

Staff Department  
THE INFANTRY SCHOOL  
Fort Benning, Georgia

ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS COURSE  
1949-1950

THE OPERATION OF COMPANY F, 16TH INFANTRY  
(1ST INFANTRY DIVISION) AT EL GUETTAR  
TUNISIA, 29 MARCH 1943  
(TUNISIAN CAMPAIGN)  
(Personal Experience of a Company Commander)

Type of operation described: INFANTRY COMPANY ATTACKING

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ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS CLASS NO I

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ORIENTATION

INTRODUCTION

The Allies successfully invaded North Africa at Casablanca, Arzew, and Algiers on 8 November 1942. By 11 November 1942 the above cities, and Oran, the large port town on the Mediterranean, were occupied and hostilities between the French defenders and Allies ended. This assault, the first Allied offensive against the Axis was made mainly by American troops with elements of the British First Army. (1) (See Map A)

Allied units were rushed eastwards and placed in action on a wide front with orders to occupy Tunisia, and deprive the Axis of the ports of Tunis and Bizerte. The Germans stopped this Allied advance and by the end of December 1942 all Allied major efforts in Tunisia were abandoned. (2)

The Allied position in North Africa at the end of January 1943 was critical. The Allies were committed on a 200 mile front with only three British, one American and three poorly equipped French divisions. (3) The British Eighth Army further east however, was meeting with success and had driven Rommel's African Corps out of Tripoli and chased them back to the Mareth Line. (4) (See Map B)

On 14 February 1943, the enemy took advantage of the over extended Allied position and struck in force through the plans of Faid and Pont du Fahs. After a very bloody battle

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(1) A-1, p. 55  
(2) A-3, p. 106  
(3) A-2, p. 2  
(4) A-2, p. 2

the Allies were forced to withdraw to Kasserine. (5) The object of this enemy thrust was clear: <sup>e</sup>Tabessa--the hub of II Corps activities and supply bases for two armies. (6)

A defensive position was established at Kasserine Pass guarding the main approach to <sup>c</sup>Tabessa. The defenders of Kasserine offered little resistance to the overwhelming superiority of the enemy and the Pass was forced. The Germans rolled into the floor of Kasserine Valley and on towards Tabessa.

On 21 February 1943 the Germans thrust up the Kasserine Valley was stopped and the enemy made a hasty retreat. (7)

During the winter of 1942-43 morale of American forces in North Africa had reached a new low. After initial successes in the invasion the previous autumn Allies forces had progressed, lost ground, regained it, and then in late February 1943 found themselves at a stand-off as Axis troops occupied their former vantage points of Faid, Maknassy, Sened, and Gafsa. (8)

This drop in morale could be attributed to many facts, weather, defeat, poor supplies, (which included British rations), piecemeal attacks, no bathing facilities or provisions for clean clothes and a general feeling of uncertainty. (9)

There was considerable friction between the various commanders resulting from the complexity of the situation which threw units of American, French and British together under their independent commanders. (10) It was not uncommon to

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(5) A-1, p. 88; A-4, p. 29  
(6) A-1, p. 88; A-4, p. 29  
(7) A-1, p. 60, 90; Personal knowledge  
(8) Personal knowledge  
(9) Personal knowledge; A-1, p. 91  
(10) A-3, p. 106

find an American battalion under a British brigade which was attached to a French corps under the British First Army. (11)

The high command realized the need for the coordination of command and control. At the Casablanca Conference, 18 February 1943, General Eisenhower was appointed Commander-in-Chief of all the Allied forces in Africa, with General Alexander (British) his deputy and commander of the newly formed 18th Army Group. This single command had as its main components the British First and Eighth Armies, American II Corps and the 19th French Corps. (12)

#### THE GENERAL SITUATION

The defeat of Rommel at Kasserine gave the Allies a much needed rest. More important it allowed the newly formed 18th Army Group time to regroup and reorganize.

Major General George S. Patton, Jr., was appointed the new II Corps commander and for the first time II Corps operated independently, only responsible to 18th Army Group. II Corps consisted of the following American units: 1st Infantry, 9th Infantry, 34th Infantry, 1st Armored Divisions and the 1st Ranger Battalion. These weary units took new life and received a much needed face lifting by the new Corps commander. Uniforms were to be worn properly, more attention given to personal appearance and troops were provided with the much needed change of clothing and baths. Along with the new restrictions came the warning that offenders caught out of uniform; without helmet or leggings would be fined. (Without helmet or leggings - \$15; without tie - \$10; without pistol or rifle - \$25; unshaven - \$25; etc.) (13)

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(11) A-5, p. 18; Personal knowledge

(12) A-1, p. 92; A-2, p. 8

(13) A-2, p. 28; Personal knowledge

The 9th Infantry Division was moved to Kasserine to relieve the 1st Infantry Division and the 34th Infantry Division was enroute to II Corps sector. After relief the 1st Infantry Division was moved into a rest area near Morsott, west of Tebessa. Here the division took stock and began the much needed task of reorganization. All elements of the division had been in continuous action since early January 1943. Excellent replacements were received from the 3d Infantry Division, weapons repaired or replaced, clothes changed, and three hot meals were the order of the day. It was here that the division received the new rocket gun, which was immediately nicknamed "The Bazooka". (14)

Morale began to change for the better, for the first time since the initial assault against Oran on 8 November 1942, the division was again together as a team. The division was commanded by Major General Terry Allen and the assistant division commander Brigadier General 'Teddy' Roosevelt.

The staff of the recently formed II Corps were not taking the rest that was afforded the rest of the corps and rumors were commonplace as to what the future offered. The answers to all guesses were finally announced after ten days of rest - the first completely American offensive since the initial invasion had been planned. The 1st Infantry Division was to attack, retake and defend Gafsa, the earlier outpost of the 26th Infantry. Enthusiasm for this operation was somewhat dampened when it was learned that this operation was designed merely to secure advance supply bases for the British Eighth

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(14) Personal knowledge

Army advancing towards the Germans dug in along the Mareth Line. (15)

It was known that Gafsa was garrisoned by Italians and some German light armored units.

On 17 March 1943 the 1st Infantry Division launched a three pronged attack against Gafsa. The peculiar location of Gafsa made it almost impossible to properly defend. As anticipated advance patrols found the town empty of enemy, they had withdrawn early in the morning to the high ground beyond El Guettar.

The division mission of capturing and defending Gafsa had been fulfilled in part - Gafsa had been captured. The defense of Gafsa had to be made in the approaches to the east and south. (16) (See Map C)

#### NARRATION

On 20 March 1943 the 1st Infantry Division was ordered to attack and seize the commanding ground east of El Guettar, 18 miles southeast of Gafsa along the Gafsa-Gabes road. The division plan of attack called for a two regiment assault, with the 18th Regimental Combat Team attacking on the south, and the 26th Regimental Combat Team attacking on the north, of the Gabes road. 16th Regimental Combat Team to remain in reserve outposting Gafsa. The 1st Ranger Battalion operating with the division was assigned the mission of capturing Djebel Orbata, a ridge reaching 3,500 feet high, north of and overlooking El Guettar. (17) (See Map C)

Initial success was enjoyed by all elements of the division. 26th Regimental Combat Team occupied Djebel el Ank

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(15) A-1, p. 92  
(16) A-1, p. 66  
(17) A-6, p. 9

(Hill 621) - the 1st Ranger Battalion captured Djebel Orbata and both units were advancing east towards Bou Hamran. Regimental Combat Team 18 after getting into the foot hills of Djebel Kreroua and Berd (Hills 369 and 926) was the first to receive stiff opposition. (18) (See Map C)

#### 16TH REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM DISPOSITION AND PLAN

Resistance along the entire 1st Division front increased with the German Luftwaffe making a determined effort, bombing and strafing the front line infantry and pounding the supporting artillery positions. The 16th Regimental Combat Team at Gafsa was called into the battle and sent the 3rd Battalion to Hill 336 to support the 3rd Battalion, 18th RCT. The 2d Battalion, 16th RCT made a night motor move and march to the El Guetter Oases on 22-23 March 1943 and the 1st Battalion remained in Gafsa as garrison troops along with the 7th Field Artillery Battalion. (19) (See Map C)

Early morning 23 March 1943 the 2d Battalion was rushed from the Oasis to the vicinity of Hill 336 and given the mission of reinforcing the 3rd Battalion, 16th RCT. F Company occupied a position on the south of the Gafsa - Gabes road. The remainder of the battalion deployed to the north of the road protecting the left flank of the 3rd Battalion, 16th RCT.

Here the 2d Battalion learned that the enemy had launched a large scale counterattack with infantry supported by tanks before daylight in an attempt to regain the positions previously lost. The Germans had infiltrated behind the 3d Battalion, 18th RCT and overrun six field pieces of the 5th

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(18) A-1, p. 67

(19) A-6, p. 9

and 32d Field Artillery Battalions. The arrival of the 899th Tank Destroyer Battalion and 17th Field Artillery Battalion (Corps) cheered the men and assisted in raising the morale. Mid morning found the German attack stalled as the defense tightened and terrific heat beat down on attacker and defender alike. (20)

An intercept of a German radio message informed the Americans defending El Guettar that the enemy would make an all out attack at 1700 hours. This intercept permitted the defenders to prepare a well-knitted defense. The enemy launched the attack as scheduled and it was broken about 500 yards in front of the defenders position by heavy artillery, mortar and machine gun fire. The famous 10th Panzer Division, had been stopped, beaten and turned back by an American Infantry Division. (21)

On 24 March 1943 the 2d Battalion relieved the 3d Battalion, 18th RCT in the hill mass west of Hill 482 with instructions to contact the 26th RCT reportedly on Hill 482. F Company on the battalion left flank was charged with contacting the 26th RCT. At dawn the following morning a patrol, commanded by Lt. Karl Wicker, Executive Officer, F Company and fifteen men departed the company area, headed due east in the shadow of their objective. This patrol returned before noon with information that 26th RCT was not located on Hill 482 as reported, but it was heavily occupied by Italian (22) Infantry. This was just one of the many cases of not knowing where a unit was and not being able to identify a position on

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(20) Personal experience

(21) A-1, p. 94; Personal experience

(22) Personal experience

a map. (The inability to properly read maps can not be blamed entirely on the individual. Maps were a very scarce item and those that were available were old maps of very small scale; 1:100,000 or smaller. And in the area this operation took place one hill mass looked like the next on the small scale map.) This patrol was undoubtedly observed and followed back to the company area because it was not long before the company and battalion areas were being shelled. The battalion held the position the rest of the day but had to withdraw the following morning to the reverse slope of Hill 336.

Action for the next two days developed into small unit clashes and vigorous patrolling of hills, wadis, and oueds, with the enemy resisting violently any attempt to approach Hill 482 (Djebel el Mcheltat). The 16th RCT launched three separate and costly attacks in an attempt to capture this commanding terrain feature, and all three attacks were sharply and decisively beaten back. Hill 482 was the key to the enemy defense and until it was taken the defenders held the upper hand. (23)

During the period 23-27 March 1943, RCT 18 had been relieved by the 39th and 47th Infantry RCT's of the 9th Infantry Division, and regrouped at El Guettar. The 18th RCT after a short rest was assigned the task of protecting the division left flank and had taken Hill 567 on 27 March 1943, and moved south to cover the 26th RCT by attacking Hill 574. (24)

II Corps ordered a combined infantry tank attack to break through the German defense of El Guettar. This operation was

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(23) Personal experience

(24) A-6, p. 11

to be conducted by Combat Command of the 1st Armored Division commanded by Colonel Chauncey Benson, supported by the 2nd Battalion, 6th Armored Infantry. This armored force was to attack on the floor of the valley with elements of the 1st and 9th Infantry Divisions attacking eastward in the hills on both sides of the valley. Time and date of attack 1400 29 March 1943. (25)

The 16th Regimental Combat Team plan of attack: The Regiment planned to attack generally eastward in column of battalions echeloned to the right rear, attacking generally east between Hill 482 and the Gabes Road. The 7th Field Artillery Battalion in direct support of the regiment, regimental cannon company in general support, prepared to fire on call. The 1st Battalion, guide battalion, on the left of the regimental zone of action to advance 3000 yards and halt, take up defensive position; 2nd Battalion following to right rear of the 1st Battalion by 1500 yards, to by-pass 1st Battalion by 3000 yards halt and take up defense position, the 3rd Battalion following the 2d Battalion to the right rear by 1500 yards to advance 3000 yards beyond 2nd Battalion, hold and take up defensive position. Regimental Headquarters and Aid Station vicinity of Hill 336. (26) (See Map C)

#### 2ND BATTALION, 16TH RCT PLAN AND DISPOSITION

The 2nd Battalion plan of attack was issued about noon and designated a battalion column of companies, F, G, H, and E to attack generally eastward in the order given. H Company in general support prepared to fire on call. Battalion Commander

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(25) Personal experience

(26) Personal experience

and staff at head of H Company. Supply and evacuation did not offer any particular problem, as the smaller vehicles (1/4 ton and 3/4 ton trucks) could operate over the general rolling terrain at will. This attack order was issued too late to allow for any planned reconnaissance, or patrol activity to locate the enemy. The battalion was familiar with the first 1500 yards but beyond that it was new ground. Reconnaissance was limited to visual means only.

#### \*F COMPANY DISPOSITION AND PLAN

F Company planned to attack in column of platoons, 1st, 2d, Weapons and 3d, in the order named. When head of F Company column was abreast of 1st Battalion on the left, or if contact with enemy was made, the formation would change to two platoons on line, weapons platoon and 3d Platoon back, (1st and 2d on line, weapons and 3d Platoon back). Contact with the enemy had been momentarily lost. However, contact with the enemy was considered imminent. Harassing artillery fire (long range) had been falling in the battalion area at spasmodic intervals. Equipment would be hand carried as would the basic ammunition load. 1st and 2d Platoon would establish own local security, 3d Platoon establish company security to flanks. Last hot meal served had been breakfast, during darkness on 29 March 1943, at which time a pack lunch had been issued (C-ration). All men were advised to fill canteens and use water sparingly and informed that a hot meal would be served the following night if the situation permitted. Battalion aid station to be at rear of battalion column, all

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vehicles to remain under battalion control.

As I recall the morale of the personnel at this particular stage was good. It was not too high nor was it too low. Some of the enthusiasm gained at the last major engagement had been worked off by a series of minor skirmishes. Mail had not been received for over two weeks but the weather had been to everyone's liking -- hot in the day and cool at night. Another contributing factor that had much to do with keeping morale high was the sight of Allied planes overhead. A sight that was more than welcomed by all--from the top down--a sight hard to believe after so many months without seeing an Allied plane. The terrain over which the attack was to be conducted could be observed as far as the eye could see. The valley floor running generally east and west flanked on the right and left by heights rising over 3500 feet in places. The only cover offered was the deep wadies and oueds; there wasn't a blade of grass to be seen let alone shrubs or trees. The sun had baked what used to be an ocean floor hard and clean as a rock. (27)

#### OPERATION

The attack jumped off as planned. F Company crossed the line of departure at 1400 hours, 29 March 1943, approximately 1500 yards to the right rear of the 1st Battalion, in column of platoons, 1st Platoon leading. The company commander with his weapons platoon leader, heavy weapons observer and artillery forward observation officer, radio and runners, followed in rear of the 1st Platoon.

Leading elements of the armored columns in the valley had

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(27) Personal experience; A-7

already engaged and been engaged by the defenders guarding the approach to Gabes.

The battalion column had advanced approximately 500 yards when poorly aimed harass<sup>ing</sup> artillery began to fall around the column. The forward artillery observation officer, Captain O'Brien was unable to locate the position of this weapon, and estimated that it was probably a self propelled weapon on the battalion's right flank, between the 2nd and 3rd Battalions. As the head of the battalion column approached the end of the valley a two gun battery of anti-tank guns was located, immediately engaged, and silenced. (28)

#### F COMPANY CHANGES FORMATION

Approximately 1530 hours F Company came abreast of the 1st Battalion which had arrived on its initial objective, 3000 yards from the line of departure and about 1000 yards to the left of F Company. The 1st Battalion's advance was without incident and units of this battalion were preparing to occupy the position they now held. (29)

The armored battle on the floor of the valley had reached a new tempo--the hill sides surrounding the pass that lead to Gabes were dotted with heavy and light artillery fire, as was the valley floor--defender and attacker were slugging it out blow by blow.

In the rapid advance up and down the deep wadis, the battalion column had by-passed a well concealed enemy artillery piece. It had reversed its direction and was firing into the rear elements of the 2nd Battalion and the other two

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(28) Personal experience

(29) A-7

battalions. The artillery forward observation officer with F Company searched and scanned the entire area as did everyone else, but try as they would the gun could not be located. It was surmised that this weapon was probably another self-propelled weapon using a very deep wadi or dug-in position. The fire of this gun was not very accurate consequently the progress of the attack was not effected.

F Company had arrived at the designated location, contact with enemy had not been made so the company began to deploy in the prearranged formation; two platoons abreast with squads in extended squad columns. The leading scouts of the first platoon were across the wadi on the embankment approximately 200 yards ahead of the 1st Platoon. There they were halted to await the change in formation. The left flank security of the 1st Platoon had been halted and signaled to return to the platoon as the 2nd Platoon would take over that area and be responsible for its own left flank security. (See Map D)

The reorganization had just started when the Regimental Commander and his staff, less the S-1 and S-4, a party of about 15 in all arrived at F Company's Command Post. (30)

#### ATTACK PLAN CHANGED

F Company Commander was sharply criticized by the regimental commander for wasting so much time and for being too cautious. He said the regimental S-3, Major Plitt, had informed him that the enemy had withdrawn from the regimental zone of advance to meet the tank attack in the valley. With that the regiment commander ordered the leading elements of F

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(30) Personal experience

Company to move out. The regimental command, <sup>ev?</sup> his staff, and a large map board supported by two members of the S-3 section, moved out with F Company's leading scouts. The 1st Platoon followed the scouts and regimental command group by about 100 yards. F Company commander hastily issued some change of orders and instructions to the rest of the company.

Patrols from the 2d Platoon were doubled timed out to protect the company's flanks, the company less <sup>the</sup> 1st Platoon reformed into column of platoons, 2nd Platoon, Weapons Platoon and 3rd Platoon. This portion of the company was turned over to the executive officer, Lt. Wicker. The confusion that existed about this time was appalling and growing worse by the minute. The Battalion Commander, Lt. Col. Joseph Crawford, appeared on the scene demanding to know what was taking place and why all the confusion. He was quickly acquainted with the situation and informed about the change of F Company's attack formation. A state of utter confusion existed in the minds of everyone concerned, including the assault elements to the support elements.

After orienting the battalion commander and company executive officer the company commander directed his attention to the regimental commander and staff group which were up with the leading scouts of the 1st Platoon.

This formable group had advanced about 300 yards over two small wadis and was in the process of crossing a very wide flat wadi or depression when the forward hill side seemed to catch fire as if struck by a match. The regimental group and 1st Platoon were engulfed in a deadly hail of small arms fire, pinning both groups to the ground. The defenders <sup>had?</sup> allowed this group to ad-  
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vance to within 100 yards of their well concealed fortified positions.

The 2d and 3d Platoons were maneuvered to a small rise overlooking the depression in an effort to shake the 1st Platoon and the regimental party out of what turned out to be a disastrous trap. These two platoons were immediately engaged and literally blown off the newly occupied positions by heavy mortar fire, artillery fire, and direct fire from two tanks that appeared on the right flank of the 1st Platoon. Captain O'Brien, the forward artillery observation officer, directed very effective artillery fire on the two tanks causing them to withdraw. Patrols were organized and sent to both flanks of the 1st Platoon in an attempt to penetrate or pin point the enemy positions. (See Map D)

This proved unsuccessful--as soon as the patrols moved out of the wadi they were engaged by fire and every movement they made was tracked by well aimed continuous artillery fire. The situation remained critical until darkness covered the battle field.

F Company was badly mauled, during the encounter. The regimental commander, Col. Fouchet, the Regimental S-2, and F Company Commander were severely wounded. Some 50 other casualties were evacuated from F Company alone.

The following morning found the regiment disorganized with all three battalions huddled closely together in a wadi under the nose of Hill 482 (Djebel El Mcheltat). (31)

On 30 March 1943 26 RCT captured Hill 482 and after four more days of continuous fighting the condition of extreme re-

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(31) A-5, p. 24

sistance changed to one where there was little or no fight left in the defending forces. This change was explained by the capture of the key terrain feature Hill 482 and news that Gabes had been taken by the British Eighth Army which was pursuing the enemy toward Sfax and Souse. (32)

#### ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

1. One of the main difficulties encountered in this operation was the limited supply of adequate maps. Rarely did a company or platoon have a map of the particular area in which it was operating. The few maps that finally reached the company were very small scale, 1/100,000 or smaller, which were practically of no use or value. The maps that were issued were small scale re-photographed French maps surveyed in 1903. (33)

The terrain east of El Guettar was a series of mountains and hill masses separated by deep wadis and oueds, which on a map of small scale looked identical. Time and again units reported themselves to be on a particular terrain feature or occupying their assigned objective to find later they were nowhere near the reported hill or object. This inaccuracy of map to ground orientation caused many attacks to be launched against less dominating terrain features. The patrol sent by F Company to contact elements of the 26th RCT reported to be occupying Hill 482 proved to be another improper identification of location. Had it been known that Hill 482 was not occupied by friendly forces I do not believe the 2nd Battalion would have been ordered to occupy the smaller hills west of Hill 482. When it was learned that the enemy held Hill 482, which was the

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(32) A-1, p. 71; Personal experience

(33) A-1, p. 71

dominating terrain feature and the key to the Guettar Valley, the 2nd Battalion was withdrawn to the deep wadi behind Hill 336.

## 2. KEY TERRAIN FEATURES

Had the planners of the attack against the high ground overlooking the El Guettar Plain realized that Hill 482 was the key to the whole valley the main effort would have been directed towards its capture and not to the hill masses in front of and south of it. It was not until the 1st and 3rd Battalions, 28th RCT actually occupied Hill 482 that the defense of El Guettar began to collapse. Four days after its capture found the defense completely broken. (34)

## 3. F COMPANY'S ATTACK

F Company received the Regimental and Battalion plan of attack and the Battalion attack order about 1230 hours the day of the attack. With H-hour at 1400 hours it left very little time for any reconnaissance or the preparing of routes. Fortunately F Company was familiar with the first 1500 yards over which it was to lead the attack, having previously attacked an enemy strong point over the same ground. But beyond the first 1500 yards the company had no conception of what the terrain offered in the way of cover, concealment or obstacles. Most important contact with the enemy had been momentarily lost and it was not known where the enemy had set up his next line of defense. Two of the enemy's defensive lines had already been broken, a third pierced but hastily closed when the 2nd Bat-

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(34) A-10, p. 13; A-6, p. 13

talion was forced to withdraw. It was not known if the enemy still occupied this third line or had withdrawn to a fourth and stronger position.

In the final phase of F Company's attack the regimental commander disregarded all elements of security by bringing his staff up to the leading platoon and ordering this platoon and company to move out without any security to front or flank. Again sufficient time should have been allowed for the security elements of the platoon to establish themselves well in front and on the flanks.

The regimental and battalion attack plans were sound and I believe tactically correct according to the nature of the terrain and mission of the regiment. Had the time been taken to allow for reconnaissance and proper study of the terrain, along with proper security measures the enemy could have been located and dealt with. (35)

#### 4. COMMAND RESPONSIBILITIES

a. As stated above I felt that the regimental and battalion attack plans were both good and tactically sound. I further feel that the plan would have met with success had the regimental commander left the details of the actual attack to his subordinate commanders.

b. A regimental commander cannot and should not be all over the battle field during an attack. He must place himself where he can best observe the action of his assault units and can control his reserve and support units.

Experience has taught us that an attack seldom progresses

as planned. The regimental commander and staff completely isolated themselves from the rest of the regiment when they joined F Company's 1st Platoon. The regimental commander and his staff were useless to the remainder of the regiment and supporting elements in the isolated position with the 1st Platoon. Control and communications were completely lost. The regiment remained out of control the rest of the day and all that night. The following morning found all three battalions huddled in a deep wadi south of Hill 482. (36)

##### 5. ATTACK PLANS CHANGED

The old axiom, "a poor plan properly executed is better than a good plan improperly executed", is very clearly demonstrated. F Company's Commander had planned his attack, issued his orders and was in the process of executing the order as planned when his whole scheme of attack was disrupted. The regimental commander by ordering F Company to hastily move out into territory that was definitely unfriendly before F Company had completed its prearranged formation threw the entire company off balance. From the company commander, platoon leaders, platoon sergeants, on down, no one was sure what formation they were in, who was suppose to do what or what had caused the sudden change of plans. In a situation of this nature, morale can easily be effected. The troops are expecting, and anticipating the first shot to be fired, they are on edge and senses are keen. The slightest change in the plan fixed in their minds may cause them to wonder and lose confidence. When this happens morale is effected and the soldier becomes

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(36) A-8, p. 13

confused, lost, and insecure. When a soldier is in a state of confusion he is not going to accomplish much on the battlefield.

As stated above commanders should leave the detailed conduct of attacking units to the local commanders. They may step in when necessary to prevent serious errors, restore order, and to insure teamwork between subordinate units. However the commander should not interfere with subordinate unit operations unless the situation warrants interference. In the case of F Company, I feel the interference by the regimental commander was not warranted and caused a general state of confusion.

#### 6. FACTS AND FANTASY

The Regimental S-3 reporting that the enemy had withdrawn from the regimental zone of action reported a fantasy as was later proved. The enemy must have worked months on the closely coordinated defensive position that stopped "F" Company. Emplacements were well concealed and some positions and dugouts were carved out of solid rock.

Subordinate unit personnel or any person reporting information, be it ever so scanty, must be absolutely sure, definite, and positive beyond all reason of doubt, that the information he is reporting is fact and not fantasy - or a product of his imagination. Personnel intent on making impressions on higher commanders by submitting erroneous information are committing a very serious offense. Steps should be taken to correct such practice before the commander is

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given a false impression of the situation. It has been pointed out that the dissemination of erroneous information was one of the great weakness of the Japanese Officer Corps. The Jap officer intent on making favorable impressions on their higher commanders, often resorted to this practice. (37) High Japanese commanders seldom knew how various campaigns were progressing until it was too late.

This operations' down fall can be traced to the lack of intelligence and erroneous information passed on to the regimental commander. This information gave him a false picture and the impression that his attacking elements were advancing too slowly.

#### LESSONS

1. Maps must be of large scale if company and smaller units are to get any benefit or use out of them.
2. In all operations large or small the seizure of key terrain features can not be over emphasized.
3. Commanders must allow enough time to subordinates for proper reconnaissance, formulation of plans and issuing of orders.
4. a. Commanders should place themselves where they can best influence the action.  
b. Detailed conduct of the attack must be left to subordinate or local commanders.
5. Plans of subordinate units should not be changed by higher commanders during the execution, unless something unforeseen occurs warranting a change.
6. Staff officers and subordinate commanders must be absolutely sure that the information he is reporting is fact and not fantasy.