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THE OPERATIONS OF COMPANY "B", 12TH INFANTRY REGIMENT
(4TH INFANTRY DIVISION), IN THE HURTGEN FOREST, WEST
OF GEY, GERMANY, 28 NOVEMBER - 5 DECEMBER 1944
(RHINELAND CAMPAIGN)
(Personal experience of a Company Commander)

Type of operation described: INFANTRY COMPANY ATTACKING
AND DEFENDING IN HEAVY WOODS

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INTRODUCTION

General George S. Patton Jr., in a letter to Major General Raymond O. Barton said in part: "So far as I know, no American division in France has excelled the magnificent record of the 4th Infantry Division, which has been almost continuously in action since it fought its way ashore on the 6th day of last June."

"Your fight in the Hurtgen Forest was an epic of stark Infantry combat." (1)

The fight in the Hurtgen forest was action of the individual rifleman. The normal accompanying team of Artillery and Tanks was used infrequently in that the limiting terrain characteristics, consisting of deep ravines and steep ridges coupled with extremely limited visibility, made it impracticable, if not impossible, to use these allied arms.

This combat action is the account of Company "B", 12th Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Division, from 28 November 1944 to 5 December 1944, in its final action to clear the Hurtgen Forest and to seize, organize and hold the high ground west of and overlooking the town of Gey, Germany. (See Map C)

On 6 June 1944, the 4th Infantry Division stormed the beaches of Normandy, landing at H-hour, D-day on Utah Beach. By 25 June, Cherbourg had been cleared by elements of the Division. Completing the Normandy Campaign on 24 July, the "Ivy" Division participated in the St. Lo breakthrough on 25 July to begin the Northern France Campaign, which lasted from 25 July to 14 September. During this phase, the Division participated in the mad dash across France. The Belgian border was crossed on 6 September 1944 and the Siegfried Line was first breached on the first day of the Rhine-

(1) A-3, p. 36.

land Campaign which officially began on 15 September 1944. The 4th Division remained in Schnee Eifel Forest section of the Seigfried Line until 4 October 1944, when relief was effected by the 2nd Infantry Division. The Division then moved north to the vicinity of Bullingen, Belgium and remained in this quiet sector until 7 November 1944. (2)

The jubilant days of August and September were gone; the war was not to be over in a matter of days. The pace of advance, instead of forty miles a day, was now measured in several hundreds of yards on an allotment of four or five rounds per artillery gun per day.

Commencing on 8 November 1944, near Zweifall, Germany, the 12th Infantry Regiment, a part of the 4th Infantry Division, was given the mission of driving north and clearing a portion of the Hurtgen Forest in order to reach the Cologne Plain. (3)

This coming action of one month duration in the Hurtgen Forest gave the 4th Infantry Division three of its four Congressional Medals of Honor.

The Hurtgen Forest, covering approximately 50 square miles, was characterized by lofty evergreens, closely spaced and reaching into the sky to a height of almost 100 feet, thus screening the warming and light-giving rays of the sun. In addition, this area was void of a road net adequate to meet the logistical requirements of an Infantry Division. (4)

The German Military had estimated this area to be an excellent defensive zone, in as much as the natural obstacle, in the form of the trees, which were wide in girth and full in foliage, gave a feeling of depression to all who ventured and stayed within their depths for even short periods of fighting. To make the area even more formidable, the Germans intensified their defenses in the form of artificial obstacles consisting of anti-personnel mines, wire, pillboxes, trench systems and covered bunkers. This was a zone incorporated into their Seigfried Line fortifications. (5)

(2) Personal Experience; (3) A-2, p. 196; (4)(5) Personal Experience.

*This is a
new thought
questionable.*

Just where does this fit in to the terrain & weather.

General J. Lawton Collins, Commanding General of VII Corps said,

"Combat in woods calls for topnotch leadership on the part of small unit commanders and the highest order of individual courage. The drive of the 4th Infantry Division across its sector of the Hurtgen Forest required a continuous display of these qualities under the most adverse conditions of terrain and weather." (6)

The cold, dank month of November contributed substantially decreasing forward movements of Allied troops. The German fighting on his own "sacred soil" fought stubbornly, even fanatically for every yard. (7)

This is analysis & reflection material.

The Battle of the Hurtgen Forest was characterized by units operating in heavy woods. This type of action called for increased demand in control in lower units. An added problem was the factor of distance between units. Contact was seldom achieved with units on the flanks. (8)

There was a general lack of artillery supporting fires due to the difficulty of observed fires. Also, an artillery round would enter the target at an angle and this would very often cause the round to detonate prior to its arrival in the target area. This premature detonation would either cause casualties to friendly troops or would result in a wasted round. (9)

The range of radios, organic to the Infantry Regiment, was decreased because of the dense woods. (10)

Resupply of rifle companies was a continuous problem. Many times decisions had to be made to determine that portion of the essential elements of supply to be sent forward to the Rifle Company. (11)

The account of this combat action will bring forth various ways in which these difficulties were overcome, thus enabling Company "B" to accomplish its mission. (12)

(6) A-3, p. 32; (7)(8)(9)(10)(11)(12) Personal Experience.

GENERAL SITUATION

12th Army Group published Letter of Instructions number Ten on the same day that Aachen fell, ordering a regroupment of all three Armies and a November advance to the Rhine.

The crossing of the Roer river, below the dams, was not considered within the scope of a calculated risk as long as the large dams above the crossing sites remained in German hands. The only direct method to seize these dams would be to attack through the Hurtgen Forest and seize the dams. This mission was given to the First Army. (13) (See Map B)

The First Army, commanded by General Courtney Hodges, consisting of three Corps, the V, VII, and VIII, having cleared the Aachen area 21 October 1944, had the mission of driving to the Roer river.

The VII Corps consisted of the 1st, 4th, and 104th Infantry Divisions, with the 3rd Armored in the tank role. (14)

The 4th Infantry Division was assigned the sector in the Hurtgen Forest on the right flank of the VII Corps which was the northern Corps in line. (15) (See Map A)

On 28 November 1944, the 104th Infantry Division, to the north on the left flank of VII Corps, attacking before dawn, advanced 2,000 yards, entering the towns of Lamersdorf and Inden. The front of this Division was established on the Inde river. One bridge over this river was secured intact. (16)

The First Infantry Division, in its sector, advanced across the highway east of Langerwehe. Langerwehe was cleared by elements of the 18th Infantry Regiment and local security was placed along the stream about one half a mile northeast of Langerwehe. One battalion established itself in the edge of the woods in the vicinity of Merode and late in the afternoon was fighting in the town of Merode. (17) (See Map B)

(13) A-4, p. 11; (14) A-1, p. 71; (15) A-1, p. 71; (16) A-1, p. 82;

(17) A-1, p. 83.

The 3rd Armored Division remained in reserve in the vicinity of Stolberg.

In the V Corps sector to the south of the 4th Infantry Division, the action continued to the east along the southern edge of the forest south of the town of Hurtgen. (18)

Elements of the German 1st SS, 9th SS and 10th SS Panzer Divisions were reported to be in the area west of Cologne. Confirmed information indicated that Sixth SS Panzer Army was being placed in the reserve role to counter-attack if the First Army succeeded in crossing the Roer river. (19)

In addition, the Fifteenth German Army was placed in the vicinity of Koenigshoven.

The first US Army estimate of the enemy situation indicated a general build up of troop strength. (20)

The enemy, during the third week in November, reinforced his units in front of the First Army by bringing in the 26th Volksgrenadier Division, 47th Infantry Division and the 277th Infantry Division. The 3rd Parachute and the 344th Infantry Divisions were added and one week later the 326th Infantry and the 352nd Infantry Divisions were placed in front of the 1st Army. (21)

German units identified by the 12th Infantry Regiment, in the Hurtgen Forest included the 183rd Volksgrenadier Division, 47th Infantry Division, 353rd Infantry Division and Independent Fortress Battalions. The German organization of the Hurtgen Forest defenses was dual in nature, primary use of the natural obstacles and strengthening these obstacles by the use of all artificial obstacles at their disposal in order to strengthen their defensive positions. (22)

(18) A-1, p. 83; (19) A-1, p. 83; (20) A-1, p. 84; (21) A-5, p. 23;

(22) A-1, p. 165; A-9, pps. 196, 155, 246; Personal Experience.

THE DIVISION SITUATION

The 4th Infantry Division, occupying the extreme right flank of VII Corps, had both its right and left boundaries within the confines of the Hurtgen Forest. (23)

On 29 November, the 4th Cavalry Group was placed in line to fill the gap between the 1st Infantry Division and the 8th Infantry Regiment which was the left Regiment in the 4th Infantry Division sector. (24) (See Map B)

The 8th Infantry Regiment continued to advance approximately 1,000 yards to the east astride the Schevenhutte-Duran road.

To the south, elements of the 22nd Infantry cleared the village of Grosshau and moved north along the Grosshau-Duran Road, entering the woods just north of the town. (25) (See Map B)

The 12th Infantry Regiment continued to advance astride the Grosshau-Duran road up to a distance of 900 yards. (26) (See Map B)

THE BATTALION SITUATION

On 28 November, the 1st Battalion, moving north on the Renn-Weg road in the formation, column of companies in the order A, C, B Company. Company "A" was given the mission of capturing Hill 90, north of Grosshau. After a severe fire fight they captured the position and took 35 prisoners. (26) (See Map C)

The woods were cleared to the north as far as RJ 357.6. This entire area was found to be heavily mined and no vehicles were permitted to proceed on the Renn-Weg north until the Division Engineers cleared the road. The Battalion Commander designated the area just east of the Renn-Weg road between RJ 357.6 and RJ 386.4 as the battalion front. This area to be occupied by Company "B" facing ^{east} west. The remainder of the Battalion occupied the zone to the rear of Company "B". (27) (See Map C)

(23) A-2, p. 196; (24) A-1, p. 83; (25) A-1, p. 83; (26) A-1, p. 83;

(27) A-2, p. 226.

THE COMPANY SITUATION
THE ATTACK

Company "B" closed into the assigned area about 1300 hours on 28 November. (See Map C) ^{RA} The Company Commander had just been killed by an anti-personnel mine.

The Battalion Commander, realizing that this company would probably be used in the attack the next day, sent one of his officers, a Captain from Battalion, to take command of this company. (28)

The newly assigned Company Commander arrived at the company about 1330 hours. (29)

The Company Commander observed that the entire company seemed nervous and extremely fatigued. The men had begun to dig holes for the night. Checking over his company area, he came upon one of the machine gun crews which had not gone into its assigned area to take up its sector of the final protective fires. The Squad Leader, when questioned as to why he had not gone into position, indicated that he felt the position was booby trapped. Lying on the ground were several German hand grenades of the "potato masher" type. When further inspected, it was determined that these grenades were not booby trapped. (30)

The Company Commander inspected the tubes of the mortars and it was apparent that they had not been fired in some time. When asked about the recent firing of the mortars, the Platoon Sergeant indicated that they had not been fired. The Sergeant further indicated that sufficient quantities of ammunition were available. The Mortar section was told that they were going to be used on the first suitable target. (31)

The company continued to dig-in their positions and each double fox-hole was covered by placing a layer of logs and a layer of earth over the hole. This would normally stop all shell fragments, except direct hits. (32)

(28)(29)(30)(31)(32) Personal Experience.

About 1510 hours Battalion called. Baker Company was ordered to send out a patrol to reconnoiter the routes and enemy dispositions east of Baker Company's position. The patrol was to advance east on the north side of the road to Gey, to the point 357.2; cross the road and return by the trail running just south of the road. (See Map C) This patrol would be completed before dark. The 2nd Platoon was designated to send out the patrol. Because of the fatigued condition of the men, the Platoon Leader was designated to lead the patrol. This patrol, consisting of the officer and one squad, left the area about 1525 hours. (33) (See Map C)

At 1600 hours, the Company Supply Sergeant arrived in the company area, having used the Renn-Weg road from the south, brought with him a hot meal of C rations, bedding rolls and ^{Mc} ^{Mc} ten reinforcements. The reinforcements included former members of the company and the remainder were new men with no prior combat service. The former members of the company were returned to their own platoons and the new men were divided among the rifle platoons. (34)

The patrol returned just prior to dark; the Lieutenant, 2nd Platoon, reported that he had covered the entire assigned sector. He stated that no enemy was ^{seen} encountered nor was the patrol fired upon. He further reported that the road to Gey was impassable in that the Germans had felled the trees every few feet and each tree inspected was mined or booby trapped. He also reported that a dead American was located in the woods about 100 yards east of the present position. This information was reported by wire to Battalion. (35)

After dark the Company Commander continued to circulate among the men in the company. This was easy as the companies habitually went into a close perimeter defense each night. The company, at this time, had been in the lines for twenty-one days and had suffered heavy casualties. The men had various mental attitudes. Normally, even in combat, it is not hard to draw a soldier into conversation. Most of these men just would not talk and when they did, it was in a racking or listless manner. (36)

(33)(34)(35)(36) Personal Experience.

The reenforcements were in a different mood from the older men. These men were extremely talkative; not having been shelled yet, they still did not quite realize the shock of battle they were soon to receive. (37)

About 2100 hours Battalion called on the EES and instructed the Company Commander to report to Battalion at 2200 hours for the attack order. The Company Commander took his messenger and reported at the time designated. (38)

The Battalion Commander gave the oral attack order as follows: "The Battalion would attack to the east at 0900 hours on 29 November, in a column of companies in the order B, C, A. The LD would be the Renn-Weg road. Company B would follow the route indicated and seize the high ground overlooking the town of Gey." (39) (See Map C)

This distance to the Battalion objective was about 1300 yards. The Company Commander was given one 1:25,000 topographical map. The Battalion Commander had an aerial photo of the area which he told the Company Commander to commit to memory. An attempt was made to do this. (40)

Returning to the company, the Company Commander called a meeting of the Platoon Leaders and issued the attack order. The attack would proceed in a column of platoons in the order 1st, 2nd, Weapons, 3rd, without artillery or mortar preparations. The Company Commander would be with the 1st Platoon and the remainder of Company Command group would follow the Weapons Platoon. There were no questions and no comments. (41)

The Company Supply Sergeant arrived at the company location in a $\frac{1}{4}$ ton 4x4 with trailer 2⁹ 0400 November with a hot breakfast, extra ammunition, including 30 extra rounds of 60 MM Mortar ammunition and one day's issue of K rations. It was SOP for the Supply Sergeant to remain in the company area until the entire company cleared. The supply group would then load the rolls and make a very thorough search of the company area in order to pick up any equipment the men left behind. (42)

(37)(38)(39)(40)(41)(42) Personal Experience.

The 1st Platoon, followed by the remainder of the company, crossed the Renn-Weg road at 0900 hours (south) of the Gey road and plunged into the woods. The woods were extremely dense at this point. The platoon advanced about one hundred yards and stopped. Up to this time there was no firing and only the dead American brought home the stark reality of war. The Company Commander, wishing to have the movement continue, moved up through the 1st platoon, which was stopped on the trail, in a column of squads. The head of the platoon had reached the edge of a clearing. The Platoon Leader had halted the advance of his platoon, because of the open ground to the ^{NOW} front. The Gey road was about thirty yards to the left of the platoon. Since the company had to cross the road in order to proceed to the objective and the other side of the road offered better concealment, the Company Commander decided to turn north, across the road and east toward the objective. (43)

The Platoon Leader moved to the edge of the road, hesitated a moment and rushed across. The Company Commander followed as soon as the Platoon Leader reached the far side. Just as this officer cleared the center of the road, a short burst was fired at him from a point about 300 yards down the road in the direction of Gey. The Platoon Sergeant placed several men in position and had the remainder of the platoon cross the road in squad rushes. No further firing was encountered by this platoon. (See Map C)

The Company Commander called on the SCR 536 to the 2nd platoon and told them to remain on the south side of the Gey road. He did this to avoid being pinned down on the north side of the road. The Enemy had been alerted as to the movement to his front. From the direction of the firing, it would be impossible for him to determine the strength or the objective of the company's movement. (44)

The 1st Platoon, upon reaching the north side of the Gey road, began its movement to the east. The 2nd Platoon was told to cross the Gey road and follow. The 1st Platoon advanced about 150 yards and was fired upon by automatic weapons and small arms fire. The Platoon showed excellent fire control (43)(44) Personal Experience.

and discipline by immediately returning the fire, a characteristic reaction this company had developed and always employed when shot at. The men were never afraid to fire their weapons. The new men in the company invariably caught on quickly. The Platoon Leader and several men worked their way around to the ^{MC}Enemy's right flank. Alone, the Lieutenant rushed the position and was killed. The Enemy then left their positions and withdrew to the north, leaving several dead in their half-dug-in position. (45) (See Map C)

While the 1st Platoon was engaging the Enemy to its front, the Enemy which first fired on the Company Commander opened up again as the 2nd Platoon was making its crossing of the road. The Platoon Leader of the 2nd Platoon came up to the Company Commander. The Lieutenant reported that he was hit in the leg and that two other men were also hit. He added that the 2nd Platoon had crossed the road and the 3rd Platoon was following. The officer was told to go to the rear, as he was too badly wounded to continue the attack. The Company Commander, feeling that the attack would be in danger of slowing down, employed the 3rd Platoon as they had not yet suffered any casualties. The attention of the company was now focused on the position of the automatic weapon which had caused the 2nd Platoon's casualties. The Platoon Leader of the 3rd Platoon had been in the edge of the woods waiting his turn to cross and had a definite idea as to the location of this automatic weapon. This Platoon Leader moved out alone and located the Enemy on the north side of the Gey road about 200 yards from the company's present position. Singlehanded, he grenaded this position, knocking out the gun and killing the crew of four. His action eliminated the threat of that gun to the remainder of the company. The Weapons Platoon and CP group were then able to cross the road. Baker Company was now on the north side of the Gey road. (46)

At 1115 hours, the company, with the 3rd Platoon leading, continued to advance just north of the Gey road to the east. (47)

(45)(46)(47) Personal Experience.

The company had perfect communication within the company and with Battalion. The SCR 536 radios were working well, even in the woods, and Battalion could be reached by SCR 300 and wire. Wire was laid as the company advanced. (48)

Baker Company advanced approximately 200 yards and came to another clearing. This clearing was about 150 yards wide and beyond was another tall stand of typical Hurtgen evergreens. There was apparently no enemy activity, yet the commander of Baker Company, knowing that the company would run into more enemy resistance, decided that this open ground and the woods beyond were critical terrain. (49)

With an insight, born of battle, yet unexplainable, the Commander knew the enemy occupied the distant sector of woods. He decided to throw an attack against these woods using all the company organic firepower plus the attached heavy Machine Gun Platoon of "D" Company. (50)

not included in original plan

The 3rd Platoon, which was leading, would make the assault. The three 60 MM Mortars were brought up and given the mission of placing a total of 18 rounds, at 10 second intervals, 50 yards within the woods. The light and heavy machine guns would take positions to fire initially into the woods if any Enemy resisted. The 3rd Platoon began its advance as soon as the first three rounds hit the target. The platoon had to clear the open ground and reach the edge of the woods as the last three rounds came in one minute after the firing started. There was to be no firing by riflemen unless the enemy opened up first. This way the Enemy, if he were in the woods, would not expect an Infantry follow-up on top of the mortar fire. If any Enemy were present in the woods he would be alert, as there had been considerable firing up to this point. (51)

The 3rd Platoon, which numbered about twenty-five effectives, knew the entire plan. The 2nd Platoon which had been following the 3rd Platoon took up positions to support, by fire, the advance of the 3rd Platoon. (52)

(48)(49)(50)(51)(52) Personal Experience.

The mortars opened fire and as soon as the first three rounds, landing almost simultaneously, hit the target, the platoon commenced its forward movement. The men moved out quickly as they realized the magnitude of help the mortars carried. (53)

As soon as the 3rd Platoon entered the woods it opened fire. The Platoon Leader reported by SCR 536, that Jerry was dug in about 50 yards from the near edge of the woods. The Platoon Leader was told to keep the platoon firing in order to maintain fire superiority. The Company Commander signalled the 2nd Platoon to move forward and moved out with them. The 2nd Platoon responded immediately and started across the clearing. As the 2nd Platoon started its movement forward, the Company Commander notified the 3rd Platoon that the 2nd Platoon would pass directly through the 3rd and assault the Enemy position. As the 2nd Platoon passed into the woods, the leader of the 3rd Platoon was seen moving among his men, encouraging them to fire. As the 2nd Platoon became oriented, they started to assault the Enemy position. At this point the platoon realized that the Enemy had constructed an elaborate "World War I" type trench system which seemed to extend about 200 yards across the front of the platoon. The left flank of the trench curved around to the Enemy's rear. In less than a minute, the 2nd Platoon passed through the 3rd Platoon and the men were in the trench engaging in individual hand-to-hand combat. The 2nd Platoon succeeded in taking about 150 yards of the position. The Enemy was still in the curved portion of the position. As an attempt was made to close in on the remaining Germans, the enemy opened fire with a Panzerfaust banking the rounds off the walls of the trench. After several rounds Jerry stopped firing, apparently having exhausted his ammunition. The 3rd Platoon was ordered to assault the Enemy position. The assault was pushed home and the 3rd Platoon rushed the trench, only to find that the remaining enemy had withdrawn out the far end of the trench. (54)

Company "B" suffered no casualties in taking this position. The Enemy's losses included ten killed and fifteen taken prisoner. (55)

(53)(54)(55) Personal Experience.

The Company quickly reorganized and moved to the far edge of the woods. The time was about 1530 hours. The Company was now 400 yards from its objective, having advanced 800 yards and overrun two Enemy positions. (56) (See Map C)

The woods had become less dense and a study of the 1:25,000 map the Company Commander was carrying indicated open ground. (57)

The Company Commander decided to alter the attack formation; the 2nd Platoon, on the right, with its left flank on the trail running parallel to and north of the Gey road; the 3rd Platoon would advance in its sector with its right flank on the trail; the 1st Platoon to follow generally astride the trail 100 yards to the rear of the attacking platoons. The Weapons Platoon and Company CP followed to the rear of the 1st Platoon. (58) (See Map C)

The Company began the advance at 1540 hours. The movement continued forward for 250 yards. The right squad of the 2nd Platoon was taken under fire from a position about 150 yards to its right front. The fires of the Enemy soon swept the ground occupied by the 2nd Platoon. The 3rd Platoon had not yet come under fire. They crossed the trail and came up on the left flank of the 2nd Platoon. The Enemy occupying the high ground had excellent fields of fire. The Platoon Leader of the 3rd Platoon once again showed his aggressive-ness. His platoon had not been taken under fire and he led the platoon in a spirited assault of the enemy position, coming up on the Enemy Platoon's right flank. There was a sharp encounter, the Enemy inflicting a number of casualties on the platoon. (59) (See Map C)

The 3rd Platoon took nineteen Germans including killed and wounded and reduced three machine guns. (60)(61)

The Company was ordered to reorganize, and at this point, the Company Commander realized that about fifteen minutes of daylight remained. (62)

The Company Commander left the Company in command of the Platoon Leader of the 3rd Platoon for the reorganization and moved north for a personal (56)(57)(58)(59)(60) Personal Experience; (61) A-2, p. 375; (62) Personal Experience.

reconnaissance of the company objective. (See Map D)

The objective was not occupied by the Enemy and the Company Commander returned to his company to lead it up on its objective. The Company closed on the objective after dark and began to dig in for the night. (63)(64)

Company "A" occupied the trench system. Company "C" occupied the ground in the vicinity of the trench system. (65)

Baker Company, in occupying the objective, was placed in a close perimeter defense. The 1st Platoon occupied the forward sector and a portion of the southern sector of the perimeter; the 2nd Platoon occupied the north sector of the zone and the 3rd Platoon occupied the entire rear and a portion of the south flank of the company area. It was a tight defense with no open ground between platoons. There was no way the Enemy could hit the Company and take it by surprise. The Weapons Platoon and the Command Post Group occupied the center of the perimeter. (66) (See Map D)

THE DEFENSE

The morning of 30 November came in cold and damp. Battalion had not been able to bring up ammunition, water or food during the night. The Gey road was heavily mined and the Enemy had active and aggressive patrols working from the north to the Gey road. These Enemy patrols would lay in wait, fire a few rounds, and withdraw back into the woods to appear at some other point to repeat these sneak tactics. (67)

The men of the Company had dug double foxholes. This allowed one man in each hole to remain awake and on the alert at all times. It tended to maintain a higher state of morale, except when one of the two-man teams became a casualty.

Because of the rocky soil, the men experienced extremely tough going when trying to "dig in" the positions. (68)

(63) Personal Experience; (64) A-2, p. 375; (65)(66)(67)(68) Personal Experience.

The Battalion Commander called about 1000 hours and told the Company Commander that the Company had done a fine job. The Battalion Commander also stated that Baker Company would support, by fire, the attack on Gey. This town was within shouting distance of the Company. Elements of the Company had advanced to the edge of the woods just short of the first house of Gey the day previously. The fog began to lift from the Company position and for the first time they could see the surrounding country and the tactical position it occupied. It was a Field Artilleryman's dream. From the position occupied by Baker Company, there was observation to the following points: the areas of Strab, Untermaubach, Winden, Kufferath, Berzbun, Birgel, Lendorsdorf Krautheusen and portions of Duren. This observation included the wooded area between the towns and all roads in the area. It was not long before the German began to make his appearance in many places. There were couriers on motorcycles, white ambulances, trucks unloading ammunition and supplies, groups of German soldiers moving in and out of clusters of houses and columns of Germans with full field equipment moving on the roads and across fields. It was not a question as to a target of opportunity; it was one of priority. (69) (See Map B)

The Company Commander called Battalion and reported this situation. Battalion reported that the 81 MM Mortar Observer, Field Artillery Forward Observer and the 4.2 Observer would be sent to the Company at once. Battalion further indicated there was a serious shortage of artillery ammunition. There appeared to be all the Heinies on the Western Front in view of Baker but nothing to kill them with. (70)

The forward observers arrived about 1300 hours and immediately set to work. It was apparent that the Artillery Observer would have trouble firing his concentrations as it was further clarified that the ammunition situation was indeed acute. (71)

(69)(70)(71) Personal Experience.

Up to now, the Enemy did not react to Baker Company's occupation of this piece of ground. The 81 MM Mortar Observer, the 4.2 Mortar Observer, of the 87th CML Battalion and the Forward Observer of the 42nd FA Battalion, began to fire on observed targets. They both continued to fire as long as the ammunition was available. (72)

The Company Commander decided to make a personal reconnaissance of the area to the north and west of the company position. The area to the north was reconnoitered to the point where the ground drops off. The Company Commander then back-tracked and took the trail leading to the rear of the company area. Following the fire trail running through the company position, the Company Commander moved up the fire trail to a point about 250 yards west of the company position. There suddenly appeared a German patrol working its way in from the north, passing about 100 yards in front of the Company Commander. After an exchange of fire both sides discreetly retired. (73)

(See Map C)

Dusk came about 1630 hours; the company closed in for the night. Battalion called and instructed Baker Company to send out a patrol to Company "C" who had occupied the ground about 400 yards to the north of Baker Company. The Baker Company patrols would commence at 1900 hours and continue during the hours of darkness with Baker Company patrolling on the odd hours. Charlie Company would furnish contact patrols on the even hours. The rifle platoons furnished the patrols equally with the order to vary the exact departure time each hour. (74) (See Map D)

Dawn came a little after 0730 hours on 1 December 1944. The Supply Sergeant, with his carrying party, was still on the position. The haul from Renn-Weg road to the company position had taken almost three hours. The bulk of supplies had been ammunition, with a short supply of K rations and water. The ammunition was needed the most. (75)

(72)(73)(74)(75) Personal Experience.

A wooden fire tower stood about 50 yards in the rear of the Company position. The Company Commander decided not to disturb this tower as long as the Enemy did not shell the position. Once the shelling of the position commenced, the Company Commander would have the tower knocked down. (76)

The Battalion S-3 arrived just after 1400 hours. He made no statement as to further plans for the Company but did indicate that the Company held an extremely vital and valuable piece of ground. (77)

The point Hof Hoherbach, just ~~East~~ of Gey, was placed under observation for some time. The Company Commander felt that this installation, which included a cluster of houses, housed at least a Battalion CP of the Enemy. It was 1400 yards east of the Company position. The Enemy was constantly moving in and about the buildings. Motorcycle couriers, on several occasions, were seen to enter and leave the main building. Battalion was notified of this Enemy installation. (78) (See Map B)

An air strike was called for and a flight of P-38's, from the IX TAC, dive bombed the target, scoring direct hits on the buildings. The medium artillery later registered on the buildings. No more activity was observed in this installation. The remainder of the day passed quietly and night closed in on the position, bringing a cold rain. (79)

This night brought much more Enemy activity than the previous one. The road west of Gey was interdicted by Enemy artillery during most of the night. Several Enemy patrols attempted to pass through the Company position but were dispersed by the local security, using hand grenades. Enemy tanks were using the roads in the vicinity of Gey. Our artillery interdicted Gey with white phosphorus. Compass azimuths were taken on the flashes of Enemy artillery and reported to Battalion as shell reports. (80)

The morning of 2 December found the tactical situation of Baker Company unchanged. The Enemy patrols had been driven off during the previous night. The wire running back to Battalion had been cut. Battalion reported that (76)(77)(78)(79)(80) Personal Experience.

extreme caution should be taken in using the Gay road.

The Enemy was attempting to cut this road. Battalion had succeeded in keeping it open. Battalion seemed extremely nervous as to the Enemy's reaction to Baker Company's position. The OP set up in the company position was in continuous use. All men in Baker Company were alerted to be awake 30 minutes prior to dawn and standing by in their holes for a daybreak counterattack. This expected counterattack did not materialize. (81)

Shortly after 1000 hours the enemy hit. The attack without any artillery preparation first hit the 1st Platoon. The Enemy drove up the wooded area from the east. The right sector of the 2nd Platoon was then engaged. Our machine guns and small arms immediately opened fire, sending into the woods to the fronts of the engaged elements of the company, a deadly hail of lead. All firing ceased within 15 minutes. The Enemy attack had been driven off. The Company Commander immediately ordered the 2nd Platoon to send out a combat patrol in the direction of the attack. This patrol had the mission of picking up any Enemy wounded and was also given the job of locating the Enemy's dispositions to the front of the 2nd Platoon. The patrol was fired upon by Enemy located 200 yards to the front of the 2nd Platoon position. This Enemy fire was reported as intense. The patrol also picked up several wounded, one straggler and counted ten dead. The wounded stated that their company, numbering about 70, attacked with the mission of taking the position occupied by Baker Company. Baker Company suffered no casualties in this action. (82)

(See Map D)

Enemy artillery was first placed on the position about noon. A number of rounds dropped into the company area with the larger number going over the position. The concentration lasted until 1230 hours, then ceased. The casualties from this shelling were light as only two men were hit. (83)

At 1345 hours, the Enemy laid it on again. This time the bulk of the rounds fell within the company position. There were both 88 MM and 122 MM

(81)(82)(83) Personal Experience.

artillery. The 88's coming in with a sharp crack and the 122's lumbering in behind them. The accuracy of the German was clarified by the pungent smell of his gun powder which completely covered the area and the crashing of the upper portion of the trees which found their way earthward. For the first time on the position, the sickening cry of "Medic" was echoed and reechoed throughout the position. (84)

The second attack came at 1400 hours. The Enemy hitting the 2nd Platoon, 1st Platoon and eastern portion of the 3rd Platoon in a single coordinated assault. It was immediately obvious that the Enemy was attempting to take the position by sheer weight of numbers. The sound of the German Maschinen pistole, gewehr 98, and MG 42 filled the air. There seemed to be a moment of silence, then Baker Company replied to this challenge of death with a deafening roar of defiance. Once again each man held his ground and poured clip after clip of M1 rifle and 30 caliber machine gun fire into the approaching Enemy. There was nothing the Company Commander could do. The weight of the fight was squarely on the shoulders of the individual riflemen. "Baker" men were being hit, but there was no cry of "Medic". (85)

This attack stopped in the same sudden quietness of the morning attack. The men stayed in their holes for some time. The Company Commander left his hole to determine the dispositions and casualties of the company. The casualties were heavy. The officer commanding the Weapons Platoon received a small arms wound necessitating evacuation. In all, an estimated thirty men were killed or wounded as a result of the artillery concentration and direct assault. (86)

Battalion was notified of the assault by the Enemy and a request was made to pick up Baker Company's litter cases. It was not considered tactically sound to use any of the Baker Company men to effect the evacuation. The strength of the company at this time was two officers and sixty enlisted men. The Field Artillery Forward Observer was called to the rear to be

(84) Maschinen pistole - machine pistol, MP 40; Gewehr 98 - standard German rifle, bolt operated Mauser design; MG 42 - machine gun. (85)(86) Personal Experience.

decorated. His enlisted assistant remained on the position to carry on in the forward observer role. The 81 MM and 4.2 MM Mortar Forward Observers remained with the company. (87)

The Battalion Commander called back about 1600 hours and wanted to know the situation. The Enemy artillery was coming in rather heavy. The Battalion Commander was so informed. A request was made for reinforcements as the Company Commander felt that this position could not be held under repeated attack. During this conversation, the Company Commander requested permission to move the company to an alternate or supplementary position. The Battalion Commander most emphatically said "You will hold the piece of ground you now occupy, at all costs." The Battalion Commander ended the conversation stating that the company's position would be reinforced by a platoon of Tank Destroyers from the 803 TD Battalion, as the Gey road was in the process of being cleared. The Battalion Commander further stated that the Company Commander should tell the men they were going to be relieved on the next day. The Company Commander did not tell the men this news as he considered the effect on morale, if the relief was delayed. (88)

Shortly after 1515 hours, the enemy shelling ceased. Twenty minutes later, intermittent shelling from a single 50 MM Mortar, began. Approximately twenty rounds fell on the position. The maximum range of this weapon was listed as 570 yards. There were no casualties from this fire, even though some rounds dropped within ten yards of some personnel. (89)(90)

One of the 81 MM Mortar Observer Team, a Sergeant who had been with the Regiment since D-day, asked permission to be sent to the rear as he felt that he was going to be killed. This man was not mentally exhausted and he was told to return to the OP. This man was killed by a shell fragment within five minutes after returning to his position. Another soldier was sent by one of the platoons, to the Company CP as a mental exhaustion case. This man (87)(88)(89) Personal Experience; (90) A-8, p. VII:- 13;

was allowed to remain at the CP and his subsequent actions left no doubt as to his actual mental condition. He was evacuated as his condition was effecting the rest of the men in the company. (91)

The cold and damp weather was having its telling effect on the men of Company "B". The nights were especially bad as the snow and sleet brought increased hardship. Most of the men did not retain the long overcoat as it was considered too bulky and did not give freedom of movement. (92)

Extreme care had to be exercised when issuing the K ration. The breakfast ration was most in demand because it contained the daily coffee issue. If the ration issue was not closely supervised, a few of the men would draw all the breakfast rations in order to obtain the coffee. (93)

Company "A", which was following the progress of the Enemy attack over the radio and wire, called to obtain clearance on twelve Baker Company reinforcements and supplies which had been stopped on the "A" Company position pending the final outcome of the attack. These welcome additions arrived on the company position at 1600 hours. (94)

Darkness had arrived as the Tank Destroyer Platoon closed into its assembly area 200 yards west of the company position. (95) (See Map D)

The patrols continued on the odd hours to maintain contact with Company "C", on the left. Company "A" remained in the trench system. (96)

The German continued his shelling during the night. Shortly after midnight there was a lull in the firing. The Tank Destroyer Platoon which had remained in defilade in rear of the company, started warming up their engines. The Company Commander immediately left his hole and went to the Tank Destroyer position. The destroyers had not yet moved out. The Lieutenant informed the Company Commander that he had orders to take his platoon to the rear to "gas up". There was nothing the Company Commander could do to stop this withdrawal. The Company Commander returned to the company position and called the Battalion Commander. The Battalion Commander stated that the Tank Destroyers had no
(91) Personal Experience; (92)(93) Personal Experience; (94)(95)(96) Personal Experience.

authority to leave the position and they would be ordered to return at once.
(97)

The sound of racing motors carries great distances at night. The Enemy usually reacted by throwing quantities of steel in the estimated direction of the armored sounds. The German, being methodical, responded by stepping up his barrages on the company positions.

At 0200 hours 3 December, Battalion called and reported that Baker Company, in its previous afternoon's action had repulsed a Battalion attack against the position. Further interrogation of prisoners revealed that the Enemy was as determined to take the position as we were to hold it. Battalion ordered that all men be alerted in their holes as a night attack was expected.
(98)

At 0330 hours, the machine gun located in the southwest corner of the 3rd Platoon's area opened fire. The men of the 3rd Platoon started firing toward the southwest. The Company Commander went to the 3rd Platoon machine gun. The gunner stated that a "lot of Jerrys are in the woods". The Enemy would only fire occasionally and when he did, he was immediately taken under fire. The Company Commander gave the order to "cease fire". After waiting about fifteen minutes, the Company Commander called to the men in the next hole and told them to follow him out. The woods were reconnoitered to the trail that led to the Company "A" trench system. Within this area there were at least fifteen German casualties. Most of them were dead. The wounded were brought to the company position. One of the wounded was Polish. He talked freely. He stated that his company had just been moved into the line for this night attack. (99) (See Map D)

The Battalion Commander called again at 0400 hours to inform Baker Company that a Platoon of Tanks from the 70th Tank Battalion would be in direct support of Baker Company and would be available about 1000 hours. As the Battalion Commander was asking the Company Commander about his supply require-
(97)(98)(99) Personal Experience.

ments, another heavy concentration fell on the Company. The wire line to Battalion was knocked out. This was the fourth time the line had gone out. The Company Commander had requested Battalion to put in an alternate line on the night of 1 December and this was in operation by noon on 2 December. The three man wire team, attached to Baker Company to repair the line, had been missing since the night of 1 December when they went out to repair the line. The line was later found to be cut and American equipment lay close by. The communications Sergeant switched the EE-8 to the alternate line and contact with Battalion was effected. (100)

Shortly before dawn the artillery on the position increased in intensity. Every man in the Company realized what was about to happen. The reinforcements had brought large quantities of ammunition and each two man fox hole was a virtual arsenal. The machine gunners had reloaded ammunition belts by hand and each man waited for dawn. (101)

Just after dawn the artillery stopped. Within a few minutes, there was a great amount of singing in the woods northeast of the 1st and 2nd Platoons. Instantly it became apparent that the German was once again attacking the position. This time the singing alerted Baker Company rather than the whine of his bullets. The men remained quiet until the first of the Enemy was observed coming in about fifteen yards in front of the 2nd Platoon. The 2nd Platoon commanded by a fearless Staff Sergeant blasted the Enemy with magnificently controlled fire. The Enemy was stopped dead in his tracks. (102)

Almost immediately the 1st Platoon was blasted by fire from the Enemy. The Enemy Company attacking the 1st Platoon position came from the east on the double. The first wave was easily dispatched but the second wave came into hand grenade distance of the Company and started heaving the Stielhandgrenates into the 1st Platoon positions. A number of these grenades found their mark. The 4.2 Chemical Battalion Forward Observer was among those (100)(101)(102) Personal Experience.

wounded. This attack against the 1st Platoon was stopped while the bodies of the German dead lay within arm's reach of the fox holes. (103) (104)

Coincident with the attacks against the 2nd and 1st Platoons, the Enemy began to come out of the woods from the south against a portion of the 3rd Platoon. The mortars kept up their constant firing on the likely avenues of approach, dropping rounds 150 yards in front of the perimeter. Each mortar covered the ground in front of a platoon sector.

As soon as the attack had been beaten off, Enemy tanks began to fire on the Company from positions in the town of Gey. There were two tanks engaged in this firing and it was impossible to get a line on them as the German was interdicting the position with artillery and mortar fire. (105) (See Map D)

The Company Commander called Battalion for ammunition, especially 60 MM mortar and machine gun. Battalion said that the tanks were bringing up food and ammunition to the Company and they should arrive shortly. The tanks stopped in defilade to the rear of the Company shortly after 1100 hours. The Company was resupplied. The men had their first full allotment of "K" rations and water since 1 December. (106)

The Tank Platoon Leader sent his Platoon Sergeant as liaison between the Tank Platoon and the Baker Company Commander. The Sergeant stayed with the rifle company and rendered invaluable assistance. (107)

About 1300 hours the Enemy opened with small arms fire on the 1st Platoon. The liaison Sergeant of the Tank Platoon was told to bring a tank up the fire trail and fire on the Enemy in front of the 1st Platoon. Within a few minutes the tank had accomplished its mission. (108)

Battalion called and said that Charlie Company was ordered to move south after dark to protect the north flank of the Battalion. This brought Charlie Company into position to the left rear of Baker Company. The move to be accomplished after dark, as the Enemy had excellent observation and fire (103) A-8, p. VII95. Stielhandgrenate; high explosive stick grenade.

(104)(105)(106)(107)(108) Personal Experience.

coverage of the entire sector. The remainder of the afternoon was spent jumping in and out of the holes. The enemy began to fire 120 MM mortars. These shells came in without any prior warning and the shell crater was shallow. The concussion and blast effect was terrific. The Platoon Leader of the 3rd Platoon occupied a double fox hole with his runner. A 120 MM mortar landed just outside his hole. The two men were in the hole together. The blast effect of the shell killed the runner instantly and the Platoon Leader was dazed. During the afternoon the platoon suffered ten casualties from shelling. The Company Commander and the Platoon Leader of the third platoon were hit by shell fragments. The Platoon Leader was wounded seriously enough to be evacuated. The Company Commander's wound was very slight. Losing the Platoon Leader of the 3rd Platoon meant that the Company Commander was the only officer left to the company. (109) (110)

At 1430 hours, twenty-seven Enemy aircraft flew over the position from the east at 500 feet and turned south in the direction of the town of Hurtgen. They did not fire on the position. (111)

Permission was again asked of Battalion to move to another position. The ground the company occupied was thoroughly untenable. The Company Commander further stated that he did not have sufficient men to hold the position against another heavy attack. Battalion told Baker Company to hold its present position. (112)

Along about dusk a German came walking into the position waving a safe-conduct pass. This man was a hundred percent case of battle fatigue. He wore no helmet, in spite of the fact that the shells were coming in every few minutes. One of the men brought him over to the Company Commander. He was positively numb. There was no immediate evacuation to the rear so the German was told to get into a hole. He would stay in his hole only if the Company Commander was in his hole. When the Company Commander checked the positions, (109)A-2, p. 375; (110)(111)(112) Personal Experience.

or left the command hole, the German would follow. (113)

At 2100 hours, both wire lines went out. The Company Commander wishing to contact Battalion and ask for more officers and men went back to Able Company. The self-appointed PW followed and was left at Able Company. (114)

The tank liaison Sergeant was told to knock down the fire tower to the rear of the company. This was coordinated with the artillery shelling of Gey. The tower though 100 feet high was made of wood and came down in a few minutes. (115)

The dawn of 4 December found the remnants of Baker Company still holding the position. The entire night had been spent in the holes. There were no aid men left in the company. They had all been either killed or wounded. Battalion called in to inform the Company Commander that one platoon, consisting of one officer and thirty two men from Charlie Company was being sent to reinforce Baker Company. Baker Company would remain on the position. The Company Commander counted the men of Baker Company and found a total of 34 remaining. The 1st Platoon had eight men, the 2nd Platoon had two men, the 3rd Platoon had ten men and the Weapons Platoon and Company Headquarters had a total of fourteen men, including the Company Commander. The Weapons Platoon had the two light machine guns and one mortar. The other two mortars were knocked out by direct hits. (116)

There was hardly a tree standing in the Company area by 1200 hours. Shortly after 1200 hours the shelling slackened and the Company Commander ordered the dead to be stacked in the area to the rear of the previous location of the fire tower. The walking wounded were sent back. There were a number of litter cases. The Company Commander decided to evacuate the wounded on the tank which was bringing up supplies to Baker Company. (117)

The tank arrived at 1300 hours; the supplies had been unloaded and the first wounded were being loaded on the back deck when the German threw five rounds of 88 MM into the front armor of the tank. Several members of the
(113)(114)(115)(116)(117) Personal Experience.

crew "bailed out". The Company Commander immediately called for smoke in front of the position; it arrived within a few minutes. The Tank engine was still running. The tank was put in reverse and backed over the hill into defilade. (118)

At 1500 hours, eighteen men arrived from Charlie Company. The remainder had become casualties before they made the full distance. These men were placed into the 2nd Platoon's position as a platoon. (119)

An engineer squad from the 4th Division Engineers arrived and was given the mission of placing wire and anti-personnel mines in front of the 1st and 2nd Platoon fronts. (120)

The shelling was terrific the rest of the day. The Enemy threw everything from 50 MM mortars to 150 MM Artillery on the position. (121)

All the forward observers had been either killed or wounded. This included the 81 MM mortar of "D" Company; the 4.2 inch mortar of the 87 CM Battalion and 105 MM artillery of the 42nd Field. (122)

The night of 4-5 December, Baker Company was ordered to withdraw from the position. Twenty-two survivors walked out. Some were wounded. (123)

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

In attempting to justly weigh the overall action of Baker Company on this operation, let us first reflect on the order of the day awarded the company by the FOURTH INFANTRY DIVISION: (118)

ORDER OF THE DAY
NUMBER.....58

Co. B, 12th Infantry

On 29 November 1944, Co. B, 12th Infantry, attacked and seized the high ground west of Gey, Germany. During this attack the company drove in the outpost of a strong German position. The company

(118)(119)(120)(121)(122)(123) Personal Experience

then stormed an entrenched German position strongly defended by machine guns and machine pistols supported by mortar fire. The company rapidly reorganized and pushed on to its objective, capturing three machine-gun nests west of Gey. After dark, the company dug in on the high ground on the edge of the woods overlooking Gey.

Considerable artillery, mortar and tank fire was placed on the position each day. On 2 December 1944, a counterattack was beaten off with heavy losses to the enemy. On 3 December 1944 a fresh German battalion made a dawn attack supported by a heavy concentration of artillery and tank fire against the position but failed to take it. On the afternoon of 3 December 1944, the constant heavy enemy fire caused numerous casualties including all of the company's officers.

During this time the company evacuated its own wounded to a forward aid station. Despite the disorganization caused by the loss of key personnel, the company still held the original ground when it was relieved on the morning of 5 December 1944.

The Division Commander desires to commend each officer and enlisted man of Co. B, 12th Infantry, for such outstanding performance of duty during a most vital action.

(124)

Both Regiment and Battalion felt that Baker Company had accomplished its mission. The cost, as measured in casualties, was extremely high. The individuals who went through the inferno of Hurtgen could not repeat such an experience many times. A word description of the existing conditions of terrain, weather and the Enemy is most inadequate in many respects.

Due credit should be given to the individual riflemen. He was courageous in his devotion to duty. During the entire period of the operation only one soldier asked permission to go to the rear. This man was killed the same day. One other soldier was sent to the rear because of mental exhaustion. To keep this second soldier on the position would have had an extremely bad effect on the other men. An officer should be quick to recognize a combat fatigue case. This man had discarded his equipment, including his helmet. He sat on the edge of his hole shaking and staring into space. He made no attempt to get down in his hole when the Company was shelled.

The attack on 29 November took on the form of "rolling up the carpet". The Enemy expected an attack from the south and made his disposition.

(124) A-2, p. 375

7 accordingly. Actually he was flanked across his entire front. It was feasible to rotate the platoons often in this attack on 29 November.

The Company, being in column, was readily maneuvered and control was maintained. The Company sought to complete its mission and did not press the attack to the north after the first resistance withdrew to the north.

Control in woods is extremely difficult. Battalion, Companies and Platoons, when attacking, normally advanced in column. Control is the dominating factor.

When attacking, contact was seldom if ever maintained with units on the flanks. This was not a healthy situation. The sectors assigned to units and the formations of the smaller units further developed the violation of flank contact. Flank security and local protection was maintained. At the same time it was necessary to decentralize control with the weight of responsibility for the bulk of attack decisions resting with the leaders of Battalions, Companies and Platoons.

The 81 MM Mortars were used as supporting fires in the majority of supported fires. The Infantry mortars proved to be exceptionally effective in woods as the high curved trajectory of the projectile caused the round to come into the target vertically.

Baker Company used a perimeter defense when it initially occupied its objective on 29 November. All round defense is of prime importance in woods. Many times depth will be sacrificed in order to retain this protection from an attack coming from an unknown direction. Once the Enemy had made his commitment it is extremely difficult for the defender to move into an alternate or supplementary position. Control of individual riflemen is a distinct problem. An intelligent Enemy will probe until he has located a weak point in the defense and he will use his force against this weakness.

In the defense, active and aggressive contact was maintained with units on the flanks. Baker Company caused patrols to be sent out daily while in

Control in woods is extremely difficult

this defensive position. However, after the Enemy began hitting the position with counterattacks, the patrolling was no longer ordered.

Coffee is one of the most important items in the "K" ration. The "K" ration is inadequate in this respect as the coffee is issued only in the breakfast unit. Each unit of the "K" ration should contain at least two coffee servings. This would give the men an adequate amount of this stimulant. In addition, the Quartermaster should prepare, for issue, packages containing twenty-five coffee units.

The combat uniform, in the Hurtgen, was not satisfactory. The winter weather was cold and wet; sometimes turning to snow. The long overcoat was too bulky and cumbersome. It absorbed water and became increasingly heavy. Many men discarded the overcoat in favor of a series of jackets. A combat uniform, of the type issued by the Armored Force, consisting of a jacket and pants, should be issued to the Combat Infantryman. This uniform should contain individual stowage pockets. Stowage sections should be provided for each soldier to carry eight handgrenades.

The Commander should make use of all available means of communication. Wire and messenger were the primary means of communication. The Rifle Companies and Battalion cooperated in keeping the wire intact and operating between these two units. The laying of additional wire lines into a position will insure that contact with higher headquarters is maintained. Wire should be marked with an identifying color at 100 yard intervals. This would give both the Commander and the Communication Personnel an indication of distance travelled. This would be especially helpful in woods or jungles.

Liaison between units as small as Rifle Companies and Tank Platoons is highly desirable. The attached unit should furnish the liaison. The Tank Platoon Sergeant performed in a superior manner and adequate coordination was effected.

Because of the difficulty of maintaining and protecting supply routes, rations were substituted for water or ammunition was sent forward in lieu of

bedding rolls.

Sufficient maps should be furnished to include distribution to the Rifle Company Platoon Leaders. The supply of maps in this operation was inadequate, both as to quantity and detailed physical coverage of the terrain. ✓

LESSONS

1. Officer leaders must be well forward in order to properly control an attack in heavy woods.
2. Communications are vital to the lower Commander. Every means available should be employed.
3. Double foxholes are conducive to higher morale and afford protection equal to single foxholes.
4. Foxholes should always be covered with limbs and earth in order to give occupants protection from tree bursts and air bursts.
5. Equal distribution of missions should be given to all units. Do not favor one unit over another. Have a schedule and stick by it.
6. Continue or push home the attack with a fresh unit; reconstitute a support immediately.
7. Make full use of all weapons. Understand the capabilities of weapons.
8. Returning individuals should be placed in their original platoons.
9. Effect prompt relief of units. A badly "torn up" unit takes much longer to regain top battlefield efficiency.
10. Make the individual fire his weapon.