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THE OPERATIONS OF THE 506TH PARACHUTE INFANTRY REGIMENT,  
(101ST AIRBORNE DIVISION) IN HOLLAND 17 SEPTEMBER TO 9  
OCTOBER 1944.

(RHINELAND CAMPAIGN)

(Personal experience of an Assistant Regimental Operations  
Officer)

Type of operation described: REGIMENT IN AN AIRBORNE  
INVASION

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THE OPERATIONS OF THE 506TH PARACHUTE INFANTRY (101ST AIRBORNE DIVISION) IN HOLLAND 17 SEPTEMBER TO 9 OCTOBER 1944  
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INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operation of the 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division, in Holland from 17 September to 9 October 1944. "OPERATION MARKET"

In order to orient the reader a short resume of events leading up to this operation is given.

On 6 June 1944 the Allies launched a coordinated airborne-sea-borne assault on the western coast of France (Normandy peninsula) in vicinity of Carentan and Caen. By mid-September they had advanced across France and were knocking at Germany's West Wall (Siegfried Line) defenses. (Map A)

The line now held <sup>as follows</sup> was Canadian First and British Second Armies along the Meuse-Escout Canal; U.S. First Army was in contact with West Wall defenses; U.S. Third Army held a bridge-head over the Moselle river, and U.S. Seventh Army and French Forces, having invaded southern France in August, had advanced generally along the Rhone river valley contacting the U.S. Third Army. (Map A)

To bring the total weight of the Allied Forces in western Europe to bear on the enemy would require a deep penetration through this deliberate defense belt. In the south the Allies had no choice except a head-on advance into the West Wall. However, in the north they might be able to advance north through Holland and out-flank this West Wall. (Map A)

The successful execution of such an operation would permit the Allied armor more suitable terrain over which to operate as compared to the terrain that would be encountered in the execution of a deep penetration in the south. From the plains in northern Germany the Allies could envelope the Rhur area (Germany's principal industrial area) from the northeast.

The Allied High Command deemed the results of such an operation, if successful, so important that it was decided to make an attempt.

#### THE GENERAL PLAN

The over-all plan called for the British Second Army to launch the main offensive advancing quickly to the Zuider Zee (low coastal area in northern Holland) thereby forcing a bridge-head over the Rhine river and trapping all enemy forces along the coast. The First Canadian Army would advance north and secure the deep water port of Rotterdam and protect the left flank of the British Second Army. (1) (Map B)

The U.S. First Army would protect the right flank of the British Army by launching an offensive toward the Rhine river, the U.S. Third Army would defend from present positions, and the U.S. Seventh Army and French Forces would re-organize in present positions and be prepared for future offensive operations. (2)

For this operation the British Second Army planned an advance along a very narrow corridor - general line Eindhoven-Uden-Grave-Nijmegen-Arnhem.

The road net along this route provided only one (1) principal route of advance - the main highway through the above mentioned towns. This would necessitate a very detailed traffic plan to accommodate the vehicles required for this operation. (Map B)

British 30th Corps would spear-head the advance with British 8th and 12th Corps advancing at a slower pace on the right and left respectively. Airborne troops would be dropped along this corridor at Zon, Veghel, Grave, Nijmegen, and Arnhem to assist the advance of 30th Corps by seizing and securing vital bridges over the Wilhelmina Canal at Zon, Willems Faart Canal at Veghel, Maas river at Grave, Waal river at Nijmegen, and Neder Rijn river at Arnhem. (3)

(1) A-1, p. 57; (2) A-1, p. 58; (3) A-2, p. 172.

Past airborne operations (Africa, Sicily, Italy, and Normandy) increasingly indicated the need for an over-all command of airborne and troop-carrier forces. As a result the First Allied Airborne Army consisting of U.S. 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions, British 1st Airborne Division, British 51st Airtransportable Division, and one (1) Polish Airborne Brigade with all available troop-carrier forces was created in England 8 August 1944. Lt. General Lewis H. Brereton, formerly Commanding General of U.S. Ninth Air Force, was placed in command. First Allied Airborne Army would be under the operational control of 21st Army Group, which was commanded by Field Marshal Montgomery. The Airborne Army Commander would be directly responsible to the Supreme Commander - General Eisenhower.

By the time the First Allied Airborne Army was six (6) weeks old its staff had planned four (4) operations, three (3) were cancelled due to the rapid advance of the Allies across France. Target date set for "Operation Market" was 17 September 1944.

First Allied Airborne Army assigned missions to its divisions as follows: 101st would land in vicinity of Zon and Veghel, secure bridges at Veghel, St. Oedenrode, Zon, and capture the city of Eindhoven; 82nd would land in vicinity of Grave and Nijmegen, secure bridges at Grave, Nijmegen, and over Maas-Waal canal in vicinity of Heumen; British 1st Division and the Polish Brigade would land in vicinity of Arnhem and secure bridges there. (4) (Map B)

Due to the number of aircraft required for the initial lift of these divisions it was decided to use two (2) routes - Northern and Southern route. The principal advantage of using two routes was that troop-carrier aircraft would be dispersed over a much larger area and enemy fighters could not concentrate on one point.

The British 1st Division, Polish Brigade, and U.S. 82nd Division

(4) A-3, p. 5.

would use the northern route to landing areas, while the 101st Division would use the southern route. Both routes had their special hazards: the northern route would be over some eighty (80) miles of enemy territory and known enemy flak positions - southern route would be directly over the enemy front line positions. A daylight landing was decided upon due to the fact that the German night fighter force was relatively intact, and Allied air superiority would be more effective during daylight. (5)

#### REGIMENT'S PREPARATION FOR HOLLAND MISSION

The 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division, participated in the initial assault on Normandy 6 June 1944. The bulk of the regiment's action was in vicinity of Carentan. The regiment was relieved from the line in Normandy on 28 June and returned to its home base near Hungerford, England 12 July 1944 to prepare for future airborne missions on the continent of Europe.

From 13 July to 13 September 1944 training was conducted in small unit and field firing exercises, known distance, rocket launcher, mortar, and rifle grenade firing, and hand grenade throwing. A three (3) day isolated platoon problem was conducted by all battalions. In addition to the training conducted, the regiment moved twice to marshalling areas for airborne missions; however, due to the rapid advance of the Allied armies, these missions were cancelled. Replacements were received, arms and equipment checked, and everything was made ready for any future operation. (6)

#### THE MARSHALLING AREA AND THE MISSION

On 14 September 1944 the regiment was ordered to the marshalling areas for the third time since returning from Normandy. Due to the previous moves to the same marshalling areas very little

(5) A-3, p. 12; (6) Personal knowledge.

reconnaissance was required prior to the actual move. By 1200 hours, 15 September all units of the regiment were sealed in their respective areas; Regimental Headquarters Company and 2nd Battalion at Membury airport, 1st Battalion at Ramsbury airport, and 3rd Battalion at Chilbolton airport.

After the regiment had closed in the marshalling areas, its mission was received which was as follows: land on DZ "C", secure bridges over Wilhelmina Canal in vicinity of Zon, and capture the city of Eindhoven. (7) (Map C)

This mission was further assigned to the battalions as follows: 3rd Battalion would land on DZ first and secure it against enemy small arms fire. 1st Battalion would land following the 3rd Battalion and move immediately to seize the bridges at Zon. Regimental Headquarters Company and 2nd Battalion would land, assemble, move east and attack Zon from the north. Upon the accomplishment of these missions the entire regiment would move south and capture Eindhoven. (8)

From the time the regiment was sealed in the marshalling areas to its departure all troops were briefed and re-briefed on each individual's part of the mission. During this period ammunition, equipment, rations, anti-motion sickness pills were issued, parachute harness was adjusted to each individual, heavy equipment that could not be carried on the individual was rolled and packed in aerial delivery units, (81mm mortars and etc.) units were broken down into plane loads, and <sup>of</sup> loading manifest was prepared for each plane. (9)

#### AIRCRAFT ALLOTTED TO THE REGIMENT

For this operation the regiment was allotted one hundred and thirty-two (132) C-47 transport planes, and eight (8) CG4 gliders. Of this number 131 planes and 6 gliders hit the DZ. One plane and (7,8,9,) Personal knowledge.

two gliders were shot down over enemy territory. 2,190 personnel emplaned for Holland, and 2,183 actually jumped or landed by glider on the DZ, remaining 7 did not jump due to reserve 'chute breaking open. (10)

#### DEPARTURE

At about 0900 hours 17 September 1944 the regiment commenced loading in the planes and by 1000 hours the regiment was airborne and on its way to Holland to play its assigned role in "Operations Market". (11)

#### PATHFINDER TEAM

The regimental Pathfinder Team, commanded by 1st Lt. Gordon O. Rothwell, took off from Chalgrove airport at 1040 hours and dropped on DZ "C" at 1255 hours. (Map C.) Upon crossing enemy lines very heavy flak was encountered, but the plane took no evasive action other <sup>IN CASE OF</sup> to <sup>TO</sup> speed to 180 m.p.h. Enemy resistance was very slight on the DZ and did not hinder the team in its mission. Within four (4) minutes after landing all navigational aids were in readiness for the in-coming serials.

The initial serials all arrived on course three (3) minutes late 1319, 1322, and 1325 hours. DZ "C" and "B" consisted of adjacent fields and no defined boundary existed making it difficult to distinguish one from the other. However, from 1319 to 1325 hours three (3) serials landed on each DZ making a total of two (2) infantry regiments landing in the area within six (6) minutes. (12)

#### REGIMENTAL SERIAL

The trip was uneventful for the regimental serials until the coast of France was reached. Here the fighter escort, a most welcome sight indeed, was picked up. This escort continued on to

(10) A-4, Annex #1; (11) Personal knowledge. (12) A-5. p. 61-62.

the DZ. As the serials would draw fire from the enemy flak positions the escorting fighters would immediately attack these positions and as a result the flak was much reduced.

As the serials passed over the British Second Army's positions, their front line was very prominently outlined by identification panels and orange smoke. (Map B) This gave everyone a good feeling as this was the signal that the British were ready to jump off as soon as the airborne serials cleared their front line.

As the DZ was approached enemy flak guns commenced firing on the serials from positions in the immediate vicinity of Zon bridge - 1st Battalion objective. Some planes were hit by these guns, but none were shot down; all parachutist were dropped on the DZ. (13) (Map C)

#### THE JUMP AND ATTACK ON ZON BRIDGE

Elements of the 3rd Battalion commenced jumping at 1319 hours and by 1325 hours the regiment, less the sea-borne echelon, was on Dutch soil. The landing was not opposed by hostile small-arms fire and the assembly was accomplished very quickly, and within one hour the 1st Battalion was engaging the enemy flak guns that had fired on the serials from vicinity of Zon bridge.

As Regimental Headquarters and 2nd Battalion were assembling five (5) enemy tanks approached the DZ from the east; but before they could do any damage they were taken under fire by friendly fighters - two (2) knocked out and the remainder driven off. (Map C)

The regiment, less 1st Battalion, assembled and moved east to Zon-St. Oedenrode highway then south into Zon. This force reached Zon at approximately 1530 hours. Upon reaching Zon the 2nd Battalion immediately attacked the enemy flak positions from the north in conjunction with 1st Battalion attacking from the west.

(13) Personal knowledge.

The enemy withdrew across the Wilhelmina canal in the face of this attack and as the leading elements of the 2nd Battalion were within 100 yards of the bridge the enemy blew it from the south bank of the canal. Five (5) dual purpose 88mm guns were knocked out in the vicinity of the bridge.

The canal at this point was about 75 feet wide. By use of some electric light poles that happened to be in the vicinity and the debris from the bridge a foot bridge was constructed and the regiment began crossing the canal at about 1800 hours.

The leading elements of the 2nd Battalion had advanced about one and one-half (1½) miles toward Eindhoven after crossing the canal to a small village - Bokt. (Map C) Here the Regimental Commander decided to stop for the night and resume the attack at dawn the next morning - 18 September. By 2400 hours all units of the regiment were across the canal and in defensive positions in the vicinity of Bokt.

During the night plans were completed for the attack on Eindhoven at dawn. Since this was to be a head-on attack it was decided to attack in a column of battalions - 3rd Battalion leading. (14)

#### CAPTURE OF EINDHOVEN

At dawn 18 September the battalions moved out and by 0900 hours the 3rd Battalion had advanced to the out-skirts of Eindhoven against light resistance. Upon entering the built-up area the battalion immediately came under heavy fire from enemy positions inside the buildings. The advance continued for approximately the distance of five (5) city blocks, where it was stopped cold by intense fire from enemy machine guns and dual purpose 88mm guns from positions in buildings and street intersections. By 1200 hours it was apparent that the 3rd Battalion could not dislocate the enemy from his positions. It was about this time that radio contact was established with reconnaissance elements of the British Guards Armored Division approaching the city from the

(14) Personal knowledge.

west.

Since the 3rd Battalion could not advance it was decided to envelope the enemy positions from the east. 1st Battalion was ordered to move to a position east and just short of 3rd Battalion, while 2nd Battalion was committed east and wide of 1st Battalion in an attempt to out flank the enemy. 2nd Battalion was successful in its enveloping move and entered the city proper at about 1300 hours. Upon finding their position out-flanked the enemy began withdrawing toward the center of the city proper only to find themselves surrounded by the 2nd Battalion. Approximately 300 enemy were killed or captured by the regiment upon its entry into Eindhoven. (15) (Map C)

Upon entry into the city the battalions commenced to mop-up and by 1700 hours the first Dutch city was in Allied hands. Defensive positions were established on the east and west sides of the city for the night.

Advanced elements of the Guards Armored Division were contacted on the south side of the city at about 1900 hours.

During the morning of 19 September defensive positions were improved and extensive patrolling conducted east and west of the city. At about 1400 hours the Dutch underground reported that an enemy force was headed toward Eindhoven from vicinity of Helmond. 2nd Battalion with one squadron of 15/19 Hussars, which was attached to the regiment earlier in the day, was dispatched to intercept this enemy and clear Helmond. This force did not contact the reported enemy as it was ordered to return to Eindhoven before reaching Helmond. This later proved to be quite an assignment as it required the greater part of the British 8th Corps to clear Helmond. (16)

At about 1500 hours the 3rd Battalion was ordered to proceed west some six (6) or eight (8) miles and secure an emergency landing strip in the vicinity of Wintelre. (Map C)

(15, 16) Personal knowledge. Statement of Lt. Col. Charles H. Chase,  
Regimental Executive Officer.

Both battalions (2nd and 3rd) had cleared the city and were well on their way to their objectives when a message was received from the Division requesting the 1st Battalion be sent to Zon immediately to assist in the defense of the bridge as the enemy was now attacking it from the east.

1st Battalion was ordered to proceed to Zon without delay thus leaving the defense of Eindhoven to Regimental Command Post personnel and elements of the Guards Armored Division enroute to Arnhem.

At about 2000 hours an enemy plane flew over the city and dropped flares over the main thoroughfare along which the British column was moving. Immediately following this plane was a flight of enemy bombers, estimated at 10 to 20, which bombed this part of the city with extreme accuracy. This bombing caught the British supply vehicles moving through and quiet a bit of damage was done. (17)

Due to the three (3) battalions being out of the city, the regiment suffered only thirteen (13) casualties from the enemy bombs. Had the battalions been in positions previously occupied casualties would have no doubt been severe. (18)

Just as the bombing attack was over the Division notified the regiment that the enemy attack at Zon had been beaten off, but the enemy was expected to attack Eindhoven. The 2nd and 3rd Battalions were ordered to return to town and occupy the positions from which they had departed. Both battalions had closed in town by mid-night. Neither battalion had made contact with the enemy while out of town. The expected attack on Eindhoven did not develop.

2nd Battalion and the 15/19 Hussars were ordered to attack enemy forces in the vicinity of Nunen on the morning of 20 September. As this force approached Nunen the enemy was observed moving to attack the Zon bridge. the 2nd Battalion and Hussars immediately engaged the

(17) Personal knowledge. (18) Personal knowledge. Statement of

Lt. Col. Charles H. Chase, Regimental Executive Officer.

enemy from the rear. Finding himself opposed from two directions, the enemy withdrew northeast. After contact was lost the 2nd Battalion and Hussars returned to the vicinity of Eindhoven.

The 1st Battalion arrived at Zon during the night and was in defensive positions by 0600 hours 20 September. The enemy launched an attack here at about 0630 hours by an estimated force of one battalion of infantry supported by one company of tanks. This attack was repelled by 1st Battalion, elements of the 327th Glider Infantry Regiment, and one (1) company of the 326th Airborne Engineer Battalion. This was the enemy which withdrew when the 2nd Battalion and Hussars attacked its rear. (19)

The 1st Battalion continued to defend the Zon bridge for the period 20-21 September.

The 2nd Battalion and 15/19 Hussars attacked the enemy in the vicinity of Nederwetten on the morning of 21 September. The enemy withdrew in the face of this attack and at 1200 hours contact was lost. The 2nd Battalion and Hussars went into defensive positions in the vicinity of Tongelre for the night 21-22 September.

During this period the 3rd Battalion occupied positions in Eindhoven and constituted the regimental reserve. On 21 September the 3rd Battalion was ordered to St. Oedenrode, a distance of approximately eleven (11) miles, as Division reserve. The battalion cleared Eindhoven at 1700 hours. (Map C)

During the evening 21 September the regiment received a warning order to be prepared to move north to Uden, a distance of approximately twenty-one (21) miles, on 22 September. (Map C)

#### THE MOVE TO UDEN

The 3rd Battalion closed in the St. Oedenrode area about 0300 hours 22 September. At about 0500 hours the regiment, including the 3rd Battalion was ordered to move to the Uden area where it would be

(19) A-4, p.3.

charged with the defense upon closing in the area. Due to the lack of transportation this move would have to be made by marching and by using the few available trucks. The 3rd Battalion began its move from St. Oedenrode by marching at 0900 hours. The remainder of the regiment would move, by marching and the use of whatever transportation was at hand, during the day.

The regimental advance party consisting of reconnaissance parties, communications personnel, and two (2) platoons of Company E departed Eindhoven at 0900 hours 22 September. This force cleared Veghel at approximately 1100 hours. Immediately after passing through Veghel the enemy cut the main highway between Veghel and Uden, thus isolating the advance party. (20)

#### ENEMY ATTACK ON VEGHEL

The enemy, after breaking contact with the 2nd Battalion and Hussars in vicinity of Nederwetten on 21 September, had moved under cover of darkness to the vicinity of Erp, and was now launching an all out attack to seize Veghel and destroy the bridges there. This enemy force was estimated at three (3) battalions of SS troops supported by thirty (30) or forty (40) tanks. (21) (Map C)

The 2nd Battalion, minus elements in Uden, reached Veghel at about 1400 hours and was immediately deployed astride the Veghel-Uden highway facing northeast in conjunction with the 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment. With the assistance of British artillery that happened to be passing through Veghel at the time the attack was repulsed by dark. At about the same time the enemy attack came from the southeast, another enemy force attacked Veghel astride the Willems Faart Canal from the northwest. One company of the 1st Battalion, having been detached earlier in the day and sent north to Veghel, reached the bridge as the enemy launched his attack from the northwest. This company detrucked, turned around, and deployed near the bridge,

(20) Personal knowledge; (21) A-4, p.4.

and with the assistance of elements of the British 44th Tank Regiment repulsed the attack. Later in the afternoon the enemy attacked the town from the north. Elements of the 3rd Battalion, in conjunction with the 2nd Battalion, 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment, halted this attack just short of the railroad bridge. By dark 22 September the regiment, less detachment in Uden and the remainder of the 1st Battalion at Zon bridge, was in defensive positions in the vicinity of Veghel. (22)

#### ADVANCE PARTY AT UDEN

Upon reaching Uden the advance party dispatched patrols east and west of the town. No enemy was contacted west of the town; however, east of the town enemy patrols were contacted in the vicinity of Vokel. Civilians in Vokel reported enemy tanks and infantry in Boekel. As a result of this report the detachment commander contacted the commander of a British Sapper (Engineer) unit which was waiting in Uden to repair an airport located in the vicinity of Beekel to effect some sort of defense of the town for the expected attack. (Map C)

At about 1600 hours the regiment notified the detachment in Uden <sup>that</sup> a Brigade of British Armor was being recalled from the Nijmegen area and would arrive some time during the night. This brigade arrived about 2030 hours and went into defensive positions in the town. (23)

#### THE ATTACK TO CLEAR VEGHEL-UDEN HIGHWAY

During the night 22-23 September the regiment planned an attack to clear the enemy from the Veghel-Uden highway. The plan called for the 2nd Battalion to attack from present positions toward Uden. The Division arranged to have the British Armored Brigade, now located in Uden, to attack toward Veghel in conjunction with the 2nd Battalion.

(22) A-4, p.4; (23) Personal knowledge.

This attack jumped off at about 0800 hours 23 September and by 1700 hours the 2nd Battalion and the Armored Brigade from Uden had made contact. The road was again open to traffic. (24)

#### GLIDERS LAND AT UDEN

About 1200 hours 23 September a flight of C-47 transport planes were observed headed north, towing two (2) gliders each. As the flight approached Uden the tug ships commenced to release their gliders. A total of seventeen (17) gliders were released before the pilots realized this was not their release point. Upon contacting the glider personnel it was learned that this flight was the 325th Glider Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, scheduled to land just north of the Grave bridge, approximately ten (10) miles north of Uden.

The released gliders landed just east of the battle now being waged by the 2nd Battalion and British Armored Brigade to clear the highway. Some gliders were fired on by the enemy as they landed but suffered no casualties. (25)

#### DEFENSE OF VEGHEL

After having made contact with British Armor and completed clearing of the highway, the 2nd Battalion pulled back to its position from which the attack was launched, for the night. The 3rd Battalion and one company of the 1st Battalion had occupied defensive positions in the vicinity of Veghel during the day and night of 23 September.

#### THE MOVE TO UDEN

On 24 September the 1st Battalion was returned to regimental control and relieved of the responsibility of the Zon bridge. The regiment, with the 321st Glider Field Artillery Battalion and Battery B, 81st Glider AA Battalion attached, was again ordered to Uden to take over the defense of that area. The regiment plus attachments closed in the area about

(24) A-4, p. 4; (25) Personal knowledge.

1430 hours.

Upon reaching Uden the 3rd Battalion was ordered to send patrols to Erp in an attempt to contact the enemy that had withdrawn in that direction the day before. These patrols reported no enemy in the area. Apparently the enemy force that cut the highway 22 September had withdrawn from the area completely. (26)

#### ENEMY CUTS HIGHWAY AT KOEVERING

Just before dark 24 September, an enemy force estimated at two (2) companies of infantry supported by tanks and self-propelled guns cut the highway south of Veghel in vicinity of Koevering. (Map C) The regimental trains (sea and land tail) consisting of twenty-two (22) vehicles happened to be moving along the highway at the point where the enemy cut it. The convey managed to turn around and return toward Zon with the loss of only two (2) vehicles. (27)

#### REGIMENT ORDERED TO CLEAR HIGHWAY

During the night 24-25 September the regiment, with attachments, was ordered to return to Veghel and clear the enemy from the highway in the vicinity of Koevering. Movement commenced at 0300 hours and by daylight 25 September the leading elements had reached Veghel. At this point a squadron of the 44th Tank Regiment was attached to the regiment. Shortly after the tanks were attached the regiment was ordered to attack Koevering and clear the highway. This attack jumped off at about 1000 hours along the west side of the highway with the 1st and 3rd Battalions echelon left, 3rd Battalion leading. The battalions had advanced about 2000 yards when they came under very heavy small-arms, artillery, and tank fire - the tanks being dug in along the road. The battalions were stopped cold. At this time the 2nd Battalion was ordered to make a wide envelopment east of the highway in an attempt to hit the enemy's flank. Movement commenced about 1400 hours and by dark the battalion had

(26) Personal knowledge; (27) A-8 pages not numbered.

reached a point just south of the enemy's position where it came under direct tank and self-propelled gun fire. All battalions were ordered to hold fast in present positions for the night and be prepared to continue the attack at daylight 26 September.

The attack jumped off at 0530 hours 26 September and by 0900 hours the enemy was driven northwest of the highway opening the road to traffic again. The regiment was pinched out of the attack by other elements of the division, and 44th Tank squadron was detached. (28)

#### THE RETURN TO UDEN

At 1300 hours the regiment, with original attachments, was ordered to return to Uden. This move was completed by 1700 hours and once again the regiment was defending Uden. (29)

#### THE MOVE TO NIJMEGEN

The regiment and attachments remained in defensive positions in the vicinity of Uden until 30 September at which time it was ordered to move to the vicinity of Nijmegen, a distance of approximately twenty (20) miles. The move commenced on the morning of 1 October and by night the regiment and attachments were closed in an assembly area on the east side of Nijmegen. (Map C) The only enemy action encountered during this move was caused by a lone enemy plane bombing the column as the troops were detrucking at the assembly area. No damage was done by this plane.

#### RELIEF OF BRITISH BRIGADE

During the night 1-2 October the regiment was ordered to relieve the 241st Brigade, 43rd British Infantry Division in the area Dodewaard-Opheusden-Randwijk. The regiment moved to the vicinity of Zetten during the day and at dusk commenced the relief of the British forces, (28, 29) Personal knowledge.

~~of the British forces~~, and by mid-night the relief was completed.

The regimental disposition was the 2nd Battalion defending north along the south bank of the Neder Rijn river; 3rd Battalion defending west along the line Opheusden-Dodewaard, its right flank anchored on the Neder Rijn, left flank anchored on the Waal river; and the 1st Battalion in regimental reserve in the vicinity of Zetten. (30.) (Map C)

The terrain here, as in the majority of Holland, was very flat and at no point in the regimental sector did it rise thirty (30) feet above sea level. On the north (enemy) bank of the Neder Rijn river the terrain rose to approximately two hundred (200) feet above sea level. This high ground afforded the enemy excellent observation of the entire regimental sector, which restricted all movement to the hours of darkness. This situation was comparable to a sandtable with the enemy as spectators.

During 3-4 October the enemy restricted his activities to the systematic shelling of the entire sector by mortars and artillery pieces, for which he seemed to have an unlimited supply of ammunition.

#### ENEMY ATTACK ON OPHEUSDEN

At about 0300 hours 5 October the enemy launched an attack in the vicinity of Opheusden (Map C), supported by mortars, artillery, and light tanks. The 3rd Battalion stopped the initial attack, but at 0530 hours the enemy resumed the attack with very much increased artillery and by 1500 hours the 3rd Battalion had been pushed back about five hundred (500) yards. At about 1200 hours the 1st Battalion was ordered to move to Opheusden and counter-attack through the right flank of the 3rd Battalion. This attack jumped off at about 1500 hours and by night the 1st Battalion had succeeded in restoring the line originally held by the 3rd Battalion.

(30) Personal knowledge. Statement of Lt. Col. Charles H. Chase.

Regimental Executive Officer.

During the night 5-6 October the 3rd Battalion was shifted south of the railroad and the 1st Battalion was assigned the Opheusden area. The night was relatively quiet. At dawn 6 October the enemy launched another attack in the Opheusden area preceded by the heaviest artillery preparation yet encountered in Holland. The 1st Battalion was pushed back about 500 yards.

Upon commitment of the 1st Battalion on 5 October a battalion of the 43rd Infantry Division was attached to the regiment as reserve.

The Regimental Commander now decided to commit the British battalion between the 1st and 3rd Battalions in a coordinated attack to regain the ground lost by the 1st Battalion. This attack was scheduled to jump off at 1245 hours; but due to enemy artillery, the British battalion did not reach the line of departure until about 1400 hours. The 1st and British Battalions were able to advance about three hundred (300) yards before being stopped.

It was now apparent that any further attempt to kick the enemy out of Opheusden would be too costly in men and material. The town was of no material value to the regiment in the defense of this line. (31)

On the night of 6-7 October the 3rd Battalion, 327th Glider Infantry Regiment, was attached to the 506th. This permitted the relief of the 1st and British Battalions. Upon completion of this relief the British battalion would revert to its parent division, and 1st Battalion would move to an assembly area about twelve hundred (1200) yards in rear of the front line.

This relief was accomplished by 3rd Battalion, 327th Glider Infantry, occupying positions some six hundred (600) yards in rear of the line originally held by the 1st and British Battalions. By 0200 hours 7 October the relief had been completed, British battalion cleared the regimental area, and 1st Battalion closed in

(31) Personal knowledge.

the assembly area.

At dawn on the morning of 7 October the 1st Battalion aid station personnel observed troops moving through an orchard some two hundred (200) yards west of their position. Thinking they were British troops, our men did not give them much attention; but upon closer examination the 1st Battalion found them to be enemy and went into action. At the end of a thirty (30) minute fight the 1st Battalion had captured one hundred and fifty-five (155) and killed approximately fifty (50) enemy. (32)

Upon investigation it was learned that this enemy force had over-run the 3rd Battalion, 506th's, position just south of the railroad. When the firing in this vicinity commenced the 3rd Battalion, 327th, commenced firing its machine guns located on the north side of the railroad cutting this enemy column in two. PWs captured by the 1st Battalion stated that their force consisted of a battalion with the mission of capturing Zetten. (Map C) Apparently the enemy column was cut when the 3rd Battalion, 327th, commenced firing. (33)

At about the time the action in the 1st Battalion area was over a strong enemy attack was launched in the 3rd Battalion, 506th, sector. This force was estimated at two (2) battalions supported by mortars and artillery. Due to the excellent fields of fire afforded by the flat terrain, our supporting artillery and automatic weapons could be employed most effectively. With these conditions in its favor, the 3rd Battalion was able to stop the attack; and by dark 7 October all enemy ground activity had ceased.

#### RELIEF OF THE REGIMENT

During the night 7-8 October the 327th Glider Infantry Regiment relieved the 3rd Battalion, 506th, without incident; and the 3rd Battalion, 327th, reverted to the 327th Regiment's control. By

(32) Personal knowledge; (33) Personal knowledge. Statement of Lt. Col. Charles H. Chase, Regimental Executive Officer.

dawn 8 October the 3rd Battalion, 506th, had closed in an assembly area in the vicinity of Zetten. (Map C)

During the period 2-8 October the 2nd Battalion had contained a small bridge-head in its sector along the south bank of the Neder Rijn river. This bridge-head was estimated to contain about three (3) hundred enemy and was completely eliminated by the combined efforts of the 2nd Battalion, 506th, and elements of the 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment on 9 October. (34)

Thereafter from 10 October to 26 November the 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment occupied various defensive positions on the island between the Neder Rijn and Waal Rivers. (35)

#### ANALYSIS AND CRITICISMS

In making a study of this operation, it is my opinion that the mission initially assigned the regiment was entirely within its capabilities.

~~In~~ Assigning only one (1) battalion the mission of securing the bridges at Zon might have been under-estimating the enemy strength and capabilities, but it must be remembered that a unit in this type of operation must be prepared for any eventuality and can not afford to commit all of its strength in one direction.

The 3rd Battalion could have been more aggressive in its attack on Eindhoven. However, it must be remembered that this was a head-on attack and the regiment had very little information concerning the enemy at this time.

The aggressive <sup>aw</sup> assault made by the 2nd Battalion on Eindhoven completely routed the enemy and prevented him from falling back to new positions and further delaying the capture of the city.

The aggressive patrolling in the Eindhoven area prevented the enemy from determining the strength and exact location of the forces in the area.

(34) Personal knowledge. Statement of Lt. Col. Charles H. Chase,

Regimental Executive Officer; (35) Personal knowledge.

The attack made by the 2nd Battalion and 15/19 Hussars on the enemy's rear in the vicinity of Nunen probably prevented the recapture of the Zon bridge, as attacking forces were superior to the defenders in number and supporting weapons at this particular point.

The ability of the regiment to detruck and deploy rapidly under shell fire in the vicinity of Veghel was one factor that insured the successful defense of the town against strong enemy attacks.

The aggressiveness of the attacking battalions in the vicinity of Koevering prevented the enemy from fully exploiting his success in the initial cutting of the highway. The envelopment of the enemy's flank by the 2nd Battalion earlier in the attack might have enabled the regiment to clear the highway before dark instead of having to wait until dawn the following day to accomplish this.

The defense of the Dodewaard-Opheusden-Randwijk area was a very tough assignment due to the enemy having control of the high ground north of the Neder Rijn river. In spite of this the regiment successfully defended this area against a very determined enemy. At the beginning of the attacks the 3rd Battalion held a sector some eight-hundred (1800) yards wide. It is believed that over terrain such as this, and with no barriers or obstacles, this is an excess frontage for a battalion.

In conjunction with the British battalion, it is estimated that the regiment destroyed the greater part of a German Infantry Division in the defense of this area. Fortunately the Germans attacked piece - meal; one (1) new regiment each day.

During this period the regiment had to bear in mind that the enemy controlled locks on the Neder Rijn and Waal rivers that would, if opened, flood the entire island at the rate of one (1) foot per hour. Plans were made whereby the regiment could start evacuating operations at a <sup>M</sup>oments notice. Fortunately the enemy did not resort to this means of clearing the Allied forces off the island.

To sum up the results of this operation: the 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment did accomplish the initial and all succeeding missions. If viewed from the Army level the mission was not accomplished in that the British Second Army did not reach the Zuider Zee; however, the enemy was prevented from moving his forces out of Holland at will. He was not allowed to use these forces to strengthen the West Wall defenses, and was delayed in re-grouping the retreating 15th Army.

In view of this it is most interesting to note that the enemy was able to form so called "Battle Groups" from stragglers, personnel guarding routes of communication, and local AA defense personnel. These groups, <sup>formed</sup> ~~formed~~ around the local ack ack gun positions, did delay the advance of the Allies, thereby giving <sup>the enemy</sup> ~~himself~~ more precious time for which he was so grimly fighting.

#### LESSONS

Some of the lessons emphasized by this operation are:

1. A daylight parachute drop is favored over a night drop if air superiority is enjoyed by the parachuting elements. This was evidenced by the quick assembly, better control, and rapidity of units moving toward initial objective.
2. To prevent a determined enemy from blowing bridges once they are wired is almost an impossible task.
3. In the defense of a narrow corridor, troops must be stationed along the entire length of such corridor, or be sufficiently mobile to enable them to move very quickly to any threat.
4. Intelligence must be up to date and authentic. To obtain this requires the continuous use of all available means at the disposal of all commanders. The lack of such intelligence was evidenced by the fact that the enemy was able to strike the Zon bridge one day, withdraw and strike the Veghel area the next. The aggressive use of reconnaissance elements

by higher commanders would have prevented this.

5. Airborne units are not equipped to conduct offensive operations in more than one direction at a time. This was evidenced by the constant re-shuffling of units within the corridor to meet threats as they developed, and by the fact that the enemy was able to cut the highway almost at will.
6. Communications in an operation of this type are almost entirely by radio. The radio SCR-300 is not suitable for use by airborne troops in this type operation due to its short range. Wire was laid on several occasions but due to enemy action and fast moving situation no material advantage was gained. It was not until the regiment reached the Opheusden area that wire was used to any great extent.
7. In operating over terrain such as this the liaison airplane is invaluable for observation. Ground observation was very limited due to the numerous orchards and cultivated forests.
8. Armor is of little value over terrain criss-crossed by canals and doubly so if no lateral roads exist as such was the case in Holland.
9. Mobility of airborne troops, once they are committed, is dependent upon captured and commandeered transportation. The amount of civilian transportation in the area of operations determines the state of mobility of an airborne unit when initially committed. This one factor determines their ability to meet numerous threats over an extended front.