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ACADEMIC DEPARTMENT
THE INFANTRY SCHOOL
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ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS COURSE

THE OPERATIONS OF THE 1ST BATTALION, 325TH GLIDER
INFANTRY (82D AIRBORNE DIVISION) AT MOOK, HOLLAND,
1-3 OCTOBER 1944
(RHINELAND CAMPAIGN)

(Personal Experience of a Battalion Headquarters Company
Commander)

Type of operation described: AIRBORNE INFANTRY BATTALION IN
THE ATTACK

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THE OPERATIONS OF THE 1ST BATTALION, 325TH GLIDER INFANTRY
(82D AIRBORNE DIVISION) AT MOOK, HOLLAND, 1-3 OCTOBER 1944
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(Personal Experience of a Battalion Headquarters Company Commander)

INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operations of the 1st Battalion, 325th Glider Infantry, 82d Airborne Division, at Mook, Holland, 1-3 October 1944. The US Army has committed only four (4) regiments to combat by glider. The question might arise as to what characterizes the employment of glider infantry troops in comparison with standard infantry troops. Some of the questions might be: (1) What happens in the planning stage just prior to the glider operation? (2) What happens when the glider troops reach the landing zone? (3) Do we move to an assembly area, or do we establish a perimeter defense in accordance with airborne doctrine? and, the most important question of all: What happens if some of the gliders do not reach the landing zone?

I would like to give a few facts which characterize glider infantry troops and their tactical employment. Remember the glider infantrymen are not provided with a parachute. They are entirely dependent upon the skill of the glider pilot and the unfailing performance of the towship. The glider is towed through the air at an average speed of 120 miles per hour, and over enemy territory altitude will average 600 to 1000 feet. If something unforeseen goes wrong, the glider must land. In a matter of seconds, decisions must be made - Where is the enemy? Where can we land safely? What action must be taken immediately after landing?

However, discounting any danger that may be inherent in entering combat by glider, such means of transportation is inspiring, and in some ways has its advantages. As the glider troops fly over enemy territory looking down on the terrain, ground obstacles such as swamps, dense woods, rivers - mean nothing to them - they are above these difficulties. The

glider men thank God they are flying and not covering endless miles on weary feet.

Naturally, there is one fact that cannot be discounted - the fear and feeling of helplessness against anti-aircraft fire. If the glider is forced to land alone in enemy territory, the possibility of becoming a casualty, or a prisoner of the enemy, is likely.

The problem of all gliders taking off from the airfield on any particular operation, and reaching the landing zone within a reasonable time of each other, and within a reasonable distance of each other, is yet to be solved. In no operation to date in which the 82d Airborne Division has participated, either in combat or in training, have all the gliders of a unit as large as a company, reached the landing zone. The most critical period to glider landing troops is the time between release from the tow-plane and the clearing of the landing area. In addition to the troops being extremely vulnerable to enemy ground action, the gliders themselves are a menace and a hazard to the personnel landing. No previous glider operation of the 325th Glider Infantry Regiment, either in training or in actual combat, has been without casualties on the landing zone.

As an example, I would like to give my experience that occurred during the invasion of HOLLAND. 402 gliders carrying the 325th Glider Infantry Regiment took off from airfields in ENGLAND on 23 September 1944, bound for HOLLAND. It was a calm, serene, Saturday afternoon. We had covered approximately 250 miles of a 300 mile flight and all was going well. The sky was filled with planes as far as the eye could see; both troop carrier planes with gliders, and fighter aircraft, which were furnishing air cover to the sky train. Fifteen (15) minutes from the landing zone, our tow-ship was hit by anti-aircraft fire. The plane dived to the ground, and our glider was left in the air with no tow-ship. One thought was ^{UP?} utmost in each individual's mind - What will

happen now? No recognizable landmarks were visible. After what seemed an unusually long time, which in reality was only a couple of minutes, the pilot was about to land the glider. Everyone braced themselves; the wheels touched the ground; a huge ditch loomed before us. In an attempt to jump the ditch, the landing gear was torn from the glider, the nose dug in the ground, and the ship flipped over on its back. Fortunately, no casualties were apparent, and in seconds the glider was unloaded.

The sound of small arms fire and the boom of artillery could be heard in the distance; however, no fire was directed at the glider or its personnel. As we were endeavoring to orient ourselves on the map and on the ground, a couple of curious Dutch civilians approached. They spoke English (English is a required subject in Dutch schools) and assisted us in orienting ourselves as to our location from the landing zone. One civilian left on a bicycle for a nearby village, for what reason we did not know until later. We came to the conclusion that we were ten (10) miles from our planned landing zone, and immediately started the long hike to join our unit. Shortly after we had started, a peculiar vehicle approached from the nearby town, with a siren blowing and a bell ringing. A Dutch civilian in uniform, with a silver badge attached, (not unlike a Junior G-Man badge) dismounted from the vehicle and informed us that he was the village Fire Marshal, and volunteered his services in transporting us to the landing zone. We quickly voiced our assent, and all members of the group mounted the vehicle and we went merrily on our way. Entering combat by glider, may under varying conditions, originate unusual circumstances. Nothing is ever certain and anything may happen.

(1)

THE GENERAL SITUATION

It may be recalled that by 1 September 1944 the Allied Armies were fighting virtually unopposed through FRANCE and BELGIUM, across eastern FRANCE toward LUXEMBOURG and GERMANY, and through southern FRANCE toward

(1) Personal knowledge.

the VOSGES Mountains and the German border. (2)

During the period 1-15 September, the 21st Army Group, consisting of the Canadian First Army and the British Second Army, commanded by General Sir Bernard L. Montgomery, advanced rapidly and with spectacular success, through BELGIUM to the border of HOLLAND. As the British forces approached the German homeland, enemy resistance stiffened, and the rapid progress that had marked the advance to, and the capture of, the port of ANTWERP, was materially impeded. (3)

By 10 September 1944, the Allies were at the threshold of GERMANY, facing north and east along the general line ANTWERP - AACHEN - METZ, and south to the frontier of SWITZERLAND. (See Map A)

The enemy had withdrawn to the formidable defenses of the Siegfried Line, where he was to make a determined effort to repel any Allied penetration of the German homeland. (4)

The Allied Armies, after glorious successes throughout the summer, were in a serious situation. The problem of logistics had become an almost insurmountable obstacle. The elasticity of the supply lines, previously strained, was now dangerously near the breaking point. Although all of FRANCE and BELGIUM (with the exception of BOULOGNE, CALAIS, and DUNKIRK) had been freed of the enemy, the Allies were receiving the major portion of their supplies over the original invasion beaches. The ports of CHERBOURG and LE HAVRE, both major French ports before the war, had been captured; however, neither of the two were operating sufficiently to relieve the burden of unloading supplies over the NORMANDY beaches. LE HAVRE, once a major port, was almost entirely demolished by the Germans prior to their surrender of the city. CHERBOURG, although not too badly damaged, was of little value to the Allies, having been primarily a passenger terminal before the war, and did not possess adequate facilities for the processing of incoming supplies. ANTWERP, the third largest port in the world, was captured intact,

(2) A-1, p. 59; (3) A-1, p. 63; (4) A-1, p. 65-66

yet its use as a supply base was denied to the Allies, by virtue of the Germans holding the entrance to the harbor, and the islands of the SCHELDE ESTUARY to the north. (5)

The supply situation at this time was growing more acute by the hour - gasoline, food, ammunition - without which we could not fight, were being consumed in quantities greater than our capacity of replenishment. (6)

General Eisenhower was confronted with one of two possibilities: (1) to continue the offensive without adequate supplies, or, (2) to assume the defensive, which would necessarily have to be organized throughout the long winter, in order to build up for an offensive in the early spring. The possibility of an offensive at this time, with limited supplies, was not feasible. Shifting from offense to defense would result in low morale within the Allied ranks, prolongation of the war, and loss of the initiative. Time would permit the enemy to regroup his armies, construct additional defenses, and to further the development of secret weapons. (7)

The Supreme Commander, after careful consideration, made the decision to divert all available transportation and supplies from the various sectors of the Allied Armies to the support of the British 21st Army Group in the north. The decision entailed the launching of a major offensive around the northern extremity of the west wall to turn the right flank of the enemy defense, and enable a breakthrough to be perpetrated through the Rhur Valley and into the Cologne plain. The northern flank of the Siegfried Line was the weakest link of the enemy defense, and with a penetration being accomplished through this sector, the tremendous problem of launching a frontal attack on the Siegfried Line and the subsequent crossing of the Rhine River in the face of enemy resistance, would be solved. (8)

(5) A-2, p. 205-222; (6) A-12, p. 68-70; (7) A-12, p. 70-71;
(8) A-13, p. 115.

THE ALLIED PLAN

Just prior to 1 September 1944, the First Allied Airborne Army was organized in ENGLAND. This new army, commanded by Lt. General Brereton, consisted of the British 1st Airborne Division, the US 82d and 101st Airborne Divisions, and the 1st Polish Parachute Brigade. (9)

The projected operation, designated MARKET-GARDEN, entered the planning stage on 10 September 1944 and included the joint operation of the newly organized 1st Allied Airborne Army and the British 21st Army Group. (10)

The general plan as outlined by the Supreme Allied Commander envisioned an attack through HOLLAND, around the northern flank of the Siegfried Line, and into the heart of GERMANY, with the greatest strength in air power, ground troops, and logistical support, possible. (11)

A major thrust through this sector presented several advantages: (1) Intelligence sources provided the information that the great bulk of the German army was in this area; (2) capture of the "flying bomb" sites was of the utmost importance in order to relieve ENGLAND of this menace; (3) our imperative need for the use of ANTWERP as a port for unloading supplies; (4) an imperative need for close support air fields in BELGIUM and HOLLAND; and, (5) at this season of the year, the terrain offered by the Cologne plain afforded the most likely avenue of advance into GERMANY. (12)

Operation MARKET-GARDEN was divided into two distinct yet integrated and coordinated parts. The general plan outlined a drive of the 21st Army Group along the axis EINDHOVEN - NIJMEGEN - ARNHEM (Operation GARDEN), and the landing of the Airborne divisions of the First Allied Airborne Army, by parachute and glider, at EINDHOVEN, GRAVE - NIJMEGEN - ARNHEM to secure the axis of advance (Operation MARKET). (See Map B) (13)

(9) A-1, p. 62; (10) A-12, p. 72-73; (11) A-1, p. 62; (12) A-1, p. 62; (13) A-2, p. 226

Diversionsary efforts were to be employed in the southern sector of the Allied front, in order to continue the engagement of as many enemy forces as possible, and to disguise the location of the main effort. (14)

PLAN OF THE 21ST ARMY GROUP

"It was the intention of the Commander-in-Chief, 21st Army Group, to advance north across the MAAS, WAAL, and LEK (NEDER RIJN), form a strong beachhead north of ARNHEM, and continue north into HOLLAND and east against the REICH. The main axis of advance was EINDHOVEN - GRAVE - NIJMEGEN - ARNHEM - - - - -."

"Airborne Corps were to capture and hold crossings over the canals and rivers on - - - - the main axis of advance, from EINDHOVEN to include ARNHEM." (15)

All Airborne troops, British, American, and Polish, were organized as Airborne Corps under the command of General F.A.M. Browning, to facilitate command responsibility for the Airborne phase of the operation. (16)

The mission of the 21st Army Group was stated as follows:

- a. The 101st Airborne Division was to land by parachute and glider in the vicinity of EINDHOVEN - UDEN to secure the communications and road center of EINDHOVEN, and the bridge over the Wilhemina Canal at SON.
- b. The 82d Airborne Division was to land by parachute and glider in the vicinity of NIJMEGEN to secure the bridge over the MAAS River at GRAVE, the GROESBEEK HEIGHTS, the bridges over the MAAS - WAAL Canal, and the bridge over the WAAL River at NIJMEGEN.
- c. The 1st British Airborne Division was to land in the vicinity of ARNHEM to secure the city of ARNHEM and establish a bridgehead over the LEK River.
- d. The 1st Polish Parachute Brigade was to drop south of ARNHEM to assist the 1st British Airborne Division in securing the bridgehead over the LEK, and to render support in defense of the bridgehead.
- e. The British Second Army, spearheaded by the Guards Armored Division, was to break out of the established

(14) A-1, p. 62; (15) A-8, p. 1; (16) A-12, p.72.

bridgehead north of the MEUSE - ESCAUT Canal, advance rapidly northward to establish contact with the Airborne units, and to continue the drive to the ZUIDER ZEE.

- f. The 1st Canadian Army was to advance on the left flank of the Guards Armored Division and advance north and west to clear the SCHELDE ESTUARY and free the port of ANTWERP. (See Map B) (17) (18)

The route of advance of the 21st Army Group lay over the widest parts of the two largest rivers in Europe, the Meuse (MAAS) and the Rhine (WAAL), together with numerous crisscrossing canals and inundated areas. Most of the roads, particularly the axis of advance, were built up at least fifteen (15) feet above the surrounding countryside. The British Second Army was to advance on a very narrow front, keeping to the main road unless impeded by enemy active or passive defenses. The flanking units were to advance more slowly, clearing isolated, by-passed pockets of resistance. (19)

Surprise and speed of advance were essential. Information relative to enemy troop dispositions and prepared defensive positions was obscure, however it was felt that the major bridges along the axis of advance would be defended by both anti-aircraft defenses and small ground force units. Intelligence sources had provided the information that heavy flak batteries were present in the NIJMEGEN - ARNHEM area; however distinct ground force designations could not be ascertained.

The plan of the 21st Army Group was daring in its concept. Supplies of gasoline, oil, ammunition, food, and transport were adequate for success only if minor opposition was encountered. If major opposition was encountered, the possibilities of success and relief of the Airborne troops would be marginal. If successful, the operation would materially shorten the war; if unsuccessful - only the future held the answer to the fate of our Airborne troops, specifically, and the Allied effort, generally. (20)

(17) A-1, p. 67; (18) A-2, p. 226-230; (19) A-12, p. 72; (20) A-12, p. 71-72.

PLAN OF THE 82D AIRBORNE DIVISION

The 82d Airborne Division, after its return to ENGLAND from the battle of NORMANDY on 14 July 1944, began an intensive program of training in anticipation of future Airborne operations. Lessons learned in the Airborne landing in NORMANDY were emphasized, and all efforts were made to eliminate in training those mistakes made in previous operations. (21)

On 15 September 1944, the 82d Airborne Division was closed and sealed within the marshaling area. All troops were briefed on the 16th of September in preparation for the take-off of the initial lifts of paratroops and gliders on D-Day, 17 September 1944. (22)

The mission of the 82d Airborne Division was as follows:

'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 GROESBEEK; deny the roads in the division area to the enemy - - - - -.' (23)

The 505 Parachute Infantry Regiment was to land during the afternoon and evening of D-Day on DZ "N"; seize GROESBEEK and the surrounding high ground; establish and maintain contact with 504 Parachute Infantry at bridges "7" and "8"; and mop up the area within its zone of responsibility. (See Map C)

The 504 Parachute Infantry (less E Company) was to drop on D-Day on DZ "O"; seize and hold the bridge over the MAAS River at GRAVE; seize and hold bridges "7", "8", and "9", over the MAAS - WAAL Canal; establish and maintain contact with 505 Parachute Infantry at bridges "7" and "8", and with 508 Parachute Infantry at bridges "9" and "10"; and mop up the area within its sector of responsibility.

E Company, 504 Parachute Infantry, was to drop south of the bridge

(21) A-9, p. 1; (22) Personal knowledge; (23) A-9, p. 1

at GRAVE, and in conjunction with the main force of the regiment, seize and hold the bridge. (See Map C)

The 508 Parachute Infantry Regiment was to drop on D-Day on DZ "T"; be prepared to seize bridge over the WAAL River at NIJMEGEN; seize and secure LZ "T" for subsequent glider landings on D + 1; establish and maintain contact with 504 Parachute Infantry at bridges "9" and "10"; and mop up the area within its zone of responsibility. (See Map C)

The 325th Glider Infantry Regiment was to land by glider on D + 1, on LZ "T"; assemble in division reserve west of GROESBEEK; and be prepared to attack in direction of NIJMEGEN and bridges "9" and "10". (See Map C) (24)

All parachute units of the 82d Airborne Division, with the exception of minor mix-ups, landed on schedule on D-Day, in the vicinity of planned drop zones. (25)

However, on D + 1, when subsequent glider landings of the 325th Glider Infantry Regiment were to take place, adverse weather conditions set in over ENGLAND and HOLLAND. As will be subsequently developed, the 325th Glider Infantry was delayed until D + 6, 23 September 1944. (26)

OPERATIONS OF 82D AIRBORNE DIVISION - D-DAY - D + 6

Enemy reaction to the initial landings on D-Day was prompt; however not too well organized. Prepared defensive positions in the REICHSWALD FOREST and the general vicinity of the bridge sites were the source of harassing fires throughout D-Day. Estimated strength of enemy troops was placed at approximately eight (8) battalions.

Initial D-Day objectives were captured by each element of the division. The bridges over the MAAS River at GRAVE, and the bridges over the MAAS - WAAL Canal, were captured intact, with the exception (24) A-7, p. 1-3; (25) A-12, p. 90; (26) Personal knowledge.

of bridges "9" and "10", which were blown by the enemy.

On D + 1, 450 gliders were landed, carrying elements of the 307th Airborne Medical Company and artillery units. Due to poor flying weather and very high winds, a number of the gliders overshot the landing zone at GROESEBEK (LZ "T") and were last seen flying over the REICHSWALD FOREST into GERMANY. On D + 2, advance elements of the Guards Armored Division established contact with the 504 Parachute Infantry at the GRAVE bridge.

During the period D + 2 - D + 6 inclusive, all elements of the 82d Airborne Division were engaged in mopping up their respective zones of responsibility, and repelling vigorous, well-supported counterattacks from the area of REICHSWALD FOREST and north of the MAAS River in the vicinity of MOOK. The division, as a whole, had an area of 25000 square yards as its zone of responsibility. The division commander had no reserve elements with which to limit penetrations through the hastily organized position. Each counterattack by the enemy succeeded in penetrating the division defenses by as much as 1000 yards in some sectors. To restore the main line of resistance, it was necessary for the division commander to weaken other portions of the line. During the period D + 1 - D + 6, gaps of 1000 yards and greater, laterally, existed between elements of the division. It is fortunate that a more determined enemy was not encountered.

By D + 6, firm contact had been established with the advancing forces of the British Second Army, which relieved the 82d Airborne Division of the responsibility of a 25000 square yard perimeter defense, and the defense in strength of the bridge within the area. (27)

At ARNHEM, the 1st British Airborne Division was being subjected to terrific counterattacks. Due to heavy flak installations in the immediate vicinity of the town, the division was forced to land eight
(27) A-9, p. 2-9.

(8) miles from ARNHEM, and, through error in intelligence (British), actual planned landing zones and drop zones were occupied by German troops. (28)

During the period D-Day, D + 5, the success of the Airborne elements at both NIJMEGEN and ARNHEM was strictly marginal, due to lack of reinforcements by air, slow progress by the British ground troops in effecting contact and relief of the Airborne elements, and the lack of supplies. Resupply by air for the first six (6) days of the operation was 25% to 50% effective, due to adverse weather conditions, and the existence of heavy anti-aircraft installations around the airhead. (29)

By D + 6, the 82d Airborne Division was engaged in consolidating the general defensive line as indicated. (See Map D)

OPERATIONS OF THE 325TH GLIDER INFANTRY - D + 6 - D + 13

The anticipated take-off of the 325th Glider Infantry Regiment by glider on D + 1 did not materialize due to poor flying conditions. Troops were maintained on one (1) hour alert for period of six (6) days prior to actual take-off in anticipation of taking advantage of a temporary break in the weather. The primary recreation of the troops within the confines of the airfield consisted chiefly of counting the planes take off for a resupply mission, and counting them again upon return. Seeing the C-47's return with one wing shot off, holes up to three (3) feet in diameter in the fuselage, and damaged landing gear, not to mention the wounded crew members, did not materially contribute to the morale of the troops. The men of the 325th knew their day of destiny was approaching. Rumor to the effect that no flak batteries were operational over the flight routes were dispelled by the appearance of the resupply planes upon their return from each mission.

(28) A-2, p. 230-240; (29) A-12, p. 97-121.

During the six (6) day period, three (3) cases of psychoneurosis developed within the regiment. One man in particular, a slightly nervous member of the 1st Battalion Headquarters Company Communications Section, was found lying on the ground at midnight, completely rigid in every muscle, however still conscious. Needless to say, he was evacuated, where his recovery, we later learned, was miraculous in its speed of culmination.

Each day of bad weather, the division commander frantically radioed the airfield to send in the 325th. From these messages we gathered that all was not going too well with the paratroop elements that had dropped on D-Day. However, the Air Corps refused to fly their planes in the bad weather, regardless of the urgent desire of the 82d Airborne Division commander. (30)

On the night of 22 September 1944, we were informed that good weather was promised for the next day, and that the take-off was to be the following afternoon, 23 September 1944. Simultaneously, we received the order that our original landing zone had been changed to LZ "O", between the MAAS River and the MAAS - WAAL Canal. This necessitated a briefing of the men, the glider pilots, and general overall change in ground assembly points and areas. This change also gave rise to conjecture among the troops as to what and how much they were to expect on landing. (31)

On the afternoon of 23 September 1944, the 325th Glider Infantry Regiment took off in 402 gliders from six (6) airfields in ENGLAND. Due to the shortage of trained glider personnel, only one (1) glider pilot was present for this three and one-half (3½) hour flight, whereas in previous operations of shorter duration, both a pilot and co-pilot had been provided. The senior officer or non-commissioned officer of each glider group was ordered to ride in the co-pilot's seat (30) Personal knowledge; (31) Personal knowledge.

to assist the pilot in determining the planned landing zone and a specific landing site. Each group leader was given thirty (30) minutes intensive instruction in glider pilot training. Should the glider pilot become fatigued, or a casualty, during the long ride, the group leader, an infantryman, would be in a capacity to render assistance in landing the glider. It was reported that a few of the infantrymen who had occasion to serve physically and technically as a glider co-pilot, were later awarded the Air Medal for their action in this operation. (32)

Three hundred and fifty-one (351) gliders reached the planned landing zone. Two (2) gliders landed in ENGLAND, six (6) landed in the English Channel, and forty-three (43) were released between the coast and the landing zone. Ten (10) were never accounted for. Anti-aircraft fire was intense in some sections over which the flight route lay, however, the superior conduct of the air fighter cover contributed to the neutralization of these defenses. During the landing, ninety (90) of the gliders were damaged as a result of the terrain encountered on the landing zone. (33)

The regiment, upon landing, moved to an assembly area northwest of GROESBEEK and awaited further orders from the division commander. It was not anticipated that we would remain long in this area, as the extended frontage occupied by the division pre-destined the commitment of the regiment to one (1) of the four (4) sectors of the front. On 24 September 1944, the regiment relieved the 505 Parachute Infantry in the vicinity of MOOK. The division defensive position was now occupied by four (4) regiments, plus one (1) battalion of Airborne Engineers, covering a fifteen (15) mile front. One (1) battalion of 508 Parachute Infantry reverted to division reserve, the first existence of a division reserve element since D-Day. (See Map D)

(34)

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

325TH GLIDER INFANTRY REGIMENT - SITUATION D † 14

During the period 24-30 September 1944, the 325th Glider Infantry Regiment held the defensive line on the right flank of the division, extending from the northern tip of the KIEKBERG WOODS south to the main MOOK highway, west along the highway to the town of MOOK and south to the MAAS River, with the 3d Battalion on the left, 2d Battalion in the center, 1st Battalion (less B Company) on the right. B Company was detached from battalion control to form a regimental reserve west of GROESBEEK. (See Map E) (35)

On the 30th of September, B Company was attached to the 3d Battalion to support an attack of the 3d Battalion in their sector. During the entire day of 30 September, the 3d Battalion reinforced by B Company, attacked with little success and suffered a severe counter-attack during the night.

1ST BATTALION - 325TH GLIDER INFANTRY REGIMENT
SITUATION - 30 SEPTEMBER 1944

During the afternoon of 30 September, our intelligence sources provided the information that a heavy German counterattack of division strength, reinforced with armor, was expected to be launched during the night with the main thrust through the right flank of the 325th Regiment, now occupied by two (2) companies of the 1st Battalion. The battalion commander of 1st Battalion, upon receipt of this information, requested the release of B Company from attachment to the 3d Battalion in order for his battalion to reinforce its defensive position. This request was denied, as B Company was engaged in the attack with the 3d Battalion and could not be withdrawn from the line. However, the battalion commander was informed that reinforcements were to be expected from the British 30th Infantry Division, with one (1) platoon of tanks, prior to darkness. In addition, direct

(35) The following pages are written from personal knowledge; no official account of this action has been recorded to date.

support of British and American artillery would be provided and remain on call in case the counterattack materialized.

All available personnel from the battalion command post, including communications personnel, mess and supply personnel, and sick, lame, and lazy, were organized into defensive position along the line MOOK - MAAS River. (See Map E)

It was later determined that the medical personnel from the battalion aid station had secured trench knives and dug foxholes along the defense line. This was no time for the Geneva Convention to interfere with self-preservation. By nightfall no reinforcements had arrived, and the battalion commander, having made the rounds of the front lines, and checking all positions, settled down to await the inevitable.

The night passed uneventful^N, as the counterattack was directed to the north against the 3d Battalion. By daylight the feeling of nervousness was abated somewhat by the arrival of the British tank platoon; however no infantry accompanied them.

The morning of 1 October brought news from the regimental commander that the division commander had ordered another attack by the regiment during the night and early morning of 2 October.

325TH PLAN OF ATTACK

The regimental commander called the battalion commanders together at the regimental command post at 1000 1 October 1944, to receive the regimental attack order. Essential elements of the order follow: (36)

1. Disposition of troops:
 - a. 505 Parachute Infantry will relieve 2d and 3d Battalion, 325th Glider Infantry, in their present position, beginning 2000 1 October.
 - b. Upon relief, the 3d Battalion will move to positions south of MOOK and assume responsibility for the south

(36) Not quoted from order.

sector of the line now occupied by the 1st Battalion.

- c. B Company, upon relief of the 3d Battalion by the 505, will revert to control of the 1st Battalion.
- d. 2d Battalion, 325th, upon relief by the 505, will revert to regimental reserve, and be prepared to assist either 1st or 2d Battalion effort.

2. Plan of attack:

- a. The 325th Glider Regiment will launch a coordinated attack from present front line positions, beginning 0500 2 October, two (2) battalions abreast, 3d Battalion on the right, to seize and secure the towns of RIETHORST, KATERBOSCH, MIDDEL-AAR, and the high ground beyond. (See Map F) *None F see Map D*
- b. Upon securing the objective, a hasty defensive position will be organized in anticipation of relief by the 185 Brigade (British) the night of 3 October 1944.

3. Supporting troops:

- a. 320th Glider Field Artillery Battalion direct support of the 1st Battalion.
- b. Three (3) brigade (72) guns British medium artillery direct support of the regiment.
- c. One (1) platoon of tanks attached to each battalion assault.

After final preparation, liaison, and coordination, the battalion commanders departed the regimental command post.

1ST BATTALION PLAN OF ATTACK

The battalion commander, 1st Battalion, gave the attack order to the company commanders at 1400 1 October. Essential elements of the order follow:

1. Disposition of troops:

- a. 3d Battalion will effect relief of the right half of the defensive line now occupied by C Company, beginning at 0001 3 October.
- b. B Company will effect relief of the left half of the defensive line now held by C Company, beginning at 0001 2 October.
- c. C Company will occupy positions along the south edge of the MOOK highway with its left flank in contact with the right flank of A Company, and with its right flank in physical contact with B Company.
- d. A Company will remain in present position.

2. Disposition of weapons:

- a. Heavy machine gun platoon (4 guns) will occupy positions within C Company sector, with one (1) section on the left flank, and one (1) section on the right flank of C Company sector. Heavy machine guns will remain under battalion control and will support the attack by fire, displacing to the final objective on order.
- b. 81-mm mortar platoon remain in present positions, be prepared to fire pre-arranged concentration in support of the advance.
- c. Attached British tanks to remain in the town of MOOK, and prepare to support the attack by fire, and to displace on order.

3. Plan of attack:

- a. 1st and 3d Battalions will launch coordinated attack to seize the towns RIETHORST, KATERBOSCH, MIDDELAAR, and the high ground beyond, from present positions, beginning 0500 2 October.
- b. B Company will advance within its sector.
- c. C Company will support the attack from its position along the highway, and will advance, as its elements are uncovered, abreast of B Company.
- d. Upon seizure of the objective, a hasty defensive position will be organized in anticipation of relief by the 185 Brigade, night of 3 October.

The enemy situation at this time was known as to location, however actual or potential strength was obscure. The 1st Battalion had attempted to pass reconnaissance patrols through the towns to the front, however none were able to get through. It was definitely known that the towns were defended, and that the enemy main line of resistance was on the high ground beyond. The REICHSWALD FOREST, it was certain, contained an unknown force of enemy troops, supported by armor. The terrain to be traversed during the attack offered every advantage to the enemy and little to the attacker. The highest ground in the area was dominated by the enemy, however it was hoped that, although the ground was relatively flat, some degree of cover and concealment would be afforded by the numerous dikes and drainage ditches.

CONDUCT OF THE ATTACK

The regimental commander in his attack order stressed the necessity of enforcing strict noise discipline during the relief of the units prior to the attack. If the attack was to be assured any degree of success, secrecy and resulting surprise were essential. The enemy, by virtue of complete and unobstructed observation upon our front lines, and throughout the entire regimental sector, was well aware of our troop disposition. It was not unreasonable to assume that the enemy was aware of our thinly held right flank, however, due to the nature of the terrain, he did not favor this route as a logical avenue of attack against our position.

The terrain within our sector was as level as a table top for a distance of 1500 yards to the front. Any movement within that area during the hours of daylight would immediately bring artillery fire from the vicinity of the REICHSWALD. The enemy could watch our every move, and the slightest indication of the attack to be launched would be immediately picked up.

It was decided by the regimental commander that no artillery preparation would be fired. Only normal artillery fires were ordered to be fired during the night. The relief and shifting of troops was to be accomplished with the greatest degree of secrecy.

Coordination to a fine degree was necessary in order that the 3d Battalion, B Company and C Company, in their shifting of positions after midnight, would be totally prepared for the attack at 0500 that morning.

During the afternoon of 1 October, coordination and liaison was effected with the supporting artillery, both British and American. Each of the British artillery brigades provided a liaison officer to our battalion command post. The 320th Glider Field Artillery Battalion Liaison Officer had been with our battalion since 24 September. One

forward observer was assigned to each of Companies' B and C.

Concentrations were planned, and coordinated fire plan was prepared by the artillery liaison officers, and the 81-mm mortar platoon leader. Every foot of ground to our front was covered by a numbered artillery concentration.

An 81-mm mortar observer was assigned to each assault rifle company. The 81-mm mortar platoon, consisting of six (6) guns, was operating as an artillery battery, and were highly trained in the conduct of their firing.

Plans were made to issue extra ammunition, rations, and water to each assault company prior to the attack. During the conduct of the attack, ammunition resupply was to be hand carried along the axis of the main road.

The battalion aid station, battalion command post, and ammunition supply point were to remain in the town of MOOK. No displacement of either of these installations was anticipated.

The first elements of the 3d Battalion began to arrive in C Company position at 0030, and the shift of C Company to the left was initiated. B Company was halted in the town of MOOK, prior to their relieving C Company, in order for the company commander to make a final check on the condition of his men, and the status of ammunition and rations. Extra rations and ammunition were issued to B Company at this time.

The company commander of B Company was a newly joined Lieutenant, having been assigned to the battalion upon our return to ENGLAND from NORMANDY. A great number of the men also were replacements with no combat service prior to the HOLLAND operation. The men had the look of weariness and fatigue etched on their faces. Some of their uniforms were torn. These men had been attacking over almost impossible terrain for the past twelve (12) hours, and without rest they were

being committed to launch the main effort in the coming attack. The company commander seemed somewhat nervous, and tried very hard to conceal it. His indoctrination had been anything but gradual.

Due to the necessity of extreme quiet, and the maintaining of strictest caution in movement, the disposition of troops was not entirely accomplished until almost 0500, the time for crossing the line of departure. At 0500 the heavy machine gun platoon was still engaged in digging their gun emplacements.

However, at 0500 the attack was launched. The battalion commander established his observation post in the sector of A Company from which at daylight he would have a commanding view of the terrain. Communications were established by radio, and a wire line was laid from the battalion switch board to the battalion observation post, the heavy machine gun platoon leader, and C Company.

During this season of the year in the low areas in HOLLAND, especially along the rivers, a heavy fog descends each night and remains until approximately 0900 each morning. It was anticipated this fog would aid the attack by affording concealment after daylight, and by the fact that fog minimizes the distance that sound carries. It was also anticipated that by 0900, the company would have advanced to the protection of the small rise in the ground and the farm buildings about 1200 yards to the front.

The fog on this particular morning was exceptionally dense, and reduced visibility to practically zero. Contact with adjacent troops was practically impossible. It was necessary to advance practically hand in hand in skirmish line formation.

The attack progressed without incident. It was now 0900; the fog was still hanging heavily over the countryside. It would have been impossible for the enemy to have observed any indication of movement between the highway and the river. Not a sound of the enemy

had been heard since our troops had crossed the LD. No artillery fire was going over in either direction. Silence prevailed!

At 0915, B Company commander informed the battalion commander that contact had been lost with the 3d Battalion, and difficulty was being encountered in re-establishing contact. The 3d Battalion commander was contacted by radio to determine the exact location of the 3d Battalion troops. As the fog prohibited visibility, the 3d Battalion commander could not definitely place his troops on the ground. The 1st Battalion commander directed B Company, Upon receipt of this information, to continue the advance and attempt, while advancing, to re-establish contact with the adjacent unit.

C Company commander informed the battalion commander that approximately two (2) squads of his right platoon had been uncovered by the advance of B Company, and that they were now advancing abreast of, and in physical contact with, B Company. This action also uncovered the right section of heavy machine guns. To alleviate the possibility of the heavy machine guns having their fire ^{MASKED?} marked by the advancing troops, the heavy machine gun platoon leader was directed by telephone to ^{ATTACK?} attack the right section of the heavy machine guns to C Company, and further directed C Company commander to reinforce his advance by having this section of heavy guns advance with his company.

The attack continued, however the going was slow, due to the fact that visibility was limited, and also the fact that the advancing troops were weary and tired. Suddenly at 0930 the fog lifted, as if a light had been suddenly switched on in a darkened room. Everything on the battlefield stood out in bold relief. The attacking force, advancing in an upright position, were as statues on the ground. We were approximately 600 yards from our objective at this time. Almost immediately, enemy observation was utilized to their

advantage. From the vicinity of the REICHSWALD, heavy concentration of artillery fire began to fall on B Company and along the road in the C Company position. Machine gun fire opened up from the vicinity of the small rises in the ground to the front. Grazing fire was obtainable to the limit of the capabilities of the enemy weapons. Our own machine guns, together with the fires of C Company, were poured into the area to our front; however, its neutralizing effect was limited by the inability of the gunners to determine the exact location of the enemy weapons.

The first burst of machine gun^{fire}, coming from the small knob directly to the front of B Company, killed the company commander, the artillery forward observer, and the platoon leader of the 1st platoon. The men had unwittingly walked into a death trap. It does not seem possible that the fog, which had contributed so much to our ^{cause} course thus far, could suddenly lift without warning. The men of B Company had no chance to escape the devastating fire. There was a mad rush in all directions. Each man was endeavoring to seek cover, which was impossible to find.

Immediately upon observing the enemy fire coming from the general direction of the town of KATERBOSCH, the battalion commander called for ^a pre-planned artillery concentration. Two (2) brigades of British artillery fired a ten (10) minute concentration. It seemed as if the very earth was being pulverized by the high explosive ammunition. At the same time, the 81-mm mortar was firing observed fire on the suspected location of the enemy machine guns.

Artillery fire continued to rain on the road, and the low ground between the road and the river. Any indication of movement would bring ten (10) rounds of ^{enemy} artillery fire from the vicinity of the REICHSWALD. The battalion commander radioed an urgent request for air support, through the regimental commander. Fifteen (15) minutes

later, rocket firing spitfires were attacking the REICHSWALD, in an effort to eliminate the artillery positions and the enemy observation post, suspected to be located on Hill 90.

The attack was stalemated - there was no contact between the 3d Battalion and B Company. At 1100 the executive officer at the battalion CP excitedly called the battalion commander to find out what was going on. At this time the battalion commander had left the observation post for the B Company sector. He was frantically endeavoring to personally organize the disrupted company. The men were widely separated, and when called to, were reluctant to answer or give indication as to their location. The men of this company, having been continuously in the attack for the past twenty-four (24) hours were weary, nervous, and shaky. They had been driven to the limit of their endurance. Only forty (40) men could be located. The wounded were lying in the open, crying for help. The company aid men were doing their best to relieve the suffering. The situation was beyond comprehension.

The battalion commander, succeeding in organizing B Company in a hastily drawn up line, contacted the company commander of A Company and directed him to dispatch one (1) of the platoon leaders of his company to assume command of B Company. By 1200 the front line was fairly quiet. Contact could not be established with the 3d Battalion on the ground, due to the wide frontage now existing. A gap of four hundred (400) yards existed between the two battalions.

The regimental commander, having been informed by radio of the recent developments came to the battalion observation ^{post?} upon being informed of the situation, and with the prospect of a counterattack by the enemy through the gap between the battalions, he directed the first and third battalions to re-organize their present positions. *where?* He further informed the battalion commander that the 2d Battalion.

would be committed in the gap between battalions, and a coordinated attack would be launched during the night to seize the regimental objective. However, the 2nd Battalion could not be maneuvered into position prior to darkness.

The period from 1400 to 2000 was spent in re-organizing the companies. C Company was given a wider sector in order to compensate for the wide frontage occupied by B Company. During the afternoon, twenty (20) men from B Company were rounded up near the battalion CP, where they had withdrawn at the first outburst of fire in the morning. Ammunition was hand carried to the heavy machine platoon, and the riflemen. The ammunition of the 81-mm mortar platoon was replenished. Casualties from the morning action were evacuated. One section of tanks was displaced forward to a position in rear of the observation post to support the night attack.

The 2d Battalion began to move into position at 2100. By 1100 all elements of the regiment had accomplished coordination and contact was physically made on the ground with all adjacent troops. The regimental commander directed that the battalion would launch the attack at midnight. A ten (10) minute artillery preparation would be fired by 96 guns of British and American artillery, at H-10.

At 1130 the enemy launched a counterattack of company strength supported by two (2) tanks. The attack was directed at the right flank of B Company. The enemy penetrated the line on the boundary between the 1st and 2d Battalions for a distance of approximately one hundred (100) yards. Immediately at the first outburst of enemy fire, the battalion commander called for the 96 gun artillery preparation. For ten (10) minutes the earth rocked to the echoes of the exploding shells. The counterattack was arrested. The 2d Battalion immediately was ordered to advance to clear the enemy from the town of KATERBOSCH. The 1st and 3d Battalions were to advance on the

right and left.

The regiment could not assume the defensive. Any penetration of our lines would give the enemy free access to our rear areas. No reserve was available to stem the advance of another counter-attack.

C Company and B Company were progressing rapidly toward their objective. It appeared that the enemy was withdrawing in the REICHSWALD, and that the counterattack was to shield the withdrawal.

It was a weird, eerie night. A thick ground haze had settled over the ground to a height of about four (4) feet. To add to the effect, the artillery concentration had set fire to the houses within the towns to the front. It was a fascinating, unbelievable sight to watch men advancing with only their head showing, outlined against the background of the flames. The fog concealed the features of the men from the shoulders to the ground, giving the appearance of bodyless heads bouncing on the fog. It was enough to make your spine tingle.

The advance continued and by 0330, the battalion was on their assigned objective. The remainder of the night was spent in reorganizing, replenishing ammunition and water, and on consolidating the position for a hasty defense.

The men were tired, dirty, and sleepy. They had been subjected to hell on earth for a period of twenty-four (24) hours. The sole consoling factor to the troops was that come the following night, they would be relieved on position by the British, and a much needed, and well-earned, respite would be forthcoming. However short the rest period, it would be welcome.

The afternoon of 3 October, the battalion commander was contacted by officers of the 185 Brigade (British) relative to the relief to be effected after nightfall. The officers inquired as to

disposition of our front lines, and upon being informed that we had attacked the twenty-four (24) period previous in order to facilitate their effecting relief of our battalion, and to stabilize the general line, the British in turn informed us that we would not be relieved on position, but that the relieving force would occupy the positions from which we had launched our attack:

A small war was narrowly averted between Allied troops upon this information being disseminated; however, the relief was effected without undue incident, and after a brief rest period, the 1st Battalion moved north and occupied a defensive position overlooking GERMANY, for a period of fifty (50) days - - - - - but that would make another story.

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

In analyzing this operation, it is the opinion of the writer that, both from a strategical and tactical standpoint, this attack was totally unnecessary. The mission of the battalion in carrying out this attack, was to seize and secure a limited objective on the right flank of the division sector. The seizure of this objective would provide a more established line along the division front, on which the British Second Army, after relieving our division, could organize a sustained defense. The fact that the actual relief was effected on the line from which the attack was launched definitely indicates a lack of physical reconnaissance on the part of the British Second Army, and a lack of coordination between the Allied forces.

The loss of life, battle fatigue, and low morale suffered by this battalion totally outweighed any tactical gain that may have been achieved. The sole benefit that may be attributed to the conduct of this attack, may be expressed in the costly lessons that were learned. As a training exercise, this action was the most realistic in which the writer has to date participated.

The regimental commander, in order to launch a coordinated attack,

was forced to disengage his troops from an attack in one sector and immediately commit the full force of his regiment in another sector. The time allowed for physical reconnaissance and detailed planning on the part of the battalion commanders was inadequate. The 1st Battalion, having occupied the defensive position for six (6) days, was in a more fortunate position however, than were the 2d and 3d Battalions. The resulting confusion, loss of contact, and general disruption that occurred during the conduct of the attack was directly in proportion to the detailed planning that was effected prior to the time the attack began.

*more
detailed
reconnaissance
needed*

The battalion commander of the 1st Battalion, in committing B Company to the main effort in this attack, did not take into consideration the fact that this company had been detached from its parent unit for the past three (3) days, and that it had been attacking for the entire twenty-four (24) period prior to this attack. The

*This should
have been
covered in
planning &
preparation*

company commander of B Company had been assigned to the battalion only one (1) month prior to the landing in HOLLAND. He did not know, by sight, all the men in his company, and was not familiar with the general organization of the battalion. In contrast, C Company, with a company commander, who had fought with the company since SICILY, had been physically occupying the line of departure for a period of six (6) days, and had ample opportunity for reconnaissance and terrain evaluation. The battalion commander, however, in formulating

his plans, made the decision to completely shift C Company to the left sector, and commit B Company to the sector formerly occupied by C Company. This entailed a complete shift of troops, and no little confusion.

*stronger criticism
&
more definite
statements
needed*

This attack illustrates vividly the important part played by the terrain in the successful conduct of an attack against a determined enemy. The 1st Battalion, denied favorable terrain, and opportunity for detailed reconnaissance, was placed at a disadvantage

before the attack was launched. It is my opinion that a flank attack, emanating from the left sector of the 1st Battalion would have been more successful, due to the fact that some semblance of cover and concealment could be found in that area. The conduct of a frontal attack over level ground, completely devoid of cover and concealment, has very little chance of success, and certainly is a contributing factor to the heavy casualties that are certain to result.

The personnel assigned to A also should have been critically analyzed

The secrecy and surprise with which this attack was launched was superb. The utilization of the ground fog as an agent of concealment was extremely fortunate, and in planning for the attack, this factor was given careful consideration. The fog, although an asset at the beginning of the attack, definitely was a detriment to our cause in the later stages of the advance. The sudden lifting of the fog resulted in our men being completely exposed and helpless to defend themselves against the enemy fire. Had the attack been phased so that by the time the fog ordinarily lifted, the troops would be in a position to obtain cover from the enemy fire; the attack would have been successful, and less casualties would have resulted. The 1st Battalion, having occupied the position for six (6) days prior to the attack, was well aware that the fog lifted, suddenly and without warning, at approximately the same time each morning.

The attack was a success, if success can be measured by the fact that the objective was seized and secured. Success in this case was costly, far beyond the realm of necessity, even in war.

LESSONS

A few outstanding lessons are emphasized by this operation, and they should be well remembered:

- ✓ 1. Secrecy and surprise are essential to the success of an attack, when observation and favorable terrain are denied the attacking force.

2. If a state of complete understanding is to be developed and maintained between Allied Armies, fullest coordination of plans and troop employment must be continuous.

3. Air support, as an added weapon of the attacker, is the greatest potential factor in obtaining neutralization of enemy position.

4. (Artillery support in this attack cannot be praised too highly.) Without artillery support, no attacker in modern warfare can expect to win battles.

5. The utilization of climatic conditions, and weather conditions, as an aid to gaining secrecy and surprise in an offensive, is to be considered with utmost care. / Fog in this operation materially assisted the attacking battalion in the initial stage of the assault; however, by careful planning and phasing of the operation, the disastrous results that were produced by the sudden dispersion of the fog, could have been avoided.

6. The commitment of troops to battle, beyond the physical limits of their endurance, invites disaster. The battalion commander in this operation gave little consideration to the combat efficiency of the troops he selected to participate in the main effort of the battalion.

7. The most important lesson derived from this operation may be expressed in the words of the former Commanding General of the 82d Airborne Division: "Adversity is the lot of the Airborne soldier." This quotation equally applies to all combat troops. The horrors of combat, the loss of our friends, and the intangible results derived from war must become accustomed to. The next time it may be one of us.