

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

ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS COURSE
1948 - 1949

SUPPLY OPERATIONS IN THE 1ST BATTALION, 501ST
PARACHUTE INFANTRY REGIMENT, (101ST AIRBORNE
DIVISION) IN THE BATTLE OF BASTOGNE,
18 - 26 DECEMBER 1944.
(ARDENNES - ALSACE CAMPAIGN)
(Personal Experience of a Battalion S-4)

Type of operation described: SUPPLY
OPERATIONS UNDER ADVERSE CONDITIONS.

Captain Joseph E. Jenkins, Infantry
ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS CLASS NO. II

7
1471

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE</u>
Index	1
Bibliography	2
Introduction	3
The General Situation	4
Equipping the Battalion	7
The Move From Mourmelon 18-19 December 1944	9
The Movement to Contact	12
Maintenance of the Troops	14
Resupply By Air	22
Analysis and Criticism	24
Lessons	29
Map A and Overlay - Road Net - Belgium - German Offensive Objective	
Map AA - Route to Bastogne, Belgium	
Map B - Contact With the Enemy	
Map C - Bastogne 22-23 December 1944, Drop Zone - Landing Zone	

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- A-1 Report of Operations,
12th Army Group, Volume III
(TIS Library)

- A-2 First United States Army,
Report of Operations, Volume IV,
1 August 1944 - 22 February 1945
(TIS Library)

- A-3 Bastogne, The First Eight Days,
By Colonel S. L. A. Marshall
(TIS Library)

- A-4 Personal Experience and Knowledge of the
Author While Assigned S-4, 1st Battalion,
501st Parachute Infantry Regiment.

- A-5 Interview with Lt. Colonel Harry W. O. Kinnard, Jr.,
A.F.P. Board #1, Fort Bragg, N. C., December 1948.

- A-6 Interview with Lt. Colonel Charles Chase,
The Infantry School, January 1948.

- A-7 Interview with Major Weldon Dorvis,
Assistant G-4, 82d Airborne Division,
Fort Bragg, N. C., December 1948.

- A-8 Dark December,
By Robert E. Merriam
(TIS Library)

- A-9 Four Stars of Hell,
By Captain Lawrence Critchell
(TIS Library)

- A-10 Interview with Captain C. E. Curran,
Student Advanced Class No. 2,
The Infantry School, January 1949.

- A-11 Rendezvous With Destiny,
By Leonard Rappart and Arthur Northwood, Jr.
(TIS Library)

- A-12 Interview with 1st Lieutenant Alvin Mathwin,
Student Advanced Class No. 2,
The Infantry School, January 1949.

- A-13 Operations Repulse: Belgium, December 1944,
Hq. IX Troop Carrier Command;
Confidential Document
(TIS Library)

SUPPLY OPERATIONS IN THE 1ST BATTALION, 501ST
PARACHUTE INFANTRY REGIMENT, (101ST AIRBORNE
DIVISION) IN THE BATTLE OF BASTOGNE,
18 - 26 DECEMBER 1944.
(ARDENNES - ALSACE CAMPAIGN)
(Personal Experience of a Battalion S-4)

INTRODUCTION

The narrative, as unfolded in this monograph, depicts the activities and actions of the supply officer and supply section, 1st Battalion, 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment, in conjunction with the move to and the defense of Bastogne, Belgium, by the 101st Airborne Division, during the period 18 - 23 December 1944.

The reader must have an understanding of the events that transpired on the central portion of the Allied Western Front, in higher headquarters, and behind the German lines, before he can fully understand and appreciate the stupendous movement of troops and arms to stop the onslaught of Germany's attempt to divide the Allied forces and recapture the port of Antwerp, Belgium.

In late November and early December winter came to the western front in Europe, bringing with it all the adverse elements of weather that make it disagreeable to man's comfort and the efficient functioning of his man-made equipment. (1) This condition and the unfavorable terrain of the northern and central fronts, though not generally given much thought, was slowly bringing the Allied winter offensive to a faltering halt in this sector of the Allied Armies.

In the early days of December the First United States Army was holding a sector (See Map A) that extended from just north of Dueren, Germany, south across the rugged hills and cultivated forest of the

(1) A-1, p. 24-25.

Ardennes, to Losheim, Germany. (2)

The United States VIII Corps, a part of the First United States Army (See Map A) had its headquarters in Bastogne, Belgium. The front assigned the VIII Corps extended from Losheim, Germany, north to a point where the Our River crosses the ^{Belgium} Franco-German Border. This front was 88 miles wide and ran parallel to the Belgium and Luxembourg boundaries. (3)

On 16 December 1944, a plan conceived by Chancellor Hitler and his German Staff, was placed in effect. (See Overlay Map A) This plan would project a German salient across the Ardennes Forest and plains of Belgium to the port of Antwerp; divide the Allied Forces, cutting them off from their bases and destroying their line of communication. Executing this offensive was the 7th German Army and the 5th and 6th Panzer Armies. (4)

As the German offensive advanced, a plan for the employing of SHAEF's reserve was placed in operation. The plan was to employ the 101st Airborne Division and the 82d Airborne Division, of the XVIII Airborne Corps, north and south of Bastogne, Belgium, (See Map A) to defend the critical road nets that passed through the town. This plan was later modified by lower Headquarters, 12th Army Group, and the 82d Airborne Division was routed to Werbomont, Belgium. (5)

THE GENERAL SITUATION

The 101st Airborne Division, recuperating from 72 days of battle in the Holland Campaign, was stationed in an old French Army Cantonment at Mourmelon le Grande, France. The division was in the process of reorganization, re-equipping, training replacements and giving the men

(2) A-2, p. 37; (3) A-3, p. 1; A-3, p. 4; (4) A-4, p. 34; A-1, p. 26; A-5, p. 36; A-6, p. 107; (5) A-3, p. 8.

a much needed and well deserved rest. It can be said that few, if any, of the members of the division were cognizant of the situation on the western front and combat was far from their minds.

Great stress was placed by Division G-4 on the supply sections of the various units of the division to check all clothing and equipment of the men for combat servicableity. This check would remove from all men and companies, equipment and clothing not deemed servicable by the unit supply officers, and in turn would give the G-4 a tentative record of the needs for the division. It was known that this clothing and equipment would not be drawn at once due to the status of the unit as a reserve element. Further an accurate estimate of these needs was impossible due to the absence of large numbers of men on leave and pass.

(6)

At approximately 2030 hours, 17 December 1944, the 101st Airborne Division was alerted by XVIII Airborne Corps to be prepared to move north on 19 December 1944, for operation under VIII Corps control; a definite area assignment was not given. The acting Commanding General, Brigadier General Anthony McAuliffe, called a meeting of his staff and unit commanders to alert them of the contemplated move, but so little information was available at this time that he could not give them an accurate picture nor the manner of employment projected for the 101st Division. (7)

In this meeting with his staff and unit commanders, General McAuliffe divided the division into combat teams. These combat teams consisted of the 501st Combat Team, which was composed of the 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment and the 907th Glider Field Artillery Battalion; the 506th Combat Team, which was composed of the 506th Parachute

(6) A-4; (7) A-3, p. 10; A-8; A-9.

Infantry Regiment and the 321st Glider Field Artillery Battalion; the 502d Combat Team, which was composed of the 502d Parachute Infantry Regiment and the 377th Parachute Field Artillery Battalion; the 327th Combat Team, composed of the 327th Glider Infantry Regiment and the 463d Parachute Field Artillery Battalion. During this meeting with the unit commanders and staff, a call was received from XVIII Corps advancing the date for the division's move from the 19th to the 18th of December, but a definite sector of employment was still not given. The herculean task of moving the 101st Division would have to be accomplished in less than 18 hours. Combat teams would begin moving out at 1400 hours, 18 December 1944, this being agreed upon as the earliest hour that the first unit could be ready to move. They would move in serials of 40 trucks, 50 men per 10 ton semi-trailer truck, with 15 minute intervals between serials. (See Map AA) The route to be followed would be via Sedan, France; Bouillon, France; St. Hubert, Belgium; to Bois de Herbaimont, Belgium where a guide would meet the Division and direct them to their sector. The first unit to leave the Mourmelon le Grande area would be the 501st Parachute Infantry Combat Team, to act as the advance guard. Further instructions were given that the troops would carry combat loads as near as physically possible, and pieces were to be "loaded and locked" while enroute. (8)

Upon his return to the regimental command post, Lieutenant Colonel Julian J. Ewell, Commanding Officer of the 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment, met with his staff and battalion commanders, which had been summoned while he was at the division headquarters. In turn each battalion staff and company commanders had been alerted and were awaiting orders in their respective battalion headquarters. Orders were given to

(8) A-5; A-6; A-7.

the battalion commanders as to the order of march, the situation as was known, and the critical supply situation as was known by all was emphasized. All available personnel not actively participating in the preparation for the move, would be sent to the battalion supply sections to facilitate the gathering of supplies. (9)

EQUIPPING THE BATTALION

The 1st Battalion S-4, who accompanied his Battalion Commander, Major Raymond Bottomly, was given specific orders at the conclusion of this meeting to equip the battalion as best possible and report to him the status of the battalion supply when the preparation had been completed. To accomplish this, battalion and company supply personnel were gathered in a group and broken down into smaller groups, with each having a specific mission to accomplish in a stated time limit; time would not wait.

Major William Butler, S-4 of the 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment, had assembled the regimental supply section and after coordinating with the Division G-4, was operating at top speed to equip a depleted unit of its shortages. Rations, equipment and ammunition on hand were prorated to the various units and orders were given to assemble representatives from each battalion to accompany the regimental ammunition sergeant to the ammunition supply point to draw what ammunition was available. Another group was dispatched to the divisional ration breakdown point to obtain any combat rations that could be had. A third group was to contact the division ordnance to redraw weapons which had previously been turned in for repair, but which as yet had not been repaired; all repaired weapons; and any previously requisitioned items which were then

(9) A-4.

available at Division Ordnance. Lieutenant Colonel Carl Kohls, G-4 of the 101st Division, contacting army supply points and ammunition depots, had dispatched details to acquire what rations, weapons and sundry supplies that could be procured. If these details did not return to the division area in time for distribution to the units by the initial point time, they were to follow at the end of the division column. (10)

After a night of collecting, scrounging and distributing equipment on hand among the companies, the battalion supply officer reported to the battalion commander that the battalion was equipped as well as could be expected, but that the status of supply in the battalion was unsatisfactory. Foreign weapons acquired in the Normandy and Holland Campaigns as souvenirs by the men of the battalion, were collected from the supply rooms and distributed to the unarmed men. Ammunition for these weapons, forbidden to be in the hands of the troops by division order, mysteriously appeared and was given to the men equipped with foreign weapons. Each man armed with an American weapon had approximately one-third basic load for his piece; heavy weapons were provided with approximately one-half basic load. The men were issued sufficient rations for one and one-third days; all rations issued to the kitchens for normal consumption were packed with the kitchen trucks; all class B bags and footlockers were stored, and rear details were selected from the sick and newly returned hospital cases.

At 1330 hours, 18 December, the supply section of the 1st Battalion was ready to move, having accomplished everything possible for the present. Regimental S-4 had assured the battalion S-4 that any equipment issued to the regiment after the battalion had departed would be brought

(10) A-7.

forward and issued when the destination had been reached. (11)

As preparations for the move to the north were being carried out during the night of 17 - 18 December, by the 101st Airborne Division, significant developments were taking place on the VIII Corps front.

A gap of between ten and twelve miles had been forced on the portion of VIII Corps front held by the 28th Infantry Division, (See Overlay Map A) and through this gap Armored spearheads of the 47th and 58th German Corps, 5th Panzer Army, were pouring at liberty. These elements were pushing for the Houffalize-Bastogne Highway, northeast of Bastogne, and the town of Wiltz, southeast of Bastogne, from which they would then push on to Namur, Belgium, to the northeast. (12)

In the early afternoon 18 December 1944, General McAuliffe and his G-3 arrived at VIII Corps Headquarters to determine the assignment and sector designated for the 101st Division. At this time he was informed that the division would be employed at or near Bastogne. Upon receiving this information the General dispatched guides to the cross roads at Bois de Herbaimont to meet the advance elements of the 101st Division.

With his G-3, General McAuliffe made an estimate of the situation and picked a tentative division assembly area. Parts of advance parties began to arrive in Bastogne, and these troops were utilized to direct the division troops as they arrived. (13)

THE MOVE FROM MOURMELON 18 - 19 DECEMBER 1944

After a difficult night in which every effort was directed toward equipping the men for combat, the 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment was ready to move from Mourmelon le Grande, France, to the VIII Corps sector. The reader is reminded that under the existing plan, the regimental

(11) A-4; (12) A-8, p. 114-115; (13) A-3, p. 19-25.

column would be intercepted in the vicinity of Bois de Herbaimont and routed to the correct destination in the VIII Corps sector. Trucks that had been dispatched to the various leave center towns to bring back men on leaves and passes, had returned only partially filled or completely empty. The men that returned were placed on the trucks, which were loading for the move, as they were. No effort would be made to equip them for combat until they had reached their destination.

At 1400 hours, 18 December, the first serial departed from Camp Mourmelon, enroute to an adventure that would keep them from returning until early spring. The trucks being used for this move had been requisitioned from the Oise Base and Seine Base sections and many of the drivers had been on the road driving to Mourmelon since the night before. These vehicles were 10-ton semi-trailer, and the men were loaded fifty per truck. So crowded were the trucks that the men were comfortable only when they were standing. What few supplies left over, of which none were critical items at the moment, were loaded on the battalion supply officer's jeep and trailer. So much room was left that the supply officer loaded all of the extras that he had collected in the Normandy and Holland Campaigns. Little did he dream that the conglomeration of materiel he loaded on his trailer would be of invaluable assistance later.

After hours of riding over congested roads, where it seemed more traffic was returning than going forward, (See Map AA) the lead element was intercepted at Bois de Herbaimont and routed to Bastogne via the Herbaimont-Bastogne Road. (See Map B - Note 1 & 2) This road led to the regimental assembly area where the men detrucked to catch what sleep they could and await orders.

Upon arrival at the assembly area Major Bottomly reported to the

regimental command post for briefing and assignment of his battalion's mission. When he returned from regimental headquarters a staff meeting of his battalion was called and Major Bottomly informed the assembled officers that the battalion would move from the assembly area at 0600 hours, 19 December, and proceed through Bastogne down the Longvilly-Bastogne Highway in an effort to contact a friendly unit which was isolated in the vicinity of Longvilly. The 1st Battalion would be the regimental advance guard and Company B was designated as advance guard for the battalion. Company C was to follow Company B and Company A would be in battalion reserve. Prior to leaving the assembly area the men were to stack their excess equipment in company piles and leave an armorer artificer to guard them. Men without weapons were to be utilized as ammunition bearers and runners and any man that was partially armed was to go with his platoon. The battalion supply officer was to collect the company equipment left behind and transport it to the new area when the situation had been established.

Attached to the 1st Battalion would be Battery B, 81st Antitank-Anti-Aircraft Battalion, consisting of 7 towed 57 mm guns, and in direct support of the regiment was the 907th Artillery Battalion. (14)

This was the first time in the combat history of the 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment that the men had not been briefed as to the mission and general situation prior to an engagement. Every shred of information that was known had been passed out to the company commanders by the Battalion S-3 to be disseminated among the men, but this information was so vague that an average soldier without benefit of a map could tell little or nothing of what was happening. All information concerning the situation collected during the night, by the battalion

(14) A-9, p. 238; A-2, p. 32-33; A-4.

staff, was passed out to the unit commanders with orders to brief their troops as best they could.

Upon reaching the assembly area the supply officer was granted permission by the Regimental S-4 to continue forward to Bastogne and endeavor to locate what he could in the way of equipment and supplies. If the equipment or supplies had been abandoned and in sufficient quantity, they were to be reported to him, for collection and issue to the units of the 501st. After searching for three hours only small amounts of abandoned ammunition, clothing, weapons and bandages were located, which were used to clothe and equip the men of the battalion that did not possess these items.

THE MOVEMENT TO CONTACT

Bastogne was not a restful town during the night of 18 - 19 December 1944. It had become the front lines. VIII Corps headquarters was in the process of moving to the rear in order to begin operations anew. Stragglers with staring eyes and a grim determination to go to the rear were everywhere. Roads were becoming cluttered and disorder was rampant. (15)

At 0600 hours, 19 December, the lead elements of the 1st Battalion crossed the Initial Point on the minute. As the units progressed down the highway, movement became more difficult as the road became more congested. Men of the battalion, watching the stragglers and men of VIII Corps Headquarters pass by on their way to the rear, accepted it with mixed emotions. Each man in the opinion of the writer, had the thought in his mind, "We'll pull your chestnuts out of the fire for you." There was determination on the faces of the airborne troops

(15) A-10; A-4.

that is seen on the faces of men who know they have a job to be done, but are uncertain of the why or where. (16)

The road to Longvilly as it leads from Bastogne is located generally between two ridges running approximately east and west with a railroad and stream running parallel. These ridges gradually increase in size on the left of the road and decrease on the right until they open into a plain approximately 4,000 yards from Bastogne. (See Map B) On this plain 1,000 yards from the foot of the hill lies the small town of Neffe. To the right of the road, approximately 4,000 yards from Bastogne, lies the town of Mont. The terrain in this area was generally cleared farm land and pasture, with a few uniformly cultivated areas of fir and spruce trees. (17)

As the battalion marched down the highway and neared Neffe, (See Map B - Note 3) the center and rear elements of the column were fired upon by enemy machine gun and rifle fire from the hill on the left side of the road. Following orders of not to send out flank security the lead elements had by-passed this German outpost due to the heavy fog which limited visibility to a few hundred feet. (18) The column was halted at once and a platoon from Company C was dispatched to investigate and clear up the situation. The enemy outpost was located 300 yards from the highway on the brow of the hill. After a short and inaccurate exchange of fire the enemy withdrew towards Neffe and was lost in the fog and woods.

Movement of the main body of the 1st Battalion along the Longvilly-Bastogne Highway continued to approximately 500 yards from Neffe when they were subjected to concentrated automatic weapons and rifle fire, in addition to fire from tanks or self-propelled guns from the vicinity

(16) A-2, p. 34; A-4; (17) A-4; (18) A-4.

of Neffe.

Faced with a force of undetermined strength to his front the battalion commander followed orders as given in the regimental staff meeting to wit: ' if contact with the enemy is made before contact with friendly forces, develop the situation, do not by-pass.' (See Map B) With this in mind, the battalion commander deployed his troops north and south of the highway, with Company B astride the highway. (19)

Uncertain of the size force facing his battalion, Major Bottomly formulated a plan to develop the situation by having Company C attack from the northeast and Company B to attack from the east. The companies failed to advance and they were being subjected to intense tank fire from the northern outskirts of Neffe. The battalion commander estimating the enemy to be of company size reinforced with armor holding a roadblock did not know until later that his unit was facing the advance elements of the Panzer Lehr Division. Companies B and C were ordered to dig in and await developments. (20)

Due to the uncertainty of the situation, (See Map B) the Battalion S-4 and section set up in a small quarry, which contained a small stone house approximately 800 yards from the front line elements. This house also became the aid station and for a short while the forward regimental command post. (See Map B) To the left rear, Company A and Battery B, 907th Glider Field Artillery Battalion had gone into position. (21)

MAINTENANCE OF THE TROOPS

It can be said that the company commander is the father of the troops, the platoon leader their mother, and the battalion supply

(19) A-4; (20) A-3, p. 34-37, 185-187; A-4; (21) A-3, p. 36; A-4.

officer is the rich uncle who furnishes their needs.

With the situation developed to a certain degree, the battalion supply officer reported to the battalion commander for orders and was instructed to return to Bastogne and endeavor to acquire what was needed by his troops. This was much easier said than done, but with three men the supply officer returned to Bastogne.

Contact was made with the regimental supply officer and a partial basic load of ammunition was issued. Further search of the town revealed the vacated quarters of the VIII Corps Military Police Company, which contained numerous items of clothing that were salvaged and one half case of caliber .45 ammunition. Helmets and gas masks were recovered from an area in which stragglers had spent the night; and numerous pieces of webbing abandoned by stragglers, were recovered from points throughout the town. In the late afternoon, 19 December 1944, the battalion supply sergeant and supply officer returned to the assembly area of that morning and removed all the batteries, spare part kits and blankets from the men's baggage. Although not known at the time this act was to save precious equipment, the loss of which would have greatly handicapped the battalion later.

The night of 19 - 20 December, was comparatively quiet on the battalion front, although armor of the friendly and enemy forces could be heard moving about throughout the night. On the opposite side of the town the situation was vastly different. An enemy force cut the highway to the west and south of Bastogne during the hours of darkness, 19 - 20 December, and severed all lines of communication and axis of supply to the west and south. In doing this, the enemy overran the assembly area used by the 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment when they first arrived at Bastogne, and destroyed all baggage and spare equip-

ment left by the 1st Battalion in that area. This action by the enemy also resulted in the capture of the 101st Division's medical installations with all patients, supplies and transportation. As a result of this loss a desperate medical situation was created among troops of the division. (22)

During the daylight hours 20 December 1944, action on the 1st Battalion front was limited to patrols and minor fire fights, although the 2d Battalion, 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment on the left flank and the 3d Battalion, 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment, on the right flank of the 1st Battalion were being subjected to strong probing action from the enemy.

Food for the troops of the 1st Battalion, as in all other units in Bastogne, had become a critical item. Of course some men had fared better than others by the process of utilizing produce and commodities found in or near the farm buildings that dotted the area in which they were defending, but the majority had not had a full meal for ten or twelve hours. With this matter foremost on his mental list of items to be accomplished, the battalion supply officer began to collect what items of foodstuff available. Potatoes were acquired from the Regimental S-4, flour and condiments from the kitchens that were brought forward, meat from the animals that had been killed by shrapnel during the periodic shelling of the line, ersatz coffee from a local merchant whose store had been shelled, and extremely weak beer from a brewery. All in all this would not make an appetizing meal in a normal situation, but just the idea of hot food of any sort would be a God-sent gift to the men. This meal was planned to be fed during the hours of darkness by the hand-carrying system. (23)

(22) A-3, p. 68; A-11, p. 467-469; A-4; (23) A-4.

At 1900 hours, 20 December, the entire front of the 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment received an intense shelling from tanks and self-propelled guns. As the artillery concentrations slacked off a concentrated attack was launched against the 1st Battalion straight down the Neffe-Bastogne Highway by elements of the Panzer Lehr Division.

Enemy armor and infantry had begun an all out assault on the most direct route to Bastogne. The battalion commander contacted the regimental commander to report the situation and requested an artillery barrage. Eleven field artillery battalions, all that were in the Bastogne area, delivered a dam of fire 200 yards west of Neffe, knocking out two Panzer and one Tiger Royal tanks and untold numbers of the enemy. Enemy troops surviving the devastating artillery fire met their fate from the platoons holding the battalion line. The 1st Battalion controlled the line so well that not a German drew close enough to penetrate the positions. (24)

This attack placed a severe drain on the meager supply of ammunition in the hands of the troops. Where were the next rounds coming from, was the thought utmost in the mind of every man facing the onslaught of the German offensive force. An arrangement was made with the Battalion Surgeon, Captain Jacob Lunin, to have his aid men remove all ammunition from the wounded men that fell in the front lines and give it to the nearest man fighting. Another man, from the supply section, was stationed at the door of the aid station to remove any weapon, ammunition or other critical items that the walking wounded or stretcher cases happened to have with them. As this small lot was gathered, it was forwarded to the company needing it most at the moment.

(24) A-3, p. 76; A-11, p. 477; A-4.

As this small amount of ordnance was being retrieved, the battalion supply officer visited adjacent units to beg, borrow or steal any ammunition available. The regimental supply officer of the 327th Glider Regiment gave him two cases of caliber .30, M-1, and one case of carbine, caliber .30 ammunition.

While trying to find a short cut back to his battalion sector the Battalion S-4 came upon a knocked out and abandoned half track that contained a fifty caliber machine gun and approximately 600 rounds of .50 caliber ammunition. This was a lucky find, although the tripod for the gun was nowhere to be found. This weapon was later made operational by the simple process of forcing the pintle into a fence post and digging the post into the ground.

Returning to the battalion area the supply officer found the action at an ebb. Upon checking with the platoon leaders and the company commanders it was learned that if the attack had lasted for another half hour, small arms and machine gun ammunition allowances would have been expended.

Every prisoner captured was searched for his ammunition and this was given to the men fighting with German weapons. Enemy patrols taken prisoner were relieved of their weapons and ammunition and kept by the company in whose sector they were captured.

The meal that was planned for the night 20 December, was finally delivered to the troops during the early morning hours of 21 December.

In a manner they would not forget the rest of their lives the night of 20 - 21 December, brought home to the men of the 1st Battalion one of the most difficult lessons to instill in soldiers -- that of conservation of supply. They would have given much for a chance to pick up the extra rounds of ammunition they had thrown away

in the hedgerows of France or the equipment abandoned when they left Holland for France.

Snow had begun falling during the night and the men arose on the morning of 21 December to a landscape blanketed with a carpet of white that obliterated the signs of the battle fought the night before. Snow in the foxholes melted and made the men live in a small sea of mud. Cold and dampness seeped into the bones. A mental picture was focussed on the mind of all, about a "White Christmas" at home.

Action in the sector fronting the 1st Battalion for the next two days was of minor nature. The time was spent in consolidating positions, patrolling, digging emplacements, and endeavoring to utilize what could be salvaged from the armored vehicles that had been destroyed in the sector.

The S-4 section began a systematic search to fulfill the needs of the troops. Regimental S-4 could help very little, if at all, in these needs. Feeding became a catch as catch can problem. Division G-4 had dispatched searching teams under directions of Major Weldon Dowis, Assistant G-4, and Captain Robert S. Smith, Civilian Affairs Officer, to locate any type of supplies that might be used for the good of the troops. Success never dreamed of came to this group of prowlers. Flour, salt, lard, and coffee were located in a Corps bakery; potatoes, onions, chickens, geese and cattle were requisitioned from the civilians; and in an abandoned Corps warehouse coffee, sugar and ovaltine were found. Later a supply of margarine, jam and flour were found by the Civilian Affairs Officer. (25) The foodstuffs found were broken down and distributed to the units and with what each unit had acquired for itself a substantial diet was maintained. Two

(25) A-7; A-4; A-11, p. 532.

meals a day were fed, one around nine-thirty at night and the other prior to dawn.

Indirectly the German troops facing the men of the 1st Battalion gave them an extra ration of meat. (See Map C) The battalion had constructed a hasty mine field in front of its position and in an effort to detonate as many mines as possible the enemy troops drove cattle into the mined area. Many of these animals came through unscathed, only to meet an immediate death at the hands of the hungry men in the line. Another method, developed by the men of the battalion S-2 section to acquire extra meat and to traverse the enemy lines at night, was to go on patrol and on the way back walk beside a cow and gently urge it towards the American lines. Lieutenant Benjamin Stevens, S-2 of the 1st Battalion, then turned these animals over to the S-4 personnel to help feed the troops.

With the capturing of the Division Hospital (Provisional) and Medical Company, a critical shortage of medical supplies presented itself. The battalion surgeon became desperately in need of alcohol, bandages, morphine and some type of stimulant for the wounded. Mentioned early in this monograph was the trailer and the load of extras that the battalion supply officer had brought along when he left Mourmelon. At this time the items which had been carried along as extras in the Battalion's S-4 trailer, although not expected to be needed, were brought forth. Among the odd assortment of items in the trailer which proved valuable were airborne first-aid packets with their bandage and morphine syrettes, taken from men on the numerous shake-down inspections after the Holland Campaign; grain alcohol that had been used on previous missions to operate an English cooker; a generous supply of rum that had been issued to the American troops while serving

with the British in Holland; and a German surgeon's kit that had been "captured" during the Normandy Campaign and was being kept as a souvenir.

In addition to the furnishing of the medical supplies, the battalion surgeon and battalion supply officer devised a plan whereby slightly wounded troops, fatigue cases, immersion foot cases (at this time it wasn't called "trench foot") and minor cases of neurotics could be rehabilitated, in as much as they couldn't be evacuated from Bastogne. (See Map B - Note 4; See Map C) It was planned to requisition a house on the outer edge of town, sheltered from direct artillery fire, and convert it into a rest camp.

Upon presenting this plan to the battalion commander it was submitted to regiment and approved. This was the beginning of the battalion supply section operating a "rest home" that was to continue throughout the engagement at Bastogne. Although the men were there for a rest they were given small tasks to accomplish, such as repairing weapons with the few spare parts on hand and by cannibalizing weapons that were beyond repair.

Snow continued to fall periodically and the silhouettes of the troops against the white background caused unnecessary casualties and retarded the men's movement during daylight hours. To remedy this situation, a water purification agent was acquired from the division engineer and a white paste similar to white wash was made to camouflage the helmets, stocks and barrels of the men's weapons, and the vehicles that operated near the front lines. In addition to this, the regimental S-4 requisitioned sheets and table cloths from the civilians to provide a snow cape for as many men as possible. These snow capes were augmented by painting the raincoats, of those that had them, with

the same solution used on the helmets. However this did not prove as satisfactory as expected, because during movement of the body the solution rubbed off in the damp snow.

Vehicles that had become battle casualties were soon repaired by two mechanics that had been borrowed from the regimental Service Company. In addition to repairing the battalion vehicles, three armored half-tracks that had been abandoned, were repaired with parts from burned or destroyed armored vehicles and the battalion became the possessor of three additional vehicles.

RESUPPLY BY AIR

On 22 December, Major William Butler, Regimental S-4, contacted his Battalion S-4's and told them a re-supply mission would be flown to Bastogne that night and (See Map C) to be on the alert for a call to assemble at a designated drop zone in the 327th Glider Regiment area. This message caused a tense and exhilarated feeling to pass through the bodies of the men who heard the order. Major Butler had been placed in command of the re-supply pick-up by the Division G-4. He was to see that the supplies were recovered by the various units of the division and the count of items recovered to be reported to G-4, to guarantee equal distribution. Anxious hours were spent in awaiting the arrival of the pathfinder group which was to precede the aerial re-supply. The mission was called off for the night of 22 December, due to weather, but was to be flown at the earliest good weather. (26)

The night of 22 - 23 December, was passed with anxiety and anticipation by the men of the various supply sections in the 101st

(26) A-11, p. 529-530; A-3, p. 135-136; A-12; A-13; A-4.

Division, all were awaiting dawn to check for visibility and weather conditions. They were not disappointed, all of the elements of weather that had harrassed the division since its arrival had disappeared and a perfect day was in the making.

At 0930 hours, 23 December, the pathfinders landed and began the operation of their homing devices to bring the re-supply planes in "on the beam". Commencing at 1130 hours a steady stream of Army C-47's began to discharge a continuous flow of cargo parachutes containing ammunition, rations, gasoline, medical supplies and equipment. (See Map C)

North of the "Drop Zone" a glider "LZ" had been marked and gliders bearing medical personnel and bulky supplies were being landed.

In their zest to recover the much needed supplies being dropped the unit supply sections disregarded all safety precautions and a few casualties were inflicted on personnel and vehicles by malfunctions and improperly packed aerial containers falling unretarded to the ground. Spasmodic artillery fire fell within the limits of the drop zone, but it only hastened the efforts of the recovery teams to clear the area of the resupply bundles.

By 1600 hours a total of 241 planes had been relieved of 1446 aerial containers containing 244 tons of gasoline, rations, medical supplies, ammunition and equipment.

Exhilaration ran rampant through the troops. Here was definite knowledge that they were not forgotten, here was something concrete to see and use. Morale increased a hundred-fold.

The needs of the 101st Division and attached units were so great on 23 December, that the re-supply mission proved totally inadequate. Some items that were sorely needed were not supplied in quantities

sufficient to alleviate the critical needs, while other items not suitable to an airborne unit's needs were delivered. Taking this into consideration the Division G-4 contacted VIII Corps and requested changes in the SOP for re-supply be made to fit the needs of the division. These additions and deletions were made and in the following aerial re-supply missions they were carried out. (27) When the IX Troop Carrier Command had completed their re-supply of Bastogne they had delivered a total of 811 tons of supplies by parachute and glider. (28)

With the aerial re-supply that began on 23 December, and continued through 27 December, it was proven that a sizable unit could be maintained, although cut-off from their normal axis of supply, when it was manned with a force determined to stand its ground. This action gave the units the wherewith to maintain a stabilized line around Bastogne until relief was effected.

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

A minimum standard of personnel and supplies lost during combat were not made available for SHAEF reserve. When the 1st Battalion, 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment, was alerted for the move from France to Belgium it had recently returned from battle in Holland and at that time had been placed in SHAEF reserve. As a component part of the 101st Airborne Division and of SHAEF reserve, the 1st Battalion had not received its requisition of personnel to replace combat losses. It had not received replacements of clothing and equipment lost or destroyed during combat action; nor replacements for clothing and equipment taken from the men during show-down inspections for combat

(27) A-11, p. 531; A-7; A-4; (28) A-13.

servicability, although both needs had been requisitioned. No effort had been made to establish any semblance of a basic load of ammunition; nor were automotive parts made available in sufficient quantity to maintain vehicles at the required minimum of maintenance. These deficiencies could have been avoided if suitable plans had been evolved in higher headquarters and an effort made to effect such plans when the unit reverted to a reserve status. The author feels that any unit, regardless of size, that is placed in a reserve status, should be maintained at a minimum standard of clothing, equipment, and ammunition which would make it available for immediate action.

When the Division was alerted to move, in the first telephone call from XVIII Corps, a definite plan should have been decided upon at that time by XVIII Corps. The vague orders received by the 101st Division can be primarily attributed to higher headquarters not receiving accurate and up to date information from its intelligence agencies; but the vague orders relative to the time of departure, area of commitment, and manner of commitment cannot be explained in that manner. If a clear plan had been developed prior to the notification of the division, valuable time and effort would have been saved. Advance parties would have been able to reach their proper designations and establish assembly areas; unit commanders would have been able to arrive in advance of their troops and accomplish a tentative plan of operations; and valuable reconnaissance by small unit commanders could have been accomplished. It is felt that this inadequacy on the part of higher headquarters was extremely disadvantageous to lower units.

In the movement from France to Belgium, many hours were lost in traffic congestions encountered by the truck serials. Critical points

2nd Div
101st

on the route of march were not manned by Traffic Control Posts and many march units became separated from their serials and further congested the already overcrowded roadways. In a rapid movement of a unit the size of a division, over an uncertain route, it is essential that a workable Traffic Plan be developed prior to the departure of the first serial from the initial point. It is also imperative that Traffic Control Posts be manned by competent and well instructed Military Police at all critical points on the route of march.

The loss of the 101st Division's Medical Company with its personnel and facilities can be attributed to poor judgement of the staff officer selecting the units flag location. It can be assumed that the tactical situation was taken into consideration, but that the gravity of the situation was not recognized. The capture of the medical unit created a serious problem for the regiment and battalion medical personnel in trying to maintain the spark of life in the wounded. In face of this the medical personnel displayed extraordinary feats of medical knowledge and ability in addition to improvising medical equipment that was not available. The performance of the medical personnel was outstanding during the seige of Bastogne.

Outstanding qualities of leadership were displayed by all leaders from the Division Commander to the lowest Squad Leader. In the absence of senior commanders the juniors stepped promptly into their positions and fulfilled them with dispatch and skill that comes only from experience and sound military knowledge. These men were basically responsible for the successful defense of the beseiged city, Bastogne.

The ingenuity and ability to forage for himself was demonstrated by the American soldier in the action at Bastogne. To be able to fight, he adapted himself to the use of the enemy's weapons. When there was

a need for modification of some item of his equipment the American soldier improvised one. When his food became exhausted, he provided for himself from what was at hand.

Shortages of supply in all classes was detrimental to the effective operation of the 1st Battalion, 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment. The 1st Battalion in a normal situation would have been committed to battle with all the essential elements necessary for the successful completion of its mission. In this action the battalion was not equipped properly for action against the enemy and due to this shortage needless lives were lost.

If the individual soldier does not maintain proper care of his equipment and practice supply discipline the mission assigned him can become jeopardized. In the 101st Division, supply discipline had not been practiced to its fullest extent during the Normandy or Holland Campaigns and the results were evident when the units of the division endeavored to equip themselves for the Ardennes breakthrough. A lesson well learned by the troops that fought in Bastogne was Conservation!

Temporary utilization of non-organic equipment can be beneficial to the troops during certain critical phases of an operation. However, the extended use of such non-organic equipment is generally deleterious because of the fact that the unit to which such equipment actually belongs, could be using it to much greater advantage in action against the enemy. The battalion S-4 did not display good judgement when he converted to his units extended use the equipment taken from an armored unit vehicle, or utilized the armored vehicles that he had had repaired as supply vehicles.

The Battalion S-4, did not perform his mission as a supply officer when he caused the loss of individual and organic equipment through his

failure to keep this equipment with the battalion. He displayed a trait that could have been harmful to the success of the operation when he left his battalion area to seek ammunition from adjoining units during the height of a meeting engagement with the enemy. If proper use of the battalion supply section had been employed the S-4 would have dispatched a member of the section to accomplish the mission.

In establishing a rest area for troops of their battalion, the battalion surgeon and the supply officer utilized a minimum of material to obtain a maximum of results. In using this method of salvaging troops, that would normally be lost, considerable manpower was saved. Also, in this rest area, much valuable maintenance and repair of equipment was accomplished.

The practice of commandeering civilian commodities for use of the troops can be disadvantageous. If this practice is of a necessity, then an accurate accounting should be maintained to enable the civilian to regain his losses and to aid the claims and investigation officer to ascertain the legality of the claim. The random collecting of food, clothing, and sheets could have been controlled better and these commodities accounted for if a plan had been developed and used.

Aerial re-supply during the seige of Bastogne was proven capable of maintaining a sizable unit when cut off from normal means of supply. The use of airplanes, gliders and parachutes for re-supplying of troops had been practiced during the earlier phases of the war in Europe and Burma, but this use had not been given full credit. When the IX Air Force maintained the units at Bastogne, when all overland routes were closed, it was proven conclusively that a sizable unit could be maintained in an isolated situation.

LESSONS

1. That any unit, regardless of size, placed in a reserve status, after front line duty, must be replenished with the minimum essential personnel, clothing, equipment and a basic load of ammunition.
2. Clear, concise plans must be formulated by higher headquarters prior to distribution to subordinate units.
3. In the movement of motor convoys it is essential that a workable Traffic Plan be evolved and coordinated by the moving unit and the Traffic Control Group in whose area the convoy will move.
4. It is important that all critical points, along a route of march (motor), must be maintained by competent, well instructed Military Police.
5. That Supply Points, Medical Clearing Stations and other service elements of a Division must be given adequate protection in a fluid situation.
6. Leadership and military skill must be developed to its highest degree in junior leaders to make it possible for them to assume responsibility and command when the need arises.
7. That the teaching and practice of supply discipline must be stressed continuously from the first day a recruit receives his initial allowance of clothing and equipment until his military career is terminated.
8. Personnel of a supply section must be used to their fullest extent in order that the Battalion Supply Officer can be with his commander to advise him in matters of supply and to supervise the supplying of the troops.
9. Minor battle casualties can be salvaged by the establishing of a unit rest area to rehabilitate troops of the unit.

10. Maintenance of a large force in an isolated situation can be accomplished through aerial re-supply.

11. That a sound plan must be developed to account for civilian commodities utilized by troops and units in an engagement with the enemy.