

Staff Department  
THE INFANTRY SCHOOL  
Fort Benning, Georgia

ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS COURSE  
1949-1950

THE OPERATIONS OF THE 2D BATTALION, 23D INFANTRY  
(2D INFANTRY DIVISION) IN THE ATTACK ON HILL 192,  
WEST OF BERIGNY, FRANCE, 12-16 JUNE 1944  
(NORMANDY CAMPAIGN)  
(Personal Experience of a Battalion Adjutant and  
Headquarters Company Commander)

Type of operation described: INFANTRY BATTALION ATTACKING  
A KEY TERRAIN FEATURE

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ORIENTATION.

INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operations of the 2nd Battalion, 23d Infantry, 2d Infantry Division in the Battle for HILL 192, BERIGNY, FRANCE, 12 June to 16 June 1944, during the expansion of OMAHA BEACHHEAD.

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

On the morning of 6 June 1944, the US First Army and British Second Army invaded FRANCE between CAEN on the east and STE-MERE-EGLISE on the west. This area was to become known as the NORMANDY BEACHHEAD. (See Map A) (1) By the end of D-Day, 6 June 1944, the Allied Forces had established a beachhead. (See Map B) (2) Major units of these forces were:

US First Army:

VII US Corps

101st US Airborne Division

82d US Airborne Division

4th US Infantry Division

V US Corps

1st US Infantry Division

29th US Infantry Division

2d US Infantry Division (Build up Force)

(1) A-1, Map I

(2) A-1, Map X

Second British Army:

30th British Corps

50th British Infantry Division

3d Canadian Infantry Division

1st British Corps

3d British Infantry Division

6th British Airborne Division

The 2d Infantry Division arrived off the V Corps beach-head on D-Day, 6 June 1944. The 9th Infantry and 38th Infantry, with their supporting artillery units, the 15th and 38th Field Artillery Battalions, were ashore on 7 June 1944. (3) The Division Headquarters was also established with its Command Post north of TREVIÈRES on this day. (4)

The 23d Infantry, with its supporting artillery, the 37th Field Artillery Battalion, was ashore on 9 June 1944 and went into an assembly area north of TREVIÈRES. (5)

The infantry and artillery units were not combat loaded. The organic transportation was loaded on separate ships and did not arrive until after the foot elements were ashore. (6) The heaviest weapon carried by the units was the Browning Automatic Rifle. (5)

THE GENERAL SITUATION

On 9 June 1944, at 1200 hours, the 9th and 38th Infantry Regimental Combat Teams launched the first Division attack. This attack was launched without the benefit of their heavy weapons. These weapons were rushed to the units as fast as they were unloaded across the beach. (7)

(3) A-2, p. 72

(4) A-3, p. 24

(5) Personal knowledge

(6) A-3, p. 24

(7) A-3, p. 24

This attack was made in the middle of the V Corps sector. This put three divisions abreast in the push inland. The two Regimental Combat Teams' attack carried them through TREVIERES, CERISY LA FORET and on 11 June 1944 cut the BAYEUX-ST LO Highway by passing through the CERISY FOREST. (See Maps B and C) (8)

During this period the 2d Infantry Division had advanced 24 kilometers into enemy territory against stubborn resistance. The other units of V Corps were generally abreast and along the line of the ELLE RIVER on 11 June 1944. (See Map C) (8)

The enemy forces opposing the V Corps at this time were the 914th Infantry Regiment and elements of the 17th SS Panzer Grenadier Division, 29th Infantry Division sector, elements of the 352d Infantry Division, 2d Infantry Division sector, and elements of the 915th and 916th Infantry Regiments and 30th Mobile Brigade, 1st Infantry Division sector. (See Map C) (8)

In compliance with V Corps plan of attack for 12 June 1944, the 2d Infantry Division planned to attack with the 9th Infantry to secure the high ground south of LITTCOU. The 23d Infantry was to secure the high ground of HILL 192. The 38th Infantry was to be in reserve. (See Map C) (9)

#### DISPOSITIONS AND PLANS OF THE 23D INFANTRY (See Map C)

On 11 June 1944, the 23d Infantry was in an assembly area north of CERISY LA FORET having moved from its first assembly area north of TREVIERES on this day. (10)

(8) A-1, Map No XIV

(9) A-2, p. 84

(10) Personal knowledge

Here the order for the attack on HILL 192 was issued. The order called for the regiment to pass through the positions held by the 38th Infantry with the 1st and 2nd Battalions, the 3rd Battalion was to be in reserve. The 1st Battalion would cross the ELLE RIVER west of CERISY LA FORET and move south against HILL 192. The 2nd Battalion was to attack southwest and take the east slope of HILL 192. (See Map C) (11)

"The terrain of the NORMANDY country side over which the regiment was to attack consisted of small fields surrounded by tough, steep earthen walls from three to seven feet in height, sometimes in double rows. From the top, dense shrubs and hawthorne bushes grew." These were called hedgerows. "The hedgerows, built first in ancient times to protect the fields from roving, half civilized tribes, had become through centuries of use hard-packed mounds of earth held by stones and twisted roots." (See Sketches No. 1 and 2) (12)

"HILL 192 was the key point of all territory to the west toward ST LO, some three miles away, and to the sea." (13)  
From HILL 192, the Germans had long range observation over all the 23d Infantry zone of attack.

"The Germans had defended the approaches to HILL 192 with a vigor proving the importance they attached to ST LO. Their defense had stopped the advance of the 38th Infantry and 29th Infantry Division and saw the first committing in the area of considerable reinforcements to be used against V Corps." (14)

"It was key terrain for any offensive operation aimed at ST LO." (15)

(11) A-1, Map No. XV and p. 153

(12) A-3, p. 29

(13) A-3, p. 29

(14) A-1, p. 153

(15) A-1, p. 151

## THE BATTALION SITUATION

The battalion was in the regimental assembly area. The Battalion Commander returned to the command post with the order for the attack about midafternoon. All plans and orders were made at this assembly area. Reconnaissance of the line of departure or of the terrain over which the battalion was to attack was not made by the Company Commanders or other subordinate Commanders prior to or after the attack order was issued. (16)

The combat efficiency of the battalion was an undetermined factor as this was to be their first combat. The battalion had trained for the past 18 months with at least 90 percent of its strength having been members of the battalion during this period. The over all combat efficiency could be estimated as excellent.

The combat strength of the battalion was that of a war strength battalion less the authorized over strength which had been left in ENGLAND to follow the battalion as its initial reinforcements.

The morale of the troops was excellent. The battalion had been on rations of the "C" and "K" types since landing. The kitchen trains had not arrived on the beach at this time.

The equipment and supplies were T/O with the exception of the rifle companies weapons carriers with the light machine guns and 60 mm mortars which had not arrived at this time. There was ample ammunition and resupply was normal. (17)

- (16) Personal knowledge and statement by Lt Col M.B. Montgomery, G Company Commander, 15 November 1949  
(17) Personal knowledge

The terrain over which the Battalion was to attack was criss-crossed with hedgerows. From the southwest edge of CERISY FOREST to the ELLE RIVER the ground sloped gently down and then sloped gently up toward HILL 192. From HILL 192, the slope ran east through the village of BERIGNY and roughly parallel to the ELLE RIVER. (See Map D)

The ELLE RIVER was fordable for foot troops and did not constitute a barrier to the attack. The ELLE itself was only 10 feet wide, but the very steep and wooded bank offered cover for well concealed enemy emplacements.

The enemy in the battalion's zone of attack was estimated as a battalion of the 916th Infantry Regiment, a part of the 352d Infantry Division. "From prisoners taken on 10 June 1944, it was learned that the units in this sector were made up of South Russians, Poles, Turkamons and Georgians. These prisoners revealed that many had joined the army to escape prison camps, and to enjoy better army fare. Many declared that they had never fired a shot against the Americans. It was believed however, that most had fought until a fortuitous moment for capture or surrender. Some had adopted civilian clothes in an effort to pass as impressed laborers." (18) "These remnants were showing signs of increased disorganization every day and the 352d Infantry Division was still the only important German force on a front of more than 25 miles. They were short of ammunition, and they had almost no artillery support. Enemy morale was steadily declining." (19) Mortar fire had increased on 11 June 1944. (20)

(18) A-3, p. 26  
(19) A-1, p. 150  
(20) A-3, p. 26

THE BATTALION PLAN OF ATTACK (21)  
(See Map D)

The line of departure was the southwest edge of CERISY FOREST, H-Hour 0600, 12 June 1944.

The battalion's plan of attack was to cross the line of departure in advance guard formation moving generally across country, guiding approximately 500 yards to the right of but parallel to the road leading up to HILL 192. Company F was to lead the battalion and occupy the objective. Company G was to follow F Company. Company E was to be in reserve and follow Battalion Headquarters Company. The Machine Gun Platoons of H Company would follow behind F and G Companies off carriers. Companies F and G were to organize the defense of the objective on arrival and await further orders. However no specific company objectives were assigned at the time the order was issued.

The Mortar Platoon of H Company was to follow the advance by bounds. Forward observers were assigned to F and G Companies.

A 20 minute artillery preparation by the 37th Field Artillery Battalion was to be fired prior to 0600 hours on HILL 192. Forward observers were to go with F and G Companies. A Liaison Officer was to accompany the Battalion Commander. This personnel did not report until after the battalion had arrived at the forward assembly area.

The Ammunition and Pioneer Platoon was to organize two squads into four rocket launcher teams with two teams to each of the leading companies.

(21) A-1, p. 153, and statement by Lt Col M. B. Montgomery, G Company Commander, 15 November 1949, and Personal knowledge

The battalion command group was to follow F Company. Communication was to be by radio. Wire to the companies or from regiment was not to be installed.

The battalion motors to include the ammunition truck were to be left in the forward assembly area under control of the Motor Officer and Supply Officer.

The Battalion Aid Station was to remain with the motors and follow on orders of the Battalion Commander. The Battalion Surgeon sent one aid man with each platoon of the four lettered companies.

MOVEMENT TO THE LINE OF DEPARTURE AND FINAL PREPARATION FOR THE ATTACK (22)  
(See Map D)

The battalion left its assembly area at about 0330 hours, 12 June 1944, in a column of companies, order of march; F, G, Headquarters, E and H. Breakfast was a "K" ration and no hot coffee was served. The battalion closed into the forward assembly area in rear of the line of departure without incident.

The companies immediately started making their final preparations for the attack. The liaison personnel from the artillery reported at this time.

The Battalion Commander returned from the 1st Battalion, 38th Infantry Command Post with the latest enemy information. This information showed that enemy patrols had been active the night of 11-12 June and little resistance had been encountered by its companies.

At 0540 hours the artillery preparation began to fall on HILL 192. At about 0545, the company weapons carriers arrived.

(22) Personal knowledge

These were quickly unloaded and the weapons integrated into the companies and all was ready to cross the line of departure.

Just prior to crossing the line of departure, a wire head from the artillery arrived. The liaison officer quickly tied onto it with assault wire. This completed the preparations for the move forward.

#### NARRATION

#### THE ATTACK ON HILL 192, 12 JUNE 1944 (See Map D)

Company F crossed the line of departure in advance guard formation at 0600 hours on 12 June 1944. After crossing the line of departure the advance moved rapidly until it reached the road opposite the orchard. Here long range machine gun fire, mortar fire, and rifle fire were received.

The chatter of the never to be forgotten German machine gun and mortar burst were heard back at the command group but no report was received from F Company.

The Battalion Commander not knowing the situation in front of F Company called for the G Company Commander and ordered him to take his company around the left of F Company and move forward. After issuing this order the Battalion Commander and Operations Officer moved forward in the direction of F Company.

(23)

Company G immediately started to move to the left of F Company. The firing increased to the front.

Company F deployed to the right. The company crossed the road by short rushes. Company G had moved up to the left and found the going easy except for the hedgerows. (24)

(23) Personal knowledge

(24) Statement by Lt Col M. B. Montgomery, G Company Commander, 15 November 1949

Companies F and G then advanced to the hedgerows running generally along the banks of the stream. Here the German positions on the west bank of the ELLE RIVER opened fire with small arms and machine gun fire. The mortar fire increased. (25)

The artillery began to deliver called fires. Under the protection of these fires both companies attempted to move forward. These attempts were repulsed by enemy small arms fire and mortar fire lacing the tops of the hedgerows. This fire was demoralizing to the advancing troops. It was so accurate that any exposed movement along the hedgerows brought some type of enemy fire. (26)

Company F moved the support platoon around to the right of the two assault platoons. This platoon advanced forward until it reached the sand bar formed by the stream at this point. The enemy took this move under concentrated fire and pinned it down. The platoon tried to move forward and reach the cover of the far bank. Each attempt was repulsed by enemy fire. The platoon remained in this position until late in the afternoon. (27)

Company G committed its support platoon around to the left flank. It moved forward until it had reached the stream. It too was pinned down by enemy fire. Attempts to move forward brought enemy fire from the flank. (28)

The rest of the battalion had arrived and deployed along the road in rear of the orchard and along the road leading back into the forest. Casualties began to come back looking for the Aid Station. Some were assisting more seriously wounded men. It was apparent that they could not make the

(25) A-1, p. 154

(26) Personal knowledge

(27) Personal knowledge

(28) Statement by Lt Col M. B. Montgomery, G Company Commander, 15 November 1949

long trip back to the Aid Station in the forest. A runner was dispatched back to the Battalion Surgeon with orders to move the Aid Station to the right of the road leading from the forest.

(29)

The fire from the enemy increased. Flat trajectory artillery began to lace the hedgerows. Snipers who had been by-passed became active and were firing into the rear of the assault companies. (30)

The Battalion Commander and Operation Officer had not returned to the command group since departing for F Company. The Battalion Intelligence Officer established an observation post along the road in the rear of the orchard and was trying to determine the enemy positions. This was an impossible task because of the smokeless powder used by the Germans and the excellent cover and camouflage offered by the hedgerows.

While this action was taking place the 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry had crossed the line of departure and had not proceeded very far when it had met effective resistance. The enemy had counter attacked and the battalion moved back a mile but remained south of the ELLE RIVER. (31) The 9th Infantry advanced 2 miles to its objective by 0940. (32)

About 1000 hours, the Aid Station was established at the stone fence and began to take care of the casualties. The Battalion Headquarters Company moved back off the road into a field opposite the Aid Station and began to organize a command post. The Communication Officer laid a wire from the 1st Battalion, 38th Infantry switchboard and wire communications were established to the rear. (33)

(29) Personal knowledge

(30) Personal knowledge

(31) A-1, p. 154

(32) A-1, p. 154

(33) Personal knowledge

The 3rd Battalion, 23rd Infantry was committed through the forest between the 1st and 2nd Battalions and it too had met stiff resistance and was making slow progress. (34)

By early afternoon, it became apparent that no further advance could be made by the battalion. The rifle companies were still trying to cross the stream but were refused ground by small arms, machine gun and mortar fire. The battalion began to organize for a defense and hold this ground. A line was established about 200 yards east of the stream. This was along the hedgerows that ran parallel to the stream.

One platoon of E Company was given the mission of mopping up the snipers and by-passed Germans by the Battalion Executive Officer. (35)

The 3rd Battalion, 23rd Infantry had been stopped on the east bank of the stream also. (36)

The litter teams of the Aid Station were still evacuating casualties. The strain was beginning to tell. Moving a man on a litter from the front over the hedgerows under fire was an exhausting, time consuming job. The Battalion Surgeon realizing this, established a litter collecting point near the observation post and from there used the litter jeep to evacuate back to the Aid Station. This saved the litter teams the long trek back to the Aid Station. (37)

The platoon of E Company that was mopping up the area captured a prisoner. As he was being marched back under guard

(34) A-1, p. 154

(35) Personal knowledge

(36) A-1, p. 154

(37) Personal knowledge

to the command post, a front line soldier who was returning from the Aid Station hit the prisoner over the head with the butt of an M-1 rifle. The prisoner was taken to the Aid Station where it was determined that he had only a bad bruise. No attempt to question the prisoner was made. The prisoner was taken back to the motor park and evacuated to the Division Collecting Point. (38)

In front of the 9th Infantry position, the enemy began vigorous offensive patrolling. These units were identified as elements of the 3d Paratroop Division. (39)

The Battalion Commander and Operation Officer returned to the command post and began to relate all the events that had taken place during the morning and early afternoon. Orders were issued to establish wire communication to the front line companies. Company E was moved to the field across the road running along the orchard and was ordered to protect the right flank. The Mortar Platoon of H Company was in position behind the road leading back into the forest.

The enemy kept the initiative by continuing to fire bursts of machine gun fire and mortar fire on the front lines.

The battalion received orders that it was not to participate in the continuation of the attack the next day. Preparations were made now for a deliberate defense of the position. Wire communications was established to all companies. Units began to dig fox holes and emplacements for weapons.

The Battalion Commander issued no instructions for patrols for the night nor did he prescribe that outpost or listening post be established. (40)

(38) Personal knowledge

(39) A-1, p. 153

(40) Personal knowledge

An air strike was directed against HILL 192 just prior to darkness. (41)

The casualties sustained by the battalion for the days fighting had been less than anticipated or expected from the vigorous defense the enemy had put up to its advance. The regiment reported a total of 211 casualties for the day. (42) The exact number for the battalion is not known but it is known that the greater losses for the battalion were among its leaders who had moved forward to spur their riflemen on to the next hedgerow. The following officers were lost during the day:

G Company

Company Commander

Company Executive Officer

One Platoon Leader

F Company

Company Commander (43)

The artillery support for the day had been excellent. The 37th and 38th Field Artillery Battalions had fired over 2600 rounds in support of the regimental attack for the day. (44)

The battalion settled down for the night. Ammunition had been resupplied and weapons were replaced from those recovered on the battlefield and at the Aid Station. (45)

The security plan for the night called for two men per rifle squad to be on the alert, with one each at platoon and

(41) A-1, p. 154

(42) A-1, p. 154

(43) Personal knowledge

(44) A-1, p. 154

(45) Personal knowledge

company headquarters. Each company was to report by phone to the command post every 30 minutes. (46)

The battalion's sector was quiet during the rest of the night of 12 June. Reports from the companies came into the command post that all was quiet.

The front lines of the Division were generally along the line at which the units had halted during the day. (See Map D)

13 JUNE 1944  
(See Map D)

The enemy kept the initiative during the night all along the line. At 0151 hours, the enemy launched a counter attack against the position held by the battalion. (47)

This counter attack was accompanied by heavy burst of small arms fire. Fire from the enemy was the heaviest on the left flank.

All elements of the battalion were alerted. The Battalion Commander called for the artillery liaison officer. This officer together with his section had moved out of the command post and established his own observation post about 1000 yards in rear of the command post. A runner was dispatched to get him and bring him back to the command post. When he was found, this officer was busy laying wire forward to the command post.

The enemy fire increased to include mortar and self-propelled fire, F and G Companies were firing into the darkness but had not located the advancing enemy.

Company G reported a large movement some 300 to 500 yards to their front. The Battalion Commander ordered the

(46) Personal knowledge

(47) A-1, p. 154

artillery to fire. The liaison officer called for this concentration. The fire from the artillery was delivered for approximately 5 minutes. During this fire, the liaison officer made contact with a 4.2 Chemical Mortar Platoon and had it thicken up the concentration with White Phosphorus. As these rounds came in there was a volley of shorts. These shorts fell in F Company area. This fire was ordered stopped at once. (48)

The enemy fire was heard up and down the entire battalion front. Every front line rifle and machine gun of the battalion was firing into the darkness at what they hoped was a target. The artillery began to shift from one flank to the other. The 81mm Mortars were firing under the direction of the forward observers in the front lines.

As quick as it had started the enemy fire ceased. For about an hour this firing had continued by both sides at a rapid rate. No patrols were ordered after the firing ceased to determine if there were any enemy casualties. The security was not increased at this time.

Casualties began to move back to the Aid Station. The Aid Station was working under great difficulty. With the command post type tent erected for the Aid Station, it was necessary to stop operations completely, turn out all the lights and move one litter case out and one in, then resume work. This was a time consuming operation and delayed the treatment and evacuation considerably.

About an hour before sunrise, the Battalion Commander ordered all troops to be ready for an enemy attack. It was

felt that the counter attack during the night had turned out to be a "Reconnaissance in Force" for a pending attack. This attack failed to materialize.

It was determined by this time that the casualties had been light due to the excellent cover offered by the hedgerows. The battalion did lose the H Company Commander, Mortar Platoon Leader, and a Mortar Section Leader. Enlisted casualties were again light.

The rest of the day was spent in digging deeper and improving positions. The front line companies were resupplied with ammunition. The Pioneer and Ammunition Platoon moved this ammunition forward by using "Ammunition Hand Carts" as the transportation was still in the forest. (49)

The 9th Infantry on the left held their previous positions and improved them during the day. The 38th Infantry attacked with two battalions at 0800. These units passed through the 1st Battalion of the 23d Infantry and made good progress for two miles south of the ELLE RIVER. They were hitting stronger opposition when this attack was halted in the afternoon by Division Order. (See Map D) This order called for all three regiments to prepare their present positions for a possible enemy attack. The 2d Division was still two miles north of HILL 192 and had not succeeded in getting possession of the BERIGNY-ST. GEORGE DELLE area. (50)

About an hour before sunset, the Battalion Commander ordered all troops alerted in case of an attack before darkness.

(49) Personal knowledge  
(50) A-1, p. 154

This alert with the morning alert became known as "Stand-To" and were SOP from this time on. (51)

Identification of prisoners taken by other units during the day revealed that units of the 8th Paratroop Regiment, 3rd Paratroop Division were in the BERIGNY area and the 352d Infantry Division was north of HILL 192. The 3d Paratroop Division was regarded as a first class unit of very high fighting quality. (52)

German artillery support was still weak, with some self-propelled guns in use. The mortar fire was increasing. It was clear that the enemy was prepared to hold HILL 192 with every means at his disposal. (53)

As darkness approached, the battalion settled down for the night. The security prescribed for the night of 12 June was not increased nor were patrols ordered. The Battalion Commander assured himself that the artillery liaison officer was present and with the coming of darkness the area was very quiet.

No notable events took place during the rest of the night.

#### 14 JUNE 1944

The Division remained in the position held previously. Some units made limited objective attacks to straighten out their lines. These attacks made some progress but were not major engagements. (See Map D)

(51) Personal knowledge

(52) A-1, p. 154

(53) A-1, p. 155

The battalion continued to improve its defensive position during the day. Some mortar fire and self-propelled artillery fire was received.

As darkness approached, no patrols were planned for the night. The night passed without any notable events. (54)

15 JUNE 1944

The Division remained in its previous positions and began plans for the continuation of the attack on HILL 192 for 16 June.

The battalion was notified that the overstrength had arrived and would be marched up as soon as the battalion was ready for them.

A guide was dispatched back to the regimental trains area to pick up this personnel. They arrived at the battalion position prior to noon. Here the companies picked up their men and guided them forward. In this group were four officers. One was a company commander and three were platoon leaders. The company commander was assigned to H Company, one platoon leader each to F and G Company, and the third was kept at battalion to work with the Battalion Operation and Intelligence Officers.

The forward movement of this personnel to the front lines caused the enemy to start firing their mortar concentrations. This fire fell intermittently for about an hour but no casualties were reported. (55)

(54) Personal knowledge

(55) Personal knowledge

During the day the Division announced the plans for the attack on 16 June. The over all plan called for all three regiments to continue the attack abreast. The 38th on the right, the 23d Infantry to capture HILL 192 and the 9th Infantry to capture ST GERMAIN D'ELLE. (See Map E) The attack was to be preceded by a fifteen minute artillery preparation on HILL 192. (56)

The 23d Infantry plans for the attack were to attack with the 2d and 3d Battalions. The 3d Battalion was to move against ST GEORGE DELLE and across the east slope of HILL 192, the 2d Battalion was to move west against HILL 192, link up with the 3d Battalion and then move against LA VALLEE-QUERON. (See Map E)

The battalion plan was to attack at 0800 with G Company supported by fire from F Company and to send E Company around the flank of G Company through BERIGNY. The line of departure would be the present position for G Company and for E Company the road junction northeast of BERIGNY. Company E was to have a platoon of medium tanks attached. The attachment was to become effective on arrival of the tanks which was scheduled for prior to 0800, 16 June. The mortar platoon was to furnish fire on call. The two machine gun platoons were to remain with G and F Companies.

No reconnaissance was made by E Company after it received its orders to determine if BERIGNY was occupied by the enemy. The battalion did not plan patrols for the night to determine routes of approach to the front or to BERIGNY. (57)

(56) A-2, p. 94

(57) Personal knowledge

The area remained quiet throughout the afternoon with only periodic shelling by the enemy. No notable events took place during the night.

FINAL PREPARATIONS FOR THE ATTACK ON HILL 192 - 16 JUNE 1944

Company E moved out of its reserve position and started the march for their line of departure at about 0630. The company arrived in rear of the line of departure and waited for the tank platoon to arrive.

The artillery preparation fell on HILL 192 on schedule. The tank platoon arrived at E Company just prior to their crossing the line of departure. This tank platoon was guided to E Company by the Assistant Regimental Operation Officer. This was the first Staff Officer of the Regiment or any other Headquarters to make an appearance in the battalion area during the period of 12 June to 16 June. This officer remained with E Company for the duration of the attack. (58)

THE ATTACK ON HILL 192 - 16 JUNE 1944 (See Map F)

At 0800, the two assault companies crossed their line of departure. Company E made rapid progress until it was in a position about 300 yards outside the village of BERIGNY. Here a German Panzerfaust stopped the leading tank. This disabled tank made an effective road block. The rest of the tanks deployed astride the road in the fields on either side of the road. The platoons of E Company advanced under the covering fire of the tanks. The tanks could not advance with the rifleman as the hedgerows were too high for them to go over or too thick to go through. (59)

(58) Personal knowledge

(59) Personal knowledge

Company G was making some progress. The enemy reaction to this attack was vigorous. Small arms fire and mortar fire fell throughout the area. Company G succeeded in crossing the ELLE RIVER and began a systematic advance from one hedgerow to another. (60)

The Battalion Commander, Operations Officer and Artillery Liaison Officer were watching the attack from the observation post along the road. Control of all elements was facilitated by both radio and wire. The attacking companies had tied assault wire onto their wire heads and carried it forward as they advanced. This enabled the company headquarters of the rifle company to keep the Battalion Commander informed of the actions of their company. The company commanders could talk to the Battalion Commander by using their radios direct. This enabled the Battalion Commander to have an up to date picture of the entire action. (61)

The litter jeep collecting point which had been established near the observation post and the jeep following E Company was speeding the evacuation of casualties.

Company E continued its advance into BERIGNY. The enemy was using every means at its hands to stop this advance. Small arms fire, mortar fire, panzerfaust and grenades were used. The outskirts of BERIGNY were reached and the attack became a house to house fight. The tank platoon still could not advance due to the road block and the hedgerows. (62)

- (60) Personal knowledge
- (61) Personal knowledge
- (62) Personal knowledge

Company G was still advancing slowly. The enemy was not giving ground until the last minute and then they fell back to the next hedgerow under protection of mortar and small arms fire. After G Company advanced approximately 700 yards past the stream the enemy counterattacked on the left flank of the company. This caused great concern to the Battalion Commander. All available fire was placed on this counterattack. Mortar and artillery fire pounded the area.

Company F was ordered to advance and gain contact with G Company. This advance was stopped at the stream. Attempts to advance forward were met with the concentrated fire that stopped the previous assault over this area.

As soon as the artillery and mortar fire lifted from G Company flank, the counterattack increased in size and forced G Company back across the stream and to its position which had been their line of departure. (63) Company F was ordered back to its previous position.

Company E had succeeded in capturing BERIGNY. The enemy was blocking E Company's attempts to move out of the village. By early afternoon the battalion ceased all attempts to move forward and began to prepare their positions for defense. (64)

During the attack of the battalion, the 3d Battalion, 23d Infantry advanced 400 yards beyond ST GEORGE DELLE and was forced to withdraw to ST GEORGE DELLE. The 38th Infantry on the right of the 3d Battalion succeeded in advancing their

(63) A-2, p. 94

(64) A-2, p. 94

3d Battalion up to the crest of the HILL. With the assistance of the 2d Engineer Battalion, which had been ordered to reinforce the 38th Infantry, the 3d Battalion succeeded in maintaining and organizing a position part way up the north slope. (65) The 9th Infantry had met stiff resistance at ST GERMAIN D'ELLE and failed to advance more than 300 yards. (66)

The casualties to the 2d Battalion were light during this action. Only one officer was wounded and only a few enlisted men were reported wounded or killed. (67)

This ended the initial attack on HILL 192 for the 2d Battalion, 23d Infantry, and the 2d Infantry Division.

#### CONCLUSION

HILL 192 was captured on 11 July by the 2d Infantry Division. The Division attacked with the 38th and 23d Infantry against the hill while the 9th Infantry made strong demonstrations on their front. The Infantry was supported by the fires of the 2d Infantry Division Artillery, 1st Infantry Division Artillery, 2d Armored Division Artillery, and Corps Artillery.

The final attack was preceded by a one hour artillery and mortar concentration which increased to its maximum during the last 15 minutes. More than 25,000 rounds, fired from organic and attached artillery according to plan, fell within the small area occupied by the fortifications of HILL 192. This was approximately 416 rounds per minutes and was the largest concentration of artillery on the beachhead to date.

(65) A-2, p. 94

(66) A-3, p. 27

(67) A-3, p. 32, 33, 34

As the Infantry advanced up the hill, unit commanders could call for fire to support their attack by merely giving a code which had been prearranged. This support fire could be delivered by a maximum of 5 artillery battalions.

The attack was launched at 0600 hours and HILL 192 was captured and occupied by night fall. (67)

### ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

#### 1. THE ATTACK ORDER FOR 12 JUNE 1944

The battalion commander's order for the attack on 12 June was a well conceived plan based on the information of the enemy and terrain which was available at the time. However the order was issued at the assembly area far in rear of the line of departure. It is my opinion that the lack of reconnaissance prior to or after the issuing of the order resulted in the company commanders preparing for the operation without the proper orientation of the terrain or the objective. Had the battalion order been issued in rear of the line of departure of some vantage point overlooking the battalion's zone of attack, the company commanders would have been able to plan for the employment of their unit with a complete picture of the terrain and objective.

#### 2. LIAISON PERSONNEL

The artillery liaison officer was not present to participate in the planning of the initial attack or to advise the commander on the capabilities of the artillery at this time.

(67) A-3, p. 32, 33, 34

This also applied to the tank platoon attached to E Company on 16 June. The plans for the employment of these supporting units were completed without the assistance of the liaison personnel. The planning for the use of these supporting weapons could have been greatly improved, had an effort been made to establish this liaison during the planning phase. This lack of liaison cannot be said to have been a serious factor in the results of the action. The action of the artillery officer during the night 12-13 June cannot be overlooked. The leaving of the command post and establishing operations some thousand yards back relieved the battalion commander of his most effective supporting arm in case of an emergency.

### 3. ARTILLERY PREPARATIONS

The artillery preparations for the attacks of 12 and 16 June were both planned to fall on HILL 192 and prior to the crossing of the line of departure by the attacking units. As was shown, the exact positions of the enemy were not known on 12 June. This preparation was probably fired at the most likely point of enemy territory at this time. The preparation for the attack on 16 June could have been fired on known enemy positions. This would have aided the advance of the attacking units. It is my opinion that these two preparations only gave early warning to the enemy of a pending attack on his positions as the distance from the line of departure to the point of the preparation was so great in both instances that attacking troops could not have covered the ground under the protection of these fires.

#### 4. PATROLLING

The complete lack of patrolling during this operation shows a lack of appreciation to gain knowledge of the enemy and terrain. Had the battalion organized a strong combat patrol to precede its advance on 12 June or had it engaged in aggressive patrolling of enemy positions after the attack was halted, enemy positions could have been determined and marked for neutralization or destruction by artillery and mortar fire. A patrol to BERIGNY could have determined the strength of the enemy in that village prior to the attack on 16 June. This lack of patrolling left the battalion with only the knowledge gained by being halted by fire from the enemy but not the knowledge that could have been gained by aggressive patrolling.

#### 5. SECURITY

The battalion commanders plan for security of the position by ordering two men alert in each squad and one each at platoon and company headquarters was only sufficient for the security within the position. The lack of an outpost line or listening post at night provided the enemy excellent opportunity to be on or within the battle position before an alarm could be sounded. It is the responsibility of all commander to secure their positions. A line of listening posts in front of the battalion's position on the night of 12-13 June would have given early warning of the enemy approaching and the movement taken under earlier fire by supporting weapons. This could have eliminated the disclosure of the Main Line of Resistance. The very fact that all weapons opened fire during this short engagement gave the enemy excellent knowledge of the exact position and in what strength the position was defended.

## 6. VISITS BY HIGHER COMMANDERS AND STAFF OFFICERS

As stated, the only officer from a higher headquarters to make an appearance in the battalion area during this entire period was the Assistant Regimental Operations Officer. Had other officers of a higher headquarters visited the battalion during the initial attack, a better appreciation of the enemy capabilities and the actual situation could have been gained. This lack of personal knowledge, together with the failure of their making an appearance within the area greatly added fuel to the fire on the saying: "Don't they know what is going on down here." The action of the battalion commander in going forward to determine the situation of F Company and remaining with his attacking companies until the defensive was assumed on 12 June cannot be regarded as the perfect solution to this defect within the battalion as this left one third of his striking force idle and required other staff officers of the command group to make decisions based on information they could gain and issue necessary instructions. This is an effort in the right direction to keep personally informed on the situation but the prolonged absence from a point where control of the entire unit can be gained is a grave tactical error.

## 7. AID STATION

The operation of the Aid Station in a command post type tent during darkness was not efficient. The delay caused by discontinuing operation to remove one casualty and bring in another greatly reduced the speed of evacuation which is expected. This delay could have meant the difference in life and death to a seriously wounded soldier.

## 8. EVACUATION

During the initial stages of the attack adequate plans for evacuation of the wounded were not made. This was apparent when the wounded men came back out of the lines which were some two to three thousand yards from the Aid Station and there was not a litter team present. The establishing of a collecting point for the wounded from the front lines and the evacuation from there by litter jeep reduced the time for the wounded to reach the Aid Station. This also conserved the strength of the limited number of litter bearer teams.

## 9. PRISONERS OF WAR

The battalion during the action of 12 June captured one prisoner. This prisoner could have been interrogated and possibly could have given some information of immediate value to the battalion. The abuse of this prisoner by the rifleman rendered this interrogation impossible. The abuse of prisoners was a continuing thorn in the side of the battalion throughout the war. A program should have been planned to stress the importance of prisoners and the treatment which is to be accorded them to reach the last man in every echelon. Had this been done it is conceivable that this act or acts to follow would not have taken place.

## 10. REINFORCEMENTS

The battalions initial reinforcements were brought over an exposed route to the forward position in daylight. This gave the enemy information of forward movement in the position which he immediately took under fire. Although the fire was not

effective and did not cause any casualties, the effects of this fire could have been disastrous to these reinforcements and the battalion.

### LESSONS

1. Orders for an operation should be issued from a vantage point in order that commanders that are to execute the plan have full knowledge of their sectors, objectives and the terrain over which they are to operate.

2. Liaison personnel should report to supported unit as soon as possible in order that they may participate in the planning of the operation and should remain with or near the commander to advise and assist him in matters peculiar to their arm.

3. Artillery preparations of short duration by organic artillery should be planned on known enemy emplacements close in front of attacking troops to provide cover for the attacking troops.

4. Patrolling must be continuous and vigorous prior to an attack and after the forward advance has been halted.

5. Security must be established in front of each position to give early warning of the enemies' approach.

6. Commander and their staff must make personal visits to the front lines during both the attack and defense to enable them to keep current on the situation of their own troops as well as the enemy.

7. The command post type tent was found to be unsuitable as a Battalion Aid Station for night operation.

8. Adequate plans for evacuation of casualties must be made prior to an operation and revised as the situation changes.

9. Stress on the proper handling of prisoners of war should reach the last rifleman of a unit and adequate steps taken by all commander to enforce these instructions:

10. Reinforcements should be received and moved forward when a unit is out of contact or at times when observation of the area is denied the enemy.