

Patrick
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Staff Department
THE INFANTRY SCHOOL
Fort Benning, Georgia

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THE OPERATIONS OF THE 1ST INFANTRY DIVISION
AT MATEUR, 23 APRIL - 3 MAY, 1943
(TUNISIAN CAMPAIGN)

Type of operation described: INTERIOR INFANTRY DIVISION
ATTACKING ACROSS RUGGED DIFFICULT TERRAIN

Major Arthur A. Gottlieb, Infantry
ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS CLASS NO II

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THE OPERATIONS OF THE 1ST INFANTRY DIVISION
AT MATEUR, TUNISIA, 23 APRIL - 3 MAY 1943
(TUNISIAN CAMPAIGN)

ORIENTATION

INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operations of the 1st Infantry Division at MATEUR in TUNISIA during the period of 23 April - 3 May 1943.

To best understand the activities of the division during this period it would be well to briefly review the events leading up to these operations.

On 17 November 1942 a combined force of British, French, and American troops crossed the Tunisian frontier from ALGERIA with a mission of seizing TUNIS and BIZERTE and capturing or destroying the Axis forces in TUNISIA. The plan called for three columns to advance along parallel routes through MATEUR, TEBOURBA and MEDJEZ EL BAB. (1) (See Map A) The Allied advance continued until about 1 January 1943 when it was halted along the general line TABARKA-MEDJEZ EL BAB-PICHON-FIAD-MAKNASSY-GAFSA. (See Map A) To all intents and purposes the active fighting had ceased for the remainder of the inclement winter weather. (2)

About the end of January, Marshal Rommel's Axis army in TRIPOLITANIA, after fighting delaying actions all across EGYPT and LIBYA before the advancing British Eighth Army, was evacuated to TUNISIA where it received replacements, was reequipped and prepared to take the offensive. (3) The win-

(1) A-1, p. 143
(2) A-2, p. 219
(3) A-3, p. 271

ter inactivity, broken by a few relatively minor actions, ended on 14 February when the Axis forces, consisting of General Von Arnim's Tunisian army and Marshal Rommel's vaunted Afrika Korps, attacked with armored units reinforced with artillery and infantry and supported by dive bombers. (4) At this time the Allied Forces in TUNISIA, under the command of British General Sir Harold H. Alexander, comprised the Allied Eighteenth Army Group which was made up of the British-French First Army, the British Eighth Army which, after pursuing the Afrika Korps from TRIPOLITANIA, was now attacking TUNISIA from the south, and the United States II Corps. (5)

The Axis thrust, which carried forward from the 14th to the 26th of February, and was the last offensive action of the enemy in TUNISIA, advanced in a three pronged drive, pushed through KASSARINE PASS and beyond for a distance of twenty one miles, and threatened the entire Allied position in central TUNISIA. However, a determined Allied counter-offensive by ground forces, powerfully supported by the combined air forces, succeeded in stopping the enemy and driving him back, until, by 22 March the line held prior to the Axis offensive was once again restored. (6) (See Map A)

THE GENERAL SITUATION

The Allies were now in a position to take the offensive and under the support of a terrific air bombardment the attack was started. Pressure was applied all along the northern front, but the main effort was located in the south where

(4) A-4, p. 24

(5) A-5, p. 2

(6) A-4, p. 24, Map D

General Montgomery's Eighth Army was pressing northward. By 7 April, units of the United States 9th Infantry Division, advancing southeast from GAFSA, made contact with the Eighth Army north of GABES. On 10 April, SFAX was captured. This was followed by the Allied capture of KAIROUAN and SOUSSE. Finally, by 23 April, the enemy had fallen back to, and occupied prepared positions in the vicinity of ENFIDAVILLE. (7)

(See Map A)

The 5th US Infantry Division advanced to the north of the zone.

PLAN OF THE II CORPS

The II Corps, commanded by Major General (now General) Omar N. Bradley, in preparation for the continuation of the attack, had moved a distance of one hundred and fifty miles to the north, through the communication lines of the British First Army, and had taken up a position on the left (north) flank of the Eighteenth Army Group. The move was completed on the 22d of April, when the last elements of the 1st Armored Division closed in the new area. (8) The Corps plan was to attack with the Corps d'Afrique and the 9th Infantry Division in the north and the 34th and 1st Infantry Divisions in the southern portion of the zone. (9) For the purposes of this monograph we are particularly interested in the southern portion of the zone and will therefore disregard the action in the north.

The formation in the south portion of the Corps zone, where the main effort was being made, was initially two divisions abreast, with the 34th Division, commanded by Major General Charles W. Ryder, on the left (north) flank, and the

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- (7) A-4, p. 25
(8) A-5, p. 4
(9) A-5, Map 2

1st Infantry Division, commanded by Major General Terry Allen, on the right flank. The combined frontage of the two divisions was approximately thirteen miles. There were two natural avenues of approach leading to MATEUR. They were the valleys of the DJOUMINE RIVER in the north and the TINE RIVER in the south. The latter, which was the broader, offered the one main corridor to the northeast for an armored striking force. The valley was heavily mined and was flanked by ridges and hills on both sides, and narrowed as it ran east. The advance of the armored units depended upon the control of the hills. Therefore, the opening attack was to be made into the hills that dominated the upper TINE VALLEY, with a mission of opening the valley for the advance of the armor.

The plan of maneuver was to have the 1st Infantry Division clear the hills north of the TINE; the 6th Armored Infantry Regiment of the 1st Armored Division, which was attached initially to the 1st Infantry Division, was to attack the hills on the southern rim of the valley; a combat team of the 34th Infantry Division was to cover the flank north of the BEJA-MATEUR ROAD. The remainder of the 34th Division and the 1st Armored Division minus the 6th Armored Infantry Regiment, was to constitute Corps reserve. (See Map B)

STUDY OF THE TERRAIN

Prior to discussing the plan of attack of the 1st Infantry Division it might be well to look at the terrain over which the division was to operate. In the bare country south of the SIDI NSIR-MATEUR ROAD the trees and brush were scarce.

The rocky slopes of the valleys steepened into cliffs and there was little or no concealment other than occasional wheat fields. The TINE RIVER valley broadened at places to about two or three miles but it was still too narrow to permit easy passage as long as the enemy held the hills. The ground was ideally suited to defensive fighting. The many hills permitted the enemy to establish mutually supporting strong points which required the attacker to reduce each one individually. To canalize the attacker into the least advantageous terrain the enemy heavily mined the narrow valleys and further blocked the natural avenues of approach with accurate machine gun, mortar and artillery fire directed from the superior observation posts afforded by the flanking hills. In brief, it was evident that the division was in for some rugged hill to hill fighting with each main hill constituting a fortress. (10)

PLANS OF THE 1ST INFANTRY DIVISION

The 1st Division planned to attack at 0300 hours on 23 April with three regiments abreast. (11) The 26th Infantry was on the left (north) flank with one battalion in the zone of the 34th Division protecting the north flank of the division; the 16th Infantry was in the center and the 18th Infantry was on the right. The 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry, was retained in division reserve. (12) The 6th Armored Infantry, which was attached to the division, was to clear the hills south of the TINE VALLEY and maintain contact with the British V Corps on the right. (13) The division artillery

(10) A-5, p. 11-12

(11) A-6, p. 2

(12) A-5, Map 4

(13) A-5, p. 23-24

supported the attack with one organic divisional battalion as well as one direct support battalion from the 13th Field Artillery Brigade firing in direct support of each regiment. The 5th Field Artillery Battalion (155 mm) was in general support. The front of the division (less the 6th Armored Infantry) extended about six miles from the hills south of SIDI NSIR to the TINE VALLEY. The direction of attack was generally east along the line from HILL 575 to DJEBEL BADJAR.

(14) (See Map C)

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MP
The German forces initially opposed to the division were identified as elements of the 334th Infantry Division, the crack Barenthin Engineer Regiment of the Luftwaffe, the 47th (separate) Infantry Regiment, the anti-tank battalion of the 10th Panzer Division and assorted marsch battalions, tank and assault gun units. (15)

NARRATION

THE FIRST DAY OF THE ATTACK

The attack jumped off as scheduled and by dawn the 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry had, against light opposition, taken HILL 565 and was moving against HILL 575 which was one of the initial objectives of the regiment. (16) The enemy occupied HILL 575 in strength, having prepared strong, well camouflaged positions with the many rocky declivities of the terrain providing maximum overhead cover. The attack of the 26th Infantry had to cross barren, round topped hills with occasional patches of short wheat that provided what little

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- (14) A-5, p. 12
(15) A-7, p. 73-74
(16) A-8, p. 4

concealment there was to be had. The initial attack of the 1st Battalion was met by heavy artillery, mortar and automatic weapons fire and the battalion was halted about three hundred yards short of the hill. The 2d Battalion was then utilized to attempt to outflank the enemy positions, but it was also subjected to very severe fire, and both units were forced to withdraw to HILL 565 to reorganize and prepare for the continuation of the attack. (17)

In the meantime, the 2d Battalion, 18th Infantry, after a twenty minute preparation by the artillery, secured HILL 350, which was one of the initial objectives of the regiment. This hill was a dominant terrain feature, being the highest in a series of hills running down a narrow valley. As was to be expected, the Germans counterattacked immediately, after first subjecting the hill to a severe artillery and mortar bombardment. The 2d Battalion was forced off the hill by the savageness of the enemy attack. As soon as they were able to reorganize, the battalion, with the 1st Battalion, 13th Armored Regiment attached, attacked once again, under the support of a heavy artillery bombardment, and once more took possession of the hill. This time they stayed there despite severe shelling from enemy artillery. (18) The men were forced to dig new slit trenches and fox holes since the ones recently vacated by the Germans contained many personnel mines and booby traps. (19) In conjunction with the attack on HILL 350, the battalion also captured HILL 306.

The 16th Infantry, after advancing against virtually no opposition, captured HILLS 415 and 374 with the 2d and 3d

(17) A-7, p. 74
(18) A-5, p. 15
(19) A-9, p. 4

Battalions respectively. The attack was continued against HILL 400 which was finally taken after severe fighting which saw the hill change hands three times. (20)

The 3d Battalion, 18th Infantry, during this time was attacking HILL 407, which was the other regimental objective. It was met by heavy fire and was unable to advance. By the end of the day it had fallen back to the cover of some wheat-fields and remained at this position during the night.

By the end of the first day therefore, the 1st Division had advanced to a line running from HILL 565 in the north to HILL 350 in the south. (See Map C) The 6th Armored Infantry, south of the TINE VALLEY, was generally parallelling this advance. At 1920 hours it was at the base of HILL 420 but was unable to secure this strongly defended hill despite a determined night attack. (21)

THE SECOND DAY OF THE ATTACK

On the morning of the 24th the attack started off at 0300 hours. The 26th Infantry was unable to make any headway against the strongly held HILL 575 and had to be contented with intermittently shelling the hill all throughout the day to soften it up for a coordinated attack the following day. During the day the 3d Battalion was relieved from its position in the zone of the 34th Division by units of that division and proceeded to rejoin the regiment. (22)

With the support of fire from the 2d Battalion from the captured HILL 400, the 16th Infantry proceeded to force the attack. The 1st Battalion captured HILL 491 and continued on

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- (20) A-7, p. 75
(21) A-8, p. 5
(22) A-5, p. 14

to maneuver against the west end of HILL 469. This was a long, steep hill from which the enemy was able to place fire on the 3d Battalion advancing on HILL 394 to the south. This fire hampered the advance of the 3d Battalion, but by 1637 hours, the 1st Battalion had taken possession of HILL 469 and the 3d Battalion was able to continue its advance and capture HILL 394.

In the zone of the 18th Infantry the 1st Battalion had been relieved from division reserve and ordered to pass through the 3d Battalion and capture HILL 407. (23) They met with practically no opposition and by 0400 hours they had occupied the hill. (24) A great deal of the success of this attack can be attributed to the heavy artillery preparation that lasted for one hour just prior to the attack. For the remainder of the day the enemy continued to place heavy artillery fires on HILL 407. They also launched a counter-attack against HILL 306 which the 2d Battalion had captured the previous day. (25) This attack was successful, but shortly thereafter the enemy was driven off by an American counterattack.

Thus by the end of the second day of fighting the 1st Division had advanced to a line extending from HILL 565 on the north through HILLS 469, 394, 407, 306, and 350. (See Map C) Reports from prisoners of war indicated that the German forces were executing a general withdrawal along the division front on the night of 24-25 April. South of the TINE VALLEY the 6th Armored Infantry was matching the advance of the division and was on HILL 388.

(23) A-8, p. 5

(24) Statement of Major E.W. McGregor, then Company Commander, Company A, 18th Infantry, 25 January 1950.

(25) A-7, p. 26

THE DIVISION MOVES FORWARD RAPIDLY

The attack on the morning of the 25th jumped off at 0200 hours and it soon became apparent that the Germans had withdrawn their main forces. The 2d Battalion, 26th Infantry occupied HILL 575 by 0350 hours. The 1st Battalion advanced to the north and took HILL 533 while the 3d Battalion pushed northeast of HILL 575 and took HILL 527. At that time enemy activity on DJEBEL TOUTA was noticed and an air strike was requested. At 0930 hours 12 Hurricanes bombed DJEBEL TOUTA thereby assisting the advance of the battalion and by mid afternoon HILL 444 was occupied. At 1830 hours the 2d Battalion was relieved from its position on HILL 575 by G Company, 168th Infantry, 34th Division and the battalion then moved forward to occupy HILLS 549, 450, and 508. Elements of the 2d Battalion, 168th Infantry also relieved the 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry from its position on HILL 533 so that it could move forward and occupy HILL 557.

The 18th Infantry moved forward prior to dawn against very light opposition and took HILLS 346, 323, and 340. By 1400 hours it was disposed with the 1st Battalion on HILL 347, the 2d Battalion on HILL 323 and the 3d Battalion on HILL 340.

The 16th Infantry, also advancing in the wake of the retreating Germans, moved onto DJEBEL MEKTA ES SOUANE where it reverted to division reserve. (26)

The 1st Battalion, 13th Armored Regiment was released to corps during the night. (27)

The 25th of April had been a relatively easy day, with

(26) A-8, p. 5

(27) A-8, p.

considerable gains against practically no opposition all along the line. The division now extended from HILL 444 south through HILL 347. (See Map C)

POSITIONS ARE CONSOLIDATED

The morning of the 26th of April was greeted by a dense fog. The 1st Division had completed the first phase of opening the TINE VALLEY. Any future advance at this time would have created a dangerous salient as the division had moved considerably further forward than the 34th Division which was about three miles to the northwest at this time. This left the north flank of the 1st Division open and exposed to counter-attacks by the enemy from their vantage points on the commanding terrain. Consequently, a directive was received from the II Corps ordering the division to hold up, consolidate their positions, and prepare for a coordinated attack in conjunction with the 34th Division. (28) The objective of the attack was to have the 34th Division capture HILL 609 which was the key fortress in the entire area while the 1st Division, relieved of the danger of a flank attack, was to take DJEBEL EL ANZ and DJEBEL BADJAR which were the remaining commanding heights that protected the city of MAFEUR and dominated the TINE VALLEY approach. (29)

During the 26th of April the 1st Division made its preparations for the forthcoming attack. The 18th Infantry, which had consolidated its positions on HILL 347, sent patrols forward to HILL 281 and as far as HILL 216 on DJEBEL BADJAR. This area was found to be occupied by the enemy in strength.

(28) A-9, p. 7

(29) A-7, p. 76, 77

Contact patrols were also sent out to HILL 444 and to determine whether the valley between the 18th and 26th Infantry Regiments was free of the enemy. The patrols reported that there was no sign of the enemy in the area.

The 16th Infantry was alerted to relieve the 1st Battalion 26th Infantry on HILLS 557, 501 and DJEBEL MENNZEL ZID. The 3d Battalion 16th Infantry was designated as the unit to make the relief. The 1st Battalion 26th was then to move forward and rejoin the rest of the regiment on HILL 444. (30)

At 2200 hours the 6th Armored Infantry was relieved from attachment to the 1st Division and the 1st Armored Division took over the responsibility for the area south of the TINE RIVER. (31)

The night of 26-27 April was spent in patrolling to the front and flanks to keep in contact with the enemy's movements and to maintain contact within the division.

While the 1st Division was consolidating its positions, (See Map D) the 34th Division was pushing its attack in an attempt to close the gap.

THE RENEWAL OF THE ATTACK

On the morning of the 27th of April the 26th Infantry moved forward and by 0845 hours had occupied DJEBEL BERAKINE without opposition.

The activity of the 18th Infantry during the day was limited to active patrolling. The patrols went forward as far as DJEBEL BADJAR, encountered the enemy positions and captured several prisoners. From them it was learned that the DJEBEL

(30) A-8, p. 6-7

(31) A-5, p. 25

was strongly held by the Germans.

While the action in the zone of the 1st Division was relatively quiet the 34th Division was advancing against the hills guarding the approaches to HILL 609, and meeting very strong opposition. The enemy control of the heights of HILL 609 made daylight attacks very costly and it wasn't until the morning of the 28th that the division had advanced to a position from which it could attempt an assault of HILL 609.

On the morning of the 28th of April the 16th Infantry was ordered to attack to the north in an attempt to take the hills guarding the approaches to HILL 609, thereby relieving the pressure on the 34th Division and assisting in the capture of HILL 609. The 26th Infantry was directed to continue its attack to sieze DJEBEL EL ANZ. (32) The 18th Infantry advanced to HILL 281 and was to hold up there and to consolidate that position. As soon as the 26th secured DJEBEL EL ANZ, the 18th was to advance against DJEBEL BADJAR. (33)

By 0700 hours the 1st Battalion 16th Infantry was on HILL 476 and the 3d Battalion was on HILL 531. Further advance was impossible during the day as the regiment was receiving mortar, artillery and machine gun fire from HILLS 523 and 609. The division received permission from II Corps to fire artillery at HILL 609 which was outside of the division zone, and until 0900 hours they fired every possible gun at the hill. Despite the cover of this fire the advance of the 16th Infantry was negligible that day.

The 26th Infantry meanwhile attacked DJEBEL EL ANZ with the 1st Battalion and succeeded in establishing a position

(32) A-8, p. 7-8

(33) Statement of Major Edward W. McGregor, then Company Commander, Company A 18th Infantry, 25 January, 1950

thereon by mid-morning. As soon as it was taken, the enemy launched a strong counterattack against the hill. It was repulsed however with considerable losses to the enemy, due to a great extent to the accurate, devastating fire of the division artillery. During the mid-afternoon the Germans launched another counterattack but this too was smashed up by accurate artillery fire which was directed into its midst by observers of the 18th Infantry on DJEBEL SIDI MEFTA. At dusk still another counterattack struck this hill only to be repulsed once again.

In the zone of the 18th Infantry no advance was made. Combat patrols reached HILL 216 but could go no further because of heavy artillery fire.

The 28th of April ended with the 16th Infantry pinned down by fire from HILLS 523 and 609, the 26th Infantry holding its positions on DJEBEL EL ANZ, and the 18th Infantry located on HILL 281.

The situation on April 29th remained essentially the same insofar as the forward progress of the division was concerned. The 16th Infantry continued to hammer away at HILL 523. It was apparent that the Germans considered this hill as one of the important keys to the entire defense system and they defended it furiously. Despite strong artillery support the assaults of the 16th were beaten back and plans were made to wait until dark and to attempt another attack. For the remainder of the day the artillery continued to pound the hill. (34)

In the zone of the 26th Infantry the enemy tried twice more to force the regiment off the strategic heights. Each

(34) A-8, p. 8-9

time the timely, accurate, devastating fire of the artillery helped repulse the attacks with heavy losses to the enemy. It was later determined from prisoners of war that the 7th Company, 755th German Regiment lost all but thirty or forty men during these attacks. (35) To further strengthen the position the 3d Battalion was moved up close behind the 1st Battalion. The 2d Battalion, which was still on HILL 444, reverted to division reserve.

THE BATTLE FOR HILL 609

During the 30th of April the 16th Infantry saw some of the most severe fighting of the operation. The 2d Battalion, after trying for two days to capture HILL 523, was aided by the 1st Battalion which finally achieved the objective as a result of an inspired bayonet charge. Almost immediately upon reaching the crest the battalion was surrounded by the enemy. One company had moved beyond HILL 523 to HILL 545, and this unit was also surrounded. It was only a matter of time before a determined German counterattack was able to retake both hills. Thereafter, the enemy proceeded to renew the intensity of their efforts to drive the elements of the 2d Battalion from the portion of HILL 523 that was still occupied. (36) Company H, 1st Armored Regiment was attached to the 16th Infantry in an effort to force the enemy off of HILL 523 and to relieve the pressure on the 3d Battalion on HILL 531. Routes were reconnoitered for the tanks but were found to be covered by high velocity anti-tank weapons. Five tanks were lost in a brief period of time, and although the tanks were able to knock

(35) A-5, p. 22

(36) A-10, p. 29-30

out several anti-tank guns, they were unable to assist the advance of the infantry. The artillery continued to pound the Germans who were attempting to drive the remnants of the 16th Infantry off HILL 523. To reinforce the infantry, a battalion was formed from Companies A and B and a detachment of D 1st Engineer Battalion and the unit was attached to the 2d Battalion to act as infantry and assist in the defense of that portion of HILL 523. (37) Nightfall found the main portion of the hill in enemy hands with the 2d Battalion reinforced still holding on the south side. The 3d Battalion was on HILL 531, reinforced by tanks of H Company 1st Armored Regiment that had been able to work their way up the hill. (38)

In the zone of the 26th Infantry the situation remained unchanged. The enemy attempted five times to drive the Americans off the heights of DJEBEL EL ANZ but each time the counter-attacks were repulsed. Twice during these attacks the enemy was forced back only when the troops of the 26th Infantry met them with bayonets and ejected them from the position. (39)

The 18th Infantry continued to probe DJEBEL BADJAR with strong patrols throughout the day.

THE END OF THE OPERATION

During the night of 30 April - 1 May, the 34th Division succeeded in taking HILL 609. This meant that HILLS 523, and 531, for which the 16th Infantry had fought so bitterly, no longer had any tactical significance for the enemy. Groups of Germans began straggling in under white flags of truce to surrender. The 16th Infantry began to move up on HILL 523

(37) A-8, p. 10

(38) A-10, p. 29-30

(39) Statement of Lt. Colonel Henry Clisson, then Company Commander, Cannon Company 26th Infantry, 24 January 1950

which was still a slow process because of the many mines that the Germans had laid throughout the area. The remainder of the day was spent in occupying the evacuated hills and re-organizing the tired battalions. Vigorous patrolling was kept up to mop up scattered groups of Germans and to prevent a possible surprise attack. That night the 18th Infantry patrols discovered that DJEBEL BADJAR had been evacuated by the enemy, and immediately sent elements forward to occupy the DJEBEL. Thus, on 1 May, the line occupied by the 1st Division extended from HILL 545 through DJEBEL EL ANZ and over to DJEBEL BADJAR. (See Map D)

The morning of 2 May showed the Germans to be withdrawing all along the line. The 18th Infantry moved the remaining elements of the regiment onto DJEBEL BADJAR and consolidated their position. The 26th Infantry advanced from its position on DJEBEL EL ANZ and occupied HILL 340. By 0730 hours there was no enemy contact all along the front of the division. (40) The remainder of the day was spent in regrouping the regiments for the continuation of the attack.

At 0805 hours on 3 May a message was received by the division commander from Major General Omar N. Bradley, Commanding General, II Corps, pertinent extracts of which are as follows: "1st Division push out reconnaissance (foot and motor). Gain contact. Advance 26th and 18th Infantry in their zones to MATEUR road at which point it will be considered that phase line 1 has been reached". The remainder of the message carried instructions for the continuation of the attack with its ultimate mission of driving the Germans from TUNISIA. (41)

(40) A-8, p. 10

(41) A-11

SUMMARY

The 1st Division, from 23 April to 3 May, accomplished a 10 mile advance by virtue of a series of battalion combat team battles against individual hill fortresses occupied by an enemy thoroughly schooled in utilization of terrain to secure its maximum advantage for the defender. This advance had cleared the TINE VALLEY so that the 1st Armored Division could utilize it as a route of advance. (42) On 3 May, the armor fulfilled its part of the mission by driving in and capturing the strategic communications center of MATEUR. (43)

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

1. THE USE OF ARMOR

The tanks of the 1st Armored Division saw very little action in the area between SIDI NSIR and MATEUR. In the attack of the hill fortresses with the Germans occupying caves and concrete emplacements which afforded them excellent overhead cover, it would have been a decided advantage to the attacking troops to have been supported by the direct fire weapons of the tanks. However, the terrain was such as to make their use in a supporting role impractical. The tanks would have had to stay in the valleys since the slopes of the hills were steep, rocky and eroded. To get to a position where they would be able to engage the enemy emplacements the tanks would have had to follow the beaten paths and this would have been virtual suicide. The Germans, with their high velocity anti-tank guns

(42) A-5, p. 23

(43) A-4, p. 26

commanded the heights and the limited approaches thereto, and the loss of vehicles would have been prohibitive. During the period of the monograph, tanks of the 1st Battalion 13th Armored Regiment assisted the 2d Battalion 18th Infantry in the second assault on HILL 350. The terrain in this area however was such that it was one of the few places where the tanks were able to get firing positions overwatching the advancing troops, and where they had any decent covered routes of approach to the enemy position. Later in the action, the tanks of Company H, 1st Armored Regiment attempted to assist the 16th Infantry in their assault of HILL 523. Five tanks were lost almost immediately, and the remainder had to remain in a covered position and were unable to assist the advance of the Infantry.

As a consequence, since the terrain didn't permit the economical use of armor the Corps Commander wisely decided to keep his armor in reserve, and built his plan to capture MATEUR upon opening a path for it so that it could be free to exploit the gains as soon as it reached terrain that was more suitable to its employment. In this case, as soon as the TINE VALLEY was cleared, the 1st Armored Division was able to sweep into MATEUR and capture that important communications center. This rapid and aggressive move was able to disrupt the enemy's organization of defensive positions between MATEUR and FERRYVILLE, which was the next logical line of defense. It also interfered with his effecting an orderly withdrawal of troops and equipment. In brief, instead of expending his armor in dribs and drabs, the Corps Commander retained it as a strong, unified striking force to be used to exploit the success of the infantry and to keep the enemy off balance once he started

to withdraw.

2. DEFENSE AGAINST COUNTERATTACKS

As soon as a piece of critical terrain was captured, it was certain that the Germans would counterattack. The normal procedure was for the enemy to fall back to the reverse slopes, reorganize while the crest of the hill was being pounded with artillery, and then counterattack the infantry before they could get settled. These tactics caused the division many times to lose terrain that they had captured. Finally, to counter this type of operation, as soon as the crest of the hill was taken, the division put observers in a place where they could place observed fire on the reverse slopes where the enemy was reforming, and our troops fell back to the forward slope to complete their reorganization. In this manner, they could partially break up the counterattack with the artillery fire, and then hit the enemy troops as they came over the crest of the hill. In this manner, the division was able to hold their objectives once they were taken and obviate the necessity of having to capture them all over again. It was necessary, however to very carefully plan the reorganization phase so that every man knew just what he was to do and where he was to go. It was also of the utmost importance to carefully coordinate the plan with the artillery so that they could place timely and accurate fire in the right place at the right time. The operations in the period covered by this monograph very clearly pointed out the inestimable value of the artillery in breaking up counterattacks. However, the key to their ability to do so, was good observation. This indicated one more very important

phase of the reorganization plans, and that was to be sure that the infantrymen were able to call for and adjust fire in case the artillery forward observer became a casualty. In addition to the artillery, the plans had to include the fires of the mortars and machine guns of the battalions. The success of the manner in which the division utilized these plans was adequately exemplified by the 26th Infantry when they were able to repulse more than seven counterattacks against their position on DJEBEL EL ANZ within a period of three days.

3. THE USE OF NIGHT ATTACKS

The Germans were past masters at the organization of the terrain so as to fully utilize its defensive potentialities. In the case of the area in the vicinity of MATEUR this was especially evident. The hills were so organized as to be mutually supporting, and it was rare that a unit could attack one hill without drawing heavy fire, usually on their flank, from one or more other hills. Added to the difficulties presented by the terrain and the enemy's organization thereof, was the accuracy of the German's artillery, mortars and automatic weapons. Since the enemy commanded all of the dominant terrain, he was continually looking down the throats of the attacking troops, and whatever he could see, he could hit. Even when being pounded by our artillery, his overhead cover permitted him to continue to fire at the advancing troops. In order to attempt to equalize these disadvantages, the division did the great majority of their attacking at night. This made control much more difficult, and required very careful planning and training, but the resultant decrease in casualties

more than made up for that. It is significant to note that the great majority of the important gains were made during the hours of darkness, and in many cases, such as the capture of HILL 523 by the 16th Infantry, attacks that were unable to advance during the day despite terrific artillery support, and attempted tank support, were successful when launched under the cover of darkness.

4. COORDINATION WITH ADJACENT UNITS

Boundaries for the attack are lines drawn on a map to act as guides or restrictions for the attacking units. The enemy doesn't defend in accordance with the boundaries that we establish, although we try to prevent splitting the responsibility for one specific terrain feature upon which the enemy may be organized. As a consequence, in planning an attack it is necessary to consider the manner in which the terrain in the zone of adjacent units will be able to effect the attack of other units. This is normally simple within a division, and the attacks can be so coordinated that the enemy's mutually supporting strong points are being simultaneously attacked by several units. It is equally important, although not so simple to make these same coordinations with adjacent units of other divisions. In the case of the 16th Infantry, the enemy positions on HILL 609 were able to place devastating fire on our flanks, because the attack of the 34th Division had not advanced abreast of the 1st Division. Had a careful ground study been made first, it would have been seen that HILL 609 dominated the area all around it, and that the 1st Division was getting out on a dangerous salient by attempting to advance be-

yond it. As the situation finally developed, the attack of the 16th Infantry was unsuccessful until such time as the 34th Division was able to take HILL 609, and was also very costly of men and equipment.

5. NECESSITY FOR MAINTAINING CONTACT WITH THE ENEMY

In order to capitalize upon successes and the resultant disorganization of the enemy, it is essential that patrols be sent out continually to keep in contact and to keep informed of his activities. While the patrolling of the division was fairly aggressive, there were several occasions when it would have been possible to inflict considerable losses on the enemy and to greatly disorganize him had the patrols kept closer contact. In the case of the withdrawal of the enemy from HILL 575 in the zone of the 26th Infantry, if the division had been able to hit them during the withdrawal, or at least place observed artillery on their troops at the time they were pulling out, it is quite possible that the Germans would never have been able to reorganize on their successive positions. This obviously would have greatly facilitated the accomplishment of our mission. The principle of maintaining contact is of particular importance when the enemy is in the throes of fighting a withdrawing action since it is at this time that he is most vulnerable to surprise attacks. Another time when the need for aggressive patrolling is imperative, is when an objective has just been taken, and the enemy has withdrawn. The natural tendency is to stop, reorganize, take care of the wounded, and replenish ammunition, and keeping contact is neglected. When it is finally remembered, the enemy is gone,

and it is necessary to start all over again to regain contact. During this period, the enemy has had the chance to reorganize and strengthen his new positions.

6. PATROLLING AND RECONNAISSANCE

Reconnaissance of the terrain over which an attack is to be made is of great importance under normal circumstances. However, when attacking in difficult terrain, it is even more important. Since the division was operating primarily at night, the determination of routes and enemy dispositions was imperative. Another factor that is important insofar as patrolling is concerned, is the protection of positions won in a night attack. The Germans were very adept at night attacks over difficult terrain, and unless patrols were put out immediately upon occupying the objective there was the danger of an unexpected counterattack. This occurred in the case of the 1st Battalion, 16th Infantry on HILL 523. As soon as they reached the crest, they were almost instantly surrounded and counterattacked. It is quite possible that by pushing a patrol out to the front immediately upon reaching the crest the battalion might have been made aware of the German strength and been able to withdraw in time.

7. USE OF OTHER BRANCH TROOPS AS INFANTRY

The Engineers were kept very busy cleaning up the many mines that the Germans had planted all along the TINE VALLEY. However, there are times when the exigencies of the situation are going to dictate that they forsake their specialist mission and reinforce the Infantry on a strictly infantry mission.

This occurred in the case of the 2d Battalion, 16th Infantry during the battle for HILL 523. When the 1st Battalion was cut off after having reached the crest, the 2d Battalion tried to hold the portion of the hill to which they had advanced. However, they had suffered a considerable number of casualties and one of their companies was almost completely disorganized by a German counterattack. It was imperative that they be reinforced. The only troops that were readily available were the Engineers, and they were thrown into the breach. This means that these personnel must be trained as infantry and worked into problems with the regiments so that when the emergency arises they can be effectively utilized. Commanders must realize that these troops are available, and plan to use them if the occasion should arise.

LESSONS

1. Tanks and Infantry must work closely together, and where the terrain is such that close support by armor is impractical, the Infantry must be used to clear the way so that the armor can exploit the success.
2. Careful plans must be made ahead of time to cover the reorganization on the objective so as to best defend against the inevitable counterattack.
3. When operating over difficult terrain that favors the defender, the use of night attacks will facilitate success and reduce casualties.
4. Coordination must be effected with adjacent units, regardless of size, to insure placing the maximum effort against the enemy's defenses at the critical time.

5. Once gained, contact with the enemy must be maintained, to prevent his uninterrupted withdrawal and reorganization.

6. Patrolling and reconnaissance must be aggressive and continuous, particularly at night, to insure the success of an attack, and to prevent surprise attacks by the enemy.

7. Troops of other branches within the Infantry Division represent a source of manpower to the commander, and should be trained to operate as Infantry if the need therefor should arise.