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THE OPERATIONS OF THE 22ND INFANTRY REGIMENT
(4TH INFANTRY DIVISION) IN THE HURTGEN FOREST,
GERMANY, 16 NOVEMBER - 3 DECEMBER 1944
(RHINELAND CAMPAIGN)
(Personal Experience of a Regimental S-4)

Type of operation described: REGIMENT IN THE ATTACK

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INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operations of the 22nd Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Division, in the Hurtgen Forest east of ZWEIFALL, Germany, during the period 14 November - 3 December 1944.

This operation can be summarized briefly by stating that it involved some of the fiercest fighting of the whole war under some of the most difficult conditions of weather, terrain and enemy resistance that were experienced anywhere on the European continent. The accomplishment of the regimental mission despite all these obstacles resulted in the award of the second distinguished unit citation received by the 22nd Infantry Regiment. (1)

Prior to the beginning of this operation, the 4th Infantry Division was assigned to V Corps and occupied positions in the line south and east of MONSCHAU, Germany, on the southern flank of V Corps. The situation had been comparatively static in this area for some time; and, as a result, the Division was in good condition for the resumption of its usual mission - hard fighting against determined resistance.

The 1st US Army plan called for a large-scale coordinated attack beginning approximately 11 November to force crossings of the Roer River and permit the movement of 1st Army to the assault on COLOGNE. (2)

(1) E; (2) A, p.73 and 74.

In order to bolster the strength of VII Corps for the attack in its zone, two divisions, the 4th and the 104th, transferred to VII Corps. The 4th Infantry Division was relieved by the 9th Infantry Division and started moving to its new area on 6 November 1944. (3) (See Map A.)

The 22nd Infantry moved during the night of 8-9 November under conditions of extreme secrecy. All identifying markings on vehicles, uniforms, and equipment were removed or covered; telephone code names were changed; and a code word "Red Wing" was used during the movement itself to identify the unit to traffic control personnel along the route. The movement was completed without serious incident, although driving conditions were extremely bad due to poor visibility, intermittent snow squalls, and slippery roads. The regiment closed into its assembly area east of ZWEIFALL by daylight, 9 November and started preparing to relieve elements of the 28th Division prior to the attack. (4)

The 4th Division was assigned the mission of seizing crossings along the Roer River in the vicinity of DUREN and to the south thereof and to assist the later advance of the 1st Division (to the north) to seize COLOGNE. (5)

The attack by 1st Army was to be coordinated with an attack by 9th Army, and was scheduled to follow an intensive aerial bombardment along the entire front. This air preparation was dependent on the weather, and D-day was set for some time during the period 11-16 November. The weather continued bad, and the attack was postponed from day to day until 16 November, when it was finally initiated. (6).

(3) B, p.292; (4) Personal knowledge; (5) A, p.73; (6) A, p.74.

The air operation, officially known as "Operation 'Q'" was the largest close-support bombardment ever flown by the RAF and US Air Forces. A total of over 9300 tons of bombs were dropped on enemy positions opposite the 1st and 9th Army fronts. (7)

The ground attack, which jumped off at 1245, 16 November, progressed slowly in the VII Corps zone, and the 22nd Infantry fought continuously, except for a few brief pauses for reorganization, resupply, and mopping-up operations, until 2 December when its final objectives were taken and the regiment was relieved. (8)

GENERAL COMMENTS ON THE OPERATION

The belt of wooded, hilly terrain which included the Hurtgen Forest was considered by the German High Command to be so vital to the defense of the approaches to the Roer River and its dams, DUREN, and COLOGNE, that four divisions and numerous other miscellaneous units were sacrificed in a vain attempt to stop the drive of one American division. Prisoners taken by the 22nd Infantry totaled 775 during the 17-day operation, and were found to represent 25 different German units ranging from separate companies to regiments. (8)

Some of the obstacles which slowed the attack were:

1. Bad weather. Heavy precipitation, either rain or snow, caused extreme discomfort and reduced roads and trails to pools of mud which frequently became impassable to both wheeled and track-laying vehicles. Low visibility also greatly reduced the effectiveness of air support. (8)

(7) A, p.74; (8) Personal knowledge.

2. Mines and booby traps. The enemy impeded our movement by his extensive use of mines and booby traps not only in roads and trails, but also within the heavily wooded areas through which the attacking units moved. Mines were laid in layers over each other so that clearing one layer was no assurance that the area was safe. Continued use of the road or trail soon cut deep enough into the mud to activate the next layer of mines. In one instance a supply truck was blown up by the third layer of mines after two layers had been removed. Anti-lifting devices were attached to most mines, necessitating their destruction in place and refilling the craters. (8)

3. Dense woods. In many areas the woods were so dense that maintenance of direction and control was almost impossible because of the extremely limited visibility. In addition, the tree tops detonated thousands of artillery and mortar shells and caused the same casualty effect as air bursts. Most of the casualties resulted from this type of fire. (8)

4. Intense high explosive fire. The regiment was subjected to almost continuous artillery and mortar fire of all calibers up to and including at least one large caliber railroad gun. It was found later that a total of 55 battalions of enemy artillery opposed the four divisions on the VII Corps front. The number of mortar batteries which fired on the 22nd Infantry was not ascertained, but the fires were the heaviest ever experienced by the regiment. (8)

5. Difficult resupply and evacuation. The woefully inadequate road net, steep slopes, unbridged icy mountain streams, dense woods, and deep mud all combined to make resupply and evacuation problems the most difficult ever encountered by the regiment. Long hand-carries were required practically all the

(8) Personal knowledge.

time, and personnel were taken from headquarters, service, and reserve units to form additional carrying parties to move ammunition and rations forward and to evacuate dead and wounded to the rear. These carrying parties frequently were subjected to fire by enemy which had infiltrated to rear areas or had been by-passed by the advancing assault troops. (8)

6. Uncertain communications. Despite the continuous efforts of communications personnel, communications lines were frequently broken by artillery and mortar fire. Telephone instruments, wire lines, and radios were destroyed faster than they could be replaced. Control was thereby reduced and the coordination of attacking units was frequently delayed considerably. (8)

7. Inadequately trained replacements. The regiment received a total of 1951 enlisted and 45 officer replacements during the operation. Practically all of these replacements had had no battle experience, and it was almost criminal to send them to the front lines so unprepared for the conditions awaiting them. Many of these replacements became casualties before they ever reached their units because of enemy shelling of our few routes of communication. (8)

8. Ammunition allocation. Although the regiment had accumulated a stock pile of several thousand rounds of mortar ammunition, the limitations imposed on the expenditure of mortar and artillery shell often prevented the desired support from these weapons. (8)

(8) Personal knowledge.

REGIMENTAL SITUATION, 15 NOVEMBER

The day by day postponement of the attack from 11 November through 15 November provided the regiment with valuable time for preparation for the attack. (8)

All company grade officers received additional instruction in the conduct of woods fighting and adjustment of artillery fire. (9)

In anticipation of serious communications problems during the attack, plans were made to augment the normal communications system. A surplus of wire and radio equipment was obtained, communications personnel within the rifle battalions was increased, and plans were made to provide double wire lines to all battalions during the attack. (9)

Evacuation difficulties were also expected. To take care of this problem, extra litter squads were organized. Plans were made to use "Weasels" (Carrier, cargo, M-29) to evacuate wounded from areas impassable to the 1/4 ton truck, which proved unable to operate in deep mud. The weasels were not effective since logs, stumps, and ruts caused them to throw their tracks very frequently. (10)

All 81-mm mortars of the regiment were massed and placed so as to be capable of supporting any unit of the regiment. Wire communication was maintained between each battalion and the mortar position. (11)

The regiment was supported by the 44th FA Battalion (105-mm Howitzers), which was reinforced by the fires of the 20th FA Battalion (155-mm Howitzers). Attached to the regiment were the medium tanks of Co. C, 70th Tank Battalion; one platoon of light tanks from Co. D, 70th Tank Battalion; Co. C, 87th Cml Battalion (less one platoon); one platoon Co. C, 803rd Tank Destroyer Battalion (SP); one platoon Co. C, 4th Engineer (c) Battalion; and Co. C, 4th Medical Battalion. Tanks and tank destroyers were

(8) Personal knowledge; (9) D; (10) Personal knowledge; (11) D.

initially held in reserve, as the rough terrain and dense woods were not suitable for their effective employment. (12)

The regiment planned to attack initially in a column of battalions, in the order 2nd, 1st, and 3rd. (12) (See Map B.)

THE ATTACK, 16 NOVEMBER - 3 DECEMBER

At 0100, 16 November, the regiment was notified that D-day was 16 November. A later message announced H-hour as 1245. (12)

Preceding the jump-off, heavy artillery preparations were fired on both flanks of the area which the regiment planned to penetrate. At 1245 the 2nd Battalion crossed the line of departure and advanced about 600 yards before making contact with the enemy. Resistance increased and the advancing battalion was slowed down so that by 1610 the total gain was about 1500 yards and the battalion front had swung to ^{the} north so that it was generally perpendicular to the line of departure. (12) (13)

The 1st Battalion crossed the line of departure, turned north, and passed through one of the 2nd Battalion rifle companies to attack along Trail "E". This attack encountered the flank and rear of a well-organized enemy position and gradually slowed down. The battalion dug in for the night at 1640 after securing advantageous positions for the resumption of the attack the next day. (13)

The 3rd Battalion dispatched one company at 1500 to clear the southern portion of Trail "E" and secure it for use as a temporary MSR. Another company soon followed and positions were taken which secured the trail and protected the south flank of the regiment. (13)

(12) Personal knowledge; (13) D

Enemy mortar and artillery fire increased in intensity as the location of our effort became known to the Germans.

The attack for the 17th, to be made by 1st Battalion, was aimed at securing the high ground north of trail junction "X" and advancing eastward to seize the high ground which dominated Road "A". The attack was delayed from 0830 until 0945 by very heavy enemy mortar and artillery fire in which two battalion commanders were lost. The attack finally got under way at 0945 following a 30-minute artillery preparation. Fighter planes of the IX TAC supported the attack. Intense enemy fires of all types and extensive mine fields retarded the advance of the 1st Battalion. (13)

The 2nd Battalion was ordered to push to the east to positions dominating Road "A". However, enemy infiltration to the rear of the battalion position and stiff resistance to the front combined to slow down the advance. (13)

By 1630 both battalions had reached positions which dominated Road "A". The platoon of light tanks was used to support the 1st Battalion in this day's operations, but early in the day two tanks were knocked out by mines and the remaining two could not be employed because of dense woods and heavily-mined fire breaks. The enemy infiltration was cleared by using one company of the reserve battalion to clean out the area. (13)

Noteworthy in this day's operations was the enemy's heavy and accurate fire on all trails and fire breaks which could be used as supply and evacuation routes. Engineer troops engaged in mine-sweeping and road maintenance were seriously hampered by this fire. This fire, as well as fire on the front-line units, continued during the night.

(13) D, Personal knowledge.

The plan for the following day called for the 1st and 2nd Battalions to attack abreast, cross Road "A", to seize hills "Y" and "Z". The 3rd Battalion, in reserve, was to protect the MSR. (13)

The attack started at 0830 on the 18th as scheduled, and proceeded slowly against heavy fire. During the advance of the 2nd Battalion, Co "F", which had been protecting the south flank and had repulsed a small counterattack at daylight, started to move forward and lost direction and contact to such an extent that the company was not located again until late in the afternoon. Another unusual occurrence was the loss of the battalion commander, S-3, and communications officer. The Battalion Executive Officer and a new S-3 moved forward to assume command. Within 5 minutes after arriving at his command post, the new battalion commander was wounded and the new S-3 was dead. The Regimental S-2 then came forward to command the battalion. By the time he arrived at the battalion command post the entire staff had been evacuated. The S-2, assisted by one runner, regained control of the battalion and by 1650 had the battalion on its objective. (14)

Since the regiment had both flanks and its rear open, with a frontage of more than 3500 yards of dense woods, only about 1500 yards of which were occupied, all-around defense was of vital importance and the units assumed night positions similar to the British hollow square. * *should be explained* (14)

Ammunition and rations were pushed forward continuously to maintain a two-day supply within each battalion area at all times in case the unit was cut off from the remainder of the regiment. (14)

(13) D; (14) D, Personal knowledge.

The advances of the assaulting battalions and the heavy rains had now increased the road maintenance problem far beyond the capabilities of the one engineer platoon in support of the regiment. The fire breaks which were the main routes of communication became so soft and muddy that no vehicular traffic could negotiate them, and to get supporting armor to the front line units was out of the question. A considerable degree of assistance was received in this respect when two additional engineer platoons were placed in support of the regiment on 18 November. (15)

At the close of the first three days of fighting, the regiment had advanced approximately 2000 yards at a cost of 300 enlisted and 24 officer casualties. (16)

No attack was planned for 19 November as (1) Road "A" in CT 8's zone was still in enemy hands; (2) Trail "E" was still not clear of mines, and engineers were now removing the third layer from beneath the mud; (3) the hand carry of supplies and wounded had become so long that the use of all available personnel, including newly-arrived replacements, was still not enough to provide adequate supply and evacuation services; (4) the bridge across the swift-running stream at the junction of Roads "A" and "B" had been blown out and the site was under such heavy and continuous mortar and artillery fire including the fire of railroad guns, that it had been impossible to construct a new bridge, thus forcing all carrying parties and litter squads to ford the neck-deep icy water; and (5) the 3rd Battalion could not be counted on as an effective fighting force since Co "I", which had taken over the defensive flank on the north when the 1st Battalion had turned east from Trail "E", had not been relieved by the 24th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron,

(15) Personal knowledge; (16) d.

although this relief had been directed 34 hours earlier; and Co "L" had been seriously weakened by the loss of key personnel and the failure of mop-up parties to return. (16)

The day was used to consolidate positions, reorganize, re-supply, and open Trail "E". Patrols were active on both sides and enemy mortar and artillery fire caused 109 casualties in the regiment. In the afternoon an enemy strongpoint to the east of the regimental command post opened fire on the security outpost. This enemy position had been by-passed by the 2nd Battalion and its existence indicated that it probably had been used to adjust the unusually accurate artillery fire which the 2nd Battalion had received on 18 November. Co "K" was moved to secure the command post and prepare to reduce this position. (17)

The attack was resumed at 0850, 20 November. (See Map C.) The 1st and 2nd Battalions were to advance along Road "B" to dominating ground about 600 yards to the east. The 3rd Battalion was to clear Road "A" to the regimental north boundary. The regimental zone of action was reduced in width by about 1000 yards by moving the boundary between the 22nd and 12th Infantry regiments to the north. (17)

The enemy launched a coordinated attack against the 2nd Battalion positions at the same time that the 2nd Battalion attacked, and a hard, close-in fight resulted. The battalion advanced slowly and had one company on the objective by 1000. (18)

The 1st Battalion met moderate resistance, reached its objective by 1017, mined Road "B" and repelled a small counter-attacking force. An infantry-armor counterattack was launched against the 2nd Battalion at 1050. Co "L" was sent to reinforce the battalion, the counterattack was repulsed, and Co "L" took up defensive positions covering the 2nd Battalion's right flank. (18)

(16) D; (17) D, personal knowledge; (18) D.

Co "K" attacked the strongpoint near the regimental command post at 1300, but did not reduce it by dark and was forced to wait until the following day to resume the attack. (18)

Engineer troops started the construction of a bridge in the woods above the bridge site, as the enemy continued to interdict the road junction and bridge site. During the night 20-21 November the bridge was finally installed, Trail "D" was finally cleared, and armor was able to move to the forward battalions. (18)

No attack was scheduled for 21 November, but several incidents occurred which aided the situation considerably. A small group of Germans who had ~~been~~ hidden within a few hundred yards of the bridge site surrendered to armored vehicles which had just crossed the new bridge. They undoubtedly had been directing the effective artillery fire which had kept the area untenable. Co "K" attacked the strongpoint near the command post, this time with one tank and a tank destroyer, and reduced the enemy position. Road "A" was cleared to the 8th Infantry positions. (18)

In spite of the comparatively inactive day, the regiment suffered 306 casualties, mostly from mortar and artillery concentrations. This brought the total casualties for the operation up to 900 enlisted men and 42 officers. Replacements received through this day totaled 513 enlisted men and one officer. (18)

The regiment resumed its advance on 22 November, with the 3rd Battalion passing to the left of the 1st Battalion and attacking to the southeast, with the 2nd Battalion attacking between roads "B" and "C" toward GROSSHAU. The 1st Battalion assisted by feinting several frontal attacks, distracting the enemy and allowing the 3rd Battalion to gain surprise effect. (19)

(18) D; (19) D, personal knowledge.

By the end of the day, the 3rd Battalion dominated the road junction west of GROSSHAU. The 2nd Battalion had an exposed right flank which became more dangerous as the day passed, and one company of the 1st Battalion and 100 2nd Battalion replacements were sent to protect this flank. (19)

On the 23rd, operations consisted of consolidation, clearing Road "B" to the road junction west of GROSSHAU, moving up armor and antitank guns, and mopping up. Limited objectives consisting of close-in trail junctions were secured or dominated by fire. A platoon of tanks moved to the 3rd Battalion and remained to support the battalion. (19)

The 24th was another day of consolidation, reorganization, readjustment, mopping up, and resupply. Road "C" was cleared to the front lines. The 12th Infantry advanced in its zone and relieved some of the pressure on the 2nd Battalion's right flank, permitting Co "B" to return to 1st Battalion control. Co "A" moved east, tying in and extending the 3rd Battalion's left flank. Enemy fire continued to harass the regiment, and casualties now totaled 1317 enlisted men and 52 officers. Replacements through this date now totaled 1093 enlisted men and 32 officers, leaving the regiment still considerably under strength and painfully short in experienced specialists. (19)

The attack on 25 November by the 2nd and 3rd Battalions was scheduled to be made with no artillery preparation in the hope of obtaining maximum surprise effect. The plan called for the 3rd Battalion to envelop GROSSHAU from the north, capturing the town from that direction. The 2nd Battalion's objective was the eastern edge of the woods at the regimental right boundary - a position from which direct fire could be placed

(19) D, personal knowledge.

on both GROSSHAU AND KLEINHAU. The attack jumped off at 0745 and the 3rd Battalion had no trouble reaching a position about 800 yards north of GROSSHAU. At that time the battalion stopped while armored support was brought up to aid in the assault on the town. Due to the rough terrain and soft ground, this armor was delayed and the attack was not resumed until 1145. When the battalion started across the open ground, the enemy reacted vigorously. Self-propelled guns, mortars, and small arms fire from organized positions in the town stopped the attack, disabling four tanks and two tank destroyers. The battalion was unable to advance further due to the intensity of the enemy fire, and at 1500 dug in for the night. (19)

The road to the 2nd Battalion was too soft to carry tanks, and the battalion was compelled to attack without armor in support. The battalion jumped off at 0820, and, in spite of intense enemy fire, drove to its objective by 1030. Tank support reached the battalion by late afternoon. (19)

The 1st Battalion, in reserve, moved up close behind the 3rd Battalion. (19)

No major attack was scheduled for 26 November as the regiment again needed reorganization. Positions were consolidated and improved. It became apparent that GROSSHAU, instead of being just another German village, was actually a fortified, heavily-defended strongpoint, and that a major effort would be required to take the town. (19)

During the day Co "C" attacked astride Road "B" to clear the area between the 2nd and 3rd Battalions and to free the road from enemy observation and direct fire. The two forward

(19) D, personal knowledge.

reduced the width of the regimental zone to 1200 yards, compared with the original 3500, and for the first time in the operation the regiment was able to cover its entire zone with no excessive gaps.

The only attack on 28 November was one on the north flank by a task force from the 3rd Battalion, in coordination with an attack by the 12th Infantry to seize the hill north of GROSSHAU. This mission was accomplished without much difficulty. (19)

During the night 28 - 29 November a patrol reached Road "D" north of GROSSHAU and mined it, then withdrew back to its unit.(19)

At the end of 28 November, total casualties had reached 1867 enlisted and 80 officers, and replacements totaled 1614 enlisted and 35 officers. (19)

On 29 November the 3rd Battalion was ordered to attack east through the woods north of GROSSHAU and seize the high ground northeast of the town. (See Map D.) The 1st Battalion was to follow the 3rd and protect its flanks and rear. The 2nd Battalion was ordered to contain GROSSHAU and protect the right flank of the regiment south of the town. It was hoped that this would make the town untenable and force the enemy to surrender without the regiment making a costly frontal assault against the town itself.(19)

Heavy artillery fire delayed the jump-off until 1200, an hour later than the scheduled time. The 3rd Battalion pushed relentlessly against very stubborn resistance and reached its objective by 1830, well after dark. (19)

Just before noon the regimental commander received a direct order to take GROSSHAU that day. This order came originally from Corps and could not be modified. Against the better judgment (19) D, personal knowledge.

battalions supported the attack by fire, but in spite of this support the company met bitter resistance. It fought until dusk, when a German counterattack supported by self-propelled guns hit the company and drove it back to its position of the night before. At the end of the day Co "C's" effective strength was 20 officers and men. This was not unusual in this operation. Companies frequently dug in for the night with only 20 to 40 men left, sometimes commanded by an enlisted man who had joined only a few days before. (19)

The next day Co "B" attacked over the ground which Co "C" had taken and lost on the 26th. Under direct artillery fire and extremely heavy machine gun fire, 105 men attacked a well organized position on dominating ground. The company was stopped, and only by several examples of outstanding individual heroism was the enemy driven from his position. In this action Pfc Macario Garcia, ASN38246362, advanced alone after being wounded and knocked out two enemy machine gun crews. He received the Medal of Honor for this action. At 1230 the company, now reduced to 35 men, assaulted across a short stretch of open terrain and reached its objective. Co "E" pushed to the north and east and reached a position on the right of Co "B". Now armor could move along Road "B" unobserved, but the tank and tank destroyer units were reluctant to travel over a road which had not been swept for mines. After an infantry lieutenant from the Antitank Co drove a half-track over the road to prove that it was not mined, the armored vehicles moved forward. (19)

On 28 November the 12th Infantry was assigned a zone of action on the left of the 22nd Infantry. The new boundary

(19) D, personal knowledge.

of the regimental commander, he ordered the 2nd Battalion to assault GROSSHAU from the west. This attack was launched at 1250, and at the same time a tank attack on the town from the south was to start. The tanks almost immediately ran into a heavy mine field and two tanks were lost. A bog further restricted the movement of the tanks, but they continued seeking a route into GROSSHAU. An entry was finally found and the tanks contacted the 2nd Battalion foot troops in the western part of the town. Fierce fighting continued after dark and by 1915 GROSSHAU had fallen. Now the town was found to consist of buildings with reinforced concrete basements, equipped with steel doors and firing slits. Air bombardment and artillery fire had had little effect on these fortifications. Roads and trails taken during the day were cleared of mines, an antitank defense was set up with mines, antitank guns, tanks and tank destroyers, and supplies were delivered to the battalions. Enemy mortar and artillery fire was received during the night. (19)

The 46th Armored Infantry Battalion was attached to the regiment to bolster its strength for subsequent attacks. (19)

The plan of attack for 30 November was to use the 3rd and 2nd Battalions and the 46th Armored Battalion abreast, in that order from left to right, attacking to the northeast to capture and secure the edge of the woods south of GEY, a position from which a coordinated infantry-tank attack could be launched toward DUREN. At first the 3rd Battalion met relatively little resistance, but as it approached its objective the resistance stiffened. The battalion was stopped and dug in for the night about 300 yards short of the edge of the woods.

(19) D, personal knowledge.

The 2nd Battalion advanced slowly across the open terrain in its zone against heavy small arms, mortar, and artillery fire, gained a total of about 300 yards, and was stopped. In this attack the battalion moved around the high ground in its zone and crossed the corps boundary. (19)

The 46th Armored Battalion, moving out to its line of departure, started receiving fire at 1020 from the high ground northeast of KLEINHAU. This ground had been reported the previous day as being held by Combat Command "R" of the 5th Armored Division, a report which was entirely false. Consequently, the 46th Battalion was forced to fight hard to reach its line of departure, and by the end of the day had reached the edge of the woods southeast of GROSSHAU, losing an estimated 50% of its fighting strength in the day's operation. The enemy was still offering determined resistance in his effort to keep us from breaking out of the forest. (19)

The 1st Battalion moved forward in rear of the 3rd Battalion, organized a defensive position on the hill northeast of GROSSHAU, and covered the gap between the 2nd and 3rd Battalions. The enemy maintained continuous pressure on the 2nd Battalion. (19)

On 1 December the 3rd Battalion was to continue its advance east to the edge of the woods. The 1st Battalion was to attack southeast, hitting the enemy facing the 2nd Battalion on its flank while the 2nd Battalion attacked by fire only. After reducing this enemy resistance, the 1st Battalion was to swing to the east and extend the 3rd Battalion line along the edge of the woods. The 2nd Battalion was to attack northeast. (19)

The 3rd Battalion reached its objective at 1010 against moderate resistance. The 1st Battalion attacked behind a smoke (19). Personal knowledge.

screen, achieved a high degree of surprise, overran German machine gun positions and an artillery OP, and advanced through the woods to a point about 500 yards northeast of the 2nd Battalion. It then turned and attacked to the northeast, leaving one company behind to contact the 2nd Battalion. The 1st Battalion reached its objective by 1220 and tied in with the the 3rd Battalion. (19)

In spite of the help furnished by the 1st Battalion, the 2nd Battalion met stiff resistance and progressed very slowly. In the late afternoon a strong counterattack hit Co "F", and the rest of the battalion was committed. Co "F" suffered severe casualties but the battalion line was finally secured at dusk. (19)

The 46th Armored Battalion attacked on 1 December despite its severe losses of the previous day, made very little progress, and at 1112 was directed to return to its jump-off position and hold there. The battalion was detached from the regiment at 2400. (19)

The regiment was once again very weak in fighting effectives. Casualties had mounted to 2304 enlisted men and 100 officers. Replacements received amounted to a total of 1699 enlisted and 35 officers. (19)

On 2 December, elements of the 1st and 3rd Battalions were directed to attack south to clear the woods in front of the 2nd Battalion and assist its advance. Before the attack could be started, a strong German attack by a battalion of 250 fresh infantry troops hit Co "I" at 0650, broke through the line and headed for the high ground northeast of GROSSHAU. Co "K" moved south to seal off this penetration, and the 2nd Battalion was prepared to assist the 3rd. At 0740 the 3rd Battalion requested additional support, and a 60-man detachment from the Antitank Co (19) Personal knowledge.

which had been organized as a reserve and placed in GROSSHAU was moved forward. Another 80-man detachment, which had been organized from Headquarters and Service Companies the night before, moved to GROSSHAU to defend it and constitute the regimental reserve. CP's of the 1st and 3rd Battalions were attacked at 0815. Soon after that, enemy were reported on the high ground northeast of GROSSHAU. All available armor was assembled and directed to re-take the hill. The penetration was sealed off, the enemy force was gradually mopped up, and the situation once again became stable on lines held the night before except for a slight withdrawal to more defensible terrain at the point of penetration by the enemy. (19)

Information was received that the regiment would be relieved on 3 December by the 330th Infantry of the 83rd Infantry Division. Accordingly, positions were improved to attain the maximum defensive strength.

On 3 December the relief of the regiment began. It was retarded by an enemy attack against the 1st Battalion in the morning, an air attack by approximately 40 German fighter planes in the afternoon, and heavy artillery, mortar, and machine gun fire in the 2nd Battalion's area. Smoke was used to screen the movements, but even with this aid the relief could not be completed until after dark. (19)

Responsibility for the area was turned over to the Commanding Officer, 330th Infantry, at 1900 and the 22nd Infantry moved to assembly areas approximately five miles west of the front lines preparatory to moving to Luxembourg the next day.

The 22nd Infantry Regiment had completed the most difficult task assigned to it during its combat operations in Europe and had made a substantial contribution to the success of the 1st US Army

(19) D, Personal knowledge.

attack toward COLOGNE. However, the regiment had lost officers and men who could never be replaced. The total losses for the eighteen days of fighting in the Hurtgen Forest amounted to 2575 enlisted men and 103 officers. The losses in equipment were proportionately high, and the wear and tear on weapons and vehicles was the heaviest ever suffered in so short a period. (19)

Although this monograph describes only the operations of the 22nd Infantry Regiment, the attached units which endured the same hardships and discomfort and fought the weather, the forest, the mud and the enemy with the regiment deserve the same recognition for their achievements as that received by the regiment, for without their aid the mission would have been far more difficult to accomplish. For its action in the Hurtgen Forest, which advanced our front lines 7500 yards to the open ground which formed the approaches to DUREN, the regiment received a commendation from the division commander and the division was commended by the corps commander. The regiment later was cited for this action. (20)

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

A study of this operation reveals several factors which deserve a thorough analysis from a critical point of view.

First, it appears that the zone of action assigned to the 4th Infantry Division was much too wide. Although there probably were cogent reasons why this was necessary, it appears that the defensive capabilities of the enemy in this sector were grossly underestimated and that the offensive capabilities of the American troops in this type of terrain were overestimated. This may have been caused by the optimism resulting from the

(19) D, Personal knowledge; (20) E.

rapid drive across France and Belgium and the widely-held opinion that the Wehrmacht was about to collapse. It may also have resulted from a failure to appreciate fully the vast difference between fighting in open terrain under favorable weather conditions and fighting in the close, rugged terrain of the Hurtgen Forest area under bad weather conditions. Whatever the cause, it resulted in "sending a boy to do a man's job."

Second, the frontage assigned to the regiment initially, approximately 3500 yards, could not possibly be covered adequately by one regiment in this type of terrain. Consequently, the regiment, in order to employ sufficient mass in its effort, was forced to confine its attack to a frontage of less than half its assigned zone. This resulted in uncovered flanks, bypassed enemy positions, and the ever-present threat of encirclement of the regiment. The enemy was able to maintain artillery observation posts within and adjacent to the regimental position from which accurate and devastating fires could be and were directed. The assignment of a zone of action which could have been covered completely and which could have been completely cleared of enemy as the unit advanced would have been tactically sound and would have resulted in considerably fewer casualties than were sustained. As the action progressed, the zone of action was narrowed by successive boundary changes which gradually eliminated the likelihood of enemy infiltration and the by-passing of enemy positions from which fire could be directed or from which attacks could be launched against the flanks or rear of the regiment.

Third, the failure to relieve the regiment, and the remainder of the division, after a few days of fighting as severe as this action, was in my opinion, the direct cause of hundreds of casualties which might have been avoided by the timely relief of the division

by a fresh, battle-experienced division. The excessive casualties, combined with the frequent attack missions, necessitated the immediate employment of replacements as fast as they arrived. The exposure of these fresh, inexperienced troops to the unusually rigorous and hazardous conditions encountered in the forest before they could be properly integrated in the fighting team was, in my opinion, almost a criminal waste of valuable manpower and should never have been allowed to occur.

Fourth, in terrain such as this and with weather conditions as they were, the division should have been furnished additional engineer support. The requirements in mine-clearing and road maintenance were beyond the capabilities of the organic engineer battalion, and the advance of the regiment was actually stopped several times by the excessive hand carries necessary to resupply and evacuate casualties. Faster clearing and repair of roads would not only have simplified the supply and evacuation problem, but also would have permitted the earlier movement of supporting armor to the front line units. Armor often could not be used when it was vitally needed because it just could not be moved over the existing roads and trails.

Fifth, the direct order received on 29 November to capture GROSSHAU that day resulted in unnecessary casualties. The regimental commander was aware of the nature of the defenses in the town and had conceived a plan (approved by division) which would have forced the enemy to withdraw or surrender. The capture of the town by frontal assault was unnecessarily costly and contributed little or nothing to the accomplishment of the ultimate mission. In my opinion, the prerogative of the regimental commander in determining how to accomplish his mission was encroached upon. This is generally not considered to be accepted policy.

Sixth, it appears that a penetration of the forest might have been avoided entirely by the execution of a holding action in the forest with a penetration on one or both flanks followed by an encirclement of the enemy forces thus contained. Here again, for reasons known only to higher headquarters, such a course of action might not have been possible. However, it seems that in this operation strength was committed against strength where a quicker, easier path to victory lies in committing strength against weakness.

The accomplishment of the regimental mission in spite of the seemingly insurmountable obstacles, was a tribute to the exceptional tactical skill, judgment, and aggressiveness of the regimental commander, Colonel Charles T. Lanham (later Brigadier General), who at all times kept his command under control and who enjoyed the implicit trust and confidence of his subordinates.

LESSONS

Some of the lessons learned in this operation are:

1. Zones of action in the attack should be assigned so as to permit the observance of the principle of mass and should depend on the strength of the enemy defenses.

2. A narrow penetration which leaves flanks unprotected is extremely dangerous in that it permits infiltration into rear areas and observation and adjustment of fire on assaulting units.

3. Adequate reserves of ammunition and rations must be maintained in a unit which is liable to encirclement and isolation.

4. In woods fighting, where artillery and mortar fire is more than normally effective, communications facilities must be reinforced to reduce the possibility of a complete breakdown.

5. In situations ^{where} requiring resupply and evacuation by

long carrying parties, additional personnel must be assigned to this duty.

6. Roads and trails in soft terrain may be mined in layers and one sweeping may not disclose all mines.

7. A unit should be removed from the line when excessive casualties have been suffered, and replacements should be integrated in the unit and trained before the unit goes back into combat.

8. The capabilities of the enemy should never be underestimated.

9. In woods fighting, fragment-proof overhead cover is essential if casualties are to be minimized.

10. Engineer support must be adequate if an attack is to proceed as desired.

11. The effectiveness of armor in woods fighting is greatly reduced.

12. The determination of the individual soldier to continue fighting under the worst conditions is the most important factor contributing to success in battle.