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III

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1944

4TH INFORMATION & HISTORICAL SERVICE

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FOREWORD



K.H.

NINTH UNITED STATES ARMY

OPERATIONS

III

C O M B A T I N H O L L A N D

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4th INFORMATION AND HISTORICAL SERVICE
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ACTION NORTH OF ANTWERP
104th Infantry Division
23 October - 6 November 1944

INTRODUCTION

On 22 October 1944, 1 (British) Corps directed the 104th Infantry Division to relieve the 49 (West Riding) Division in its sector across the main Breda-Antwerp road just north of Wustwezel (8015) on the western wall of the corridor resulting from the previous month's airborne operation. Upon completion of this relief, which was to occur during the next two days, 49 Division was to take up positions west of the 104th. The sector east of the 104th was occupied by the 2 (Canadian) Armoured Brigade.

The front to be occupied by the 104th Division faced north to the Maas-Waal estuary 22 miles away, and in width extended roughly 8000 yards on each side of the main road running northeast to Zundert and Breda. The land here is flat with an imperceptible slope to the northwest. Under the sandy surface, impervious clay prevents standing water from draining away and necessitates extensive ditching of roads, meadows, and plantations. Grain, sugarbeets and potatoes are grown where the ground is not too marshy; elsewhere is rough pasture and small but numerous plantings of pine woods in various stages of growth. Since there are no hills, the buildings and steeples of villeges provide the only observation. The only terrain feature of the entire area is the River Mark which flows east to west some four miles south of the Hollandsch Diep. Vehicular traffic is road-bound. The principal routes of stone construction are good, but all others are narrow and incapable of two-way military traffic.

OPERATIONS

On 23 October 1944 as directed by 1 Corps, Regimental Combat Team 413, under command of Colonel Welcome P. Waltz, moved into the defensive positions of 56 Infantry Brigade in a zone about 8000 yards wide. On the right the 1st Battalion occupied the vicinity of Heiden (8612) and sent a reinforced rifle platoon to Oostbrecht (8810) on the division boundary to defend against attack from the northeast. In the center the 2d Battalion, with a platoon of the anti-tank company attached, organized near Stapelheide (8514), holding a rifle company (which could be reinforced with a section each of heavy machine guns and 81mm mortars) in mobile regimental reserve. On the left the 3d Battalion established itself around the village of Loenhout (8415). It also had attached a platoon of anti-tank guns.

S E C R E T

S E C R E T

The initial mission of the combat team was defensive. During the night patrols pushed out vigorously, in rain until 0430 and after that in fog, across the flat, grassy fields, ditches with standing water, and patches of trees. One German straggler was taken prisoner. The patrols found no other enemy activity for a distance of 1500 yards north and northeast, bearing out previous reports by armored reconnaissance that the enemy in this area were scattered remnants.

Further west, in the center of what was to be the division sector, the Germans had likewise withdrawn. During the morning they had been observed building up a counterattack, but after being engaged for half an hour by 49 Division Artillery, they dispersed and for two hours around noon began pulling back up the main road towards Breda.

The next day, 24 October, Regimental Combat Team 414, commanded by Colonel Anthony J. Touart, relieved 147 Infantry Brigade in a zone extending for 3000 yards across the Breda road (8416 to 8117). In the right portion astride the road, the 1st Battalion, reinforced by the attachment of a squad of the intelligence and reconnaissance platoon and the 1st platoons of the anti-tank and cannon companies, completed its relief at 1620. An hour earlier the 2d Battalion had occupied the left half of the sector.

During the day, Combat Team 413 continued patrolling to the front without meeting the enemy, although sporadic mortar and artillery fire came over. Patrols reported various mine fields, including one on the Loenhout-Terbeek road. At 1400 the combat team advanced unopposed to control the road crossing its sector between the 15 and 16 grid lines. Through the night patrolling continued by both regiments without incident.

Occupation of the division sector was completed by 0930 25 October when Regimental Combat Team 415, commanded by Colonel John H. Cochran, relieved 154 Infantry Brigade in the left 3000 yards. Two battalions went into line: on the right the 1st, on the left the 3d, each with a platoon of the anti-tank company attached and a platoon of the cannon company in direct support. The 1st Battalion had also attached Squadron A, 147 Tank Battalion (Royal Armoured Corps).

The division was now in position with seven infantry battalions in line. The reserve battalions of the 414th and 415th Infantries constituted the division reserve and were to be committed only with division permission.

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At 1010 that morning, first contact with the enemy was made. A patrol of Company B, 414th Infantry, advancing up the Breda road to the custom house just north of the Holland frontier, ran into light machine gun fire from an enemy numbering about a platoon. Enemy personnel and emplacements were concealed in banked ditches beside the road, rows and groups of trees from which all the leaves had not yet fallen, and numerous scattered buildings. The surrounding flat, open meadows offered excellent fields of fire.

That morning Field Marshal Montgomery and the 1st Corps Commander, Lieutenant General Crocker, visited the division CP. Montgomery expressed his desire that the division thrust forward without delay, engaging the enemy firmly and driving him northward with all possible speed. (1) As General Crocker expressed it: "The Boche is softening all around, and I don't want to miss an opportunity." (2)

Since the main enemy activity had been on and just west of the Breda road, the Commanding General, Major General Terry de la M. Allen, and G-3, Major Leo A. Hoegh, laid plans to flank this artery on both sides.

The prospect of a continuing offensive mission caused General Allen concern for his ammunition supply. The original allotment (21 October) of basic loads plus three units of fire had just been reduced to 34 percent of that amount. Consequently, General Allen wrote to the Commanding General, Ninth U. S. Army, requesting further supplies. Meanwhile, he instructed all commanders to limit the use of supporting fires. (3)

General Crocker directed the division to push in the enemy outpost at the custom house and clear the main road through Zundert (867235), gaining control of the road junction there at the latest on 27 October. (4) Toward this end the division by warning orders on the afternoon of the 24th, followed by a Field Order at 2300, had already directed the regiments to gain and maintain contact with the enemy and initially secure a line designated as Phase Line A. Through the sectors of CT 415 and CT 414 this line was the Holland frontier; in the sector of the 413th it was a projection east of that line from 8518 where the frontier turned north.

On the morning of the 25th this advance began as planned. The 413th Infantry, which had the greatest distance

S E C R E T

to go to Phase Line A, moved the 2d and 3d Battalions out at 0600. Soon they met the fire of machine guns, served by three and four-men crews, and came under mortar fire. Little artillery fell on them. Through the day the resistance was not enough to halt their advance. However, at 1700 stronger opposition, including artillery fire on the 2d Battalion, halted the regiment along the 18 grid line just short of Phase Line A.

This northward movement of the battalions swung the regiment away from the division right boundary and their adjacent unit, the Bob Force of the 2 (Canadian) Armoured Brigade. Accordingly at 1400 General Allen directed the 104th Reconnaissance Troop (less the platoon guarding the division CP) to move to Driehoek (9221) to strengthen that area.

In the center along the Breda road, the 414th Infantry, X strongly reinforced with Squadron C, 147 Tank Battalion and the 103d Anti-Tank Battery, made progress without initial difficulty, although by noon civilians driven south by the Germans through their lines caused some confusion to troops in the neighborhood of Wustwezel (8114). At 1430 the assault battalions reached Phase Line A and an hour and a half later jumped off to continue the advance.

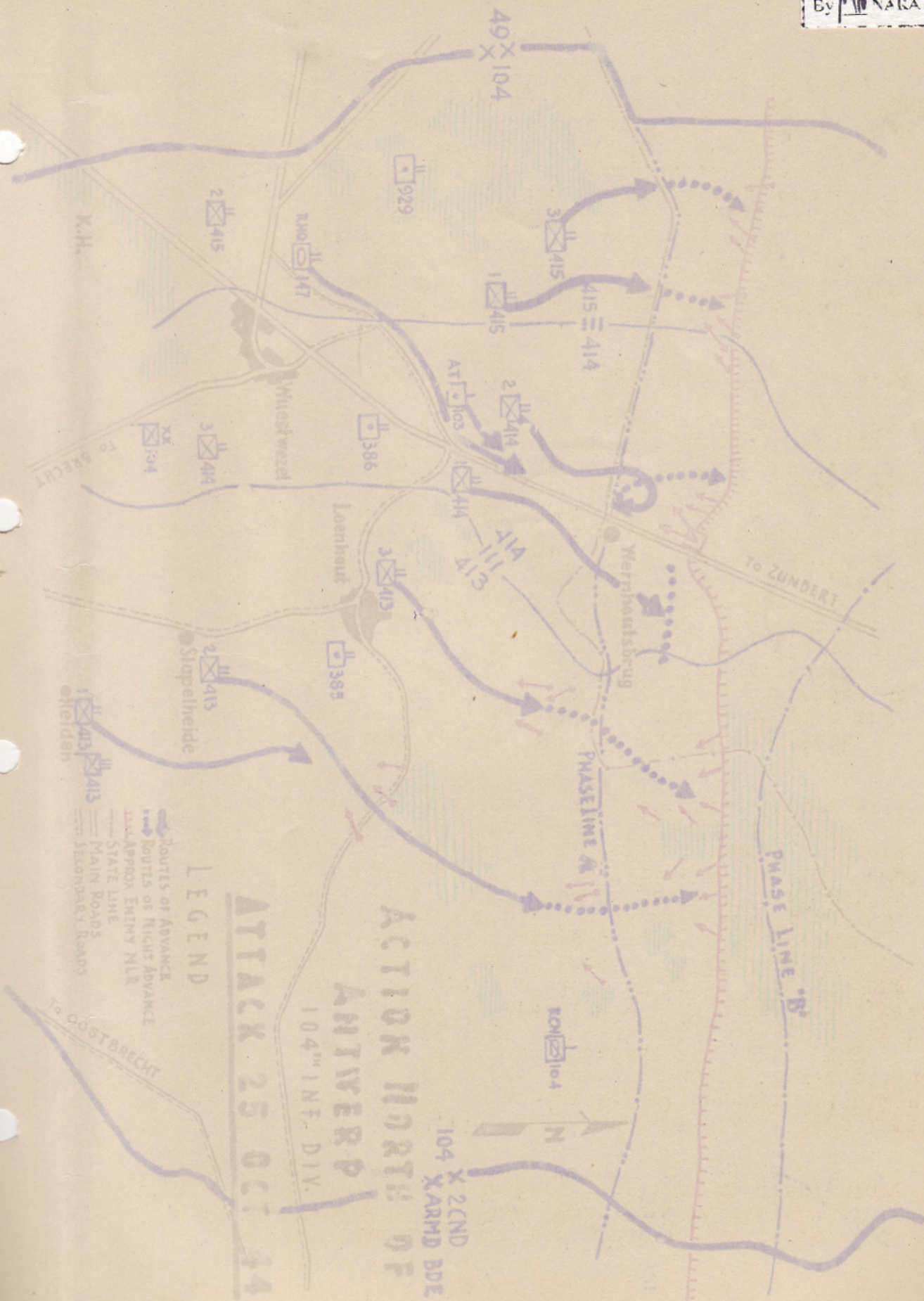
Opposition became considerably heavier and progress slow. Fire from the vicinity of Wernhoutsbrug (8419) stopped Company B. Company A, given the mission of bypassing the source of fire and continuing to Phase Line B (approximately 4000 yards north of Phase Line A), advanced to Goorkens (850195) where it remained during the night. When the 2d Battalion had advanced 1000 yards, it met heavy machine gun fire from the concrete works (8420) and was forced to withdraw to Phase Line A and reorganize.

On the left the 415th Infantry reached Phase Line A shortly before 1600. For a time enemy at the edge of a woods 200 yards to the north fired machine pistols at the 3d Battalion from earth emplacements and then withdrew. Heavy mortar fire continued to fall on the battalion. Both battalions halted to reorganize.

As night fell at around 1800, the division was substantially where it had planned to be with six infantry battalions in contact with the enemy. The Germans, however, remained elusive; their main forces had not yet been encountered. The division plan was to maintain constant pressure, particularly by night operations.

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ATTACK 25 OCT 44
ACTION HORNS OF ANTWERP
 104th INF. DIV.
 104 X 2 CND
 X ARMED BDE

LEGEND
 Routes of Advance
 Routes of Night Advance
 Approx Enemy MLR
 State Line
 Main Roads
 Secondary Roads

S E C R E T

At 1500 General Allen had directed all three regiments to advance north from Phase Line A to Phase Line B, and these instructions were confirmed by fragmentary order at 2000.

The 413th Infantry with two battalions in line infiltrated forward at 2230 with the direct support battalion of artillery firing on known installations.

Night
Advance

The night was overcast and dark. The troops took full advantage of the cover of darkness, and with a minimum of casualties advanced 800 to 900 yards against an enemy strongly dug in. The 3d Battalion, under command of Lieutenant Colonel William M. Summers, reached a point near Goorkens after meeting rifle, mortar, and machine gun fire from the front and right flank. The 2d Battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Collins R. Perry, gained the woods in the vicinity of 875200 in the face of small arms and machine gun fire. By morning the regiment in these positions directly threatened the main line (along grid 20) of the enemy defensive positions.

In the center sector, the 1st Battalion, 414th Infantry, during the night held its ground astride the Breda road. On its left the 2d Battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Joseph M. Cummins, Jr., advanced towards Phase Line B. Before morning light, as the platoons which had been pressing on through the darkness were re-aligning, the battalion came under very severe machine gun fire from the front and flanks and a great deal of mortar and 88mm fire. The enemy, estimated as a company, was repelled with the support of artillery, but the battalion was scattered and disorganized. After a hasty review of the situation, the battalion commander reported (at 0530) that he had lost Company H with all its weapons. At the time of this preliminary report, one rifle company appeared intact while another had 80 men. Later reorganization showed that the losses were by no means so severe. Yet the battalion had been held without appreciable gain.

On the left flank the 415th Infantry progressed slowly through difficult terrain. The ground was marshy, with diked ditches four feet wide and deep. The men were wet to the armpits, and no vehicles could reach them. Rations and ammunition were being carried up and casualties carried out by hand. At 1935 the regimental commander telephoned to G-3 that the 3d Battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Gerald Z. Kelleher, was opposed by six or eight machine guns, some riflemen, and mortars, and recommended buttoning up until morning (5); but to follow the division plan, he continued the advance at 0200.

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The men of the 3d Battalion crawled out of the bog surrounding them and found a way around the canal at its northern limit. For a time a raised lane gave them firm footing. Near 8020 the troops were fired on from buildings by four or five machine pistols, several emplaced machine guns, and eighteen to twenty riflemen. This was at 0430; an hour and a half later, while assault groups were working through an adjoining swamp to flank the enemy position, heavy mortar fire inflicted several casualties, and the battalion commander halted the advance.

The 1st Battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel John H. Elliot, also moved steadily forward through the night. At 2130 Company A reached the woods at 816202. Enemy fire was intense and the battalion suffered 26 casualties, including the battalion commander who was wounded by machine gun fire at 0300. The S-3, Captain Martin Previjs, took command. There was no contact with the adjacent unit on the right (the 2d Battalion 414th Infantry) from 0100 to 0610. At 0500, when the battalion had moved 1000 yards north of Phase Line A, it received machine gun cross fire from its exposed right flank. At 0700 Company B repulsed a counterattack, and immediately thereafter the regiment directed the battalion to reorganize and hold.

Both battalions had encountered severe mortar fire, in some instances from weapons emplaced in the cellars of ruined buildings. Anti-tank rocket launchers were used against these emplacements with good results. By morning the 1st Battalion had advanced 1400 yards, and the 3d, despite the boggy ground, 1600 yards.

The night advance of both flanks had progressed with fair success, but the center had been held up by the heavy enemy counterattack. On the morning of the 26th, General Allen considered that the division could not afford to commit the infantry in the center sector on the strongly-defended Breda road, but should make full use of artillery there. (6) The infantry, following the original division scheme, was to hold back in the center and push around the flanks.

Maneuver
Toward
Zundert

26 OCTOBER

G-2, Lieutenant Colonel Mark S. Plaisted, estimated the total enemy strength on the division front that morning as seven normal infantry battalions with an average strength of 200 to 300 men each. Probably one or two more battalions were in reserve. Supporting the

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foot troops appeared to be two brigades of self-propelled guns, believed to consist of 40 guns each. Further possible reserves on the division right flank could counterattack in the division zone. Weapons employed by these units included 20mm anti-aircraft guns used as ground pieces and 88mm and 76.2 self-propelled guns.

From 1 Corps the division had received the direct support of 68 (British) Medium Regiment of Artillery and planned to use it supporting the attack of the 415th Infantry and left elements of the 414th Infantry. General Allen was not satisfied with the ammunition on hand, and that morning sent a telegram to Ninth U.S. Army, indicating the urgent need of immediately having available two additional units of fire of all types to accomplish the mission. At 0750 General Allen on the telephone requested that 1 Corps Commander, if necessary, endorse this request.

Second
request for
Ammunition

Aerial reconnaissance was to ascertain threats of enemy counterattack, especially against the right flank from the vicinity of Meer (9120) in the east and on the Zundert-Breda road. On that road the 3d Battalion, 414th Infantry was to be held in readiness to repel any such attempt. Three air missions were requested, and approved: bombardments of Achtmaal (809219), Zundert, and Meer; but inclement weather kept the planes grounded.

In the 413th Infantry, where the main effort was to be made, a regimental fragmentary order on the 25th had warned all units to be prepared for offensive action on 26 October north towards Zundert. Through the morning that advance was steady against numerous emplaced positions

The ammunition distributing point of the 3d Battalion was hit at 0715 by machine gun tracer fired by an enemy patrol. Nearly the entire battalion supply of ammunition was destroyed. However, within two hours a new load was brought up, and the operation was not delayed.

While the 2d Battalion advanced two companies on line (G and E), the 3d had three abreast with the left flank, nearest the Breda road, exposed. At 1030 enemy fire pinned down this flank in an exposed position, and right was confronted by flat ground which prevented maneuver. The division answered a regimental request for tanks at noon, and in the early afternoon elements of 147 Tank Battalion, thrusting in front of the 3d Battalion, opened the way for further advance. Enemy snipers in the rear area of the battalion seriously

Tanks
Move In

snipers in the rear area of the battalion seriously

S E C R E T

harassed personnel and vehicles. Among the casualties was one at the entrance of the battalion command post. By 1430 the regiment had reached grid line 22. At 1600 the regimental sector was strengthened and the right flank of the division protected by the movement into the zone of the 2d Battalion, 415th Infantry, motorized.

The CP of the 3d Battalion was attacked at 1705 by a strongly reinforced platoon. At the time the line companies, several hundred yards forward, were heavily engaged. However, tanks and the direct support artillery battalion were available. The artillery laid fire within fifty yards of the CP. The attack was dispersed with several prisoners taken.

At dark both battalions reached Phase Line B and buttoned up. An advance of 1200 yards had been made during the day with 50 casualties; the regiment had breached a series of strong earthworks and was in the desired position to strike at Zundert. The night passed uneventfully and gave some rest to the troops who had been in continuous fire and movement through two days and a night. The regiment kept contact with the 2 Armoured Brigade on its right and prepared for the attack next morning. On this flank the reconnaissance troop operated between the 413th Infantry and the 2 Armoured Brigade, gaining no contact with the enemy.

As directed, the 414th Infantry through the day of the 26th continued reorganization and improvement of its positions under intermittent artillery fire, especially in the 1st Battalion sector. Only on order was the regiment to move beyond Phase Line B on which the 2d Battalion was established.

During the afternoon hostile infantry with automatic weapons counterattacked the right flank of Company A. With the aid of intensive artillery concentrations it was repulsed in half an hour. Snipers were constantly active. For an hour, beginning at 1700, 88mm guns and two guns of larger than 105mm bore heavily shelled the 1st Battalion line and command post. Counterbattery concentrations silenced this fire.

At 1950 the regiment was informed by G-3 that there would be no further movement that night. Throughout the night all battalions, including the 3d in reserve, sent out patrols against snipers over the roads and bridges. All lines held secure. At 0500 an enemy platoon was repulsed from the left flank of the 2d Battalion.

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The 415th Infantry (after 1600 less the 2d Battalion) on the left maintained pressure and advanced slightly. A regimental reserve was constituted of the intelligence and reconnaissance platoon, the anti-tank company mine platoon, and the attached engineer platoon. The 1st Battalion moved 1900 yards north of Phase Line A, but meeting heavy enemy mortar and artillery fire, withdrew somewhat. The 3d Battalion, after gaining 800 yards, was pinned to the ground with machine gun, machine pistol, mortar and artillery fire at a point 400 yards north of the brick works (794211). The roads in the regimental area, in addition to being under enemy fire, were heavily mined; ammunition and litter cases had to be hand carried 1500 yards.

During the night supporting artillery fired harassing missions on numerous targets, including enemy positions in the vicinity of Achtmaal (8122). The troops, harried by mortar and artillery fire and by enemy patrols, got little rest. In the 1st Battalion sector the enemy re-occupied two earth emplacements with machine pistols to cause a diversion while patrols slipped into the battalion line. In the 3d Battalion patrols attempted to throw potato-masher grenades into fox-holes. Through the night the regimental lines held firm.

Generally, during 26 October hostile resistance had stiffened. (7) The small groups with harassing machine guns and rifles had given way to more substantial forces, including 75mm self-propelled guns, behind them.

On the 27th very little remained between the division and Zundert. The principal enemy line had been assaulted in such strength that in darkness, while covering elements were active, the main body had withdrawn and begun the preparation of new positions along the Vaart Canal, six to eight miles to the north. (8)

Taking of
Zundert

However, the rearguard, large in numbers, could be expected to hold out doggedly. General Allen had received his requested quota of ammunition, and he made plans for a strong drive. The 413th Infantry was constituted a Task Force with the reinforcement of the 385th, 387th and 68th Field Artillery Battalions, a squadron of 147 Tank Battalion, the 2d Battalion of the 415th Infantry, and the 104th Reconnaissance Troop. This Task Force was to continue the attack with the same assault elements as on the previous day, the 2d and 3d Battalions of the 413th Infantry. The rest of the division was to keep steady pressure and reach a line at the concrete works, north of grid 20.

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For twenty minutes before the jump-off an artillery preparation with 105 and 155mm Howitzers and other guns, laid accurate and punishing fire on the hostile positions. Numbers of enemy dead were later found, and the prisoners taken were dazed. At 0640 the infantry in columns of companies moved out of the woods and across the fields towards their intermediate objective, a further strip of trees --- the last before Zundert.

Initially mortar and small-arms fire from a chateau in that strip of trees to their left front held up the 2d Battalion. Patrols from Company F, supported by 81mm mortars, silenced this fire and brought in three prisoners. Heavy mortar fire replaced light fire of enemy artillery and self-propelled guns. Snipers operated continuously. Both battalions reached the intermediate objective by 1230 and there lost contact with the retreating enemy. After a brief reorganization the advance continued. A 60-foot Bailey Bridge was constructed by the 329th Engineer Battalion to permit the advance of the tanks.

Meanwhile the 414th and 415th Infantries were carrying out their assigned role, straightening their line by forward movement in a series of small advances. The 414th moved into Wernhoutsbrug, cleaning out the custom house there. Infantrymen of the 415th killed several snipers wearing civilian clothes under their overcoats. The mine platoon of the anti-tank company removed 40 box mines, about 4 by 6 by 30 inches, buried level with the ground along roads. The reconnaissance troop patrolled the vicinity of Meer, destroying an enemy observation post in a church steeple. At 1830 the troop reported the area free of enemy.

A planned artillery barrage on Zundert was cancelled when it became apparent that the rearguards defending it had been wiped out. Before dark the 3d Battalion, 413th Infantry, entered the town to find no enemy. The 2d Battalion closed on the Breda highway north of Zundert.

During the three days following the occupation of Zundert on 27 October, the division was engaged in pursuing the enemy to the River Mark. No large-scale action developed in the period.

<u>Pursuit</u>	
<u>28 October</u>	The division gained two further attachments: the 692d Tank Destroyer Battalion (Towed), and the 555th Anti-Aircraft Artillery (Automatic Weapons) Battalion (Mobile).

At 0300 on the morning following the occupation of Zundert the division issued the following directions in Field Order No. 6: Contact with the enemy was to be maintained by patrolling, and units were to hold themselves

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in readiness to advance either northeast to Breda (9436), or northwest through Rucphen (7830). The 413th Infantry, going into division reserve, was to spearhead an attack on Breda. In preparation for an advance through Rucphen the 414th Infantry, strongly reinforced as a Task Force, was to seize that town, while the 415th Infantry was to protect its right flank.

Task Force 414 included the following attachments to the regiment: Company B, 329th Engineer Battalion; the 103d Anti-Tank Battery; Squadron C, 147 Tank Battalion; the 104th Reconnaissance Troop; Battery A, 555th Anti-Aircraft Battalion; and a battery of the 387th Field Artillery Battalion. At 0330 half an hour after the division issued its order, a regimental field order directed the units to cross the Holland frontier at 1100 in a column of battalions -- the 3d leading, followed by the 1st and 2d -- and advance along the Zundert-Rucphen road. However, at 0845 1 Corps directed the division not to go to Rucphen but to advance on Breda. Immediately this information was telephoned to the 414th Infantry, which changed its plans and at 1000 issued a new field order. The time for crossing the Holland frontier was set back to 1145.

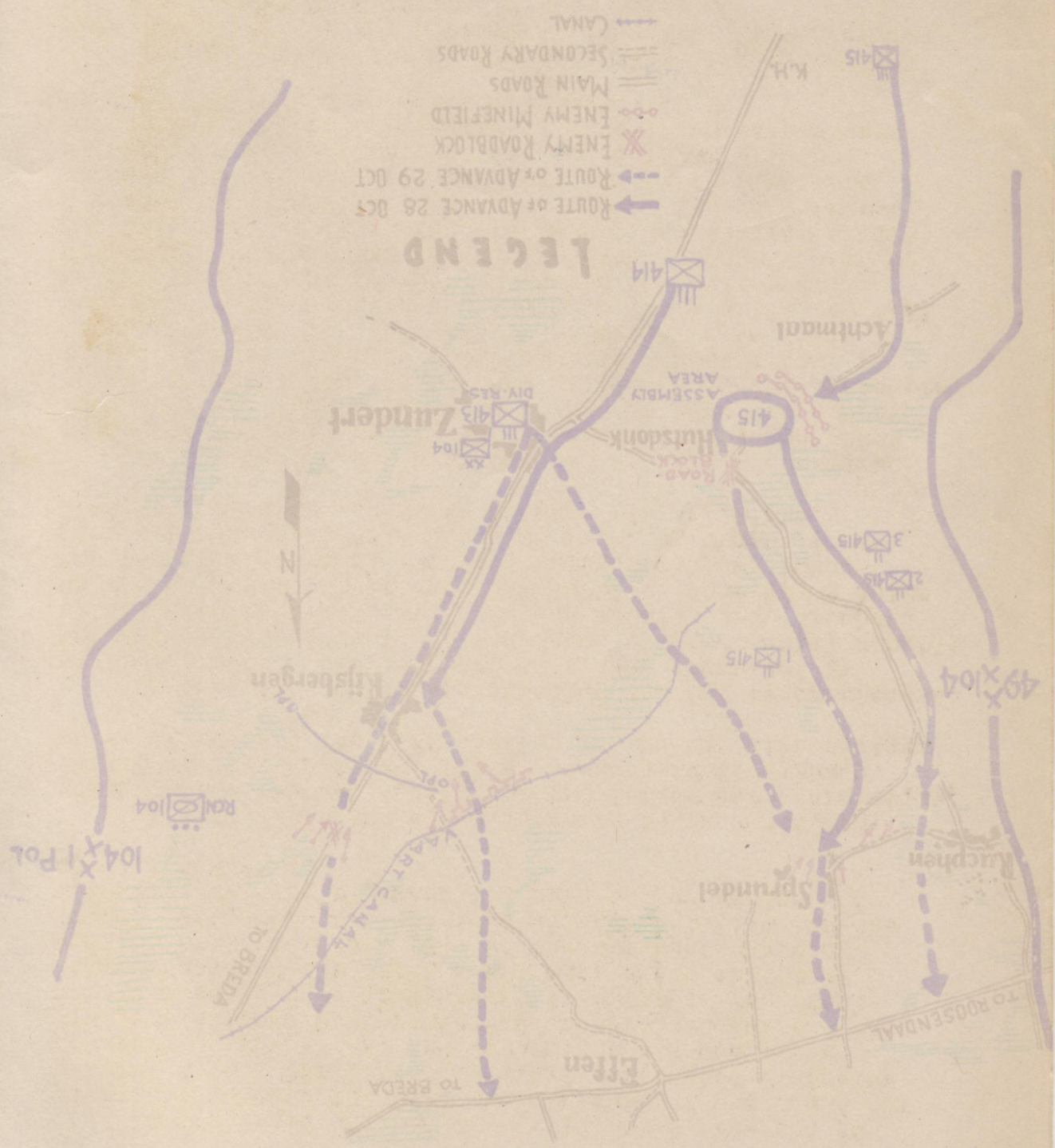
Pursuant to this order, the column passed through the 413th Infantry at Zundert, encountering enemy in small groups of two to 10 who surrendered without opposition. A few rounds of light artillery (probably 88mm) fell on the troops just south of Rijsbergen (895286), apparently from Fort Oranje, 2000 yards north of the town.

ALTERED ORDERS

Then at 1700 the operation was further altered by 1 Corps. The directive given to General Allen on the telephone was, "Stop your advance towards Breda at Rijsbergen; you may have to swing north and march on the River Mark."

The Division Operations Memo No. 2, confirming the oral orders of the morning, was accordingly changed by an immediate telephone message to the 414th Infantry, halting it at nightfall at Rijsbergen. An advance guard was posted a distance of a mile and a half to the north.

Meanwhile corresponding changes had been necessary in the operations of the 415th Infantry. Starting at 0800 it had moved northeast through considerable mortar fire from the woods a thousand yards north of Achtmaal. Our artillery fire and combat patrols silenced these weapons. The



ACTION NORTH OF
 ANTWERP
 PURSUIT 28-29 OCT 44

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1st Battalion passed to the right of the town, and the 3d Battalion, going through it, found it unoccupied.

At this time the intention of the regiment was to swing to the right of the 414th Infantry and then parallel it northwest beyond Rucphen. When corps instructions sent the 414th northeast instead, the 415th was ordered to assemble at Biggelaar (843234) just short of Zundert.

It proceeded through a heavily mined area and at Biggelaar reached the most solid ground it had found for several days. Until now mines had restricted vehicular movement on the roads, and open marsh and countless drainage ditches had prohibited it across country. Now vehicles could move in comparative safety. The front-line troops had not eaten a hot meal since the first contact on 25 October. (9) Of the numerous cases of trench foot, some had required evacuation. (10) At the assembly area the regiment was able to reorganize and dry out somewhat.

At last light the 415th Infantry began a movement north on two routes. Following the latest corps directive, its objective was to cut the Breda-Roosendaal highway where it crossed the left portion of the division sector.

On the right route the intelligence and reconnaissance platoon preceded the 1st Battalion, now commanded by Major Fred E. Needham. It made good progress until shortly before midnight when artillery and machine gun fire held up the column south of Sprundel (8331). Four hours later the battalion mortars and supporting artillery (whose fire was requested from the left route on which it was moving) forced the enemy to abandon his positions.

On the left route a platoon of the reconnaissance troop was followed by the 2d Battalion in advance guard formation and the 3d Battalion. For an hour and a half before midnight the advance was halted while the engineers removed a road block of trees seventeen feet thick, at Hulsdonk (842242). Thereafter the column made rapid progress to the crossroads at 811285 where artillery fell on the tail of the advance guard and the main body. Vehicles moved off the roads and later pushed forward by infiltration, still subject to mortar and artillery fire directed by concealed enemy observers. The foot troops resumed the advance, clearing the route of mines, and at 0300 encountered snipers in Sgt. Willabroed (8233). Before daylight both columns had reached positions just south of the Breda - Roosendaal highway.

For the first time in the operations a regiment had been out of action for a complete day; the 413th Infantry had remained at Zundert in division reserve.

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The division had now reached the second defensive line prepared by the enemy, who had dug in along the Veart Canal. This was held by a force estimated to be four infantry battalions (strength 1100 to 1200 men), supported by an engineer battalion, an anti-tank battalion, a divisional artillery regiment, and a brigade of self propelled guns. The west end of the line had given way, surprised by the night operations of the 415th Infantry, but the eastern portion held firmly. (11)

Pursuit continued

During the night 1 Corps ordered the division to move five to eight miles to the northwest and secure a crossing over the River Mark. Two further regiments of medium artillery, the 65 and 79 (British) were attached. Division Field Order No. 7 issued at 0200 directed the 414th Infantry at Standaardbuiten (770396). At daylight on 29 October both were moving north.

ACROSS THE CANAL

Just after noon the leading battalion of the 414th Infantry, the 3d, reached the Veart Canal at 887304. Here, occupying strong positions built into the dykes, the enemy halted the advance for five hours. The division put down an intensive artillery barrage which left the defenders dazed, and our infantrymen took several score of prisoners. Between 1730 and 1900 the volume of fire forced the enemy to fall back. The 3d Battalion, gaining the north bank, pursued the survivors without pause.

On the left the 1st Battalion, 415th Infantry, passed through Sprundel at 0600, inflicting heavy casualties and capturing numerous prisoners. Before 1000 the regiment had full control of the Breda-Roosendaal highway, and the enemy fell back, offering no further close resistance. However, through the morning, heavy and accurate mortar and artillery fire fell on the 2d and 3d Battalions, the executive officers of each, respectively, Major Robert W. Russi and Major John Jeevons, were killed by shell fire. The fire ceased when a patrol removed an observer directing it from a church steeple.

The main body of the 413th Infantry remained in division reserve, moving at darkness to the vicinity of Sprundel. The 1st Battalion went by motor at 0800 to Rijsbergen and from there proceeded on foot to guard the division right flank. At around 1600 small-arms fire slowed, but did not halt, the advance. At 2000 lead elements encountered a road block protected by machine gun fire. Battalion personnel who took cover in the ditches along the road suffered casualties from anti-

S E C R E T

personnel mines. By midnight the area on the immediate right of the 414th Infantry was clear of enemy. (12)

Further to the right a platoon of the reconnaissance troop, operating northeast of Rijsbergen in an effort to contact the 1st Polish Armoured Division, had replaced the 2 Canadian Armoured Brigade which was converging on Breda. The platoon found this area held in strength.

From the Vaart Canal, Task Force 414 throughout the night pressed on, covering the 5000 yards to the Breda-Roosendaal highway. For the most part the Germans did not turn to fight. The operations since the preceding nightfall had completely destroyed and overrun the Vaart Canal line. Eighty-nine prisoners had been taken. Only one more delaying position south of the Hollandsch Diep remained to the Germans: the River Mark.

Pursuit to the River Mark was completed on 30 October. Corps pressed the urgency of clearing mines from the road net connecting Breda, Etten and Roosendaal.

To the River Mark This work continued all day, increasing as the infantry advance disclosed further road blocks and booby traps. The main routes into Oudenbosch were blocked by railway cars heavily mined and surrounded by bombs. These mines constituted the principal harassing activity of the enemy, although occasional rounds of mortar and artillery fire fell.

In the afternoon the division rapidly covered the distance (varying from four to five miles) between the Breda-Roosendaal highway and the River Mark. While a portion of Task Force 414 remained just north of the highway, the 2d Battalion and Company C moved into position for crossing the river, and reconnoitered under severe enemy fire from the north bank.

The 415th Infantry advanced in two columns. On the left route the 2d Battalion arrived at 1900 at the bridge south of Standaerbuiten (770391). Here the advance guard, Company L, found a road block consisting of steel cross-jacks about 200 yards short of the bridge, and drew fire from a machine gun and several machine pistols that were protecting the road-block. As patrols advanced on the point, they observed great confusion among the enemy troops who were shouting and running about near the bridge. A few minutes later the bridge was blown up.

Close resistance on the south bank of the river at that point was eliminated by 2030, but fierce fire of all types from the north bank continued all night. The men of Company L killed numerous enemy and took 11 prisoners, including an officer, without a casualty to themselves.

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General Allen, in a written directive to Colonel Cochran, desired the 415th Infantry to force a crossing that night. At 2100 Colonel Cochran disposed his units between Oudenbosch (7837) and the river as follows: the 3d Battalion near Bennenlous (780383), the 2d just north of the railroad crossing on Meerdijksche Straat (790380), and the 1st in the vicinity of Lollestraat (790365). Heavy mortar and artillery fire on the 3d Battalion as it went into position caused casualties of five killed, 19 wounded and five missing. The 1st Battalion was before daylight to establish a bridgehead over the river east of Standaardbuiten. Reconnaissance for it was made under difficult conditions. The flat meadows enclosed within their surrounding dykes gave no cover from enemy fire, and the dykes themselves were heavily mined. Thus the division, on the night of 30 October, was in position to attack the German's best delaying position, the river line of the Mark.

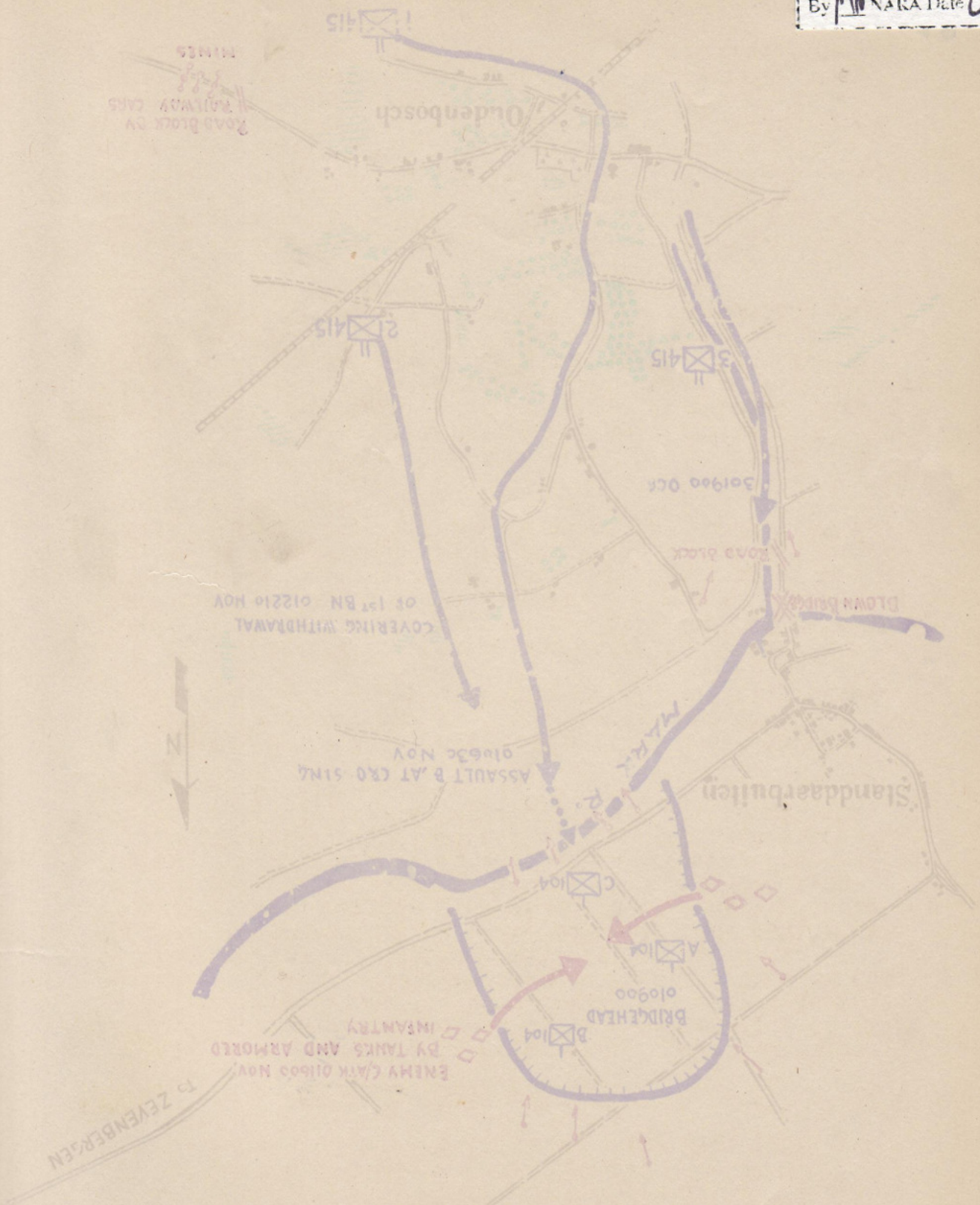
On the right the 414th Infantry, south of Zevenbergen, completed a thorough and discouraging reconnaissance. Of the two existing bridges, one was blown and the other damaged beyond use. Before any equipment could be moved in the area extensive removal of mines was necessary. First Crossing of the Mark At no point did the approach to the water offer solid footing for the equipment necessary to a crossing. The regimental plan had been for a simulated operation on the right. When this diversion had attracted enemy attention, the main effort by the 2d Battalion was to be launched on the left. The division was advised of the boggy nature of the partially flooded field, and ordered that the main effort be held up. (13) The feint on the right, however, was carried out at 0400 as planned, and the 2d Battalion remained in readiness to exploit advantage gained elsewhere on the river.

Before Standaardbuiten the 415th planned the crossing by the 1st Battalion at 793403, 2500 yards east of the blown bridge. Division engineers provided assault boats.

At 0630 Company A, the first wave, crossed the water under grazing machine gun fire. Most of the troops clung to the sides of the assault boats. On the north bank a strip of meadow at water level had to be crossed before the men reached the cover of the first dyke. There they were able to return fire and to some extent cover the crossing of further waves.

A few hundred yards from the scene of the crossing a German floating footbridge was found. It had been prepared for demolition with Teller mines, but an officer of the battalion, Lieutenant Neil, cut the wires controlling

ACTION NORTH OF ANTWERP
FIRST CROSSING OF THE
MARK RIVER



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the mines, and the bridge was seized intact. By 0900 the three rifle companies were on the north side of the river, and had pushed their thousand-yard-wide bridgehead 1400 yards across the Standaardbuiten-Zevenbergen road. Forward right and left were Companies B and A, with Company C in reserve. Through all this time the enemy employed mortar and artillery fire liberally.

RETREAT ACROSS THE MARK

It was impossible to support the rifle companies adequately. There was no way to get the vehicles of the battalion across, and the 81mm mortars could not go into position for lack of observation and because of constant counter-battery fire. The artillery was unable to support the troops because wire communication could not be maintained. Any use of radio brought down immediate and accurate fires; the efficiency of enemy direction finders forced radio communication to be suspended completely. (14) The battalion commander requested air support, but weather conditions did not permit the mission to be flown.

Enemy observers occupying concealed positions in the dykes accounted for the accuracy of some of the hostile fire until they could be spotted and eliminated.

It was planned to follow the initial crossing immediately with the 2d Battalion. Later the 2d Battalion, 414th Infantry was to move across the river at the same point. These plans were abandoned because many of the assault boats had been destroyed, and constant and heavy shelling continued, including exceedingly accurate fire from self-propelled guns. (15)

Scattered Germans remained south of the river, and in the early afternoon harassed the division rear at various points, including as far south as 825375. There a patrol in some force attempted disruption of an artillery position, employing a machine gun, machine pistols, and a mortar. Company F 414th Infantry, with a platoon of machine guns of Company H, undertook the protection on the south bank of the base of the crossing.

At 1600 the enemy counter-attacked the bridgehead with armor accompanied by infantry. Six medium tanks encircled Companies B and A, and overrunning their positions, fired into the men's foxholes. Further assault boats were urgently requested from corps, but were not immediately available. (16) In these circumstances, and with neither support nor reinforcement possible, the rifle elements could not maintain the bridgehead. They alone in the corps sector were north of the river, subject

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to the concentration of all the available German resources. The chance of violent surprise had been lost.

The decision of 1 Corps was to withdraw the 1st Battalion, 415th Infantry, to the south side of the River Mark, and to plan a coordinated corps attack within a day or two. The Corps G-Ops, Colonel Butler, telephoned this directive to General Allen.

Following the division directive, at 2210, Colonel Cochran, commanding the 415th Infantry, ordered the 1st Battalion to withdraw across the river and reorganize, the withdrawal to be covered by the 2d Battalion. The 1st Battalion made an urgent request for litter bearers to assist in evacuating the wounded from the advanced positions.

Major Fred E. Needham, the 1st Battalion commander, and Captain Felkins, a Battery Commander of the 387th Field Artillery Battalion, with a reinforced platoon from Company F commanded by Sergeant Scott, advanced with additional bazookas and ammunition in an attempt to provide anti-tank protection for the withdrawal of Companies A and B. About 500 yards north of the river-bank the relief party encountered an enemy patrol and machine gun fire. While engaged in repelling this patrol, Captain Felkins was killed. The relief party was unable to reach Companies A and B, but assisted in evacuating the wounded.

The withdrawal continued throughout the night, and when reorganization was effected, the battalion had lost 66 wounded and 121 missing. The heroism of officers and men of the 1st Battalion was outstanding. (17)

Up to this point the division had suffered casualties of 81 killed, 323 wounded, and 135 missing; 450 replacements had been received. Prisoners had been taken in the number of 280.

The day and evening of 1 and 2 November were occupied in planning and preparing the coordinated corps attack on the river line. Second Crossing of the Mark Company F of the 415th Infantry and machine guns of Company H guarded the German footbridge. There was very little enemy activity. For a day survivors from the bridgehead of the 1st Battalion continued to make their way back across the river. (18) The 413th Infantry sent four 3 man patrols reconnoitering on the north bank. Division artillery laid heavy concentrations on Standaard-buiten and the road from that town to Zevenbergen. The

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enemy determination to hold the river line was disclosed by the statements of prisoners that 200 replacements arrived in the area 30 October, and that troops in the line were threatened with force to remain and fight to the last man.

On the afternoon of 1 November a conference at Roosendaal was attended by Lieutenant General Crocker, Major General Barker, 49 Division Commander, and Major General Allen. They discussed plans for an attack on 2 November. (19)

THE PLAN

On the night of 2 November the corps main effort was to be made by the 104th Division in the vicinity of Standaarbuiten. It was then to develop its operation and secure Zevenbergen, and exploit its attack within the division boundaries as far as the River Maas. The main assault was to be at 2100; at 1900 there was to be a subsidiary diversionary attack in the area of Zwartenburg (8540). 49 Division was to attack at approximately the same time as the 104th. The 1st Polish Armoured Division was to withdraw the small bridgehead it had established on the right of the 414th Infantry, and make an effort farther to the east; not, however, in conjunction with the main corps assault.

At 0200 2 November the division issued Field Order No. 8 specifying the plan. The 413th Infantry was to make the main effort west of Standaarbuiten; the 415th Infantry was to renew its crossings east of the town, which it would seize. The engineers prepared to construct a nine-ton Floating Boat Equipment bridge at Standaarbuiten when a bridgehead was established and later throw across a Bailey Bridge with a capacity of 40 tons. The 414th Infantry was to make only a feint and be ready later to follow over the crossings established by the other regiments.

Through the early hours and day of 2 November, patrols and aerial reconnaissance provided increasing information of the situation ahead. At 0300 a patrol of the 413th Infantry brought back two prisoners from the north bank opposite the sugar factory at 761391. Artillery planes reported road blocks, barbed wire, an enemy observation post in a steeple, freshly dug foxholes north of Standaarbuiten, and numerous machine gun positions. At 1900 air observer determined that many enemy emplacements were unoccupied.

To amplify the appearance of the feint by the 414th Infantry, during the afternoon 100 members of the division headquarters rear echelon and a squadron of tanks otherwise unoccupied moved into assembly positions in the

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regimental sector. After nightfall they were withdrawn by infiltration.

By 2000 the assault battalions were in position, and a preparatory one-hour barrage by division and corps artillery began. The attack jumped off on time.

At Standaardbuiten Company K, 415th Infantry was on the north bank in 20 minutes, fighting in the town. Concurrently on the right Company G crossed at the point of the former bridgehead, and within an hour had cut the Standaardbuiten-Zevenbergen road, suffering three casualties. Company Mark followed immediately behind. At that time construction began on the bridge, under registered enemy artillery fire. At 2230 Company K reported capturing several Germans and finding many dead in Standaardbuiten.

On the left the 2d Battalion, 413th Infantry, crossed the river in assault boats in 25 minutes and were pushing through the darkness towards Kreek (770415). Behind followed the 1st Battalion, which completed its crossing at 2125.

In both regimental sectors close opposition was only moderate. Information from prisoners of war that the enemy was again withdrawing his main force proved correct. The delaying forces left by the enemy appeared to be thoroughly disorganized by the division artillery preparator

However, hostile mortars and artillery did continue to be active. Both opened fire on the leading elements of the 413th Infantry, but failed to halt their advance. At 2300 the Assistant Division Commander, Brigadier General Bryant E. Moore, who was with the regiment, advised continued advance to Kreek and beyond.

Construction of the FBE bridge proceeded with difficulty. Mortar and artillery fire on it was extremely accurate. At 0115 it was completed and work begun on the Bailey bridge. At 0315 one bay was knocked out of the FBE bridge by enemy artillery; it was repaired in half an hour. The engineers' attempt to complete the Bailey bridge continued under further shelling. The 3d Battalion Commander, 415th Infantry, instituted a search for a possible enemy observer. Two were found, directing the fire by radio, concealed under an abutment of the old demolished bridge.

At midnight leading elements of the 413th Infantry, Companies G and F, passed through Kreek. On this road they encountered a force of six enemy tanks. When artillery

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fire was laid on the tanks they turned back. With some difficulty, the regiment maintained telephone communication with forward units, and the advance was closely coordinated. An hour and three quarters behind the 2d Battalion, the 1st arrived at Kreek. At 0620, the 1st Battalion reached a planned objective half way to Nordhoek (784430) and sent patrols into that town. In a counterattack from Nordhoek at around 0900 Lieutenant Colonel Collins R. Perry, commanding the 2d Battalion, was wounded along with several other men. Lieutenant Colonel Thomas F. Neilson took command of the battalion and repelled the attack with the aid of artillery.

The crossings of the 415th Infantry had proceeded with equal dispatch. At 2120 Company K was cleaning out scattered enemy from Standaardbuiten. At another point the 2d Battalion, starting across at 2100, within an hour had Company G firmly astride the Standaardbuiten-Zevenbergen road at the expense of only three casualties. At that time Company E was crossing. Standaardbuiten yielded several prisoners and many enemy dead.

At 0100 Company G faced four tanks and mortar and machine gun fire. The company withdrew far enough for supporting artillery to lay fire on the position and again advanced.

At around 0900 Lieutenants Fox and Squires and approximately 65 men of Companies A and B, still holding their advanced positions north of the river, were passed through by the 2d Battalion. They had retained these positions since 0900 31 October despite enemy tank, artillery and mortar fire. In addition the group had been under severe friendly artillery fire. They had subsisted on turnips and sugar beets found in the vicinity. The officers and men maintained superior discipline and morale, and by expert use of cover suffered minimum casualties during the time they were separated from the battalion.

Survivors
Rescued

From positions immediately south of the river the 2d Battalion, 414th Infantry, supported by fire the attack of the 415th Infantry.

During the morning the reserve battalion of the 413th Infantry, the 3d, crossed to the north bank of the river, completing the movement at 1120.

Before noon of 3 November it was apparent that the German line of the River Mark had been finally broken. (20) No further natural delaying positions remained to the enemy

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south of the River Maas. The task before the division was one of prompt and relentless pursuit. Through the day hostile artillery fire became lighter as the enemy withdrew his heavy equipment to the escape route across the bridge at Moerdijk. The 88s and self-propelled guns left behind employed hit-and-run tactics, at times concealing their firing positions in haystacks.

North of the River Mark the terrain is lower and more barren than to the south. There are no plantations of timber, and such trees as line the roads or surround farm buildings are sparse. The small marshy meadows lie at sea level or below and are surrounded by secondary dykes and canals eight to 10 feet deep. Roads traverse the country on the larger dykes. These are about 80 feet wide and 12 feet high with occasional buildings constructed partially within them. In the cellars of these buildings the Germans emplaced machine guns, using the upper portions for observation posts. At bends of the dykes emplacements, commanding the roads, had been carefully constructed and camouflaged with sod. Some of these were dug in vertically; others extended horizontally right through the dyke. Elaborate systems of communications trenches connected the positions. Preparations of this scope, executed with such care, suggested that the enemy meant to hold the ground much longer than he did.

Pursuit to
the River
Maas

As he retreated he liberally sowed the restricted avenues of movement with varied types of mines and booby-traps. Numbers of the latter were improvised from beet-roots. The sugar-beet harvest had just been gathered, and the ground was littered with scattered beet-roots. To mine these an anti-personnel charge was inserted in the center of the root. Two wires, each with a small green ball on the end, protruded among the leaves at the top of the plant. Any movement of the root which caused the two balls to touch detonated the charge.

Across this bleak, forbidding, marsh-riddled plain, intersected everywhere by the obstacles of canals and dykes, and swept by high winds penetratingly cold, the pursuit continued for three days and nights.

At noon on 3 November, when it was clear that the firmly established bridgehead provided a suitable base for further operations, plans for those to begin at 1000 the next day were issued to the units in verbal orders. (21) In the meantime the 413th Infantry was directed (by a telephone call from General Allen to the regimental S-3, Captain Charles W. Fernel) to make an immediate push to straighten its lines by occupying Nordhoek with night patrols to press on to Zevenbergen.

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Interrogation of a prisoner taken by the 415th Infantry revealed that the Germans were preparing a counterattack in the vicinity 795446. This attack was broken up by artillery while it was forming, an example of how, through good communications, artillery support was of vital importance in the campaign in keeping the enemy dispersed. (22)

In the afternoon advance of the regiment, the 1st and 2d Battalions received considerable artillery, machine gun and mortar fire. Nevertheless, by 1830 both battalions had reached their assigned objectives. During the day the regiment took 103 prisoners and killed a larger number of enemy with losses to themselves of eight killed and 116 wounded. The division casualties for the day were 11 killed, 164 wounded, and four missing. One hundred thirty-two prisoners were taken.

The oral orders issued earlier in the day were confirmed at 2100 in Field Order No. 9. The 413th and 415th Infantries were to attack abreast at 1000 with the mission of seizing a line running through Klundert and just south of Zevenbergen. From that line the 414th Infantry was to continue the attack at 1410 to cut off Zevenbergen from the north.

As the weather was promising, attacks by air on Klundert and Zevenbergen were arranged.

During the early hours of the morning 4 November a 40 to 50 man counterattack was launched by the enemy in front of the 1st Battalion, 413th Infantry, and the lines received small arms, mortar and machine gun fire. The counterattack was repulsed, again with the aid of artillery.

Enemy
Tenacity

At 0900 the remainder of the 3d Battalion, 415th Infantry crossed the River Mark by the German foot-bridge near Bochlust (795402) and went into positions on the north bank opposite that village, ready to assist the advance of the 2d Battalion.

As planned, the division attacked at 1000, beginning a general advance which extended 2000 yards to the day's objectives. On the right the 415th Infantry assaulted with one battalion, Companies E and F forward. A battery of the 555th Anti-Aircraft Artillery, from positions just south of the river, supported the battalion by flanking fire along a dyke. The intelligence and reconnaissance platoon, securing the right flank, put several machine guns out of action, and then, at 815416,

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a strong point east of the so-called "Oldest Steam Pump", became involved in a see-saw action which lasted through out the day. Company I moved up to the assistance of the platoon, but could not at once overcome the position.

By noon the 2d Battalion had reached the intermediate objective midway between Klundert and Zevenbergen. During the afternoon the 1st Battalion moved into Stendaerbuiten, and at 1820 Companies E, F and G were in complete occupation of the regimental objective facing Zevenbergen. At 1950 Company I requested artillery fire on the strong point east of the Oldest Steam Pump, and later, in the darkness, closed in and by hand-to-hand battle drove the enemy from his bunkers.

On the left the advance of the 413th Infantry with two battalions abreast (the 1st and the 3d, which had passed through the 2d) placed it at 2000 in positions immediately before Klundert. Heavy resistance was met and thrown back by the 3d Battalion which through the day was harassed by self-propelled guns and tanks. Artillery fire, directed from the battalion observation posts, dispersed the tanks and caused the enemy to evacuate a number of gun positions. However, despite this dispersion and evacuation his furious opposition inflicted the heaviest casualties the regiment had suffered since entering combat: 32 killed, 313 wounded, and 41 missing. The regiment took 125 prisoners of war.

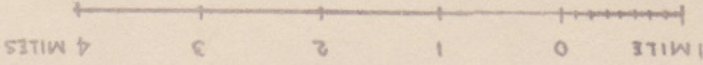
Meanwhile the 414th Infantry had moved across the bridge at Stendaerbuiten in column of battalions, the 3d leading followed by the 1st and 2d. At 1600 the regiment passed through the 415th Infantry on the Zevenbergen-Klundert road and, against moderate resistance, continued to the position north of Zevenbergen from which it could cut off the town.

Generally on the division front the enemy self-propelled guns and tanks ran laterally back and forth across the front, operating singly or in pairs, showing intimate knowledge of such routes as the terrain offered. One German tank was knocked out by a direct hit from division artillery at 797442.

Tank
Tactics

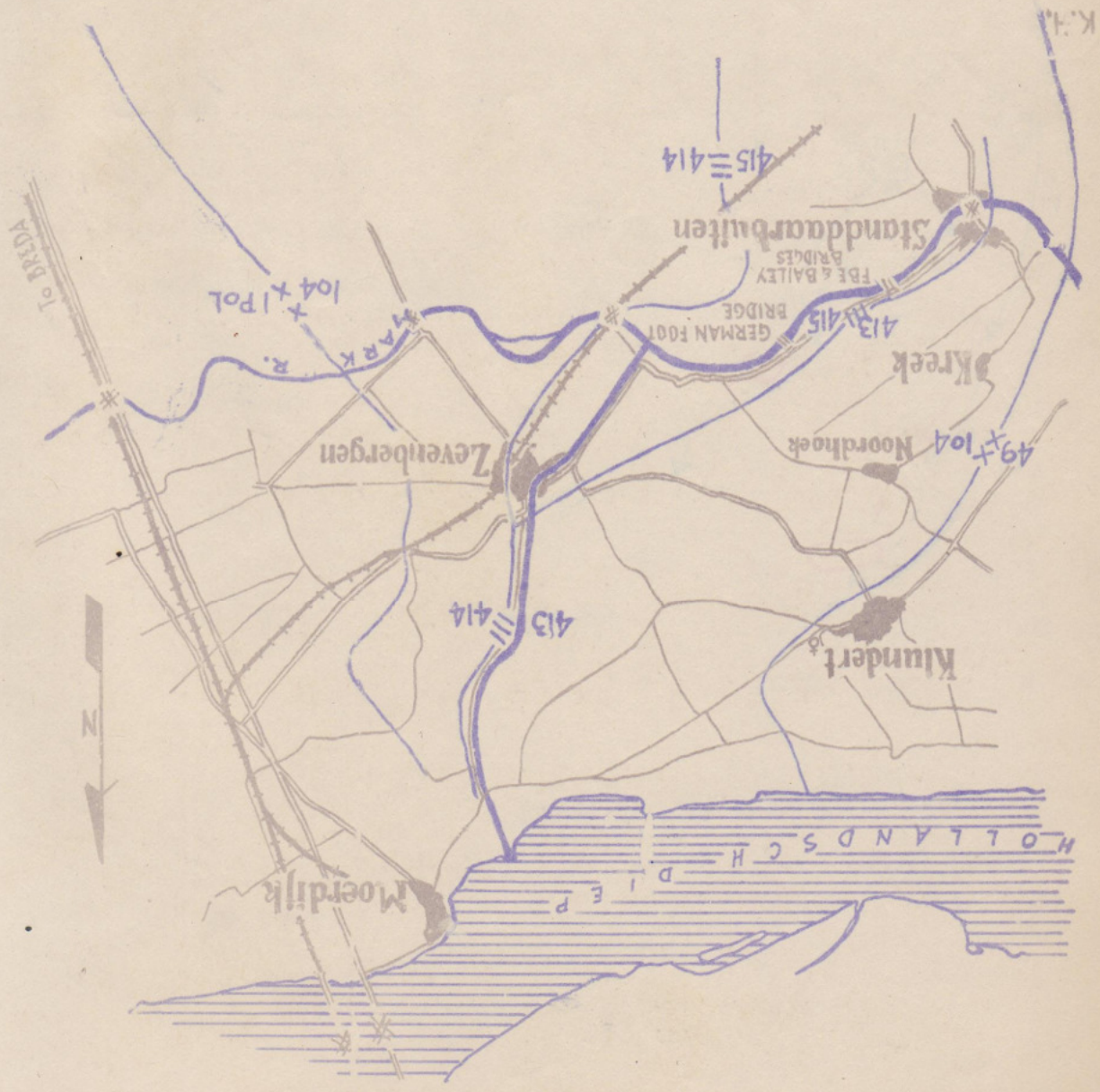
During the day Spitfires of the Royal Air Force made effective attacks on Zevenbergen, a sugar factory at 838435, Klundert, Zandberg (818452), and machine gun positions.

Division casualties in this day of relentless pursuit and bitter fighting by enemy, delaying elements



2 NOV - 7 NOV 44

ACTION NORTH OF ANTWERP ACROSS THE MARK TO THE MAAS



S E C R E T

totalled 44 killed, 252 wounded, and 42 missing. The prisoners of the German rear guard taken during the day reported that they had strict orders to hold their ground to the last man.

During the latter days of October discussions had been held with a representative of G-3, First U. S. Army, concerning probable use of the 104th Infantry Division in the vicinity of Aachen, Germany. (23) On 4 November a telegram was received from the First Army to move there as soon as released.

With this move in mind, plans for 5 November called for the 413th and 415th Regiments to contain, respectively, Klundert and Zevenbergen. The 414th Infantry was to continue the attack to the north, gaining objectives on the 46 grid line and sending patrols north to the River Meas.

During the night 4-5 November the division continued to gain ground in the night operations which throughout the campaign had proved so successful. The 414th Infantry without pause continued to drive north of Zevenbergen through Zandberg to the estuary of the River Meas, and Company I, 415th Infantry, advanced from the strong point east of the Oldest Steam Pump.

At 0800 the 2d Battalion, 415th Infantry moved on Zevenbergen in the face of scattered resistance, while the 3d Battalion came up on the right. At 1500 one company of each battalion converged on the town from the west and the south to the left and right of the canal. No infantry troops were encountered on the way, and mines soon in the vicinities of 830450 and 840460 were bypassed. The town was unoccupied. At 1800 the two companies closed on their assigned objectives.

Meanwhile the 3d Battalion, 413th Infantry, was securing the division flank on the canal forming the left boundary, with Company E under some heavy mortar fire, and the 3d Battalion containing Klundert from which it was receiving some self-propelled gun fire. At 0700 the 1st Battalion attacked to the north, moving rapidly at first against only small arms fire. At 0900 when Company A had reached its objective Zwanenhoef (802454) and Company B was on its objective 1000 yards to the west, both came under artillery fire. They believed this was from 56 British Brigade on the left. Upon investigation the Brigade Liaison Officer confirmed the source of the fire. (24) Adjustment of the positions of the troops and the firing of the artillery was accomplished without casualties.

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As planned, the regiment held on its positions for the remainder of the day, terminating the combat mission of the regiment in the Holland campaign.

The weather continued cool and unsettled with strong winds. The troops of the 414th Infantry, who had been advancing since 1600 the previous day, drove on in daylight without pause. Self-propelled guns which went into action against them from time to time were quickly brought under artillery fire. At noon a minor tank assault from the vicinity of 876476 was quickly repulsed. Other enemy activity was principally harassing fire from machine guns. Spearhead groups of the 1st and 2d Battalions, 414th Infantry, promptly assaulted these positions, and as one was wiped out, raced on to the next. Under this constant pressure, accompanied by continuous fire from division artillery, the enemy withdrew towards Moerdijk. By mid-afternoon enemy armor had ceased its activity; apparently the self-propelled guns and tanks had been destroyed or evacuated. (25)

At 1615 patrols of the 1st Battalion reached the shores of the estuary of the River Maas.

By this time the Moerdijk bridge was so closely threatened that the Germans could no longer risk leaving it intact; in a thorough job of demolition they blew out the three center spans.

Thus on the evening of 5 November, with the clearing of the division zone north to the River Maas, the mission of the Division was completed. However, on that afternoon corps assigned to the division the additional mission of assisting the 1st Polish Armoured Division to secure Moerdijk (8549). The 2d Battalion 414th Infantry and its combat team artillery, the 386th Battalion, were to carry out this task, while the division less these elements moved to Germany. The 413th Infantry had already completed its mission. At 0800 on 6 November the 414th Infantry was pulled out of its positions and went into assembly areas in the vicinity of Oudenbosch. At the close of the campaign, out of an assigned strength of 3092, the regiment had an effective strength of 2852. Casualties had been 92 killed, 446 wounded and 99 missing. A total of 221 prisoners had been captured.

On the night of 5-6 November American and British supporting artillery of the Army Group Royal Artillery leveled the town of Moerdijk and the approaches to the bridges across the River Maas.

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On 6 November the 2d Battalion, 414th Infantry, pushed forward until it reached a point within 1500 yards of Moerdijk. Here it was held up by constant fire from the vicinity of the town. A canal just southwest of the battalion position was bridged by the platoon of the 329th Engineers supporting the battalion and anti-tank weapons were brought across. The 386th Field Artillery Battalion fired many missions, effectively silencing enemy mortars. At the close of the day pressure was being maintained on Moerdijk from the southwest by division troops, and the 1st Polish Armoured Division was moving up on the town from the south.

Closing
on
Moerdijk

In the evening General Allen ordered Colonel Touart, commanding the 414th Infantry, to remain as commander in the action against Moerdijk. (26) He instructed Colonel Tourart that he was free to use his own judgement as to whether to endeavour to move physically into Moerdijk, or whether to assist the Poles by maintaining constant pressure. (27) He also informed him that the combat team forces would be relieved not later than 2100 7 November by the Essex Brigade of 49 Division the adjacent unit on the left. General Allen then left for Aachen.

On 7 November, prior to this relief which was effected as planned, the 2d Battalion 414th Infantry advanced another 400 yards into the outskirts of Moerdijk. There, with the bridge destroyed, and the few doomed enemy troops still holding out in pillboxes, the 104th Infantry Division took leave of the Holland campaign.

S E C R E T

Notes in Conclusion

During the Holland campaign the division suffered total casualties of 1300 officers and men. Of these 179 were killed, 856 wounded, and 365 missing. (Of the missing an officer and 34 men were later---in December---recaptured by the British.) Replacements received by the division through 7 November numbered 1117.

In addition to large numbers of enemy killed, 658 prisoners of war were taken. These prisoners, including the officers, stated that German casualties had been very high. They said that U. S. artillery fire had given them their worst experience, and that the tactics employed by American artillery were far more effective than anything they had encountered in Russia.

According to the Division G-5, Major T. S. Cawthorne, the Holland Underground, "Delta", and also the local Red Cross, proved most useful and reliable. An infantry regiment also stated that "Delta" was very cooperative, giving information of the location of enemy troops, mines, mobile artillery and radio stations.

On air support Major General Allen made the following statement: "During our recent operations with the British in Holland, our air support system worked very efficiently. I have within my division an air staff composed of an air support party officer, G-3 air, G-2 air, artillery air, and engineer air, to select remunerative air targets and to coordinate and control air missions. On one occasion, an enemy strong point was hit effectively by 36 fighter-bombers within 42 minutes of the time the mission was requested. This close support enabled the division to advance far enough to control the division zone south of the Maas River, following the crossing of the Mark River."

On 7 November a commendation of the 104th Infantry Division was written by Lieutenant General G. G. Simmonds, commanding the First Canadian Army. It was forwarded by Field Marshal Montgomery to the Commanding General of the Twelfth Army Group and thence to the division. General Simmonds wrote in part, "Once the 'Timberwolves' got their teeth into the Boche they showed great dash, and British and Canadian troops on their flanks expressed the greatest admiration for their courage and enthusiasm. . . . Relations have been most cordial, and we have received the utmost cooperation from General Allen, his staff, and all commanders. I am sorry that they are leaving us and feel sure that when they again meet the Boche all hell cannot stop the Timberwolves."

S E C R E T

NOTES

1. Major Leo A. Hoegh, G-3, 104th Infantry Division, to Lt. Kline at the division CP, 28 October 1944.
2. Transcript of a telephone conversation, General Crocker to General Allen, 250855 October 1944.
3. Memorandum, General Allen to the Commanding General, Ninth U.S. Army, 25 October 1944.
4. Transcript of a telephone conversation, General Crocker to General Allen, 250855 October 1944.
5. Transcript of a telephone conversation, Colonel John H. Cochran to G-3, 104th Infantry Division, 251935 October 1944.
6. Transcript of a telephone conversation, General Allen to Colonel Anthony J. Touart 260830 October 1944.
7. G-2 Periodic Report, 104th Infantry Division, 27 October 1944.
8. Ibid.
9. After Action Report, 415th Infantry, 29 October 1944.
10. Ibid.
11. Intelligence Summary, 104th Infantry Division, 29 October 1944.
12. S-3 Periodic Report, 414th Infantry, 29 October 1944.
13. G-3 Journal, 104th Infantry Division, 31 October 1944.
14. S-3 Periodic Report, 415th Infantry, 31 October 1944.
15. After Action Report, 415th Infantry, October 1944.
16. G-3 Journal, 104th Infantry Division, 31 October 1944.
17. After Action Report, 104th Infantry Division, October 1944.
18. S-3, 415th Infantry, to Lt. Kline at the regimental CP, 6 November 1944.
19. After Action Report, 104th Infantry Division, October 1944.

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20. Lt. Colonel Mark S. Plaisted, G-2, 104th Infantry Division, to Lt. Kline at the division CP, 3 November 1944.
21. Transcripts of various telephone conversations, 3 November 1944.
22. Capt. Charles W. Fernald, S-3, 413th Infantry, to Lt. Kline at the regimental CP, 9 November 1944.
23. After Action Report, 104th Infantry Division, November 1944.
24. See note 22.
25. G-2 Periodic Report, 104th Infantry Division, 5 November 1944.
26. After Action Report, 104th Infantry Division, November 1944.
27. Ibid.

S E C R E T

BATTLE OF CANALS

Operations of the 7th Armored Division
27 October - 7 November 1944

INTRODUCTION

At 0718 on 27 October the German Army launched a vigorous attack against the 7th US Armored Division guarding the right flank of the British Second Army in Southeastern Holland. For three days two powerful German Panzer Divisions clashed with the 7th Armored Division in an attempt to force a diversion from our drive on the Scheldt Peninsula to the west, or to cut our lines of communication and supply along the Holland salient toward Arnhem.

On the morning of 27 October elements of the 9th Panzer Division began the attack against the town of Meijel, Holland. When our efforts to counter his thrust had failed, the enemy, who had reinforced himself throughout the day with additional armor and infantry, launched a second attack to the north and west from Meijel. By this time the reserve of the 7th Armored Division was in position and prevented further substantial gains. During the second day of the attack the enemy was content to hold down our forces while he built up his strength by the addition of a second division, the 15th Panzer Grenadier. On the third day the enemy again struck vigorously to the north and west from Meijel. To the north he penetrated the line to capture the town of Liesel but was unable to clear the main road from Meijel to Liesel, while to the west he attempted to overrun our forces astride the road to Asten. By a firm stand in both sectors and with the invaluable assistance of the artillery of the division and attached British units the enemy attack was contained.

On the third night reinforcements arrived, and the sector of the 7th Armored Division was considerably shortened. Two days later the arrival of additional British forces still further strengthened the front. On 2 November the division on a narrow front struck back at the enemy to remove him from a part of the territory he had gained. Four days of pushing brought our troops almost to the limited division objective, but the final assault was to await the parallel attack from the north. Once again additional British units were brought up and the 7th Armored was able to return to the Ninth U.S. Army, its mission of containing the Germans along a wide sector of the British right flank having been successful.

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THE SITUATION

October, 1944, was a month for consolidation and preparation for the Allied forces. A prime prerequisite for any large-scale push into Germany was the shortening of our much-extended supply lines. The lightning thrust of the British armored units to the north in the latter weeks of September had caught the Germans off guard; Antwerp had been captured before extensive demolitions could be effected. Here was the needed link in our supply line. Antwerp, one of the largest ports in Europe, was close to our northern flank and could be put into operation with a minimum of reconstruction.

The German was not to relinquish his grip on this prize without a stiff fight. His trump card was control of the Scheldt Estuary, the approaches to the harbor. It was essential to remove the enemy from this area. Units for the mopping up operation were drawn from the western flank of the Holland salient and concentrated in the Antwerp sector.

The plan of action outlined for the month of October called for the 7th U.S. Armored Division to protect the right flank of the British Second Army during the Scheldt operation. (1) The commanding general of the 7th Armored Division ordered the division to establish a counter-reconnaissance screen and maintain contact with the Belgian Brigade on its right flank, and to be prepared at all times to commit the bulk of the division against any serious thrust the enemy might attempt in the sector from Deurne to Weert. (2)

Division mission

POSITION

The division front in the latter weeks of October was as follows: on the north, Combat Command B (CCB) held two bridges across the Griendtsveen canal (7018); in the center, the 87th Reconnaissance Squadron patrolled 24,000 yards of the Deurne and Nord canals from east of Liesel to the canal junction immediately to the south of Nederweert; and to the south, Combat Command A (CCA) patrolled 10,000 yards along the Wessem canal to the 90th east-west coordinate. On the extreme right (south) flank, the Belgian Brigade, attached, held a sector south along the Wessem canal to the junction with the Meuse River, and then south to Ophoven. Combat Command R (CCR) was in division reserve at Asten. The total front extended about 25 miles.

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The defenses of the 7th Armored Division along this canal line, were predicated on the fact that the Germans held the canal line, and were dug in on the east bank of the canals. The 7th Armored defenses consisted of a series of outposts ranging from 800 to 1500 yards west of the canals. In some cases these outposts were as much as 800 yards apart. During the day motorized patrols were sent up and down the road net parallel to the front, and at night foot patrols were pushed to the canals whenever possible.

The terrain in the entire division sector was extremely flat. From the enemy banks of the canal observation for 1000 to 2000 yards was not uncommon. Much of the ground was swampy, and at almost no place in the sector were tanks able to maneuver off the main roads. The net of usable roads was quite limited insofar as tanks and armored vehicles were concerned. Observation was confined to church steeples or tall houses, and these landmarks were the object of heavy fire in any contested zone.

It was in the canal area of the Deurne, Asten, Weert line that the enemy had elected to maintain a bridgehead across the Meuse River. He had chosen well, for to his rear lay Venlo, the key to the Ruhr Valley. As long as the enemy could maintain a bridgehead to the west of the Meuse, he remained a threat to our vital lines of communication. Thus did he hope to hold down forces which we might use elsewhere. (3) In this way he planned at least to postpone the day that Allied troops would thrust another wedge onto German soil. (4)

THE ATTACK

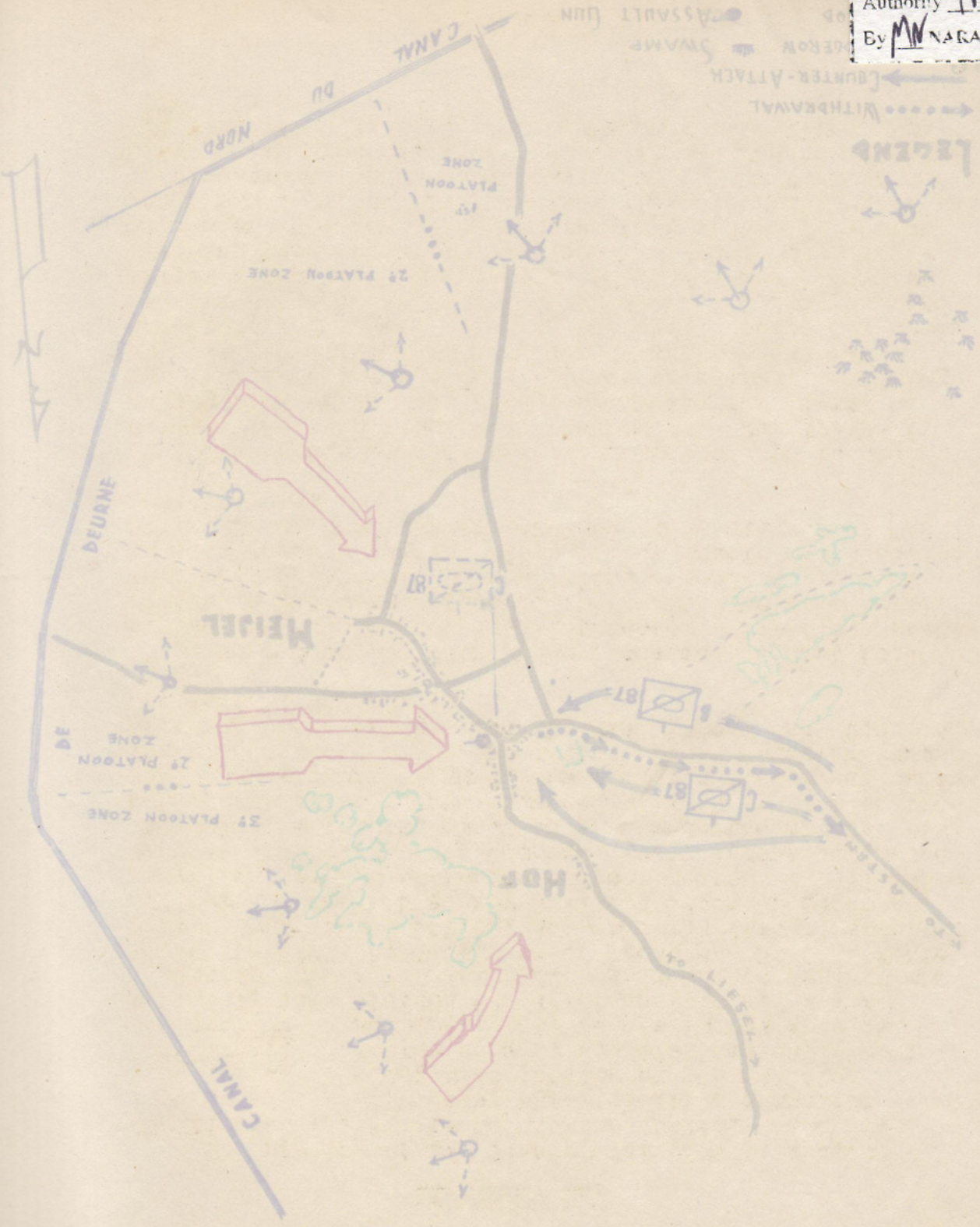
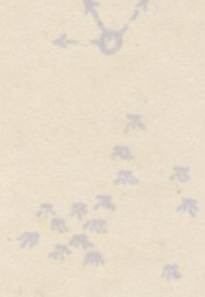
During the second and third weeks of October, little more than routine patrolling occupied the troops in the 7th Armored sector. However, for some days prior to 27 October, German activities were intensified along the front, especially in the sector of the 87th Reconnaissance Squadron. German patrols were sent against our positions, civilian reports of strong German tank and infantry concentrations filtered through the lines, and on 25 October many of the citizens of Meijel evacuated the town on the word of the burgomaster who simply said it would be well to leave. (5) On 26 October enemy tanks and vehicular movement were heard, artillery was more active, and civilian accounts of strong German concentrations continued. (6) But as yet no confirmation was available of German troop movements

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SWAMP
ASSAULT LUN
GERMAN THRUST

← WITHDRAWAL
← COUNTER-ATTACK

LEGEND



27 OCT 1944

GERMAN THRUST TO MEIJEL

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into the sector. Bad flying weather had grounded most of our planes. The long nights and wooded areas to the east had offered the enemy ample opportunity to conceal any substantial movements. It was known that the bridge at Venlo remained intact despite repeated aerial attacks. (7)

THE FIRST DAY

The morning of 27 October was cloudy; a heavy fog limited visibility to about 50 yards. At about 0610 heavy enemy shelling commenced along that portion of the division sector held by the 87th Reconnaissance Squadron. Our troops in the area immediately were alerted to expect an attack. A particularly strong concentration was directed against the town of Meijel, headquarters of Troop C. At 0710 there came a lull in the firing, and at about 0718 a German officer of the 9th Panzer Division stood up about 40 yards east of the defensive outposts around Meijel and shouted orders. At his command, enemy troops estimated at company strength, stood up and began the attack. (8) Concurrent attacks were launched against Troop A on the right or southern flank of the squadron sector and against Troop D to the north. The latter thrust centered around Neerkant and Heitrak. But the main thrust that first day was against Meijel.

The enemy attacks

Troop C of the 87th Reconnaissance Squadron held an 8,000 yard zone of the division sector. The three reconnaissance platoons outposted the front with nine posts, each having from six to eight men, a machine gun, and in some cases a mortar. (9) Meijel itself was occupied by the troop headquarters platoon and a platoon of two assault guns.

During his barrage the enemy had managed to pass between the outposts without detection. Our troops in Meijel held their fire as the enemy advanced until he was within 30 yards. Then all the defenders, including assault gun squads, opened fire at point-blank range. The first and second waves of the enemy except for those few men who were able to filter around the flanks, were almost all killed or wounded. The third wave advanced throwing hand grenades, over-ran the local outposts, and gained the houses from where they opened fire with small arms. Meanwhile the flank platoons had been called in from their outpost positions, but in the face of the heavy enemy fire the troop commander decided to withdraw and save the vehicles. The northern flank platoon was

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cut off from the main body of Troop C but managed to circle around and join forces with Troop B the squadron reserve, as it moved forward.

The attack against the Troop D outposts to the north centered around Heittrak, Neerkant, and Hof. The first assault against Neerkant was stopped by our small arms and artillery fire. Capt. William Rau of Troop D requested artillery and it was brought down 100 yards in front of our defensive outposts. When this assault was repulsed the attackers angled to the north toward Heittrak to join in that thrust. There, the enemy was hit by the assault guns of Troop E and his attack stopped.

To the south in Troop A sector, the third enemy thrust was made. Like the other attacks this one was preceded by a heavy artillery barrage which centered chiefly at Nederweert and the banks of the Bois le Duc Canal. The enemy was attempting to isolate our troops from their support across the canal. Immediately following the artillery concentration, strong enemy patrols consisting of from 25 to 40 men came toward the first and third platoon defensive outposts. (10) But the main attack was apparently directed against the troop headquarters in Nieuw-en Winnerstradt. One of the patrols was led by a civilian. Another group of the enemy infiltrated through our outposts in the guise of American and British soldiers. (11) Two sections of the third platoon were cut off by the patrols and were not heard from again. (12) The first platoon was also surrounded but managed to escape through the German ring. The second platoon withdrew to consolidate its position on line with the remainder of the troop.

In a concurrent demonstration thrust into the sector of the Belgian Brigade, the enemy penetrated into the town of Thorn, but was driven back across the canal with losses of 33 prisoners of war, seven wounded, and three killed.

The enemy had utilized surprise to the maximum to pierce our counter-reconnaissance screen and establish a foothold on the west banks of the canals. He had successfully brought infantry in strength across the canals under the protection of the heavy barrage, had captured the town of Meijel, and was in sufficient force to meet our counter-thrusts. (13) He was ready to consolidate his position and build his bridges for further action.

At the squadron CP word of the enemy attack was received at 0720. Troop B, the squadron reserve, was immediately alerted and sent forward under the command

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of Major Charles A. Cannon, Jr., Squadron Executive Officer. About one quarter of a mile west of Meijel the major met and stopped
The Reconnaissance Squadron thrusts back Troop C Reorganization was started at once, and when the Squadron Commander, Lt. Colonel Vincent Boylan, arrived, preparations were completed for a counter attack on Meijel.

At 1010 our forces launched a dismounted attack toward Meijel with Troop B on the south and Troop C on the north of the Asten-Meijel road. Four assault guns were in support. The colonel walked down the middle of the road saying "Come on, God damn it! these dirty bastards can't hit you. Keep moving. I want to kill some of them." (14)

After a short advance Troop B reached the edge of a woods just west of Meijel, and was halted by the heavy enemy fire from the town. Troop C was screened by buildings and was able to push ahead but upon realizing that both flanks were open, 1st Lieutenant Richard D. Montgomery, Troop C.O. drew back on a line with Troop B. Heavy enemy small arms, automatic weapon, artillery, and mortar fire held our forces at this point.

Shortly after the repulse of the first attack, the light tank company of the squadron arrived. With its arrival a second attack was organized. B and C Troops moved forward in their same relative positions. One platoon of tanks was sent wide to the left to provide flank security, one went down the road and then peeled off to the left in direct support, and the third platoon followed down the road in local reserve. Some prisoners were taken by a tank of the flanking platoon as our forces moved forward. The tank gun jammed, and the Germans recognized its plight and refused to drop their grenades. A tommy gun was fired at the feet of the prisoners, but they remained adamant. (15) A tank from the second platoon was sent over to take the prisoners back, but it was hit in the rear by what was thought to be bazooka fire. Fire was also directed against the tanks on the flank, and three of them were knocked out in rapid succession. The remaining two tanks of this platoon pushed into the woods and were not seen again. When two additional tanks of the second platoon were hit by anti-tank fire, the attack collapsed and the troops fell back to the line from which they had started.

Five ten-man bazooka teams were then organized to make a coordinated attack with the remaining tanks.

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The five teams headed for a hedgerow north of the road and to the west of Meijel. They managed to reach the objective, but before the men could dig in an anti-tank gun opened fire and knocked out two of our tanks. The remaining tanks withdrew, leaving the dismounted men to face the heavy fire being directed at them. The men retreated in disorder. (16) Our first counter-thrust had failed.

Meanwhile the commanding general ordered CCR at 0730 to move out to repel the enemy. Companies A and C of the 48th Armored Infantry Battalion We reinforce our lines (AI Bn) were dispatched at 0812 to an assembly area to await further orders.

Concurrently Task Force Wemple, consisting of Companies B and D and the assault gun platoon of the 17th Tank Battalion (Tk Bn), was alerted and moved to an assembly position in the vicinity of 682127 to repel any thrust toward Liesel. At 0925 Task Force Wemple was informed that 250 Germans were crossing the canal in the vicinity of 710115. Lt. Colonel Wemple was given the mission of moving his force to the east in order to place direct fire on the advancing Germans. He placed one medium tank platoon with the third platoon of Troop D 87th Rcn near Neerkant. A second tank platoon was already with the Troop E 87th Rcn assault guns at Heitrak, and the third tank platoon of B company was north of Heitrak. The light tank company (Company D) originally in general support in the woods north of Heitrak, moved almost immediately to provide security for the 440th Armored Field Artillery Battalion which was firing from positions near Broek (698099). At 1045 the two platoons of tanks, which were with Troop D 87th Rcn, were in position firing on the enemy.

At 1200 Company C of the 814th Tank Destroyers (TD) was attached to Task Force Wemple. At the direction of Colonel Wemple, the company commander placed one platoon of the TD's directly north of Heitrak, the second platoon astride the road junction at 682128, and the third platoon just south of Liesel. Our forces to the north of Meijel were, therefore, in position by noon of the 27th to meet whatever thrusts the enemy might make.

Prior to the failure of the counter-attacks of Troops B and C, the commanding general had visited their positions and, after talking with the squadron commander, had expressed the opinion that the town could be retaken by the troops then committed. (17) He directed that if the town were not taken by 1300 CCR would be thrown into the fight. As a precautionary measure the commander of CCR dispatched Company C of the 48th AIBn at 0930 from its

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assembly area. The mission was to outpost an area due east of Neerkant and guard the northern approaches to the Meijel-Asten road. By noon Company C occupied a position generally along a small road running in a big loop off the main road from 669096 around to 680086. No enemy was sighted in this zone, but at 1330 the company received instructions to send a patrol from each platoon to investigate enemy strength in Neerkant.

Beginning about 1100 the enemy was able to bring into play his armor. By that time he had constructed the necessary bridges to move across heavy equipment, and he was beginning to build up his forces in anticipation of continuing the attack. At 1112

The enemy builds up his strength

Troop D of the 87th Rcn sighted the first enemy armor on the west side of the canal. Three tanks and other enemy vehicles were observed in the vicinity of Hooagebrug (708122). Our assault guns and artillery engaged these tanks but apparently they were not hit because at approximately 1200 an M 8 armored car of Troop D 87th Rcn observed three enemy tanks approaching its outpost behind a haystack along the Hooagebrug road. The armored car allowed the first tank (identified as a Tiger) to pass its position, and then at a range of about 15 yards, it fired six shots with its 37mm gun into the rear of the tank. The tank was ditched and the crew abandoned it. The armored car escaped up the road as the second tank approached to within 200 yards of it. (18) At 1215 Troop D reported a column of 10 enemy vehicles moving south in the vicinity of 704124. Two of the vehicles were identified as tanks; all were ingeniously camouflaged as haystacks. (19) Tank destroyers, assault guns, and artillery engaged this column, but results were undetermined. Enemy artillery and mortar fire developed after 1200, especially in the vicinity of the road junction at 682128. One of our medium tanks was hit at 1354 by the enemy in positions south of Hooagebrug. We again massed our fire in the vicinity of the enemy concentration, and nothing more was noticed from that direction. TD's fired continuously throughout the afternoon on the area to the east of the Liesel-Meijel road and to the north of Heitrak, but with undetermined results. The enemy was observed bringing up machine guns and mortars at periods throughout the afternoon, and several concentrations of enemy troops were sighted. Despite our heavy artillery fire the enemy built up his forces on the west side of the canal.

By 1630 the enemy had built up his tank and infantry strength to the point where he was capable of resuming

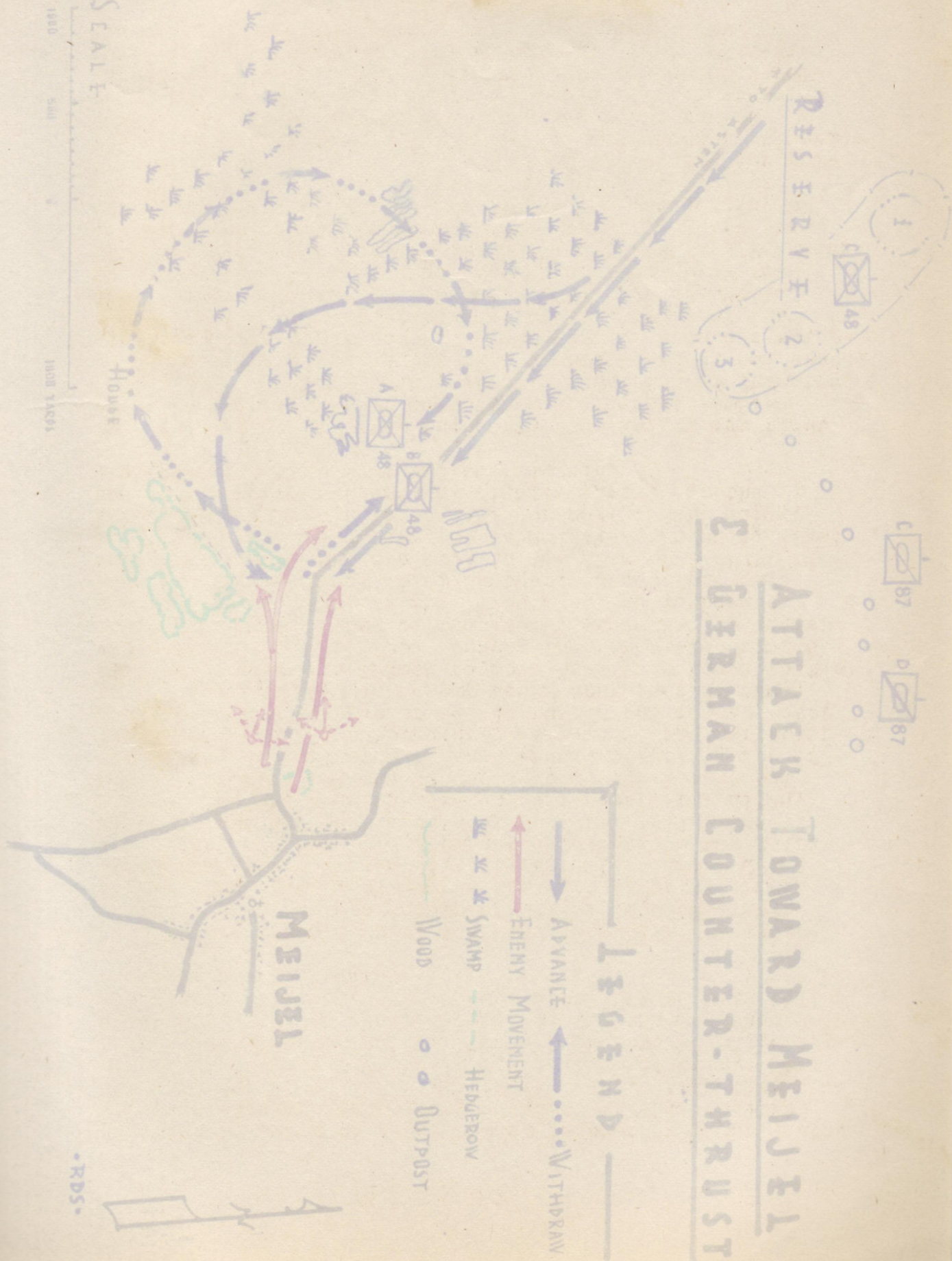
S E C R E T

the attack upon our forces. Sensing the enemy intentions Lt. Colonel Wemple had requested infantry support for the tanks, but Colonel John L. Ryan, CCR commander, informed him that no infantry was available for the job. (20) About 1645 the enemy attacked both north and west from Meijel.

At 1300 the reconnaissance squadron was still held up by the enemy fire from Meijel. Accordingly, CCR was directed to attack and seize Meijel. The plan of attack was that Companies A and B of the 48th CCR attacks AIBn and Company A of the 17th Tk Bn toward Meijel would make the attack, with Company C of the 48th AIBn in reserve. Elements of the 87th Rcn were to provide flank security. Company A of the 48th AIBn was to flank Meijel from the south while Company B advanced toward the town astride the road. The tanks were to be in direct support behind the infantry. About 1400 Company B of the 48th AIBn started down the road toward Meijel with one platoon on either side of the road and the third to the rear in support. Swamp land was on both sides of the road and the troops waded in knee deep water. Company A moved forward in a wide arc to the south of Meijel. Shortly before 1600 B Company fought its way forward to a point where it met Lt. Colonel Boylan of the 87th Rcn. who expressed his happiness that reinforcements had arrived. (21) Colonel Boylan informed the B, Company Commander that no enemy had been sighted along the road to the west of the church on the outskirts of Meijel. (22) In accordance with plans the 87th began with drawing through the 48th AIBn to take up its flank positions. (23) However, as the main body of Company B rounded a sharp curve in the road, it ran into concentrated machine gun and small arms fire directed down the road and on each side of the advancing forces. Thus ended our thrust to recover Meijel.

The enemy force attacking west from Meijel joined battle with our forces moving east on the road toward Meijel. Two enemy tanks were sent down the road toward Company B of the 48th AIBn. The enemy renews the attack to the west The tanks swung off the road behind the attacking echelons of Company B one tank on each side of the road. This maneuver cut off about two squads from each platoon. Some of these men were able to rejoin the company as it withdrew to the west, but many of them were lost. The company fell back about 1000 yards on the road, but the German tanks continued their push forward spouting fire at the withdrawing company. The support platoon of Company B had dug in on the side of the road to the rear of the advancing

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platoons in order to cover the approaches from the south. The remainder of the company withdrew to this position and also dug in to the right of the road. From these positions Company B was able to place considerable fire on the advancing infantry. Forward observers called for heavy artillery concentrations, and the enemy advance was finally stopped. The troops were able to hold this position for the night.

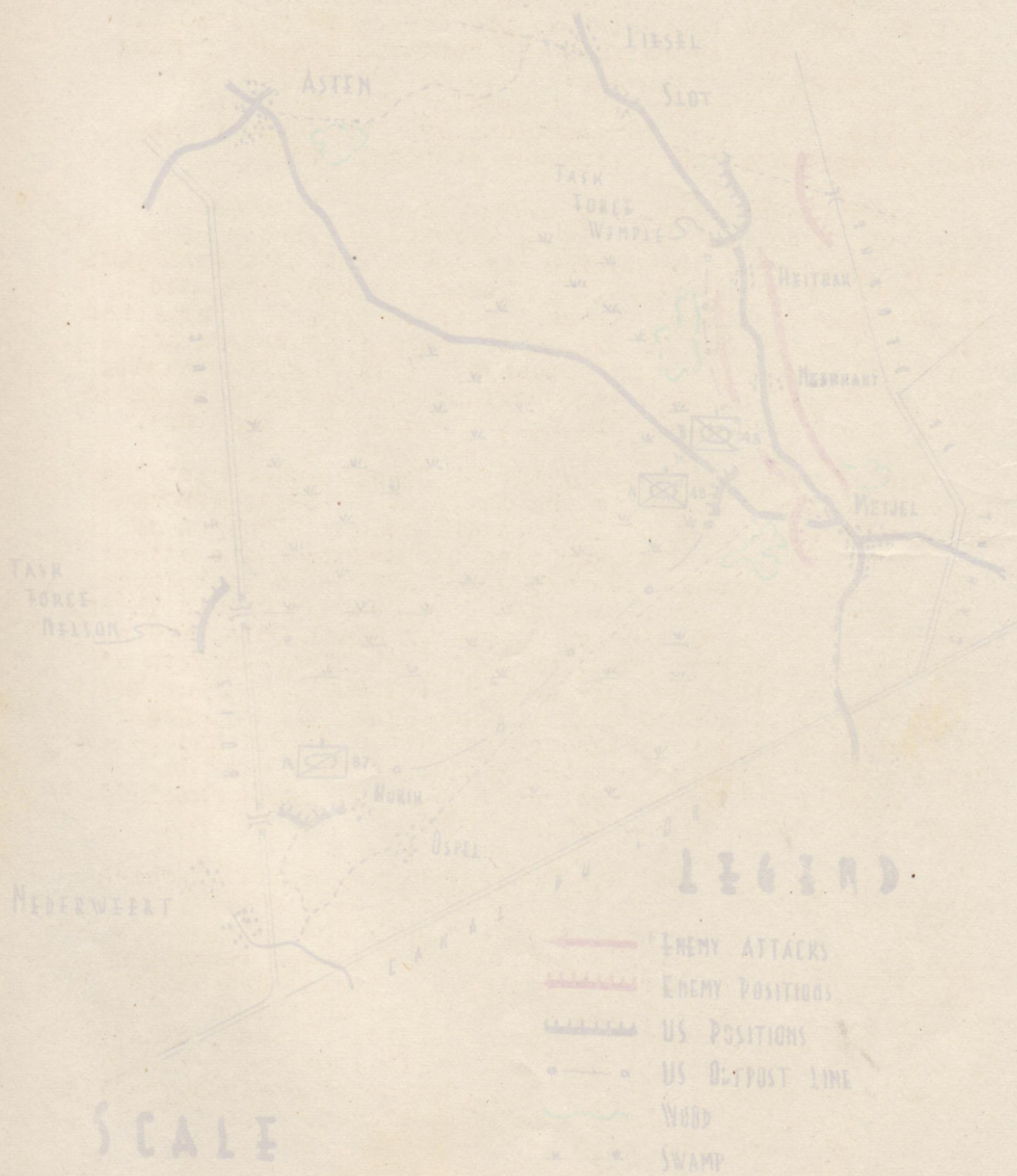
To the south Company A of the 48th AIBn proceeded to the edge of a woods south of Meijel (696069) where it also ran into heavy German tank and infantry fire. Two German tanks headed directly for the company CP and began to blast it. A runner came back to the third platoon area and very excitedly told Lt. Wells, the platoon leader, that the company commander, Lt. Allen, had been killed and the CP destroyed. The lieutenant established a perimeter defense around a small group of trees. Lt. Allen subsequently arrived at the perimeter positions, but because of wounds turned the company over to Lt. Wells. (24) The enemy tanks continued to fire, and the company was forced to move back to a house in the vicinity of 688063. (25) During the night the Germans moved around two sides of the house, and when Lt. Wells heard a large patrol on the third side, he decided to move the company back still further. One of the men who spoke German put a pistol in the ribs of a civilian and told him to lead them to the Meijel-Asten road. (26) After wading through the swamps for most of the night, the remainder of the company finally arrived in the vicinity of B Company where they dug in.

The enemy attack to the north from Meijel was first reported by outposts of the 87th Rcn at about 1645.

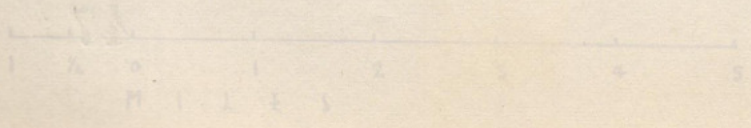
The enemy strikes north Enemy tanks, closely supported by infantry, moved up the road toward Neerkant and scored a hit on one of our tanks. When our returning fire bounced off the front of the enemy armor, our tanks withdrew. (27) The advance of the enemy cut off the third platoon of Troop D of the 87th Rcn and a platoon of Company C of the 48th AIBn which had been sent to the vicinity of Neerkant to guard the artillery for the night. Lt. George Webb, a Company C platoon leader, had just arrived in Neerkant and was talking to the crew of a tank when an M8 armored car pulled up alongside them. The commander announced that German tanks were coming up the road from the south toward Neerkant. A quick reconnaissance revealed that at least three tanks (thought to be Tigers) were approaching followed by supporting infantry in column. (28) By taking his platoon through ditches and across swamps, Lt. Webb

GERMAN THRUSTS TO NORTH AND SOUTH

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was able to extricate his men from the German lunge. Before the end of the night his platoon was once more back with its company. The enemy tank column, which attacked at this time, was approximately twenty strong. (29)

As the Germans advanced to the north from Meijel the reconnaissance squadron established a new line to the north of Heittrak. The platoon of tank destroyers, which had been in Liesel during the afternoon, was sent to this new line to assist in the defense. By 1730 the enemy had crept toward this new position and was firing on our lines from ranges as close as 200 yards. Our tanks and TD's fired with everything they had, and artillery was called for continually. Many enemy were seen to drop and the attack was stopped. (30)

Heavy enemy artillery and small arms fire was received throughout the night, and enemy patrols were extremely active. By moving the tanks and TD's from time to time during the night, the enemy was kept confused as to their location. Several patrols closely approached our positions. One TD commander heard a nearby German call out; "Surrender my company." (31) Local security for the tanks and TD's was provided by the few dismounted troops that were available from the security sections.

To the south the enemy thrust toward Nederweert had made some progress during the day, but no major effort appeared to be expended in this direction. Troop A of the 87th Ren bore the brunt of the attack during the day until 1701 when Task Force Nelson, consisting of Company C 40th Tk Bn, a platoon of Company A 814th TD's, and a platoon of infantry from Company A 38th AIBn, arrived at the bridge across the Bois Le Duc (613052). During the night the platoon of Company A 38th AIBn, the remainder of Troop A 87th Reconnaissance and Troop B 87th Reconnaissance (withdrawn from the Meijel sector) were in line along the Horik-Meijel road, but the tanks remained on the west side of the canal. (32)

Southern thrust

At days end, the 87th Reconnaissance Squadron which had withstood the initial shock of the attack was substantially reinforced by CCR. The enemy had been successful in pushing large forces of infantry and tanks across his bridgehead, but had been unable to expand beyond the Meijel-Heittrak area. He did, however, occupy a favorable position if he were inclined to continue the attack the following day. (33) Estimated enemy casualties were 45 dead, 115 wounded, and 47 captured. Our losses for the day were estimated as two killed, 31 wounded, and 47 missing.

Results of first day

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THE SECOND DAY

Conferences between the commanding general of the 7th Armored Division and Lt General O'Connor, Commander 8 (British) Corps, were held on the afternoon 27 October. By mid-afternoon the second German thrust had made plain the intent of the enemy to pursue his aggressive policy in the sector of the 7th Armored. To counter the enemy force, now firmly established across the bridgehead, it would be necessary to throw in more troops than were then available to the division. Almost the entire force of CCR had been committed during the day. CCA would have to remain in position to guard against a thrust in its direction, and CCB was committed in the bridgehead sector. The most readily available force was CCB, within easy distance and on the flank. Accordingly the corps issued an order relieving CCB of its responsibility in the Griendtsveen bridgehead sector along the Deurne-Amerika road. The right flank of the British 11 Armored Division was moved south to include the sector formerly held by CCB. At 272045 the relief by the British was complete, and CCB moved to assembly positions in the vicinity Rinkveld-Leensel-Liesel preparatory to attack the next day.

Plans

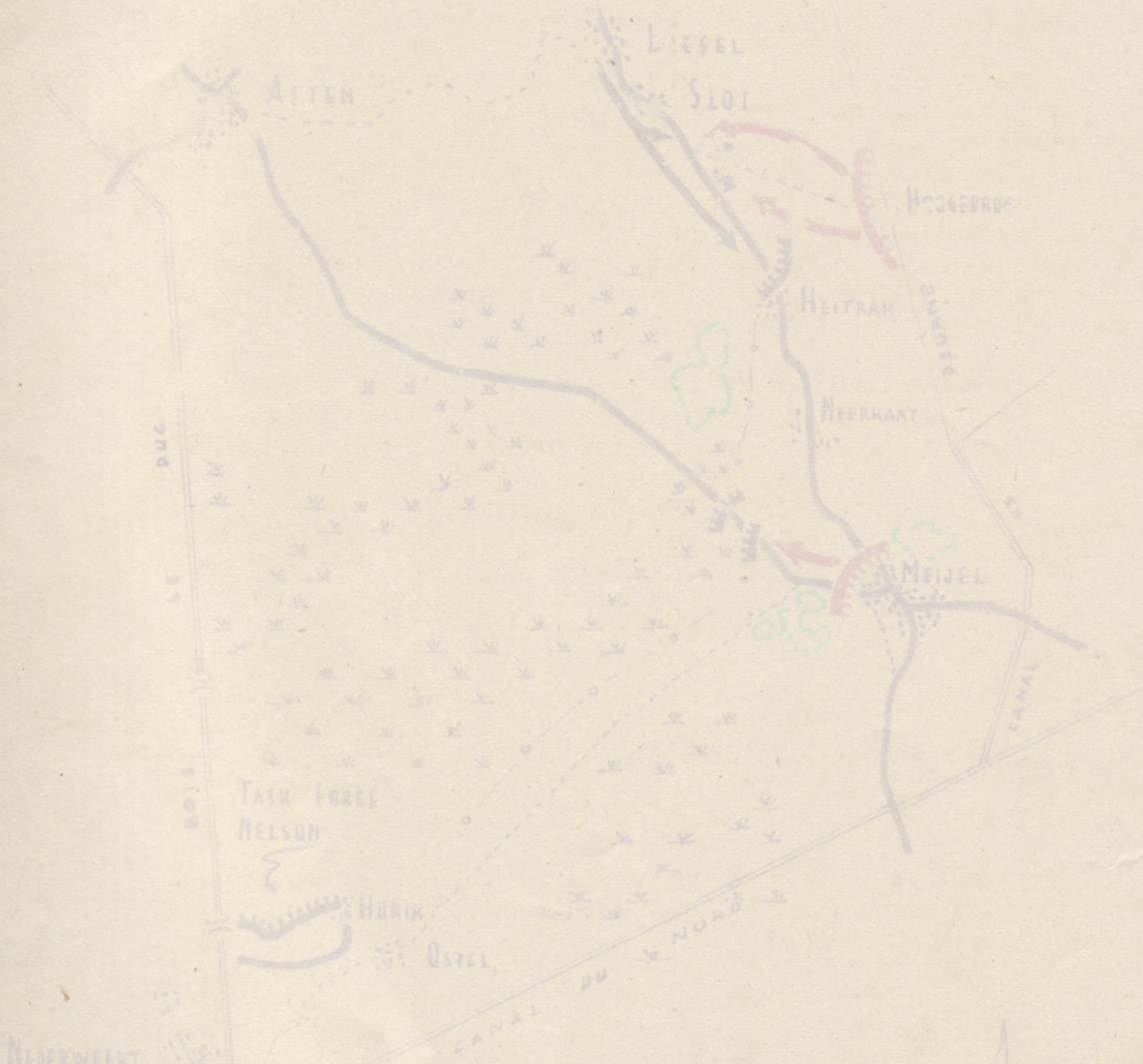
The division issued operations instructions at 272100. The assigned mission was to attack and seize Meijel and drive the enemy from the division zone. The attacking forces were to include CCR, CCB, and Task Force Nelson of CCA. CCR was composed of the 48th AIBn, a platoon of medium tanks from the 17th Tk Bn, Troops B and C of the 87th Rcn, a platoon of engineers, and a platoon of tank destroyers. CCB absorbed Task Force Wemple, and had in addition the 23rd AIBn and the 31st Tk Bn. CCB was to establish liaison with the British 11 Armored Division on the north. CCA, with the exception of Task Force Nelson, was to continue its present holding mission. The Belgian Brigade was to do likewise.

Enemy potentialities were still not clearly determined. During 27 October definite identification was made of only one company of the 9th Panzer Division. Other units, consisting of an assortment of paratroop and ground force elements, were still active on the front as far as could be determined. (34) Although the enemy was capable of reinforcing his strength in this sector, it was decided that he was not yet strong enough to withstand our coordinated assault.








Our forces were in control of the two major roads converging on Meijel. Our attacks were of necessity focused down these routes because of the extremely swampy

ACTION SECOND DAY

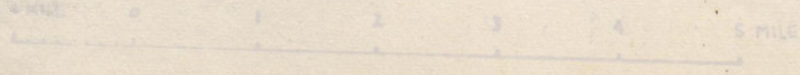
28 OCTOBER



LEGEND

-  US ATTACKS
-  ENEMY ATTACKS
-  US POSITIONS
-  ENEMY POSITIONS
-  OUTPOST LINE TROOP "D" 87th REG
-  WOOD
-  SWAMP

SCALE



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terrain. Tanks were capable of operating on the main roads, but could not maneuver off them any great distance without becoming bogged down. While the sky was cloudy, visibility was good.

The plan was for CCR to attack down the Asten-Meijel road, to seize and hold the southern portion of Meijel, and to secure the line of the Deurne and Nord canals in its assigned zone. CCA was to attack across the Bois le Duc canal to seize that portion of the Nord canal in its zone. The main effort was to be made by CCB, which would attack astride the Liesel-Meijel road, pass through Task Force Wemple which would hold in its present positions, and continue on to Meijel to seize the north portion of the town and secure the line of the Deurne canal in its zone. H hour was to be 280700.

The attacking force of CCB consisted of three companies of the 23rd AIBn and two companies of the 31st Tk Bn. The scheme of maneuver adopted by the commanding general CCB was for Companies A and C of the 23rd AIBn to proceed astride the road toward Meijel with Company A of the 31st Tk Bn in immediate support; while Company B of the 23d AIBn, Company C of the 31st Tk Bn, the assault gun and mortar platoons of the 31st Tk Bn, a platoon of TD's, and a platoon of engineers branched off the main road at 682129 and attacked southeast along the Hoogebrug road to destroy the bridge the enemy had erected across the canal. Company D of the 31st Tk Bn was to remain in reserve in the assembly area. (Company B of the 31st was still in division reserve.)

The main effort

The attacking force moved out at 0700 as planned. The dismounted infantry was disposed on either side of the road with Company A on the left, Company C on the right, and the tanks following. The forces progressed about 1000 yards to Slot by 0815 against little more than light artillery, some mortar, and a slight amount of machine gun fire. At Slot the artillery fire noticeably increased in intensity, especially to the east of the road. In addition considerable small arms and automatic fire was directed at Company A. The fire became so intense that the company was stopped. With some difficulty. Company A disengaged itself from the enemy and crossed over to the east of the road behind Company C. After passing the road junction where Company B branched off for the canal, Company A was once more able to cover its assigned zone on the left side of the road, and the advance continued.

S E C R E T

By 1400 Company C on the right had reached the outskirts of Heittrak, and had dug into position to await the arrival of Company A. Mortar, machine gun, and artillery fire directed from the flank against Company A was extremely heavy. Those rounds which didn't land in the Company A sector went over into the Company C sector. At 1400 General Hasbrouck, the CCB commander, ordered the suspension of all offensive actions. (35) Company C was drawn back on the high ground to its rear on line with Company A after a temporary gap between the companies had been filled by the heavy machine gun and reconnaissance platoons of the battalion headquarters.

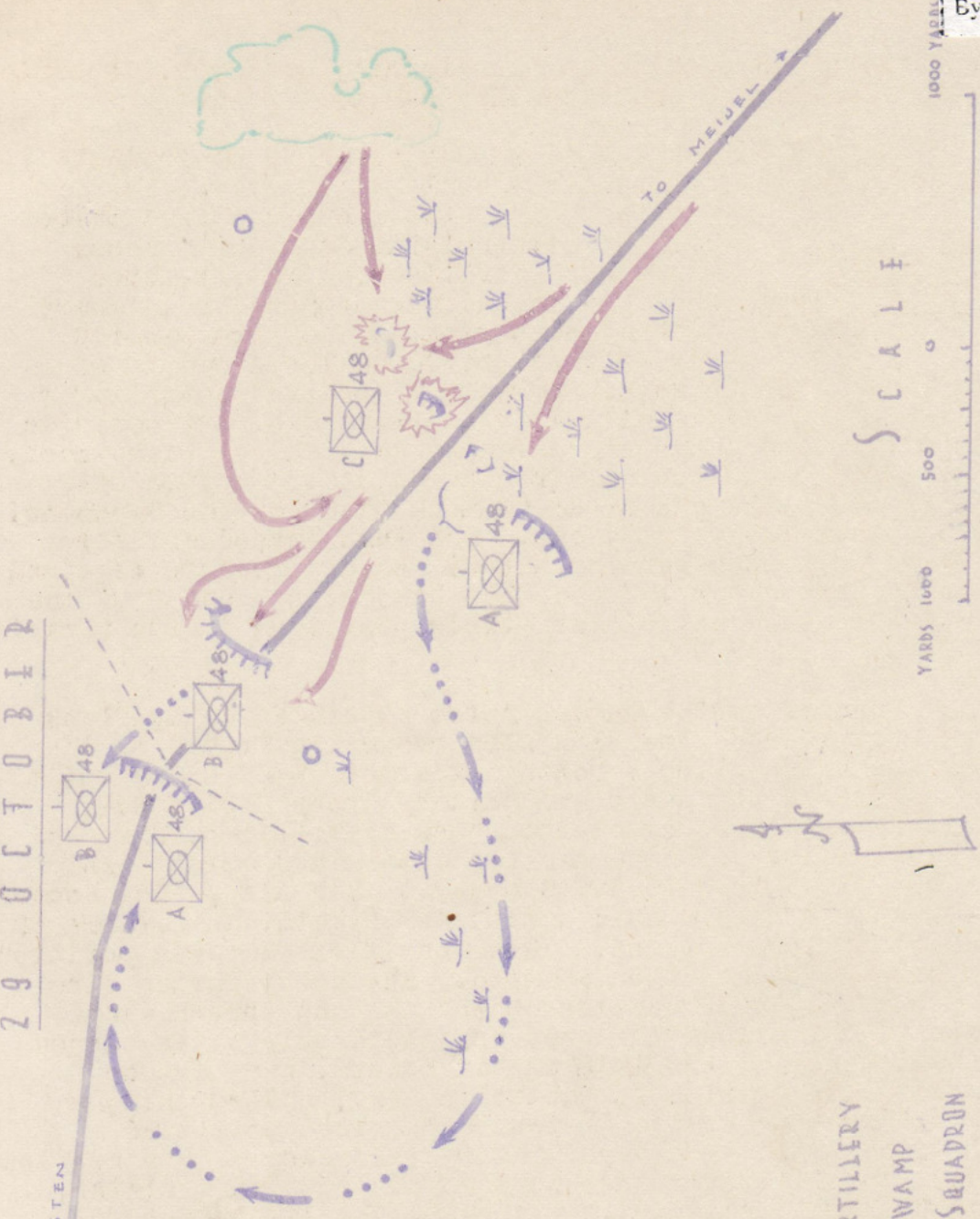
Meanwhile the force heading for the canal at Hoogebrug immediately ran into heavy enemy artillery and mortar fire. The enemy had a planned concentration for the road junction at 682129 which he laid down any time troops attempted to pass it. As the force moved across the junction, the enemy fire was so intense that the platoon of the 814 TD's, which was to protect the left flank of the advancing force, was unable to see the road junction 50 yards away. (36) Enemy machine gun, small arms, artillery, and mortar fire increased as the force advanced. Soon direct fire weapons were brought to bear on the tanks which had gotten slightly ahead of the infantry, and in a short time five of the tanks were knocked out. (37) Lt. Whiteman of Company B called for a rolling barrage. The infantry followed the barrage at 100 yards. (38) The barrage moved forward 600 yards. Our attack progressed 600 yards. Then the heavy enemy fire forced our troops once more to dig in. They held in those positions for the rest of the day. Considerable enemy movement was noticed to their front, and much artillery fire was called for.

Concurrent with the main thrust down the road from Liesel to Meijel, CCR was to push down the Asten-Meijel road. The attacking force was to consist of Companies A and B of the 48th AIBn with Company A of the 17th Tk Bn. Company C of the 48th Our secondary thrusts AIBn was to be in reserve, but was not relieved of its flank mission until 0500. Consequently it arrived too late to receive the attack order, and it set up defensive positions astride the road. With it were several tank destroyers and a platoon of tanks. The attack by CCR was never launched because of the strong enemy pressure to the front.

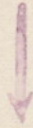




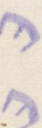

In CCA sector Task Force Nelson was directed to attack to the south and east on order. An attack started but made little progress. The forces were

ENEMY ATTACK TOWARD ASTEN

29 OCTOBER



LEGEND

-  ENEMY ATTACKS
-  WITHDRAWAL
-  ALLIED HEAVY ARTILLERY
-  WOOD
-  SWAMP
-  OUTPOSTS 87 REG SQUADRON
-  PLATOON POSITIONS CO "C"

SCALE
1000
500
100
YARDS

S E C R E T

successful in pushing to the vicinity of Horik. Positions were established along the Horik-Meijel road.

German forces lodged in Meijel began to indicate their aggressive intentions early in the day. To the west of Meijel the enemy appeared to be content with holding down our forces. The enemy counters toward Asten His tanks patrolled the Meijel-Asten road and in addition forces of infantry with machine guns and mortars covered any attempts by Companies A and B of the 48th AIBn to move. Company A observed seven enemy tanks which were firing in all directions. At periodic intervals the tanks aimed rounds down the straight road. (39) CCR requested an air mission on the column of tanks and smoke was fired to mark them for the Typhoons. The attack was carried out. One tank burned and three others were seen burning. (40) Enemy pressure remained strong throughout the day, but Companies A and B of the 48th were able to maintain their positions in the vicinity 690078.

Further east a German force attempted to outflank the positions of the 48th AIBn by moving around to the north. Around 1000 a force estimated at 65 enemy built up to attack the positions held by Troop C 87th Ren. This enemy force was blasted back by artillery fire and assault guns. At 1600 another determined thrust was made against Troop C and Company C 48th AIBn. The second platoon of Troop C held positions slightly in advance of the other two platoons. The enemy flanked these positions on both sides and then charged. The heavy mortar fire had caved in the foxholes of the men and thrown dirt into almost all of the weapons. With only a few weapons functioning and the enemy on both sides, the platoon leader, Lt. Charles A. Robertson, Jr., ordered his men to withdraw to a ditch between the first and third platoons while he covered their withdrawal with a machine gun. The lieutenant was wounded but continued firing, and the men successfully withdrew. The lieutenant was not seen again, and the platoon retired past the positions of the other two platoons. The enemy continued forward and was partially successful in penetrating our lines. Our tanks engaged the advancing armor and one of our mediums was knocked out, another damaged, and the other two abandoned until nightfall when they were recovered. (41) Despite this penetration the enemy was not able to exploit his advance because of the considerable artillery fire which was placed on his positions.

Enemy thrusts north from Meijel drove Troop D 87th Ren out of its outposts during the morning. The troop

S E C R E T

withdrew to the vicinity of Liesel. Enemy infantrymen with mortars and machine guns were observed advancing, and were taken under fire. The church steeple at Neerkant became an enemy OP until tank artillery and TD fire chopped it down. But the main enemy pressure was brought to bear on the flank facing the Deurne Canal.

Company B of the 23d AIBn and supporting tanks ran into strong enemy opposition as they approached the canal down the Hoogebrug road. Apparently the enemy intended to use this route to attack our forces on the flank. His attacking force met with ours and was driven back slightly. The enemy then attempted to circle to the north of our force, cutting between them and Liesel. Tank destroyers engaged some of the enemy tanks and knocked out two with the loss of two of their destroyers. (42)

The assault platoon of the 31st Tk Bn, which was guarding the left flank of Company B, 23d AIBn, spotted a column of German tanks. The platoon knocked five of them out with the loss of only one assault gun. (43)

The heavy artillery concentrations called for by the forward observer with Company B helped stop the enemy advance. At dusk Company B of the 23d was given an order to withdraw 500 yards along the Hoogebrug road in order to shorten the line between its forces and those along the road to Meijel. Even with this shortened line, our defensive positions were dangerously thin. The gap was plugged with dismounted troops of the 814th TD's. Troop D of the 87th Ren was sent around from Liesel to fill the gap along the right flank of the CCB sector, and it outposted between Company C of the 23d AIBn and Company B of the 48th AIBn. Thus the lines were somewhat consolidated, but the territory between the main body of CCB to the north of Heitrak and Company B of the 23rd AIBn on the road to Hoogebrug presented a dangerous wedge which if exploited by the enemy, could result in severing the CCB forces. (44)

At the close of the day CCR forces had held their ground, but were in a precarious position because of strong enemy infiltrations on the north flank and along the Meijel-Asten road. Results of second day CCB forces were dug in defensively along a broad front, and had generally contained the German thrust from Meijel and around its north flank. However, it was known that the enemy was in considerable strength to the east of our lines along the Hoogebrug road.

S E C R E T

Enemy casualties for the day were estimated at 100 dead, 150 wounded, and 71 captured. For the same period our casualties were estimated to be nine killed, 45 wounded, and two missing. (45)

There was more air activity on both sides. Six missions were flown in the sector on division call, and three more on corps call. Tanks were hit five times, bridges three times, and Meijel once. Results were generally unobserved because of dust kicked up by the 60 pound rockets of the Spitfires and Typhoons. (46) German planes in their first appearance in this sector bombed and strafed positions of our troops in the Asten area. Damage and casualties were inflicted on the landing strip for the artillery liaison planes.

THE SECOND NIGHT

At 281600 enemy strength was still calculated to consist of the 9th Panzer Division plus miscellaneous units previously holding in the area. The commanding general believed that the enemy forces could be driven back. The 25 (British) Field Artillery

Our plans Regiment was now in support of our troops, and one brigade of the 15 Scottish Division was moving to the vicinity of Vlierden-Asten. Accordingly the division issued operations instructions directing that the attack be continued in the morning. CCB was to seize and hold Meijel and secure the line of the Deurne and Nord canals. CCR was to consolidate and hold its present positions and then clear the enemy from its assigned zone, securing the line of the Nord canal in its sector.

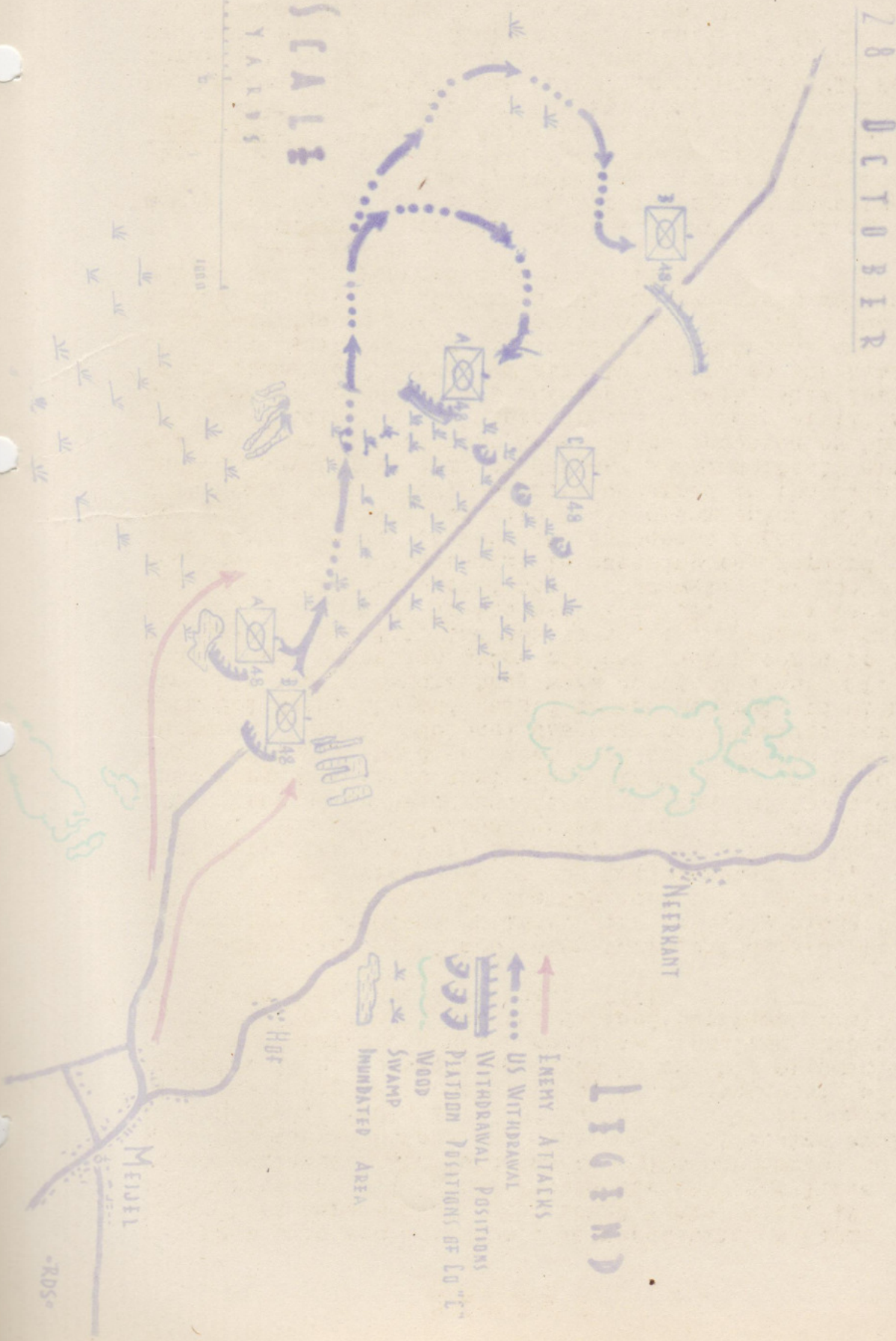
By the end of the second day, elements of the 15th Panzer Grenadier Division were engaged on the division front. Enemy tank strength across the bridgehead was estimated at from 20-30 tanks, and prisoners stated that there were some 76 tanks with the attacking forces. (47)

Evaluation of the reason for the German thrust was revised as a result of the identification of this second enemy division. At first it had been thought that the enemy attack was a diversion to release pressure on the Tilburg-Hertogenbosch area. Such a diversion might be accomplished by a division which could break through our screen and disrupt our defense in the sector. But with two divisions available and committed, it was logical to presume a larger goal. A probable explanation








NIGHT ACTION - SECOND DAY

28 OCTOBER

SCALE
1000
500
0
500
1000
YARDS



LEGEND

-  ENEMY ATTACKS
-  US WITHDRAWAL
-  WITHDRAWAL POSITIONS
-  PLATOON POSITIONS OF CO 'C'
-  WOOD
-  SWAMP
-  INUNDATED AREA

-RDS-

S E C R E T

was that this was an attempt to reestablish a firm bridgehead across the Meuse around Venlo which, if reinforced and maintained, would threaten our lines of communication and force us to shift our forces to this bridgehead before any other major offensive could be launched. (48) It might furthermore be presumed that the enemy was hopeful that, if he could maintain surprise in his attack, he might be capable of forcing a major breakthrough which could be exploited into a counter-offensive to cut the Holland corridor or at the least recapture Eindhoven. (49)

During the night the enemy further indicated his aggressive intentions by increasing activity along both CCB and CCR sectors. In the CCR sector enemy tanks in large numbers were heard on the Meijel-Asten road, artillery fire was very intense, and patrolling was active. The forces of Companies A and B of the 48th AIBn observed or heard additional German infiltrations. They were soon aware that enemy troops were on three sides of them. Word was sent back to battalion headquarters where Lt. Colonel Chappuis had received permission from Col Ryan, who had talked to the general, to withdraw his troops before they were completely cut off. Lt. Tucker, the battalion motor officer, volunteered to lead a four-man patrol to the positions of Companies A and B and guide them back to the battalion CP. A box barrage was to be fired to screen the withdrawal. Lt. Tucker and one man were successful in reaching the forward positions, and at midnight the companies began the withdrawal. Lt. Tucker led with the two companies in single file behind him. (50) A break occurred in the file, and Company B with some of Company A found itself without a leader in territory known to be occupied by the enemy. Guiding on the flash of the friendly artillery, two burning houses, and a burning haystack, this latter group struck off across country to return to the battalion CP. Both sections were successfully withdrawn, and before dawn were dug in defensive positions. Company A dug in on the right flank of Company C, and Company B was dug in behind the two forward elements. (51)

As the enemy pressure began to increase during the early evening of the 28th and his intentions were re-evaluated, it became apparent that enemy potentialities for the next day were extremely favorable to the attack. In addition to the 9th Panzer and the 15th Panzer Grenadier Divisions on our front, the XLVII Panzer Corps had recently established headquarters in Venlo, and the 116th Panzer Division was identified in the vicinity of Steinstrass about 35 miles distant.

Revision of our plans

S E C R E T

The commanding general of CCB in evaluating his position found that the loss of 10 to 12 medium tanks had so weakened his forces that an attack in strength would not be possible. If he attacked toward the bridge at Hoogebrug he would need to reinforce his effort by a medium tank company and a company of infantry. That would leave the southern attacking force with only one infantry company and part of a tank company. Any attack to the south would present a long flank to the enemy. (52)

In the light of this information the division revised its orders at 282100, and directed all forces to consolidate and hold their present positions.

THE THIRD DAY

During the early morning 29 October, enemy activity throughout the sector was marked by aggressive patrols and intermittent artillery fire. Listening posts heard considerable movement of enemy vehicles. At 0410 a guard at the vehicle park for CCB in Liesel heard tracked vehicles moving to the west. Going to another guard, he asked him if he noticed the noises, but the second guard replied: "Oh hell, its the British." (53)

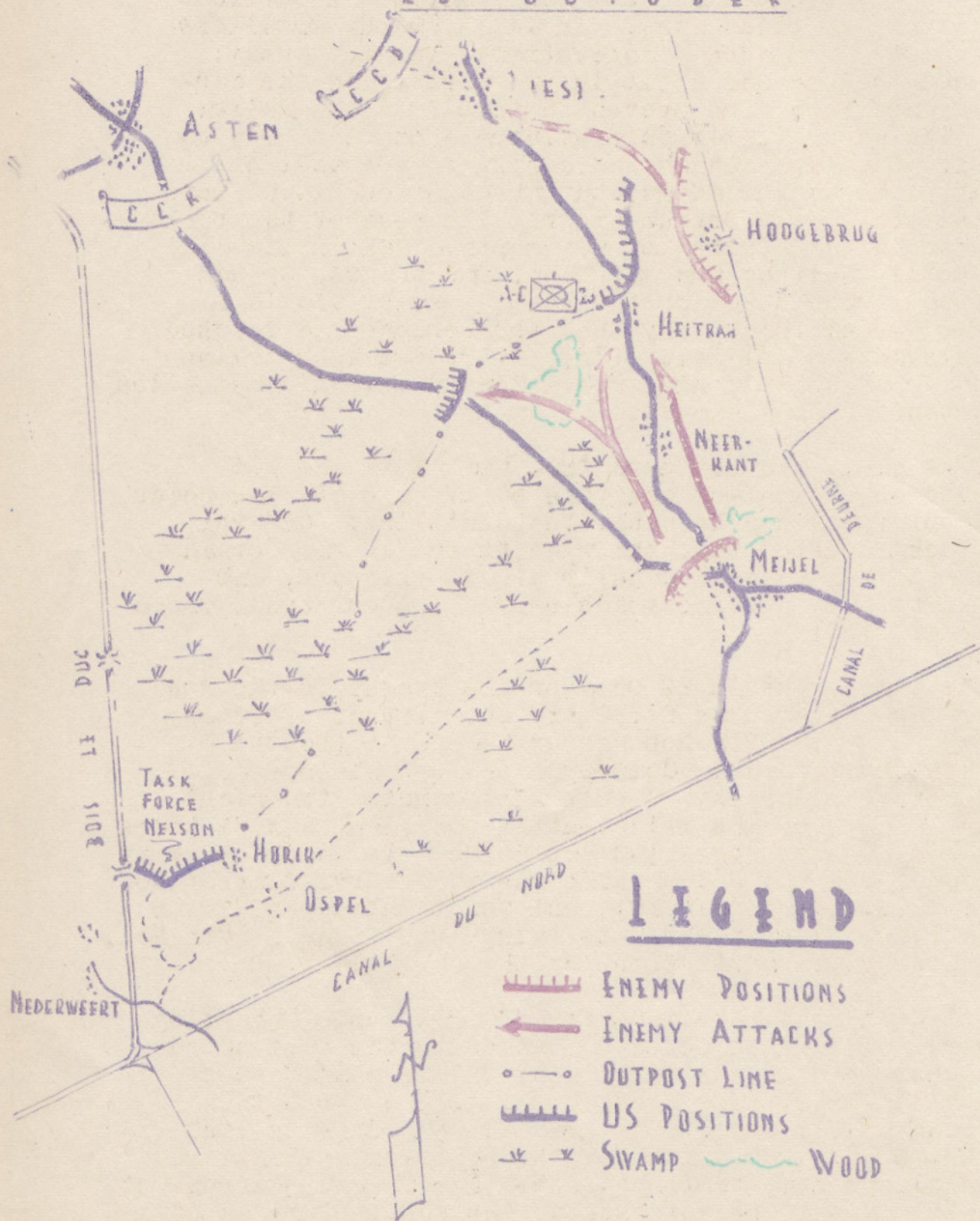
The enemy attacks However, at 0715 Company D of the 17th Tk Bn, which was screening directly to the east of Liesel, reported 150-200 enemy troops, accompanied by four tanks, approaching from the east. The tanks were very possibly those which had been heard at 0410. To the south in the sector of Company B 23d AIBn, astride the Hoogebrug road, a strong enemy patrol advanced in the dark and set fire to the barn in which the company CP was located. Guided by the fire the German troops attacked. The fire provided the necessary light for Company B to lay down a heavy volume of machine gun and small arms fire on the advancing waves and columns of enemy. Lt. Whiteman and the forward observers called for artillery and mortar fire to be placed on the enemy. Numerous casualties were inflicted, and at about dawn the enemy retreated to a row of trees to the east of our defensive positions.

The enemy was launching a double attack against our defenses. One prong of the attack was aimed at Asten up the Meijel road, and the second prong was directed toward Liesel, and could either angle west to Asten or north to Deurne. Subsequent events showed that his scheme of maneuver called for a flanking thrust at Liesel to cut off the defending forces along the Meijel-Liesel road.







Shortly after the pre-dawn attack against Company B 23d AIBn on the Hoogebrug road, an enemy force was

THE ENEMY ATTACKS LIESEL AND TOWARD ASTEN

29 OCTOBER



LEGEND

-  ENEMY POSITIONS
-  ENEMY ATTACKS
-  OUTPOST LINE
-  US POSITIONS
-  SWAMP
-  WOOD

SCALE

1 MILE 1/2 0 1 2 3 4 5 MILE

RDS.

DECLASSIFIED
Authority: NND 35217
By: W. NARA Date: 09/25/95

S E C R E T

sighted turning off the road from the Hoogebrug bridge on to a small road leading to Liesel.

The attack
against
Liesel

The turning column was hit by machine gun fire from our positions about 1000 yards away. In addition our artillery placed a concentration on the enemy.

The enemy column was split in two parts, and the continued artillery fire prevented them from rejoining. (54) The enemy formation continued along the road to Liesel. Our light tanks, screening to the east of Liesel, engaged the enemy, but three of our tanks were knocked out by the German armor. The rest of the tanks were forced to withdraw to the north. CCB in Liesel was hastily alerted for movement, and the CCB CP and motor pool were moved to the west, leaving the town for the German force. By 0840 the Germans had reached the outskirts of Liesel. (55) At 0900 the battalion commander of the 23d AIBn was informed that his battalion was cut off from the rear.

The enemy had hit hard from the flank and had achieved an element of surprise by the use of back roads which our tanks had been unable to utilize. General Hasbrouck asserted that the wide treads on the German tanks materially reduced their ground pressure, and allowed them to utilize roads over which our tanks could not move. (56)

As dawn broke on 29 October the troops in the CCR sector were arrayed as follows: one platoon of Troop C 87th Ren was on the right (south) flank; Company A and one platoon of Company C 48th AIBn were on the right of the Meijel-Asten road, and two platoons of Company C 48th AIBn were on the left of the road; Company B 48th AIBn was in reserve further to the rear astride this road; and the remainder of Troop C with a few light tanks, was tying into Troop D 87th Ren, which was on the south flank of the CCB forces.

The attack
against
Asten

At dawn large enemy forces of tanks and supporting infantry moving from the large woods to the east of our positions attacked the left flank of the main forces astride the road. The tanks completely overran the positions of Company C 48th AIBn and the defense line was shattered. A TD fired at the approaching tanks but was unable to stop their advance. The TD was overrun but shot its way out and got back up the road. (57) A 57mm gun was dug in guarding the approaches to the road, but could not be turned to fire to the rear where the Germans were approaching. (58) One German tank commander put his

S E C R E T

gun in the window of the house where the company CP was located, and forced the surrender of all but two men who ran down a ditch outside the house. Although heavy enemy fire was falling on the right flank, no enemy tanks came into that sector.

With the collapse of the other flank Company A and the remaining platoon of Company C concluded that their position was hopeless. An immediate withdrawal was begun toward the battalion CP. Lts. Wells and Webb, assuming that the enemy tanks and infantry had continued on up the road toward Asten, made a wide arc through the swamps so as not to come up behind this force. Eventually they were successful in reaching the battalion headquarters where they immediately reorganized their men, hastily appointing squad leaders and establishing new squads. (59)

Company B of the 48th AIBn now the front line troops, could see the Germans advancing from the east. They could also observe a large force of infantry in a solid column advancing on the road about 1000 yards to the southwest of the main road. Some few men at this time became panicky and went forward to the German lines with their hands up. (60) However, the main group was consolidated and formed into a hook-shaped defense running north of the road at 673095. German tanks were cruising up and down the road to the east, and enemy infantry was already on both sides of Company B's position. Major Frazier, the battalion S-3, went back at this time to form a strong point about 500 yards to the west of the Company B position. He told Captain Vogelsang Company Commander, Company B to hold until the new force could be gathered together, and then to withdraw to the new position. (61)

Meanwhile the enemy forces had been receiving a very severe artillery concentration. A forward observer with Troop D of the 87th Rcn was able to obtain excellent observation of the German columns, and he called for all the fire he could get. Six enemy tanks were seen to burn. (62)

Our heavy artillery, augmented by two more British artillery regiments, slowed the German advance and gave our troops time to reorganize after the breakthrough. Major Frazier assembled three tank destroyers, five tanks, and about 80 infantrymen, including the remainder of Company A, and set up a perimeter defense around the road junction at 669096. Company B withdrew to this position.

S E C R E T

The Germans continued the assault with both tanks and infantry. The defending force knocked out seven enemy tanks and three armored vehicles. (63) Several artillery forward observers were present and directed heavy concentrations on the Germans with extremely effective results. Subsequent PW and other reports indicated that a battalion of Germans had barely completed movement into the woods to the west of our position and had not dug in when we placed a heavy concentration on the woods. Nearly the entire battalion was wiped out by our fire. The mortars and machine guns of the battalion, later augmented by the heavy machine guns, were utilized and the strongpoint was able to repulse further enemy advances.

Despite the loss of Liesel the main force of CCB remained in position astride the Meijel-Liesel road.

Attack Pressure against Companies A and C of
against CCB the 23d AIBn to the south was light during the morning, although PW's reported enemy tank concentrations in Heittrak. At 0900 the tanks of Company B of the 17th Tk Bn were withdrawn on order of the battalion commander, but at 1125 four of the tanks were sent back to the infantry. About 1300 Companies A and C of the 23d AIBn moved back to more favorable positions a few hundred yards to the north.

Late in the afternoon a large tank battle started. German tanks, closely followed by infantry, again began moving from the south toward our positions astride the Heittrak-Liesel road. Eleven enemy tanks were seen by Company A of the 23d AIBn and others were observed to the front of Company C. Our tanks duelled with the enemy but results were inconclusive. (64) Heavy artillery concentrations were placed on the enemy formations. (65)

At dusk Company E of the 23d received its heaviest counter-attack of the day. Our tanks had just withdrawn to cover positions when the enemy, estimated at company strength, began to approach Company B. One column headed for them on the road, and the others came across the fields in a skirmish line. Our machine guns were able to deliver cross-fire on the field, and had a machine gun trained down the road. The Germans were driven back with heavy losses. Our artillery forward observer called for and received artillery fire 100 yards in front of the defending positions. (66)

Immediately after the loss of Liesel the commanding general CCB sent a company of medium tanks from the 31st

S E C R E T

S E C R E T

Tk Bn, a platoon of TD's, and a company of the 33rd
Engineers to reinforce our lines to
We counter the west and north of the town.
at Liesel Three German tanks were knocked out
by these forces. (67)

At about 1330 this force was ordered to attack
and clear the enemy from Liesel. The attack was to
be from the north so that the long axis of the town
would be presented to the attacking troops. In this
way less fire could be placed on our troops as they
advanced. (68) With the assault gun platoon and the
TD's firing supporting mission, Company B of the engineers
began to work its way through the town. They had pro-
gressed about half-way when they were ordered to halt.
About this time the division received word of the
proposed relief by the British. When the British in-
dicated they would set up defensive lines to the west
of Liesel, the commanding general decided to abandon
the attack. (69) The troops were withdrawn and on
CCB request, an air mission flown over the town.

Enemy pressure and intentions forced a decision
to strengthen the sector. Conferences between the 7th
Armored Division and 8 (British) Corps
The relief commanders resulted in the decision to
shorten the front of the 7th Armored by
bringing in a new division to take over
part of the sector. Orders were issued by the division
at 1630 29 October directing movement of CCB and OCR
to assembly areas upon relief by the 15th Scottish
Division. Relief was to be effective after dusk on the
29th.

Immediately after dusk British forces established
positions to the rear of our forces. One position was
about 1000 yards to the west of our strongpoint on the
Meijel-Asten road, and the other position was on the
Liesel-Asten road about 2000 yards to the rear of our
forward positions.

The night of the 29th was a brilliant moonlight
night. The forces in the CCB sector were faced with the
difficult task of disengaging themselves from an enemy
in close proximity to their front and astride the main
road to their rear. A small road with a log bridge was
discovered to the west of the main road, and plans were
made for the withdrawal over this road. Subsequent testing
proved that the bridge was not strong enough to hold the
vehicles, so a peep was driven into the creek to serve
as a foundation. Logs were placed over the peep, and a
substantial bridge thus constructed. However, the tank

forces were unable to cross over the bridge. Another bridge was discovered about 500 yards south of Liesel, and the tanks were able to utilize that route even though it was perilously close to the enemy. One company of light tanks circled the German positions at Liesel, crossed the Meijel-Liesel road and passed through the woods. The enemy was not inactive. Tankers reported the artillery concentrated on the woods through which they passed was the heaviest they had encountered since they had been in action. (70) Companies A and C of the 23d AIBn were finally successful in disengaging themselves despite the precarious maneuver of withdrawing across the front of the enemy. (71)

Major share for the successful withdrawal went to the combined British and American artillery which fired a continuous screen in front of the troops. The barrage in front of the CCB sector was so effective that the British did not make contact with the enemy until the next morning. (72) In the CCR sector the barrage started in front of the British positions and moved down about 200 yards to the front of the defensive positions. (73) The artillery could fire 2 rounds per minute or 8 to 10 rounds per minute as the situation required. (74)

Enemy casualties for the day amounted to an estimated 115 killed, 165 wounded, and 13 captured. Our casualties were seven killed, 54 wounded, and 233 missing.

Losses (75) A heavy toll was taken of enemy armor on the 29th. Seventeen enemy tanks were confirmed, six were probable, and 17 more were hit from the air with undetermined results. (76) In addition three enemy assault guns and three 88 mm AT guns were destroyed. The 7th Armored lost seven medium and six light tanks, five TD's, one medium tank, M4 with 105 mm assault gun, five half-tracks, one armored car, and nine other vehicles.

DAMAGE ASSESSED

In three days of heavy fighting the enemy had enlarged his bridgehead across the Meuse river, but at a heavy cost in personnel and armor. His offensive power had been stayed, and the new bridgehead contained short of the first objective, Asten. (77) Our forces had withstood the thrust long enough to allow Army to bring up the needed reinforcements. (78)

Observed enemy losses in equipment for the three day battle were five anti-tank guns, six 88mm guns, ten Mark V tanks, and 20 Mark VI tanks. Our losses were 32 medium tanks, 13 light tanks, 5 Medium tank M4 with 105 mm assault gun, 14 half tracks (personnel carrier), two M8

armored cars, 2 M8 Assault guns, seven tank destroyers, three half track mortar carriers M21 and 45 peeps. (79)

WE COUNTERATTACK

Relief of the 7th Armored Division from the northern zone of its canal line sector did not materially alter the mission of the division. Operations in the Scheldt Estuary and to the south of the Maas River were drawing to a conclusion, but no major counter-thrusts against the Germans were to be made until additional units were returned from the western Holland sector. Consequently 8 (British) Corps decided to make a limited attack to restore the line of the Deurne and Nord canals to insure protection of the lines of communication pending the conclusion of the Scheldt operation.

Prelude

The 8 (British) Corps commander decided upon a coordinated attack by the 7th U.S. Armored and the 15 Scottish Divisions to restore the line of the Deurne-Nord canals. The corps plan was that the 15 Scottish Division would recapture Meijel while the 7th Armored attacked to the south, clearing the enemy along the Nord canal. The attack was to take place at dawn 31 October.

As plans went forward for the attack on the 31st, additional information and identifications of the enemy caused a revision of the original scheme of maneuver. By the time relief of the 7th Armored by the 15 Scottish Division had been completed, all four Panzer Grenadier Regiments of the 9th Panzer and 15th Panzer Grenadier Divisions had been identified, and in every case with substantial support from tanks and artillery. (80) The 9th SS Panzer Division and the 344th Infantry Division were both reported in the general vicinity of Roermond and the 116th Panzer Division was reported in Steinstrass. (81) During the night 30-31 October the enemy indicated his aggressive intentions by constructing a footbridge across the Wessem canal at 640957, and constructing other smaller bridges and cuts and various points in the canals. (82) It was entirely possible for the enemy to make a new thrust against our right flank along the Wessem canal. This thrust would have seriously endangered our supply lines which paralleled the front line for a considerable distance.

The commanding general of the 8 (British) Corps in a meeting with the commanding general of the 7th Armored

S E C R E T

Division emphasized the importance of Nederweert, Weert, and Bree to the Allied plan of operations for this area. He instructed the 7th Armored Division to watch carefully the area to the south and be ready to send troops there if any enemy thrust should be made in the direction of Weert, Bree, or Kimroy. (83)

In the light of the enemy potentialities, the attack scheduled for dawn of the 31st was postponed. A further regrouping of the forces was deemed necessary prior to any coordinated attempt to remove the enemy from his new canal bridgehead. The 4 British Armored Brigade was attached to the division on 30 October, and on 31 October it assumed responsibility for the sector along the Wessem canal. On 1 November the 158 Brigade of the British 53 Division relieved the 4 Armored Brigade, and responsibility for the Wessem canal sector passed to the 53 Division. Attachment of the Belgian Brigade also ended effective 1800 31 October.

At 2400 31 October Major General Lindsay McDonald Silvester was relieved of his command and Brigadier General Robert W. Hasbrouck assumed command of the division.

PLAN OF ATTACK

Regrouping of the forces having been effected, 8 (British) Corps issued orders to attack 2 November. At 2300 1 November the division distributed operations instructions directing an attack by CCA at 021000A to secure the Canal du Nord, destroy all crossings of the canal, and clear enemy resistance from the division zone. (84) As the enemy was cleared CCA was to be relieved of the responsibility of securing the Canal du Nord to its rear. CCR was to support the attack of CCA by fire from the west banks of Bois le Duc.

It was estimated that about 540 men or a battalion of enemy of the 344th Infantry Division were to be found to the front of the attackers. These troops were thought to be of the Hermann Paratroop Regiment. (85)

The terrain was not favorable to our attack. The division was familiar with the sector inasmuch as a week previously the territory had been occupied by Troop A of the 87th Rcn. Almost half of the sector was swamp land, and the useable road net was extremely limited. Several small towns dotted the landscape, and a minor road net connected them. To the left a large swamp and a peat works formed an almost impenetrable barrier to the foot troops, and was certainly impenetrable by armored vehicles.

S E C R E T

The personnel strength of the division was 95%. The shortage in assigned strength was 452 men and in effective strength was 562 men. (86) Combat efficiency was excellent despite the rough fighting of the previous several days. Supplies were adequate, but the effective strength of medium tanks was 65%. In view of the nature of the terrain to be attacked this shortage was not critical because tanks were utilized to a minimum. (87)

CCA was to be composed of the 40th Tk Bn, the 38th AIBn, the 48th AIBn, Company A of the 33d Engineers, Company A and the Reconnaissance Company of the 814th TD's, and Troop A of the 87th Reconnaissance. The division engineers were to be prepared to construct a bridge across the Bois le Duc at 617023 and then prepare the bridge for destruction.

The plan of attack involved the use of two task forces, Fuller and Brown. TF Fuller was composed of the 38th AIBn, Companies A and C of the 40th Tk Bn, and a platoon each of the 814th TD's and 33d Engineers. Task Force Brown consisted of the 40th Tk Bn minus Companies A and C, the 48th AIBn, and a platoon each of the 814th TD's and the 33d Engineers.

The division was to attack and secure a canal line, the opposite side of which was held by the enemy. An attack directly to the east would expose its flank to the enemy during the entire operation. In view of this danger the plan of attack adopted was to attack from the north toward the enemy held canal line, progress through a series of objectives until the canal on the south was reached, and then withdraw to the north to peel off another piece. If the enemy resistance during the first thrust appeared light then the attack might be swung east along the canal bank. (88)

THE FIRST DAY

H hour was to be at 021000A, the line of departure being the outpost lines which had been established several days previously. However, the attack was delayed slightly because the 48th AIBn had difficulty getting to the line of departure. At 1110 TF Brown crossed the LD, and at 1117 TF Fuller jumped off, Companies A and C in squad column with the tanks behind. Ground fog had shrouded vision, but at H hour the fog lifted and two tanks of Company C 40th Tk Bn were knocked out by cross fire of AT guns located in the vicinity of Horik.

COUNTER-ATTACK

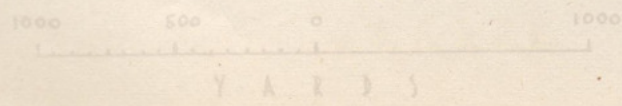
2 - 3 NOVEMBER



LEGEND

- LD — LINE OF DEPARTURE
- ← US ATTACKS
- OUTPOST LINE
- SHADED AREAS INDICATE OBJECTIVES

SCALE



ea

S E C R E T

Task Force Brown was formed in a column of companies with A leading, C following, and B outposting on the left flank as the attack progressed. By 1320 TF Brown was on the 03 grid line approaching Horik. Two enemy tanks had been reported in Horik, and the fire from these tanks or anti-tank guns slowed up the advance on the left flank. Contact between TF Fuller and Brown was temporarily lost, and Fuller, which had met almost no enemy opposition except the cross-fire from Horik, was forced to hold up. Contact was soon reestablished and the advance continued slowly, but at 1430 both forces were slowed down by small arms and anti-tank fire and numerous mines.

In the mid-afternoon the commanding general visited the battlefield and observed that the supporting artillery was not being utilized to the maximum extent. (89) Subsequently he ordered the entire division artillery to strike the town of Horik, and to discourage any enemy who might have pulled back to the next town of Ospel, he called for an air mission there. The line was pushed forward until at nightfall our troops were just short of Horik on the left, and had reached the old bridge site along the canal on the right (617023). Here they buttoned up for the night after establishing outposts along the front.

Our losses for the day were three medium tanks and one light tank. Casualties were 11 wounded. Enemy casualties were unknown.

From 0600 to 0645 on 3 November, the division placed a heavy artillery concentration upon Horik. At the end of this barrage the attack was resumed. Company A of the 48th AIBn split into two columns and converged on Ospel, clearing out houses as they went. By 1400 they had reached Ospel. Little active enemy opposition was encountered, although he had strewn the area with anti-personnel and anti-tank mines laid in a haphazard manner which made their detection very difficult.

Task Force Fuller continued the advance along the Bois le Duc with Companies A and C of the 38th AIBn in the lead. Four snipers were driven out of one house in a charge by a lieutenant who thought he had his whole platoon with him but ended up with only eight men. One of the snipers turned to surrender and attempted to persuade his friends to do likewise. He was shot through the stomach by his comrades. (90)

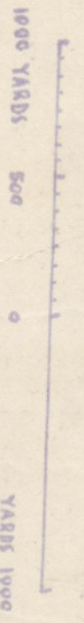
COUNTER-ATTACK CONT'D

3 NOVEMBER

LEGEND

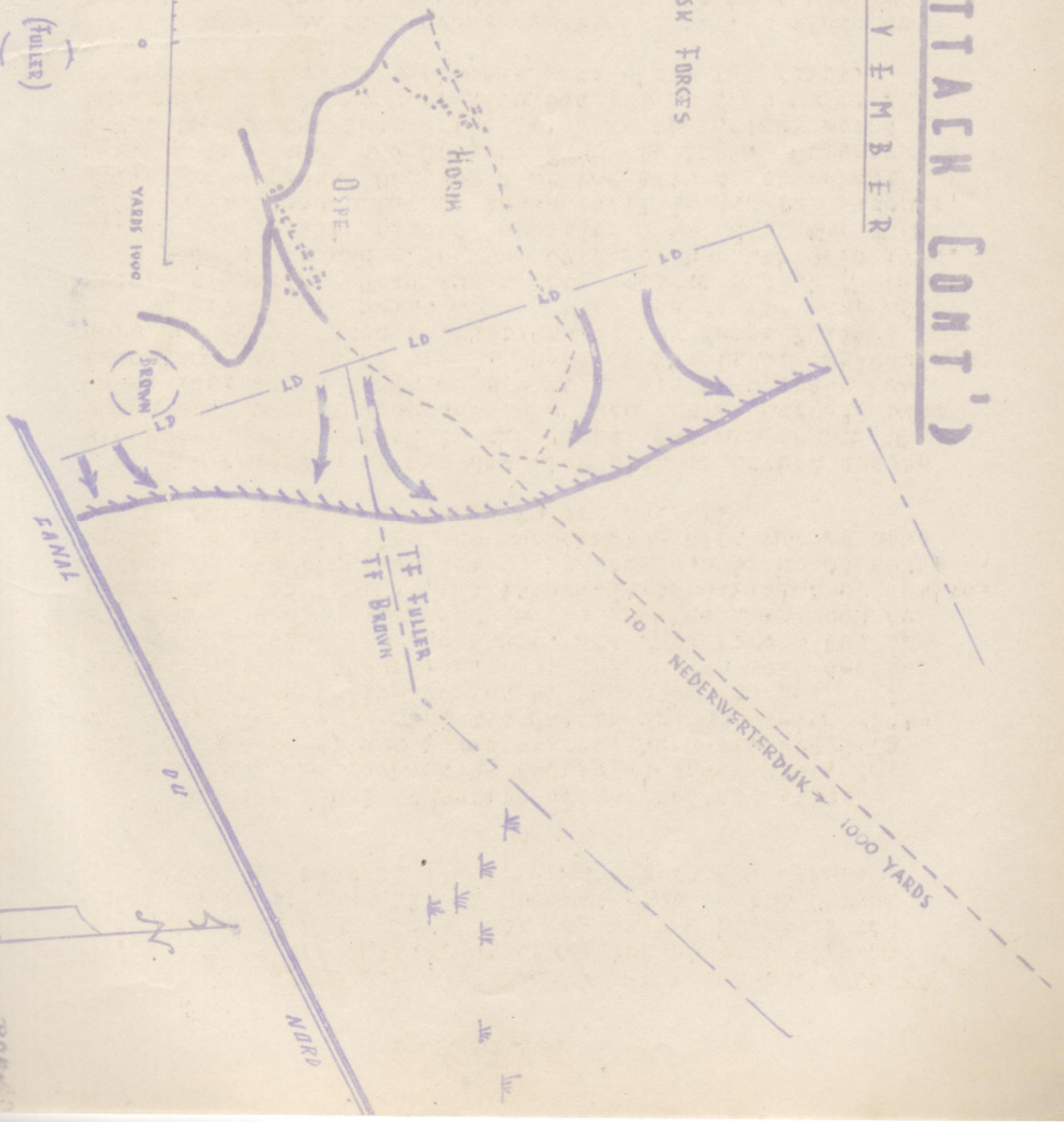
- () ASSEMBLY AREAS TASK FORCES
- ↑ US ATTACKS
- ▄ MLR 1830 HOURS
- LINE OF DEPARTURE
- - - TASK FORCE BOUNDARIES
- W SWAMP

SCALE



(FULLER)

(BROWN)



S E C R E T

By mid-afternoon both forces had reached the third objective of the initial attack. One platoon of Company A of the 48th AIBn worked its way to the banks of the canal where it was able to observe some of the German positions and several log bridges across the canal. (91)

When the final objective of the initial attack was reached, the commanding general decided that, in view of the light enemy resistance, he would speed up the operation by turning the forces and attacking westward rather than withdrawing to the north to peel off another slice. Accordingly assembly areas were designated at Kriejel and Westskamp, and Task Forces Fuller and Brown were to jump off in the afternoon as soon as reorganized to capture the intermediate division objective. Attack on the final objective was changed to be on corps order, so that it might be coordinated with the advance of the 15 Scottish Division toward Meijel.

The revision of the division plan of attack necessitated a modification in the combat command scheme of maneuver. German observation of the entire terrain over which Task Force Brown on the right was to operate was excellent because of the flatness of the land. Operations were shaped by these limitations. Task Force Fuller was to attack and seize the high ground to the west of Nederwerterdijk. Task Force Brown was to attack to the west seizing ground along the 67th north-south grid line. Lt. Colonel Fuller placed Companies A and C of the 38th AIBn in the lead with his tanks still in general support, while Brown placed Company C of the 48th on the right next to the canal and Company B on the left. Company A was to outpost toward the canal as the attack moved forward. The tanks were situated inland from the canal to avoid the German anti-tank guns along the flank.

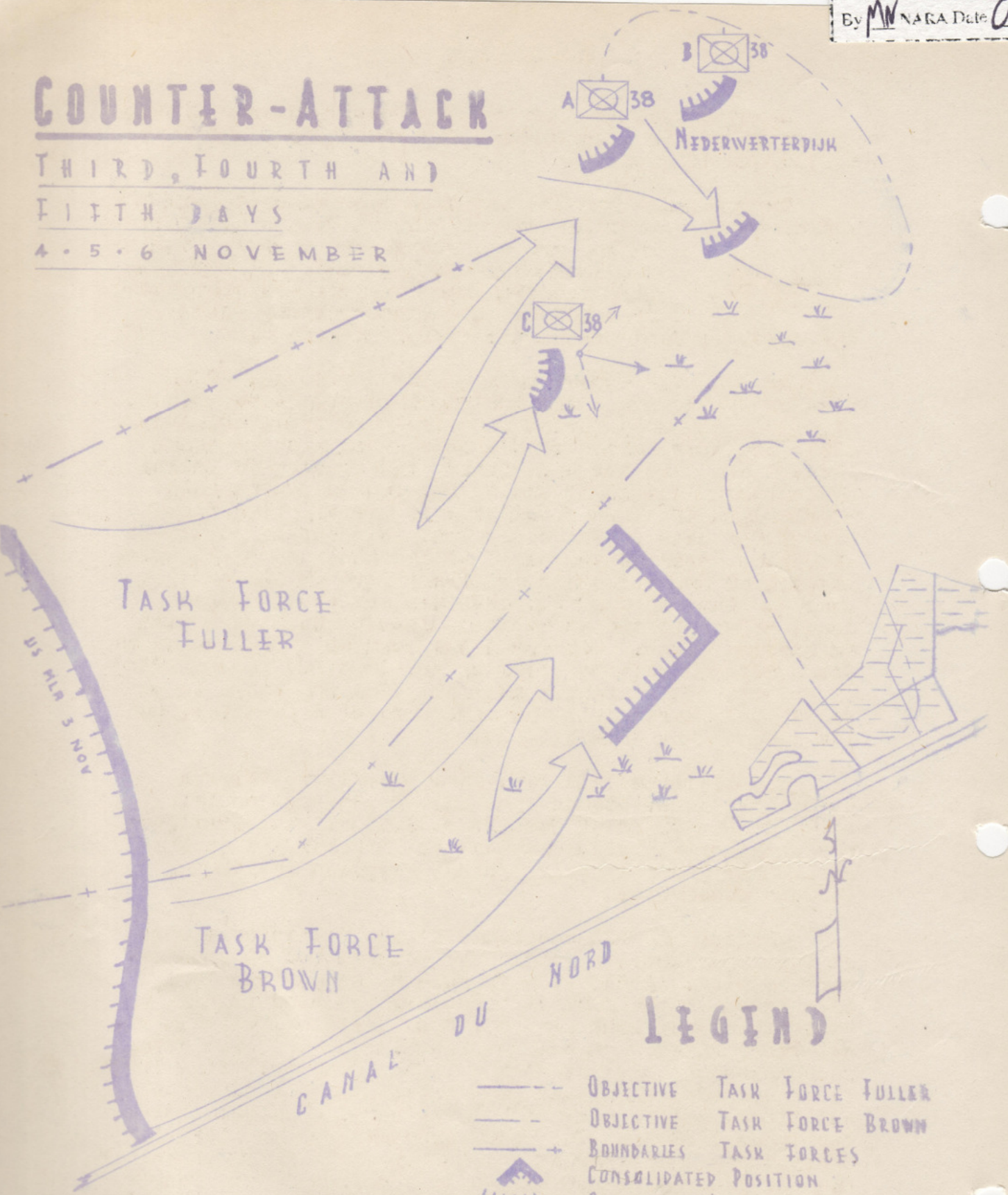
Assembly of the forces was slowed by the mines and by the necessity of gathering in platoons from widely separated areas, but at 1505 TF Fuller was ready to move and at 1550 TF Brown began the advance. Both forces made small gains before the order was given to button up for the night.

Meanwhile the 33d Engineers had erected in five hours a second bridge across the Bois le Duc canal. This new bridge considerably shortened the lines of supply and communication from the division to the task forces. Reconnaissance troops of the 814 TD's patrolling the left flank of the CCA sector reported enemy strongpoints in the bogs to the west of their positions approximately abreast of the advancing troops. (92)

COUNTER-ATTACK

THIRD, FOURTH AND FIFTH DAYS

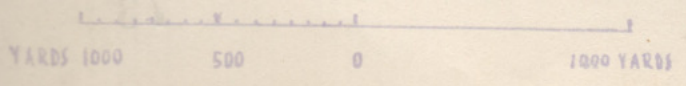
4 - 5 - 6 NOVEMBER



LEGEND

- OBJECTIVE TASK FORCE FULLER
- OBJECTIVE TASK FORCE BROWN
- + BOUNDARIES TASK FORCES
- CONSOLIDATED POSITION
- COMPANY POSITIONS
- INUNDAED AREAS
- SWAMP

SCALE



S E C R E T

Enemy casualties for the day were unknown. Eight prisoners of war were taken. Our casualties were five killed and 46 wounded.

During the night the 23d AIBn was detached from CCR and moved to positions west of Bois le Duc to be prepared to support the attack the next day should its assistance be required. At the same time the 87th Ren Squadron was relieved from CCR to establish security along the canal du Nord behind the advancing forces.

At 0645 the attack to the east continued. The mission was to seize the intermediate objective, secure it, and await corps order to attack the final objective. (93) The task forces in operation remained the same. Phase lines were set up. During the morning TF Fuller encountered only light artillery, but on the exposed right flank TF Brown received considerable fire from across the canal. The enemy from well dug-in positions along the banks of the canal placed observed small arms, mortar, 88 mm, and other artillery fire on our advancing forces. Company C of the 48th was completely pinned down and was forced to withdraw leaving Company A with an exposed flank. Company A had been able to advance to its positions only by crawling the last 300 yards. (94) TF Fuller, with infantry still leading and tanks in general support, soon ran into the same kind of opposition, and its advance was also held up.

The division laid down heavy artillery fire on enemy positions, at one time firing 116 guns on the woods to the front of Task Force Fuller. The artillery was considerably reinforced by the British who at the request of General Hasbrough had supplied additional forward observers.

During the afternoon the attack continued slowly as the enemy artillery fire was neutralized by counter-battery fire. About 1400 TF Fuller encountered enemy opposition in the form of three machine guns in the vicinity of the high ground at the final objective. The artillery fired on these positions. Contact with the reconnaissance company of the 814th TD's, providing left flank security along the peat bogs, was lost temporarily, and the advance again was held up until a patrol reestablished liaison. The task force was on the alert for a potential enemy thrust between the left flank of Fuller and the reconnaissance screen in the bogs. This danger was increased with the indication of an enemy strongpoint, noticed in the form of fresh digging, to the west of a woods near the Task Force Fuller objective. The advance was halted for the night slightly beyond the third phase line.

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One air mission was flown against enemy tanks in the vicinity of Canal du Nord. Three fires were observed.

In preparation for the final assault on the Meijel area, which had been converted into an enemy strongpoint, the division issued operation instructions at 041700A. The capture of the corps objective was to be effected by a coordinated attack at 050730A. The 15 Scottish was to attack to seize that portion of the corps objective in its zone. The 7th Armored was to attack after 050900 to secure the area to the south of Meijel. CCA was to seize the final objective and secure the north bank of the Nord Canal. CCR was to assure the security of the Canal du Nord progressively as the north bank was cleared. (95) For this latter task the 87th Rcn was attached to CCR.

The presence of considerable numbers of anti-personnel and vehicle mines in the vicinity of Ospel-Kreijel-Budschop and at other scattered places had made progress of supplies and troops a slow operation. Engineers were immediately put to work, but due to the vast numbers of trails the job was a difficult one. A small number of the trails were used for transport purposes. To insure a flow of supplies to the area additional bridges were to be built across the canal at the north division boundary, and roads were to be maintained by combat commands.

The CCA commander decided to have TF Brown hold the right flank from dug-in positions about 1000 yards north of the canal in a line which tied in to the swampy area in the vicinity of 6704. TF Fuller was to continue the advance and seize the intermediate objective on the high ground, and then swing to the south and work to the canal and the final division objective. Company A of the 48th AIBn was to follow along and drop outposts who would dig in and protect the right flank of TF Fuller, and would cover with cross-fire the low ground leading up to the swamp to which TF Brown had tied in its left flank.

During the night TF Brown dug into the defensive positions indicated, and the next morning found themselves subjected to very heavy observed artillery, anti-tank, small arms, and mortar fire from south of the canal. TF Fuller, with three companies of the 38th AIBn on line and the tanks and TD's in the rear in reserve, moved toward the high ground from which three enemy machine guns had been observed the previous day. Company B on the left flank with Company A in the center was to swing around the flank while Company C with a machine gun platoon and the reconnaissance section was to lay down a

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base of fire from the vicinity of 069050. Company B was able to maneuver around the flank of high ground and occupy its section of the intermediate objective. Company A in the center ran into many mines and was considerably slowed up. Company C was running into undetermined enemy resistance from the woods to its front, including some machine gun fire. A patrol of three men was sent out to determine the extent of the resistance. When the patrol did not return after several hours the company commander called for smoke and artillery fire on the woods in an attempt to relieve the patrol from the fire pinning it down.

By 1300 word from the 15 Scottish Division on the left indicated that its attack on Meijel had been slowed down with the loss of 23 tanks hit or bogged down and that it was consolidating for the day. The commanding general of the 15 Scottish recommended that the assault on the objective be postponed until a coordinated attack could be resumed once more. (96) In view of the slow progress made during the day due to mine fields, heavy artillery, mortar and machine gun fire, and enemy ground resistance, the division directed that the attack on the final objective would be on division order.

Losses for the day were one tank, one armored car, and one jeep. Estimated personnel losses were two killed, 17 wounded, and one missing. Two enemy wounded were known.

During the night, the 23d AIBn took over the defensive positions held by the 48th AIBn, while the 48th Fifth day AIBn took over the reinforcing positions in the CCR sector. Relief of the 48th AIBn was completed at 0445.

During the day the division generally consolidated its positions, awaiting word from the 15 Scottish Division on the progress of its attack toward Meijel. Task Force Fuller advanced slightly on the high ground to its front, but was held up considerably by mines covered by small arms fire. Sporadic enemy artillery and mortar fire were received.

CONCLUSION OF THE OPERATION

On 6 November the 7th Armored Division was informed that it was to be relieved in the Venlo bridgehead sector by the 15 Scottish and 51 British Highland Division. The mission of the 7th Armored had been successfully carried out; the enemy had been contained along a wide front

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for sufficient time to allow the British units to clear out the Scheldt Estuary to the Meas River. When the enemy had attacked along the thinly-held front, the 7th Armored had contained him until reinforcements could be sent. With the conclusion of the western Holland campaign, units were free for regrouping for the next push on the road to Berlin. The 7th Armored Division was able to leave the British Second Army and return to the U.S. Ninth Army with the feeling of a job well done. (97)

Relief of elements of the 7th Armored Division was completed during the night 7-8 November, and at 080600A responsibility for the canal sector passed to the 15 Scottish and the 51 British Highland Division.

NOTES

1. FO No. 13, 7th Armored Division, 4 October 1944.
2. Ibid.
3. Intelligence Summary, 8 (British) Corps, 1 November 1944.
4. Ibid.
5. After Action Report, 87th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron Mechanized, 31 October 1944.
6. G-2 Journal, 7th Armored Division, 26 October 1944.
7. After Action Report, 7th Armored Division, 1-31 October 1944.
8. After Action Report, 87th Ren., 1-31 October 1944.
The defenders reported the enemy appeared drunk or doped as they attacked.
9. For detailed defense scheme see attached aerial mosaic.
10. See Appendix A for details of this attack.
11. Capt. Slade, Major Cannon, Major Hiland, Capt. Wells to Lt. Merriam, 31 Oct. 44.
12. When American troops later reoccupied this area the grave of the platoon leader was discovered. Dutch civilians were arrested who had shown the Germans where our men had been hidden for three days.

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13. According to G-2 initial crossings were made in assault boats.
14. Lt. Colonel Boylan to Lt. Merriam, 1 November 1944.
15. Capt. Slade to Lt. Merriam, 7 November 1944.
16. After Action Report, 87th Rcn, 1-31 October 1944.
17. Major Cannon to Lt. Merriam, 31 October 1944.
18. Capt. Rau, Troop D, 87th Rcn, to Lt. Merriam, 1 November 1944. The cavalry commander was S/Sgt. Stanley Merrick, killed the next day. The gunner was T/5 Leslie Clark.
19. G-3 Journal, 27 October 44; Capt. Rau to Lt. Merriam, 31 October 1944.
20. After Action Report, 17th Tank Battalion, 1-31 October 1944.
21. Capt. Vogelsang, Company B, 48th Armored Infantry Battalion, to Lt. Merriam, 9 November 1944.
22. Despite the knowledge that the 87th was to withdraw through B and C companies of the 48th, the sight of this rearward movement created an apprehension in the minds of the infantry men which evidenced itself in a lack of aggressiveness. Report of C.O., CCB, to the commanding general, 13 November 1944.
23. Capt. Vogelsang to Lt. Merriam, 9 November 1944.
24. Lt. Wells, Company A, 48th Armored Infantry Battalion, to Lt. Merriam, 9 November 1944.
25. Lt. Wells to Lt. Merriam, 9 November 1944. During this action one sergeant fired four rounds with a bazooka at a Tiger tank. He hit the tank each time but couldn't stop it. Frontal fire at Tigers did not prove effective above 100 yards range.
26. Lt. Wells to Lt. Merriam 9 November 1944.
27. After Action Report, 87th Rcn., 1-31 October 1944; Lt. Webb to Lt. Merriam, 9 November 1944.
28. Many tanks identified at the time as Tigers turned out upon subsequent investigation to be Mk IV's or MK V's (Panthers).

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- 29. Capt. Rau to Lt. Merriam, 31 October 1944. Pvt. David E. Spangler, D Troop, 87th Rcn, was cut off from his unit at the time of the attack on Neerkent. For several hours he lay in a ditch along the road. During this period, he counted 20 enemy tanks going by his place of concealment.
- 30. After Action Report, 17th Tk Bn, 1-31 October 1944.
- 31. After Action Report, 814th Tank Destroyer Battalion 1-31 October 1944.
- 32. After Action Report, 87th Rcn, 1-31 October 1944.
- 33. G-2 Periodic Report, 7th Armored Division, 27 October 1944.
- 34. Ibid. Units identified on the division front prior to 27 October included 15th L/W Fortress Bn, Para Lehr Regiment, Hubner Para Regiment, 1st Bn Grostehl Para Regiment, 1st Bn Menzel Para Regiment.
- 35. General Hasbrouck to Lt. Merriam, 14 November 1944.
- 36. After Action Report, 814th TD, 1-31 October 1944.
- 37. Major Lohse, S-3, 31st Tank Battalion to Lt. Merriam, 4 November 1944.
- 38. Lt. George A. Taylor, Company B 23rd AIBn, to Lt. Merriam, 11 November 1944.
- 39. Lt. Wells, Company A 48th AIBn, to Lt. Merriam, 10 November 1944. Five men became dazed and got out of the foxholes to surrender. Lt. Wells was forced to get them down again by strong language and pleading. These men were spotted by the Germans, and the fire became heavier than ever.
- 40. It was the unanimous agreement that the air support offered by the RAF was excellent. Officers time and again expressed the sentiment that despite occasional strafings of our own troops by the planes, and regardless of the results of the attacks, the very presence of the aircraft was a tremendous boost to the morale of the fighting troops. (Lt. Col. Rhea and assembled officers, Lt. Wells to Lt. Merriam.) In the mission against the tanks despite the fact that one man was killed by a smoke shell which landed on his head, the plane attack was a great morale booster for the men.

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- 41. Lts. Webb, Johnson, Company C, 48th AIBn to Lt. Merriam, 9 November 1944.
- 42. After Action Report, 814th TD, 1-31 October 1944.
- 43. Major Lohse, S-3 31st Tk Bn to Lt. Merriam, 4 November 1944.
- 44. General Hasbrouck to Lt. Merriam, 14 November 1944.
- 45. G-1 Journal, 7th Armored Division 28 October 1944.
- 46. G-3 air to Lt. Merriam, 28 October 1944. G-3 air described the ground alert system as being very effective, with 30 minutes required from alert to target.
- 47. G-2 Periodic Report, 7th Armored Division, 28 October 1944.
- 48. Intelligence Summary, 8 (British) Corps, 1 November 1944.
- 49. Ibid.; Major New, Ass't G-2, to Lt. Merriam.
- 50. Lt. Webb, Lt. Wells to Lt. Merriam, 4 November 1944.
- 51. Capt. Vogelsang, Company B 48th AIBn Lt. Wells Company, C 48th AIBn, 8-10 November 1944.
- 52. S-3 Journal, Combat Command B, 28 October 1944.
- 53. Lt. Col. Rhea, C.O. 23rd AIBn, to Lt. Merriam, 9 November 1944.
- 54. Lt. Taylor, Company B 23rd AIBn, to Lt. Merriam, 10 November 1944.
- 55. One medic, in a peep, intent on getting a casualty to an aid station followed this column nearly all the way into Liesel before being discovered and fired upon.
- 56. General Hasbrouck to Lt. Merriam, 1 November 1944. Subsequently cleats were added to our medium tanks. These cleats are said to reduce ground pressure by 17 to 19 percent.
- 57. After Action Report, 814th TD, 1-31 October 1944.
- 58. Lts. Webb and Johnson, Company A 48th AIBn, to Lt. Merriam, 8 November 1944.

59. Lt. Webb had a particularly difficult time in the reorganization of his platoon because he was a replacement officer recently arrived, and was not familiar with his men nor they with him.
60. Capt. Vogelsang to Lt. Merriam, 9 November 1944.
61. Ibid.
62. After Action Report, 87th Rcn, 1-31 October 1944.
63. Major Frazier to Lt. Merriam, 10 November 1944.
64. Of interest was the surrender of two Germans to the British 30 October because they couldn't face our tank fire another day.
65. In this engagement troops of the 23rd AIBn encountered for the first time a weapon which they described as a gun which shot an oil or jelly petrol. As described by Lt. Joseph Zang, Battalion Motor Officer, and his platoon sergeant, who viewed the weapon through binoculars at from 600 to 700 yards range, the weapon at first appeared to be an 88 mm gun towed by another 88 mm gun. On closer examination it became apparent that a tracked vehicle, which the lieutenant likened to the tractors which tow our 240 mm guns, was towing a gun mounted on a wheeled carriage. Both men said the gun appeared to be larger than the 88 mm. Evidence of this was offered when attempts to hide it behind a building were unsuccessful because the barrel extended beyond the building. When the weapon was fired it made a screeching noise, like a plank being ripped loose from nails or like chalk scratch on a blackboard. No flame was observed while the projectile was in flight, but when it hit it was as if some gasoline had been poured on the ground and lit. A huge flame immediately burst out.
The weapon was brought into position in the company of four tanks. A group of approximately 12 men were around the gun, but it was not apparent whether the men were the crew of the gun. Two shots were fired while the men were observing. One shot hit a building, and the building immediately burst into flame. The other hit a haystack about 25 to 50 yards from the sergeant. The sergeant said he observed no shrapnel effect.
66. Lt. Taylor, Company B 23rd AIBn, to Lt. Merriam, 9 November 1944. The artillery forward observer was credited with a large part of the success in the defense of this position.

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- 67. After Action Report, 814th TD, 1-31 October 1944.
- 68. General Hasbrouck to Lt. Merriam, 13 November 1944.
- 69. Ibid.
- 70. Major Lohse to Lt. Merriam, 3 November 1944.
- 71. Lt. Col. Rhea, Battalion Commander, 23rd AIBn to Lt. Merriam, 11 November 1944.
- 72. General Hasbrouck to Lt. Merriam, 13 November 1944.
- 73. Major Frazier to Lt. Merriam, 9 November 1944.
- 74. General Hasbrouck to Lt. Merriam, 13 November 1944.
- 75. G-1 Journal, 7th Armored Division, 29 October 1944. Many of our men were reported missing due to the confusion. A large number of them subsequently rejoined their units.
- 76. Air support for the day consisted of eight missions in addition to corps missions which knocked out all of the enemy bridgeheads across the canals.
- 77. G-2 Periodic Report, PW report.
- 78. See attached letter General Dempsey to General Hasbrouck, Appendix B.
- 79. G-4 Report, 7th Armored Division.
- 80. G-2 Periodic Report, 7th Armored Division, 29 October 1944.
- 81. Ibid; 30 October 1944.
- 82. Destruction of the enemy footbridge across the Wessom canal was accomplished by a daring squad of engineers from B Company 33d Engineers. The following account of the foray was given by Captain Hochberg, CO Company B, 53rd Armored Engineers.
At 310030 the company received orders to blow up the bridge. The platoon leader, Lt. Ralph S. Favor, moved the squad to an assembly area in the vicinity of the bridge. T/5 George W. Schultz, 34192557 and Pvt. Judson P. Turner, 31106460, left the squad and made their way toward the bridge. In the movement to the bridge noises attracted the attention of the Germans on the bridge, and the enemy opened fire with a light machine gun. But Cpl. Schultz and Pvt.

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Turner continued to work their way forward until they were actually under the bridge. A charge with a fuze delay igniter was set under the bridge while the Germans were still firing from above at the suspected location of the squad. The charge was set and Schultz and Turner returned to the squad assembly area. An artillery concentration was brought down simultaneously with the explosion. Considerable German fire was received from along the canal, but the entire squad escaped without injury. Upon investigation the next day a patrol discovered that the bridge was totally destroyed, and six dead Germans and a wrecked machine gun were seen in the debris.

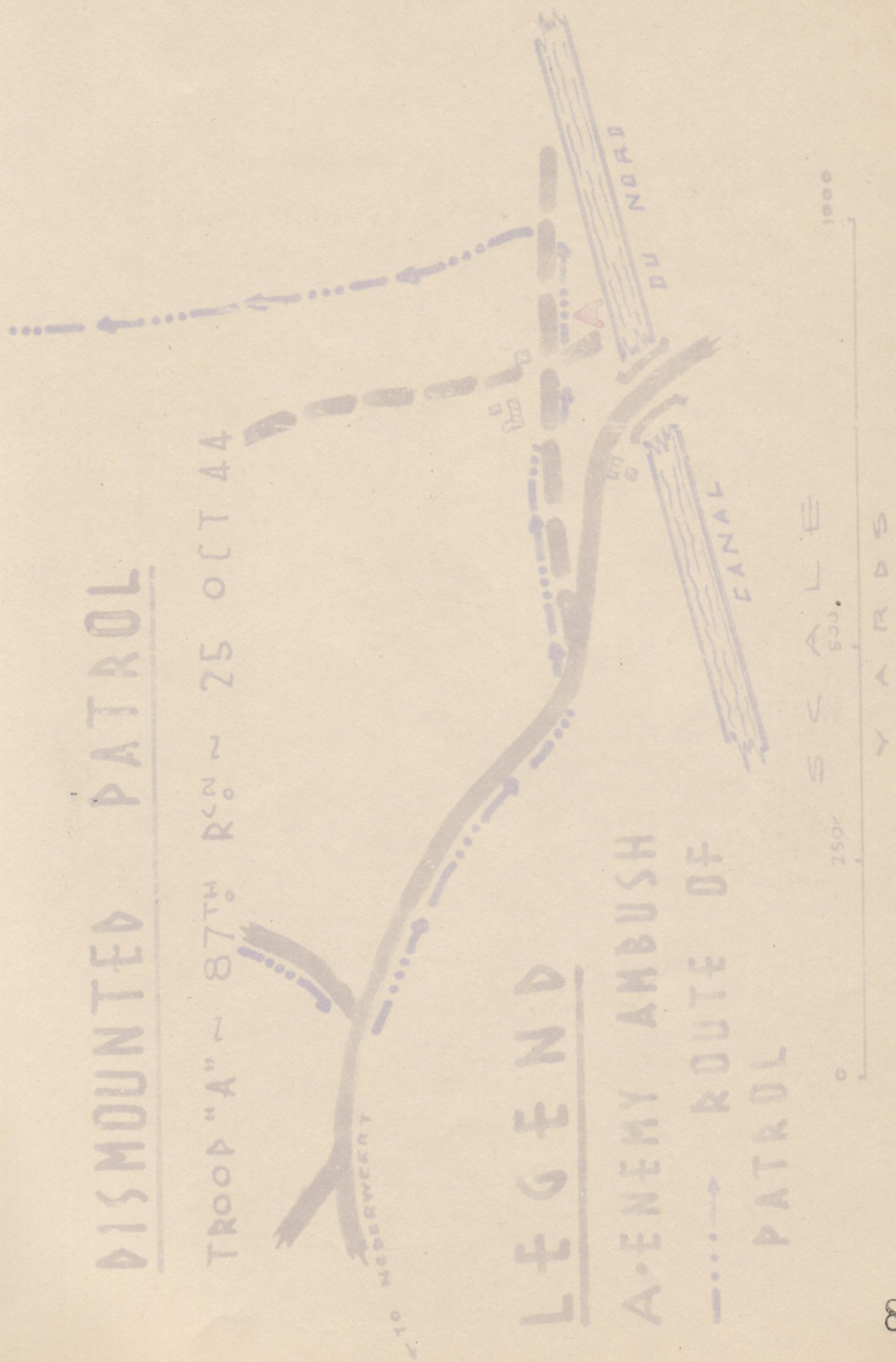
- 83. Summary of conversation between Generals O'Conner and Silvester, 30 October. 1944.
- 84. Operations Instructions, 7th AD, 1 November 1944.
- 85. Col. Hermann was a 1st Lieutenant at the time of the invasion of Crete. He performed several heroic acts in that operation for which he received high awards from the German army. Subsequently he was in charge of the forces which freed Mussolini after the capitulation of Italy.
But the fighting qualities of Col. Hermann's men were not like his original paratroopers. As an example two half companies or a total of 70 men attacked our positions along the east banks of the Bois le Duc on 31 October with the apparent intent of removing our small foothold remaining on the east bank. At this time the sector was outposted by CCA, Companies A of the 38th AIBn, C of the 40th Tk Bn, and A of the 87th Ren. Our forces established a narrow line running parallel to the Bois le Duc, and the enemy attacked in waves of about 25 men. One group was brought under heavy tank fire and surrendered almost to a man. A second group was subjected to tank and artillery fire and was almost completely eliminated. The third group was either captured or killed. Some few managed to escape to the south.
- 86. G-1 Report, 7th Armored Division, 1 November 1944.
- 87. Major Whalen, S-3 CCA, said to Lt. Merriam on 4 November 1944 that tanks weren't doing anything in this operation (2-7 Nov.) except getting bogged down.
- 88. General Hasbrouck to Lt. Merriam, 3 November 1944.

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- 89. Conversation at TF Fuller CP, Lt. Merriam present, 2 November 1944.
- 90. Lt. Col. Fuller, CO 38th AIBn, to Lt. Merriam.
- 91. Lt. Wells, Company A 48th AIBn, to Lt. Merriam 9 November 1944. This platoon was caught by enemy fire and was able to extricate itself only after a strong artillery concentration had been placed on the enemy.
- 92. G-3 Journal 7th Armored Division 3 November 1944.
- 93. Operations Instructions, 7th Armored Division, 3 November 1944.
- 94. Lt. Webb, Company C, 48th AIBn, to Lt. Merriam, 9 November 1944.
- 95. Operations Instructions, 7th Armored Division 041700A November 1944.
- 96. G-3 Journal, 7th Armored Division, 6 November 1944.
- 97. Attached letters from Commanding Generals, British Second Army and 8 (British) Corps, testify to the importance of the holding action of the 7th Armored Division. See Appendix B & C.

DISMOUNTED PATROL

TROOP "A" ~ 87TH R^{GN} ~ 25 OCT 44



S E C R E T

APPENDIX A

THE GERMAN THRUST AT NEDERWEERT

27-30 October

Troop A of the 87th Reconnaissance Squadron was assigned an 8,000 yard frontage in the 7th Armored Division sector of the 8 (British) Corps during the latter weeks of October when the main effort of the British Second Army was being expended in the Scheldt Estuary zone.

Like the other troops of the 87th Ren, Troop A was charged with the maintenance of a counter-reconnaissance screen along a canal line, the other side of which was held by the enemy from dug-in positions. The Troop A zone ran from the canal junction south of Nederweert east along the Canal du Nord to a small settlement called Stokers Horst. The defense consisted of a series of outposts of six men, each with a light machine gun, and in some cases a mortar. The points were spaced 500 to 800 yards apart and were from 1000 to 1500 yards to the north of the canal line.

The enemy had been active in the Troop A sector for some days prior to the general attack on 27 October. Our forces had reason to believe that the enemy had positions, or at least observation posts, on the north side of the canal line. To probe the enemy defenses and to look for an observation post, a dismounted patrol of 12 men, led by Lt. George W. Monaghan, was sent south on 25 October. Lt. Monaghan split his patrol into two sections of six men each. The advanced section had small arms and a radio, and the rear section had a mortar and a machine gun. The patrol advanced down the road from Nederweert toward the canal and had reached a point near the canal at 630998 when a German patrol in ambush opened fire with a machine gun. The first section had advanced slightly beyond the line of fire of the machine gun when the initial burst was fired. All men immediately took to the ditch along the road. The second section was caught in the fire. The mortar crew rolled into the ditch, set up the gun, and was able to fire five rounds at the machine gun before a German mortar opened fire on them. No more rounds were fired by our mortar. The enemy machine gun and mortars continued their fire, and only one man of the second section was able to escape. In the meantime the first section, led by Lt. Monaghan, had found a small ditch in the middle of a beet field. The beet leaves hid the ditch, and by crawling up this slight defile for nearly 1000 yards they were able to reach the Kreijel-Waatskamp road and return to the CP.

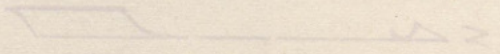
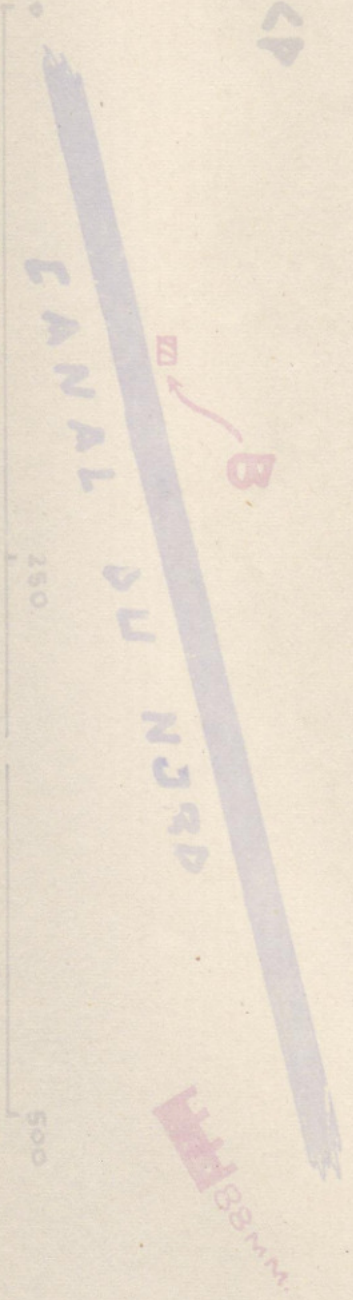
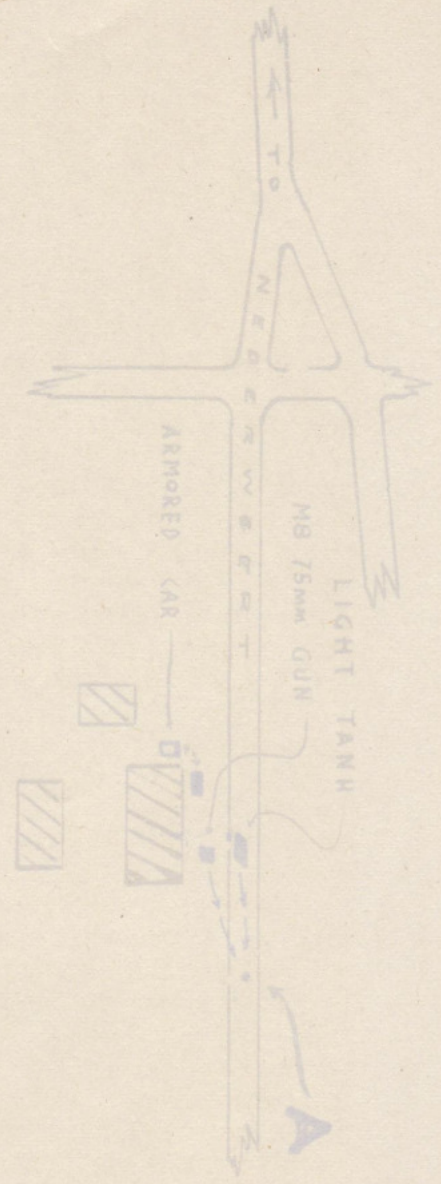
LEGEND

A. FIRING POSITION OF
TANK & ASSAULT
GUN.

B. ENEMY <P>

PATROL ACTION

Troop "A" ~ 87th Pcn
26 OCT 44



S E C R E T

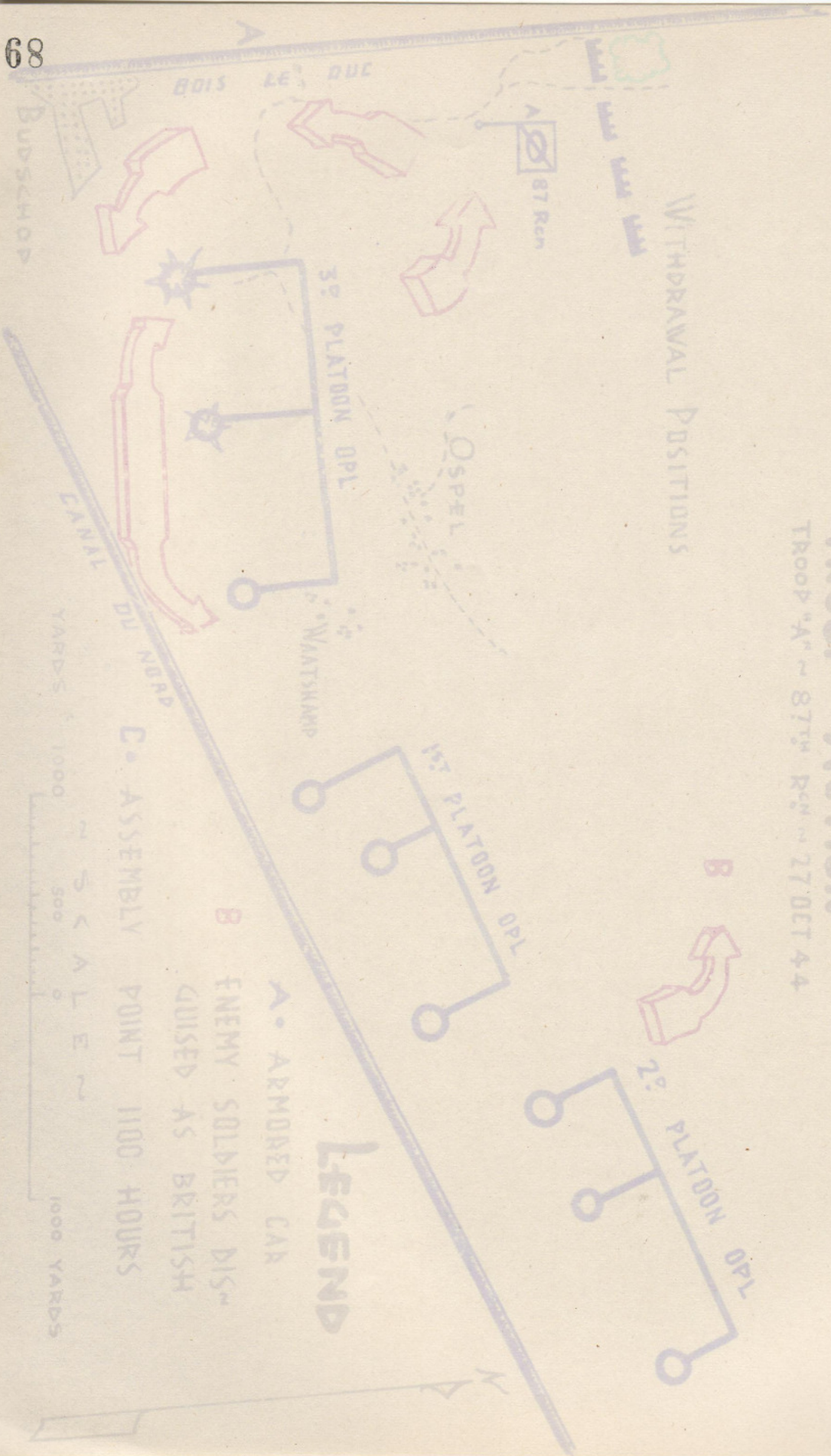
On the next day Troop A commander, Capt. John W. Wells, Jr., decided to dispatch another patrol to the same general vicinity to ascertain if possible the strength of the enemy on our side of the canal. Accordingly, Lt. Second Patrol Charles W. Rogers organized a patrol consisting of two armored cars, three light tanks, and an M8 75mm. assault gun. The patrol was halted behind some houses in Budschop while Lt. Rogers and two men made a dismounted reconnaissance of the enemy positions along the canal. Lt. Rogers watched a German officer inspect the enemy canal positions. He could see the officer question each man. Lt. Rogers withdrew from this position without engaging the enemy and continued the patrol along the road from Budschop to the east.

When the patrol reached a triangular fork in the road at 629003, the vehicles were once more halted behind the shelter of the buildings while Lt. Rogers made a second foot reconnaissance to attempt to locate the enemy CP. While looking around the corner of a house, he noticed four men enter a shack on the north bank of the canal about 500 yards to his front. On the chance that the shack was the enemy CP, Lt. Rogers immediately brought up his armored car, a light tank, and the assault gun, and hid them behind and beside the house. The armored car at the side of the house moved behind the shelter after an anti-tank gun opened fire on it. Lt. Rogers brought the gunners with him on foot as he moved around the side of the house. There, from behind some shrubs, he pointed out the target and presented his plan of action.

The assault gun was to draw out on the road beyond the house and open fire on the shack. The tank was to face down the road to the east, still behind the house, and guard against any possible enemy activity to the left flank. The assault gunner returned to his vehicle and the gun was moved into position. Four rounds were fired at the shack in rapid succession. One man was seen to run out of the shack. He was engaged by Lt. Rogers and two enlisted men, but the range was too extreme for their carbines, and the man escaped. On the fifth round, the assault gun jammed. The gun was immediately pulled back behind the house, and the tank, without any instructions, moved out to the identical position that the assault gun had occupied.

By this time, German gunners were zeroed in on the location. As soon as the tank moved into position a gun, presumed to be an 88mm opened up and scored a direct hit on the tank, killing two of the men and wounding the other two. About this time an enemy mortar shelled the

68



TROOP ACTION
TROOP "A" ~ 87th Rcn ~ 27 OCT 44

LEGEND

- A • ARMORED CAR
- B ENEMY SOLDIERS DISGUISED AS BRITISH

C • ASSEMBLY POINT 1100 HOURS

YARDS
1000
500
1000

S E C R E T

house. The wounded men were rescued from the tank and placed in the armored car. The armored car was facing east, and in order to turn it was necessary to back into the position from which the car had been moved because of the anti-tank fire. Fortunately, the enemy did not fire again, and Lt. Rogers led the assault gun and the rest of the patrol out of the vicinity. The shack and three of its occupants had been destroyed.

On the morning of 27 October at about 0645, guards at troop headquarters (622021) noticed a German patrol of 15 to 20 men in a field to the east. Enemy Probe The headquarters was alerted, and the combined fire of the personnel located there turned the German patrol to the south where they were taken under fire by the maintenance armored car on the west side of the canal and the right flank outpost of the third platoon. At the same time, the third platoon discovered about 150 men to their front. They were surrounded on three sides. Those who could withdrew. None of the right outpost of the third platoon escaped, but two men in the center outpost and all six in the left outpost of the platoon were successful in getting through the German ring. One of the men came through the enemy positions in the bottom of a cart driven by a Dutch civilian. At this time the left flank platoon was attacked by twenty dismounted men. The platoon outposts placed considerable mortar and machine gun fire on the Germans advancing in a wave, and the enemy was held back.

In the second platoon zone no enemy attacked, but recognizing the serious situation, the platoon leader Lt. McMillan, sent back two men for assistance. However, when Troop C on the left flank of Troop A withdrew from its positions after the attack on Meijel, it became apparent that a withdrawal to shorten the lines was necessary. Capt. Wells gave orders for the withdrawal to an assembly area vicinity of 615042. The first and third platoons were to withdraw together, but the first platoon leader started ahead on his own. During this withdrawal, Lt. McMillan observed some men he identified as British, and he stood up to talk with them. They were Germans, and the lieutenant was killed. A fire fight ensued, and the enemy was driven back.

By 1100, the first and second platoons and the remainder of the third platoon had assembled at the designated point. The troop headquarters was at the bridge site, vicinity 613055. Capt. Wells ordered this force of approximately 40 men to move south to recontact the enemy. The force moved south along the canal to the

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woods at 618028. A patrol moving ahead of the main body discovered enemy activity to the south of the woods. The captain decided to establish a line along the south edge of the woods running east for a distance of about 500 yards. Four positions were set up and dug in. From this position, our forces had excellent observation of the enemy and were able to bring down accurate artillery fire. During the afternoon several enemy attempts were made to organize for an attack, but each time our artillery fire broke up the formation.

During the night, enemy activity was limited to artillery and mortar fire. Our forces held their four points. At 0200, one officer and 23 men of the 1st Platoon, Company A, 38th Armored Infantry Battalion arrived to reinforce Troop A. CCA issued orders for the entire force to attack to the south on the morning of 28 October and secure the Horik road from the canal to the east, including Horik. The force was divided into nine patrols, each consisting of about six men. Three machine guns were available for the entire group. At 0530, the advance began. No opposition was encountered, and by 0600 the road had been secured. Due to the limited number of men, it was once again necessary to set up a series of outposts, and each of the nine patrols dug in along the road or occupied buildings.

The enemy engaged our positions as soon as he discovered them, and heavy artillery and mortar fire were brought to bear. He also immediately began to infiltrate between our positions. By 0715 all of the outposts with the exception of two had been cut off by the enemy. The remaining two withdrew to their original positions along the line east from the woods.

Enemy attempts to storm the strongpoints themselves were unsuccessful. The flat terrain offered excellent fields of fire for our machine guns and riflemen, but the positions were untenable. By this time a company of medium tanks from the 40th Tank Battalion, which had been dispatched by the commanding officer of CCA to the area the previous afternoon, was across the canal. Several attempts were made by the tanks during the day to relieve the pressure on the isolated elements, but each time the enemy artillery fire drove them back to covered positions.

In Horik itself Lt. Lee A. Mestas, the second platoon leader, found himself in an uncomfortable position. He was established with his patrol and a machine gun in one house, while the enemy was in a second house about 60 yards away with their machine gun. Neither force was able to attack the other because of the open ground in

-44-

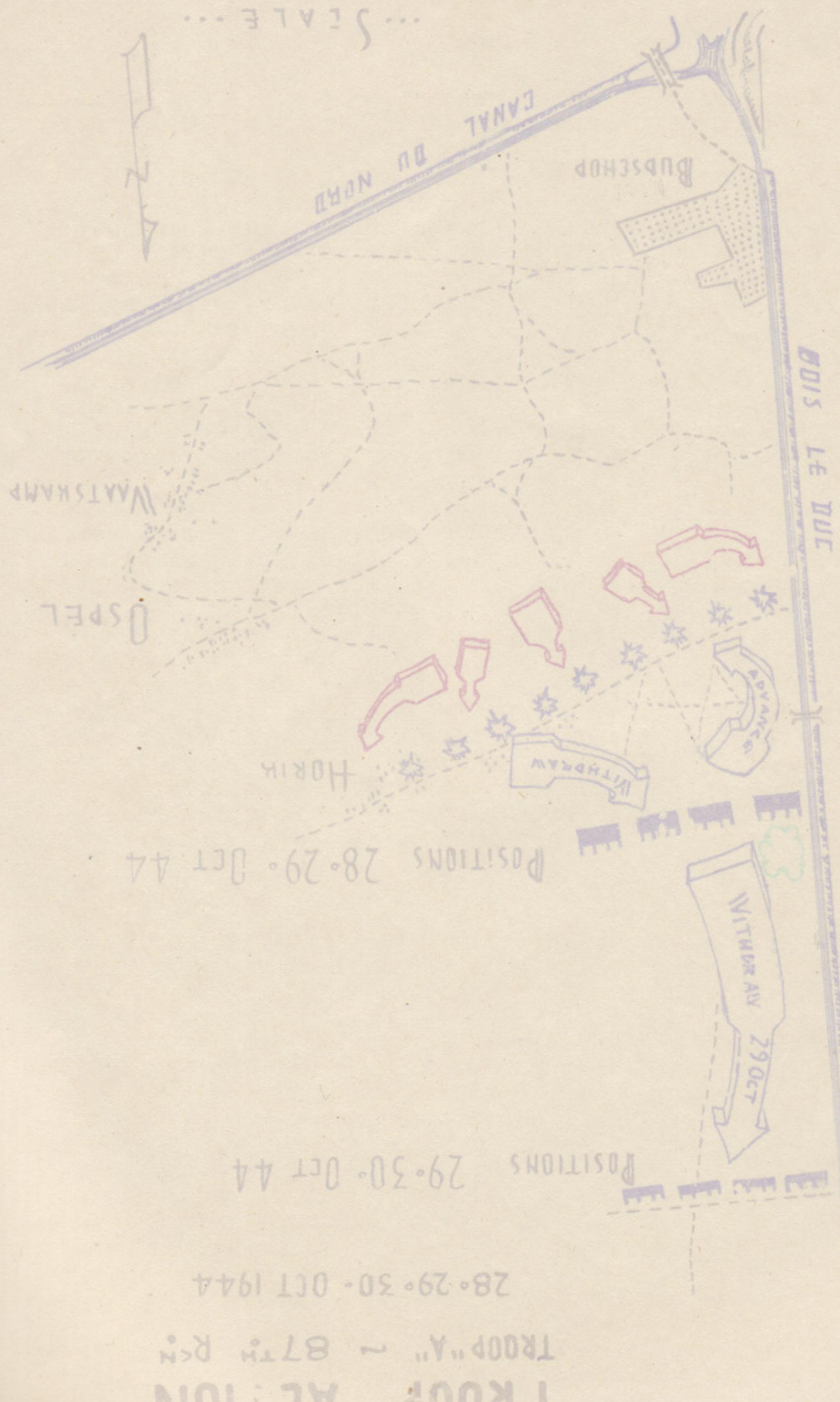
S E C R E T

91

1000 YARDS 500 0 500 1000 YARDS

92

SCALE



TRUMP ACTION
TROOP "A" - 87th RCT

28-29-30 OCT 1944

POSITIONS 29-30 OCT 44

POSITIONS 28-29 OCT 44

S E C R E T

between. Finally at dusk Capt. Nelson, the tank commander, sent the tanks forward under the protection of a very heavy artillery concentration to bring back the isolated units. As the concentration was fired, the tanks advanced and picked up the men in the forward positions. Many of the men rode on the outside of the tanks. Lt. Mestas' platoon was in the most difficult position and presented the hardest problem of extrication. The tanks approached to within 30 yards of his position. Under cover of the dusk and a neighboring building, the men were able to crawl to the waiting tanks. Lt. Mestas mounted one tank and hung on the outside. When the tank reached the rear area, the lieutenant dismounted. The tank hatch was opened and seven men from his platoon, and the five man crew tumbled from the inside.

Upon withdrawal the troops were set up along the line occupied during the previous afternoon, but the posts were now established for a distance of 1,000 yards east of the Bois le Duc Canal. This line was held throughout the night of the 28th, and the next day. During the next day repeated enemy attempts to attack were broken up. Our artillery fired concentrations for the entire front. These concentrations were adjusted by the forward platoon leaders each time the Germans came up in columns and deployed. The Germans were not able to get within 300 yards of our positions. However, as the enemy strength built up, it appeared that the extended line with the small number of troops was dangerous, and consequently, during the night a new line was set up to the rear along the road running east from the canal at 616044.

During 30 October, activity was limited to patrolling. One patrol of three men was cut off by the Germans and either killed or captured, and another ran into a machine gun about 75 yards to its front. The men in the latter patrol crawled up a ditch filled with water and returned to their position. During the afternoon the platoon of infantry was withdrawn from the line, leaving a gap. Tank destroyers were sent down to assist the Ren forces, and they were successful in stopping a patrol of about 20 Germans which attempted to infiltrate through the gap. During the afternoon a large patrol consisting of troops of the 15 Scottish Division Reconnaissance unit and Troop A assault guns was sent to clean out the peat works to the east and slightly north of the defense line. The Germans had infiltrated behind our positions and were menacing us from the rear. The site was cleaned out at a cost to the enemy of ten dead and five captured.

Preparations were made by division for an attack to the south on 31 October, and during the night of 30 October,

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Troop A was withdrawn from the zone east of the canal after four days of dogged fighting against an enemy force estimated to be a battalion of the Hermann Paratroop Regiment.

COMBAT PATROL
6 November 1944

On 5 November 1944, Lieutenant Colonel Samuel T. McDowell summoned 1st Lieutenant Dalton J. Thibodeaux to 3d Battalion Headquarters, 117th Infantry, and ordered him to prepare nine men of the 2d Platoon, Company K, for a reconnaissance patrol in the Mariadorf area. The colonel, in company with the S-3, Captain Wayne Culp, and the S-2, 1st Lt. John D. Barabaz, directed Lt. Thibodeaux to reconnoiter the enemy defenses in the regimental sector that night, determine how thoroughly they were dug in, and ascertain to what extent they were prepared for an attack. This information was desired either to substantiate or prove untrue a report of a prisoner of war captured earlier in the day that the enemy had withdrawn in the sector.

A short time later, Colonel Walter M. Johnson, Regimental Commander, 117th Infantry, and the S-2, Major Warren C. Giles, gave the lieutenant a more specific briefing both on the mission and the territory to be investigated. Furnished with aerial photos to facilitate his daylight reconnaissance of the route he would cover that night, the lieutenant, accompanied by his platoon sergeant, Staff Sergeant Roy A. Bettes, who was to be second in command of the patrol, moved to a vantage point on the terrain and studied the ground over which the patrol was to operate.

Before an opportunity presented itself to orient completely the members of the patrol, Colonel Johnson

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C O N F I D E N T I A L

again called the lieutenant to his headquarters and told him to abandon the idea of a reconnaissance patrol. Higher headquarters had requested that on 6 November 1944 a 25-man combat patrol be formed to probe the enemy lines and capture a prisoner of war.

Lt. Thibodeaux, for tactical unity, formed his patrol from his 1st and 2d squads. Four men from his 3d squad, led by Sergeant Harry C. Farrington, were selected to act as rear guard; they were armed with rifles, a bazooka and a BAR. Ammunition loads for the riflemen consisted of two bandoleers and three fragmentation grenades, while the men armed with BARs carried nine full clips. This amounted to a total of 180 rounds of caliber 30 ammunition. Sgt. Farrington, who carried the bazooka in the rear protection detail, also had four rockets. Two men had an SCR 536 radio each. One aid man, Pfc. William L. Gussman, accompanied the patrol.

While arrangements were being made with the company through whose lines the patrol had to be guided, Lt. Thibodeaux gave his men preliminary instructions and warned them about the necessity of maintaining silence.

"Remember, fellows," he said, "if you're hit, grit your teeth and take it. One cry and we're all sunk. And another thing; no matter what happens, there won't be a single one of you left out there. I'll get you back some way."

C O N F I D E N T I A L

At 1910 the patrol moved to a break in the line of buildings in the village of Schaufenberg (A). Lt. Thibodeaux stationed a radio man there with the warning that he would receive only one transmission--the notification of the patrol's return. Pfc. Thomas Barry carried the radio that accompanied the unit.

It was necessary to form the men into a single file to pass through mine fields and trip flares that were installed by our troops in front of the lines. With Lt. Thibodeaux leading the way, the men, maintaining visual contact, negotiated this area without event. Once on the other side of the field, the patrol moved into a wedge formation, each wing composed of a complete squad. The rear guard remained at the center and slightly to the rear of the open end of the wedge.

Moving slowly and with extreme caution to lessen noise, the patrol worked its way to a point (B) 200 yards east of the mine field and 100 yards north of a slag pile (F). The men heard enemy voices and the movement of tracked vehicles in the vicinity of the slag pile, but since the area was heavily mined, they maintained the same formation and moved on as planned. At 2015 hours they reached the railroad embankment (C) that ran generally north and south some 1000 yards in front of our lines. This embankment, 20 feet high, was believed to be the Germans' first line of defense. Its slopes were very steep and as one patrol member said, "A guy would have to

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scramble on all fours to get up the thing."

The patrol dispersed along the friendly side of the embankment, and Lt. Thibodeaux, accompanied by Sgt. Bettes and Private Otis B. Barnett, crawled to the top of the bank and established a listening post. Sgt. Bettes, hearing the approach of what he believed to be an enemy patrol operating on the other side of the tracks, touched his platoon leader's arm, signalling the discovery.

"Visibility was so poor I couldn't tell the number of Germans in the patrol," stated Lt. Thibodeaux.

Since he had not penetrated the enemy lines far enough to accomplish his mission, the lieutenant decided that a fire fight at this time would defeat his purpose. So he permitted the Germans to move out of hearing.

Sliding back down the embankment, the three men then held a hurried consultation that was interrupted by Sgt. Bettes' discovery of an enemy trip wire attached to a booby trap. Lt. Thibodeaux tore a strip of white border from his map and marked the wire. Then, stationing himself at the marker, he guided his men around the trap, moving them toward the southwest along the friendly side of the embankment. Just a few minutes after the movement started, Sgt. Bettes located another trap which the lieutenant also marked.

"How the hell he found those things in the dark, I don't know," the lieutenant said later.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L

Once beyond the traps, the patrol again moved forward in wedge formation. When the lead man reached a position approximately 20 yards from an underpass (D), he heard enemy voices and halted. With Lt. Thibodeaux 10 yards behind him, Sgt. Bettles wriggled up to investigate.

"They must have picked us up at that point," stated the sergeant, "for they heaved a grenade that landed and exploded between me and Lt. Thibodeaux,"

Immediately all the men dispersed, endeavoring to run beyond grenade range. Before they got away, the Germans threw two more, one of which bounced off the arm of Pfc. Charlie B. Collier before exploding. No one was hurt, however, and the patrol reassembled some distance from the underpass and took up its formation.

Lt. Thibodeaux, realizing that it would now be impossible to penetrate further into enemy territory, led his men back towards their own lines. They had traversed some 200 yards on their return route when a flare caught them at (E) and they were forced to hit the ground. Since flares are often used to direct artillery and mortar fire, the patrol expected to be shelled. But after 10 seconds (which, according to the patrol leader, "seemed like 10 hours"), the light faded without fire being placed in the vicinity.

Moving now on the double, the men gained a position parallel to the slag pile where earlier in the evening they had heard the enemy. An automatic weapon opened

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up on them, and they hugged the earth. When the bullets stopped kicking up the dirt about them, they moved rapidly forward until they reached a point where fire from their own lines might be dangerous. Then the lieutenant instructed Pfc. Barry to warn the radio man at the point of departure that the patrol was returning. While friendly troops held their fire, Lt. Thibodeaux maneuvered his men in single file through the mine field and reported to Colonel Johnson at the regimental command post.

Note: This narrative was obtained by interviewing nine soldiers who were members of the patrol. The interview took place on 7 November 1944 at the CP, 2d Platoon, Company K, 117th Infantry. The men interviewed were:

- 1st. Lt. Dalton J. Thibodeaux, Patrol Leader.
- S/Sgt. Roy A. Bettles, Platoon Sergeant, 2d Platoon.
- Sgt. Sigmund Lavendowski, patrol member.
- Sgt. Harry C. Farrington, bazooka man, rear guard.
- Pfc. Lawrence H. Maylin, BAR man, rear guard.
- Pfc. William E. Pucky, rifleman.
- Pfc. Buel E. Hale, rifleman.
- Pfc. William L. Gussman, platoon aid man.
- Pfc. Thomas Barry, radio man.

MILITARY GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

On 13 October 1944, Military Government Detachment II-H2 was assigned the mission of governing Ubach, Palenberg, and Marienberg. This group of German villages may be treated as one city, for they are adjacent, their civil government was centralized, and most of the populace worked for the Carolus Magnus Coal Mine in Palenberg.

Government of Villages

The total normal population of the three villages was 7,800 people, of whom about 7,000 had left the area on German military evacuation order. At the time of American occupation, the actual number of inhabitants was approximately 850. Almost 100 of these were displaced persons from Russia, Italy, Poland, etc., and about 700 came from homes in neighboring cities which were endangered by the tactical situation. These latter people were termed "refugees" to differentiate them from displaced persons from other European nations. (1)

When the military government group entered the city, approximately 650 persons were living in a section of the Carolus Magnus Coal Mine that offered protection from bombing and shelling. The remainder of the population occupied the cellars of some of the homes in Palenberg. (2) As the tactical lines were pushed further east, numerous civilians emerged from the mines and cellars and moved into those houses not completely destroyed during the advance of the XIII Corps to the Roer. Eventually, the military government officer assigned the remainder of the populace to homes.

In late November, the movement of portions of the 2d Armored and 102d Infantry Divisions into the villages created difficulties. Frequently, civilians employed in the mines by day would return to their homes at night and find them occupied by American troops. Accordingly, after discussing the matter with troop commanders, the military government officer placed lists of authorized house occupants on the door of each dwelling. Even that was not successful and it was eventually found necessary to post "Off Limits" signs on the doors.

The actual administration of the villages was accomplished by civilians who had been investigated by the Counter Intelligence Corps and the military government officer. The military government team selected the officials to be in charge of the sections and maintained strict supervision over them. However, it endeavored to permit the continuance of administration as it existed prior to the advent of the Nazis. The burgermeister, Peter Esser, was recommended by local Catholic clergymen and physicians. He and his staff, which consisted of a police chief, city treasurer, and officials charged with

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city health, food supply, public welfare, and statistics, had occupied public positions prior to the Nazi government and were familiar with local problems.

All of these men were carefully instructed in their obligations to the military government team. They were required to furnish daily reports of their activities as well as any other information called for by the military government officer. An attempt was made to reduce contact between American team members and the civilians who were directed to conduct their affairs through public officials.

"Of all those civil cases arising," said Captain William H. Brooks, Chief of the Military Government Detachment in the villages, "the mayor handles about 90 percent and refers 10 percent to the military government team for decision. We make every effort to govern from the background." (3)

On entrance into the city, the military government officer instructed the burgermeister to continue to maintain, broaden, and make more reliable a census system. Under instruction and supervision, a careful card system was set up giving name, address, occupation, political affiliations, and other pertinent data of every civilian in the three towns. As other persons drifted back into the city, information concerning them was recorded and filed. Such a system was valuable to military intelligence and to those preparing rationing estimations for food and clothing.

The police force was composed of 28 civilians approved by the Counter Intelligence Corps. Besides being charged with normal police duties, these men prevented civilians from pillaging vacated homes. They were authorized to arrest any civilian looters, who were then tried by the MGO or the board established for that purpose. Persons apprehended by military police or Counter-Intelligence for violating Allied laws were tried by the same group. No serious violations occurred up to the time this report was made, which was approximately two months after the occupation. However, infractions normally considered minor, such as traveling from one German city to another without pass and being out after curfew hours, were dealt with severely. Curfew hours established for the city permitted no civilian, with the exception of specific local policemen, outside between 1700 and 0800 hours. From 0800 to 1700 hours, one person in each family was allowed to leave his assigned home once a day to procure food and water.

Public health was supervised closely by a doctor appointed for that purpose. He made daily reports of

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respiratory, venereal, and other diseases in the area, inspected children to determine if any epidemic was rising, and took steps to prevent an unusual or unexpected increase in rates of illnesses. Medical supplies, under the control of the military government officer, were adequate for the area. A sanitary official was also appointed and made responsible for the sanitary and sewage conditions of the city. One of his first jobs was to dispose of the large number of cattle, horses, and other livestock that had been killed during the battle.

Every attempt was made to make the populace self-sustaining so as not to require the army to issue anything for civilian consumption. By careful supervision and planning, it was found that all necessities of life could be made available from local sources. Food, medical supplies, and clothing were in the immediate area and could be obtained from village stores under military control.

A careful plan was set up by the military government detachment to assure an equitable distribution of the limited supply of food. Grain, potatoes, turnips, and cabbages were in nearby fields, and sufficient livestock was kept on adjacent farms to furnish an adequate supply of meat. Gathering parties, under the direction of one civilian, who carried a military government pass authorizing himself and his detail to be out during the day, collected the grain and vegetables. All food obtained from untenanted farms was turned into a warehouse and distributed by the mayor.

Any civilian who desired food requested it at the mayor's office. The request was investigated by the city police and if found legitimate, food was issued. Money derived from such sales went into a municipal fund to repay those persons from whose farms food was taken. A careful record was maintained of the number of bushels of potatoes, carts of cabbage, etc., that were gathered from every farm, and on the basis of these records, reimbursement was to be made to the farm owners on their return to the region. Limited loans were also made from this fund to civilians who requested it.

Food could be purchased by civilians from stores at which they were registered. Early in December the military government team issued ration cards which allowed purchases to be made based on the pre-occupation economy level. By late November the average caloric content of the adult civilian diet was 2,299, that of children 2,614, and that of employees of the local coal mine 3,800. (4) Specific items, such as milk or eggs, were rationed and distributed to children or adults who required them to maintain health.

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A board appointed from the mayor's staff set prices on articles. There appeared to be no lack of paper money among the German people, and so the natural economy did not suffer from the lack of purchasing power.

The physical aspect of the city, like most occupied German cities, was quite deplorable. As stated earlier, the homes in Palenberg were all damaged, some severely, some slightly. Roads were broken or spotted with shell craters. Water mains were frequently broken, and all other municipal utilities were affected by the ravages of war. Where repairs were necessary for military purposes, such as resurfacing roads or connecting water lines, the tactical unit in the immediate sector was charged with accomplishing the tasks. Where a public building was in need of repair or where a home's condition endangered civilians and required prompt attention, the work was done under municipal direction. In the latter case, necessary work was explained to the MGO and if he approved of it, the burgermeister appointed a labor group to accomplish the task. The laborers were then paid for their work out of the municipal fund that had been derived from tax collections and the sale of food. As the number of natives returning to the city increased, plans were made in early December for leveling a city tax to go into the municipal fund to meet normal city expenses.

The principal industry of the Palenberg area was the Carolus Magnus Coal Mine. Sprawled over many acres of land the mine was the source of employment for 3,000 persons in 1938 and 3,500 in 1944. (5) The capacity output of the mine was estimated at 80,000 tons per month, although the peak figure reached (in 1944) was between 70,000 and 75,000 tons. Except for a brief period of prosperity in 1937, the mine operated at a loss of three million marks a year.

The mine was owned by three French companies (Société Anonyme des Hauts Fourneaux et Founderies de Pont-a-Mouson, Compagnie des Forges de la Marine et d'Homecourt, and Société Anonyme de Micheville) and was a member of the Rhine Westphalen Coal Syndicate. This syndicate probably controlled the mine's operations.

The mine was badly damaged by shell fire and tactical operations in the immediate area. However, representatives of the Solid Fuel Commission, SHAEF, determined that production of coal was possible and recommended that mining operations commence as early as practicable. The military government detachment of Palenberg began work on the mine to comply with that directive.

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At the time the military government detachment took over control of the mine, there were approximately 70 workers. By early December that number had increased to about 120, all of whom were employed in making repairs and adjustments. The mine contained three levels and when work was begun under American direction, it was found that the third or lower level was flooded by natural seepage of water. This water had to be pumped out before coal could be mined.

The mine power plant consisted of eleven boilers and three turbo-generators, the latter furnishing electricity to run electric hoists, pump water, and perform other necessary mine functions. Four of the eleven boilers were put into immediate operation and sufficient power was derived for lights. However, there were not enough pumps in operation to clear the water from the third level. For that reason, the MGO requested the aid of the army engineers who materially assisted in the work of bringing the mine back into working condition.

Mine employees went to work under military government supervision for the first time on 20 October 1944. Authorized employees were issued passes permitting them to leave their homes at 0730 hours and arrive at the mine no later than 0800 hours. (6) As the number of available workers increased, they were investigated and given employment in the mine.

The military government detachment handled the funds of the mine in conformity with international regulations. When the city was occupied, the mine funds were contained in the safe of the chief cashier, Emil Singer, and in the safe of the paymaster, Heinrich Rower. Funds from both of these sources were audited by Captain William H. Brooks, 2d Lieutenant Edwin J. Zabcik, both military government officers, and Herr Singer. The money on hand was found to total 187,162.60 marks with over 300,000 marks on deposit with banks in Aachen and Cologne and a credit of over 400,000 marks due from its parent syndicate.

It was found from records that the mine employees were last paid on 20 September 1944. Their rate of pay at that time was about 11 marks per day, almost four marks over the average of 1937. (7) On 7 December 1944 the mine employees were paid for the first time under American occupation. Their payroll was made up under the direction of the cashier and on the basis of the rate of pay for June, July, August, and September 1944. (8) All of these funds and payments were audited by a military government officer of Detachment II-H2.

S E C R E T

The production management of the mine was under the direction of the former foreman, Karl Schmidt, who had been approved by the military government officer. However, it was recommended in November 1944 that competent engineers be secured to supervise operations for the greatest benefit of the Allied forces and in conformity with rules of land warfare. (9) On 10 December, French mining engineers from SHAEF were attached to the military government detachment to assist in the operations of the Carolus Magnus Mine.

NOTES

1. Chart, Detachment II-H2, 26 November 1944.
2. Letter to the Commanding General, XIII Corps, from Detachment II-H2, 1 December 1944.
3. Captain William H. Brooks, Chief Detachment II-H2, to Lt. Sigband, 7 December 1944.
4. Letter to the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-5, XIII Corps, from Detachment II-H2, 27 November 1944.
5. Report of MII Team 457 to Ass't. Chief of Staff, G-5, XIII Corps, 29 November 1944.
6. Letter, Special Report to Commanding General, XIII Corps, from Military Government Detachment II-H2, 7 December 1944.
7. Report of MII Team 457 to Ass't. Chief of Staff, G-5, XIII Corps, 29 November 1944.
8. As explained by Herr Singer to Lt. Sigband, 7 December 1944.
9. Information of mine obtained from conversation with Captain William H. Brooks, 3 December 1944, and Periodic Report from Detachment II-H2 to Ass't. Chief of Staff, G-5, 26 November 1944.

SEARCHLIGHTS IN BATTLE

Searchlights as an aid in tactical ground operations have been employed recently by United States forces. First inaugurated by the British in July 1944, they were used with varying degrees of success until 24 November when a United States searchlight battalion began experimenting with them.

The British discovered numerous uses for the lights during the first four months of their employment. In night attacks, they provided sufficient illumination to enable advancing infantrymen to avoid traps, recognize enemy defenses, and maintain direction.

Use of Searchlights During reorganization, they facilitated movement of troops into line and permitted anti-aircraft and artillery units to emplace their guns preparatory to dawn concentrations. Naturally they speeded up the rate of night artillery fire by making the results partially visible to observers. Their greatest value, however, probably lay in following the retreat of an enemy which, during the night, expected respite from close pursuit. They also helped troops clear mine fields at night, assisted the patrolling activities of small groups, and permitted night reconnaissance of terrain. Their use cut down vehicle accidents on roads, and considerably reduced the percentage of non-battle casualties. The lights were even utilized for purposes of deception by directing enemy attention to the illuminated area while an attack was being made on the flank.

Effecting an illumination of approximately 3/4 moonlight up to a distance of five miles, the British lights could best be used during nights when thick clouds were present. These clouds acted as reflectors and cast the light toward the ground. Although rain, mist, or fog greatly detracted from the efficiency of the lights, their use during inclement weather was still valuable.

During the night of 17 November, British searchlights, directed over the 84th Infantry Division from the left flank held by the 43 (British) Division, were utilized by the 333d and 334th Regiments of the 84th Infantry Division to aid in clearing mine fields that lay in front of the attacking units. Small teams, greatly assisted by British flails⁺, were able to neutralize the fields sufficiently to permit the 333d and 334th RCTs to pass through the cleared areas the following day in their attack on Geilenkirchen. The British lights continued to be used every night until 23 November.

⁺Chain devices attached to the front of tanks. As the vehicle moved forward the ground was literally flailed by the chains, thus exploding those mines lying in its path.

S E C R E T

On the night of 23 November, the 1st Platoon of A Battery, 226th Anti-aircraft Searchlight Battalion, worked with the British unit for orientation purposes. The next two nights the lights of the 226th AAA Battalion were used alone. On 26 and 27 November, the 113th and 125th Mechanized Cavalry Squadrons replaced the 333d and 334th Infantries holding the line to the southwest of the Beeck--Lindern area, and for that reason, illumination was not desired.

American Adoption

An evaluation of the advantages and disadvantages resulting from the use of these lights was obtained from front line troops operating under illumination. Technical Sergeant James I. Mayne said that in an advance the lights were of benefit to him because he could turn around and actually see the outline of the men of his platoon advancing with him. It was not necessary for him to surmise that his men were behind him or on his flank. Sgt. Mayne said: "If I wanted the boys to drop flat or crouch, I could motion them into that position, and I could observe the execution of that by the men. I was certain that none advanced past me, for I could see them if they had. In a word, I had control of my men all during the time the lights were on, and did not have to resort to loud whispers or speech to pass on instructions." (1)

Tec 5 Carter O. Burkett was a truck driver during the period of the attack. He found that the lights aided him in carrying out his missions. Burkett said that when transporting supplies and equipment to and from front line troops, he never attempted to use any of his vehicle's lights, not even the blackout lights. Under these conditions he could not safely drive his truck unless someone walked in front of his vehicle as a guide, or he proceeded not faster than two or three miles an hour. However, "when the lights were on, I could drive 15 and 20 miles an hour and save hours getting supplies up and back. I wasn't constantly tensed and afraid I was going to run into the back end of another vehicle or veer to the wrong side of the road and smash into an oncoming truck or jeep. Nor was I afraid of running off the side of the road, into the shoulder and over a mine. I could unload and load supplies much more quickly and I could see, and wasn't required to work or drive in the pitch blackness ordinarily present." (2)

Traffic Control

Pfc. Marcila I. Puente, a front line rifleman, felt that the lights silhouetted him when he advanced; and on that point, Pfc. John C. Galloway, runner from the line to company headquarters, agreed with him. Galloway contended that the lights were a great aid to him in helping him find

various company commanders when he had a message to deliver. "However, when I was with the boys and we attempted to advance, we certainly wished we controlled the switch. If we did, we would turn them on to see the terrain and situation that lay before us, and turn them off again when we moved. We could switch 'em on again when we halted, and off again when we advanced."

The logic and common sense of that soldier's suggestions are quickly evident; however, it is almost impossible to accomplish his desires. But control of the illumination can be a two or three minute proposition. The lights, as set up by the 226th AAA SL Battalion, had a good communication system. One man, who had telephone communication with forward elements, was maintained at division headquarters. By using his SCR 284, he could call the searchlight section and order it to switch the lights on or off. This system was not an instantaneous one, but it required no more than two minutes. (3)

"In the drive toward Geilenkirchen, I felt that my company benefited a great deal by the illumination the lights offered," said Capt. James W. Mitchell, Commanding Officer, Company I, 333d Infantry. "It certainly aided me in controlling my unit. I had a good idea where all the elements were almost all of the time." (4)

Lt. Charles J. Coakley, platoon leader, Company L of the 333d Regiment, also commended the lights for the control it gave him over his platoon. "Further," he said, "It greatly aided my sense of direction. I knew I was heading in the right direction and didn't entertain the feeling that I was moving off to the left or right too far. I knew where I was going and could see a tank ditch or a barbed wire apron."

Two platoon sergeants felt similarly. They said that they knew Jerry couldn't see their advance, for beams shining toward the enemy lines blinded the enemy so that at distances greater than 100 yards, he could not perceive moving troops. (5)

S/Sgt. William Randolph (6) said that his mortar squad operated much more efficiently because not only could he see his mortar shells exploding, but he could observe how near their objective they landed. "With the lights on, I was able to shoot mortar shells at a target and not out into the blackness of the night. I think the lights are damn good. Furthermore, I know the flash of my mortar did not reveal my position, for its flash was almost completely lost in the searchlights' illumination."

Similarly flares or star shells, employed by the enemy in an attempt to illuminate advancing troops or patrols, were not visible when the searchlights were on.

The actual functioning of the lights in this early stage revealed some need for correction or modification. A searchlight platoon had six lights but only four 2½-ton trucks. Each light was equipped with a towed power plant. Therefore, a minimum of twelve 2½-ton trucks was

Platoon
Equipment

necessary to maintain a searchlight platoon as a line mobile unit. The reason for the small number of trucks was the fact that searchlight units were not originally designed as mobile units. It was not contemplated that they would be employed as close as 4000 yards behind the front lines and be required to move rapidly. Under conditions existing during the testing period, it was necessary either to attempt to borrow trucks or to shuttle the same vehicles back and forth. This was an unsatisfactory arrangement, and it was recommended that searchlight platoons operating with and in support of front line elements be provided with a minimum of eight additional heavy trucks, plus other necessary equipment and personnel in conformity with such reorganization and employment. (7)

Since our lights differed from the British lights, we found it necessary to experiment with them in order to determine how they might best be utilized. The British light was a 36-inch, 210,000,000 candlepower affair, whereas the American light used for battlefield illumination was 60 inches in diameter and operated with a strength of 800,000,000 candlepower. For this reason our searchlights had to be employed differently. British lights were set up 150 to 200 yards from each other, but the American lights, with their greater power, were set up from 700 to 1000 yards apart, and could either be emplaced further back

U S Lights
Powerful

than the British lights to furnish equal illumination or as far forward as the British lights to provide greater illumination.

This first American searchlight platoon was organized with three lights functioning and one in the immediate area as an alternate. The other two lights were maintained in reserve. A reorganization could have been effected so as to provide two teams of three lights each; or perhaps four, five or six lights could be employed at one time more effectively.

In any event, the use of lights for battlefield illumination was so new that experimentation was certainly required, and the trial and error method was a necessary result.

S E C R E T

The primary disadvantage, as recognized by line troops, was the silhouetting of men to form a better target for the enemy. Our searchlight officers felt that this objection could be eliminated. By maintaining close communication with the light section, the troops could request that necessary changes be made in elevation to cut down silhouetting; or they could have the lights instantly turned on or off as they desired.

The use of lights not only offered advantages to attacking troops, but also permitted other jobs to be carried out at night. Whereas heavy engineer equipment was formerly used only for seven or eight daylight hours, it could now be utilized for 24 hours. By the aid of battlefield illumination construction could be continued and other tasks performed after dark.

Although our troops believed that they could be observed by the enemy during an advance, the opposite was the case. The enemy could not see our troops until they were within 100 yards or less. Up to that time the blinding effect of the lights kept our troops invisible. If confidence on that score could be instilled in the troops, and the psychological feeling overcome that he was being outlined by the lights at his back, an important combat point would be gained.

By and large, it may safely be said that battlefield illumination offered a great many more advantages than disadvantages. Continued and expanded use of the searchlights was definitely warranted.

S E C R E T

NOTES

(Interviews cited in this narrative took place on 28 November 1944 between enlisted men and Lt. Sigband at Geilenkirchen, Germany, in a company assembled critique. Searchlight battalion officers were interviewed the same day in the vicinity of Scherpenseel, Germany.)

1. T/Sgt. James I. Mayne, Company I, 333d Infantry, 84th Infantry Division.
2. T-5 Carter O. Burkett, Company I, 333d Infantry, 84th Infantry Division.
3. Information from 2d Lieutenant Donald Starkey, 1st Platoon, Company A, 226th AAA SL Bn.
4. Captain James W. Mitchell, Company Commander, Company I, 333d Infantry, 84th Infantry Division.
5. S/Sgts Otis Cain & Wayne E. Spencer, Company L, 333d Infantry, 84th Infantry Division.
6. S/Sgt. William Randolph, Company L, 333d Infantry, 84th Infantry Division.
7. 1st Lieutenant Hall Koltz, Battery A, 226th AAA SL Bn.