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OFFENSIVE ACTIONS IN SNOW
AND EXTREME COLD

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFACE	2
INTRODUCTION	4
DISCUSSION	8
CONCLUSIONS	33
BIBLIOGRAPHY	34
ANNEX A	35
ANNEX B	36
ANNEX C	37

PREFACE

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In order to understand more fully the following discussion of offensive actions in snow and extreme cold, the author desires to draw to the attention of the reader the following definitions which will help to establish the various winter climatic zones in the Northern Hemisphere.

The first of these areas is the Arctic Region. This is the portion of the earth's surface which has an average temperature of below 50°F for the warmest month and an average temperature of below 32°F for the coldest month.

The second region is the Sub-Arctic. In this area we find the following variations of temperature. An average January temperature of below 32°F, an average temperature for the warmest month of above 50°F, and less than four months with an average temperature above 50°F.

The third area with which we are concerned is referred to as the Winter Warfare Zone. This is that large area in which forces equipped for orthodox campaigns in temperate climates, would require modifications in equipment, training and organization in order to conduct sustained mobile offensive operations during the months of December, January and February.

In addition to the above definitions, the

reader's attention is directed to Annex A which graphically portrays the winter climatic zones.

"The point of view expressed in this paper is that of the author - not necessarily that of The Infantry School or of the Department of the Army."

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Harold W. Humphrey
Major Infantry

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this monograph is to examine a number of small unit engagements to determine what factors must be taken into consideration by commanders when their units are undertaking offensive actions in snow and extreme cold.

There are many reasons why commanders should concern themselves with a study of this nature. First, the Army's peacetime mission is preparedness. This means being ready to fight over any kind of terrain, and in any kind of climate. World War II proved that often times cold areas can be military hot spots. Examples of this was when the Finns fought the Russians in the Karelian Isthmus and along the borders of Lake Ladoga in weather conditions which were prohibitive, and when the Russians fought the Germans in the extremely cold areas around Leningrad and Smolensk. In fact, one of the reasons given for the Germans' defeat in that campaign was that their soldiers were poorly equipped for cold climate fighting. In addition, our own history shows that the American Army fought a number of cold weather engagements in World War II and Korea.

Secondly, we must not forget the strategic importance of the Arctic area. General of the Army, H. H. Arnold stated: "If there is a third world war, its strategic center will be the North Pole." (6:73) There is a possibility that an enemy may in-

vade the North American Arctic. If such a situation arises, it will be necessary for armed forces to repel these invasions and recapture immediately any bases which may be lost. Even though it has been established that air power will play a large part in Arctic operations, the army will still have a major role. There will be the requirement for airborne and air transportable troops to secure vital areas or to recapture or destroy any bases, weather stations, guided missile sites, or other installations which may be erected by the enemy. (2:64)

Thirdly, the necessity for the study of snow and extreme cold has been recognized by the army for many years and tests, experiments, and large scale exercises and maneuvers have been conducted in an attempt to find the solutions to the problems created by this climatic condition.

Finally, in order to avoid mistakes in the future, it is necessary to examine some of our past actions to try to determine what we did that was right and those things which should be avoided if we are to conduct successful cold weather operations.

When we think of snow and extreme cold, we must consider that we have varying degrees, and we must plan for the climate which exists not only in the temperate zone but also the sub-arctic and arctic regions. Although climate is naturally the most important consideration affecting operations in the

Far North, other physical factors have an important relation to the climatic conditions. These are such things as unusual seasonal variation of day and night, brilliance of moonlight when the terrain is covered with snow and the fact that the arctic winter night is not nearly as dark as one might think.

It should be noted that "snow and extreme cold" is a general term and conveys a different meaning to different people. Some think of it as being the Arctic region only - while others may include the temperate zone.

All the engagements in which our forces fought could not be classified in the strictest sense as Arctic warfare; however, if we were to ask any soldier who fought along the Gothic line in the Italian mountains, in the Ardennes in the winter of 1944, in the Aleutian Islands or in Korea during the winter months, we will find that he will say that the weather was extremely cold.

This study will deal with an examination and analysis of only those actions in which our own troops were engaged. It is true that the Germans fought numerous actions against the Russians in snow and extreme cold and the Russians encountered the same conditions when they were fighting Finland, but since it is our own concepts, tactics and doctrine with which we are concerned, it is felt that we can best improve

our methods of operation by critiquing our own past performances.

In order to get an adequate sampling of how our units operated, the actions have been taken from Attu and Europe.

It will be noted that we did not always learn something new in each action. In fact, we were often times committing the same errors in places which were divorced from each other in time, distance and command.

DISCUSSION

When examining offensive actions in snow and extreme cold, consideration must be given to the action on Attu of the Battalions of the 17th Infantry Regiment, 7th Division. The reason for this is that this unit assaulted the Japanese held Attu Island in a joint Army-Navy operation that involved for the first time a complete exposure to problems presented by cold weather assault. Furthermore, Attu was the only real cold weather objective in World War II which featured a determined amphibious assault against tenaciously defending enemy forces ashore. (4:663)

After much secrecy, the 7th Division which had not previously seen action and which had been training as a motorized unit in the desert at Camp San Luis Obispo, California, was moved to Fort Ord, California. From there the division was transported to positions from which it could launch an attack against the enemy holding the island of Attu. (11:4)

On 11 May 1943, the 17th Infantry began its two phase operation against an enemy strength which was estimated at three thousand two hundred men. The 1st Battalion, 17th Infantry Regiment which was designated as the Northern Force, was to land on Red Beach some three miles north of the main Japanese Camp which was located at the end of the west arm of Moltz Bay. (Annex B) In addition to the 1st Battalion, the

Northern Force consisted of a field artillery battery, Cannon Company and a small number of supporting troops such as an antiaircraft battery, medical, engineer and communication units. (11:6)

When the landing had been completed, the mission of the Northern Force was to attack and clear the west arm of Holtz Bay. After effecting a junction with the Southern Force moving north over Jarmin Pass, the Northern Force was to complete the capture of the Holtz Bay area and the valley to the southwest. (Annex B)

The Southern Force which was the main body was to land on the beach of Massacre Bay. This force consisted of the 2d and 3d Battalions of the 17th Infantry Regiment; the 2d Battalion of the 32d Infantry Regiment; three batteries of 105mm field artillery; and auxiliary troops. The mission of this force was to advance rapidly up Massacre Valley, seize Jarmin Pass and Clevesy Pass and move into the Holtz Bay area to join up with the Northern Force. The combined forces were first to hold and finally to destroy the enemy in the Chichagof Harbor area. (10:10)

Company F, 17th Infantry Regiment was the first unit of the Southern Force to move forward after coming ashore on Massacre Beach at 1620 hours, 11 May 1943. The company was assigned the mission of protecting the right flank of the battalion by blocking the pass through the mountains from Sarana Bay and then moving up the Sarana Valley and joining the battalion in the vicinity of Clevesy Pass. The Company Commander decided to use

the 1st Platoon with a section of light machine guns and a 60 mm mortar squad on the right flank of the company. It is the experience of this platoon which will give us an insight into the operation.

It was evident from the beginning that Company F could expect very little support from the artillery. Immediately after landing the artillery had started to move forward, but some seventy-five yards from the water's edge, the crews had their first experience of Aleutian terrain. The treads broke through the tundra, and it was impossible to advance further. Since some artillery support was essential, the gun crews swung their pieces around and set them up pointing in the general direction of the objective. (11:26)

By nightfall the 1st Platoon of Company F had struggled up the mountain. The ground was new to the men. The tundra, the holes and the snow made it difficult for them to travel. After moving all night, the unit arrived at the Sarana Valley entrance to the lower pass by early the next morning.

The plan was to move along the top of Gilbert Ridge, but the terrain was so difficult and some of the slopes so steep, that by the end of the afternoon the platoon had to work its way down into the Sarana Valley. By pushing forward that night and by continuing to move until daylight, the unit arrived a short distance inland from the western shore of Lake Nicholas. (Annex B) There they dug in on the side of the hill. This not only afforded them a measure of protection but also allowed

the water to drain from the foxholes and slit trenches which they had prepared. The members of the platoon were wet, cold and hungry. They had been on the move over rugged terrain and under conditions of weather which required the utmost in physical exertion. Contact had been lost with the remainder of the company and the morale of the unit began to wane. (11:28)

The rest which had been hoped for in this position was not to be had. The daylight revealed that the Sarana Valley was swarming with Japanese. It was about this same time that the enemy soldiers discovered the elements of Company F and sent out a combat patrol to eliminate the platoon.

In order to find a better defensive position, the platoon leader immediately took his men farther up the slopes where they could take advantage of the rough terrain and height. The platoon was engaged by the enemy and stiff fighting took place until the Japanese were beaten off.

Noon time found the exhausted men of the 1st Platoon of Company F dragging themselves up Gilbert Ridge seeking better positions. After locating a spot from which they could defend, hastily organized positions were prepared. From these positions there could be seen approximately three hundred Japanese digging in on the Sarana nose across the valley. Since the men did not feel secure in their present location, the platoon leader moved the unit farther up the ridge. The con-

dition of the men was bad. The platoon sergeant had been wounded and did not want to move. The aid man was sick and vomiting and said that he was unable to continue on. The only alternative for the platoon leader was to leave the two men in the shelter of a nearby rock with all of the remaining rations and move the rest of his men on up toward the top of Gilbert Ridge.

When they arrived near the crest, they came to a nose of ground which appeared to be an ideal spot for defensive positions. Prior to digging in, the platoon leader decided to make a reconnaissance of the area. His plan was to send one squad around the left side of the nose and to take the rest of the platoon and explore the opposite face. This was the last time that the platoon leader had his unit together.

The left squad which had ten men in it became lost. The men were sick and many of them were vomiting green bile. They were completely exhausted, wet, hungry, depressed and barely able to move along. In spite of this the squad picked its way along in the fog over the snow field on Gilbert Ridge. In the late afternoon of the 14th of May, the fog lifted without warning. Below the men could see the beach installations and they started down toward them. Almost at once the Americans of the shore party, not being able to identify them, opened fire at the figures

which were outlined against the white background. The men ran and slid across the snow to the nearest rocks where they took cover and waited. Finally, one member was able to climb down the wet, slippery mountainside and reached Massacre Valley at approximately 0300 hours on the 15th of May. He was outfitted with dry clothes, given his first meal in three days, and then volunteered to lead the rescue party back up on the mountain to bring down the men who had remained behind. (11:31)

While this was taking place, the platoon leader with the balance of the platoon had come across a Japanese position on the crest of Gilbert Ridge. His unit immediately assaulted the position and killed the eight enemy soldiers who manned it. After digging in, patrols were run for twenty-four hours in an effort to locate the lost squad. After having located the area where the other squad had started down across the snow, the platoon leader led his men back along the crest of the ridge and climbed down to Massacre Valley without further incident. (11:27)

The 1st Platoon of Company F, 17th Infantry Regiment started out on its mission from the beach at Massacre Bay. It was only a few days until it was back on the beach without having successfully accomplished its assigned mission. The concept of the operation was sound and the tactics used did not differ from the accepted doctrine of offensive action. What

then are the factors which contributed to this failure?

An analysis of this small portion of a large operation indicates a number of considerations which must be applied or weighed when a unit undertakes a mission under conditions which exist in an area which may have snow or extreme cold weather. It was evident that the 7th Division went to Attu not fully prepared for what was found. In fact, it seems that the secrecy of the Attu operation turned out to backfire and was detrimental to the proper appreciation of the problems which are to be faced in cold weather warfare. The unit had trained extensively in the desert at Camp San Luis Obispo, California and not a man in the Division was acclimated to the extreme wet-cold which he was later to encounter. Time did not permit the training of the men in the essential expedients for taking care of oneself under Aleutian conditions; consequently, the men had little appreciation of the conditions which were ahead. Since the men did not have impressed on their minds the obstacles which they might encounter, they became almost ineffective when they met adverse conditions such as an exacting enemy, rugged terrain and the weather. It cannot be said that training alone would have made this a better operation; however, cold weather training combined with the opportunity to have become acclimatized would have helped the men to dispell any apprehension which they might have had about fighting in snow and cold.

Proper equipment is another consideration for this type of warfare. The Division went to the Aleutians with the best equipment which they had available, but it was not the type which would enable a person to withstand the weather in that area. It was reported that the first few nights on Attu were the worse for the troops because none of the proper equipment had been provided. The climate demanded that rubber shoepacs, water repellent jersey lined trousers, sweaters, mountain jackets, water repellent sleeping bags and flame tablets be issued to every man. Since this equipment did not exist at first, the casualties which were exacted by the wet-cold exceeded those inflicted by the Japanese. Reinforcements which arrived later had been given proper foot-gear and equipment and experienced no frostbitten feet or other exposure difficulties traceable to improper clothing. (11:5)

Logistical support must be given special consideration in this type of warfare. It is true that logistics play a big part in every type of operation, but in snow and extreme cold our time tables and experience factors are greatly modified. The problem of getting supplies to those who need them is monumental. Mobility is reduced and adequate road nets are practically non-existent. As a result, the burden of transporting supplies normally falls on human carriers. In the case of the 1st Platoon of Company F, the men

went without food for three days. When the fact is realized that personnel living in extreme cold must have additional nourishment to build energy in their bodies, it could not be expected that a unit moving out to make contact with the enemy could be effective under such circumstances. (6:84)

Evacuation of wounded and sick is another problem which assumes gigantic proportion in areas like the Aleutians. The Platoon Leader of the 1st Platoon of Company F was unable to take care of his Platoon Sergeant who was wounded and his aid man who was ill. Warmth which is necessary in the treatment of shock could not be provided. Furthermore, a means of transporting these men was not available and they were left behind out of necessity.

Snow obscures terrain features, which increases the chances of becoming lost. This was evident when the ten man squad of the 1st Platoon lost its bearings and began to move back toward the beach, instead of eventually connecting up with the main portion of the platoon.

Camouflage is still required in a snow covered area. The Platoon of Company F was quickly discovered by the Japanese who were in Sarana Valley because they were unable to camouflage their positions and themselves. Camouflage must be thorough. This not only means that camouflage discipline must be observed by the troops but also that special equipment such as

white parkas, white covers for headgear, white overall trousers or some adequate substitute must be issued. In addition, troops must be careful not to disturb the snow cover in front of their positions by unnecessary trampling or allow the snow to become blackened in front of the positions by firing too much without moving to a new location.

Winter cold and snow necessitate special measures concerning the carrying, moving and bringing into position of infantry weapons and supporting weapons. The elements of Company F were able to carry their organic weapons; however, the support artillery was hampered greatly from the moment they landed on the beach.

When men are committed to action in snow and extreme cold and do not have the proper clothing and equipment, and are forced to go without adequate food, the desired combat effectiveness no longer exists. Morale and esprit disappear and the thought uppermost in their minds is survival. Not survival from the enemy soldier, but survival from just as real an enemy, the elements.

Attu was not the only area in which American troops encountered snow and extreme cold during World War II. Other engagements were fought in the Winter Warfare Zone. In order to determine whether considerations differ in this zone from the Arctic and Sub-arctic, an examination of a unit action in the

Ardennes is appropriate.

The 274th Infantry Regiment, 70th Division arrived at Niederbronn, France, on or about 0400 hours, 4 January 1945, and found the following situation: Troops of the 275th Infantry, sister Regiment of the 274th Infantry, had occupied positions north of Phillipsbourg, France, until the Germans had unexpectedly made a push and driven them back. The attack was sudden and heavy, and the 275th Infantry had suffered excessively in both men and equipment, including numerous artillery pieces. The 275th Infantry had launched a counter-attack, but the Germans, in turn, delivered one attack after another. The 275th Infantry was desperately in need of help, but had managed to hold in the vicinity of Phillipsbourg. (8:24)

The mission of the 1st Bn., 274th Infantry Regiment, was to attack and alleviate the pressure on the remnants of the 275th Infantry, and to relieve them from the line if possible for reorganization. The Battalion Commander's plan of attack was as follows: The enemy occupies the northern portion of Phillipsbourg. Companies I and K of the 275th Infantry are along the southern edge of town. The 1st Battalion, 274th Infantry will attack at 0900 hours, 4 January 1945 and capture the hills west and north-east of town. (Annex C) Company B will furnish two squads to go with the tanks down the main road into Phillipsbourg. The rest of the company will dig in on the outskirts of town. One heavy machine gun section

will be attached to both Company^A and Company C. The rest of Company D will follow. (8:24)

Everyone was cold and tired after having walked approximately five miles to a location south of Phillipsbourg. A thick snow had been falling and the ground was covered with a heavy white snow under which there was a sheet of ice. At dawn on the morning of the 4th of January, the 1st Battalion began to move up the winding valley road toward Phillipsbourg. It was difficult moving over the snow covered terrain. Reaching the edge of town, the units began to deploy in the woods. Company A emerged from the woods and moved out across an open field. Once out in the open, Company A began receiving intensive mortar and artillery fire. Casualties were heavy, but in spite of the fire, most of the unit was able to get to the foot of the first hill. There they were sheltered from high angle artillery fire, however, the Germans who occupied the position began to pour heavy small arms fire into the attackers. The men of Company A tried to push up the hill. The snow was deep and it was almost impossible to get a good footing. Unable to gain the heights at this time, the Company Commander sent a platoon around to the flank with the mission of getting in behind the Germans. Even though the platoon tried to move stealthily, they were soon spotted by the Germans and were immediately taken under fire. After repeated costly efforts, Company A

still was unable to dislodge the Germans from their dug-in positions on the top of the hill. At this time, the Company Commander decided to let the artillery try to blast them out. The artillery zeroed in on the hill and then opened up with everything they had. This continued until late afternoon at which time the defenders withdrew. Company A then moved up without any trouble and took over the hill. (8:27)

At the same time Company A was attacking, Company C advanced on the left guiding on the railroad track. (Annex C) Heavy fire from buildings within the town slowed progress considerably. To unseasoned troops getting their first test of combat, the whine and crack of incoming shells gave the impression that their own batteries were falling short. With the abrupt realization that it was enemy fire, they moved to the left away from the draw in which the fire was concentrated. They had advanced only a short distance when they were caught once again in the midst of another barrage. The Company Commander ordered the 3rd Platoon to probe for a route to the company objective. The Platoon Leader decided to have his 3rd squad flank the enemy by moving through the clearing on the right. The squad started out under direct observation and fire, but in spite of the retarding effect of running through deep snow and by taking advantage of every defiladed spot in the ground, they managed to make it across the clearing safely. Proceeding on, they knocked out the two

machine guns, which were holding up the advance of the platoon. Setting up a base of fire, the squad enabled the rest of the platoon to advance to the next hill. The attack proceeded along the side of the hill and after clearing the last two houses on its side of town, and overrunning a pillbox at the end of the objective, the rest of Company C moved up to defend the hill. (8:28)

Meanwhile, Company B was coming in for its share of action. Assigned the mission of having two squads ride the tanks into town, the Company Commander selected the 3rd Platoon for the job. As the unit reached the first house, enemy artillery began to land about it. Shell fragments sprayed the area and the infantry dove for the roadside. Since the Germans had perfect observation on the road, they kept pounding away with a heavy concentration and the tank-infantry team was unable to move. The tanks were sliding from side to side on the slippery surface and were unable to maneuver effectively. One tank was able to get into defilade behind a small hill and the remainder had to back up. For approximately thirty minutes, the enemy artillery continued to pound the two squads. At dusk the infantry dug in and stood guard for the tanks which had remained with them. The men tried to get some rest but were unable to do so because of the cold weather. The equipment had been left in an old foundry at

Niederbronn prior to moving into the attack, therefore, blankets were not available to help ward off the cold. (8:32)

The attack had reached the following phase: Company C had captured the hill west of town and was now making preparations for the defense of its objective. Company A was in possession of its first hill, but it was too late and the men were too tired to continue on towards its final objective, which was the hill northeast of town. Two squads of Company B with the platoon of tanks were dug in on the southern outskirts of Phillipsbourg. (Annex C)

Plans were made during the night for Company A to resume the attack in the morning. The attack was to begin at 0900 hours, and a thirty minute artillery preparation was to precede the jump-off. The A Company Commander planned to have the 1st and 3rd Platoons lead the attack. At 0900 as the last rounds of the preparation were landing on the enemy positions, the platoons of Company A started across the field on the double and were about halfway across when the first enemy artillery started falling. It was thick and came in fast. At the same moment enemy machine guns opened up on them and casualties became heavy. The attack soon became disorganized but the men still pushed forward. The snow-covered rocks and half frozen paths made footing treacherous. In numerous places, the men had to slide because it was too

slippery to walk. At this time, the Battalion Commander appeared in the zone of action of Company A. His presence seemed to inspire the men to take the hill at all costs. Often times held up by fire, but not for long, the Battalion Commander moved forward with the unit, and when the objective was taken he was present. (8:38)

Simultaneously, Company B had resumed its attack through the town with the assistance of the tanks. The first platoon had replaced the third and had moved out. As the unit moved into the main street of Phillipsbourg, a machine gun opened up and the members of the unit scattered and tried to take cover. Since the men had taken cover throughout the buildings and the noise of the exploding shells was deafening, it was difficult to get the unit assembled and moving again. Finally a few of the men started forward with the tanks and by pointing out targets to the tankers, they were able to clear the houses in B Company's sector of town. (8:39)

Another day of intense fighting had come to an end and Company B dug in for the night. Companies A and C were on their objectives and Company B was in the town. The mission assigned to the 1st Battalion was completed. The town was clear and the 275th Infantry Regiment had been relieved. Such was the situation on the night of 5 January 1945. The feeling which existed in the units could best be shown by the

following statement. "In front of us we could see hill after hill, all looking just like the one we were on --- covered with evergreens and snow --- it was a depressing picture." (8:39)

The hill was clear now, so the rest of the company moved up and start digging positions. There was only one entrenching shovel for about every three men and progress was slow. The men were numb from lack of sleep and cold weater - their clothes were wet. It was a gigantic task to dig a hole in the frozen earth in order to prepare for possibility of a counterattack.

The attack of the 1st Battalion, 274th Infantry Regiment during the cold weather of January 1945 was successful. It proved again that engagements can be fought successfully under the adverse conditions brought about by the weather and climate. Even though the mission was accomplished, it is still beneficial to view this action in retrospect and to analyze the plan and tactics employed.

Regardless of the weather, the Battalion Commander's concept of operation did not differ greatly from accepted doctrine. The Battalion was attacking with two companies abreast and was utilizing its tanks in the best way that the terrain would permit. Units advanced by using fire and maneuver. The supporting artillery was employed effectively, and the attack was preceded by an artillery preparation. All of this reemphasizes the point that a commander does not necessarily face a change in tactical doctrine or

principles when he is fighting his unit in snow and extreme cold.

What lessons, if any, can be learned from this operation? It is evident that there are a number of considerations which are worthy of being noted and remembered for future operations in snow.

First of all, in snow it is necessary that proper camouflage suits be supplied. This need was brought out again by the fact that the troops of Company A were quickly spotted by the defenders and brought under fire. Even when crossing open snow covered areas, white clothing will help reduce the advantage that the defender has over the attacker by making the attacker a more difficult target.

Another consideration is that men are not able to move as fast and as far when they are trying to negotiate snow covered terrain. The men of the assaulting units begin to tire more quickly and the attack will begin to lose momentum. This need for rest makes it necessary for units to stop and dig in at a time when possibly a little added push and "staying power" would enable them to continue on and seize the objective. As a result of this "slowing down tendency", troop commanders must work with a different set of time factors. An operation in snow requires more time than an operation under normal conditions; therefore, a commander cannot expect to seize a large number of objectives in a short period of time. Attacks in ex-

treme cold should be directed at a series of limited objectives as done by the Battalion Commander, 1st Battalion, 274th Infantry.

Simple plans have the best chance for successful execution. This is definitely true when operating in the Winter Warfare Zone. The reason for this is the fact that the assaulting elements must divide their attention between two enemies - the enemy which must be driven from the holes and the weather. When men are cold and miserable, the tendency is to concern themselves with alleviating their suffering and not with the execution of a complicated plan of maneuver.

Strong leadership is required when men are fighting in snow and extreme cold. It is true that leadership is needed in every type of operation; however, when men are tired and cold there is the chance that the morale of a unit will decline with the resultant loss of offensive power. The Battalion Commander of the 1st Battalion exercised leadership by appearing in the area where the going was toughest.

Detailed planning must take place for every phase of this type of operation. There are not small tasks when operating in extreme cold. Every detail is highly important to the maintenance of combat efficiency. The attack of the 1st Battalion was planned thoroughly and was well-coordinated, but there were still some details which were overlooked. The

planning did not include provisions for supplying the men with sufficient blankets with which they could shelter themselves while they were trying to obtain some rest before continuing the attack on the second morning. Neither had plans been made to supply dry, clean socks. As a result, the effectiveness of the unit began to decline due to the losses sustained from trench foot and frozen feet.

Plans should be made to move units as far forward as they can by vehicle or some other type of conveyance. This prevents excessive fatigue prior to the attack. Rapid assault in snow requires a great amount of physical exertion and troops which are not rested do not have the capability of waging an aggressive attack.

Another small unit action which brings to our attention a number of considerations governing offensive actions in snow and extreme cold, is the engagement in which elements of the 16th Infantry Regiment took part.

In January 1945, the 16th Infantry Regiment, 1st Division, had been moved into a rest area in Belgium. The unit had fought long and hard and was destined for a rest. However, conditions became such that it was necessary to commit the 16th Infantry at the northern corner of the "Bulge" near the towns of Faymonville and Schoppen, Belgium.

After detailed planning, the attack jumped-off on the morning of the 15th of January, 1945. The

Regimental Commander had decided to commit both the 1st and 3d Battalions. The mission of the 1st Battalion was to seize the town of Faymonville, while the 3d Battalion was assigned the job of attacking the ground to the northeast of town.

The attack of the 3d Battalion was successful from the beginning. It was so successful that within an hour from the time the attack started, one platoon of Company I was in position with the remainder of the company fighting to get into a few buildings which were located near the company objective. Company L, which was on the right of Company I, progressed more slowly, but was eventually successful. (7:195)

The 1st Battalion did not enjoy the success which the 3d Battalion had with its attack. Company B had maneuvered its way into the north edge of Faymonville and proceeded to fight from house to house. Company A was pinned down outside of town and after fighting for two hours, eventually became disorganized. Company B was able to get one tank into Faymonville and with this added fire power, proceeded to move farther into the town. Company A was able to reorganize by 1112 hours, 15 January, and it took up the attack once more.

Casualties began to mount up by this time. Each of the assaulting companies of the 1st Battalion, Company A and Company B, had sixteen. The reason for the increased number of casualties was that the houses in Faymonville were widely spaced and the attacking

force suffered losses every time it advanced from one to another. (7:196)

When night came, both Battalions held up and dug in, and plans were made to continue the attack with Companies B and C on the morning of the 16th of January.

The attack started at day-break, and B and C Companies moved on through Faymonville, searching the houses, and meeting very little resistance. The bulk of the German forces had withdrawn during the night. At 0900 hours, the Battalion Commander of the 1st Battalion reported that the town was cleared. This enabled the Regiment to go after its next objective which was the town of Schoppen, Belgium. (7:197)

On the 19th of January, the 3d Battalion was assigned the mission of seizing Schoppen. The plan was for Companies I and K to attack abreast and Company L in reserve.

Prior to H-hour the weather took a turn for the worse. It was reported that it was the most adverse weather conditions encountered by the unit during all of its campaigning in World War II. Snow was knee deep on the level and drifted to two and three times that depth where the wind was able to blow it. Conditions were aggravated by the fact that the snow continued to come down so hard that it resembled a blizzard. Observation was almost impossible. Snow plows were used to open roads so that chow jeeps could

get through with breakfast for the troops before they jumped-off. The engineers had worked all night with bulldozers and tankdozers in an effort to open the roads, but this was to no avail. Vehicles became stuck, and almost all of the roads were blocked. The only vehicles that could attempt to travel were the small tracked "weasels", horse-drawn sleds borrowed from the Belgium natives, and tanks. (7:197)

In spite of the weather conditions the 3d Battalion pushed out with the tanks. The companies progressed slowly because the men were having difficulty moving through the snow. Walking through the drifts was so exhausting that it was necessary for the troops to halt frequently to rest. The weapons company men, especially, with their mortars and machine guns were hard put to make any progress whatsoever. While it was wearing on the troops of the 3d Battalion, the snow did give the attackers the advantage of surprise. Conditions were so bad that the Germans were not only unable to observe the advance, but it was likely that they did not even suspect that an attack was being made.

Our forces were able to surprise and quickly eliminate enemy outposts. Some resistance was encountered in the town, but most of the enemy were sheltering themselves in houses and cellars and were unprepared to fight. The town was cleared by noon, 19 January 1945, and Company K moved out approximately five hundred yards to the high ground south of

Schoppen. (7:198)

"The condition of the men was terrible. Wherever possible, men were in houses but hundreds had to remain in the open. Wet clothes froze on them; there was a shortage of blankets and it was impossible to keep socks dry. Men were coming down with bad colds, were developing trench feet and when neither of these two illnesses occurred, they were so miserable in general that their continued determination to fight is one of the finest evidences of the quality of these American Infantrymen." (7:198-199)

The successful operation of the 3d Battalion, 16th Infantry is added proof that a unit can conduct aggressive offensive actions under adverse climatic conditions. This attack, like the two discussed previously, has given to us a number of factors which should be taken into consideration by all commanders when planning operations in snow.

It is evident that mobility is cut down considerably, not only for wheeled vehicles but also for the men traveling on foot. This does not mean that a unit becomes bogged down completely. Tanks are able to travel and can be used to give added support to the assaulting units. Furthermore, a commander can increase his mobility by the use of special equipment such as "weasels" and by employing bulldozers and tankdozers to keep the supply routes open.

An all out effort was made to get a hot meal to

the troops before the attack began. This indicates that the commander realized the necessity for adequate food so that his men would be able to stand up under the strain which was ahead. If a cold meal had been served, it would have required less planning and less effort; however, in all probability the morale and physical fitness of the men would have been affected.

The weather which was heretofore considered a detriment actually came to the assistance of the attacking units. The enemy did not believe that an attack would be launched under the existing conditions; therefore, the element of surprise was achieved.

No new tactical plan was involved in this operation. Established doctrine was followed and the mission was accomplished.

CONCLUSIONS

The three operations discussed in this monograph establish the following conclusions:

1. An understanding and successful solution of the special problems of living, moving, and fighting in a cold climate is a prerequisite to the consideration of winter warfare tactics, which are basically no different from the tactics of operations in normal terrain and climate.
2. Existing offensive tactics can be applied successfully provided commanders give adequate consideration to the limitations imposed by extreme climatic conditions.
3. The offensive action must be carefully planned, taking into consideration the condition of the troops, the weather and the terrain, and conditions to be encountered so that the offensive pressure can be maintained until the objective is taken.
4. Troops should be given cold weather training and allowed to become acclimatized before being committed in any of the winter warfare zones.
5. Troops must have adequate cold weather clothing if they are to be expected to be effective.
6. Special equipment is required to furnish units the mobility necessary to undertake offensive action.
7. When fully understood, snow and extreme cold can become an ally by enabling the attacking forces to gain the element of surprise.

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ANNEX C

