge of Nijmegen, but did not succeed in capturing it. They were ordered to withdraw as enemy pressure on the northeast was causing penetrations in their lines. (44) Farther to the north, the 1st British Airborne Division was fighting a losing battle with superior enemy forces at Arnhem.

*resupply actual*  
South of the division sector, contact with the 30th Corp was effected at Eindhoven at 1215 hours by the 101st Airborne Division.

Resupply by B-24 Bombers was about 60% effective due to part of the LZs being held by the enemy whose small arms fire prevented recovery of the supply bundles.

*Humor*  
During the first two days, fighting elements of 27 different units were identified. At this time no single enemy unit of battalion size could be identified due to their piece-meal employment. Prisoners captured were told by their commanders that the parachutists were without weapons and all they had to do was surround them and they would give up or could easily be destroyed. (45)

Artillery of the 376th FA Battalion played an important part in the breaking up of counterattacks and destroying of enemy self-propelled flak (42) A-5, p. 2; (43) A-7, p. 109; (44) A-3, Plate 1; (45) Personal knowledge.

— weapons. The 456th FA Battalion, which had now arrived, was put in direct support of the 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment. (46)

D PLUS 2

(19 SEPTEMBER)

On the morning of 19 September, we found that enemy pressure was gradually increasing in <sup>the</sup> south and southwest. <sup>from</sup> The 1st Battalion received a report at 1005 that approximately 500 Germans were moving from the south toward Reithorst.

Late that afternoon the attack came. It continued throughout the 19th and 20th and was finally repulsed with heavy losses to both sides. The remainder of the battalion continued to improve their positions on their perimeter. (47) (See Map F)

The 3rd Battalion continued to secure the division area to the south-east. Enemy counterattacks were repulsed at Heikant and Horst. Contact was reestablished with the 508th Parachute Infantry on the left after restoring the MLR. *where was it lost*

*not shown* \* Meanwhile, in the 2d Battalion's area, a link-up was made by the British Guards Armored Division. At 1100 hours the 2d Battalion became division reserve and was attached to the Guards Armored Division to move to the north and assist in seizing the Nijmegen railway and highway bridge. The 2d Battalion, with the Grenadier Guards Group of the Guards Armored Division, moved without incident to the outskirts of the city. Once in town only light artillery fire was received. Upon reaching the center of Nijmegen, the combined force of British tanks and British and American infantrymen split. Company D, of the 2d Battalion, and 7 tanks turned northwest to attack the railroad bridge, and the remainder of the force to the right to attack the highway bridge. A fierce battle was fought throughout the night but the Allied force failed to break the enemy arc of defense within 400 yards of both bridges. (48) (See Map F)

(46, 47) Personal knowledge; (48) A-3, p. 4.

Resupply from C-47s, flying at excessively high altitudes, was not effective this day due to the wide dispersion of bundles.

The 504th Parachute Infantry was relieved by elements of the British Coldstream Guards and one (1) battalion of the 508th Parachute Infantry. The 504th Parachute Infantry then moved to division reserve in Jonker Bosch woods in their sector. (See Map F)

While there was relief in many a trooper's heart at hearing of the link-up with ground forces, the ever-increasing enemy pressure from the northeast around to the far south was anything but heartening. Due to weather, the 325th Glider Infantry did not arrive and the weather forecasts were not favorable for D plus 3. (49)

At dusk each day found patrols being organized to be sent into enemy held territory. From these patrols information relative to disposition of enemy troops and their intended course of action for the following day was learned. *(what was it)*

#### D PLUS 3

(20 SEPTEMBER)

On Wednesday, 20 September, we find elements of the British Coldstream Guard, who were attached to the division, being sent to the 1st Battalion of the 505th Parachute Infantry. They consisted of six tanks. Companies of the 1st Battalion were told to hold at all costs. At 1310 two regiments of enemy parachutists were reported by prisoners of war to be moving up from the south toward Riethorst and Mook. The British tanks arrived in B Company area at Mook and were immediately put into position. The regiment, at this time, was without a reserve, due to the fact that the 2d Battalion had been sent Nijmegen. Colonel Ekman, realizing the situation, took immediate steps to constitute a new force.

At 1600 hours the main attack came at Mook. The enemy, supported by  
(49) Personal knowledge.

tanks and artillery, penetrated 1000 yards on a 1000 yard front. (See Map G) This was the most concentrated attack so far in the operation, and our troops realized this was a do or die effort for both forces. The enemy strength in this attack was one regiment and not two as was expected; however, the remainder of the enemy force was being kept in reserve for the time being. (50)

By 2100 hours the penetration had been wiped out and the MLR restored. At this time, ammunition, medical supplies, and food were badly needed. Losses in personnel were serious and a call for reinforcements brought 150 glider pilots to the 1st Battalion area. While they were not trained for this type action, they did as best they could. The 376th FA Battalion was put in support of the 1st Battalion and the 456th FA Battalion in support of the 3rd Battalion. Elements of the British Royals began making a reconnaissance of the area in event they were committed or were to relieve the 1st Battalion. (51) (See Map G)

Local attacks were made against the 3rd Battalion in their sector. Here the enemy seemed to be withdrawing or performing a screening type action. Troops on this front could not be released to other sectors due to major counterattacks on their left flank in the 508th Parachute Infantry sector. However, a platoon of H Company was formed as a regimental reserve. (52)

Action in the north with the 2d Battalion amounted to the continuation of their attack on the strong points at the southern end of the Nijmegen bridges. At 1400 hours an all out attack cleaned the approaches to the highway bridge and the bridge was reached at 1700 hours. At 1830 hours the first tank of the Grenadier Guards crossed the bridge. (53) (See Map G)

To assist in the capture of the Nijmegen bridge, the 504th Parachute Infantry, with the 2d Irish Guards attached, attacked and effected a

(50) A-3, p. 5; (51) A-5, p. 1; (52) Personal knowledge; (53) A-3, p. 5.

crossing of the Waal River. At 1800 hours they captured the north end of the railroad bridge over the Waal River and continued and cleared the northern approaches to the highway bridge for the passage of the Guards Armored Division at 1830 hours.

During this period of time, the 508th Parachute Infantry was experiencing the same type of attack at Beek that the 1st Battalion of the 505th had received at Mook. The German units, identified at both places, was the German 6th Parachute Division. An attack order was captured and it had followed the events of the day <sup>had been</sup> accurately. The concentrated attack in both northeastern and southern sectors was to have been a double envelopment of the Beek-Mook front by driving a wedge into both flanks with a combat team at each town. Its mission was to cut the Grave-Grosebeek-Nijmegen highway and destroy all bridges, lines of communications, and Allied troops. (54) (See Map G)

Resupply was again only about 60% effective. Weather did not permit the 325th Glider Infantry Regiment to make their entry on the scene of battle. Parachute elements of the 1st Polish Brigade likewise failed to arrive to help in the critical situation at Arnhem.

"K" rations began to run low as well as artillery and small arms ammunition. Morale among the troops was good despite the fact they were in need of sleep and rest. Their hopes and prayers were <sup>about that</sup> in the thoughts of <sup>would be</sup> being relieved in the near future. (55)

#### D PLUS 4

(21 SEPTEMBER)

This was an unusually quiet day. Local and minor attacks were conducted by the 1st and 3rd Battalions. The enemy action consisted mostly of artillery and mortar firing. The 1st Battalion received 295 glider pilots,

(54) A-7, p. 108; (55) Personal knowledge.

*effort is to  
be made of  
more details*

including the 150 previously mentioned which were put in the front line at Mook. One hundred and forty-five pilots became the battalion reserve.

The 2d Battalion was to be relieved and revert to regimental reserve, but orders were changed and they assumed the defense of the southeastern exits of Nijmegen. (See Map H)

The weather in the battle area was clear, but heavy fog hung over the English Channel and airfields in England.

The non-arrival of the 325th Glider Infantry RCT was becoming more serious. The Coldstream Guards could not be relieved for missions to the north as they were needed as division reserve in case of an emergency. The 1st Polish Parachute Brigade did come in south of the Arnhem bridge in the Elste area. Fifteen per cent of their aircraft were shot down by enemy fighters and flak. They managed to assemble 750 men in hopes of assisting in the relief of Arnhem. (56)

At 1500 hours supplies from 400 C-47s were dropped on DZ "O." The drop pattern was six miles in length and two miles wide. Recovery, with assistance from Dutch civilians, was 50% effective. At the close of this day, the airborne troops were holding firm, despite the odds, all along their perimeter of defense. (See Map H)

#### D PLUS 5

(22 SEPTEMBER)

The 1st and 3rd Battalions continued to hold and improve the defensive line from Kamp-Horst-Graftwegen-Riethorst to Mook.

The 2d Battalion was relieved in Nijmegen at dawn by the 2d Battalion of 504th Parachute Infantry. They then moved to a reserve area west of Grosebeek. (See Map G)

(56) A-12, p. 13.



The Coldstream Guards were relieved of the bridge over the Maas-Waal Canal at Heumen. They were then relieved of attachment to the 82d Airborne Division.

The 504th Parachute Infantry combat team moved from Nijmegen to a division reserve area northwest of Grosebeek. This began a consolidation phase for the next 24 hours.

D PLUS 6

(23 SEPTEMBER)

The weather was very favorable for flying, and at 1545 hours, the long awaited 325th Glider RCT started arriving. Their lift was completed at 1805 and they were move from LZ "O" to the wooded area west of Grosebeek.

Enemy activity was confined to artillery and mortar firing and to scattered patrols. By late afternoon enemy pressure was beginning to build up again in the Mook area.

At 2100 hours a new mission was given the regiment. It was to be relieved by the 325th Glider Infantry on the 24th of September. The 505th Parachute Infantry was then to move to Nijmegen to relieve the British units at 1300 hours and to assume the guarding of the bridges. The 2d and 3rd Battalions were to be sent north of the bridges and the 1st Battalion to be located south of the bridges. The Regimental CP was to be located west of the north end of the highway bridge. Orders were issued for the glider pilots to stay with the 325th, and no tanks would be attached to the regiment. The 456th FA Battalion was to continue to support the regiment from an area, to be designated, south of the Waal River. (57)

With the 505th Parachute Infantry now relieving elements of the British 30th Corps, the 30th Corp could now go to the much needed relief of the remaining forces in Arnhem. This action again left the division area of responsibility open to attack as troops were spread very thinly in places, (57) A-5, p. 6.

and only by keeping small reserve units were they able to ward off any counterattacks.

During the period of 17 to 23 September, the regiment captured 666 German prisoners and had lost a total of over 300 troopers, wounded or killed. (58)

D plus 6 terminated in the airborne aspect of Operation Market for the 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment. It did not terminate their combat action in this campaign; they continued to fight in this sector until the 12th of November 1944. (59)

#### ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

An analysis of this operation indicates the mission given the First Allied Airborne Army was well conceived. The key bridges over the main rivers were vital and by the use of airborne troops these bridges could be captured. This was also the first time airborne troops of different nations had operated under one command.

The mission assigned the 82d Airborne Division was sound. While one may think forty miles behind enemy lines is too great a distance, the manner in which they were employed and the over-all scheme of maneuver made this a normal operation.

Surprise and shock action, characteristic of airborne troops, aided in the initial successes. The psychological effect paralyzed enemy troops for several days.

This operation clearly demonstrated and proved that airborne troops should be employed in mass, the adage of "getting their first with the most."

Due credit should be given the Troop Carrier Command. Despite the flak encountered, troops were dropped in an excellent manner on their drop zones.

(58) A-19, p. 5; (59) Personal knowledge.

The mission given and tasks performed by the 505th Parachute Infantry was logical and well executed. This was due to the high state of training, initiative, and excellent leadership displayed by the commissioned and non-commissioned officers. A good example was the 1st Battalion withstanding the counterattack made by a regiment of the German 6th Parachute Division at Mook.

The reorganization of units on the DZ was rapid, giving weight to the argument of daylight drops. The first several hours after landing are critical and time must not be lost in assembly of troops.

The use of tank-infantry teams and their actions, though they were from different nations, proved they are sound tactics and can be successful. Without this combination, a much larger sized force would have had to have been employed in the capture of the Nijmegen bridge.

Coordinated fire support and control of troops were major factors in breaking up the counterattacks on D plus 2 and 3 on the entire perimeter.

The doctrine of perimeter defense certainly applied; however, the seven mile perimeter and OPL assigned the 505th Parachute Infantry was excessive after the first three days. Casualties, prisoners to be guarded, and recovery of supplies drew heavily on the manpower available, using up the reserves in many cases.

1100  
Captured vehicles, animals, and equipment were vital factors in numerous fire fights, due to the resupply being insufficient, or at times not continuous.

In criticising the operation, there are many schools of thought in regard to resupply. It is my opinion that if the resupply missions had been flown at a lower altitude or had the bundles been daisy-chained (bundles tied together by means of a rope approximately 8 to 10 feet apart), they would have landed in a more compact pattern instead of the wide dispersion that existed.

Ground tactics should be taught glider pilots prior to their entry into a combat zone. The glider pilots in this case committed in the 1st Battalion area, had little idea of tactical formations or how to use the M1 rifle much less a machine gun. They, therefore, presented only a token resistance at a critical time when troops were needed in a "hold at all costs" situation.

In this operation, as in operations in the future, weather is certainly a major factor. Long range forecasts should be carefully determined to insure that the build-up and resupply activities are continuous.

Sufficient time from the receipt of operation orders until D-Day is essential. In this operation it was too short. Briefings, while complete, were not as detailed as they should have been. This is a must in airborne operations. In this case almost all troops landed as planned, but had they missed their DZs, they should be so briefed, prior to take off, that they can establish their locations and move to their intended DZ or objective without delay.

In summary, the overall picture of Operation Market was considered 85 to 90% effective. A wedge was driven into the German lines on the northern end of the West Wall. The 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment can report "Mission Accomplished." For their efforts, two awards were presented;

By General Order No. 65, War Department, dated 28 June 1946, and under the provisions of Section IV, WD Circular 333, 1943, the 2d Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment was awarded a cluster to their Distinguished Unit Citation for outstanding performance of duty and extraordinary heroism in action against the enemy on 19th and 20th September 1944 at Nijmegen, Holland.

By the Ministerial Degree, Netherlands Government, dated 8 October 1945, the Orange Lanyard of the Royal Netherlands Army was awarded each

member of the 82d Airborne Division who participated in the area of Nijmegen in the period from 17 September to 4 October 1944.

### LESSONS

Some of the lessons emphasized by this operation are:

1. Airborne troops should be employed in mass.
2. Airhead operations far behind enemy lines are sound and successful if a rapid ground link-up can be made.
- AW* 3. Surprise and shock action must be fully utilized in initial operations.
4. Close coordination between air forces and airborne forces is essential.
5. Individual and unit training must be continuous during periods of inactivity between operations.
6. Reorganization is a vital element in training <sup>operation</sup> of airborne troops.
7. Tank-infantry teams can provide a potent fighting machine even though they are from different countries.
- AW* 8. A perimeter defense is strong if the size of the perimeter is governed by the terrain and the forces to be employed.
9. Coordinated fire support, supervision, and control thereof will turn the tide of battle when positions are overrun or seem lost.
10. Familiarity of enemy weapons and equipment is vital to every soldier when his weapon is broken or ammunition supply exhausted; however, captured weapons and equipment should only be used in case of emergency.
- AW* 11. Resupply functions must be continuous.
12. Weather forecasts should be carefully studied and analyzed.
13. Detailed briefings of every individual is essential, regardless of job or mission.
14. Glider pilots should be trained in ground tactics and weapons.
15. Discipline and morale can make or break a combat unit when the odds are in favor of the enemy.