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THE OPERATIONS OF THE 3D BATTALION, 134TH INFANTRY,
(35TH INFANTRY DIVISION) IN THE ATTACK ON ST. LO, FRANCE,
15 - 18 JULY 1944
(NORMANDY CAMPAIGN)
(Personal Experience of a Battalion S-1)

Type of operation described: INFANTRY BATTALION ATTACKING
HEDGEROW DEFENSES.

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THE OPERATIONS OF THE 3D BATTALION, 134TH INFANTRY,
(45TH INFANTRY DIVISION) IN THE ATTACK ON ST. LO, FRANCE,
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ORIENTATION

INTRODUCTION

The subject to be treated by this monograph covers the operations of the 3d Battalion, 134th Infantry Regiment, 35th Infantry Division in the attack on ST. LO, FRANCE, 15 - 18 July 1944, during the Normandy Campaign.

For the purpose of proper orientation the reader is reminded that on 6 June 1944 the U.S. First Army, consisting of the V and VII Corps made up of three Infantry and two Airborne Divisions, assaulted the coast of FRANCE at the base of the COTENTIN PENINSULA. The 4th Infantry Division of the VII Corps landed at UTAH BEACH, while the 1st Infantry Division (minus) and the 29th Infantry Division (minus), of the V Corps, landed at OMAHA BEACH. The 82d and 101st Airborne Divisions dropped in the vicinity of STE. MERE-EGLISE in the zone of the VII Corps. (1) (2) (See Map A)

Subsequent to the landings, referred to above, the beach-heads were expanded and joined. The initial objectives of the invasion of FRANCE, namely; the establishment of beach-heads and the capture of CAEN, BAYEUX, ISIGNY and CARENTAN were in progress. (3) On 15 June 1944 the U.S. XIX Corps became operational in the lodgement area. (4)

The 35th Infantry Division landed across OMAHA BEACH during the period 5-7 July 1944 and was attached to XIX Corps.

- (1) A-1, p. 6,7,19-21
- (2) A-2, Map #1
- (3) A-1, p. 6,7,19-21
- (4) A-3, p. 29

By 9 July the 137th and 320th Infantry Combat Teams of the 35th Infantry Division had relieved elements of the 29th and 30th Infantry Divisions. The last two named Divisions were part of XIX Corps. The 134th Infantry Combat Team of the 35th Infantry Division became XIX Corps reserve. (5)

On 13 July the 134th Infantry Combat Team was relieved from XIX Corps reserve and the 3d Battalion of that C T relieved additional elements of the 29th Infantry Division on 13 - 14 July 1944. (6)

THE GENERAL SITUATION

By 10 July 1944 the XIX Corps, consisting of three Infantry Divisions, namely; the 30th on the right, the 35th in the center and the 29th on the left, held a line centered generally two or three miles north of the city of ST. LO, NORMANDY, FRANCE. (See Map B) The First U.S. Army plan of attack against the hills protecting the key communication center of ST. LO, and the city itself, called for a three Division offensive and that assignment fell to the XIX Corps. The main effort to be made by the 29th Infantry Division on the Corps left with the mission of taking ST. LO. On the right of the 29th Infantry Division the 35th Infantry Division was to close up to the VIRE RIVER, which constituted the boundary between the 35th and 30th Infantry Divisions, (See Map B), which in turn would cover the left flank of the 30th Infantry Division. (7)

The planned offensive of the XIX Corps began on 11 July 1944. Local gains were made on all fronts, but the attack

(5) A-4, Chap. II & III

(6) A-4, Chap. II & III

(7) A-6, p. 51

failed to gain the necessary momentum. All existed all along the Corps front on 14 July 1944, during which plans were made for a coordinated Corps attack for 15 July 1944. The capture of ST. LO remained the main Corps objective. In order to add strength to the attack on that city the frontage of the 29th Infantry Division had been reduced by bringing into the line, on 13 - 14 July 1944, the 134th Infantry Combat Team of the 35th Infantry Division. The mission of the 35th Infantry Division, as heretofore, remained unchanged. (8)

THE SITUATION - 35TH INFANTRY DIVISION, XIX CORPS

The 35th Infantry Division had been committed to action since 9 July 1944 except for the 134th Infantry Combat Team which had been held in Corps reserve. Two Combat Teams of that Division, the 137th and 320th, had been participating in XIX Corps offensive action since 11 July 1944 and had, like other units of the XIX Corps, faced intense enemy opposition to win local advances. On 13 July 1944 the 134th Combat Team had been released from Corps reserve and the 3d Battalion of that C T had gone on line the same date to become the left regiment of the 35th Division. (See par 5 of INTRODUCTION and par 2 of THE GENERAL SITUATION above)

The 35th Infantry Division, with its right on the VIRE RIVER and its left exclusive of the ISIGNY - ST. LO ROAD, and with three regiments on line (134th on the left, 320th in the center, and 137th on the right) (See Map C), had the mission of attacking generally south and southwest toward ST. LO, close up to the VIRE RIVER in zone and assist in the

(8) A-6, p. 72-102; A-5, p. 34

capture of ST. LO. (9) (See Map C)

THE SITUATION - 134TH INFANTRY COMBAT TEAM,
35TH INFANTRY DIVISION

The 134th Infantry Combat Team of the 35th Infantry Division was released from XIX Corps reserve at about 2030 hours, 13 July 1944. The 3d Battalion of that C T was ordered to relieve the 2d Battalion, 115th Infantry, 29th Division, maintain the defensive on position occupied while the remainder of the C T was to prepare to attack in zone on 15 July 1944. Thus the 3d Battalion, 134th Infantry Regiment was the first element of that regiment to be committed to action in the drive against ST. LO. (10)

At 1645 hours, 14 July 1944, attack orders from the 35th Division arrived at CP 134th Infantry Combat Team. The mission of the C T was given as that of destroying enemy forces in zone, occupying HILL 122 and seizing and capturing ST. LO. (11) (See Map D)

At 1900 hours the same date the 134th Infantry Combat Team attack order was issued. In part that order read as follows:

1. a. Enemy forces entrenched along (503663) (510658) (515658) (517660) (523661) (525657), occupies high ground N of St LO (hill #122 - 504652). Elmts of the 14th Prcht Regt vic St LO; elmts of 897th, 898th, 899th Panzer Grenadier Regts (motorized Inf) have been identified in Div Z. (See Map E)

b. XIX Corps continues atk to SW 150515

July 44; Div abreast 30th on right, 29th on left.

(9) A-6, p. 51, 72-102

(10) A-5, p. 32-33; Personal knowledge

(11) A-4, Chap. II

2. The 134th Inf (w/ 737 Tk Bn (less Co B); 1st Plat Co A, 60th Engr Bn; one plat 654 TD Bn; Co A, 110th Med Bn atchd), supported by 161 FA Bn and atchd 4.2 Chemical Mortar Co and supported by 35th Inf Div Arty, attacks in Z 0515 15 July 44. Obj - to destroy enemy forces in Z N St L0 and to seize and occupy St. Lo. Bnrdrys, LD, objectives, formation, direction of atk - see overlay. (See Map D)

3. a. 1st Bn 134th Inf passes through 3d Bn in Z atks 0515, 15 July 44 to seize and occupy obj in Z.

b. 2d Bn 134th Inf (w/ one squad AT Co Mine plat, one 57mm plat AT Co, 737th Tk Bn (- atched) atks 0515, 15 July 44 to seize and occupy obj in Z.

c. 3d Bn 134th Inf when passed through reverts to Regtl res; to remain on present location prepared to assemble on order.

f. I & R plat responsible for contact w/ 115th Inf on left and 320th Inf on right.

g. 161 FA Bn (w/ 1 Co 82d Chemical Bn) be prepared to support atk. Smoke enemy installations fr H Hr to H plus 15; prepare rolling barrage beg at H Hr to cover adv of 1st Bn 134th Inf to be lifted on call. (12)

The 134th Infantry Combat Team was as of the time of issue of the order indicated above at full combat strength. Morale was high and the regiment had not experienced any in-

(12) A-5, p. 34; Personal knowledge

fluencing changes in personnel for the past twelve months; training and conduct during maneuvers had been more than satisfactory. (13)

The terrain in the zone of the 134th Infantry Combat Team was broken into many small compartments of either field or orchard fenced by earthen mounds three to six feet thick and six to ten feet high; overgrown on sides by brush and surmounted by brush and trees. Observation was usually limited to the extent of the compartments and was on the average of about 150 feet. The mounds mentioned created many narrow sunken lanes which formed excellent defensive positions affording ideal cover and concealment. (14)

Weather conditions varied in extremes. Cloudy skies and intermittent showers prevailed with warm to hot weather from mid-morning to early evening followed by gradually cooling conditions to chilly early morning hours. (15)

The enemy showed stubborn resistance and a thorough knowledge of defensive tactics. Repeated enemy counter-attacks were common. (16)

THE SITUATION - 3D BATTALION, 134TH INFANTRY COMBAT TEAM

Without benefit of daylight reconnaissance the 3d Battalion, 134th Infantry Combat Team relieved the 2d Battalion, 115th Infantry, 29th Infantry Division during the period 2030 hours, 13 July 1944 and 1030 hours 14 July 1944. (17)

On a frontage of about 1600 yards the 3d Battalion committed three rifle companies; K on the left, I in the center

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- (13) Personal knowledge
 - (14) Personal knowledge
 - (15) Personal knowledge
 - (16) Personal knowledge
 - (17) A-5, p. 32-33

and L on the right. Machine guns from M Company were attached to the rifle companies and the mortars of that company were in general support. (18)

Due to the time element involved no reconnaissance was possible and very little orientation was received from the unit relieved. Because the 2d Battalion, 115th Infantry was operating at greatly reduced strength it had been necessary for that unit to commit three rifle companies on line, therefore, the relief was made on the basis of company for company. (19)

In as much as the attack scheduled for 15 July 1944 was to be an-all-out effort to break the enemy defenses north of ST. LO and capture that city all activity in the zone of the 3d Battalion was kept to a minimum in order not to reveal to the enemy the fact that new elements had entered the line. (20)

At 0515 hours, 15 July 1944 the 1st and 2d Battalions (with attachments) of the 134th Infantry Combat Team passed through the 3d Battalion and against heavy enemy opposition advanced in zone. By 1310 hours the same date the 1st Battalion on the right had leading elements in the village of EMELIE (See Map F) and was assaulting HILL 122. (See Map F) (21)

Briefly stated the mission, situation and responsibility of the 3d Battalion, 134th Infantry Combat Team was to hold on position and await orders. The reader is reminded that the 3d Battalion had no attachments but could request artillery support through its Artillery Liaison Officer.

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- (18) Personal knowledge
(19) Personal knowledge
(20) Personal knowledge
(21) Personal knowledge; A-5, p. 37

THE FIGHT FOR AN ASSEMBLY AREA

At about 1400 hours, 15 July 1944, the 3d Battalion, 134th Infantry Combat Team was ordered to assemble and be prepared to follow up the advance of the 1st Battalion.

The assembly area was designated to be astride the VILLERS - FOSSARD - ST. LO ROAD about 1800 yards south of VILLERS - FOSSARD and just exclusive of the village of EMELIE. (See Map F)

Commanding Officer, 3d Battalion upon receipt of the order to assemble sent ahead a party consisting of his S-3, S-1 and M Company Commander and four runners. He also directed the Motor Officer and the Anti-Tank Platoon Leader to make contact with the first group and to locate a site for the battalion motor park south of VILLERS - FOSSARD. (23)

Commanding Officer, 3d Battalion then oriented the Commanders of K, I and L Companies as to the situation, indicated the assembly area to them and directed them to move their companies by the most direct route from present location to the assembly area. The 3d Battalion Commander with his S-2 and enough of the Battalion Headquarters Company personnel to open the new CP began to move toward the assembly area. 3d Battalion Executive Officer remained to close out the old CP. It was about 1500 hours, 15 July 1944 when the first elements of the Battalion began to move.

The advance party, in order to be properly oriented on the ground, moved first to VILLERS - FOSSARD then south on

(22) This entire NARRATION is taken from personal experience and knowledge of the writer. Unless another source is indicated, it should be presumed that personal experience is the source.

(23) A-5, p. 37

the VILLERS - FOSSARD - ST. LO ROAD toward the assembly area. This precaution was considered necessary because the entire area was cut by many sunken trails not shown on maps available and direction could be easily lost. As the party advanced beyond the creek, about 500 yards south of VILLERS - FOSSARD (See Map F), it became apparent that no troops had passed that way as evidenced by a complete lack of abandoned clothing or equipment. Also the road, a hard surfaced one, was almost completely covered by leaves and small branches apparently blown from nearby trees during the intense artillery preparation that proceeded the attack of that morning. The debris on the road showed no signs of having been disturbed in any way.

Convinced that they were moving in the right direction the advance party continued toward the assembly area which had been designated by the Regimental Commander and, therefore, must have been covered by the advance of the 1st Battalion on the right of the regimental zone.

Upon arrival at the north boundary of the assembly area the S-1 and one runner turned to the right and moved down a sunken road for about 100 yards to a spot where the map indicated a few scattered buildings. These he found and without further investigation marked that area for the battalion CP. He was then about to return to the VILLERS - FOSSARD - ST. LO ROAD when he heard, from just beyond the embankment to his left (in the direction of ST. LO) the sound of mortars being loaded and the explosion of the propelling charges as the rounds were "on the way". Conversations in German could be plainly heard. He immediately returned to the main road to

find other members of the party, scattered and prone, along-side of that road. They had observed enemy troops about 100 yards distant and in the direction of the village of EMELIE. (See Map F)

At about this same time machine gun fire began to rake the banks of the road and all members of the advance party withdrew toward VILLERS - FOSSARD. Arriving at the creek about 500 yards south of VILLERS - FOSSARD the party held a conference. Certain that the proposed assembly area had not been cleared of enemy troops and that it was occupied by organized enemy forces, all agreed that the marching rifle companies would have to be intercepted and rerouted to VILLERS - FOSSARD so that the battalion could advance toward the assembly area as a unit under the control of the Battalion Commander and, therefore, be prepared to fight its way into the assembly area. The time was about 1530 hours.

At about the same time the Battalion Motor Officer and the Anti-Tank Platoon Leader joined the advance party and reported that during their reconnaissance they had received scattered rifle fire from an area about 1000 yards south of VILLERS - FOSSARD and about 300 yards northwest of the VILLERS - FOSSARD - ST. LO ROAD. The S-1 then directed that the motor park be located just north of VILLERS - FOSSARD and the anti-tank guns to the east thereof. (See Map F)

The S-3 was to remain at the creek in the hope of intercepting the Battalion Commander and inform him of the developments. The S-1 was to locate I and L Companies and the M Company Commander was to locate K Company inform them of the situation and reroute all companies to the vicinity of VILLERS - FOSSARD.

It will be remembered that K Company was on the left of the battalion position. Because the commander of that company could hear that an intense fire fight was in progress not too far to the south of his position he had taken it upon himself to move his company to the assembly area via VILLERS - FOSSARD. Therefore, M Company Commander had no difficulty locating K Company, orienting its commander and leading that company toward VILLERS - FOSSARD.

The S-1 intercepted the lead platoon of L Company as it started to cross the creek about 800 yards south of VILLERS - FOSSARD and about 300 yards east of the VILLERS - FOSSARD - ST. LO ROAD. (See Map F) As he halted the advance of L Company, the lead platoon thereof, came under inaccurate machine gun fire from its left flank. L Company changed direction and approached the bridge on the VILLERS - FOSSARD - ST. LO ROAD about 500 yards south of VILLERS - FOSSARD.

Efforts of the S-1 to locate I Company failed and he returned to the point where he had left the S-3.

Meanwhile, the Battalion Commander had been informed of the situation by the S-3, however, the Battalion Commander was unwilling to regard the report as serious and expressed himself as of the belief that the enemy troops seen were only a few who had been by-passed by the 1st Battalion. The Battalion Commander did send his S-2 and two intelligence scouts forward to investigate the reports and then waited for the arrival of the rifle companies.

The S-2 returned shortly to confirm the report of the S-3. By this time, about 1630 hours, L Company had arrived at the bridge mentioned and one platoon of that company was

ordered to neutralize and destroy the enemy located by the S-2. The platoon deployed to the right of the road and at a point about 700 yards south of VILLERS - FOSSARD became involved in a fire fight with enemy forces on its right flank.

Leaving the platoon from L Company to engage the enemy in place and protect the right flank, the 3d Battalion Commander then formed the battalion in column along the road; K Company leading. Placing himself with his S-3 to the rear of the leading platoon of K Company, the Battalion Commander ordered an advance to the assembly area. The whereabouts of I Company was still unknown.

Starting about 500 yards south of VILLERS - FOSSARD the VILLERS - FOSSARD - ST. LO ROAD became a narrow cut or sunken road with steep banks from six to ten feet high. Such was its condition as far as the advance party had been able to follow it.

As the head of the 3d Battalion column approached the north boundary of the assembly area and at almost the exact spot where the advance party had first observed the enemy it came under intense cross fire from enemy machine guns, followed by mortar fire, which halted the column. Light artillery began to hit to the right and left of the road. Men crouched against the banks of the road.

The mortar fire on the head of the column lifted and there appeared a rapid-firing, direct fire, self-propelled gun moving north on the road. Shell bursts from its gun were creeping down the column. Caught enroute, the column in a sunken road from which its men could not deploy, the battalion faced the prospect of heavy losses from enfilade fire

against which had no defense. The column broke, turned back toward VILLERS - FOSSARD and deployed, very much out of control, about 400 yards south of VILLERS - FOSSARD. The self-propelled gun did not advance beyond the head of the column. After having scattered the battalion it withdrew in the direction of ST. LO.

The whereabouts of the 3d Battalion Commander was unknown, and the Battalion Executive Officer undertook the difficult task of reorganizing the battalion. K Company was deployed to the left of the road leading to ST. LO and L Company to the right of that road. About 1900 hours order had been restored and tactical control established on a line astride the VILLERS - FOSSARD - ST. LO ROAD and about 400 yards south of VILLERS - FOSSARD. The Battalion Commander was yet unheard from and a patrol sent to locate him, failed in that mission. Firing forward and left of the position indicated that the platoon of L Company, given the earlier mission of protecting the left flank, was still engaging the enemy.

At about 2030 hours, the 3d Battalion Commander appeared at the battalion CP. He had been cut off behind the enemy positions and had just been able to make his way back to his battalion.

Preparations had been underway to launch an attack at 2045 hours in conjunction with an assault by the 1st Battalion. Artillery preparation requests were refused because of the unknown situation in the 1st Battalion area, located about 300 yards south of EMELIE. (See Map F)

Word had been received that I Company had become in-

volved in a fight alongside the 1st Battalion and would not be able to disengage itself until after dark.

At 2045 hours, the 3d Battalion attacked and was able by 2300 hours to establish a line about 1500 yards south of VILLERS - FOSSARD and astride to ST. LO. The battalion was ordered to dig in and hold and prepare to resume the attack on 16 July 1944. (See Map F)

During the night, I Company returned to the battalion and was placed in reserve behind L Company on the right.

K rations were issued, ammunition was resupplied. Generally it was quiet all along the battalion front during the night.

THE ATTACK - 16 JULY 1944

The attack for 16 July was scheduled for 0730 hours. A platoon of Tank Destroyers was attached to the 3d Battalion. Again artillery support was refused because the precise location of the 1st Battalion was not known. Mortar fire was ineffective due to poor observation. Without outside support, for the TD platoon had failed to arrive until 1000 hours, the 3d Battalion jumped off; K Company on the left, L Company on the right, and I Company following L Company. Immediate and intense enemy fire was encountered. Mortar and artillery fire was heavy and effective. Soon control was hard to maintain because of the many small compartments described in the INTRODUCTION above. Most action evolved around squads. Communications were difficult - the terrain seemed to interfere with SCR 536 transmissions. Mortar and artillery fire destroyed wire lines. It was almost impossible for leaders to

locate themselves in relation to the maps available due to the exclusion from such maps of many terrain features.

When the TD platoon arrived they proved ineffective against the earthen mounds which divided the terrain and their 3-inch guns merely dented the enemy defenses which were dug in behind those mounds.

By late afternoon the battalion had advanced 100 to 200 yards and the attack was halted to allow preparations to be made for resumption of the attack at 0430 17 July 1944. (24)

During the day the 1st Battalion side slipped to the left of the VILLERS-FOSSARD-ST LO road and the zone of the 3rd Battalion was established with its left inclusive of that road and its right on the regimental right boundary. (See Map G) This allowed the 3rd Battalion freedom of action in a definite zone and defined for certain the position of the 1st Battalion.

During the night the battalion was resupplied and the front was generally quiet.

THE ATTACK - 17 JULY 1944

Attached to the 3rd Battalion for the attack on 17 July 1944 was a company of medium tanks, a platoon of TD's and a 4.2-inch chemical mortar company. The 3rd Battalion was to make the main effort on the right. Objectives remained unchanged.

At 0430 17 July 1944, the 3rd Battalion launched its attack. Heavy fog reduced visibility to the point where the tanks and TD's were useless. Artillery and mortar fire had to be laid down by map coordinates and, therefore, could not be

brought in as close as was desired. Heavy enemy resistance from machine guns and mortars was encountered at once. The enemy had the benefit of prearranged defensive fires. The attack progressed very slowly and I Company was sent around the right of L Company in an attempt to flank the enemy. Immediately I Company, platoon by platoon, was pinned down on the right of L Company. Throughout the day the battalion inched forward and when a halt was called at dusk the 3rd Battalion had advanced to within 400 yards of the crest of Hill 122 and about 300 yards to the right rear of the 1st Battalion. (See Map G) The attack was to be resumed at 1100 hours 18 July 1944.

THE ATTACK - 18 JULY 1944

Without any change in attachments, dispositions or mission the 3rd Battalion began its attack at 1100 hours 18 July 1944. The attack was generally a repetition of that of the day before. The weather had cleared and the tanks and TD's were able to bring effective fire against the enemy positions. Also the terrain seemed to open somewhat and artillery and mortar was used to advantage for the first time by the battalion. By about 1400 the enemy defenses showed signs of weakening and the crest of Hill 122 was gained shortly thereafter. Going was now down hill and 1100 yards away could be seen the edge of the objective - ST LO.

The attack continued and another 500 yards had been gained by 1800 hours. The Battalion Commander then ordered a halt, reorganized and resupplied the companies with ammunition.

Word had been received earlier from Regimental CP to halt

the attack at the north edge of ST LO in order to allow the 29th Infantry Division on the left to enter the city first.

(25)

At 1930 hours the companies of the 3rd Battalion moved out in a last effort to reach the objective. Slowly the enemy defenses crumbled and at 2100 hours troops of the 3rd Battalion were on the objective. It was with some difficulty that the attack was stopped and several squads had to be withdrawn to the northern edge of ST. LO.

It had taken the 3rd Battalion four days of continuous frontal attack to advance about 3000 yards to ST. LO. Together with a task force of the 115th Infantry, 29th Infantry Division ST. LO had been captured. The Corps, Division, Regiment and Battalion missions had been accomplished thus allowing for development of plans for the breakout of NORMANDY.

Supply and evacuation have not been treated in this narration inasmuch as neither ever presented a serious problem.

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

1. RELIEF OF THE 2ND BATTALION, 115TH INFANTRY, 29TH INFANTRY DIVISION

The 3rd Battalion, 134th Infantry Combat Team relieved the 2nd Battalion, 115th Infantry, 29th Infantry Division without benefit of daylight reconnaissance. Because the 2nd Battalion, 115th Infantry had been operating at greatly reduced strength (it had been in action since D-Day, 6 June 1944) it had been necessary for that unit to employ three rifle companies on a line that would have normally required the use of

(25) A-5, p. 41

two rifle companies at full strength. The fact was not known by the Commander of the 3rd Battalion, 134th Infantry Combat Team, and due to the short time element involved in the relief the condition was not taken into regard. To simplify the relief in face of the confusion existant during darkness the relief was made on a company for company basis. By daylight the next day, 14 July 1944, it was discovered that adjustments had to be made to take care of what can be termed crowded troop conditions on the line.

As stated in the NARRATION all activity on the position of the 3rd Battalion was to be kept to an absolute minimum so as not to disclose to the enemy that the area had been taken over by additional troops of a new unit.

Considering the stubborn defense of the enemy from 15 to 18 July 1944, on the front of the 134th Infantry Combat Team it is conceivable that the adjustments made on position on 14 July 1944 had hinted to the enemy that a strong attack in that area was pending and the enemy had prepared accordingly.

2. MOVEMENT TO THE ASSEMBLY AREA

The action of the 3rd Battalion Commander, 134th Infantry Combat Team in directing his companies to move independently to the assigned assembly area was unsound. A map reconnaissance alone would have shown that due to the nature of the terrain which was cut by many sunken trails and paths plus the poor observation afforded by the nature of the terrain made the maintenance of direction very difficult. Moreover, the companies would have had to move through the rear

battle position of two attacking battalions where some confusion could have been expected. That is exactly what happened to I Company with the result that that company became involved in a fire fight along side another battalion and was, therefore, lost to its battalion for about twelve hours. The battalion commander had lost control of his battalion.

3. SECURITY

When ordered to assemble the 3rd Battalion Commander had assumed that the proposed assembly area had been covered by the advance of the 1st Battalion. On the basis of information on hand and the orders received he could be excused for not having considered a security element for the advance of the battalion to the assembly area.

Even after having been informed by the S-3 that the assembly area was occupied by enemy forces, and even after that information had been confirmed by the S-2 the Battalion Commander failed to take proper security measures and allowed his battalion to be caught in column in a sunken road out of which it could not deploy with the result that the battalion became completely disorganized.

4. THE ACTIONS OF THE ADVANCE PARTY

The advance party of the 3rd Battalion was officered by staff officers. Upon discovering that enemy forces occupied the assembly their action in not attempting to develop the situation further was justified. Their duty was to assist the commander and to keep him informed and advised. This they did by first attempting to warn the companies of the situation to

be expected on the approach to the assembly area and by changing the routes of march of those companies. Secondly, they informed the Battalion Commander of the situation as soon as possible.

Had the staff officers on the advance party taken it upon themselves to attempt to develop the enemy situation in any detail they may have become engaged by the enemy and would have been unable to take the corrective action as described.

5. THE PLACE OF THE COMMANDER IN RELATION TO THE TROOPS COMMANDED

The action of the 3rd Battalion Commander in placing himself behind the lead platoon in the approach to the assembly area was not justified. Minutes after the battalion had made contact with the enemy he was cut off behind enemy positions and could not fight his battalion.

Had the situation been slightly different, and had the Battalion Commander not been separated from his battalion, he would have had to return to a position where he could control the bulk of his battalion. His return to the rear for that purpose would have left the troops with a poor idea of leadership for under the circumstances they could not have known the reason for such action.

6. REPORTING POSITIONS AND LOCATIONS

Sometime after the completion of the events described in the NARRATION, it was learned that the 1st Battalion had never been astride the VILLERS-FOSSARD-ST. LO road until after it had passed to the east of EMELIE and had then gotten troops west of that road. The 1st Battalion Commander had, for some

unknown reason failed to report or indicate that fact when he reported his battalion prepared to assault Hill 122. Consequently the 3rd Battalion was ordered to assemble in an area never cleared of enemy with the results indicated in the NARRATION.

As a reserve battalion, the 3rd Battalion was to be used to assist the two attacking battalions to seize the regimental objective. The 1st Battalion was in a position to take a commanding terrain feature which would have assured the seizure of the regimental objective. Had it been understood that enemy forces had been by-passed in order to place the 1st Battalion in an assaulting position to take Hill 122, a well planned attack by the 3rd Battalion on the right and to the rear of the 1st Battalion would have eased pressure on the flank of the 1st Battalion and Hill 122 could have been taken on 15 July 1944 instead of on 16 July 1944.

LESSONS

1. Whenever possible relief of units during the hours of darkness should be preceded by a daylight reconnaissance.
2. All tactical troop movements should be assured of the complete control of the troop commander throughout the entire movement.
3. Security elements should cover the movement of all troops in the forward combat zone irregardless of the assurance that other units have covered or are covering the movement.
4. Staff officers are advisors and assistants to their commander and should not allow themselves to become involved

in enemy action to the extent that they may fail in their obligations to their commander.

5. Commanders should place themselves where they can control the largest element of their command and should not attempt to assume the duties of subordinates.

6. Positions of units should be reported accurately and should a maneuver require that a zone of advance not be completely covered such fact should be reported.