

THE INFANTRY SCHOOL  
FOURTH SECTION  
COMMITTEE "H"  
FORT BENNING, GEORGIA

PE 2-30

ADVANCED COURSE  
1930-1931

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF A BATTALION COMMANDER  
AND BRIGADE SIGNAL OFFICER, 105th FIELD SIGNAL  
BATTALION, IN THE SOMME OFFENSIVE, SEPTEMBER  
29 - OCTOBER 12, 1918.

Captain John W. Stanley, Infantry

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## Introduction

This monograph is based almost entirely upon memory. <sup>Search</sup> ~~Search~~ as I may, I have been unable to locate any official records of the detail operations of the 105th Field Signal Battalion during the Somme offensive which commenced on the morning of September 29, 1918, other than, it was a part of the 30th Division.

The 105th Field Signal Battalion was organized at Camp Sevier, S. C. in October 1917. Its organization consisted as follows:

- A. Radio Company,
- B. Wire Company,
- C. Outpost Company.

The Outpost Company was divided into four sections, one section being assigned to each infantry regiment. The Radio Company established communication principally with Brigade, Division and Corps. The Wire Company was principally concerned with communication from Division Headquarters to Brigade, and from Brigade forwarded to Regiments. The Brigade Signal troops operated a T. P. S. set (ground induction) and telephones from Brigade to Regiments. From Brigade to Division, Tube set and telephones. The Division plan of communication was prepared in the office of the Division Signal officer as an annex to the Division order for the attack. This plan was delivered to the battalion commander for execution. On September 25, 1918, the 105th Field Signal Battalion relieved the Signal troops of the 75th British Division on that portion of the front that the 30th Division was to attack. The battalion commander had been previously notified by the Division Signal



This circuit proved quite a success for a while, at least, but of course like most everything else connected with modern warfare had its disadvantages. Its chief advantage was: a shell could strike and break any one of the lines or even two of them, but so long as all three were not cut in a single frame, it would not put the line out of commission. Its disadvantages were: it took too long to construct, also after the offensive had started and the enemy in retreat, the brigade and regimental command posts changed so often, time would not permit of its construction. This of course was not learned until after the offensive had commenced. During the remainder of the day and until about 9:00 PM this system worked like a charm. The other telephone lines were kept repaired and worked satisfactory. The T.P.S (ground induction) worked satisfactory. Shortly after 9:00 PM telephone communication began to go out, one by one each line would go dead. We had several men out all the time patrolling the lines and testing in to brigade command posts at intervals of five to ten minutes. Within a few minutes after all the lines to the 118th Infantry had gone out, we received a very excited call from one of our linemen over the 117th Infantry lines,

reporting that about 200 British tanks were crossing directly over all our lines and leaving them a tangled mass. Of course we knew immediately what this would mean, i.e., more and more trouble. After making a hurried investigation it was learned that 44, not 200, British tanks were moving into position ready for the jump-off next morning at 5:50 AM. Even if there were, only 44 tanks instead of 200, as stated by the excited soldier~~s~~, they did plenty of damage. Strange to say, the laddered circuit to the 118th Infantry was not damaged as badly as we expected, and the same kind to the 117th Infantry was not touched. The single lines to both regiments were all out. We reached the 118th Infantry through the 117th switchboard, of course this overcrowded them considerably. As stated before, we still had the T.P.S. working but this did not suit the brigade commander, he must have his telephone. Now here is where the battalion commander must make a quick decision. The attack on the Hindenburg line was to start at 5:50 AM, communication must be established to its highest degree and maintained, especially until zero hour. Well, here is what the battalion commander did. He ordered all available men of the battalion, together with all officers out, with orders to get all lines repaired, and keep them repaired until zero hour. Under heavy shell fire every available officer and man went out and with extreme difficulty, the lines were repaired and communication established by 4:30 AM and maintained until the brigade commander moved his command post. The heretofore bawled out signal officer now received the congratulations

Sept. 30

What time  
was this?  
when?

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of the brigade commander. During the next two or three days very little trouble was experienced in maintaining communication. Of course there would be a break of the lines at times but not for very long. We had learned more about war by this time, and our organization had somewhat undergone a change from the original plan. About October 6 or 7, late one afternoon near sunset as I recall, Colonel "A" at Division Headquarters called Colonel "B" of one of the regiments in the assault echelon over the telephone, and the conversation ran something like this: Colonel "A" to Colonel "B", "How is everything coming along down there?" "Oh fine," replied Colonel "B", "They are shelling us pretty heavy but their shells are all striking about 100 yards in rear of my reserves." The conversation ran on for several minutes when suddenly Colonel "B" exclaimed, "By Jove, they are planting them right on my reserve line," and almost in the same breath, "There! one landed right on top of my dugout; they surely are giving us hot peas now." From the above conversation it can be plainly seen what Colonel "B" did. He didn't only correct the range for the enemy artillery but told them when they were on the target. At this time the enemy had powerful interception sets and to speak in the clear from brigade forward was very dangerous. However, try as they may, the signal personnel was unable to convince some commanders of this danger. The next day a meeting of the signal officers was called by the Division Signal officer to discuss ways and means to overcome this danger, which was now beginning to be realized. Pardon this personal reference, but at

at/

this meeting I pointed out to the Division Signal officer that the old 1st N. C. Regiment which was split up at Camp Sevier, S. C. in 1917 and its personnel assigned to the 119th and 120th Infantry Regiments, contained quite a number of Cherokee Indians which were now somewhere in the division, and that in my opinion, if a number of the most intelligent of them were placed at each telephone, and that they transmit all messages in their native tongue, I felt sure that even a battalion commander could use them in transmitting messages to his company commanders in perfect safety. The matter was taken up with the division commander, and the next day found every command post from brigade forward, including some company command posts, a telephone with a Cherokee Indian beside it. Needless to say, there were no further messages intercepted by the enemy that we heard of. About the second or third day after this system was put into effect, a colonel of the enemy intelligence staff was captured and sent back to Division Headquarters for questioning. He could speak English exceedingly well, and after the officers at Division Headquarters had about finished their examination of him, he asked permission of them to ask a question himself, which was granted. It ran something like this, "Gentlemen, we have officers in our army that can speak and translate the majority of the languages of the world, but none of them can understand the language you Americans are using over the telephone. Now please, gentlemen, won't you tell me what it is?" There was quite a bit of laughter but no one gave the secret away. From then on until October 12, 1918, at which date I was ordered back to the

United States as an instructor, the Cherokees were kept on the job with continued success, and I understand were used until the end of the war.

### LESSONS

In summing up the lessons to be learned by this personal experience, there are probably many, but the three that strike me most forcibly are as follows:

First. The great improvement of our present equipment and system of signal communication over that used during the World War.

Second. The successful use of the Cherokee Indians in transmitting messages over the telephone in their native tongue.

Third. If I ever have the honor to command troops in battle again, and any American Indians are available, I will in all probability insist upon their use over the telephone.

### CONCLUSION

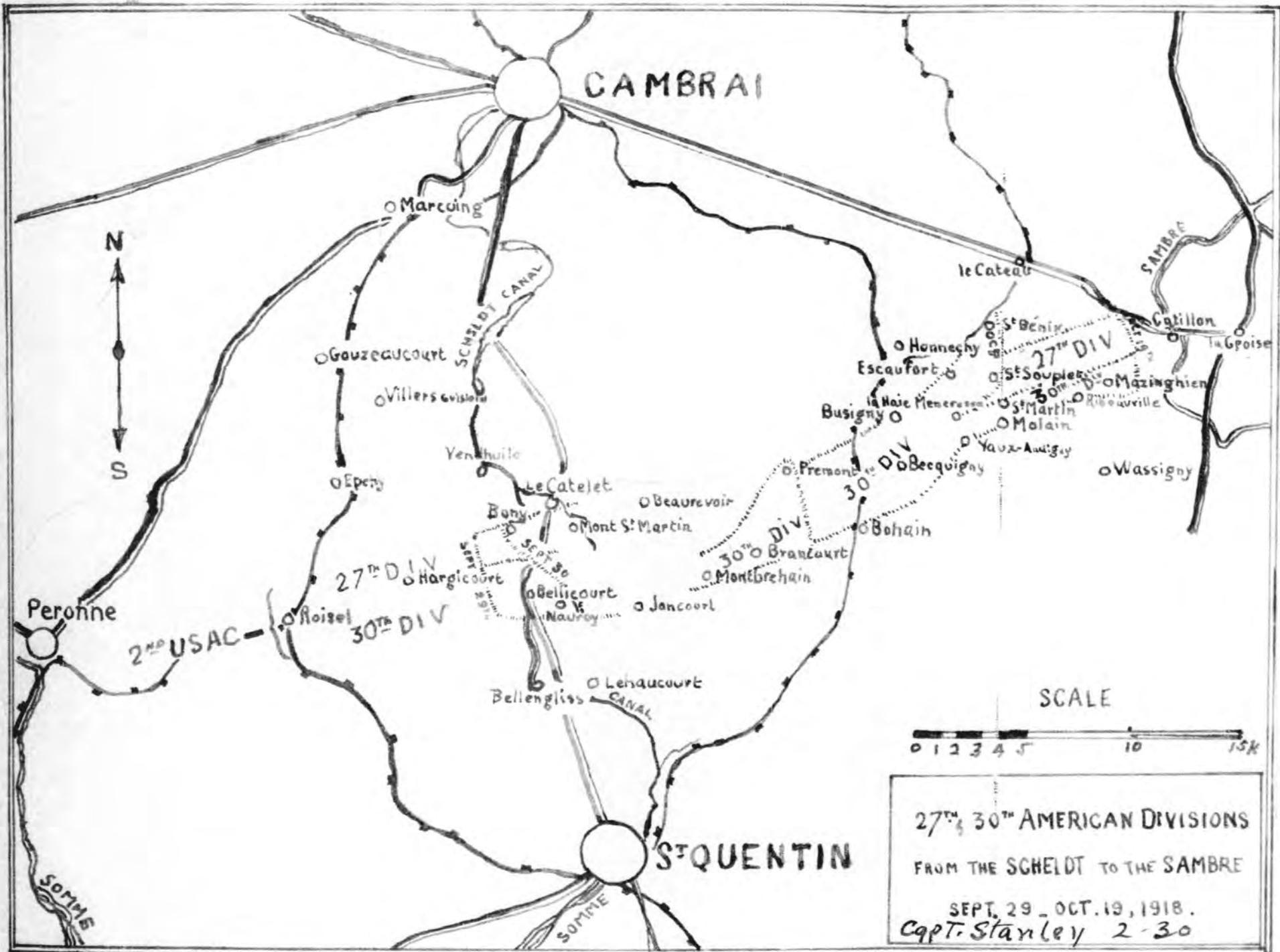
Considering all of the Principles of War, the one that seems to apply most strongly in this case, is the Principle of Cooperation. "That Principle of War which embodies the doctrine that all members of a command must work together for the accomplishment of their mission. Teamwork.

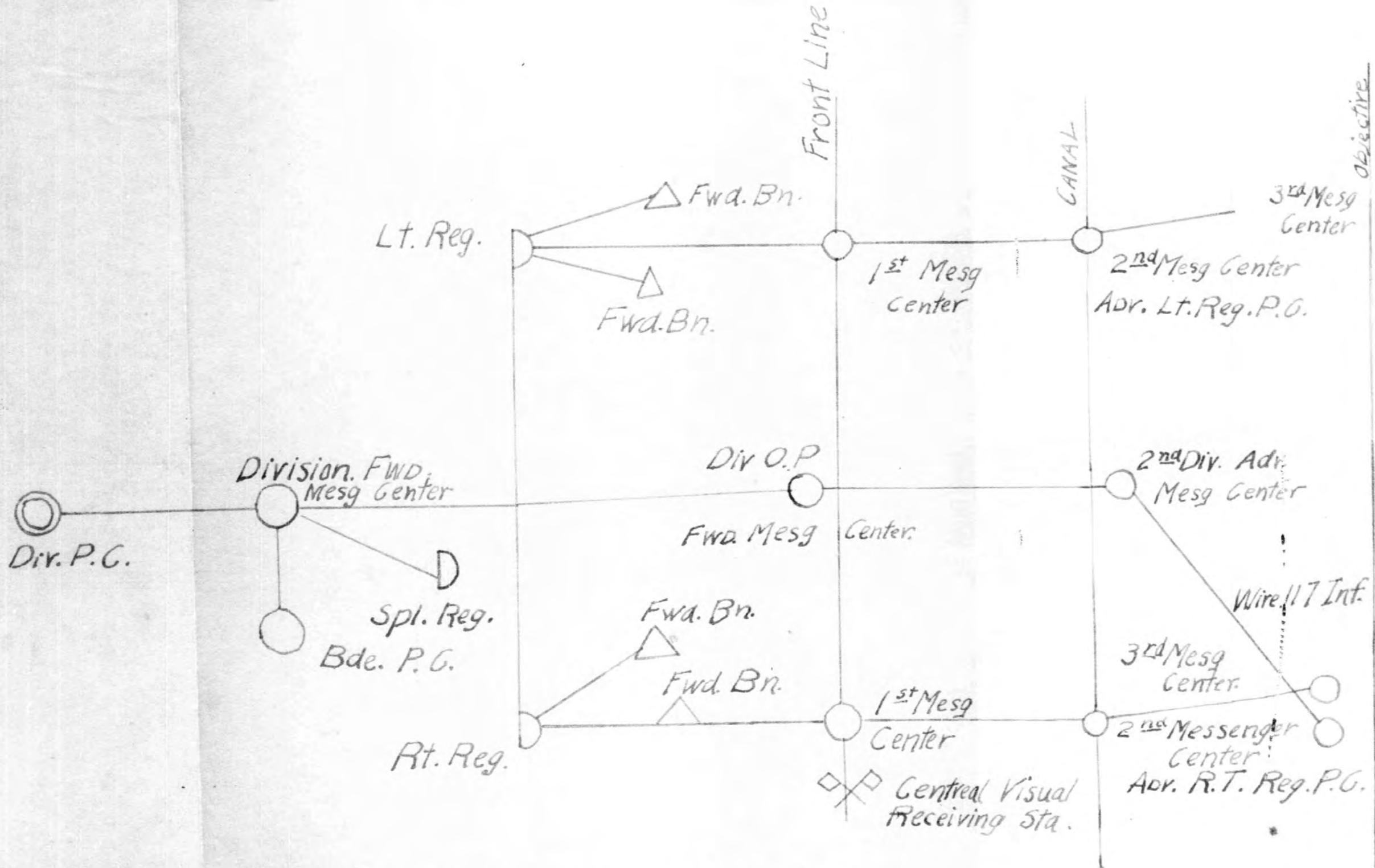
In my opinion the British tanks violated this principle by not informing the Division Signal officer in ample time, what, when, where, why, and how.

## QUESTIONS

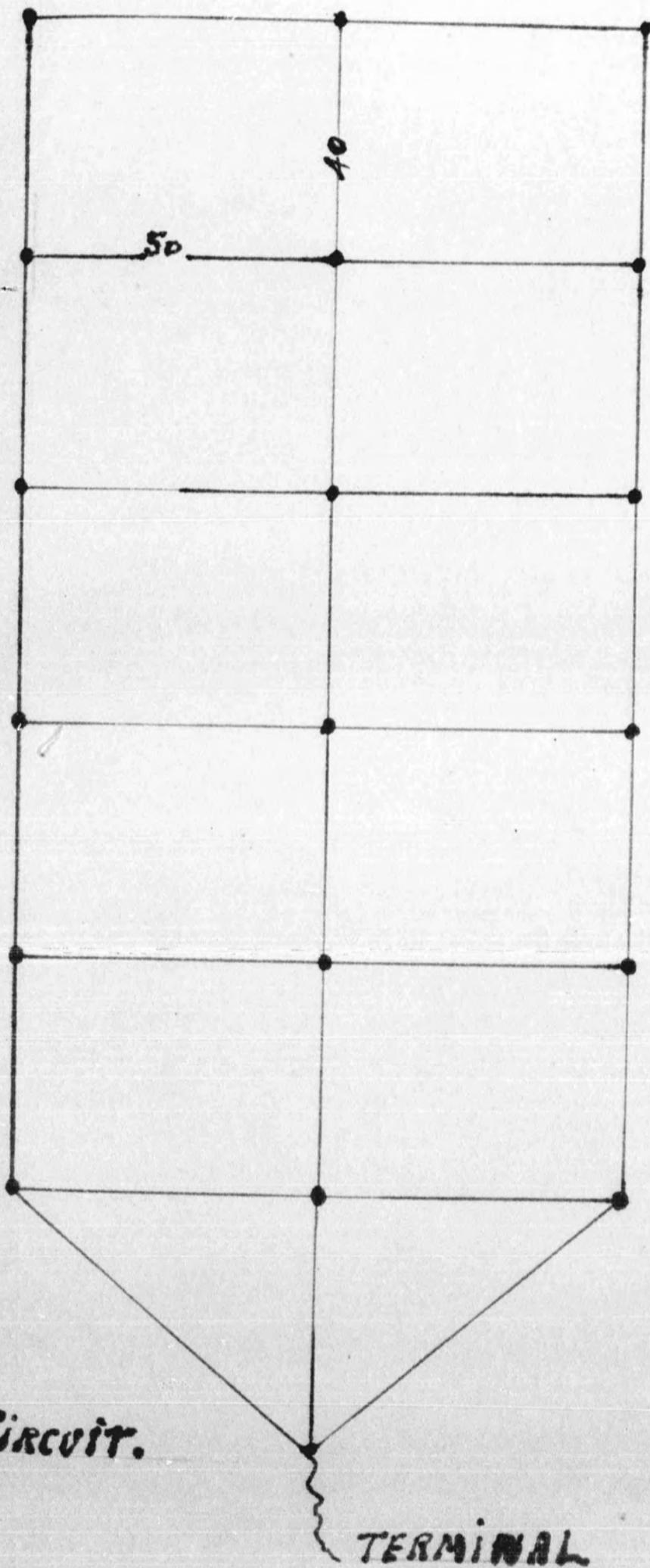
It is now about 10:00 PM (28th). The attack starts on the Hindenburg line at 5:50 AM tomorrow morning - all wire communication from brigade to regiments are out. You are the battalion commander. What do you decide to do?

Answer: To turn out every available officer and man in the battalion with positive orders that communication must be established and maintained, especially until after H hour.





PLAN of WIRE COMMUNICATION TO ACCOMPANY APPENDIX No. 2  
 BATTLE INSTRUCTION No. 1. OF 30 DIVISION  
 CAPT. STANLEY - 2-30



LADDERED CIRCUIT.

TERMINAL

Capt. Stanley 2-30.