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THE OPERATIONS OF THE 1ST BATTALION, 502ND PARACHUTE INFANTRY  
(101ST AIRBORNE DIVISION) AT CHAMPS, BELGIUM  
25 DECEMBER 1944, 0330 to 0900  
(ARDENNES CAMPAIGN)  
(Personal Experience of a Company Commander)

Type of operation described: RESERVE BATTALION IN  
REDUCTION OF PENETRATION

Captain Clarence A. Thompson, Jr., Infantry

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Author's Note: All of the above references were read and digested in an attempt to secure data for authentication of this monograph. Most of the material listed deals with the overall picture of the defense of Bastogne and not with the particular action covered by this monograph. A-11 is incorrect as author was eye witness to the action covered by A-11.

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INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operations of the 1st Battalion, 502nd Parachute Infantry, 101st Airborne Division at Champs, Belgium, 25 December 1944, from 0330 until 0900 hours, in the Ardennes Campaign.

This action was one of the more important engagements in the defense of Bastogne, Belgium by the 101st Airborne Division. In order to orient the reader for the action, it will be necessary to give a short resume of the events that lead up to the action.

On 16 December 1944, when General Karl Von Runstedt began the last great German counter-offensive in the west, the XVIII Airborne Corps, United States Army, was in Allied Expeditionary Forces Reserve. The XVIII Airborne Corps, at this time, was composed of Corps Headquarters (Advanced) operating from Rheims, France; the 82nd Airborne Division located at Soissons, France; and the 101st Airborne Division stationed at Camp Mourmelon le Grande, France. Both Division camps were located approximately twenty-five miles to the north and north-east of Rheims. (1) (2)

The XVIII Airborne Corps had been relieved in November 1944 from the Holland sector of the Rhineland Campaign, where they had operated under the British Second Army and the Canadian First Army. The 82nd Division had cleared Holland in mid November with the 101st Division following in the latter part of the same month. The Divisions, when relieved, were ordered to a rest area in France, in order that they might be re-equipped, reorganized, and brought up to Table of Organization strength. As both Divisions had remained in Holland much

(1) A-1, p. 75; (2) Personal knowledge, self.

longer than originally planned, it was felt that at least two months were needed for the Divisions to be trained for future airborne operations. Many of the Corps personnel felt that the next mission would be in support of the crossing of the Rhine River, the same mission that they had attempted in conjunction with the 1st British Airborne Division in September 1944. (3) (4)

When the XVIII Corps was alerted to help stem the German counter-offensive, the 82nd and the 101st Airborne Divisions were combat equipped, loaded upon trucks, and on their way to the battle area in approximately eleven hours. This was one of the fastest moves ever made by a unit of this size in the history of United States Army. The rapid move was a result of smooth staff functioning and the prompt response of the well seasoned troops. Supply personnel working with great speed and determination saw that the Divisions were fully equipped with the exception of a few unimportant items. (5)

The 82nd Division "pulled out" slightly ahead of the 101st Division, as they were more fully equipped and proceeded to Werbomont, Belgium, where they took up positions against the enemy on 18 December 1944. The XVIII Corps was split at this time since it could not become operational until 19 December 1944. The 101st Division was attached to VIII Corps, under the command of Major General Troy Middleton, through whose area the initial German assault had been pressed. The 82nd Division was attached to V Corps but reverted back to XVIII Corps after a short period. (6)

The 101st Division was routed to Bastogne, Belgium by Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces. Great importance was attached to this town by Lieutenant General W. B. Smith, SHAEF Chief of Staff, as it was fed by seven first class roads and one railroad. In his estimation

(3) Personal knowledge, self; (4) A-2, p. 12; (5) Statement Captain Kendig, 101st Div. Hq.; (6) A-2, p. 10, 11, 12; A-3, p. 108.

of the situation, General Smith quickly realized that Bastogne was vitally needed by the Germans in their attempted drive to Antwerp and the sea. (7) (See Map A)

The 101st Airborne Division was organically comprised of four combat teams which are listed as follows:

501st Parachute Infantry Combat Team  
502nd Parachute Infantry Combat Team  
506th Parachute Infantry Combat Team  
327th Glider Infantry Combat Team

It is pointed out that the normal infantry division is organized into three regimental combat teams, while the airborne division is composed of four regimental combat teams. This difference was due to the organic strength of the parachute rifle company, which consisted of eight officers and only one hundred and nineteen enlisted men, approximately half the strength of the normal infantry rifle company. The 101st Division was under strength for two reasons. The glider elements had not received their replacements for the men lost in the Rhineland Campaign, and one battalion was on leave in Paris when the orders came to move to the front. This battalion was not returned to Camp Mourmelon because it was desired to move the division with maximum security. (8)

In the defense of Bastogne, all four regiments and the Division Engineers, which were employed as infantry, were committed into sectors of the Division perimeter at the same time. The 81st Anti-Aircraft Battalion, and the 705th Tank Destroyer Battalion gave anti-tank support to the Division in its defensive position. The 705th Tank Destroyer Battalion had been operating some sixty miles north of Bastogne when the breakthrough came. It was ordered to join VIII Corps in Bastogne by the Ninth Army and upon arrival at Bastogne was attached to the 101st Division. The timely arrival of this Tank Destroyer Battalion was to contribute immeasurably to the success

(7) A-1, p. 75; A-2, p. 8; (8) Personal knowledge, self; Statement Capt. Adams, 327th Gli. Inf.

of the 101st Airborne Division in the defense of the town, as the attacking German Forces were heavy in armor and airborne divisions have few organic anti-tank weapons. The Division Artillery was not directly employed in support of the different regiments but was massed to give support where it was most needed. (9)

During the period covered by this monograph, the 101st Division was generally employed as follows: The 506th Parachute Infantry was located on the north-east sector, the 501st Parachute Infantry on the east and south-east side, the 327th Glider Infantry on the south south-east and western edge, and the 502nd Parachute Infantry on the northwest, north and north north-east portion of the perimeter. The Division Engineers were committed in the southern sector in conjunction with the 327th Glider Infantry. (10) (See Map A)

In order to give the reader the exact organization of the 101st Airborne Division and to give just credit to the many units attached to the Division, the American Order of Battle is listed.

AMERICAN ORDER OF BATTLE

101 st Airborne Division

|   |  |
|---|--|
| 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment         |  |
| 502nd Parachute Infantry Regiment         |  |
| 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment         |  |
| 327th Glider Infantry Regiment            |  |
| 321st Glider Field Artillery Battalion    |  |
| 907th Glider Field Artillery Battalion    |  |
| 377th Parachute Field Artillery Battalion |  |
| 463rd Parachute Field Artillery Battalion |  |
| 81st Airborne Anti-Aircraft Battalion     |  |
| 326th Airborne Engineer Battalion         |  |
| 326th Airborne Medical Company            |  |
| 426th Airborne Quartermaster Company      |  |
| 801st Airborne Maintenance Ord Company    |  |
| 101st Airborne Signal Company             |  |

ATTACHED UNITS

Combat Command B, 10th Armored Division  
 705th Tank Destroyer Battalion  
 755th Field Artillery Battalion  
 Company C, 9th Armored Engineers  
 969th Field Artillery Battalion

Combat Command R (37th Battalion) 4th Armored Division (11)

(9) Personal knowledge, self; A-2, p. 9; (10) Personal knowledge, self; Statement Capt. Evans, 327th Gli.Inf.; A-2, p: 158; (11) A-2, p.viii,xi.

Commitment of the XVIII Airborne Corps presented a very important picture to the German High Command. Lieutenant General Henrich Von Luttwitz, Commanding General of the XXXXVII Panzer Corps, was informed <sup>OF</sup> ~~to~~ this move by means of a radio intercept. This, to his mind, removed the last obstacle which had been worrying the German Command since operation "Market" in September 1944, when the 1st Allied Airborne Army almost succeeded in turning the Upper Rhine River for the 21st British Army Group. General Von Luttwitz drew two important conclusions from this intercept. In the first place, and of prime importance, this removed the threat of an airborne attack upon the rear of the attacking German Armies, and secondly, it showed him that SHAEF Reserves in this area were very limited if such highly specialized troops were committed into battle in the role of ground troops. (12)

The German assault upon Bastogne was conducted by the XXXXVII Panzer Corps of the V Panzer Army. Four German Divisions and elements of two others were thrown against the 101st Division perimeter at Bastogne during the seige of the town. The six divisions which played the major role in the attacks are listed as follows in order of importance:

GERMAN ORDER OF BATTLE

2nd Panzer Division  
 Panzer Lehr Division  
 15th Panzergrenadier Division  
 26th Volksgrenadier Division  
 5th Parachute Infantry Division (Elements)  
 560th Volksgrenadier Division (13)

FIRST BATTALION, 502nd PARACHUTE INFANTRY  
AT CHAMPS, BELGIUM

<sup>24</sup>  
 On December 1944 the 502nd Parachute Infantry was in position on the northwest, north and north northeast sector of the Division

(12) A-2, p. 174, 179; (13) Personal knowledge, self.



as follows: The Second Battalion, less E Company (which was in Paris when the Division left Camp Mourmelon) extended from approximately four hundred yards east of Champs to Longchamps inclusive. The Third Battalion extended from Longchamps to two hundred yards west of Foy, where it joined the 506th Parachute Infantry. The 1st Battalion was located at Hemroulle on the Givry-Bastogne Road. The Battalion was intact except for Company A which was manning a roadblock at Champs under Regimental Control and one platoon of B Company which was also manning a roadblock under Regimental Control on the Bastogne-Longchamps Road. (14)

The First Battalion was at full Table of Organization strength as it had not been committed in any of the previous engagements of the Regiment. It had been in Division Reserve for approximately four days and had been returned to Regimental Control on 24 December 1944. In physical stamina, the Battalion, was not up to par, due to extensive maneuvering undergone while under Division Control. Most of the maneuvering was done in deep snow with full packs (musette bags) with a blanket roll tied upon the top of the pack. The extreme cold and the short ration of one meal per day was beginning to be felt by the men. The single meal was composed of two tablespoons of hash and acorn coffee. Morale and esprit de corps were high, as usual, and the Battalion felt that it was well able to accomplish any mission that it might be called upon to perform. The men were well trained and combat seasoned, having completed two hard and grueling campaigns in Normandy and Holland. Many of the men had been wounded and returned to their organizations from hospitals during the period between operations. Approximately twenty percent of the men were replacements, but they had been well indoctrinated and were ready to take their places with the seasoned troops. (15)

(14) A-2, p. 168; Personal knowledge, self; (15) Statement Capt. Dody, 502nd Pch. Inf.; Personal knowledge, self.

Christmas Eve Day was fairly quiet within the 101st Division perimeter. Bastogne was heavily bombed twice during the night. As a result the Battalion received little sleep on the night before one of the most eventful days in the history of the Battalion.

At 0245 of 25 December 1944 there was an intense shelling of Champs where A Company was maintaining the roadblock. At 0300 A Company was hit by a German attack. A call to Captain Wallace A. Swanson, A Company Commanding Officer, by the Regimental Executive Officer, Lt. Col. Patrick F. Cassidy, yielded little information as the fighting had not developed enough for Captain Swanson to determine the extent of the attack. Col. Cassidy called Capt. Swanson again at 0330 and received the report that A Company was engaged in hand to hand combat with a large German force. As they were talking the phone lines went out. At this time Lieutenant Colonel Steve A. Chappuis, the Regimental Commander, was awakened by Col. Cassidy. Col. Chappuis immediately called Major John D. Hanlon, Commanding Officer of the First Battalion, and ordered him to report <sup>to</sup> the Regimental Command Post at Rolle. Major Hanlon alerted B and C Companies and proceeded to Rolle. Upon arrival at the Command Post he was ordered by Col. Chappuis to move B Company forward to Champs to give A Company all possible assistance. All efforts to contact A Company both by Signal Corps Radio 300 and phone proved unsuccessful, and as a result Major Hanlon left the Command Post to make his way forward to Champs to try to determine the existing situation. (16)

At the same time that Major Hanlon left for Champs, Col. Chappuis received a message from Lt. Col. Thomas H. Sutcliffe, Commanding Officer of the Second Battalion, stating that while his front had not become engaged, small groups of the enemy were infiltrating

(16) A-2, p. 157; Statement Col. Cassidy, 502nd Parachute Infantry.

through the gap which existed between the left flank of his Battalion and A Company. He also stated that E Company had been shifted slightly to meet this infiltration but his lines were overextended and a partial gap still remained. Col. Chappuis countered this enemy action by sending the Second Platoon of B Company, which was manning the roadblock on the Longchamps-Bastogne Road, to oppose the infiltration. This the Second Platoon did successfully, under the leadership of 1st Lt. Stewart and Staff Sergeant Chester A. Fentz. (17)

At 0545 Major Hanlon called Col. Chappuis and informed him that A Company was still locked with the enemy but appeared to be holding Champs; however, the house to house fighting was very severe. He also informed Col. Chappuis that B Company had taken up temporary positions astride the Champs-Bastogne Road on the ridge overlooking Champs. Major Hanlon requested permission to keep B Company in this position until daylight, as he realized B Company was in position to counter-attack to restore the lines, or to support a withdrawal if such became necessary. It was further realized by Major Hanlon and the B Company Commander that all reserve value of the Company would be lost if it were pushed into Champs in the darkness, as the close fighting made it impossible to distinguish friend from foe. Permission to withhold the Company was granted by Col. Chappuis. (18)

Shortly after this call the Company Commander of B Company moved his command post back from the ridge overlooking Champs, as it was receiving a large volume of unaimed small arms fire from Champs. Leaving the command post under the command of 1st Lt. Curcuru, the Company Executive Officer, 1st Lt. Clarence A. Thompson, the B Company Commander returned to the front line platoons to select possible routes for a counter-attack at daylight and to try to establish con-

(17) Statement Lt. Stewart, 502nd Pch. Inf.; Personal knowledge, self; (18) A-2, p. 158, 159.; Personal knowledge, self.

tact with C Company, 401st Glider Infantry Battalion, which was supposed to move in on B Company's left flank. (19)

Back at the Regimental Command Post, Colonels Chappuis and Cassidy had made an accurate estimation of the situation and were anxiously awaiting the next German blow. This, they believed, would come to the west of the Regimental area, through the point where the 327th Glider Infantry's boundary joined that of the 502nd's area. There had been a gap between the two regiments but this had been partially blocked when B Company took up its position overlooking Champs. The 502nd Infantry Command Post was under heavy artillery fire at this time and communications to the 101st Airborne Division Headquarters by radio and by wire were out. (20)

Shortly before dawn Lt. Thompson received word from his left flank platoon that contact had been established with C Company, 401st Glider Infantry Battalion. The message also stated that Captain Preston E. Townes, the Company Commander of C Company, would meet him at a crossroads some four hundred yards behind the front line platoons of B Company. Lt. Thompson issued his warning order for the counter-attack and left for the crossroads accompanied by his SCR 536 radio operator, Private Turner, to meet Captain Townes. (21)

C Company, 502nd Parachute Infantry, which had been under alert since B Company had moved out, received orders from Battalion to move out. ~~as ordered~~. Major Hanlon had decided to move C Company up to join B Company, as he realized that both companies would have to be committed in order to assure the success of a counter-attack. He had come to the conclusion that this was an all out German attack and not a diversion. German field orders captured later in the morning proved his conclusions to be correct. (22)

(19) Personal knowledge, self; (20) A-2, p. 159, 160; (21) Personal knowledge, self; (22) Statement Capt. Cody, 502nd Prcht. Inf.

C Company was halted by order of Battalion some eight hundred yards to the south of B Company, in order that Capt. Cody might have the opportunity to come forward to make his personal reconnaissance and coordinate with the B Company Commander for the counter-attack. (23)

Captain Cody complied with these orders at once, making a snap decision which was to be the deciding factor in the forthcoming engagement. Instead of leaving his troops dispersed in the approach-march formation along the road, with local security out, he ordered C Company off the road and had them prepare all around defensive positions. This decision was made as Captain Cody was well aware of the thin line that existed between the 327th Glider Infantry and the 502nd Parachute Infantry. (24)

While the company was moving off ~~of~~ the road, C Company of the 401st Glider Infantry Battalion, passed through on their way to take up positions in the right sector of the 327th Glider Infantry sector. This was the same company that was to make contact, later in the morning, with B Company and finish sealing the gap that existed between the 327th Glider Infantry and the 502nd Parachute Infantry. (25)

C Company, 502nd Parachute Infantry was deployed in the following manner: The First and Third Platoons established positions along the southwest portion of the woods to the west of the Champs-Bastogne Road. The Second Platoon took up positions to the west of the 401st Glider Infantry Battalion Command Post. The Company Command Post was located just off of the road near the center of the Second Platoon. (26) (See Map B)

(23) Statement Capt. Cody, 502nd Inf.; (24) Statement Capt. Cody, 502nd Inf.; (25) Personal knowledge, self; (26) Statement Capt. Cody.

Lt. Thompson, B Company Commander, proceeded to the crossroads where he was to meet Capt. Townes, 401st Glider Infantry, and found that officer waiting for him. As they were discussing the situation they were joined by 1st Lieutenant Samuel B. Nickels, S-2 of the First Battalion, 502nd Parachute Infantry. Lt. Nickels was on his way to Champs to see A Company's position when daylight came. Lt. Nickles was giving Captain Townes and Lt. Thompson the latest information of the situation from Battalion Headquarters when Lieutenant Thompson glanced down the road towards Hemroulle to discover nine tracked vehicles in a field approximately one hundred yards away. These vehicles were ridden by infantry and headed in the direction of Hemroulle. They were in a single column and were at a standstill within fifty yards of the temporary B Company Command Post. The group broke up at a run, with Lieutenant Nickels heading across the field to the 502nd Regimental Command Post, Captain Townes racing for his Company's positions and Lieutenant Thompson running for the B Company front lines. (27)

Lieutenant Nickels alerted the 502nd Command Post and a scratch force composed of cooks, clerks and walking wounded under the command of Captain James C. Stone, 502nd Parachute Infantry Headquarters Commandant, was dispatched to meet the enemy. (28)

Lieutenant Thompson upon reaching his company, ordered the platoons faced to the rear to meet this new threat. Commandeering a jeep which was coming up the road from Champs, he rushed to the bottom of the ridge to inform Major Hanlon. Major Hanlon immediately dispatched two Tank Destroyers, which had been supporting A Company, with Lieutenant Thompson to meet the enemy. Upon reaching the top of the ridge it was found that the enemy was gathered around the 401st Glider Infantry Command Post. Lt. Thompson decided to send the Third  
(27) (28) Eye witness, self.

Platoon, under the command of 1st Lieutenant Porter C. Little, to a tree line approximately four hundred yards to the Company left front, to take up a defensive position. The Tank Destroyers were sent with the Third Platoon to support them. The First Platoon was kept in place in order to present a defense in depth and to be in position to help A Company, although the fighting in Champs seemed to be spending itself. The Third Platoon and the two Tank Destroyers moved out and were in position as ordered within twenty minutes of receipt of the message to move. (29)

The B Company Command Post, under the cool leadership of the Executive Officer, Lieutenant Curcuru, had been displaced down a ditch with no casualties. This, however, was unknown to Lieutenant Thompson as radio contact had been lost. He believed that the Command Post group had either been taken prisoner or become casualties. (30)

As dawn began to break an artillery shell from short range passed over the C Company (502nd Parachute Infantry) Command Post. Captain Cody turned to his Executive Officer, 1st Lieutenant Kenny and said, "Something must be fouled up, the 463d (Parachute Field Artillery Battalion) is firing in the wrong direction." He had hardly finished speaking when a second round crashed into the Command Post. Captain Cody immediately realized that it was enemy fire, coming in all probability from tanks. His first thought was that A Company had been bypassed by the attacking Germans; he discarded this thought at once, because he knew that if this were true the Germans would have run into B Company, 502nd Parachute Inf. and C Company, 401st Glider Infantry Battalion, and there would have been sounds of firing from that direction. From these thoughts he (29) (30) Eye witness, self.

arrived at the correct solution, that the thinly held lines of the 327th Glider Infantry Regiment must have been by-passed as there had been no firing in that area. Captain Cody immediately moved to a position from which he could observe to the west, into the area from which the tank fire was coming. (31)

As it grew a little lighter Captain Cody saw from his vantage point a number of enemy Mark IV tanks and several half-tracks ridden and supported by Panzergrenadiers. This force was moving directly towards the 401st Glider Infantry Command Post, screaming and yelling as they came. The personnel of the Command Post had already begun to displace to avoid capture. Much of the Command Post equipment was left behind, but it was recaptured later in the morning by B and C Companies, 502nd Parachute Infantry. (32)

Captain Cody immediately ordered his Second Platoon to withdraw across the road and deploy to the right of the 1st Platoon. The majority of the platoon was able to carry out this order with no undue confusion. The withdrawal was covered by a force of one squad of the platoon, commanded by Staff Sergeant DeWitt. This holding force was surrounded and captured by the attacking Germans. The Command Post had been displaced with the remainder of the 2nd Platoon. (33)

The Germans evidently believed that when they captured the 401st Command Post, including the operation maps and various other Command Post equipment, that all American troops in the vicinity had been routed. They immediately sent out local security and began to prepare breakfast, little realizing that a full strength company was deployed across the road from them and preparing to take them under fire. (34)

Captain Cody planned his attack little realizing that B Company

(31) (32) (33) (34) Statements, Captain Cody.



was taking the enemy in its sights from the north and that Captain Stone's scratch group from the Regimental Command Post was moving into position to take the enemy under fire from the east. (35)

The order to fire was given to C Company and the company laid down a withering fire upon the enemy. The Germans were thrown into great confusion; however, they soon rallied and jumped into their tanks and began to get underway. At the same time that C Company opened fire, the 3d Platoon of B Company took the enemy under fire from the left flank, using three light machine guns, two 2.36" rocket launchers and rifle fire. This fire was supported by the fires of the two Tank Destroyers, which had maneuvered into position. Soon after this Captain Stone's group opened fire against the enemy with 2.36" rockets and rifle fire. This completed the ring of fire around the German penetration. (36)

Under this devastating avalanche of fire the German penetration was crushed before it could get started. This fire fight lasted approximately fifteen minutes. When the firing was over there were sixty-seven dead Panzergrenadiers and thirty-five wounded prisoners. Six Mark IV tanks and two half-tracks had been destroyed. One enemy tank broke through the B Company's position and headed towards Champs. Rifle and machine gun fire from B Company accounted for the Germans riding upon the tank. The tank itself was knocked out by A Company when it attempted to break through the Company lines and escape. (37)

The attack that A Company had been under had spent itself while B and C Companies were engaging the enemy penetration. The enemy dead in Champs amounted to ninety-eight, with two officers and seventy-nine enlisted men taken prisoner. (38)

In all, eighteen tanks were destroyed by the combined efforts of the 327th Glider Infantry, the 502nd Parachute Infantry and the

(35) Statements, Capt. Cody; (36) Eye witness, self; (37) Eye witness, self; (38) A-2, p. 169.

463rd Parachute Field Artillery Battalion, during Christmas morning. The 463d Parachute Field Artillery Battalion accounted for two of these tanks, by taking them under direct fire with their seventy-five mm pack howitzers. This Battalion had been drawn up in a perimeter defense around the village of Hemroulle as their ammunition was exhausted, having fallen to two rounds per gun. The action of the 327th Glider Infantry Regiment cannot be taken up due to the extensive operations of that Regiment. (39)

A German Field Order captured during the fight showed that the German attempt had been made by the 115th Panzergrenadier Regiment of the 15th Panzergrenadier Division (This division had recently been brought up from the Italian front.) and two Battalions of the 77th Volksgrenadier Regiment of the 26th Volksgrenadier Division. The attack was supported by the division artillery of the 26th Volksgrenadier Division. (40)

The American losses during the fighting were eight men killed and fifteen men wounded. Two Tank Destroyers were destroyed by the enemy tank fire but the crews of both escaped, although four of them were wounded. (41)

#### ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

In making a study of this operation, it will be seen that while the enemy had engaged the front lines of Company A, 502nd Parachute Infantry at Champs and made an enveloping movement around the thinly held flank between the 502nd Parachute Infantry and the 327th Glider Infantry, the attack was contained and reduced by the proper use of reserves.

The German forces used the principles of Mass, Surprise, Economy of Force, and Movement to gain an initial advantage. The fail-

(39) A-2, p. 163; (40) A-2, p. 169; Personal knowledge, self; (41) American wounded, estimated.

ure to observe the principle of Security resulted in the loss of all advantage that had been gained by the attacking forces.

Much criticism may be directed towards the Germans for failure to press their advantage when they had broken through the American lines. Coordination between the forces attacking Champs and the enveloping force was poor. Had the enveloping force swung north along the Champs-Bastogne Road after capturing the 401st Glider Infantry Command Post, they would have over run Company B, 502nd Parachute Infantry and made the position of Company A at Champs untenable. This would have resulted in a general collapse of the American lines along the northern sector of the 101st Division perimeter. As a result the German forces would have been able to pour through the breach and in all probability continued on to Bastogne.

The German failure to deploy in battle formation after they believed the American troops routed, resulted in the utter confusion of their forces when they were taken under fire by the defending Americans. Had the German commander employed his troops and armor correctly, the result would have been a long drawn out fire fight, which would have resulted in many casualties among the defenders. Initiative and the desire to press home the attack are of prime importance in the conduct of modern warfare.

Little criticism may be made of the defending American forces. Both commanders and troops reacted with speed and determination in a very adverse situation. These reactions resulted in the decimation of the German forces.

Small unit leadership was at its best in the difficult task of infantry, with few anti-tank weapons, repelling a larger attacking force of armor supported by infantry.

It may seem that the First Battalion Reserves were committed in a piecemeal fashion. It must be remembered, however, that <sup>THIS</sup> was

an unusual situation. If the reserve had been thrown into Champs to repel the German attack, the enveloping force would have driven into Bastogne with little opposition.

#### LESSONS

Some of the lessons learned from this operation are:

1. When gaps exist in a defensive or offensive position, vigorous and continuous patrolling must be carried out.
2. All around security must be maintained at all times.
3. When a unit is halted on an approach march, subordinate units must be deployed to meet an attack from any direction.
4. Reserves must be held until the situation had been fully developed and must not be committed piecemeal or in haste.
5. A well organized defense in a small village can extract heavy toll from a much larger attacking force. To attack such a position, special assault units such as flamethrowers, demolitions, and tanks are needed.
6. Tank Destroyers are utilized to the best advantage in a defensive position by being held in mobile reserve.
7. In an offensive situation when contact is made with the enemy, it must not be broken on the attacker's own accord.
8. Mass, Economy of Movement and Surprise are essential parts of the attack but all must be pressed home vigorously to exploit any success that has been gained.
9. Seasoned infantry troops can withstand an attack by medium armor by use of organic anti-tank weapons. Individual positions must be held and movement kept to a minimum.

PARACHUTE RIFLE COMPANY (1944)

1. COMPANY HEADQUARTERS:

2 Officers - 14 Enlisted Men

2. RIFLE PLATOONS:

3 Identical Platoons of 2 Officers and  
35 Enlisted Men each

3. SQUADS OF RIFLE PLATOON:

3 rifle squads of 8 men each, each squad  
containing a light machine gun team

1 60mm mortar squad of 6 men

Platoon Headquarters: 2 Officers and 3  
Enlisted Men

4. PARACHUTE COMPANY WEAPONS:

100 M-1 Rifles  
19 M-1A-4 Carbines  
13 Thompson Sub-Machine Guns  
6 Springfield 1903 Rifles with grenade  
launchers  
12 Light Machine Guns, 12 for defense,  
9 for attack  
3 60mm Mortars  
4 2.36" Rocket Launchers

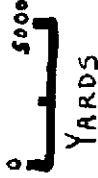
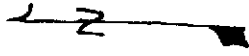
5. BATTALION HEADQUARTERS SUPPORTING WEAPONS:

4 81mm Mortars  
8 Light Machine Guns (2 sections  
4 guns each)

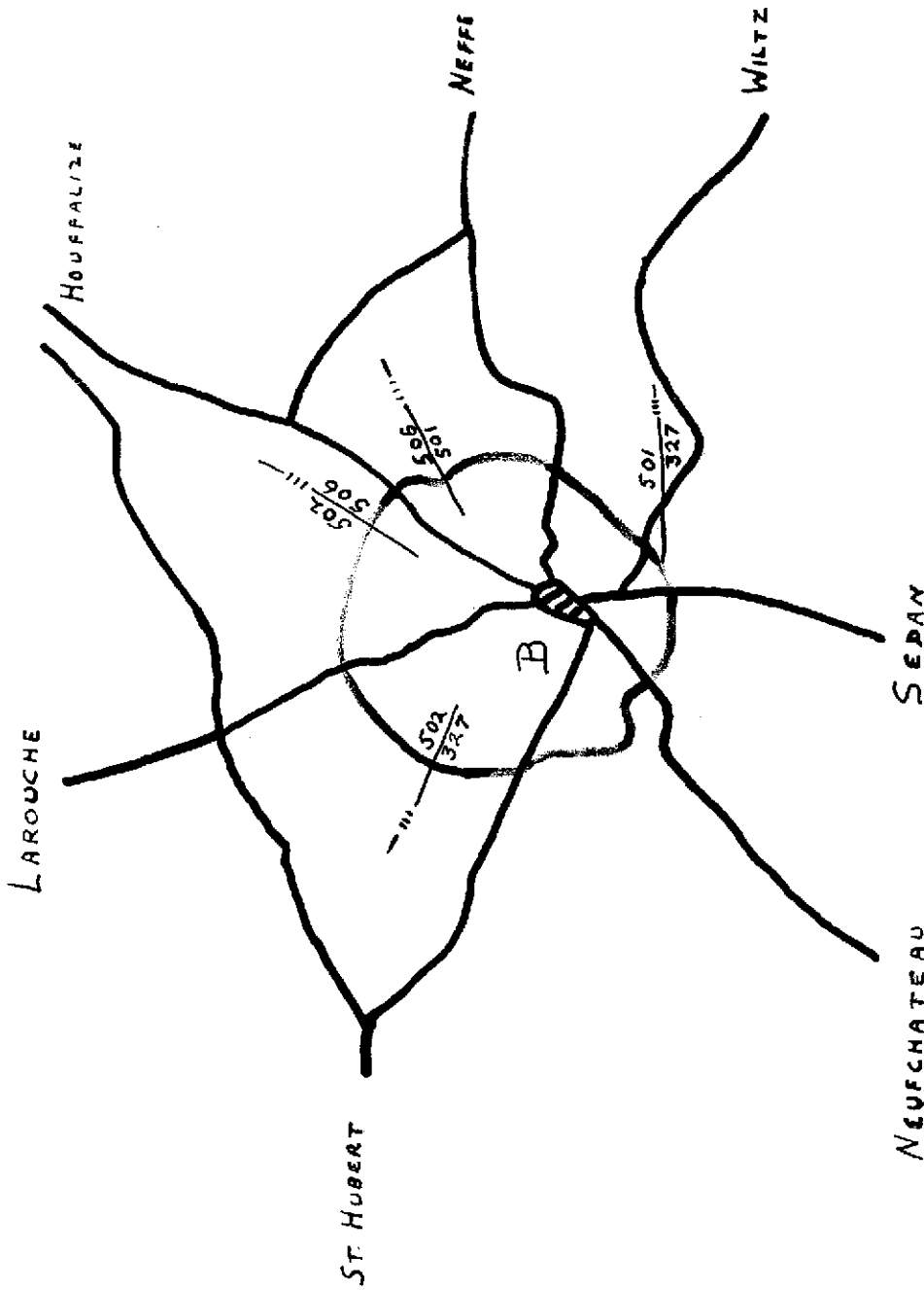
6. SUPPORTING BATTALION ARTILLERY:

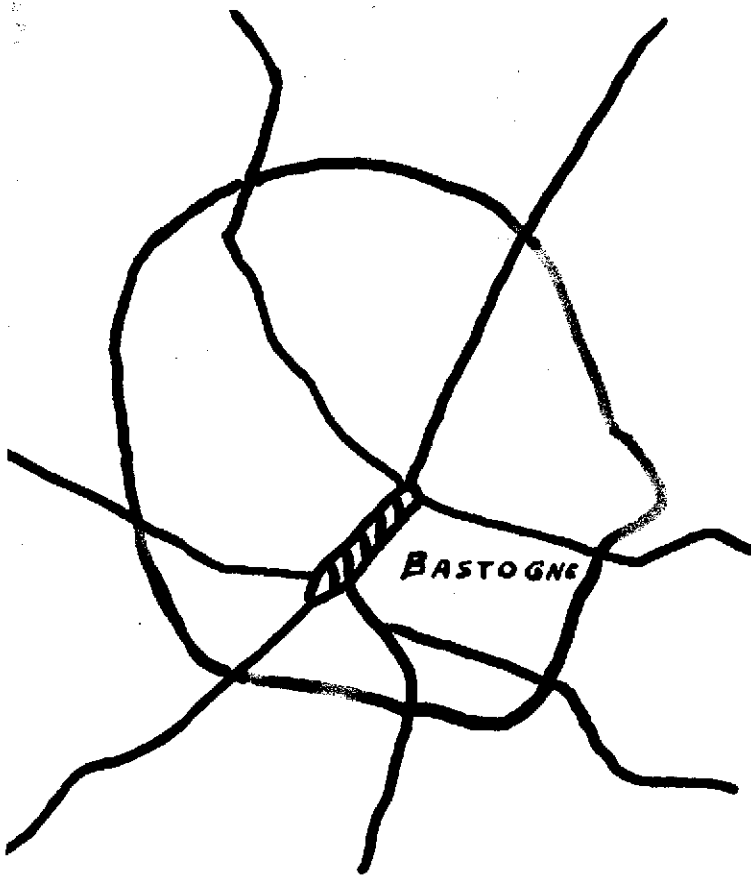
4 75mm Pack Howitzers

MAP "A"



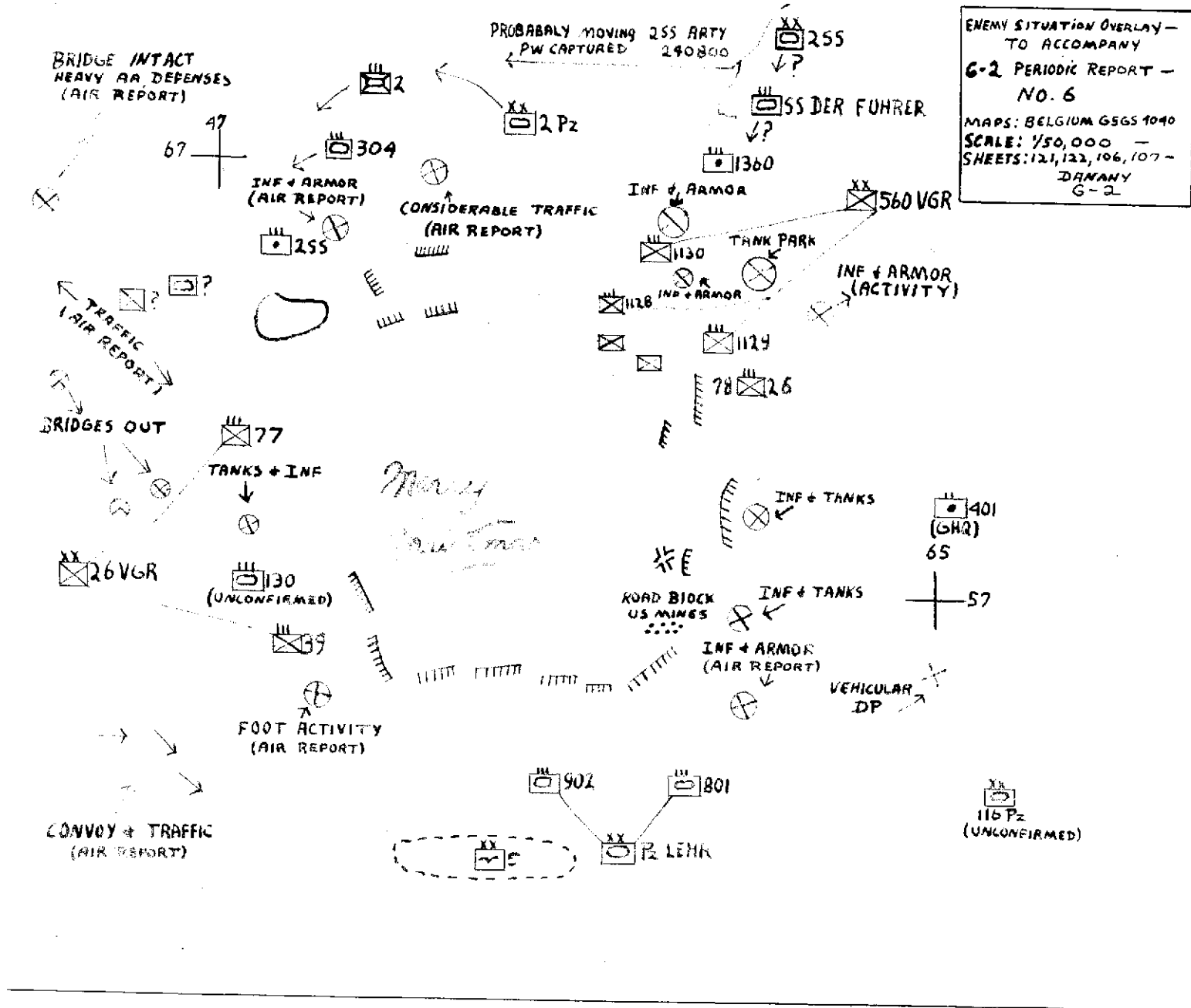
BASTOGNE, BELGIUM  
ROAD NET





BASTOGNE ROAD NET  
AND  
DIVISION PERIMETER





ENEMY SITUATION OVERLAY -  
 TO ACCOMPANY  
 G-2 PERIODIC REPORT -  
 NO. 6  
 MAPS: BELGIUM G565 1040  
 SCALE: 1/50,000 -  
 SHEETS: 121, 122, 106, 107 -  
 DANAHY  
 G-2



