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THE OPERATIONS OF G COMPANY, 379TH INFANTRY (95TH INFANTRY DIVISION) IN BREACHING THE MAGINOT LINE IN THE VICINITY OF FORT JEANNE D'ARC, 14 - 15 NOVEMBER 1944
(RHINELAND CAMPAIGN)
(Personal Experience of a Company Commander)

Type of operation described: INFANTRY COMPANY ATTACKING AND HOLDING A FORTIFIED POSITION

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THE OPERATIONS OF G COMPANY, 379TH INFANTRY (95TH INFANTRY DIVISION) IN BREACHING THE MAGINOT LINE IN THE VICINITY OF FORT JEANNE D'ARC, 14 - 15 NOVEMBER 1944
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ORIENTATION

INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operations of "G" Company, 379th Infantry, 95th Division in the breaching of the Maginot Line, 14-15 November, 1944, in the vicinity of METZ, France.

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

Following the Allied landings in NORMANDY early in June 1944, a surging drive carried the Allies across practically the whole of FRANCE.(1) Spearheads of each of the Allied Armies forced their way deep into enemy territory, and the impetus of their drive was so great that the enemy was unable to stem the tide that threatened to engulf them. However, the inevitable laws of supply and demand slowed the drive to a walk and finally stopped it. On 25 September, higher headquarters issued a restraining order to the Third Army preventing further movement until the order was lifted. (2) This was necessary to allow a buildup of supplies to replace those exhausted in the drive across FRANCE. (See Map A)

The Germans were now able to turn from a withdrawal to the defensive and regroup their forces.

In the zone of the Third Army, and specifically in the zone of the XX Corps, the drive had stopped short of German soil and had come to rest facing the tremendous fortifications and natural terrain obstacles in the METZ area.

THE GENERAL SITUATION

"All available intelligence showed that Fortress METZ consisted of an inner and outer belt of mutually supporting permanent forts and field

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(1) A-1
(2) A-2, p. 98

fortifications, situated on the commanding ground and individually capable of all around defense. The approaches were difficult and well covered by fire. The fortress was highly impregnable to a frontal assault." (3)

There were 43 forts in this system, exclusive of the Maginot Line fortifications, the forts around THIONVILLE, and the Siegfried Line (4), none of which was more than 5 miles away from METZ. (5)

The development of the fortified area began back in the 16th Century (6), and throughout the years to follow the greatest engineering minds of EUROPE had added to and strengthened the defense. With the collapse of the French Armies in 1940, the Germans inherited METZ and had little to do to bring the defenses up to their exacting standards. They did, however, add to the forts 210 mm and 105 mm cannon placed in steel revolving turrets capable of withstanding fire from high velocity, direct fire weapons (7), and honeycombed the forts with underground passages, supply installations, bombproof barracks and storage compartments.

The troops of the fortress were primarily personnel who had been attending the Officer Candidate and Non-Commissioned Officers Schools in the METZ area.(8) As this area had long been used in connection with these training programs, the instructor and student personnel had executed many field problems over the area to be defended and had an intimate knowledge of the terrain and the capabilities of the defensive system.

On 7 November, the go ahead signal was flashed - the restraining order had been lifted. (9)

XX Corps, believing that a frontal assault on METZ would be unsuccessful, evolved a plan of attack consisting of a 3 pronged encirclement: the

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(3) A-7,p. 134
(4) A-3, p. 7
(5) A-5, p. 829
(6) A-1
(7) A-9, p. 12
(8) A-7, p. 134
(9) A-2, p. 115

90th Infantry Division on the north attacking southeast from the vicinity of THIONVILLE; the 5th Infantry Division on the south attacking to the northeast, and the 95th Infantry Division in the center attacking to the east. (10) The 10th Armored Division was to cross the MOSELLE RIVER behind the 90th Infantry Division and drive deep to the SAAR.(11) (See Map B)

The major obstacle to this plan was the flooded MOSELLE RIVER which, according to French officials, had reached its highest point in 35 years. In some places the river was almost a mile wide.(12) As a result, it was imperative that the 90th Infantry Division establish and hold a bridgehead across the MOSELLE for the crossing of the armor.

The 95th Infantry Division in the center had been ordered to hold the broad front, execute a series of feints, and maintain a constant pressure against the enemy, taking advantage of any weakness that developed. (13) Subsequent developments were to change the role of the 95th Infantry Division from a minor to a major role in the attack on METZ.

After the 90th Infantry Division jumped off in its attack, it succeeded in crossing the MOSELLE with 8 of its 9 Battalions and sustained very few losses. Working feverishly, engineers succeeded in erecting a 300 foot pontoon bridge. The 10th Armored Division was poised and ready to cross. Before the work was completed, the already swollen river was hit by a flash flood. The pontoon bridge was unaffected and rode merrily on top of the crest. However, the approaches to the bridge had disappeared. They were under 54 inches of water. (14)

As a part of the 95th Infantry Division feints, the 1st Battalion,

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(10) A-8, p. 173
(11) A-1
(12) A-4, p. 4
(13) A-1
(14) A-2, p. 182

377th Infantry was to make a demonstration at UCKANGE in order to draw attention away from the 90th Infantry Division further to the north. (15)

As a result of the difficulty the engineers were having in the 90th Infantry Division Bridgehead, XX Corps ordered the 1st Battalion, 377th Infantry, to cross the river in force and establish a bridgehead. On 11 November the 2nd Battalion, 378th Infantry had crossed the MOSELLE at THIONVILLE and successfully established and maintained a bridgehead there. On the afternoon of 15 November these two forces made contact, and preparations were made to drive south toward METZ along the east bank of the MOSELLE.

As a result of the success of these two battalions, XX Corps altered its plan of attack and ordered the 95th Infantry Division to attack south into METZ astride the MOSELLE without waiting until the 5th and 90th Infantry Divisions had encircled the city.

The 95th Division planned to attack with three regiments abreast: the 377th Infantry (-) south to the METZ suburb of WOIPPY; the 378th Infantry (-) to attack the northern group of the western fortifications and assist the attack of the 377th Infantry; and 379th Infantry to attack the southern group of the western fortification.(16) Finally, TASK FORCE BACON (the two battalions east of the MOSELLE) was to attack south along the MOSELLE in conjunction with the 90th Division. (See Map C)

DISPOSITIONS AND PLANS OF THE 379TH INFANTRY

During the early days of November the 379th Infantry was disposed in position before METZ with 3 battalions in line. Facing the Regiment were the great southwestern forts of JEANNE D'ARC, DE GUISE, and DRIANT. In addition there were innumerable smaller defensive works interspersed between the forts along commanding ground. The Regimental objectives for

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(15) A-1
(16) A-1

the attack were the ridge northwest of VAUX and the high ground southeast of FORT JEANNE D'ARC. In order to accomplish its mission, the 3rd Battalion was redisposed to stretch along the entire Regimental front, while the 1st and 2nd Battalions were regrouped in assembly areas in preparation for the attack. The 2nd Battalion was to attack on the left to capture as an initial objective the high ground between FORT JEANNE D'ARC and FORT DE GUISE; on order, it would continue the attack to its final objective, the high ground southeast of FORT JEANNE D'ARC. (17) (See Map D)

THE BATTALION SITUATION

The 2nd Battalion was situated in the GRAVELOTTE area, and to its immediate front were a series of mutually supporting pillboxes and fortified bunkers along a high ridge about 1000 yards to the front. The military crest of the ridge was all that could be seen on the skyline from the line of departure as the fortified area lay some 500 yards behind on the same level as the military crest. Included in the fortified area was FORT JEANNE D'ARC which was situated on the dominating terrain in the area, the ridge running between FORTS JEANNE D'ARC and DE GUISE. During the early days of November the Battalion had sent out a series of patrols to develop the situation. These patrols brought in the information that the enemy held strong defensive positions all along the line with his main defenses along the ridge to the front. The Division Order of Battle Team estimated that approximately 8000 Germans opposed the Division, including the entire 462nd Infantry Division and about half of the 19th Infantry Division. (18)

November is usually the start of the rainy season in that region of FRANCE, and November 1944 was no exception. There was almost continuous cold, drenching rain day after day. Pools of water stood everywhere, and

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(17) A-1
(18) A-1

the mud was unbelievable. As a result, clothing mildewed, metal rusted, and trench foot ran rampant. To top off the misery, the weather turned freezing cold. (19)

THE BATTALION PLAN OF ATTACK

As previously stated, the 2nd Battalion 379th Infantry was to attack on the left in the 379th Infantry zone and capture the high ground along the ridge between FORTS JEANNE D'ARC and DE GUISE and, on order, attack and capture the high ground southeast of FORT JEANNE D'ARC. The Battalion Commander, Lieutenant Colonel Golson, planned to attack with Companies E and F abreast. G Company (-) in reserve was to move on orders of the Battalion Commander, and H Company was to support the attack with all of its weapons in general support. The attack was to jump off at 0545 hours, 14 November and would be supported by elements of the 359th Field Artillery Battalion, the 204th Field Artillery Battalion, Company B 607th Tank Destroyer Battalion, and by some miscellaneous captured Artillery. (20) G Company (-) was mentioned as being in reserve. As both the 378th and 379th Infantry planned to bypass FORT DE GUISE, a gap of some 1000 yards would exist between the assaulting echelon of the two Regiments. Consequently, Colonel Chapman, Regimental Commander of the 379th Infantry, ordered the 2nd Battalion to send a reinforced platoon to a "misnamed" farm, LEIPZIG FARM, which was located in the center of the gap and guarded the approaches to FORT DE GUISE. The mission fell to G Company. (21)

THE BATTALION ATTACK

At 0500 hours, 14 November all hell broke loose, and, after 45 minutes of Artillery preparations, E and F Companies, and the 2nd Platoon of G Company with 1 light machine gun and 1 60 mm mortar attached, jumped off in

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(19) Personal Experience
(20) A-1
(21) Personal Experience

the attack led by Lieutenant Colonel Golson. Following close behind a rolling barrage, E and F Companies reached their initial objective, the high ground, by 0850 hours and captured a number of pillboxes. In the attack, however, Lieutenant Colonel Golson, Battalion Commander, Captain Burdick and Captain Carter, Company Commanders of Companies E and F were seriously wounded, and a platoon of F Company was virtually wiped out by fires from a strongly fortified bunker position which refused to fall. Captain Gattis, Battalion S-3, took command of the attacking companies and continued the attack. By 1100 hours the Battalion was on the final objective and preparing to repell the counterattacks which were sure to come. During the afternoon, three German counterattacks, one right after the other, hit the Battalion, but the position was held.

In the meantime, the 2nd Platoon of G Company had reached LEIPZIG FARM and occupied it. Lieutenant Eberle, the Platoon Leader, immediately set up a perimeter defense and awaited developments. During the night of 14 November the farm was heavily shelled by the Germans,but no ground action took place. Consequently, no further consideration will be given to the actions of this Platoon.

Back in the Battalion C.P. Major Richmond, the Battalion Executive Officer, learned of Lieutenant Colonel Golson's wound and immediately started across the battlefield to join the Battalion and take command. When last seen, he was moving across the skyline 1000 yards away. From this time on until about 2000 hours the night of 14 November nothing more was heard from Companies E and F, the machine guns of H Company which had displaced forward to the ridge, or Major Richmond. At the Battalion C.P. confusion was the keynote. The Company Commander of H Company who had remained at the C.P., and the Battalion Adjutant had the same date of rank as Captains, and the burning question at hand was who was to be the Battalion Executive Officer. The Company Commander of G Company received no orders,and,

to his knowledge, the situation was not reported to Regiment. About 2000 hours that night Lieutenant Kloss, the Platoon Leader of the ill fated platoon of F Company, dragged himself back to the C.P. Seriously wounded, he had lain on the ground in front of the bunker that had refused to fall awaiting darkness in order to get away. His story outlined the fact that the German lines that had been breached in the assault had closed behind the attacking companies. About 2100 hours a platoon leader of one of H Company's Machine Gun Platoons arrived at the C.P. His story verified that of Lieutenant Kloss' and added that: Major Richmond was in a bunker atop the ridge with the remnants of H Company's Machine Gun Platoons; that the machine guns were out of ammunition; that the position was under constant Artillery and small arms fire, and that the position would fall if counterattacked. He further stated that Major Richmond wanted G Company to move out, carrying all the machine gun ammunition it would, to his position and be prepared to make a night attack against the bunker causing all the trouble. Right here it should be stated that the Company Commander of G Company did not know where Major Richmond was; that, due to the nature of the terrain, the bunker to be attacked could not be seen from the line of departure, and that the Platoon Leader from H Company, who was to lead G Company, said he thought he could lead G Company to Major Richmond's position.

NARRATION (See Map E)

About 2300 hours 14 November, G Company (-) left the vicinity of the Battalion C.P., 87 cold, wet and heavily burdened men in a column of files. The pace set was slow as the night was pitch black, and the guide

was the only one who had any idea where he was going. After about thirty minutes of walking, the G Company Commander ran to the head of the column and halted it. In policing the column, he had been able to count only 43 men. The guide, claiming to know the area, left the column to go and find the lost men. About an hour passed and still no missing men and no guide. Suddenly, from the 300 radio which had been on a listening alert, came a transmission. It was the Battalion Adjutant who, by some means, had had himself acknowledged as Battalion Executive Officer. He stated that the guide had found the missing men of G Company, but after finding them had been unable to find the Company again and had led the men back to the Battalion C.P. He further stated that G Company was to continue on with its mission; that the guide from H Company estimated that if G Company followed an azimuth of 103 degrees it would run into Major Richmond's position, and lastly, the guide had stated that the position was recognizable by the barbed wire around it and by three tall trees behind it on the horizon. The Company Commander protested continuing on such a mission when he hadn't the slightest idea of where he was or where he was going. However, he was given a direct order to continue on. In view of this order, the Company Commander started the column moving on an azimuth of 103 degrees. A light snow had started falling about an hour earlier which, added to the darkness of the night, cut the visibility down to about 15 feet. About 0100 hours, the lead scout was seen to stumble and fall to the ground. The Company Commander moved up to his side and found that the scout had stumbled over some barbed wire. A reconnaissance brought out the fact that the wire stretched for about 75 yards and curved away at each end. It was obvious that this wire surrounded some sort of a position, but what? No tall trees could be seen on the skyline, and not a sound could be heard in the immediate vicinity. The Company Commander was at a loss as to how to determine if this was the bunker where Major

Richmond was holed up when the problem was solved for him. Some man in G Company, in moving, stumbled and discharged his weapon. With the report of his rifle, the echoes seemed to rebound a thousandfold. First a ball of flame burst about 50 yards in front of the Company and a panzerfaust whistled over the men's heads. Then an unknown number of machine guns and machine pistols opened up from beyond the barbed wire. Being relatively sure by now that this was the wrong bunker, the Company Commander somehow got G Company turned around and started to the rear. Fortunately, the route of advance was clearly outlined in the snow and the Company stumbled and fumbled its way back to its starting position at the line of departure, and went back to its assembly area. Reporting to the C.P., the Company Commander was told that G Company would move out at daylight the following morning with the same mission.

About 0600 hours 15 November, G Company again started out with its 87 men led by the guide from H Company. A heavy ground fog obscured everything. However, this time everything went well, for the Company arrived at the H Company bunker without having had a single shot fired at it. The ammunition was taken by the H Company machine gunners and the G Company men crowded into the bunker, dropped to the floor and fell asleep. In the meantime, Major Richmond was explaining to the Company Commander of G Company that on the previous day E and F Companies had made a penetration in the defenses atop the ridge and had driven on to their final objective, but that the lines had closed again and E and F Companies were isolated. He said he had tried several times to go forward and join the companies but each time he had barely escaped with his life. The main position, that is the one from which the bulk of the fires seemed to come, was about 500 yards north on the ridge line. This was the same position

at which the Platoon of F Company had been practically annihalated. With this, he ordered G Company to assault and take the position thereby opening up the supply route to the 2nd Battalion.

The men from G Company were aroused from their sleep, deployed in a line of platoon columns, and started out. Major Richmond had indicated that a nose extended from the ridge toward the east and that the objective was located on the ridge at the head of the nose. With this in mind, G Company swung back to the northeast to the foot of the nose. When this position was reached the Company was deployed with its two platoons abreast in a line of skirmishers: the first Platoon on the right on top of the nose, and the 3rd Platoon on the left on the north slope of the nose. The Company Commander accompanied the First Platoon with a 300 radio, while a second 300 radio accompanied the 3rd Platoon. The light machine gun was given the mission of accompanying the first Platoon and neutralizing any enemy automatic weapons that opened fire from within the position. The two 60 mm mortars, because of the lack of any defilade, were told to follow by about 300 yards and to join the Company on the objective as soon as it had fallen. The Platoon Sergeant of the Weapons Platoon and each of the mortar squad leaders had the SCR 536's belonging to the Company Commander and 1st and 3rd Platoon Leaders. The Platoon Sergeant was to follow immediately behind the First Platoon and observe fire for the two mortars. As this plan had been evolved back at Major Richmond's position, it was only a matter of minutes after reaching the nose before the Company was ready to go. The ground fog still hovered over the ground and visibility was extremely limited. The Company had advanced about 500 yards when suddenly it broke out of the fog, and the fortified bunker was clearly visible about 100 yards to the front. On order, both Platoons took up

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assault fire. The light machine gun opened up, spraying the area. In a matter of seconds shells from the two 60 mm mortars were falling on the position. The Germans had been caught flatfooted. With the first burst of fire, the German fires retaliated. Machine guns and machine pistols crackled incessantly. However, all of their fire was unaimed and over the heads of the men. In order to maintain the advantage and keep the defenders' heads down, the First and Third Platoons leapfrogged each other. One would advance while the other poured fire into the position and vice versa. By this time, the Germans had called down an Artillery barrage, but G Company's advance had been so rapid and unexpected that the fire was all falling to its rear. This leapfrogging continued until finally, in one of its bounds forward, the 3rd Platoon reached the barbed wire. T/Sgt. Standerfer, Platoon Sergeant of the 3rd Platoon, jumped up on the wire and over and charged into the trenches. He was closely followed by the entire 3rd Platoon. The First Platoon, seeing their success, quickly followed. Immediately a wild melee took place. Suddenly, as quickly as the action had erupted, calm ensued. G Company held the trenches and had killed about 12 Germans and captured another 20. Half of the oval trenchworks were assigned to each Platoon and a reorganization of sorts was effected. It was found that of the 87 men who had started in the attack, only 38 unwounded men remained.

A questioning of the prisoners revealed that approximately 60 Germans including their Commander, a Major, had fled from the trenches and had taken refuge in the main bunker. They added that there were radio facilities in the bunker, as well as food and water.

To digress for a moment and describe this bunker position will give the reader a clearer picture of the action to follow. The position consisted of an oval shaped trench with concrete pillboxes spaced at intervals around

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it. The pillboxes were of two types; small structures that would house a machine gun and several men, and the larger type that had sleeping accomodations for about 10 men. In the center of the oval was the main bunker. It was about 80 feet long and about 20 feet wide. When viewed from the west, all that could be seen were two ventilation pipes sticking up out of the ground. From the east, however, you could see the rear wall of the bunker with its steel door and firing slits, all of which was about 15 feet below ground level.

Apparently the German Commander was making good use of his radio, for he was directing Artillery fire in on top of the position. At extreme risk to themselves, the Company Aid men went out on the battlefield and brought the wounded men back into the pillboxes where they rendered such first aid as they were capable. In the meantime, a more detailed reorganization was going on. It was found that the light machine gun and the mortars were completely out of ammunition, and there were less than 20 rounds apiece for the M-1s. Four German machine guns that had jammed during the attack had been abandoned in the pillboxes. They were taken out, cleared, and then redisposed on the north, south, and east sides of the perimeter. All ammunition was taken from the seriously wounded, and search parties went out and took the ammunition from the dead. Both 300 radios were found to be inoperative, and as the 536's were only in the Company net, the Company was now out of contact with any other unit.

From all outward appearances, the mission had been accomplished, the position had been taken, and the Company was prepared to defend it. However, there were more live Germans under the position than there were Americans over it. The Artillery continued to fall in monotonous regularity, and long range machine gun fire was being received from FORT JEANNE D'ARC about 2000 yards to the south, and from another bunker position about 700 yards to the northeast.

A group of about 20 Germans launched a counterattack against the position from the woods about 500 yards to the front, but it was broken up by the fires of the captured machine guns. In the meantime, various means were tried to get the Germans out of the bunker. Noted demanding their surrender were dropped down the air shafts, grenades soon followed, and lastly, an attempt was made to plug up the air vents with mud and snow, but the attempts were of no avail.

By this time darkness had fallen and a runner was sent back to the Battalion C.P. to inform them of the situation and to request assistance in the way of ammunition and demolitions. About 2200 hours a part of the Regimental Scouts, a special patrol group of Regiment, arrived on the position with the ammunition and several beehive charges. It was decided to blow down the door to the bunker immediately rather than spend the night sitting on a keg of dynamite. The light machine gun was set up to fire at the slit in the door while two men crawled down the steps and placed a charge against the lower hinge of the door. With the explosion, the machine gun opened up and poured fire into the gap that had been sprung. The gun was ordered to cease fire, and in a moment a piece of white rag was stuck through the slit. Thereupon, the German Commander, surrendered his garrison of 60 men. (22)

The taking of this strong point did not open the supply route to the 2nd Battalion, as the following day the 3rd Battalion was committed in the zone of the 2nd Battalion to assault other bunker positions along the ridge. However, it is believed that G Company's accomplishment made the attack of the 3rd Battalion the following day considerably easier and greatly aided in the opening of the route.

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(22) Personal knowledge, statement of T/Sgt.John Dorsey,18 November 1944

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

1. FAILURE TO EXPLOIT THE PENETRATION

The failure of the Battalion to widen the gap in the enemy's defenses after the penetration was made, resulted in the eventual isolation of the Battalion. Once the breaching had been effected, G Company should have been immediately employed to systematically attack and destroy successive bunkers on each flank of the penetration thereby widening the gap in the base of the penetration. The strength of such a defense lies in its flanking fortifications. Therefore, in order to reduce effectively the strength of such a defense, all positions that were mutually supporting should have been assaulted, the weapons destroyed or removed, and the emplacements demolished.

2. CHAIN OF COMMAND

The failure of the Battalion Commander to designate the chain of command in the Battalion resulted in a considerable period of confusion and inactivity. When Major Richmond went forward to assume command of the Battalion, he failed to designate the new Executive Officer. This would have been a minor point had he been able to maintain communications with his C.P. However, after he lost communication, one third of the fighting strength of his Battalion remained idle while two officers each attempted to elevate himself to that position. The result was a lack of decision and complete inactivity.

3. DUAL MISSION

In giving G Company the mission of acting as a carrying party for a large quantity of ammunition as well as being prepared to assault a strong key point, the Battalion Commander failed to consider the physical condition of his troops and greatly reduced their effectiveness. Had G Company

come under fire while carrying the ammunition, it is doubtful if the ammunition would have reached its destination, and also it would have been necessary for the Company to deploy under fire thereby running the risk of incurring heavy losses.

4. LACK OF PLANNING AND RECONNAISSANCE FOR A NIGHT ATTACK

When the Company received orders to be prepared to make a night attack it was totally unprepared for such an operation. Due to the nature of the terrain and the distance of the objective from the line of departure, the objective could not have been seen by the Company Commander, nor had he been able to make a reconnaissance due to concentrated fire on the battlefield. As a result, there had been no detailed plan made for the conduct of the operation. The decision to attack should have been made while there was still sufficient daylight to make the detailed plans so necessary in this type of operation.

5. THE OBJECTIVE

The capture of the objective selected by the Battalion Commander did not accomplish the mission of opening the supply route to E and F Companies. The objective should have been all of the positions on the flanks of the penetration. However, it is not believed that such an objective should have been assigned to an understrength Rifle Company considering the time that had elapsed since the original penetration had been made. It would be more logical to assume that such an objective should have been given to the reserve Battalion in view of the fact that a new penetration had to be made in order to accomplish the mission.

6. SURPRISE

In the attack of the morning of 15 November, the assaulting Company was able to seize a strongly defended position in spite of numerical inferiority as a result of the surprise effected. The heavy ground fog denied the enemy observation and warning of the attack, and at the same time enabled the Company to reach an assault position before its presence

was discovered. Even after discovery, the surprise effected enabled the Company to seize the initiative and gain fire superiority which resulted in the capture of the position.

7. ASSAULT FIRE

While it is accepted doctrine than when the supporting fires are lifted, the assault echelons deliver assault fire and close with the enemy, its effective use by G Company is noteworthy of mention. It should be remembered that the Company launched its attack by stealth, and not under cover of supporting fires. The first shots fired by the riflemen of G Company in the attack were those of assault fire, and its volume and accuracy from the very beginning was largely responsible for the successful assault of the position. Had there been any diminution of the fires, it is quite possible that the defenders might have been able to gain fire superiority in which event, it is doubtful if the position would have fallen.

LESSONS

1. Once a breach has been effected in a fortified defensive line, additional assault troops should be employed immediately to widen the penetration by attacking positions on both flanks of the gap.

2. The chain of command in any organization ahould be definitely established so that there is no period of indecision, but a smooth continuation of effort whenever a key position is vacated.

3. A unit should not be given a dual mission with dissimiliar objectives which tends to reduce the unity of effort of that unit.

4. Night combat should be preceded by thorough reconnaissance and careful planning for an attack against an easily identified objective.

5. An objective should be so selected that its capture would enable a unit to accomplish its mission or would aid in the accomplishment of the mission.

6. Surprise may influence the tide of battle in favor of a numerically

inferior attacker if complete and unexpected.

7. Assault fire, if vigorously employed, not only serves to keep the defender's heads down, but also has a psychological effect on the assaulting troops in that it spurs their incentive to close with the enemy.