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THE OPERATIONS OF THE 180TH INFANTRY (45TH INF. DIV.)
FROM VENAFRO, ITALY TO CASALE, ITALY; 2 NOVEMBER 1943
TO 3 JANUARY 1944
(NAPLES-FOGGIA CAMPAIGN)
(Personal experience of a Company Commander attached
4.2 Chemical Mortar Company)

Type of operation described: REGIMENT IN ATTACK

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INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operations of the 180th Infantry (45th Inf. Div.) from 2 November 1943 to 3 January 1944. The action described is a part of the Naples-Foggia Campaign in the Mediterranean Theater of Operations.

At the beginning of September 1943, the Allied Troops in the Mediterranean Theater were on the threshold of one of the bloodiest, most bitter campaigns in the history of American military operations.

Following decisive victories in North Africa and Sicily, the stage was now set for striking at the "soft underbelly of Festung Europa". This invasion began on 3 September 1943 with the landing of the British Eighth Army on the toe of Italy.

On the eve of the Salerno landing of the American Fifth Army, the announcement was made of the surrender of Italy to the Allies. Aboard the convoy enroute to Salerno, this announcement was met with cheers and speculation. Many aboard believed the coming landings would be unopposed and that the Germans would evacuate Italy as soon as possible. (1) This belief was quickly dispelled as the assault waves were met at the beaches by heavy fire.

The Salerno Beachhead was secured after withstanding many heavy counter-attacks by German armor. By this time, it was apparent to the Allied High Command that the Germans had no intention of giving up Italy until so required.

major port for the unloading of supplies. By early October, the Fifth Army, composed of the American VI Corps and the British 10th Corps, had reached the Volturno River. Here the Germans had established a hastily fortified line. (2) This obstacle was overcome by frontal assault, but the river was to figure in many subsequent actions. By the end of October, constant fighting had carried the Fifth Army to the next place where the enemy had elected to stand. This place was the Barbara Line which extended from the mountains above Venafro, through the Mount Massico hill mass, and west to the Tyrrhenian Sea. (3) For the most part, the same units that had participated in the Salerno Landing were responsible for the gains to this point. One of these units was the 180th Infantry, a regiment of the 45th Infantry Division.

The 180th Infantry was ordered into Federal Service on 16 September 1940. Prior to this time, the regiment had been a unit of the Oklahoma National Guard and had a long period of peacetime service to that state. At the time of induction, the personnel were chiefly native Oklahomans. A large number were of Indian ancestry.

Training, begun at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, was continued at Camp Barkley, Texas. This training included maneuvers with other divisions. In 1942, the regiment, with the balance of the 45th Division, participated in amphibious training at Camp Edwards, Mass. and in Chesapeake Bay. It also received a period of mountain training in 1943 at Arnold Valley, Virginia.

Sailing from Hampton Roads Port of Embarkation on 8 June 1943, the convoy carrying the 180th finally anchored near Christel, Algeria. At this place, the regiment took part in a landing exercise and then moved into bivouac.

The Sicilian Campaign was the battle-indoctrination for this regiment. Here its personnel learned lessons which they were to put to great use in later battles. However, these lessons were not without a price as the regiment suffered several casualties in this campaign.

The next operation for the 180th was the landing at Salerno where it was in army reserve. In the battles from there on up the peninsula, the regiment took part in most of the fighting. It had very little rest until 23 October 1944 when it was given six days. This was just prior to assembling for the operations described in this monograph.

GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURES

Any study of the Italian Campaign cannot be made without consideration of the terrain. Probably no single factor in military operations so dominated this campaign as the terrain of Southern Italy.

A rugged chain of mountains called the Appenines runs generally north and south down the Italian Peninsula. They are characterized by a number of steep, barren peaks that rise to five thousand or more feet in height. These peaks are often the highest point on large hill masses that contain a number of lesser hills. These hill masses dominate all the surrounding terrain. Vegetation on the mountains consists of olive groves on the lower slopes and ragged brush up higher. The tops of these hill masses are rocky and barren.

Narrow, swift mountain streams wind tortuously between the hills and mountains. In some places, they widen out in flat or rolling valleys which are criss-crossed with irrigation ditches and canals. These irrigation ditches are frequently wide enough and deep enough to

patches of woods are found on the lower hills and in the valleys.

The national highways in Italy are constructed of macadam. Although adequate for passenger vehicles, they soon broke down under heavier military vehicles. The secondary roads vary from two way dirt or gravel roads to rocky one way trails. In the mountains, these trails are crooked, narrow, and steep. They required additional engineering work before they were suitable for vehicular use. Bridges crossing the many streams and ditches were of stone construction. This type of construction was well suited to the German program of demolitions. Bridges crossing the wider streams were built of steel. German demolitions here not only destroyed the bridges, but also added the task of clearing away the twisted girders before repair could be started.

The mountain towns of Southern Italy normally consist of a solid row of stone houses on each side of the only road or highway in the vicinity. By blowing these houses in on the streets, the Germans were able to make very effective road blocks. Setting astride the highways, all towns were fortified by the enemy and constituted a series of objectives for the advancing Fifth Army.

Specifically, the dominating terrain features affecting the first phase of the action covered in this monograph are Mount Cesima, Mount Sammucro, Mount Corno, and Mount San Croce. These four hill masses overlook the upper Volturno valley and form a ring around the key town of Venafro. Further north and northwest lay Mount Monna Aquafondata, Mount Monna Casale, and Mount Molino which figure in the second phase of this action.

Highway 85 is a national highway running north to Venafro and then northeast to Isernia. At Venafro, it connects with a lateral road

into the mountains and goes northwest through the village of Pozzilli. This road joins with the lateral road running from Filignano west through Casale, Sant'Elia, and then south to Cassino. These roads formed the axis of advance for VI Corps in its drive into the Winter Line.

FIRST PHASE-ATTACK WEST OF VENAFRO

The mountains guarding the Upper Volturno River Valley form the eastern flank of the Barbara Line. This defense line of the Germans was designed as a delaying position. (4) A sustained defense here would permit the German engineers to complete their Winter Line defenses. In addition, by making the attack against the Barbara Line costly, the Germans would weaken the forces attacking their Winter Line.

At the time orders were received for the attack on the Barbara Line, the 180th Infantry, commanded by Lt. Col. (later Brigadier General) Robert Dulaney, was in an assembly area near Alife. On 31 October 1943, the regiment moved to a final assembly area near Raviscannia. Company C, 84th Chemical Mortar Battalion was attached. (5) This attachment was to remain until 4 January 1944. Final plans and preparations were made for the crossing of the Volturno River. The initial objective for the regiment was the northern edge of the Mount Cesima hills, the attack would be continued to the northwest cutting the lateral road between Venafro and San Pietro Infine.

After extensive patrolling, Company F crossed the Volturno on the night of 2-3 November and occupied the village of Sesto Campano on the northern slopes of Mount Calvello. (6) This village had previously been occupied by a platoon of that company. A number of Italian Partisans

Elmer Dugger led Company F up the rocky trail into Sesto Campano; they were greeted by a concussion grenade thrown by one of the alert Partisans. After the subsequent confusion had been settled, the company moved into the village without further incident. (7)

In the evening of 3 November, the balance of the 2d Battalion moved across the Volturno. They were followed by the 1st Battalion with the 3d Battalion in reserve. (8) The 2d Battalion followed the rocky train to Sesto Campano and from there jumped off to seize the village of Rocca Pipirozzi and the high ground just north of that village. The 1st Battalion followed by the 3d moved to the right around the base of the Mount Cesima hill mass.

The 2d Battalion moved out of Sesto Campano at 0100 on 4 November in a column of companies. (9) The route of advance led over a narrow, rocky trail which was so steep in places that men had to literally pull themselves up by hand. The night was very dark and the trail was soon invisible. In the first light of dawn, Lt. Col. (then Capt.) Howard Crye, the Battalion Commander, and Capt. Dugger went forward to reconnoiter after halting the battalion. After crossing the crest of a ridge, they found themselves very near a group of Germans. In fact, they were so close that they could distinguish officer's insignia on the enemy uniforms. The enemy party seemed to be in a discussion over a map. Col. Crye waved at the Germans and the Germans waved back. Then Col. Crye and Capt. Dugger walked away until they came near a stone wall. The American officers leaped the wall and escaped. A plan for the capture of the Germans failed. Col. Crye was later killed in action just north of Rome. (10)

Soon after this incident, the battalion made contact with the

enabled the battalion to assault and the village was mopped up. Several enemy were killed or captured in this action, one of whom was an artillery forward observer. By the night of 5 November, the 2d Battalion had taken the high ground north of the village and had established outposts there. In the two day action, many enemy counterattacks were beaten off. Three strong attacks against the battalion were repulsed on 5 November alone. The battalion operated strong patrols to the north and west. (11)

Meanwhile, on the night of 4 November, the 1st Battalion supported by Company C, 84th Chemical Mortar Battalion (less 2d Platoon) moved across the flat valley west of Venafro. (12) The objectives of this battalion were the peaks of Mount Corno and Mount San Croce, which rose abruptly behind the town. The valley floor was cut up by irrigation ditches and one canal. These obstacles made progress of the unit very slow as they hindered the movement of Company D and the Chemical Mortar Company. The only incident that occurred during the crossing was the action of the advance security patrol. This patrol surprised some enemy soldiers in a house and killed four while taking one prisoner. (13) The battalion entered the large olive grove west of Venafro just before dawn. The movement of 5500 yards had required some ten hours.

Some enemy self-propelled guns moved out of the town on the road leading west to Ceppagna just before this road was cut by the 1st Battalion. After crossing a bridge which was immediately blown by the enemy, these guns started to shell the olive grove and the town. The shelling caused no serious damage but hampered the movement of the battalion transportation into town. (14)

A serious obstacle to the movement of the 1st Battalion arose as

were chiefly S-mines and were placed up in trees as well as on the ground. The battalion suffered several casualties as a result of these mines. (15)

The 1st Battalion attacked the high ground north of Venafro on 6 November. (16) The village of Concascasale on the north side of this high ground was the battalion objective. Strong enemy resistance was encountered immediately and the battalion made little headway. A strong patrol west to Ceppagna made no contact.

The 2d Battalion remained in position on the high ground north of Rocca Pipirozzi but carried out extensive patrolling. Company E established a road block south of Ceppagna and patrols contacted the enemy in Vallecupa. (17)

November 7 saw the 1st Battalion continuing the attack against Mount Corno and Mount San Croce. The terrain was so steep that mules could not negotiate the slopes. Enemy from positions on these mountains dropped hand grenades on the attacking infantrymen. Automatic weapons covered every approach and the ever present S-mine slowed the advance. Enemy artillery and mortar fire was heavy. Company L of the 3d Battalion was sent out on the right flank in an attempt to seize the crest of Mount San Croce. (18)

Company A had some success on 8 November. Advancing against a strong point under heavy supporting fire, they captured several prisoners who surrendered without any further resistance. Company B and Company C advanced slowly against strong resistance. A platoon of Company L reached the crest of Mount San Croce. (19)

On the next day, Company L started working west from Mount San Croce. It succeeded in reaching a small peak between the two mountains. Sniper fire slowed the advance. German artillery fire destroyed two ammunition trucks of Company C, 84th Chemical Mortar Battalion. Two 2 1/2 ton trucks

on Mount Corno. Direct fire from tank destroyers and the 180th Cannon Company supported the attack. Chemical mortars firing white phosphorous shells flushed Germans out of ravines and draws. These enemy soldiers were quickly killed by infantry small arms fire and 4.2 high explosive shells. The battalion succeeded in getting to the crest of Mount Corno. The 1st Ranger Battalion relieved the 1st Battalion and Company L of the 180th on the night of 10 November. The 180th RCT (less the 2d Battalion) reverted to Corps Reserve in positions east of Sesto Campano. During the day's action, two men from Company L killed twelve Germans who were trying to retreat. (21)

During the period 7-10 November, the 2d Battalion remained in defensive positions around Rocca Pipirozzi. Contact patrols were sent to the 30th Infantry (3d Inf. Div.) on the left. Patrols found the village of Ceppagna vacated but extensively mined and booby-trapped. A platoon of Company F went into position north of Ceppagna. The 4th Ranger Battalion took up positions around Ceppagna on 13 November. (22) They were forced out of these positions by an artillery supported counterattack. Company G was ordered to reinforce the Rangers. (23) Company F captured twenty-three prisoners after a heavy concentration of mortar and artillery fire had been placed on the enemy positions. (24)

DEFENSIVE POSITIONS AROUND CEPPAGNA

On 13 November, Col. Dulaney was ordered to make preparations for taking up defensive positions on the left flank of the division. A reconnaissance party consisting of the Regimental Commander, the 3d Battalion Commander, his S-3, and the Commander of Company C, 84th Chemical Mortar Battalion reconnoitered positions south of Ceppagna to affect the relief of the 4th Ranger Battalion by the 3d Battalion of the

Rangers. There were no casualties. (25) Company B, 84th Chemical Mortar Battalion, was attached to the regiment.

The 3d Battalion relieved the 4th Ranger Battalion and Company G of the 180th Infantry on 14 November. (26) The 3d Battalion was greeted by the fire of light artillery on their position. Company C, 84th Chemical Mortar Battalion was attached to this battalion by the regimental commander. Rain began to fall steadily and the roads turned into bottomless stretches of mud.

Enemy light artillery continued to shell the 3d Battalion positions on 15 November. The battalion was given the mission of organizing the high ground south and west of Ceppagna. While organizing these positions, Company K came under enemy small arms fire. The company captured an enemy machine gun and two prisoners. (27)

Although in defensive positions, the 3d Battalion made a series of limited objective attacks to improve these positions. A patrol to San Pietro Infine made contact with the enemy. Enemy artillery and tank fire fell on the positions. The rain continued and life was miserable for the front-line infantrymen. The battalion established a road block on the road from Ceppagna to San Pietro.

The Germans reinforced their troops in front of VI Corps by employing the 26th Panzer Division. Steady rains fell which made the roads all but impassable. Mule trains became the principal means of supply for the front line units. Non-battle casualties caused by trench foot and influenza began to appear among the troops. The men suffered from the lack of proper equipment. General Clark called for a halt in the attack in the VI Corps sector on 15 November. This would permit the divisions to rest and bring their strength up for the assault on the Winter Line. (28)

south of the village. To the left of the 3d Battalion, the 2d Battalion held positions on the high ground south of Ceppagna and around Vallecupa. The 1st Battalion was in regimental reserve southeast of Ceppagna. Contact was maintained with the 1st Ranger Battalion on the right and the 36th Infantry Division on the left.

Some discussion should be given to the high ground south of Ceppagna. This terrain feature is a long rocky ridge that overlooks the village of San Pietro and the upper Volturno Valley. Although overshadowed by the 3900 foot Mount Sammucro which was held by the enemy, it had to be occupied to protect the town of Venafro and for future operations against the enemy. It was impossible to dig holes in the bare rock. Some protection was afforded the troops by the piling up of stones to form "inverted fox-holes". When artillery or mortar shells landed on the ridge, the number of fragments was increased by the flying rock chips. When the 3d Battalion moved up on this terrain feature, twenty-six dead Germans were found. These enemy dead had been killed by our own artillery and mortar fire. (30)

During the period 18-30 November, the regiment held its defensive positions. Steady rains fell and visibility was limited throughout the period. Enemy artillery and mortars shelled the positions every day and night. Heaviest casualties were among the companies on the ridge south of Ceppagna. Extensive patrolling was carried out to the flanks and to the front. Enemy patrols also probed the defenses of the regiment. On 23 November, a patrol of Company I captured four prisoners of the 71st Regiment, 29th Panzer Grenadier Division. (31) This division had previously been operating on the British Eighth Army front. A 2d Battalion patrol was sent out to reconnoiter a bridge on the road to San Pietro. This patrol found two dead Germans under the bridge. The bridge was pre-

A strong enemy patrol attempted to get by a Company F outpost southwest of Ceppagna on 26 November. This enemy patrol, estimated to be forty men, withdrew after receiving small arms, artillery, and mortar fire. (33) An I and R Platoon patrol to Hill 950 found an estimated company dug in on this hill. (34) A 2d Battalion patrol captured two prisoners from the 15th Regiment, 29th Panzer Grenadier Division. (35) Company B, 84th Chemical Mortar Battalion was detached and attached to the 1st Ranger Battalion.

Supply was by mule pack train. The regiment was forced to use approximately one officer and one hundred men for this duty. The average strength of rifle companies were down to eighty men. The regiment received three enlisted replacements for the entire month. (36)

The 180th Infantry remained in these defensive positions until 12 December. Patrol activity succeeded in fixing many German positions and provided much valuable information for the 36th Division and the 3d Ranger Battalion. The 3d Ranger Battalion passed through 2d Battalion, 180th positions and took up defensive positions to the front on 7 December. (37) The 143d Infantry (36th Div.) attacked across the front of the 180th on 8 December. (38)

On 12 December, the regiment (less 3d Battalion) was relieved of its mission and assembled near Pozzilli in division reserve. Preparations were made to relieve the 179th Infantry on the right flank of the division.

SECOND PHASE-ATTACK AGAINST THE WINTER LINE

The Barbara Line, having been breached, no longer gave the Germans a shield in front of their Winter Line. The German had prepared their positions in such depth that it was hard to determine where one defensive line ended and another began. After a pause during the last two weeks in November, the Fifth Army had attacked all the way across its front. The

crossing the desolate mountain region in the VI Corps sector. The outer defenses to the road were built around Hill 769. These defenses were supported by positions on Hill 855 and Hill 970. In the center of these three hills was the village of Lagone. This village was made of houses so strong that they would withstand anything less than direct hits from large caliber guns. The 179th Infantry, attacking on the right flank of the division, had succeeded in taking Hill 769 and Lagone, but only after heavy casualties. Hill 855 was also taken by the 179th. The 179th held these positions on 17 December with French troops of the 2d Moroccan Division on the right and the 157th Infantry on the left.

The 180th Infantry (less 3d Battalion) with Company C, 84th Chemical Mortar Battalion and Company C, 120th Medical Battalion attached was in division reserve near Pozzilli on 14 December. Liaison was established with the 5th Regiment, 2d Moroccan Division; the 157th Infantry; and the 179th Infantry. The 1st Battalion moved to a forward assembly area near Filignano.

On 17 December, the 2d Battalion passed through leading elements of the 179th Infantry. By 0300, it was on Hill 970 which was found unoccupied. Patrols pushed on out to Hill 935 which was also unoccupied. An observation post was set up on Hill 935. The 1st Battalion took up positions south and west of Lagone. There was no physical contact with the enemy but the 2d Battalion received heavy artillery fire on Hill 970. (40)

This area is dominated by the towering peaks of Mount Monna Casale, Mount Monna Acquafondata, and Mount Majo which gave the Germans excellent observation across the regimental front.

The regiment advanced on 18 December with still no contact. The 2d Battalion outposted Hills 885, 935, and 830. The following day, a 1st

ambush. After a short fire fight, the patrol killed seven, wounded several more, and captured eleven of the enemy. Four mortars, and five machine guns were found dug in on the position. Interrogation of the prisoners disclosed that the enemy party consisted of thirty men who were put out to ambush a battalion advancing up the gorge that night. (41)

As the 1st Battalion advanced on 19 December, Company A cleared its way through an anti-personnel mine field and moved up on Hill 840. There they found a platoon of Germans who were pushed off after a brief fight. Another enemy force attacked Company A at daylight but was driven off. The same day approximately a company of enemy attacked the 2d Battalion. This attack was broken up by artillery and mortar fire. (42)

On 20 December, the regiment had contact with the enemy in both battalion sectors. Company F ran into an estimated thirty-five Germans on Hill 830. Company A was having a stiff fight with enemy located on the western slope of Hill 840. This fight consisted of an exchange of hand grenades, small arms fire, and mortar fire and continued on into the night. (43)

Slight advances were made during the 21st. Company G cleared the enemy from Hill 830. Company A had secured Hill 840 but was receiving fire from a knoll to the southwest. The line now ran from Hill 840 northwest through Casale to Hills 830 and 930. An enemy force of about one hundred hit Company G on Hill 830 at 1600 but was repelled by artillery fire before the attack could be well organized. The rain began anew. (44)

The regiment maintained contact with the enemy on 22 December. The day was very cloudy and visibility was limited. An enemy party infiltrated around positions on Hill 810 but withdrew before it could be brought under fire. At 1138, two groups of enemy of about thirty or forty each were observed moving to the west. The first group disappeared before fire

On the 23d of December, the regiment held a line running generally from Hill 885 southwest to Hill 840 then southeast to Hill 873. Anti-Tank Company was operating patrols in Casale and on the road southwest. One Anti-Tank Company patrol captured a prisoner in Casale. He was from the 100th Regiment, 5th Mountain Division. (46) Previous identifications in this sector had been those of elements of the 44th Grenadier Division. Company A and Company B patrols did not make contact but a Company B patrol heard enemy voices on Mount Molino.

No forward movement was made on the 24th. The two battalions held defensive positions. A Company B patrol made contact with the enemy on Mount Molino at 1518. The patrol first saw an enemy group of about twelve. Then thirty or forty more ran over the top of the hill and occupied positions. After a fire fight, the patrol withdrew, subsequent to inflicting some casualties on the enemy. A Company A patrol to Hill 960 heard German voices on the eastern and southern slopes. This patrol also found a quantity of enemy individual and organizational equipment laying about. The 2d Battalion put an outpost on the base of Mount Rotondo. (47)

Christmas Day, 1943, dawned cloudy and cold. The Regiment continued to occupy defensive positions with extensive patrolling to gain information for future attacks. Special attention was paid to the condition of the road, for any use of armor would be limited to roads. A patrol from the 1st Battalion went to Hill 960 and there made contact with a small group of enemy. A larger group then ran over the crest to prepared positions. The friendly patrol withdrew and a heavy concentration of artillery was then placed on the hill. (48)

Some mention should be made of the type positions occupied by the Germans. With the aid of forced civilian labor, they had blasted holes

cross-ties. The apertures were only large enough to allow a man to crawl into the inside. Automatic weapons were sighted to effectively cover all slopes and draws leading into the positions. In addition, these draws were heavily mined with anti-personnel mines. The minefields were also covered by automatic weapons to prevent removal. Medium artillery had no effect on the bunkers. The terrain did not permit the attacking of these positions with direct fire weapons such as tanks and self-propelled guns.

On 26 December, the 3d Battalion was released from division control to that of the regiment. (49) Up to this time, the regiment had conducted this phase of the operation with only two battalions. The 3d Battalion was placed in regimental reserve. The weather continued bad with the falling of steady, cold rain.

Operations on 27 December were limited to patrols and listening posts. Four inches of snow fell during the night. An Anti-Tank Company patrol accompanied by a group of engineers found seven craters on the road southwest of Casale.

An item of enemy equipment of special interest was found at this time. Enemy soldiers were wearing a reversible uniform which was white on one side and brown on the other. (50) The white uniform worn by a man against a snowy background made him invisible at a very short distance. Compare these with the olive drab uniforms worn by the American troops. Our uniform, worn against the snowy background, made a perfect target for the enemy snipers. It was also about this time that winter combat suits were first issued to front line troops. This was late December and the weather had been cold and wet since early November. These combat suits were issued on a percentage basis and there were never enough for all the men who needed them.

on 30 December. The 1st Battalion was ordered to take Mount Molino and Hill 960 south of Mount Molino. The 3d Battalion was ordered to take Mount Rotondo, Mount Raimo, and Hill 960 southeast of Mount Raimo. The 2d Battalion would be in reserve. (51) A platoon of Company A, 84th Chemical Mortar Battalion was attached to support the attack. Company A, 751st Tank Battalion would support from positions on the road.

The 180th attacked at 0645 on 30 December after a fifteen minute preparation by six battalions of artillery, Cannon Company, organic mortars and a company, plus one platoon, of 4.2 mortars. Assault companies were B and C of the 1st Battalion and K and L of the 3d Battalion. By 0855, Company B had reached the first knoll of Mount Molino and Company C was on the eastern side of Hill 960. Both companies were receiving mortar fire and Company C was receiving machine gun fire in addition. Reports from the 3d Battalion placed Company L on Mt. Rotondo and Company K on Mount Raimo at 0815. Both companies were still advancing. Company A, 751st Tank Battalion, operating on the road, had fired all their ammunition and had returned for resupply. At 0900, a platoon from Company I was committed on the left of Company K to protect the left flank of the battalion. (52)

The 1st Battalion reported an estimated two companies defending Mount Molino and Hill 960. It had also estimated that there were twenty heavy machine gun emplacements on Mount Molino alone. At about 1100, a group of enemy tried to turn the right flank of Company B but was driven off. The 1st Battalion called for artillery fire on top of Mount Molino at 1315. Company K was driven off Mount Raimo at 1600 by a counterattack. This counterattack was made by an estimated two enemy companies supported by artillery. Mount Raimo was under enemy observation from three sides

withdrew to Hill 810 and Company C withdrew to its line of departure. A total of nineteen prisoners were taken during the day. The four assault companies had heavy casualties. (53)

After a twenty minute artillery concentration on Mount Molino, the 1st Battalion attacked again on the 31st. Mount Molino was the objective for this attack and the attack was made by Companies A and B. Jumping off at 0650, some advances were made initially. By 0704, Company A was within 350 yards of the top and Company B held the northeast knoll. Both companies were receiving heavy machine gun and mortar fire. Company B had to withdraw by 1000 to reorganize on Hill 810. Company A continued the attack until 1600 but made no more gains. At this time the company withdrew to Hill 840. Nine prisoners were taken during the day. Cold rains fell the entire day. This abortive attack ended the last offensive action by the 180th in this sector. (54)

The regiment had suffered heavy casualties and took up defensive positions. From 1 January 1944 to 3 January 1944, the regiment remained in defensive positions on Hill 840, Hill 810, and Mount Rotondo. Patrolling was carried out to the front and flanks. Four prisoners were taken by patrols during the period. On 3 January, the 180th was relieved by the 7th Regiment, Tirrailleurs Algerian and the regiment assembled southwest of Lagone. (55)

The month of December 1943 had been a very difficult month for the 180th Infantry Regiment. In addition to the combat, supply and evacuation presented major problems. Practically all of the supply was by mule trains. Casualties were evacuated by litter hauls of up to six hours in many cases. Approximately half the medical evacuations were made at night and during snow or rain. The number of evacuations due to exposure dropped

one enlisted men from all causes. (56) Nearly all of these losses were absorbed by the rifle companies.

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

In analyzing the operations related in this monograph, it is seen that the 180th Regimental Combat team was assigned two separate missions both of which were fought over similar terrain. The first mission, that of securing the hill masses to the west of Venafro was accomplished despite a stubborn defense by the enemy. He was routed from positions prepared by civilian labor and well stocked with ammunition and supplies. By the use of surprise and aggressive leadership on the part of unit commanders, positions were easily taken which might otherwise been very costly in both casualties and time. Courageous action on the part of individual officers and men must also be given a share of the credit.

In the second mission, that of attacking west along the Filignano-Sant'Elia Road, the only objectives not taken by the combat team were those of Mount Molino and Mount Raimo. Here the combat team was assigned a task far beyond its capabilities. With combat efficiency lowered by continued exposure and loss of well trained platoon leaders and company commanders as well as non-commissioned officers, the assault against positions of the type found in that area was fore-doomed. The regiment had conducted the majority of this advance with only two battalions which required overworking both officers and men. In addition to the well-prepared emplacements in terrain of the enemy's choosing, the enemy had equality if not superiority in numbers. Everything favored the defender and nothing favored the attacker except the indomitable spirit of the infantrymen of the 180th Regiment.

By no means should the heroic task of the communications personnel

praise goes for the medics. They performed great deeds in caring for and evacuating the wounded.

Some specific criticisms are the following:

1. The lack of proper clothing and equipment for conducting operations in mountainous terrain in winter. This causes an excessive amount of non-battle casualties from exposure and limits the effectiveness of units.

2. The failure of supply channels to provide a sufficient number of pack animals for operations in terrain which prohibits the use of vehicles. A constant flow of supplies is essential to attacking troops and when the flow is stopped or reduced, the attack will likewise stop or slow down.

3. The violation of the principle of mass by the 1st Battalion Commander in his plan for the attack on 30 December 1943. He attacked Mount Molino and Hill 960 simultaneously, with one company attacking each hill. Previous intelligence had indicated that the two hills were held in strengths of approximately one company each. The following day, Mount Molino was attacked by two companies but the enemy had been alerted and the impetus of the attack had been lost on the previous day.

4. The aggressive leadership of unit commanders in the capture of Rocca Pipirozzi, Mount Corno, and Mount San Croce is worthy of note and praise.

5. The high standard of aggressive patrolling on the part of the battalions. This patrolling is responsible for many of the advances of the regiment and the securing of valuable information.

6. The slow movement of the 1st Battalion in the night attack across the valley floor to the left of Venafro on the night of 4 November. This movement could have been made more quickly had the heavier weapons been emplaced to cover the advance of the battalion and then displaced by

or no losses and to take the occupants as prisoners.

LESSONS LEARNED

1. The principle of surprise is essential to a successful attack.
2. The principle of mass should never be violated except when outweighed by other factors.
3. Troops fighting under severe weather conditions must be properly equipped to prevent excessive non-battle losses.
4. One of the most important factors leading to success in combat is the quality of leadership in small units.
5. To violate the principle of security leads to disaster.
6. The taking of well fortified positions requires direct fire weapons of calibers of seventy-five millimeters or larger.
7. Some means of transporting supplies must be provided when the use of vehicles is prohibited.
8. Efficient communications are necessary if effective fire support is to be provided the front line troops.
9. All units must stress the importance of aggressive patrolling and the information gained therefrom.