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AIRBORNE OPERATION
504TH PARACHUTE INFANTRY REGIMENTAL C/T
(82ND AIRBORNE DIVISION)
SICILY
9 JULY - 19 AUGUST, 1943

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE
OF A
REGIMENTAL HEADQUARTERS COMPANY COMMANDER

Type of operation described:

NIGHT AIRBORNE OPERATION AND REGIMENT IN THE ATTACK

Captain Adam A. Komosa, Infantry

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THE OPERATION OF THE 504TH PARACHUTE INFANTRY
REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM (82ND AIRBORNE DIVISION)
SICILY

9 JULY-19 AUGUST 1943

(Personal experience of a Regimental Headquarters Company Commander)

INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operations of the 504th parachute Infantry Regimental Combat Team, in which it participated in the first large scale night airborne operation in military history. After the jump, paratroopers were scattered over an area of sixty miles in the southern portion of sicily. Reorganizing, they moved out to assigned sectors along the south and west coast of the island.

In order to orient the reader properly, it will be necessary to go back several months and give a short resume of the events that lead up to this campaign, which was described by Winston Churchill, the Prime Minister of England, as: "Not the beginning of the end, but the end of the beginning."

There was much talk about "the soft underbelly of Europe" long before the invasion of Sicily was begun. Preparations were made for a tough and bloody course of war, with the realization that, while the Italians were sure to collapse under the blow, the Nazis would fight stubbornly and bitterly. The Italian nation was disgruntled with its own government, shaken by the reverses in Africa, unhappy with the swaggering Germans in its midst. Italy was, in short, poised for the knockout.

There were other considerations besides the desirability of knocking out the Axis weak sister that prompted the Anglo-American strategy. There was a good chance of trapping a substantial German army in southern Italy, besides the certainty of tying up many German Divisions, both of which, if accomplished would relieve Nazi pressure on the Soviet front, and keep many troops from the defense of occupied

France. Control of Sicily would mean, also, control of the Mediterranean and insurance of the shortest supply line from Britain and the United States to India and China. (1)

In broad terms, the attack against Sicily was to be made by two task forces. The American Seventh Army, the Western task force, would land on the southeast coast of the island, while the British Eighth Army, the Eastern task force, would land on the extreme southeast tip and around the eastern side of the island.

The American Seventh Army was commanded by General George S. Patton. It consisted of six Divisions, organized into two Corps, one under Lt. Gen. Omar N. Bradley and the other under Maj. Gen. Geoffrey Keyes. Certain French Moroccan troops were to be available and held in Africa as a General Reserve. (2)

Once ashore, the United States Army's mission was to secure the left flank of the operation from enemy resistance, while the center and right flanks drove toward the central highlands of Sicily, which dominate the valleys and approaches. At this point, the American Army was to make contact with the British Army, which after securing all the eastern coast and ports, was to move inland.

The plan was to sever the island from its mainland connections and force it to fall of its own weight.

The strongest concentration of defense was known to be centered in the northwest and center of Sicily. The assault was planned according to the cardinal principles of warfare - strike where the enemy least expects it, or, "Hit 'em where they ain't." (3)

Oujda, North Africa

The Regiment was camped outside of Oujda, French Morocco. The camp site chosen was typical of sites for American training camps. On one side of the town there were the beautiful rolling plains, ankle-high grass which looked like a soft green carpet flowing gently over

(1) A-6. (2) A-2. (3) A-6.

the hills and blending into the beauties of the mountains on the left and the blue Mediterranean on the right. So the camp was located on the other side of the town in the middle of the worst dust bowl on the continent of Africa. It was located in a desolate, sterile, rocky, dusty, heat-seared valley, which seemed "No where in North Africa" instead of the censor's "Somewhere in North Africa," found on the letterheads of these troops so recently from the States.

In addition to the scheduled jumps in tricky winds, there was the worst epidemic of dysentery ever imagined in a latrine orderly's nightmare, and jumps scheduled or unscheduled were made all through the day and night. Men on guard wore entrenching tools as "standard equipment". (4)

Oujda brought the Regiment the first taste of extended field conditions. Troops lived in long straight rows of pup tents, interspaced with slit trenches. They squatted on the ground and ate from mess kits at the field kitchens. They bathed, shaved and washed in their helmets and learned the meaning of water discipline. They washed their clothing in wooden tubs or in halves of discarded oil drums. They gave each other hair cuts. (5)

Despite the climatic conditions, the camp at Oujda was to become the greatest parade ground the Regiment and Division had graced to date. We were to be the proud recipient of virtually every dignity in northwestern Africa. The proud 82nd paraded before 15 allied generals in less than a month. The Division colors were dipped for General Mark Clark, Commanding General of the Fifth Army; General "Tohey" Spaatz, the colorful commander of our African Air Force; General Patton, Commanding the Seventh Army; General Bradley, The Division's first Commanding General in World War II; Major General Gruenther, 5th Army Chief of Staff, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, and an impressive row of French and Spanish dignitaries, including Lt. General

(4, 5, 6) Eyewitness, self.

Luis Orgaz, High Commissioner of Spanish Morocco, and many others. (6) With all the visits we had been receiving from dignitaries, it was quite obvious that they had big things in store for us. As General Eisenhower, Commander in Chief of Allied Forces, told us some sixteen months later, "I owe you a lot, but I will owe you much more by VE Day".

All told the "All American" (82nd A/B Div) was at Oujda for six weeks. Training was essential, but how, when, and where? The soldiers tried to train in the day time. It was too hot and dirty to do anything.

Allied Headquarters had us slated for a night airborne operation on Sicily. A night parachute operation had never before been attempted by any army; so organization and training for it offered many new problems. The many intangible and indefinable difficulties of fighting at night in hostile territory, when every object appears to be and often is the foe, had to be overcome. Rapid assembly of the troops and reorganization after landing by parachute appeared to be the greatest problem.

Training began at night - compass marches by small groups, organizing in the dark, from simulated parachute drops and glider landings, moving across country at night and organizing positions, digging fox holes, laying wire, preparing mine fields by the light of the moon. Emphasis was placed on training in judo, demolitions, commando fighting and the use of the knife. All this worked out well but bayonet practice at 2 A.M. was a little too unique to bring enthusiasm.

It was too hot to sleep in the day time and as a result the troops became exhausted. (7) ~~Self~~

DISPLACEMENT TO KAIROUAN, TUNISIA

Having completed the ground and refresher training, the Division was now in the process of its next move - closer to combat. On the morning of 16 June 1943, the advance elements departed by truck for

^{6,}
(7) Self, Eyewitness.

the advanced take-off airfield and dispersal area at Kairouan, Tunisia.

The forward bases were dispersed over a wide area in the vicinity of Kairouan, the third holy city in all Islam, according to Uncle Sam's "Guide to North Africa". Holy cities are off limits of course, not because they are Holy, but because they are too filthy even for healthy soldiers to enter. (8)

The Regimental Combat Teams were bivouaced in a huge arc around the city in scattered Olive groves, and cactus patches. This area was also very dusty and the scorching heat was unbearable.

Within 275 short miles lay the enemy in Sicily, nervously waiting for the invasion which certainly would come soon. The troops began to sense the nearness of the battle. Situation huts were set up immediately and conferences were held concerning the pending attack on the iron-muscled underbelly of Festung Europa.

Training was as usual "continuous" with both day and night exercises. Troops got up at 0430 and started at 0600. They got madder and meaner. The Krauts could expect anything. Emphasis was placed on night assembly in simulated parachute drop. Planes could not be obtained from the Air Corps for the purpose of making night parachute jumps. The Combat Team was in an excellent state of training, but there was a serious gap in the combined Ground Forces - Air Corps training. (9) ~~Self~~

An Air Corps liaison officer was attached to the 82nd Airborne Division Headquarters, but he was not used to the best advantage. He did not operate as an integral member of the Division Staff and was not in a position to coordinate plane requirements, etc.

An Airborne liaison officer was later attached to the 52nd Troop Carrier Wing. He was made assistant A-3 and proved a real value to the unit in its planning and training.

The spirit of cooperation between the 82nd Airborne Division and the 52nd TC Wing was excellent; however, the inadequate organization

(8) A-3[?] (9) Self, Eye-witness.

proved the stumbling block. Cooperation alone was not enough for the closely knit teamwork required. (10)

The 52nd TC Wing arrived in the theatre qualified for daylight ^{yh} operations and parachute drops over familiar terrain, but unqualified for night operations. At the start of the training program the wing did night formation and navigation flying with navigational lights. After becoming proficient with navigational lights, the formation flying was done without navigational lights and with resin lights. Occasionally the Air Corps was used to work with the 509th Parachute Infantry Scout Company on DZ (Drop Zone) and resupply exercises. However, the Wing did not fully appreciate the value of these projects and used most of their training time to fly large formations and token drops which had little operational value.

Very little real effort was put forth by the 52nd TC Wing to check the location of pin-point DZ's at night. Equipment containers were made available in an effort to get the 52nd Wing to drop simulated loads on a DZ on practice flights. Very few times were containers used to check the DZ location by the navigator and the jump signal by the pilot. Air photos, for training aids in the location of DZ's by night pilotage, were not used in the majority of training flights.

Training of a practical nature was difficult under the existing set-up without a control command over the 52nd TC Wing and the Airborne Division. Despite the necessity of such a step, a full scale rehearsal of the operation was not conducted. Final training was further hampered because the Wing Air Corps over the final three weeks were engaged in shuttling troops and supplies to advance bases.

No exercise involving support aviation, other than a demonstration, were held as were no exercises involving aerial resupply. (11)

On the Fourth of July the mechanism of final battle preparation

(10, 11) A-5

swung into full gear with General Ridgway, Commanding General, 82nd Airborne Division, and his staff flying to Algiers where they joined the Command Staff of the First Armored Corps (reinforced) to complete plans for the invasion of Sicily under Lt. General George S. Patton, Commander of the highly secret Seventh Army.

Every man in the division was filled with speculation on the wheres and whats of the immediate future, but the flies, sand, and sun had done their job in their own insufferable way. With the body hardened and the mind still filled with thoughts of the disagreeable training area, anticipation for the future and combat could not have been keener. Morale was at a peak. The men wanted to tackle anything.

(12)

THE PLAN

Information of the enemy indicated that the entire island of Sicily had been prepared for defense. Towns, consisting almost entirely of stone buildings, were reported organized as centers of resistance. All beaches were reported protected by batteries, pillboxes, barbed wire and mines. Roads were understood to be blocked by anti-tank obstacles. Strength of the defenders was stated to be somewhat between 300,000 and 400,000 men. (13)

The plan for the invasion of Sicily provided for landings to be made on the southeastern extremity of the island, with British and Canadian forces on the east coast and American forces on the south coast. The American assault forces were to consist of the 3rd, 1st, and 45th Infantry Divisions, with attached units, which were to land in the LICATA, GELA, and SAMPIERE vicinities, respectively, and parachute troops from the 82nd Airborne Division, which were to land inland from GELA.

The II Corps, commanded by General (then Major General) Omar N. Bradley, consisted of the 1st and 45th Divisions. After landing, the

(12) Self. (13) A-1, pg. 654.

Airborne troops of the 82d Airborne Division were to be attached to this Corps. (14) (General Bradley commanded this Division back in the United States before it became airborne).

The plan of invasion called for one parachute combat team of the 82d Airborne Division to drop just north of an important road junction about seven miles east of GELA, between known large enemy reserves and the 1st Division's beaches, with the mission of preventing these reserves from interfering with amphibious landings.

The assaulting paratroopers were the 505th Combat Team, commanded by Colonel James M. Gavin, reinforced by the 3rd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, and their mission was thus stated in Field Order #6, issued by the II Corps.

"(1) Land during night D-1/D in area N and E of GELA, capture and secure high ground in that area. (2) Disrupt communications and movement of reserves during night. (3) Be attached to 1st Infantry Division effective H plus 1 hours on D Day. (4) Assist 1st Infantry Division in capturing and securing landing field at PONTE OLIVIO." (15)

In compliance with Field Order #1, of Force 343 (Seventh Army), the Division devised a Movement Table, under which the 504th Parachute Infantry Combat Team, as a second lift, was alerted for movement the evening of D Day; or, in the event of negative instructions at that time, the evening of D plus 1, or any day thereafter. (16)

The mission posed a number of problems never before encountered. First, should the transports fly in formation in order to quickly deliver a mass of troops on the objective? There were two disadvantages in formation flying: (1) inflexibility in the event of hostile interception and heavy flak, and (2) the necessity for intensive pilot training in formation flying of C-47's. The advantages were that the accurate delivery of troops would depend on fewer skilled navigators and the troops would be delivered enmasse, not by single ship drops, over the objective. If delivered in the wrong area, each unit would be still a

(14) A-3, pg. 26. (15) A-7, pg. 5, 6. (16) A-7, pg. 5, 6.

complete fighting force. It was decided to fly in a nine ship formation: i.e., a V of V's, with approximately one and one half minutes between each flight. Serials contained up to 52 planes.

When to drop was the next question. Training experience had led the troopers to believe that at least a half moon would be necessary both for the flight and drop. Moonlight would greatly facilitate the assembly and reorganization of the troops after landing. On the target date selected, 10 July 1943, the moon would be almost full. The ideal solution would be to complete the dropping of all units before the moon set. Thus there would be several hours of darkness to carry out defensive organization and operations against the enemy. The exposure to interception by hostile fighters and the risk of extensive enemy aack-ack causing heavy casualties eliminated the day drop. (17)

D-DAY

10 July was selected as D-Day. At dusk of 9th July, the 505th Combat Team and 3rd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, departed in 226 C-47's from ten airfields near KAIROUAN, TUNISIA. The estimated flight and air rendezvous time between KAIROUAN and the intended Drop Zone in Sicily was three hours and twenty minutes.

The 504th Combat Team, commanded by Reuben H. Tucker, was alerted throughout D-Day for the second lift, at the fields and loaded in the planes, waited while a negative message from General Ridgway was delayed in delivery, but was finally received at 1840, when Colonel Clark of the 52nd Wing decided that it was too late for the mission to be undertaken. The next day D plus 1, at 1100 hours, orders were received that the Second Lift would be flown that evening. (18)

The basic load of combat equipment for the individual parachutist was checked. The bundles and equipment were complete and the aircraft were dispersed according to the parking plan at the departure airfields.

(17) A-3, pg. 26. (18) A-7, pg. 7.

The equipment bundles were raised and hooked into the pararacks under the bellies of the planes. (19)

Plane loads were lined up near their respective planes. The chutes of each individual were checked by each plane jumpmaster. The troops then enplaned 30 minutes before take off.

The planning for the final take-off had been complete and thorough, which, with the execution of the final plans, were probably the outstanding features of the entire airborne operation. Bundle and pararack loading, dispersal arrangements and parking plans, all went off like clock-work.

Allowance was not made for the time required to inform all shipping and shore batteries of the impending flight. Ground units beyond the 1st Division area knew nothing of the operation. The 504th RCT was not familiar with the situation or countersign of units on the flanks of the 1st Division area. (20)

The African sun, like a bloody curious eye, hung on the rim of the world as one hundred and forty four planes coughed into life, spewing miniature dust storms across the flat wastes of desert airfields.

Thin aluminum skins of C-47's vibrated like drawn snare drums and, as paratroopers sought their predesignated seats, they wrinkled their noses at the smell of gasoline and laquer that flooded the planes' interiors. The take-off proceeded in three plane V formations as planned. Flights, squadrons and groups assembled at rendezvous points. By dusk the planes were airborne and the formations started flying their course for Sicily. (21)

The planes were to cruise north over the churning sea to MALTA, thence to the southeastern coast of SICILY at SAMPIERE, thence along the coast to lake BIVIERE southeast of GELA, thence inland to the FORELLO airport. The approach was to be low level, keeping a low

(19) Eyewitness, self. (20) A-5, Self. (21) A-7, pg. 37.

and closed formation across the Mediterranean, rising to a jump altitude on the approach to the Drop Zone (DZ) to 600 feet. A twenty minute oral warning was to be given to the jumpmaster by the crew chief, then a five minute red light warning, finally the "GO" green light. (22)

The air was relatively quiet; the night was lighted by a quarter moon and the highest hope for a safe crossing seemed justified. Some men closed their eyes and dozed off to sleep, while others anxiously craned their necks to peer ahead or to look down at the white-capped waves which tossed fifteen feet below the planes.

Some formations missed MALTA, planes lost their leaders and a few planes followed a British formation which was at the same time flying a token parachute force into the vicinity of SIRACUSA. (23)

PARACHUTE DROP ON SICILY

Approaching the SICILIAN coast, the plane formation was suddenly fired upon by one American machine gun. At first it appeared as a flare. Then the fire suddenly became very intense. Immediately, as though a prearranged signal, friendly anti-aircraft and U. S. Naval vessels lying offshore fired a devastating torrent of anti-aircraft fire. The plane has no slit trench to get into, nor can it assume the prone position or take cover. We felt like trapped rats. It was a most uncomfortable feeling knowing that our own troops were throwing everything they had at us. Planes dropped out of formation and crashed into the sea. Others, like clumsy whales, wheeled and attempted to get beyond the flak which rose in fountains of fire, lighting the stricken faces of men as they stared through the windows. (24)

More planes dived into the sea and those that escaped broke formation and raced like a covey of quail for what they thought was the protection of the beach. But they were wrong. Over the beach they were hit again - this time by American ground units, believing the planes to be German.

(22) Eye witness, self. (23) A-5. (24) Eye witness, self.

More planes fell and from some of them, lucky men jumped and escaped alive; the less fortunate were riddled by flak before reaching the ground.

Twenty-seven planes were shot down over the beach area and many more damaged, some of which never did reach their base. Planes forced down near the coast were machine gunned by shore parties as paratroopers attempted to launch rubber boats which were a part of the plane equipment. (25)

The pilot of one of the planes which did return told of his difficulties:

"A few minutes before reaching the drop point with the paratroopers, a shell smashed into the starboard side of the fuselage and knocked out a hole, four by six feet, while a fragment from the shell slit the aluminum and every rib from hole to rudder. Passing through the plane the fragment ripped off a door as a second ack-ack blast carried away a portion of the left stabilizer. The explosions also blew away a large piece of equipment, and the impact was so great that it felt like a motor crash in the pilot's cabin.

The airplane spun at a right angle and nearly pulled the controls from my grasp. For a second I didn't realize what happened, then finding myself out of formation I began a violent evasive action. I saw three planes burning on the ground and red tracers everywhere as machine gunners sprayed us as if potting a flight of ducks.

Meanwhile I had out into a less dangerous spot to give the parachutists a fighting chance to reach the ground. But I've got to hand it to those boys; one, who had been pretty badly hit by shrapnel, insisted on leaping with the others although he had been ordered to remain in the plane." (26)

One of the more harrowing reports was that of 1st Lt C. A. Drew, Company "F", 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment. His statement shows that some men were lost because a warning of the flight had not been

(25) A-5. (26) A-7, pg. 7, 8.

conveyed to the men of one unit, and others because each division then had its own password.

"I was jumpmaster in plane 531. This plane was leading a formation of 3 planes and was number 7 in our company. The pilot of my plane gave me the warning 20 minutes out from the DZ. After the red light came on, he had to give me the green light in about 1 minute, due to the plane being on fire.

We jumped into a steady stream of AA fire, and not knowing that they were friendly troops,. There were 4 men killed and 4 wounded from my platoon. Three of these men were hit coming down and one was killed on the ground because he had the wrong password. After landing we found out the countersign had been changed to "Think" - "Quickly".

The AA we jumped into was the 180th Infantry of the 45th Division. They also were not told that we were coming. Later we found out that the 45th Division had been told we were coming but word never got to the 180th Infantry of the 45th Division.

We tried to reorganize but found we didn't have but 44 men including 3 officers. We searched all night for the rest of the men. After accounting for them we took care of the dead and wounded and started toward our objective. We arrived at the 504th CP at 2 O'clock, 12 July 1943.

About 75 yards from where I landed, plane 915 was hit and burned. To my knowledge, only the pilot and three men got out. The pilot was thrown through the window.

"Another plane was shot down on the beach and another plane was shot down, burning about 1000 yards to my front. Although there were three planes I know of, being shot down." (27)

1st Lieutenant M. C. Shelly, Headquarters Company, 2d Battalion,

(27) A-7, pg. 8.

504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, was standing in the door of his plane when it crashed. He was thrown clear of the plane and all other occupants were killed. (28)

One of the planes lost on its return flight, and of which no remains have been found, carried as an official observer Brigadier General Charles L. Keerans, Jr., Assistant Division Commander.

In the returning planes were four dead and six wounded parachutists, and eight full loads which had not been given the opportunity to jump. These included ten officers, two warrant officers and ninety-five enlisted men. (29)

The troopers were scattered from NOTO to LICATA, a distance of over 60 miles. (See map #1) After landing the paratroops that landed in the 45th Division area were fired upon by ground troops of that unit.

Upon making an unpleasant landing against a stone wall in a vineyard, Chaplain Delbert A. Kuehl was immediately fired upon by members of the 45th Division. The Chaplain still stunned from the landing, gave the countersign and attempted to identify himself as an American. But, the soldier would not cease firing. The Chaplain, still stunned and not too happy about the existing situation, for the first time in his life uttered a curse word. While several of the men with Chaplain Kuehl established a base of fire by shooting into the air, he maneuvered around the left, through a vineyard, then closed in from the rear, tapped one of the frightened soldiers on the back, had the others cease fire and directed one of them to guide him to the Company CP, where the Company Commander of that unit was immediately oriented. (30)

Captain Charles M. Conover, a member of the First U. S. Infantry Division had this statement to make:

"On the night of 11-12 July 1943, while on duty at the 1st Divis-

(28) Statement of Lt. Shelly to self. (29) A-7, pg. 8. (30) Statement of men of Chaplain Kuehl's plane.

ion Headquarters located approximately 600 yards inland from the beach and two miles east of the city of GELA. The Division Chief of Staff, Colonel Stan B. Macon, informed me that a friendly airborne drop will take place in approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ hour. Colonel Mason instructed me to personally tell all installations in the immediate area of that fact, and to hold fire on any ships which may come over.

In approximately one-half hour, I watched the Naval Units fire on aircraft coming in low over the sea. A great many planes flew directly overhead, and I noticed that they had their wing lights on as well as an amber light near the nose of the ship. For the most part, installations in my immediate area held their fire, however, to the east of our position along the beach, ground elements took up the fire from the Naval units.

I should add that approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ hour before these airborne troops landed, the enemy had been over the beach installations dropping flares and a few anti-personnel and heavier type bombs. The men were therefore all alerted and manning their weapons.

The next day found many paratroopers all over the area- reorganizing - some of them fighting with our own infantrymen.

"Had the Naval and ground elements been informed of this Airborne operation beforehand, many lives and planes would have been saved."

(31)

Captain Edward M. Solomon, 18th Infantry, First Division, gave the following account of how it looked from GELA beach:

"During the afternoon of July 11, 1943, the 18th Infantry, a part of the force that landed on GELA beach, was notified that American paratroopers of the 82d Airborne Division, would be landed within our lines at 2300 this evening.

At approximately 2250 the same day, GELA beach was bombed by 3 or 4 enemy bombers. The enemies effort was met by a fairly intense display of Anti-aircraft fire, but the planes were gone within a minute

(31) Eyewitness statement, Capt Charles M. Conover to self.

or two.

A few minutes later, at 2300, we could hear the roar of planes coming toward us from the direction of the sea. The navigation lights could be seen shortly thereafter. We knew they were troop carrier planes with their loads of American paratroopers.

At this time our CP was in an olive grove approximately 1000 yards from the beach.

As the planes arrived over the scores of ships anchored off shore, they were met by a steady stream of anti-aircraft fire from the ship's anti-aircraft guns. Some of the beach Ack-Ack guns soon joined in adding to the hail of fire. The low flying transports had to plow through to reach their drop zone. Needless to say, most of them never made it.

We viewed this weird fratricidal disaster with a feeling of helpless frustration. The heart rendering scene which was being unfolded before our eyes was over in a matter of minutes. But the damage had been done. It was irrevocable.

A paratrooper - one of the more fortunate ones - landed in our immediate area. We reached him just as he was rolling up his chute. His chagrin at the latest turn of events was aptly expressed with liberal usage of expletives that have no place in this monograph. His opinion of his Brothers-in-arms was not complimentary to say the least. His point was well taken." (32)

Fired upon by our own Navy and shore troops, in one of the greatest tragedies of World War II, the 504th Parachute Infantry, was scattered like chaff in the wind over the length of breadth of Sicily. By morning only 400 of the regiment's 1600 men (excluding the 3rd Battalion) had reached the regimental area.

GUERRILLA WARFARE

Other plane loads of 504th CT men dropped in isolated groups on

(32) Eyewitness statement of Capt. Edward M. Solomon to self.

all parts of the island, and although unable to join the regiment, carried out demolitions, cut lines of communication, established inland roadblocks, ambushed German and Italian motorized columns, and caused confusion over such extensive area behind the enemy lines that initial German radio reports estimated the number of American parachutists dropped to be over ten times the number actually participating!

Road blocks were alerted to watch for German parachutists and brisk fights started between Airborne and ground troops. Even the 1st Division in whose area the drop was supposed to take place, carried the 504th RCT as an identified German Parachute Regiment in its G-2 Report. (33)

Two and one-half miles southeast of NISCEMI a group of between 95 and 100 troopers, under Lt George J. Watts, and Lt Willie J. Ferril, Company I, 504th Parachute Infantry, ambushed a force of 350 Germans, from the Herman Goering Division, retreating up the road. These paratroopers organized a strong point on a hill around a large chateau, later identified as CASTLE NOCERA.

They had already shot up a German patrol, and one small group had demolished an Italian patrol, killing 14. Eleven of these Italians were killed by two privates, Shelby R. Hord and Thomas E. Lane. The Germans made repeated attempts to dislodge them, and failing to do so, tried to ignore them and by-pass the Chateau, which overlooked the main NISCEMI-GELA road. The troopers made several sorties on the German troops moving south toward GELA. Finally the German movement changed and started back northward. On the following day this force began to increase. At noon an enemy column was observed coming up the road from the south. With the Germans were several American prisoners. Lt. Ferril withheld fire until the Germans were almost opposite his position. Then the Germans suddenly halted for a ten

(33) A-5.

minute break. The Troopers waited until the Germans started to get up and put on their packs, and then fired on them with devastating effect. The battle lasted all afternoon. It was joined by two enemy tanks which shelled the Americans from the far-off hills. Late in the afternoon, a German Lieutenant came up the hill with a white flag to arrange a surrender, but when he saw the Americans were parachutists he refused to surrender and went down the hill again. Then the battle was resumed and lasted until dusk, when the Germans withdrew, leaving 50 dead. The cost to the Americans was 5 killed and 15 wounded. These troopers held their position continuously, inflicting heavy losses on the enemy until contacted and relieved by elements of the 16th Infantry, First Infantry Division. (34)

Lieutenants Watts and Ferrell, both gallant young paratroopers were later killed. Lt Watts was killed on Hill 1205, near VENAFRO, ITALY, south of CASINO and Lt. Ferrel was killed near the MUSSOLINI CANAL, at the ANZIO BEACHEAD, ITALY. (35)

Approximately 2 miles northwest of BISCANI, First Lieutenant Peter J. Eaton, Headquarters Company, 3rd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry, Mortar Platoon Leader, took charge of 3 plane loads that landed intact. He rounded up all the equipment and men he could find and proceeded west toward NISCEMI.

At 1200, 10 July, scouts encountered 2 Italian cars towing 47-mm Anti-tank guns. They killed the occupants and took the guns. With this added equipment, positions were prepared, manned, and the roads to BISCARI covered and mined.

About 1230, a column of Italian motorized Infantry estimated to be a Battalion, was moving in from the direction of NISCEMI with an 11-ton tankette in the lead. Sergeant Suggs, Headquarters Company, and his men destroyed the tank with the captured 47-mm anti-tank guns and so disorganized the column with this fire, supported by his own

(34) A-7, pg. 11-12. (35) Eyewitness, self.

81-mm mortars, that the enemy retreated in confusion.

The following day, Lieutenant Eaton's group contacted a battalion of 180th Infantry and continued to fight with this force till the following day when he learned the location of the Battalion Command Post and joined it in the vicinity of GELA. (36)

At about 0200, 10 July, Major William H. Beal, 3rd Battalion Executive Officer, 504th Parachute Infantry and Captain William W. Kitchen, landed beside an Italian garrison. The enemy having knowledge of the presence of paratroopers, were combing the area in the dark. About 200 yards away, Major Beal heard machine gun and intermittent carbine fire, he knew then other paratroopers were in the area. About 0730, an advance patrol of Canadians came up, and gave their positions to Major Beal. He asked them to assist him in attacking the Italian garrison, but was unable to secure it, since they had another mission of establishing and protecting beach-heads in another zone. He then worked his way back to the beach; where he got assistance; returned, captured the garrison, and released six paratroopers which were imprisoned by the Italians. Major Beal continued his search for more men, and with what he rounded up, went back to the beach, where they remained all night.

On the morning of 11 July, Major Beal went out to the 1st Division Headquarters afoot, to arrange for transportation in order to enable him to rejoin his unit.

12 July, Major Beal, Captain Kitchen, and 18 enlisted men left by RAF crash boat to rejoin their unit, and stopping enroute at coast towns to pick up any paratroopers that may be there. Landed at SCOGLITTI on 13 July, and reported to the 505th CI, CP, with Captain Kitchen, one other officer and 48 enlisted men from various organizations. At VITTORIA, Major Beal was told that the Battalion

(36) A-7, pg. 35-36. (37)

Commanding Officer had been captured and he was in Command. He proceeded to organize the remainder of the Battalion preparatory to continuing operations. When the reorganization was affected, the total strength of the battalion was 4 officers and 90 enlisted men. The Battalion then moved out to join the 504th RCT.

Major Beal was later killed at CHIUNZI PASS, between MAIORI and the valley of NAPLES, ITALY.

REORGANIZATION

The Commanding General of the Division, Major General M. B. Ridgeway and his special command party disembarked from the MONROVIA and set up a Division CP about 3 miles southeast of GELA and one mile from the coast. (37)

As the reassembly progressed, preparations for action were being made. On 13 July 1943, the 3d Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry, rejoined the 504th Combat Team. The 505th RCT assembled in this area also, thus forming the 82d Airborne Division. Upon completion of the assembly, the 504th RCT had one manually drawn 75-mm Pack Howitzer for artillery support.

At noon on the 15th, a directive was received from Seventh Army, ordering the 82d Airborne Division to assemble in the PALMA DI MONTECHIARO area, to relieve elements of the 3d Division in that area by dark, 19 July and to be prepared to advance west. The projected zone of action of the Division was a coastal strip including Highway #115 and extending 5-10 miles inland, until, in the vicinity of the VERDURA River, west of RIBERA, the right boundary, shared with the 3d Division, turned north to PALERMO. The left boundary was the sea.

The movement west from the assembly area near GELA began at 0600 17 July, to the new area west of PALMA. On the 17 July at 1100 hours, Provisional Corps directed immediate relief of the 3d Division in the 82d zone. On the afternoon of the 18 July the 504th moved to an area near REALMONTE, from which it could undertake an advance the next day. (38)

(37) A-7, pg. 13. (38) A-7, pg. 14

THE CAMPAIGN

The Provisional Corps Field Order #1, issued at 1500, 18 July, directed the Division to advance by 0800 the 19th from the REALMONTE LINE, and the Division Field Order #2 of the same day, directed the 504th RCT to relieve Combat Team #39, by 0800 the 19th, secure crossings over the CANNE River by daylight and continue westward. Battery A and B of the 83rd Chemical Battalion and Battery A of the 82nd Armored Field Artillery were attached to the 504th for this mission. (39)

By noon the 18th some elements of the Combat Team made an envelopment to the far side of REALMONTE even before formal orders were issued. The Combat Team moved out into the attack, spearheading the coastal drive of the 82nd Airborne Division, with Italian light tanks, motorcycles, donkeys, bicycles, trucks and even wheelbarrows for transportation the regiment pressed forward; a cocky, spirited bunch of "mechanized" paratroopers heading into battle. Before dark the CT secured the CANNE crossings and the high ground to the west. At 0300 the 19th, troops of the 2d battalion were in MONTALLEGRO; at 0900 at the PLATANI River; at 1015 at the MAGGAZOLO River; and at 1200 had occupied RIBERA.

Upon continuing the attack, the point of the 2d Battalion, came under small arms fire a few minutes west of RIBERA, but without being caused any delay of ^{by} casualties, except on three different occasions ^{from} strafing by ME 110's. Resistance for the most part was light; the Germans had withdrawn to the north and east, leaving behind garrisons of Italian soldiers who would fire a few shots, and having "saved face" (and other portions of their respective anatomies) would raise the white flag of surrender.

Before 2100, they had reached and were stopped by the Corps

(39) A-7, pg. 14

phase line halfway between RIBERA and SCIACCA.

At 0430 the 20th, the Combat Team was directed to proceed with the attack by 0600. The attack began on schedule, and leading elements entered SCIACCA at 0925, but the preparation of a difficult bypass around a demolished bridge on the western outskirts of SCIACCA and the removal of mines in that vicinity so delayed the main body that it did not pass through the city until about noon. There were many formidable pillboxes, some of which were three stories high with basements. There were one or two on every hill and in places where they could command the roads, all of them were expertly camouflaged and surrounded by double apron wire. (40)

Tank traps approximately 15' x 8' x 10' with 12" spikes in the bottom were dug across the road. They were camouflaged with cross pieces placed over the tops of the pits, callahan matting or burlap placed on the crosspieces and strewn with dirt.

The Italians apparently learned this trick from the Natives in the Ethiopian campaign. No vehicles to my knowledge have been caught by these ingenious traps. (41)

The 2d Battalion, then leading, was turned north on the SAN MARGHERITA Road with TUMMINELLO as the night's objective and Combat Team 504-(2d Battalion) continued west on Highway #15 toward MENFI, which was entered by 1800. By nightfall the 2d Battalion reached a point about 8 miles north of SCIACCA, both sides were somewhat delayed during the afternoon by minefields, and the 1st Battalion of the 504th, leading from SCIACCA to MENFI, was fired on briefly by a battery of 75-mm guns, which were quickly captured.

The advance during the day was about 20 miles; the number of prisoners taken approximately 1000; and our own casualties, two. North of SCIACCA was discovered an abandoned German bivouac area and anti-aircraft position, and a large Italian Quartermaster dump.

(40) Eyewitness, self. A-7, pg. 14, 15. (41) Eyewitness, self.

The 2d Battalion which had stopped about 5 miles short of TUMMINNELLO the night before, resumed its advance the morning of the 21st and reached TUMMINNELLO at 0800. The enemy, prepared at this point in a pass, a strong natural position, fired point blank at the column, killing 6 and wounding 8 of Company F. The column immediately deployed. Colonel Yarborough, the Battalion Commander ordered "Fix Bayonets" and made a long bayonet attack, capturing the position with all its personnel, and Italian Colonel, a battery of 75-mm guns, and 2 90-mm guns.

At the end of the day the 2d Battalion was occupying SAMBUCA; and the remainder of the Regiment was moving from MENFI to SAN MARGHERITA. (42)

The gruelling Mediterranean sun, however, told on the foot-weary paratroopers; it was march, march, march, day and night. They prayed for the enemy to make a stand so that they could stop and fight - and rest. For five days and nights this continued and in an outstanding tribute to the physical stamina of parachute troops, men of the 504th walked and fought their way from AGRIGENTO to ST. MARGUERITA - a distance of 150 miles. (43)

At 0830, 23 July, Corps orders were received by Division to move without delay to seize TRIPANI.

THE SURRENDER

Combat 505 moved by truck to TRIPANI. A treaty of surrender was immediately dictated by General Ridgeway to Admiral Manfredi, Commander of the TRIPANI district, requiring cessation of resistance, preservation of stores, and the posting of guards on all military and naval property. In addition to Admiral Manfredi, Brigadier General Antonio Sodero, who was to have succeeded the Admiral in the command of the district, and 2639 other prisoners were taken during the evening of the 23d and the day of the 24th, in and around the city of TRIFANI.

(42) A-7, pg. 16. (43) Eyewitness, self.

Also captured were an uncounted amount of guns, other artillery and naval material, and stores, which were hidden in tunnels in the mountains. (44)

During the afternoon of the 23rd, Colonel Yarbrough, Commanding Officer, 2d Battalion, entered CASTELLAMMARE D GULFO with a reconnaissance party and persuaded the Italian Colonel to surrender his forces.

The defenses were strong. The shore line was rocky and sharp; All beaches were mined. Coastal guns were covered by small arms and automatic weapons; All approaches were covered, except those inland. The defenses were all pointing out to the sea.

The approach to CASTELLAMMARE was a winding road on the face of a steep bluff. An anti-facist reported this road as being prepared for demolition. He disclosed the position of the charges to the engineers before they could be blown. Approximately 10 tons of explosives (Similar to TNT blocks) were tamped with sandbags underneath the road in a tunnel 3 feet square and 24 feet in length, with electric detonating leads running up to a farm house several hundred yards from the road. These charges were immediately neutralized and removed by Captain (Spike) Harris and his men of Company C, 307th Engineers.

Had this road been demolished, CASTELLAMMARE would not have been accessible by vehicle. Due to the nature of the terrain surrounding the town, it would take a considerable length of time, effort, labor and material (which was not available) to reconstruct the road. Apparently the individual or group assigned the mission of demolishing this road decided it most unwise, since they would be merely isolating themselves and cutting their own life-line. (45)

On the morning of the 24th, Combat Team 504 proceeded to ALCAMO, where a Division Command Post was captured along with large enemy equipment and stores. (46)

(44) A-7, pg. 17. (45) Eyewitness, self, and statement Capt Harris.

(46) Eye-witness, self.

The final objective was taken, the south and western portion of SICILY was in the hands of the Americans. The Regiment then moved south to CASTELVETRANO to police the occupied area and garrison it against the possibility of enemy counterattack, assembly captured stores, and gather in straggling prisoners. This was to be the work of many days. Prisoners were still being picked up, and drifted in from isolated outposts for weeks to follow. Enemy barracks and stores which were being looted were placed under guard and the food stores later appropriated to feed prisoners. Among the food stores taken were 28,000 hard rations from one warehouse, 700 pounds of beef, 2000 pounds of sugar, 500 pounds of coffee, 400 gallons of tomato paste and a huge supply of Italian uniforms. (47)

The EGADI ISLANDS - FAVIGNANA, LEVANZP, and MARETTIMO situated 10-20 miles off TRIPANI, which had been out of communication with the mainland since the 23d, surrendered 29th July to Captain Richard Gerard, of the G-3 Section and 1st Lieutenant Louis P. Testa, P.W.I., who approached FAVIGNANA in a sail boat and negotiated a surrender with Lieutenant Colonel Silvio Serralunga. The population of the islands is about 6000; their garrison was nearly 1000. (48)

THE RELIEF - RETURN TO AFRICA

The 82d Airborne Division was relieved from the Sicilian Army of Occupation and directed to return to its base in KAIROUAN. Orders were received to send staff representatives to Seventh Army Headquarters in PALERMO to formulate plans to move the Division by truck to PALERMO, thence by sea to BIZERTE and thence by truck to KAIROUAN. The G-3 and assistant G-3 departed from TRIPANI on August 17 on this mission. The Division Commander was in ALGIERS when these orders were received. (49)

At 1500, 18th August, a radio from the Division Commander at ALGIERS was received at TRIPANI, directing the Chief of Staff and the

(47) Eyewitness, self. (48) A-7, pg. 18. (49) A-7, pg. 43.

two parachute Combat Team Commanders to meet him at 1600 on CASTELVETRANO airfield. At CASTELVETRANO the Division Commander informed these officers that all arrangements had been made and that, commencing the next morning, the troops in SICILY would be prepared for air movement back to KAIROUAN.

During the night units scattered over the western end of Sicily were alerted by radio, telephone and courier. The Division had only 24 trucks to move personnel and equipment to the airfields, which were as much as 45 miles away. At 0200 the orders were confirmed. On that day, 19th August, the Combat Team moved out to the CASTELVETRANO airfield, loaded up quickly into C-47's and was transported back to KAIROUAN, North Africa. Speed was essential and it is well indeed that the movement was executed by air without red tape and complicated "co-ordination". The troops and equipment simply loaded up and took off for NORTH AFRICA. The staff officers who had been in Army Headquarters at PALERMO formulating the move by sea to North Africa arrived with approved but complicated plans for a rail-water journey just in time to board the last transport plane to Africa. The official confirmatory orders for the truck and sea movement arrived three days later, after the Division closed in the KAIROUAN Area. Only sixteen days until D Day (Italy). (50)

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISMS

To analyze this operation: the 504th Parachute Infantry Regimental Combat Team was given a mission of making a night parachute drop, reinforcing the 505th Combat Team; to seize specific objectives which were vital to the rapid advance to the seaborne forces; to prevent or to delay the arrival of enemy reinforcements; and a fundamental function of airborne troops - to create confusion and alarm in the mind of the enemy command and enemy troops.

A comparatively small portion of the total forces engaged was land-

(50) A-7, pg. 43.

ed on the correct DZ (Drop Zone). The paratroopers were scattered as far as 60 miles apart, from NOTO to LICATA. Nevertheless, the objectives were gained, and the fact that the landings of the sea-borne forces were largely unopposed may reasonably be attributed to the unrehearsed but energetic and determined action of those airborne troops who, although landed outside their zones, assisted in spreading the rumor that several Airborne Divisions descended on the island. This rumor, it may be noted, must certainly have been given additional substance by the simultaneous drop of 600 dummies.

Although the SICILIAN Operation was costly, both in lives and equipment (casualties 33 Officers and 355 Enlisted Men), valuable experience was gained by those who survived, untold damage was inflicted behind enemy lines and many prisoners were captured.

Everywhere the Germans and Italians saw small groups of troopers coming out of the night. The panic of not knowing how many were coming, or from where, had its demoralizing psychological effect.

Upon effecting a reorganization, the RCT moved out in the attack, spearheading the coastal drive of the 82d Airborne Division. All objectives were taken rapidly, successfully and with very little casualties.

German General Kurt Student, foremost authority in the German Army on Airborne operations and who was commander of the Airborne Operations on CRETE, made the following statement at NUREMBERG trial:

"The Allied Airborne Operation in SICILY was decisive, despite widely scattered drops, which must be expected in a night landing. It is my opinion that if it had not been for the Allied Airborne Forces blocking the Herman Goering Armored Division from reaching the beach-head, that Division would have driven the initial seaborne forces back into the sea. I attribute the entire success of the Allied Sicilian Operations to the delaying of German Reserves (by the 82d Airborne Division) until sufficient forces had been landed by sea to resist the

counterattacks by our defending forces (the strength of which had been held in mobile reserve)."

The points in the criticism of this operation are as follows:

1. Navigation on the flight to the DZ was generally unsatisfactory.

In spite of the clear weather, a quarter moon, the existence of MALTA as a check and easily recognizable coastline, the navigation by the Troop-carrier air-crew went wrong.

2. There was no countersign or parole for the entire task force. Each Division had its own set of passwords. Amphibious units other than the First Division were not conversant with the parachute operations and were not familiar with the parachute uniforms.

3. The planning and staff work was not centralized: The 82d Airborne Division was under the Seventh Army. Allotment of aircraft was decided by AFHQ, Mediterranean Air Command, the 15th Army Group, and the details of control and training were carried out by the Troop Carrier Command. There was no combined Airborne-Air Corps training, nor was there a rehearsal for the operation.

4. Apparently the Navy and ground troops were not informed of the arrival of friendly airborne troops. Upon being questioned, certain members of the 45th Division stated that they were instructed to be on the lookout for German parachutists at the time that we were about to drop. One unit actually carried the 82d Airborne Division on its G-2 report as an identified German Airborne Division. Even though the planes sacrificed security, for the sake of recognition, friendly naval and anti-aircraft fire shot them down. Anti-aircraft control appeared to be non-existent.

5. There were very few parachutists on the General or Special Staff of the Division, despite the fact that both regiments to participate in the SICILIAN operation were parachute units. These staff officers were not conversant with many parachute problems and had to rely wholly on the parachute regiments for guidance.

6. No member of the Division staff came in by plane with either of the parachute regiments. The Forward Division CP was afloat. Later the Division Command Group disembarked and established its CP on the island in the vicinity of GELA.

7. Communications were difficult: The radio equipment employed by this Combat Team was unsatisfactory due to its limited range and sensitivity to local terrain.

Wire was impossible to lay; due to the rapidity with which the Regiment advanced, shortage of equipment, personnel and transportation.

LESSONS

Some of the lessons to be learned from this operation are:

1. As much navigational assistance that can be obtained should be used enroute to the DZ at night. The lanes across the sea should be patrolled by vessels, preferably submarines, specially detailed, and trained, in the use of radar and lights to mark the lanes. In the initial assault, and at the risk of sacrificing surprise, picked crews will have to be used to land small parties to set up homing devices to guide the aircraft into the desired DZ.

Most tactical situations will permit the employment of navigational equipment. Training should be conducted with a view to their habitual employment. Without positive navigational assistance on the DZ, it can be expected that many ships will not arrive at the proper DZ in a night operation.

Airborne troops are of a very high quality and their training takes time and expense. They are given important tasks which may acutely affect the operations as a whole. Correct navigation is therefore, essential both from the operational and psychological point of view.

2. A common password should be used by the whole task force.

3. The planning, staff work, combined training, and control prior to an operation of Airborne forces needs to be centralized to a very high degree. Certain amount of confusion must be accepted as

normal, but if "little things" go wrong in an airborne operation, confusion is increased in magnitude.

4. The launching of an airborne operation entails the closest cooperation between Naval, Ground and Air Forces. This is primarily so with respect to the problem of the route to be followed by the planes over the sea. Over water routes, for troop carrier formations, should be a path about ten miles wide, cleared of shipping and marked by vessels with lights every 50 to 75 miles. The entire task force should be warned of the flight, giving the time, route, altitude, and recognition signal.

5. All members of the Division Staff of an Airborne Division should be qualified paratroopers, and jump into the operation with the troops. Psychology plays a dominant role in an airborne organization. The men will go anywhere and do anything as long as they see their leader up ahead of them. "Men are lead and not pushed." The jump-master in each plane is an officer and the first one to make the exit. The men follow like a string of pearls. An example of eagerness on the part of men to follow their leader was when several men were severely wounded by flak in the flight over SICILY: these men were too weak to stand up, but upon seeing their Company Commander jump, asked their buddies to scoot them down and help them out the door of the plane.

6. Strict anti-aircraft discipline, both Naval and Military must be maintained at all times.

7. Except for individuals heavily loaded with special equipment, every individual should jump with an anti-tank mine. The Hawkins mine has proven very satisfactory, it's only disadvantage being a light charge. In addition, larger mines should be dropped in parachute containers, scattered throughout the entire organization, as well as concentrated loads with Engineer units.

8. When villages are encountered and must be passed through,

it is best to first send a strong patrol to the far side of the village to cut communications and prevent enemy withdrawal and destroy any enemy attempting to withdraw. In the attack on villages by large units the village should be enveloped first and, time permitting, a patrol should work back from the far side of the village, clearing it from the direction of the enemy.

9. In organizing a defense great care must be exercised in placing individual's and weapons so that they will not be exposed to direct hostile fire. With the present large scale use of time fire and automatic weapons, forward slopes are untenable without heavy losses. The proper use of cover will probably contribute more to a successful defense than extensive fields of fire. If ground must be held, a forward slope can be held with a light covering-security force with the bulk of the troops dug in on the reverse slope. Certain units should be designated to execute counterattacks on pre-arranged signals. Many airborne missions require units to hold until relieved. This, to be accomplished, makes it highly important to select ground that is not suitable for enemy tank employment, since airborne troops are initially very vulnerable to armor attacks. In the event tanks do penetrate, they should be permitted to pass through and the infantry following them must be destroyed or driven off.

10. The enemy has organized his defenses based on physically occupying key terrain such as good observation points, canal crossings and bridges. There were usually a number of gaps in his defense that he covered by fire, but did not physically occupy. It has proven practicable in some instances to push large units through these gaps under cover of darkness with a mission of seizing and holding key terrain in the enemy's rear. In the long run more can be accomplished in this manner with less loss of life than by deploying in a straight frontal attack. More and more the attack was becoming a case of making a strong reconnaissance in force and then rapidly following up to hold what has

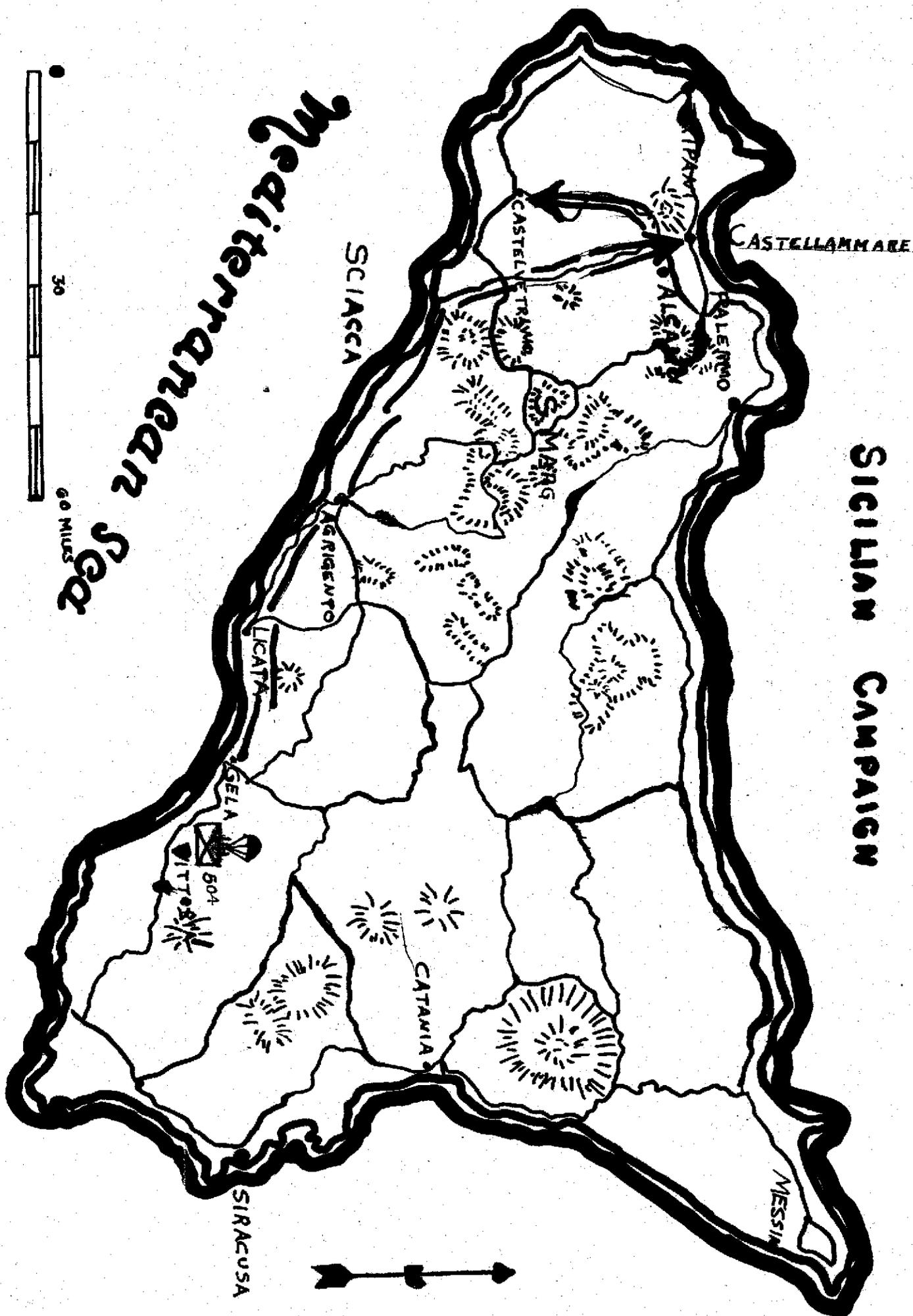
been gained rather than applying a uniform pressure along the entire front. When such advances are made at night, it is most important to be on suitable defensive terrain by daylight. Units caught in low terrain, subject to hostile observation and fire, are certain to receive heavy casualties.

11. Great care must be taken to insure that preliminary bombing during the actual airborne flight and landings do not so light up the ground by explosions and fires that recognition of routes and of DZ's become difficult. For example: a large fire near lake BIVIERE itself (an important landmark on the route) ^{made the lake} very difficult to see, and many aircraft lost their way at this point.

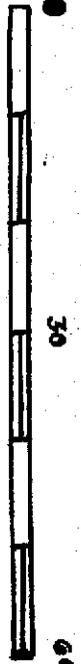
12. The accomplishment of the mission is a tribute to the fighting heart, skill, courage and initiative of individuals and small unit commanders.

Here in SICILY the "Airborne Pioneers" proved the hard way that vertical envelopment at night was feasible, and almost impossible to stop. These men had the mental and physical courage to try anything, asking and expecting no odds. For as the dispersal was widespread, so also were the surprises and confusion of the enemy.

SICILIAN CAMPAIGN



Mediterranean Sea



DROPS AS REPORTED BY OFFICERS
OF THE 504 PCT

