

General Subjects Section
ACADEMIC DEPARTMENT
THE INFANTRY SCHOOL
Fort Benning, Georgia

ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS COURSE
1947 - 1948

THE OPERATIONS OF COMPANY G, 135th INFANTRY (34th
INFANTRY DIVISION) IN THE BATTLE FOR ALLANO, ITALY,
25 - 28 OCTOBER 1943.
(NAPLES - FOGGIA CAMPAIGN)
(Personal Experience of Company Commander)

Type of operation described: RIFLE COMPANY IN THE ATTACK

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THE OPERATIONS OF COMPANY G, 135th INFANTRY
(34th INFANTRY DIVISION) IN THE BATTLE FOR
AILANO, ITALY, 25 - 28 OCTOBER 1943.
(NAPLES - FOGGIA CAMPAIGN)
(Personal Experience of a Company Commander)

INTRODUCTION

The personal experiences presented herein concern the operations of Company G, 135th Infantry, 34th Infantry Division, in the battle for Ailano, Italy, during the period 25 - 28 October 1943.

This narrative also concerns itself with those same combat veterans who, some four months previous, had aided in the destruction of the once famous German Africa Corps, Tunisia, North Africa.

Before entering into the operations around Ailano, Italy, however, it is desirable, as well as necessary, to summarize briefly the chain of events which transpired prior to this action. (The mass of background material concerning the reasons for entry of the Allied Forces into the Italian Campaign will not be dealt with but rather that information believed essential in the orientation of the reader.)

The 2d Battalion, 135th Infantry, as a part of the 34th Infantry Division, was convoy loaded aboard "HMS Empire Trooper" at the port of Mers El Kebir (near Oran), Algeria, North Africa, 15 September 1943 and left the harbor 1900, 17 September, "destination unknown." (1)

Morale was high and the men were near the peak in their state of training. All 34th Division units, near authorized strengths by the addition of replacements received after the Tunisian Campaign, had recently (August 1943) completed realistic battle training at the Fifth Army Invasion Training Center, Slissen, Algeria, North Africa. (2)

Four days later, 21 September, the 2d Battalion landed with other elements of the 135th Infantry on the Salerno beaches in the vicinity of the Sele River (see Map A) and with other 34th Division units was placed in Fifth Army reserve. It was on these same beaches just twelve days before, that other American units had successfully established a beachhead despite bitter enemy opposition. (3)

(1) A-8, p. 1; (2) A-8, p. 1; (3) A-9, p. 1.

The birds-eye view of the terrain depicted to those who stepped on shore from the landing craft presented a brief insight into what lay ahead. Opposing the broad flat beach area in all directions - to the north; to the east; to the south - were the mountains. (See Map A) A further map analysis of the terrain reveals that the entire peninsula, almost without exception, is traversed by rugged hills and mountains. The towering Appenines rising abruptly from the coast, broken only by the thousands of rivers which make the fertile valleys, form the backbone of the country. The road net is good in the open terrain but few good lateral roads exist to connect the numerous valleys between the broken series of mountain ranges. Briefly - as recorded in the Fifth Army History - "the terrain was about as difficult as could be found in Europe." The attack over such rugged and formidable terrain, should the enemy decide to defend, could be exceedingly difficult. (4)

The German Commander, fully realizing the advantages to a defender of such terrain and being unsuccessful in his attempts to thwart the initial landing on the Salerno beaches, initiated a series of delaying actions to gain additional time for the building of strong defensive positions further up the Italian peninsula to stop the Allied advance. (5)

These retrograde movements on the part of a ruthless, cunning, well trained and well equipped enemy were soon to prove costly in manpower, as well as time consuming, to the attacker. As the enemy withdrew, railroads were torn up, bridges were destroyed, roads were mined, towns were booby-trapped and trees were felled to form obstacles of every sort to impede vehicular movement. Logical cross-country foot approaches were covered by the fires of rifles, machine guns, mortars and artillery and whenever possible further supported by the fires from tank guns. It was quite evident, after meeting the first delaying actions, that the German did not intend for his withdrawing troops to fritter away their strength by engaging in close combat at frequent intervals, but instead to impose the maximum of delay on the attacker with a minimum of loss to his own

(4) A-5, p. 2; (5) A-10, p. 37.

manpower and equipment. (6)

MOVEMENT FORWARD

The movement to the front, by the 135th Infantry, initially delayed pending the arrival of equipment and supplies loaded on other ships, began 28 September despite the fact that heavy rains and impassable roads prevented the movement forward as a regimental combat team. (7)

The first crossing of the Volturno River on the night 12 - 13 October marked the first operation of importance engaged in by the 2d Battalion, 135th Infantry, on the Italian mainland. (8)

Approximately a week later this same water barrier, abruptly changing direction, crossed the line of advance. A second crossing during the night 19 - 20 October placed the 2d Battalion in an area just south of Alife. (See Map B) (9)

In the meantime, the 133d Infantry (34th Infantry Division), crossing the Volturno (see Map B) advanced to positions some four kilometers northwest of Alife by 22 October. The 2d Battalion, 135th Infantry, located to protect its own regiment's right flank, was ordered to move to a position in rear of the 133d Infantry. From this position it had the mission of protecting the left flank of the 133d Infantry; maintaining contact with the 3d Infantry Division across the river and patrolling to the river. (After the second crossing of the Volturno the 34th Division left boundary was pivoted to the left, following the course of the river, with the result that left flank units were forced to advance up the floor of the valley.) (10)

While in the performance of this security mission orders were received 24 October alerting the battalion for possible movement to the vicinity of Sant Angelo d'Alife, situated some four kilometers to the front. The 133d Infantry moving forward had occupied the towns of Sant Angelo d'Alife and Raviscanina following the withdrawal of the enemy during the night 23 - 24 October. A wire line extending from the 2d Battalion command post to the 135th Infantry command post provided the necessary communications. (11)

(6) A-10, p. 31; (7) A-8, p. 1; (8) A-3, p. 3; (9) A-8, p. 5
(10) A-8, p. 5; (11) A-5, p. 33.

THE ATTACK PLAN

During the morning, 25 October, after a telephone conversation with the Regimental S-3, the 2d Battalion Commander, Major Frank A. McCulloch, the Battalion Executive Officer, Captain Ray Ericksen, and certain other selected members of the battalion staff, went forward to an observation post to receive the regimental order. The Battalion Executive, after hearing the regimental order, returned to the battalion area where he oriented the company commanders and presented the regimental plan. The plan was as follows: The 2d Battalion - to move forward after dark to a position in rear of the 2d Battalion, 133d Infantry, and await further orders. The 3d Battalion - to pass thru the 1st Battalion, 133d Infantry, and secure Hill 559, Mount Cimogna, with the 1st Battalion, 135th Infantry, following the 3d Battalion, prepared to pass through or around and secure the 3d Battalion objective. Hill 559 was also designated as being a part of the Division objective. The attack was scheduled for 0530 the next morning. (12)

The Battalion Executive, accompanied by the commanders of Companies E, F, G and H, went forward in "jeeps" to reconnoiter a route and coordinate the movement with the 2d Battalion Commander, 133d Infantry. After completing a motor and foot reconnaissance of the forward area and after selecting assembly areas in rear of the 2d Battalion, 133d Infantry, the party returned to the battalion area arriving approximately 1800. At this time the unit commanders found that the troops had been issued a hot meal, that bedding rolls had been stacked and a guard arranged for and that the men were prepared to march. (13)

Approximately 1830 a telephone message was received from the Regimental Commander. The message stated simply that the battalion was to continue the march and pass on through the 2d Battalion, 133d Infantry, and attack at 0530 the next morning from a position now held by patrols of the 133d Infantry. The battalion's objective - the road running southwest of Ailano.

(12) A-8, p. 5, except that part which pertains to the mission of the 2d Battalion which is personal knowledge; (13) Personal knowledge.

It was also stated that a member of the patrol, who had returned, would guide the battalion forward from the area of the 2d Battalion, 133d Infantry, to the line of departure designated as Hill 235. (14)

Information relative to the change in orders was disseminated to all commanders. The fact that it had not been possible to reconnoiter forward of the 2d Battalion, 133d Infantry, during the day made it quite evident that the knowledge which the guide had relative to suitable routes forward would have to be relied upon.

A NIGHT MARCH

Shortly after dark the battalion in advance guard formation moved forward with Company E leading followed by Battalion Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Companies F, H and G with the Battalion Medical Detachment in their vehicles plus other battalion vehicles bringing up the rear. The route selected was the same one which had been reconnoitered during the afternoon. (15)

Almost immediately after the battalion had begun marching several rounds fired haphazardly from enemy long range artillery exploded near enough to the moving column as to cause several casualties. The Battalion Medical Detachment personnel administered first aid immediately and evacuated the wounded. The march continued without further incident, the leading elements of the battalion arriving at the area of the 2d Battalion, 133d Infantry, approximately 2200. At this time the Battalion Commander contacted the guide who was to lead the battalion forward. By midnight the battalion was once again on the move.

The route over which the troops were led forward was at times along a narrow, indistinct trail and at other times followed cross-country through narrow ravines and deep gullies filled with boulders, heavy brush and abrupt drop-offs. It was supposedly the same route which the patrol had used during the daylight hours to take advantage of the cover and concealment afforded by the terrain. The majority of the time the battalion was forced to march in single file. With observation limited by this time (14, 15) Personal knowledge.

to a few feet contact was maintained only by each man actually touching the back of the man ahead of him. Needless to say using such a method resulted in contact being broken hundreds of times during the march which varied from a standstill to a run. The head of the column was forced to halt every hundred yards or so in order that some semblance of a formation be maintained. The men of the Heavy Weapons Company groping their way ahead while hand-carrying the heavy machine guns, mortars and ammunition added greatly to the problem of keeping contact. A 4.2" chemical mortar platoon, attached to the battalion for this operation, became separated from the column during the night. The guide, too, became somewhat confused and experienced considerable difficulty in identifying the route. (16)

The hours slipped by rapidly. At 0500 the guide halted and informed the Battalion Commander that this was the place. Observation, though somewhat improved by the approach of daylight, was hampered by heavy fog drifting into the area.

The Battalion Commander was not convinced that he was on Hill 235 so ordered the troops to halt in place while he and his staff attempted to determine the actual location on the map with respect to the ground. During this time the Heavy Weapons Company Commander, Captain Einer M. Lund, reported that all weapons and weapon crews of his company were present but that the 4.2" mortars had not been located. The artillery liaison officer and the liaison sergeant were also present with the battalion. A brief ground reconnaissance did prove that the present location was not Hill 235 even though the true location could not be found on the map. The Battalion Commander, Major McCulloch, believing that time was of the essence ordered Company E Commander, Lieutenant Kimble, to continue the march with the balance of the battalion following as before. (17)

The lead company advancing a few hundred yards crossed a good gravelled road at a point near which a small trail formed a junction. Here the Battalion Commander locating this position on the map was able to ascertain that Hill 235 was approximately eighteen hundred yards to the front and that (16), (17) Personal knowledge.

the small trail which formed a junction with the gravelled road led directly to the hill. At this time the Battalion Commander decided to shift from the advance guard formation to the approach march formation in order that the battalion might be disposed more favorably for the attack from the line of departure. The commanders of Companies E and F were ordered to move forward astride the trail - Company E on the right - while Company G was ordered to follow in the rear of Company E. It was hoped that the fog would continue long enough to screen the movements of the units until the hill could be reached. (18)

The two companies, moving rapidly to positions astride the small trail, had progressed several hundred yards when suddenly the lead platoons of the right company, Company E, were subjected to heavy machine gun and rifle fire. Quick thinking on the part of platoon and squad leaders aided materially in disposing of this resistance. Ten to twelve enemy were either captured or killed in a matter of minutes. The men, continuing to advance some five hundred yards more against sporadic rifle and machine gun fire, suddenly emerged from the fog only to find themselves in a wide open field and quite exposed to observation from all directions. The enemy, taking immediate advantage of the situation, placed mortar and machine gun fire on the exposed troops from concealed positions limiting any further movement. (19)

THE ATTACK

The Battalion Commander, following close behind the lead companies, observed that directly to the front, at a range of approximately a thousand yards, was an insignificant knoll-like hill which a brief glance at the map disclosed as Hill 235. A terrain analysis revealed that the hill, though not more than twenty five meters (about eighty feet) in height, was covered with dense scrub growth; that the area surrounding the hill was flat and open affording the enemy excellent fields of fire; that two possible approaches existed, one on the right flank through a small patch of woods and one on the left flank through a larger patch of woods. Neither approach offered concealment for the troops to a position closer than three hundred yards (18, 19) Personal knowledge.

from the hill. (See Map C)

Throughout the morning and afternoon every effort was made to assist the attacking units in the movement forward but each time the enemy was able to concentrate the mass of his fires on the attacker thereby breaking up the attack. The 4.2" chemical mortar platoon, strengthened by the addition of two more platoons, had finally caught up to the battalion and provided close support by firing mixed concentrations of white phosphorus and high explosive ammunition on the forward slopes of Hill 235. The 81mm mortars also "sniped" at suspected enemy positions. In addition, the artillery liaison officer called for and received concentrations of artillery fire on the hill. Yet, with all of this fire support, the attacking companies were not able to move forward. Enemy flanking fire positions, from both the right and left flank, which could not be located, cut down the attacking units before they could get started. Company G, the reserve rifle company, was also brought into the picture when one platoon was ordered to move around the left flank through the woods with the mission of destroying the enemy flanking fire positions. However, the platoon was driven back by heavy machine gun and rifle fire before being able to accomplish its mission and was forced to withdraw back to the reserve company area. Two men were killed and four men were wounded in this action. (20)

The Army and Corps Commanders, visiting the regimental observation post located on the dominating height of S. Angelo d'Vecchio, observed the difficulties which the 2d Battalion were experiencing in trying to reach the line of departure. (21)

By nightfall, no further gains having been made, the Battalion Commander ordered each company to post local security elements to the front, flanks and rear. Patrols were to be active throughout the night. The Battalion S-4, appearing on the scene shortly before dark, announced that a hot supper was on the way up for each of the companies. Wounded men who had not been evacuated during the day were taken out at this time. Telephone communications, established early in the day with the regimental (20) A-9, p.3; (21) A-8, p. 5.

command post when the wire line had been extended forward from the last area, provided the necessary contact from front to rear.

The 1st and 3d Battalions, attacking in the mountains to the northeast, had been more successful. Hill 559 had been taken by the 3d Battalion by 1500. Both battalions reported that the attack would continue. (22)

Shortly after dark the mess trucks arrived in the battalion area and were immediately released to each of the companies. At 2130 all company commanders were assembled at the battalion command post vehicle (a 3/4 ton truck equipped with a light and a small table and covered with a lightproof canvas) where the Battalion Commander issued orders for the continuation of the attack at 0530 the following morning. The plan, as outlined, called for the employment of a company of medium tanks which were to arrive sometime during the night plus an antitank platoon from the Regimental Antitank Company. Companies E and F were to continue in the attacking echelon as before. The artillery support for the operations was to consist of concentrations beginning at 0530 to lift and advance one hundred yards every six minutes. The Battalion Commander was quite confident that with this close support from the artillery plus the added tank support and protection from antitank guns that the hill could be taken quite readily the next morning, 27 October. (23)

THE ATTACK CONTINUED

As H - hour approached the battalion was accomplishing final preparations for the attack. However, since neither the company of medium tanks nor the antitank platoon had arrived permission was granted to delay the attack. Several hours later ten tanks arrived and so the attack began. The plan for the employment of the tanks and infantry was essentially as follows: the tanks were to precede the infantry and attack from the right flank. The antitank platoon never did arrive. Three tanks moved forward followed by the infantry. Almost immediately heavy machine gun fire forced the attacking infantry to take cover. Two tanks continued on towards the hill. These two tanks had advanced only several hundred yards when suddenly (22) A-8, p. 6; (23) A-8, p. 6.

two sharp reports were heard and the lead tank was observed to be hit and burning. The second tank withdrew immediately after the crew members of the lead tank had gotten out of their disabled vehicle. Thus ended the morning attack. Not a round had been fired from any of the tanks supporting the battalion. (24)

During the morning, however, Company E had managed to move two platoons across the open field on the right flank into the patch of woods, across another small field and into a narrow strip of woods on the extreme right flank. (See Map C)

About 1415 an urgent telephone message from the Assistant Division Commander located at the regimental observation post ordered the Battalion Commander, Major McCulloch, to launch a coordinated attack, supported by the artillery, at 1500 without the tanks. Hill 235 had to be taken that afternoon. In accordance with these instructions, Major McCulloch ordered the Company G commander to move the reserve rifle company to the patch of woods on the right flank and to launch an attack from this position in conjunction with the two platoons of Company E on the extreme right flank at 1500. The Company F commander, Captain Alden S. Lance, was ordered to move his company into a reserve position in the woods on the left flank of Company G with the mission of protecting the battalion's left flank. (25)

Prior reconnaissance had revealed that the movement to the woods could be accomplished by moving some six or seven hundred yards to the right and across the rear of the battalion area, then forward at a left oblique along a small trail and into the woods. The Company G commander following this route and accompanied by the 1st Sergeant and the Weapons Platoon leader (the company did not have an Executive Officer) went forward to reconnoiter the woods. After selecting platoon assembly areas the Company Commander ordered the 1st Sergeant to return to the company and lead the platoons to the assembly positions. The G Company commander contacting the Heavy Weapons Company commander coordinated the fire support plan of the Weapons Platoon and the heavy machine gun platoons; selected platoon areas on the (24), (25) Personal knowledge.

line of departure (designated as the edge of the woods nearest Hill 235) and contacted the Battalion Executive, Captain Ericksen. The Weapons Platoon leader in the meantime selected firing positions for the 60mm mortars and the light machine guns as directed by the company commander. By the time the reconnaissance had been completed the rifle platoons had arrived in the woods. Here the platoon leaders were oriented and orders for the attack issued. The attack plan as issued to the platoon leaders was as follows: The 1st and 2d Platoons, from positions to be designated, would attack at 1500 to capture Hill 235 in conjunction with the two platoons of Company E on the right flank and supported by the fires from heavy machine guns, light machine guns, 60 and 81mm mortars, 4.2" chemical mortars and the field artillery. The 3d Platoon, in company support, would be located between and in rear of the 1st and 2d Platoons. The signal for the launching of the attack in the event that the SCR 536 radio failed would be the time the artillery concentrations began falling on Hill 235. (26)

Forward observers, from the 81mm mortar platoon, located in the woods observed two enemy machine gun positions approximately a hundred yards from the woods. These observers directing accurate white phosphorus mortar rounds one at a time neutralized these enemy positions before the attack.

As the rifle platoons were moving into position in preparation for the attack a field artillery cub plane flew over the area. A few moments later artillery fire was raining on Hill 235. The Company G commander immediately glancing at his watch noticed that it was only 1445 - 15 valuable minutes before the scheduled time of attack- felt that some misunderstanding must have occurred between the infantry-artillery coordination. The G Company commander decided to contact the Battalion Commander, who had moved into a position in rear of Company G, to determine what was happening. The Battalion Commander was attempting to reach the Regimental Commander while the artillery liaison officer was trying to contact the fire direction center. (27)

In the meantime, the weapon crews of the supporting weapons, thinking (26, 27) Personal knowledge.

that the attack had been initiated, opened fire on assigned targets. It was then that the Company G commander, realizing that the attacking platoons might move out without any further orders, returned to the forward platoon areas accompanied by the Battalion Executive, Captain Ericksen. Here it was learned that the men were already moving forward. At the moment the men moved out from the woods heavy gun fire burst forth from the enemy positions on Hill 235. Word quickly filtered back that ten to twelve "Jerry" tanks at the base of the hill had caught the forward elements of the attacking platoons with direct cannon and machine gun fire. The woods by this time were alive with the crack and whine of bullets and cannon fire. Realizing that the attack could not progress against such formidable opposition, the Company G commander ordered the men to withdraw back into the woods. Few of those men who advanced beyond the woods ever got back.

Meanwhile, the remaining nine American tanks, that had moved into a vineyard on a small hill to the right and rear of the battalion after the unsuccessful morning attack, were so located that the tank gunners were able to see the immediate area surrounding Hill 235. These tank gunners observing the enemy tanks firing at the infantry immediately brought their cannons to bear on the enemy tanks. The German gunners, not to be outdone and between firing into the woods and at anything that moved, also fired on the American tanks. The net result was a tank battle with the 2d Battalion caught between the two armored forces. (28)

How long the two forces continued to batter at each other has never been determined. Eventually all firing ceased and a dead calm hung over the battle area. Casualties were heavy. Men with their arms or legs or both partly blown off, or riddled with bullets and still living, were evacuated by the medical aid men continually during the battle. The dead were left to be evacuated later. By dark the company had reorganized and had placed out security elements to protect the unit against a possible attack by the enemy. Hot food was brought up after dark in $\frac{1}{4}$ -ton trucks to an area within a few hundred yards of the forward platoons. (29)

(28, 29) Personal knowledge.

During the early part of the night the security posts reported that they could hear the enemy talking and moving about in the vicinity of the hill. The enemy tanks were also reported as being moved about. Based on this information Major McCulloch ordered the battalion's antitank guns - the 37mm at that time - moved up into the woods and in the company areas in anticipation of a likely tank attack the next morning.

About midnight the Battalion Commander informed the unit commanders that the battalion would remain in its present position until 0900 the next morning (28 October). At this time a battalion of the 168th Infantry, 34th Infantry Division, would attack after a thirty minute artillery preparation on the right flank of the 2d Battalion's position with the mission of capturing Hill 235 and continuing the drive to the northwest. The 2d Battalion was to assist in the attack by the fire of all its weapons. Armed with this information the unit commanders built up the supply of ammunition at each of the gun positions during the night. (30)

During the balance of the night the sounds of enemy activity gradually diminished and finally ceased. The men anxiously awaited the dawn. By daylight, 28 October, all eyes were turned toward the hill. But from the enemy's side all was quiet. About 0700 the Company G commander and 1st Sergeant moved out from the edge of the woods to better view the area and to determine if the enemy still occupied the hill. Drawing no fire, these individuals cautiously moved across the open field towards the hill. Still no enemy fire. Scanning the ground and noticing the great numbers of tank and truck tracks, and the absence of hostile fire, it was believed that the enemy had withdrawn during the night. The information thus obtained was reported to the 2d Battalion Commander who in turn informed the Regimental Commander. However, the decision, that the attack by the 168th Infantry would proceed as planned, still held. (31)

As planned, the artillery preparation began promptly at 0830 but was ordered to cease at the end of ten minutes of firing. The battalion of the 168th Infantry stormed the hill only to find the position unoccupied. (30, 31) Personal knowledge.

The 1st Battalion, 135th Infantry, moving into Ailano also found that that village was unoccupied. The enemy had once again successfully broken off contact with the attacker and had withdrawn to new delaying positions further up the "boot." Thus ended a three day battle for a small, insignificant hill cleverly organized as a delaying position by a cunning, well trained enemy. (32)

THE FINAL TALLY

Later, to determine the cause for the premature opening of artillery fires on the hill the afternoon of 27 October, it was learned that the artillery observer in the cub plane, which had flown over the area, had observed the movement of the enemy tanks and had called for the artillery fires through the fire direction center.

Casualties sustained for the three day period by Company G were as follows: two of the four company officers were killed in action while eight other men of the company were killed and eighteen were wounded - roughly one fifth, or twenty per cent, of the fighting strength of the company lost. Other units in the battalion suffered equally as many casualties. (33)

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

In looking back on this operation and comparing it with other engagements up to this time, less was accomplished while the price paid, measured in lives lost, was far to great. It is my frank opinion that this operation contributed little, if anything, to the destruction of the enemy's forces. Perhaps the battle should have been avoided.

But, regardless of whether or not this attack should have occurred, valuable experience was gained, experience that could not be obtained in any other way. It is these impressions which are desired to be stated for all to read.

The value of prior reconnaissance in preparation for an attack was so clearly brought out in this operation. The fact that a suitable route of advance could not be selected for the battalion before the night movement (32, 33) Personal knowledge.

resulted in a mass of confusion, loss of valuable time, and above all it imposed upon a certain few the difficult task of shouldering the heavy weapons and ammunition. A statement recorded in the 135th Infantry History, and I quote: "The planning of the first Volturno River crossing was the first time the Battalion Commanders felt they had had adequate time for reconnaissance and planning for an operation." This being true, then, the unit commanders, the platoon leaders, the squad leaders and down to include the individual soldier, have not been considered in the planning. Yet, these are the men who actually carry out the orders. In this operation the Battalion Commander did not have the opportunity to make a reconnaissance, select a suitable route of advance, or adequately plan the attack. (34)

The ability of all leaders to accurately locate themselves on the map in respect to their location on the ground is of vital importance. You have seen how a patrol, supposedly occupying a piece of ground, failed to correctly locate their position and as a consequence an entire battalion fought three days for the line of departure.

Communications also play an important role in any operation. The SCR 511, an obsolete piece of cavalry equipment and poorly suited for infantry use, was the battalion's only radio communication facility with the regiment, hence the necessity of wire communications. Throughout the operations the wire line to regiment was kept in operation only by careful and painstaking effort. The SCR 536 radios within the companies performed satisfactorily at short ranges but proved quite inadequate at greater distances and over varied terrain. The lack of communications between the tanks and the infantry was one of the contributing factors to the poor coordination which existed. Also, all observers must be able to communicate with the infantry. This fact is borne out by the observer in the sub plane noticing the enemy tanks and not being able to convey the information directly to the infantry. The use of artillery fire as a means of launching the attack did not prove satisfactory on this occasion. A more suitable arrangement must be made to launch

(34) A-8, p. 8.

a coordinated attack.

The ability of the weapon crews to provide close support fires with the 81mm mortars and the 4.2" mortars and still utilize the characteristics which make these weapons so valuable was emphasized again and again during this operation. Fire missions were called for and mortar fire delivered as close as one hundred yards from the troops without serious danger. The casualty producing effect of the 4.2" white phosphorus round had a decided effect on the enemy's morale. Prisoners expressed an intense fear of the chemical.

While it has been shown that one contributing factor for the lack of coordination between the tanks and the infantry was the poor communications available other factors were also present. The most outstanding being, the halfhearted attempt to utilize the armored fire power, the flexibility and the mobility so characteristic of the armor. I believe that if the majority of the tanks had been employed, instead of the two or three as was done, supported by the massed fires of the artillery, the 81mm mortars, the 4.2" mortars, plus all of the available light and heavy machine guns, and closely followed by the infantry, that the hill could have been taken on the morning of 26 October. As it was, the available fire power in the battalion was not utilized nor were the tanks employed in mass, a fact which can be attributed to the lack of infantry - tank team training.

The movement of supplies to the front line units during the attack was continuous. The company's $\frac{1}{2}$ ton trucks were employed to haul food to the fighting men as well as ammunition and other essentials. At least one hot meal was available to the troops of the 2d Battalion during each day of the operation.

An adequate supply of maps (scale 1/50,000) were distributed in sufficient quantities as to provide each platoon leader with a map. However, in many cases the maps were not entirely accurate due to the fact that they were reproduced from copies of old Italian road maps.

Perhaps one of the greatest factors to be considered in building morale, in the light of future operations and one that was overlooked in this operation, is success in battle. The 2d Battalion, after attacking for two

days, was denied the honor (if it can be so called) of taking the hill. Especially, after a brief reconnaissance revealed the probability that the enemy had withdrawn.

The leadership and heroism displayed by the various leaders of all grades and ranks and by the individual men was outstanding. One platoon leader (Company G), Lieutenant Nick W. Bowden, who was killed in this action, ably expressed the nature of the American soldier when writing home to his parents, saying, "..... you ask if they (the American soldier) are brave men I have seen nothing but brave men!" The persistence, the patience, the courage, the accumulated effort to achieve success as shown during this and other battles, all mark the trained American soldier as an outstanding combat soldier. All officers and men alike, acquiring command over such men, must display the qualities of leadership at all times.

To sum up briefly the results accomplished by this operation: The engagement did not change any of the principles of warfare as we know them. Rather it reemphasized that the tactical principles as taught are sound. The secret of success being in the application of these principles. Company G, 135th Infantry, as a part of the 2d Battalion, did carry its share of the burden in the attack on Hill 235. Although badly battered and limping slightly the company came through proudly, head held high, determined to avenge a thousand times the loss of each and every man. Rightfully, the success achieved in the engagement belongs to the enemy. By grim determination and through long experience he held on despite the combined efforts of an infantry battalion, a company of tanks, and all of the available fire support, and imposed the maximum of delay and casualties on the attacker before relinquishing his hold on Hill 235.

LESSONS

The outstanding lessons emphasized by this engagement are:

1. Reconnaissance prior to an attack by the lower unit commander is of equal, if not of more importance as that of the higher commander. Combat operations in every theater, in every battle, has shown this to be true.
2. Every leader must have the ability to read a map and accurately

locate their position on the map. In this instance an entire battalion was lead to believe that Hill 235 was occupied by friendly troops.

3. Wire communications between the front line battalions and the regiment are feasible in the attack and in many cases will be the only contact with the rear.

4. Intercommunications are essential between infantry and any of the supporting arms if success is to be accomplished.

5. The value of the 4.2" chemical mortar as a close support weapon for the infantry cannot be over emphasized.

6. Initial successes must be rapidly exploited if the advantage obtained by surprise is to be utilized.

7. A determined enemy, in a well organized delaying position, can inflict heavy casualties and impose the maximum of delay on a much larger force.

8. An adequate supply of maps is essential in any operation. In this same light, the reliability of the map must not be too closely depended upon.

9. The movement of supplies - ammunition, food and water - to the front line soldier must be a continuous operation.

10. The unsung heroes of many operations have been the medical aid men. Throughout the heat of battle and despite heavy fire they continued to evacuate the wounded and as a result the lives of many, who might have died, were saved.

11. The building of morale through success in battle is a decided advantage in considering future operations.

12. In training, emphasis must be placed on small unit combat instruction since battles are fought, not by battalions or companies, but by platoons and squads and more often by groups of two or three men.

13. Leadership is essential. In the words of Lieutenant General Jacob L. Devers, in commenting on the lessons learned in Italy, "Leadership is really the outstanding lesson. Without it success is not obtainable."