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OPERATIONS OF THE 310TH INFANTRY (78TH INFAN-  
TRY DIVISION) IN THE ATTACK ON ROLLESBROICH,  
NORTH OF MALMEDY, 13-16 DECEMBER 1944  
(RHINELAND CAMPAIGN)  
(Personal Experience of Anti-Tank Company Commander)

Type of operation described: INFANTRY REGIMENT AT-  
TACKING A TOWN IN THE SIEGFRIED LINE

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OPERATIONS OF THE 310TH INFANTRY (78TH INFANTRY DIVISION) IN THE ATTACK ON ROLLESBROICH, NORTH OF MALMEDY, 13-16 DECEMBER 1944 (RHINELAND CAMPAIGN)  
(Personal Experience of Anti-Tank Company Commander)

ORIENTATION

INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operations of the 310th Infantry, 78th Infantry Division, in the attack on the town of ROLLESBROICH, GERMANY, 13-16 December 1944, during the offensive to seize the ROER RIVER dams.

In order to orient the reader, it will be necessary to discuss briefly the situation on the Western Front, and the events leading up to this action.

By the fall of 1944, the German had been driven from FRANCE, LUXEMBOURG, and BELGIUM. (See Map A)

The First United States Army had taken the city of AACHEN on 21 October, and in early December was generally disposed along the SIEGFRIED LINE defenses. The Ninth United States Army to the north had reached the banks of the ROER RIVER. (1)

The SIEGFRIED LINE, built on natural barriers immediately east of the German border, consisted of pillboxes, trenches, dugouts, dragon's teeth antitank obstacles, and wire entanglements, constructed in series. In the areas where nature provided the least for defense, artificial obstacles were the strongest. Dragon's teeth were more numerous where river barriers were lacking. Pillboxes were made of heavy reinforced concrete and steel, constructed to provide mutual support by

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(1) A-1, p. 1; A-4, p. 55; A-5, p. 25, 26

interlocking bands of grazing fire. Some were built into the sides of hills and were well camouflaged while others were located in basements of what appeared to be nothing more than German family residences. They were equipped with telephone intercommunication systems and, in the larger ones, sleeping quarters. (2)

To provide depth, many villages well within the German border, containing houses of heavy concrete construction, were well fortified as strong points. (See Map B) This was particularly true of the Villages of SCHMIDT, STECKENBORN, and ROLLESBROICH, southeast of AACHEN, and in the path of the First United States Army. (3)

#### THE GENERAL SITUATION

The ROER RIVER, a small river approximately six miles east of the First United States Army front, was not in itself a major obstacle. (See Map B) However, seriously restraining the progress of the First and Ninth United States Armies were the dams on the ROER and URFT RIVERS in the vicinity of SCHMIDT, approximately ten miles southeast of AACHEN in the V Corps zone. Lakes created behind these dams held billions of gallons of water which, if unleashed by only a two-thirds destruction of the largest of the dams, the SCHWAMMENAUDEL, would cause the river to rise an estimated twenty-five to thirty feet in six hours and to widen to one and one-half miles at DUREN to the north for a period of two days, as well as cause an increase in velocity from five to sixteen feet per second. (4)

Concerning the importance of these dams, the Chief of

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(2) A-1, p. 51-52; Personal knowledge

(3) A-1, p. 53; Personal knowledge

(4) A-1, p. 95; A-2, p. 329; A-4, p. 55

Staff, United States Army, in his Biennial Report for the period 1 July 1943 to 30 June 1945 states, "He (the enemy) is assisted in the area, however, by the flooded condition of the ROER RIVER and the capability he has of producing a sudden rush of water by blowing the dams near SCHMIDT. Bradley has about come to the conclusion that we must take that area by a very difficult attack from the west and southwest."

(5)

Destruction of these dams by aerial bombing would immediately cut off those German forces west of the ROER RIVER and would insure eventual Allied crossings without threat of flood disasters during the operations. However, destruction by bombing had been tried earlier. Heavy bombs failed to effect destruction of the dams due to their combined earth and concrete construction. (6)

American forces had previously attempted to capture the dams by attacks, via SCHMIDT, from the northwest. (See Map E) In early November the 28th Infantry Division attacked with the mission of securing the SCHMIDT-STRAUCH area for the purpose of gaining control of the dams. Its 112th Infantry entered the village of SCHMIDT on 3 November but withdrew under an enemy counterattack, by the German 89th Infantry Division and 116th Panzer Division, suffering heavy casualties and equipment losses. (7)

The enemy was determined to deny penetration of the approaches to the two key dams, the SCHWAMMENAUDEL and the URFTTALLSPERRE. Fully aware of our intentions in this area he had increased his capability of defending west of the ROER

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(5) A-3, p. 42

(6) A-1, p. 102; A-2, p. 329; A-5, p. 26

(7) A-1, p. 68; 69; 72

with divisions of the Sixth SS Panzer Army in addition to the 2nd and 116th Panzer Divisions which were available for local counterattack. (8)

V Corps with its recent addition of the 2nd and 78th Infantry Divisions, was ordered by First Army to attack not earlier than 13 December with the mission of seizing and securing the SCHWAMMENAUEL and URFTTALLSPERRE dams. (9)

On 7 December, V Corps issued its order for the attack. (See Map A) The 2nd Infantry Division, in conjunction with the 99th Infantry on the Corps right, was to advance east to the URFT RIVER and seize the URFTTALISPERRE dam. The 78th Infantry Division (less 311th RCT) on the left of the 2nd Infantry Division was to pass through the line held by the 102nd Cavalry Group in the LAMMERSDORF area and attack in three phases. (See Map B) Phase one included the seizure of the towns of ROLLESBROICH, BICKERATH, SIMMERATH, KESTERNICH, and the high ground east thereof. Phase two provided for a turn to the south to capture the towns of KONZEN, IMGENBROICH, and EICHERSHEID, in order to secure the right flank. Phase three included an attack to the northeast to capture the towns of STRAUCH, STECKENBORN, and SCHMIDT; then a turn to the southeast to seize the final objective, the SCHWAMMENAUEL dam. The 8th Infantry Division (plus 311th RCT) on the Corps left was to exert pressure along the KALL RIVER line. (10)

#### THE DIVISION SITUATION

This operation was to be the 78th Division's initial combat experience in World War II. This Division was reactivated

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(8) A-1, p. 102

(9) A-1, p. 88

(10) A-1, p. 97; A-2, p. 330; A-5, p. 27, 28

on 15 August 1942. In October of that year it was designated as a "replacement" division and from that time until 15 March 1943 processed and trained almost fifty thousand replacements. Following 15 March 1943 it trained as a combat division and participated in TENNESSEE maneuvers in early 1944. (11)

The 78th Infantry Division, composed of the 309th, 310th and 311th Regimental Combat Teams, arrived on the Continent of EUROPE on or about 22 November 1944, and at the end of the month was closed into TONGRES, BELGIUM area in Ninth United States Army reserve. Here the men of the Division became acquainted with buzz bombs, which passed noisily overhead toward ANTWERP and ENGLAND. The troops also learned about trenchfoot, the tremendous casualties it brought about, and ways to combat it. Some officers and non-commissioned officers visited front line units of the 29th and 30th Infantry Divisions and the entire Division received orientation on the "big picture". Here the troops first heard of "The Dams" which were preventing the Ninth United States Army from crossing the ROER RIVER.

In early December the 78th Infantry Division was assigned to the V Corps, First United States Army. Pursuant to V Corps order for the attack to seize the ROER RIVER dams, the Division's 309th and 310th Regimental Combat Teams closed into assembly areas in the vicinity of ROTGEN, GERMANY on 8 December. (See Map B) (12)

The initial Division Field Order assigned the 309th Regimental Combat Team, with the 2nd Battalion, 310th Infantry attached the mission of capturing the area comprising the towns of BICKERATH, SIMMERATH, and KESTERNICH and the high ground

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(11) A-5, p. 8-13; Personal knowledge

(12) A-5, p. 20, 22; A-6, p. 24

east thereof. (13)

The 310th Regimental Combat Team, less its 2nd Battalion, was to attack and capture the area comprising the town of ROLLESBROICH and the high ground south thereof. (14)

Attached to the Division for this initial operation were the 709th Tank Battalion, 893rd Tank Destroyer Battalion, 987th Field Artillery Battalion (minus Batteries A and C), 7th Field Artillery Battalion, and the 62nd Field Artillery Battalion. (15)

#### DISPOSITIONS AND PLAN OF THE 310TH INFANTRY

On the 9th and 10th of December selected personnel made reconnaissance of the area they were to attack over and commanders discussed plans for the attack on 13 December. At 1800 hours on 11 December, in complete blackout and in a driving snow, the Regiment marched ten miles to an assembly area in the vicinity of LAMMERSDORF, GERMANY. (See Map B) Units closed into this area by midnight, and the Regimental Command Post was set up in the OTTO JUNKER factory in the northwest part of town.

The initial combat the 310th Infantry Regiment was to take part in <sup>what</sup> would be a typical assault against a fortified line. (16) (See Map B)

The enemy occupied the high ground along the line running from ROLLESBROICH south to SIMMERATH. In front of these carefully selected positions was the rugged terrain of KALL CREEK Canyon. Continuous anti-personnel and anti-tank mines had been planted along the entire front. Pillboxes, dugouts and en-

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(13) A-1, p. 97; A-5, p. 28

(14) A-1, p. 97; A-5, p. 28

(15) A-5, p. 28

(16) A-5, p. 22; Personal knowledge

trenchments would also have to be overcome.

Prior intelligence indicated the ROLLESBROICH-SIMMERATH line was manned by two battalions of infantry, part of the 980th and 982nd Volksgrenadiers. Their fields of fire was excellent and their artillery and mortar support had registered across the entire front. They had a perfect defense system.

(17)

Along a generally north-south line across the KALL CREEK Canyon was the front lines of the First United States Army held by the 102nd Cavalry Group. (See Map C) Their foxholes along the creek were to be the line of departure for the 310th Infantry attack. The 310th Infantry Regiment was to pass through their lines, take ROLLESBROICH and vicinity. The 3rd Battalion was to lead the attack. The 1st Battalion, 310th Infantry was to coordinate its attack with the 309th Infantry Regiment, make a limited advance on the 3rd Battalion, 310th Infantry right and secure the high ground south of ROLLESBROICH. (18)

Meanwhile the 78th Reconnaissance Troop was to make a demonstration in the northern sector of the Division Zone to attract the enemy's attention.

Because surprise was essential in the zone of the main attack, radios were silenced and the artillery fired only harassing missions before the attack.

The missions were assigned, the objectives were understood and the attack was to get under way. (19)

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(17) A-6, p. 28; Personal knowledge  
(18) A-5, p. 28; A-6, p. 30; Personal knowledge  
(19) A-5, p. 28; A-6, p. 30; Personal knowledge

MOVEMENT TO THE LINE OF DEPARTURE AND FINAL PREPARATIONS FOR THE ATTACK

The early morning of 13 December was extremely cold, and the snow which had fallen the past three days, was glazed and deceivably deep. The troops had spent a miserable night. Every man was tense and excited. Weapons were checked and rechecked automatically. Feet were already half frozen and fingers were brittle. There was a shortage of large size artic overshoes and the men had not been equipped with winterized equipment or white camouflaged suits to blend with the snow.

Yet, there was an unflinching quality of determination as everyone realized there was a job to be done. (20)

At 0200 hours the men of the 3rd Battalion, 310th Infantry moved into forward assembly areas in KALL CREEK Canyon. (See Map C) Some of the men tried to get a little rest before the attack, others were too busy making final preparations. An unfortunate German shellburst had required a last minute reorganization of Company K.

At 0400 hours the leading Companies of 3rd Battalion began scaling forward and silently worked their way up a nearly vertical two hundred foot slope, where they were to pass through the lines of the 102nd Cavalry Group. Here, a last check was made of personnel and equipment.

At about 0600 hours heavy firing commenced in the 311th Infantry and 78th Reconnaissance Troop sector to the north, at which time Lieutenant Colonel Harry Lutz, 3rd Battalion Commander ordered his Battalion to attack. (21)

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(20) Personal knowledge

(21) A-5, p. 29; A-6, p. 33; A-7, p. 1

NARRATION

THE ATTACK ON ROLLESBROICH

The 3rd Battalion, 310th Infantry, K and L Companies on the line, Company I in reserve crossed the line of departure at 0600 hours on 13 December 1944. Company K on the left headed directly for the town of ROLLESBROICH. (See Map C) Company L moved south toward the LAMMERSDORF-ROLLESBROICH road. (22)

As Company K moved upward and to the right of a small hill overlooking ROLLESBROICH, the platoons kept contact with difficulty as it was still very dark.

Suddenly there was an explosion. Someone had stepped on a mine. Tense faces, which had been lighted up briefly stared through the darkness toward the place where someone had fallen, then turned again toward their objective. The Battalion Aid Men as always were close behind.

The sky was now beginning to show strains of light, and the separate squads and platoons began to show up as groups of shadowy figures, eyes to the ground, straining upward over the icy slope.

Suddenly a group of Germans entrenched up ahead opened up with rifle fire on the leading men of Company K. The first tendency was to drop to the ground, to figure out the next move. One squad, however, moving forward rapidly as the firing ceased, was able to capture the squad of enemy without much of a fight.

Company K continued its advance on up and around the hill

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(22) A-5, p. 30; A-6, p. 33; A-7, p. 1

where they reached the top of the crest and below them they could distinguish the dim outline of ROLLESBROICH. They had taken their first hill and the town seemed to be within easy grasp. Then the enemy resistance really began. An enemy machine gun from a pillbox on the hill north of town opened up on the leading men of Company K, killing one. The remainder of the men dropped to the ground and crawled back to a covered position.

An explosion and flying snow and earth to the right told them that the first enemy mortar shell had come in. They were on the reverse slope of an exposed hill, and to advance directly into the machine gun fire would have been very costly, so they took cover and organized to hold the ground they had taken.

(23)

Company L was also running into difficulty to the south. Initially its advance had been rapid, although many men were bruised and scratched as they plunged through the snowdrifts, or elbowed their way through clumps of bushes and hedgerows. Company L's men met their first Germans at 0625 hours when enemy rifles began to snipe at them from someplace up ahead. As they approached their first objective, a small hill overlooking ROLLESBROICH from the south, a barrage of mortar shells descended upon them. The men hit the ground, got up and kept moving, but not for too long. Astride a hill just west of the crossroads at the southern end of town, one platoon was suddenly pinned down by intense machine gun fire from a house in the vicinity of the crossroads. It looked like an ordinary house, but looks are deceiving, as the ineffectiveness of re-

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(23) A-5, p. 30; A-6, p. 33-34; A-7, p. 1

turn fire of Company M's heavy machine guns disclosed. (24)

Company K on a hill to the north and Company L on a hill to the south, knowing how well the enemy had the fields of advance covered by machine guns and mortars, took stock of the situation and revised their plans to take the town. (25)

Meanwhile wire crews had been laboring with their wire and heavy reels up over the line of departure to supplement the radio communications which up until this time had been unsatisfactory due to the rugged terrain and the radios rapidly losing calibration under the shock sustained when the operators fell down or jumped into holes for security. Now the wires were in and the ever-present Forward Observer from the 903rd Field Artillery Battalion could give Company M's mortars which were doing an excellent job some much needed assistance by calling for fire on the pillbox on the hill north of town, which was holding up Company K's advance. The men listened thankfully as the 105 Howitzer shells whistled overhead on their way to the target. (26)

During the artillery firing a few elements of Company K, less exposed, managed to work their way to the south and enter the town of ROLLESBROICH. (27)

Company L to the south was being held up by the enemy machine gun fire from the house at the crossroads, which really was a camouflaged pillbox. Two men of Company B, 303rd Engineers, lugging pole charges crept and crawled up to its very walls, placed their charges, lit the fuses, moved away only to realize that their long trip and constant falling in the snow had wet the charges. This having failed, two ~~Flame Throw-~~

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(24) A-5, p. 30-31; A-6, p. 34; A-7, p. 1

(25) A-5, p. 31

(26) A-5, p. 30; A-8; A-10

(27) A-6, p. 34; A-7, p. 1

ers, which were with the engineer unit attached were brought forward in an attempt to knock out the strong point. In both attempts the Flame-Throwers failed to function properly and the Napalm was released harmlessly on the ground. An artillery concentration might do the job, but Captain Barton H. Hunter, Commanding Company L, refused further injuring his wounded men lying near the bunker. The Regimental Executive Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Hayes, who witnessed this, tried to have two Tank Destroyers brought up, whose direct fire weapons, using fuze delay, would wipe out the defenders, but the Tank Destroyers couldn't approach, due to the heavily mined roads and the 303rd Engineers being unable to work under enemy fire. One platoon of Company I, 310th Infantry, with the mission of protecting the engineers in an attempt to clear the mined road had already suffered heavy casualties. (28)

After sizing up the situation L Company Commander decided to by-pass the enemy strong point and ordered his Company to move to the north and into ROLLESBROICH which was successful, thus joining forces with Company K's men. By noon these forces had cleared most of ROLLESBROICH'S 50-odd shattered houses.

However the enemy still defended the house that had held up Company L earlier in the morning and the southern edge of town was still in enemy hands. (29)

Company B, 310th Infantry, was to have coordinated its attack with the 2nd Battalion, 309th Infantry which was heavily reinforced with tanks. Mined roads prevented this, and Company B, 310th Infantry attacked independently at 1345. It

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(28) A-5, p. 37-38; A-6, p. 34; A-7, p. 1

(29) A-5, p. 36-37; A-6, p. 34; A-8; A-9

made good progress along the LAMMERSDORF-ROLLESBROICH road and expected to turn south at the town's crossroads for the purpose of controlling the road junction and seizing the high ground south of town. The attempt proved costly when the camouflaged bunker which had pinned down Company L's men and other crossroad houses opened up. Company B, after suffering heavy casualties was unable to advance and had to dig in. (30)

While this attack was taking place, Lieutenant Colonel Harry Lutz, 3rd Battalion Commander, after making a personal reconnaissance, called for an artillery preparation on the hill north of town, and ordered Captain Olson's Company I to swing around Company K's left flank and secure the hill, and the pillbox that was holding up Company K. This maneuver met with initial success, produced twenty prisoners, and reached a group of houses just northwest of Company K. The enemy hadn't been caught napping. Small groups had infiltrated back to their original positions and made further advance impossible. Company I dug in to hold the ground they had taken. (31)

While all this was taking place, most of Company K that was pinned down was able to advance into town, rejoin elements of K and L Companies that had entered town previously, and dug defensive positions on the eastern outskirts of town.

Regimental Headquarters could report it had gained its primary objective, ROLLESBROICH. Now the problem was to hold it. There were enemy to the front, to either side and even to the rear, and there were other troubles. Men began to realize they were cold, wet, hungry and that they needed ammunition. Casualties had to be evacuated. (32)

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(30) A-5, p. 39; A-6, p. 34; A-7, p. 2

(31) A-5, p. 39-40; A-6, p. 35; A-7, p. 2; A-8

(32) A-5, p. 39; A-6, p. 35; A-7, p. 2; A-8

Mined roads, constant artillery and mortar shelling, and darkness prevented the use of vehicles. Safe lanes over rough terrain for distances better than two miles called for hand carrying parties, and even the tired men could hardly be spared. Rank or job lost its significance and there was adequate compensation in seeing the job done. (33)

Sometime after dark, the enemy which still held the southern tip of the town near the crossroads, picked up Company L's nearby casualties and gave them first aid. Three other men, uninjured but pinned down near the bunker were also taken. The Americans tried to explain the hopelessness of the German's position and induce them to surrender. They might have succeeded, but for the German officer who ordered six Germans to take the uninjured prisoners to the rear. Outside the bunker there was a sudden call "Duck", and the three Americans hit the ground, just as a Browning automatic rifle opened fire. Two of the German guards were killed and the other four were happy prisoners. Two of Company L's men had concealed themselves in a clump of bushes and their patience was rewarded. (34)

The enemy artillery was active throughout the night and small arms clashes between outposts and patrols were frequent.

Mines prevented use of roads, but Company B, 893rd Tank Destroyers felt their way around the minefields, and at dawn on 14 December six Tank Destroyers were in town. (35)

Company A, 310th Infantry was to attack and seize the high ground south of ROLLESBROICH following a heavy artillery barrage scheduled at 0430 hours, 14 December, but was delayed due

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(33) A-5, p. 46; A-6, p. 35; A-7, p. 2; A-8  
(34) A-5, p. 46; A-6, p. 35; A-7, p. 2; A-8  
(35) A-5, p. 46; A-6, p. 35; A-8

to the artillery not being able to fire, because of friendly patrols of the 309th Infantry Regiment operating in the area, which had not been coordinated with the S-2 of the 310th Infantry Regiment.

At 0730 hours clearance was obtained, and following a heavy artillery barrage began the attack. The going was rough, men were wading in knee deep snow. The 1st Platoon secured the right flank of the Company. The remainder of the Company, carried the main attack across the minefield to the objective. The high ground south of ROLLESBROICH was taken at the cost of eighteen casualties. The left flank of the Company made contact with Company B, 310th Infantry on the left. The right flank covered the south area and tied in with the 309th Infantry on the right. (36)

Company B, 310th Infantry moved forward and seized the troublesome crossroads bunker recently abandoned by the enemy except for Company L's wounded men, and completed mopping up the southern edge of town. (37)

The 3rd Battalion spent the day clearing the northern part of town of enemy snipers, deactivating the boobytraps in houses which were to be used, clearing routes through the minefields which still lay to the rear, and consolidating their positions. (38)

One platoon of Company C, 310th Infantry, which had been attached to the 3rd Battalion to clean out pockets of enemy resistance west of ROLLESBROICH and establish contact with the 78th Reconnaissance Troop to the north, was stopped by an extensive SCHU-mine field blocking their path. The platoon suf-

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(36) A-5, p. 49; A-6, p. 36

(37) A-5, p. 48-49; A-6, p. 36; A-8

(38) A-5, p. 48; A-6, p. 36

ferred seventeen casualties before they abandoned this course of action. (39)

Company I improved their positions throughout the day, and after dark one platoon took over the high ground and pill-box which had given Company K so much trouble. They were then successful in sending a patrol to the north, contacting the 78th Reconnaissance Troop and established an outpost to maintain contact. (40)

The Anti-Tank Company, 310th Infantry, which prior to this time had coordinated defensive-measures in depth, and set up flank road blocks, sent two platoons of Anti-Tank guns into ROLLESBROICH for added support. (41)

The medical aid men and litter bearers, who had been confronted with a new problem of removing casualties from mine-fields, continued to work without rest, treating casualties under fire without thought of their own safety and hand carrying litter cases across thousands of yards of the roughest kind of terrain. The need for having engineers close at hand to assist the Medical personnel became apparent. (42)

The following day, 15 December, all units continued to deal with snipers who had been by-passed or who had infiltrated back into town during the night, improved communications, and consolidated positions. (43)

One platoon of Company C, 310th Infantry returned to the SCHU-mine field where they had received heavy casualties the day before, and with a mine squad from Anti-Tank Company, 310th Infantry, and an additional squad from Company B, 303rd Engi-

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(39) A-5, p. 49; A-6, p. 36; Personal knowledge

(40) A-5, p. 49; A-6, p. 36; A-8

(41) A-6, p. 36; Personal knowledge

(42) A-6, p. 38; A-10; Personal knowledge

(43) A-6, p. 36; A-7, p. 3; Personal knowledge

neers, cleared a path through the minefield. (44)

The Germans hadn't been the only enemy. The weather had been most unfavorable throughout the operation and trench foot casualties began to mount. The men tried to do what they could to prevent it, but inadequate equipment, extreme cold, water-filled foxholes, and the tactical impossibility of building fires, obtaining dry socks or shoes, or even removing one's shoes for massaging made prevention almost impossible. (45)

The Baptism of fire had been thorough. What troops remained were not the same soldiers who had nervously stood guard back in BELGIUM and FRANCE.

The first engagement was accomplished. The regiment had advanced approximately a mile into the SIEGFRIED LINE along a three-thousand yard front, plus one-hundred-fifty enemy known dead or captured. (46)

The total men lost to the two battalions of the 310th Infantry was two-hundred-twenty-seven men.

On the morning of 16 December the 310th Infantry was notified to establish a deliberate defense in place and hold the ground they had gained. (47)

#### ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

##### 1. SACRIFICING TACTICAL INTEGRITY OF UNITS

The V Corps Commander decision to detach the 311th Infantry Regiment from the 78th Infantry Division and attach it to the 8th Infantry Division for the 78th Infantry Divisions initial attack in World War II, left the Division Commander faced

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(44) A-6, p. 36; A-7, p. 3; Personal knowledge

(45) Personal knowledge

(46) A-6, p. 38

(47) Personal knowledge

with what General Bradley called a very difficult mission to accomplish, and no reserve Regiment if elements of two Infantry Regiments were committed on line. With the frontage assigned the Division in the V Corps order, the Division Commander had no choice, but to assign two regiments on line. The Division Commanders decision to detach the 2nd Battalion, 310th Infantry from the regiment and attach it to the 309th Infantry which appeared would have the toughest going, left the 310th Infantry Regimental Commander faced with a problem of fighting his Regiment with no reserve battalion if he elected to commit two battalions on line. In addition to this the 2nd Battalion, 310th Infantry was to enter Combat attached to a Regimental Combat Team that they had not trained with, and were not familiar with the commander's policies. This was further emphasized when the 2nd Battalion, 310th Infantry lost five hundred forty two men during its initial attack. The unit that was most successful in its initial engagement was the 3rd Battalion, 310th Infantry which was assigned a mission and accomplished it mainly because the tactical integrity of the unit was maintained.

The objectives assigned to units should be sub-divided and the tactical integrity of units maintained.

## 2. WINTER CLOTHING

The existing shortages of winter clothing was continually brought to the attention of higher headquarters many times and was on requisition. It was clearly indicated months in advance that this unit was about to enter combat. These existing

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shortages were taken up personally by the Division Commander with both the First and Ninth United States Army Commanders, but was not corrected until two months after its initial entry into combat. The existing shortage of large sized overshoes greatly increased the trench-foot cases in the Division.

### 3. COMMUNICATIONS

The restrictions place on the use of radios prior to the attack, because surprise was essential, somewhat contributed to the faulty communications the first day of combat, in that the unit had prior to this time, been located in a static position where wire was the main means of communications, the radios were not used, and sufficient stress was not placed on radio maintenance by unit commanders. If, following the move into the new area, radios could have been rotated and tested with the 102nd Cavalry Group which was in contact with the enemy, secrecy could have been maintained, and the existing deficiencies could have been detected and corrected.

### 4. ENGINEER EQUIPMENT

Every possible effort should be made to keep engineer equipment in excellent working condition, so when the occasion arises where it is most urgently needed by the Infantry units it will function properly and assist them in accomplishing their mission. It should be readily available in sufficient amounts with engineers close at hand to deliver it to the unit needing it, so as to not hold up an attack or allow any doubt in a Commander's mind as to whether it will function properly or not.

## 5. BY-PASSING ENEMY RESISTANCE

The decision of Captain Hunter to by-pass the enemy resistance at the crossroads bunker after all attempts to knock it out by his unit and attached engineers had failed, seemed to him the only thing left to do. However, in analyzing it now, we can see that definite instructions should have been given to some element of Company L to contain the enemy in the bunker and continually put pressure on this strong-point which was in a position to control the only road into ROLLESBROICH which would have to be used for re-supply and evacuation of both the 1st and 3rd Battalions of the 310th Infantry.

In addition to this the enemy was in a position to block movement of the 1st Battalion which it did very successfully, causing heavy casualties to the 1st Battalion.

It also prevented the engineers from clearing any mines from the road during daylight hours and allowed the enemy to withdraw after dark anytime he saw fit to do so.

## 6. PLANS MUST BE FLEXIBLE

The 1st Battalion, 310th Infantry was to coordinate its attack with the 309th Infantry Regiment, make a limited advance on the 3rd Battalion, 310th Infantry, right and secure the high ground south of ROLLESBROICH.

This attack was not carried out because the 309th Infantry, which was heavily reinforced with tanks was held up <sup>at</sup> to heavily mined roads. If the 1st Battalion, 310th Infantry had attacked abreast of the 3rd Battalion at the same time, the objective may have been taken much earlier and with fewer casualties.

On 14 December 1944, Company A, 310th Infantry was to have made an attack following an artillery preparation which was to commence at 0430 hours, but was held up, because the artillery could not fire due to friendly patrols operating in the areas that had not been coordinated between the Regimental S-2s. If Company A had launched its attack at 0430 hours when the unit was ready to move it may have taken its objective with fewer casualties than it received at 0730 hours following the artillery preparation.

#### 7. MINE TRAINING

During the first attack it was very clearly brought out that there had not been enough thought given to training in enemy mines. Prior to this attack it had been felt that there were many other subjects that took priority over enemy mine training and if we did come across any, the mine platoon and the engineers would be close at hand to take over. This mistake proved to be very costly, both to the medical personnel trying to remove casualties from the minefields and to the Infantrymen trying to go through them.

#### LESSONS

1. The tactical integrity of units must not be sacrificed. It is far better to sub-divide objectives rather than Regiments and Battalions.
2. In order to attain the maximum efficiency of a unit, the men must be equipped with clothing and equipment in accordance with the existing climate.
3. In order to have communications when they are needed,

radios must be tested, continually, and especially just prior to being used in an attack.

4. Engineer equipment must be delivered to assault units in such a condition that it will function properly when needed.

5. Enemy resistance must not be by-passed in a zone which threatens the advance of reserves and adjacent units.

6. Attacks cannot be successful, if plans are not flexible. One unit should not be held up waiting for another unit or supporting arms.

7. If the infantryman is to be successful in combat, he must have a basic working knowledge of enemy mines and other obstacles that will be placed in his path.