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THE OPERATIONS OF THE 289TH INFANTRY (75TH INF. DIV.)
AT GRANDMANIL, BELGIUM, 21 DEC. 1944 - 2 JAN. 1945
(ARDENNES CAMPAIGN)
(Personal experience of an Anti Tank Company Commander)

Type of operation described: REGIMENT IN THE ATTACK

Captain Evert C. Way, Infantry

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INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operations of the 289th Infantry, 75th U.S. Division, in the Ardennes Campaign, from the march forward from the assembly 21 December to assembling of the regiment at Brisco, Belgium, 2 Jan. 1945. This narrative will trace the 289th Inf. in the following actions: The approach march, a meeting engagement, the attack of a village, the defense, and lastly the elimination of a counterattack that had reached our rear areas.

In order to orient the reader properly it will be necessary to describe certain pertinent facts relative to the unit.

The 75th Division was activated on the 13th of April, 1943 at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. The cadre was formed from officers and men of the 83rd Inf. Division. The fillers received were of the highest type, young, alert, and spirited. The average age of the Division at activation was 20.7 years.

Maneuvers rounded out a year of most rigorous training. Before this phase of training was completed however, we were called upon to furnish several hundred men as replacements for divisions in combat, and when the move to Camp Breckenridge in May, 1944 was completed, the really crippling blow fell. All Grade VI. and VII. men were alerted for overseas shipment. In addition to that, all available lieutenants received alert orders. Thus the Division was left with little more than a

cadre of experienced men once more. It can be seen that all unit training was lost as far as the Division was concerned.

We were receiving new men almost daily from various branches: Air Cadets, A.S.T.P., Anti Aircraft, Quartermaster, and many others. The new men were in various stages of training. Many had never fired the M-1 rifle. Few had any previous crew-served weapons experience and the majority were in poor physical condition according to Infantry standards. The morale of the Division was at its lowest ebb. Training of all types was immediately initiated. This was no small problem in itself, trying to determine which men were in need of certain types of training and in sufficient amounts consistent with the amount of time available.

After several months the Division found itself boarding ships in a New York harbor. Arriving in England on 12 November 1944 a month was spent in readying for combat, and in early December the Division was assembled at Yvetot, France. A three hundred mile motor march to the vicinity of Gulpin, Holland was completed when plans to relieve the 29th Division were interrupted by the German Ardennes Offensive. (1)

For events leading up to this offensive a short resume will be necessary. From the invasion of continental Europe 6 June, 1944 the combined Allied Armies had been delivering sledge-hammer blows against the once vaunted superman. Each time he elected to stand and fight, he would be decisively defeated and would reel backward to another defensive position and once more fight with the ferocity of a cornered lion until outmaneuvered and outfought. This fighting had been very costly in both men

(1) A-1

and materials. In October and November alone the Germans had suffered more than 300,000 casualties, swelling their total to 1,200,000 since the invasion. In addition to these staggering totals our air forces were wreaking havoc on German industries, marshalling yards, lines of communications and reducing the civilian morale to a dangerous low. (2)

As early as September Hitler had recognized the extent of the disaster that his armies had suffered in the west. It was imperative that the Allies be checked before it was too late. During the period from mid-September to mid-December the Allies had pushed forward to the west wall and had broken through in the Aachen sector.

While the Allied casualties were also very high, the commanders were to give the enemy no respite, never let him stop to regroup. In addition plans were being pushed and supplies assembled for an all out winter offensive that would bring him to his knees. In an attempt to delay the launching of this offensive the enemy decided that the best chance in the west lay in launching a counteroffensive. The only alternative lay in a battle of attrition that they knew could only bring complete defeat in the end.

The Allies were heavily committed along the Roer River, the Saar River and in the Vosges Mountain sectors, while in the Ardennes they were spread thinly over a wide sector. Thus the Germans counted on catching them entirely off balance, thereby delaying the contemplated offensive indefinitely. The immediate objective would be to cut the Allied lines of communication running laterally behind the armies, and subsequently

(2) A-4, p. 70.

those supplying the most immediate threat: The British Second, the American First and Ninth Armies.

TERRAIN ANALYSIS

The Ardennes area is approximately sixty miles in width and fifty miles in depth. It is bounded on the west by the Meuse River, on the east by the Our River, while the Orthe River, a branch of the Meuse, cuts through the center of the area. It is characterized by a series of high ridge lines rising to about 700 meters. Between these are many broad valleys. Contrary to popular belief the Ardennes has a number of excellent roads running east and west. According to a British survey there are at least 13 first class roads, and for each of these about three secondary ones. (3) The big disadvantage in these, from a military viewpoint, is that in many areas vehicles would be unable to move off the roads and in the case of armored vehicles could not maneuver into firing positions due to the sharp cuts and steep cliffs. In addition to this there are hundreds of small villages situated astride these roads, and as all the buildings are of heavy stone construction they all become potential fortifications from which a determined enemy can defend very successfully. During the summer months there are large areas of swamp land which would hamper the movement of vehicles. In the winter the weather constitutes most of the disadvantages. The temperature often ranges several degrees below zero and during certain periods the skies are heavily overcast so as to hamper observation and reduce air activity to a minimum. However, it is possible to conduct both offensive and defensive operations in this area at any time of year, if

(3) A-3, p. 83; Personal Reconnaissance.

these advantages and disadvantages are weighed and proper allowances made for them. (4)

THE ENEMY AND HIS OBJECTIVES

To carry out this mission the German strategic reserves had been carefully hoarded for such a purpose. In addition several corps from their Seventh Army, the Fifth and Sixth Armored Armies would be employed; in all, seven Corps comprising fourteen infantry and ten armored divisions. The Germans planned to carry the attack to the line of the Meuse during the first two days, with Namur and Liege as specific objectives and to Antwerp within three weeks. With the capture of the Belgian port, thirty-eight Allied divisions would be cut off from their supplies. (5)

The area chosen for the main assault was lightly held and had been relatively quiet for several months. In addition the weather in this sector at this time of year was almost certain to be bad, preventing the vastly superior Allied air power from exerting its full strength.

By making full use of the mobility of the Panzer Armies the Germans were able to concentrate their forces and launch an attack by the 16th of December without their full intentions being discovered by the Allied High Command, although the general location of these reserves was known at all times. (6)

The Ardennes sector itself was as familiar to the Germans as any portion of their own country. Not only had they used this same area for an offensive in 1914 and in 1940 but they had used the area for maneuvers during the time they occupied the continent. All road nets, bridge capacities, and other

(4) A-2, p. 49. (5) A-2, p. 70. (6) A-5, p. 102.

pertinent data had been noted with characteristic German thoroughness.

THE GERMAN ATTACK

Within 48 hours two main penetrations had been effected; one penetrating 20 miles into the area south of Malmedy capturing Stavelot, the other toward Bastogne. In addition the attack was 60 miles wide overrunning some American units and carrying others in front of them by the sheer momentum of their attack. (7)

The Allied reaction was immediate and quite different from the tactics employed against the German in his former assaults in this sector when the French and Belgians had only attempted to delay here with approximately two divisions and to establish their main defenses at the Meuse River. General Eisenhower had no intention of giving up this hard won ground. He therefore strengthened the shoulders of the breakthrough while other units fought fanatically to contain the flanks of gap. Armored and infantry divisions were immediately ordered from both the Ninth and Third Armies to move into line and build up strength on the flanks to be able to pinch off the penetration.

American troops have seldom been called upon to perform such tremendous tasks as these men attempting to halt the once more victorious German. General Eisenhower's faith in the American soldier was highly justified. Such places as St. Vith and Bastogne were among the more famous towns which bear mute evidence of this. (8) Our casualties were necessarily high but the German Jauggernut was being thrown so far off schedule

(7) A-2, p. 72. (8) A-11, p. 63.

that very early in the campaign Von Rundstedt must surely have realized the futility of this last great effort.

THE MOVE TO THE BATTLE AREA

By 21 December all plans for commitment in the Holland sector had been abandoned and the 75th Division was ordered to retrace its steps back into Belgium to become a part of the First Army to assist in stemming the tide of the German onslaught. On the morning of 23 December this move had been completed. The third battalion of the regiment was ordered to prepare and occupy positions along the Ourthe River in the vicinity of Durbuy. The balance of the regiment was to go into bivouac in the vicinity of Septon, Belgium. All day on the 23rd the third battalion could hear the struggle between the German Panzer units and the American Third Armored Division.

On the twenty fourth of December the 289th Infantry was attached to the Third Armored Division and ordered to move to a bivouac area in the vicinity of Brisco. This was to be a combination foot and motor march. The order of march was: Third battalion, second battalion, special units of the regiment followed by first battalion. Foot elements of third battalion neared the bridge across the Ourthe River when American engineers blew it on orders from higher headquarters. This necessitated a change of route and caused an additional march of approximately ten miles plus a four hour delay. Plans were being changed constantly even while the unit was on the march. To say the situation was fluid would be a gross understatement. It is doubtful if the "fog of war" was ever more complete during the entire war.

The Third and Seventh Armored Divisions had been fighting a series of delaying actions but the Germans were gradually forcing them back. (9) Upon reaching the town of Fanzell, word was received that the enemy was holding the area assigned to the 289th Inf. as a bivouac area. After consultation with the Armored Force Commander it was decided that the Regiment would move into this area as planned. It was estimated that these were only small enemy patrols which had been able to infiltrate thru the road blocks.

The 3rd Battalion was entrucked in engineer bridge trucks and moved to the vicinity of Briscol. Throughout the move there was considerable delay caused by extreme congestion of the roads, and a lack of adequate traffic control. The balance of the regiment was shuttled to the area by these same trucks. The bivouac areas had been altered slightly for the 1st and 2nd Battalions but the 3rd Battalion was to move as previously scheduled.

A MEETING ENGAGEMENT

Third Battalion was to move from Briscol to its assembly area approximately four miles on foot; weapons to be hand carried; order of march: I, L, Hq., M and K Companies. The Battalion was ordered to deploy with L Company on the left of the road, and I and K Companies on the right. After issuance of this order the Battalion Commander was ordered to report at once to regiment. The Battalion Executive, Major E. O. McDonald, started forward from the temporary command post at Briscol to take charge of the battalion. (10) On his move forward he was fired upon by an American Sherman tank. The

(9) A-6, p. 110. (10) Statement, Major E. O. McDonald, Battalion Executive Officer, 7 Aug. 1947.

shot went through the windshield of the jeep, some of the glass striking his driver in the eyes. Major McDonald shouted at the tank crew to cease firing and as his jeep had collided with the tank, he dismounted to attempt to disengage it. He was fired upon a second time. This time he could hear voices speaking German. By diving into the near ditch he was able to escape. Making his way through the woods he could hear the Germans moving cautiously down the road stopping every few minutes and shutting off their motors to listen. After travelling about a mile in this manner Major McDonald decided to risk moving back to the road and attempt to warn the battalion. As he arrived he found the battalion wire crew and radio vehicle. Thus he was able to contact the S-3 informing him of the situation. Capt. Wilbur Hilton, Battalion S-3, had returned from the front line companies just a short time before and realized Major McDonald had not overshot the battalion but rather that the tanks had moved through the bivouac area. (11) Lt.Col. Pretty, Battalion Commander, arrived at this time from his trip to regiment. (12) He and the S-3 started once more on foot for the bivouac area. Upon reaching the battalion they found it quite badly disorganized. There had been no time to dig fox holes before the Germans hit and losses were quite severe. However, one of the bazooka men from K Company had knocked out a German Mark V. This apparently discouraged the rest. It was estimated there had been seventeen tanks in all. On their withdrawal toward Grandmanil they had thoroughly sprayed the area with machine guns. This occurred about 0400 25 December. The companies were reorganized and had

(11) Statement, Capt. Wilbur Hilton, Battalion S-3 7 Aug. 1947

(12) Statement, Lt. Col. Harry Pretty, Battalion Commander, 7 Aug. 1947.

started to dig in when a battalion of medium artillery commenced firing on Grandmanil. However one of the guns was firing short and the rounds landed in the battalion area. Lt. Col. Pretty had no communications with this artillery unit and a message was sent to regiment which was in a similar situation. Finally by contacting 3rd Armored this error was corrected but not before many more men were hit.

Orders were issued for 3rd Battalion to send one company across the lower road leading from Grandmanil and two companies were to block the upper road. This was accomplished without incident. The organization of the defensive positions was progressing well.

SEIZURE OF THE HIGH GROUND OVERLOOKING LAFOSSE

First and 2nd Battalions were assigned boundaries and ordered to move forward to occupy the high ground overlooking the LaFosse-Amonnes highway, and to clear the woods of all enemy in their respective zones, contact to be maintained from right to left with the 1st Battalion on the right. They were to attempt to contact elements of the 290th Inf. attached to Combat Command B in the vicinity of Amonnes. Both 1st and 2nd Battalions had several brisk fights with the enemy in the woods, and due to the fact that the area assigned to the two battalions was well over five miles in width and the forest in the area was so dense they were experiencing a great deal of difficulty in maintaining contact between companies. All contact was lost between battalions.

Prior to launching the attack with the two battalions, Col. D. B. Smith had protested vigorously saying the area was

much too large for two battalions and requested assistance from 3rd Armored. (13) This was to no avail as there were no other infantry elements available and the terrain was impassable for tanks. Upon reaching the high ground both battalions made every effort to regain contact both committing their reserve companies and reorganizing their fronts in attempts to get greater distance between individuals. This was also impractical due to the density of the woods. Again assistance was requested and again none was available, so a thousand yard gap existed between 1st and 2nd Battalions.

Late in the day of 25 December Brigadier General D. O. Hickey, Commanding Officer of Combat Command A, 3rd Armored Division, received orders to seize the town of Grandmanil immediately. This town was situated astride the main highway leading from the south into Liege. Thus the possession of this small Belgian town became important to both the Germans and the Americans.

Accordingly at 2200, 25 December tanks and armored infantry launched their attack. This was repulsed by heavy anti tank fire from within the town. (14) General Hickey fearful of a trap in the town then ordered Col. Smith to establish a road block on the lower road, the block to consist of one platoon from Anti Tank Company, one platoon of the 703rd T. D. Battalion (then attached to 3rd Armored) and the regimental mines platoon. (15) When this was completed another attack was launched; this time K Company, 289th Infantry, was to accompany the tanks. The attack was launched at 0200; this time the attack moved part way into the town and bitter fighting was

(13) Eye witness, self. (14) A-6, p. 226. (15) Eye witness, self.

in progress the balance of the night. At 0800 it was determined that this force was too small and was ordered back. After the withdrawal, K Company was initially only able to account for forty-three men. A few more infiltrated back a short time later; however the losses were severe. (16)

At about 0900 hours the Germans decided to test our defenses on the lower road and moved out with sixteen tanks. This force was met by the road block and two German tanks were destroyed. Our forces suffered the loss of one of the self-propelled T. D. guns. (17)

THE SEIZURE OF GRANDMANIL

By this time winter had set-in in earnest. The roads were becoming increasingly difficult to travel and men were suffering considerably from the cold. L Company had been ordered to return to the upper road at 1100 but in moving from the road came under intense machine gun and flat trajectory fire and was unable to complete its move as ordered. Higher Headquarters still insisted on the seizure of Grandmanil and the entire 3rd Battalion, supported by five tanks, was ordered to attack this stronghold. Lt. Col. Pretty received the order from the Combat Command at 1355 to attack at 1420. He protested the time of attack as an impossibility, but was told the attack would move at 1420. Fortunately on his return to the battalion he met the Commanding Officer of L Company and issued his attack order as follows: "There will be five tanks pass here within ten minutes. You are to move into Grandmanil. You are responsible for the left portion of the town including this road. I Company will be on your right."

(16) Statement, Lt. Col. Harry Pretty, Battalion Commander, 7 Aug. 1947. (17) Eye witness, self.

Moving forward he contacted the I Company Commander and ordered him to attack astride the trail leading into Grandmanil from the north, and to maintain contact with L Company. One platoon of Anti Tank Company and one platoon of the 703rd T. D. was attached to 3rd Battalion for this attack. By 1800 on the evening of 26 Dec. the two companies were in the town as well as the tanks; however, fighting continued all night. By morning of the 27th the Germans had quieted down and K Company which had been in battalion reserve was systematically mopping up house to house. By 1000 hours they had secured 180 prisoners. The German losses in killed were approximately 100. In addition to this there were seven German Mark V tanks and considerable small arms and equipment destroyed. (18)

Grandmanil was immediately organized for defense. The Regimental Executive Officer Lt. Col. J. E. Stearns was dispatched to the town to assist Lt. Col. Pretty in his reorganization. The Regimental Mines Platoon was also sent to lay a ring of mines to the front of the area. In all some 3600 mines were laid and a great deal of time was spent searching for American mines which had been scattered promiscuously in the area and were causing casualties. There was no available record of these mines so this made the work considerably more difficult.

A counterattack was expected almost hourly and strangely enough as fanatically as the Germans had defended this strong point, they never made a serious attempt to regain it. They did throw artillery and mortar fire in periodically but that was the limit of their activity.

(18) Statement, Lt. Col. P pretty, Battalion Commander, 7 Aug. 1947

In the area held by the 1st and 2nd Battalions every effort was being made to establish contact. Attempts to clean out the gap by a detachment of the 509th Parachute Battalion (also attached to the 3rd Armored) were only partially successful. However, on the 27th of December the 2nd Battalion of the 112th Inf., 28th Division, was attached to 3rd Armored and ordered into this area to plug the gap. (19)

In all fairness to this battalion it must be said that they had just come from the front line in another sector, and were down to about 50 per cent effective strength. They arrived in the area about 1630, or almost dark and were ordered to attack immediately from a march formation with no previous reconnaissance of the area; obviously the armored unit had not seen this area or they would have realized the futility of such an order. This area was so densely wooded it was necessary to use the few foot trails to move. We had rained all types of artillery in this area to no avail for two days. By the time the battalion of the 112th established contact with the 1st Battalion of the 289th Infantry, darkness had set in. C Company, 289th Infantry was to push across this gap trapping the remaining Germans estimated to be one company. However, the left flank of the battalion from the 112th did not move into line as had been planned.

THE COUNTERATTACK

The Germans launched an attack directly at the Regimental Command Post and their strength had been grossly underestimated. Instead of one battered company of Germans it was learned the pocket consisted of two battalions of SS troops whose mission

was to cut the highway in front of Brisco. (20) All infantry troops had been committed except one platoon of the Anti Tank Company, and the detachment of 509th Paratroopers. The Regimental Command Post was forced to displace to Fanzell. The one platoon of Anti Tank Company was able to hold the left flank of this line until the 509th could launch a counter-attack from the left. Not so fortunate however was the Chemical Mortar Company of the 87th Chemical Battalion in the vicinity of Sadzot which was caught completely by surprise and before they could offer much resistance they were almost completely overrun. The Germans had been in position to observe every move in our rear area for two days and consequently made very thorough plans. They moved to our mortar positions, elevated the mortar tubes a few turns and commenced dumping 4.2 rounds on our own front lines. (21)

A furious fight continued throughout the night with the Regimental Command Post Guard on the right and the Headquarters Platoon and one gun platoon of the Anti Tank Company on the left. The Germans succeeded in occupying one of the houses on the Brisco highway but were ejected by point blank 57 MM fire at ranges of 100 yards. This apparently discouraged the enemy and he fell back to the south of the road. From this position he was able to direct very accurate artillery and mortar fire which caused a number of casualties. By 0800 the following morning the 509th Parachute Battalion with a wonderful display of courage attacked across the open ground south of the Brisco Road toward Sadzot where they met a platoon of light tanks from 3rd Armored, and the two units proceeded to

(20) Statement, Major Donald C. Flint, Regimental S-2, 2 Jan.1945.
(21) Statement of Officers and men of 1st Battalion on 2 Jan.1945.

drive the enemy back into the woods. The most impressive performance here was the fact that the parachute battalion at this time numbered approximately 80 men. This ^afete won the undying admiration of this green infantry regiment. The Anti Tank losses were eight men; the Regimental Command Post Guard lost five, and the Armored platoon lost two tanks, while the 509th's losses are unknown. There were slightly less than 300 dead Germans left in the area and an unknown number of wounded. This was the last serious threat the Germans made in this sector.

Once again an all out effort was made to close the gap that still existed between the 1st and 2nd Battalions. Both Lt. Col. H. Fluck of 1st Battalion and Major T. A. Gearhart of 2nd Battalion thinned out the front line positions and established a reserve to extend their flanks. The battalion from 112th Infantry attempted to move from 1st Battalion in the direction of the 2nd but was unsuccessful. The Germans had constructed individual bunkers--each fox hole had layers of logs overhead so it is doubtful if even a direct hit by artillery could have routed him. Most of the artillery striking in the area was exploded by striking the trees so the only casualties we caused were individuals who had strayed too far from their emplacement.

On 29 Dec. the 75th Division assumed control of this sector coupled with a shift in the Corps boundaries which put the town of Grandmanil in the XVIII. Airborne Corps sector. This change soon gave us the strength needed. The 3rd Battalion was relieved from its assignment in Grandmanil and

reverted to regimental reserve. The 3rd Battalion by now was in much better shape than the other two battalions. After its initial losses in the attack on Grandmanil it had suffered very few casualties. The men had been able to take cover in the houses or basements for at least certain portions of the day or night while in the other two battalions the men had been out in the severe cold for several days. The temperature hovered near zero and occasionally below, and the regiment had been unable to obtain any special winter clothing. The regular combat boot was found to be inadequate for these temperatures even though the men lined the foxholes with boughs and in some cases straw. The snow would melt under their feet causing the boots to become wet and eventually freeze. A great many cases of frost bite had to be evacuated and the dreaded trench foot began to make its appearance in some cases. Clean socks were provided daily and platoon leaders were required to visit each individual once a day to see this change was made and that each man exercised his feet. This helped a great deal but some cases continued to appear.

As soon as 3rd Battalion came out of Grandmanil plans were started for the elimination of this gap. This attack was launched the following day and was completely successful. Third Battalion drove all the way to the Aisne River. This cleared the path for the counteroffensive of the American forces in this sector.

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISMS

In making a study of this operation it will be seen that the 289th Infantry was committed for the first time in combat

as a separate regiment. It was given a frontal mission with no information as to troops on either flank and with enemy information extremely vague. This was responsible for a great deal of the difficulty encountered by the 289th Infantry in its operation. The fact that the regiment fighting in reality as armored infantry was able to fully accomplish its mission reflects great credit upon both leaders and men of the regiment. Those points in reference which admit of criticism are:

1st: It is the opinion of the writer that one battalion should have been motorized in the Septon area and moved to Grandmanil rather than moving the regiment by foot. Thus we could have been in a position to defend the town rather than having to seize it from the enemy.

2nd: The blowing of the foot bridge in the vicinity of Warre caused a serious delay in moving the regiment. In addition to being several miles in rear of the front lines, it is doubtful if more than a quarter ton vehicle could pass over it and therefore could have been of little value to the enemy.

3rd: The almost complete lack of enemy information, and in some cases faulty friendly information caused the 3rd Battalion to become involved in a meeting engagement with enemy armor.

4th: The lack of adequate communications between the 289th Infantry and Combat Command A caused a serious delay in the transmission orders, and other vital information. In addition this hampered our use of supporting fires.

5th: The attack of the armored elements on the night of Dec. 25 was in direct violation of the doctrine^e laid down by our Armored force; namely, tanks are at a disadvantage operating alone in villages. They need infantry as protection.

6th: It is a physical impossibility for a battalion to prepare and launch an attack in twenty five minutes as the 3rd Battalion was required to do. It was little short of miraculous that this attack succeeded.

7th: To cover the area assigned the regiment it was necessary to commit all three battalions. This was to invite disaster as there were no troops from which a reserve could be constituted, and as the terrain did not lend itself to the employment of armor it is easy to see how the enemy was able to make so deep a penetration in the Sadzot area virtually unopposed.

8th: The order for the 2nd Battalion, 112th to attack as soon as they reached the area of Briscoe was believed to have been unfair to the officer and the command under him. Not only was the area completely strange to this unit but they were nearly exhausted from previous engagements. There was little or no time allowed for this battalion commander to formulate any plans or to familiarize himself with the situation. Consequently he was unable to move as ordered. Had he been able to do so he would probably have hit the enemy attack on the flank disrupting the enemy before he hit the Sadzot area.

9th: It is believed that more emphasis should be placed on training the American soldier to operate in conjunction with tanks prior to reaching the combat zone. The potential power of the tank-infantry team is so great that every individual soldier should receive specialized training, not merely familiarization.

10th: The Regimental Commander was constantly harrassed during this operation by commanders insisting that the linear defense

should be abandoned and an island defense set up. That he was able to forestall this move is evidence of his good judgment. Even with the defense used the enemy was able to infiltrate two battalions. It is believed had the change been made the entire position would have been overrun.

In summary it must be said of these criticisms they were not deliberate violations of our standard teachings nor negligence on the part of our commanders, but rather they became necessities as a result of a very unusual situation. The enemy at this point had become desperate. We therefore were forced to counteract his actions with what we had available in an effort to gain the initiative once more, and if possible to turn his initial victories into a complete defeat. That we were unable to do this can probably be ^{at} contributed to two factors: The cunning of Von Rundstedt and very unfavorable weather which reduced our effectiveness in the air and restricted the movement of our vastly superior armor.

LESSONS LEARNED

In combat three things are of vital importance: Reconnaissance, security, and communications. The first must be made by each unit and time must be allowed by higher headquarters in its planning. The second is the responsibility of all units. Once we neglect security we invite disaster. The third is especially difficult when operating with units of another branch. However constant effort must be made by all commanders to accomplish this end.

There was no time allowed for reconnaissance in the first five days of this campaign. Units cannot operate efficiently under such conditions.

Towed anti tank weapons were found to be impractical to furnish the close support necessary. The 57 MM gun was found to be entirely too light to cope with the heavy German armor and the 88 MM gun.

When anti tank mines are laid in an area they must be carefully recorded and overlays submitted to higher headquarters. While this is required at present, all too often this was not done.

Courage and initiative such as displayed by the 509th Parachute Battalion can often turn the tide of battle.