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THE OPERATIONS OF COMPANY D, 511TH PARACHUTE INFANTRY
11TH AIRBORNE DIVISION, NEAR LIPA, LUZON
PHILIPPINE ISLANDS, 13 MARCH 1945
(LUZON CAMPAIGN)
(Personal Experience of a Battalion Executive Officer)

Type of operation described: RIFLE COMPANY ATTACKING
A FORTIFIED POSITION

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INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operation of Company D, 511th Parachute Infantry, 11th Airborne Division, in an attack on MOUNT BIJIANG, an important terrain feature about 35 miles north of LIPA, LUZON. The operation occurred on 13 March 1945 during the LUZON campaign.

This introduction is designed to assist in understanding and evaluating the company attack described herein.

Early in January 1945 the Commanding General, Eighth US Army, ordered the 11th Airborne Division to prepare for a movement from their camp on LEYTE, P.I., to the island of LUZON. The 511th Parachute Infantry Regiment, with attachments, was to move to MINDORO by water and air, and to complete the movement to LUZON by air. Remaining elements of the division moved to LUZON by water and made an amphibious landing at NASUGBU. This amphibious landing was followed closely by the parachute landings made by the 511th RCT on TAGATAY RIDGE on 3 and 4 February. (1) (See Map A)

Immediately after the parachute landings the 511th Parachute Infantry, followed by the rest of the division, moved north to attack MANILA on the south, thereby assisting the offensive of the Sixth US Army. (See Map B) On 5 February the 511th, with the 2d Battalion leading, had driven through to the outskirts of MANILA and engaged the strongly organized

(1) A-1, p. 7.

defenses in the vicinity of NICHOLS FIELD. Other divisional units closed quickly to assist the 511th. (2) The division, although rather short on artillery, was able to reduce the well-prepared defenses that the defenders had attempted to perfect in the three years of their occupation. The Japanese main line of resistance consisted of hundreds of mutually supporting concrete and earth emplacements. Most of them contained automatic weapons; many had 20-mm or 40-mm anti-aircraft cannon that had been removed from nearby NICHOLS FIELD for use against ground targets. (3) Proof of the effectiveness of the defenses may be found by examining the casualties incurred by the attacking battalion. The 2d Battalion of the 511th landed at TAGATAY RIDGE with 502 effectives; on 10 February there were 187 officers and men left in the battalion. (4)

By this time the division had advanced to a point that required very close coordination with elements of Sixth Army, advancing toward the 11th Airborne. To insure the coordination, reassignment from Eighth to Sixth Army was effected; and on 10 February the 11th Airborne Division was assigned to Sixth US Army, then reassigned to XIV Corps. (5)

The division, which had been attacking to the north, wheeled to the northeast toward FORT MCKINLEY. During the period 11 February - 18 February the 11th Airborne continued the reduction of that part of the GHENKO LINE in the division zone. On 21 February the last resistance in FORT MCKINLEY was cleaned out. (6) (See Map B) The direction of the attack

(2) A-1, p. 80; (3) A-3, p. 30; (4) Statement of Lt Col Frank S. Holcomb, then Battalion Commander, 2d Battalion, 511th Parachute Infantry, on 14 February 1949; (5) A-3, p. 29; (6) A-3, p. 30.

was changed again; this time the division was to attack to the south.

THE GENERAL SITUATION

Before following the division in its move to the south it is necessary to pause for a look at the enemy situation and at the overall picture of Sixth Army's situation.

Enemy forces consisting of elements of the 31st Infantry (Japanese), the remnants of two Japanese artillery battalions, and other Army, Naval, and Air personnel had been consolidated under one Japanese commander and were grouped as the SHIMBU SHUDAN force. The SHUDAN organized and held ground southwest of MANILA. (7) The total number of troops available to the SHIMBU SHUDAN commander was estimated to be 15,380. (8) Later interrogation of the Japanese commanders proved the estimate to be very nearly correct. (9) South of MANILA, to include all southern LUZON, was the FUJI HEIDAN command. This force was composed of elements of the Japanese 8th Infantry Division, artillery units, some scattered artillery personnel, and two or more GYORO (suicide boat) battalions. (10) This force had prepared strong defensive positions on a north - south line running from BATANGAS and TAYABAS BAY north through ROSARIO, LIPA, TANAUAN, MOUNT BIJIANG, ALLIGATOR LAKE. (11) One battalion of infantry was placed on IBAAN HILL, one on MOUNT MACOLOD, and a third near CANDELARIA. (12) (See Map D) These battalions were from the 17th Infantry. Farther to the south another regiment of Japanese infantry was similarly disposed. (13) (See Map D) During January 1945

(7) A-4, p. 229; (8) A-2, p. 5; (9) A-1, p. 123; (10) A-4, p. 250; (11) A-4, p. 249; (12) A-4, p. 246; (13) A-4, p. 251.

a reduction in the forces available to the FUJI HEIDAN made a reorganization of the defenses necessary. (14) This reorganization placed the remaining infantry regiment, the 17th Infantry, the GYORO Battalions, and the miscellaneous artillery and service personnel in positions to accomplish the same mission the larger force had been given - to defend southern LUZON. The mission was accomplished by organizing two strong center defenses on MOUNT MACALOD and MOUNT BIJIANG. (15) (See Map D) This reorganization was almost completed by the first of March. (16)

Our own forces on LUZON, under the Commanding General, Sixth US Army, were deployed in the following manner:

XI Corps was employed north of MANILA. (17) (See Map C)

XIV Corps was attacking southeast from MANILA.

The corps objective was the general line MOUNT

BIJIANG, TANAUAN, LIPA, BATANGAS. (18) (See Map C)

The 11th Airborne Division, with the 158th Combat Team attached, was on the corps right flank. The right flank of the division was on MANILA BAY. The left flank, initially protected by the 38th Division, rested on LAGUNA DE BAY that formed the eastern boundary between the division and the 1st Cavalry Division. (19) (See Map C)

Within the 11th Airborne, troop dispositions were as follows:

The 511th Parachute Infantry was on the left (east) flank.

The 187th Infantry was poised to the right of the

(14) A-4, p. 251; (15) A-4, p. 251; (16) A-4, p. 251; (17) A-4, p. 247, sketch 34; (18) A-4, p. 244; (19) A-4, p. 244.

511th (on 2 March these two regiments were in rear of CALAMBA ready to advance along the line MOUNT BIJIANG, SANTA TOMAS, TANAUAN, LIPA). (20)

To the rear of 187th and 511th, the 158th RCT was in position to envelop the enemy left flank.

The 188th Infantry was attacking the town of TERNATE, the direction of attack was 180 degrees from that of the rest of the division. (21) (See Map C)

There was no division reserve. (22)

THE REGIMENTAL SITUATION

By 2 March the regimental commander, 511th Parachute Infantry, had moved his regiment from the vicinity of MANILA some 25 miles to areas along the southwestern shore of LAGUNA DE BAY. This movement was made against sporadic resistance. (23) (See Map D) The regimental CP was established near BINYAN initially; however, the battalions were assigned missions that separated them from regimental installations by several thousands of yards. (See Map C) As the situation developed the command post was moved, and on 11 March was located at the SUGAR CENTRAL, a commercial installation near Highway 1 and about 7,000 yards north of MOUNT BIJIANG. (24)

Combat intelligence, produced at regiment or secured from division, indicated that a position held in strength was located on or near MOUNT BIJIANG. On 10 March a combat patrol from 3d Battalion proved this intelligence correct; the enemy occupying the positions were estimated as a

(20) A-4, p. 247; (21) A-1, p. 99; (22) A-1, p. 102; (23) A-1, p. 99; (24) Personal knowledge.

reinforced rifle company. (25) The enemy was capable of reinforcing this and other positions within the 511th zone by boat across LAGUNA DE BAY. The 2d Battalion was given several captured inboard motor boats, designed by the Japanese for use in the GYORO units, to patrol LAGUNA DE BAY and deny its use to the enemy. The division air section was also used on this mission. The enemy was still able to infiltrate troops into the regimental zone during the hours of darkness. (26)

The 1st Battalion was moving south along Highway 1. (See Map C) By 12 March the battalion had succeeded in capturing HILL 660 and was mopping up SANTO TOMAS prior to continuing the advance towards LIPA. (27) At the same time the 2d Battalion was patrolling to the rear of the regimental command post, with the mission of protecting the regimental rear and left flanks. Patrols from each of the rifle companies had made contact with small groups of the enemy. Company E of the 2d Battalion was patrolling the CALAMBA area and made contact with a small enemy force between the SAN CRISTOBAL RIVER and CALAMBA. Company E killed most of this group along the railroad line in this area. (28) Company F was patrolling still farther to the rear and one platoon moved to the battalion command post on 11 March to protect the approaches to BINYAN. Company D had initially been assigned that part of the battalion area nearest the regimental command post. (See Map E) On the morning of 11

(25) Statement of Major Lyman S. Faulkner, then Regimental S-2, 511th Parachute Infantry, on 14 February 1949; (26) A-1, p. 129; (27) Statement of Lt Col Frederick S. Wright, then Battalion Commander, 1st Battalion, 511th Parachute Infantry, on 14 February 1949; (28) Personal knowledge.

March the battalion commander was ordered to furnish a company to move to the regimental CP and to remain there in regimental reserve. Company D was selected and moved to SUGAR CENTRAL on that day. The areas occupied by each of the other letter companies was extended to compensate for the loss of the third company. Companies G and H of the 3d Battalion were in contact with the enemy in the vicinity of ALLIGATOR LAKE. Initially the battalion command post was near the regimental CP. The battalion commander was with these two companies during the period 10 and 11 March. (29) On 12 and 13 March the Commanding Officer, 3d Battalion remained at his own command post and at regiment to assist in preparing plans for the attack on MOUNT BIJIANG. Company I of the 3d Battalion had patrolled the MOUNT BIJIANG area on 11 March and had received heavy fire from MOUNT BIJIANG. Commanding Officer of Company I returned to SUGAR CENTRAL to remain there until 13 March. (30) Any plan to use both of these companies would necessarily employ the reserve immediately available to the regimental commander, and regiment, like division, would have no reserve.

PLANNING THE ATTACK

The decision to attack MOUNT BIJIANG was made as a result of the combat intelligence available to the regimental commander; however, an independent terrain analysis would have also indicated the importance of this hill mass. MOUNT BIJIANG is the highest hill in the area. Its crest is covered with tall rank grass that permits movement free

(29) Personal knowledge; (30) Personal knowledge.

from observation from below. The approaches to the hill are cultivated fields whose flat surfaces offer no cover nor concealment from MOUNT BIJIANG. Between the grassy crest and the cultivated approaches, on the side of the hill, some vegetation offers concealment, and erosion has created some cover, useful either to the attacker or to the defender. From the crest, observation to the east is unrestricted to the shores of LAGUNA DE BAY. This includes the LOS BANOS highway. To the north SUGAR CENTRAL and the highway intersection may be clearly seen. On the western side some two miles of Highway 1 are under direct observation. On the southern side a narrow ridge leads to the hills over which MOUNT BIJIANG rises. For infantry alone the southern slopes provide the attackers the best avenue of approach. (31) (See Map E) An improved road from SUGAR CENTRAL leads directly to the crest of MOUNT BIJIANG. The use of armor is limited because of the steep banks of BROWN CREEK whose course lies across the entire north and east of the hill mass. (See Map E) The BROWN CREEK bridge was destroyed by the enemy, and no wheeled vehicles could approach MOUNT BIJIANG from any position in friendly hands.

A study of enemy capabilities indicated that an attack launched as soon as forces could be gathered for the attack and coordination made, would have the best chance of success. It was possible for the enemy to reinforce the troops then in position on the hill. In addition, the enemy was able to improve existing defenses and improve his fields of fire.

Company I had attempted to reach the crest of MOUNT BIJIANG on the morning of 11 March. This attack was repulsed

(31) Personal knowledge.

and artillery was used to harass the defenders until another attack, scheduled for 13 March, could be launched. Infantry available for the attack included Companies D and I. No 81-mm mortars were available to support the attack, but each of the two rifle companies had three 60-mm mortars. (32) The 457th Field Artillery Battalion (light) and the 472d Field Artillery Battalion (medium) were in position to support the attack with fire on the northern side and crest of the objective. An air strike was requested for the afternoon of the 12th and again for the morning of the 13th. Both requests were approved, and each strike, made by six P-38s with 100-pound high explosive bombs, was pronounced a success by observers at the regimental command post. (33)

At about 121600 March, Company Commander, Company D, reported to the S-3, 511th Parachute Infantry at the regimental CP at SUGAR CENTRAL. The company commander was taken at once to the regimental commander and was given a fragmentary order for the attack so that time could be saved for a visual reconnaissance that afternoon. This order was issued from the roof of the command post where observation of the majority of the approaches to the objective, and the objective as well, was the best that could be found. (34) Maps of the area were at best inaccurate. No aircraft were available to fly photographic missions. (35) Time did not permit the use of the liaison aircraft at division for the company commander to make reconnaissance.

(32) Statement of Captain Steve S. Cavanaugh, then Company Commander, Company D, 511th Parachute Infantry, on 14 February 1949; (33) Personal knowledge; (34) Statement of Major William F. Frick, then Regimental S-3, 511th Parachute Infantry Regiment, on 13 March 1945; (35) Statement of Major Lyman S. Faulkner, then Regimental S-2, 511th Parachute Infantry, on 14 February 1949.

The Commanding Officer, Company D, sent for his company executive officer and two platoon leaders, and informed them of the situation. He then called his battalion commander and informed him of the situation as he then knew it. He then contacted the Commanding Officer of Company I for additional information. The two company commanders went to the CP where some coordination between the two companies was achieved. During this time the Executive Officer of Company D with the other company officers and noncommissioned officers were checking equipment, drawing additional ammunition; and one-third "K" ration per man was drawn and issued. (36)

The two company commanders made a hurried reconnaissance in the regimental commander's jeep. The route followed was first down the LOS BANOS highway for several hundred yards, back through REAL, then southwest on the SANTO TOMAS-LIPA highway and return to SUGAR CENTRAL. (See Map F)

On this reconnaissance a serious mistake was made. The visible crest of MOUNT BIJIANG masked the true topographical crest. Every person who had seen and evaluated this hill had made the same mistake. Even the Commanding Officer of Company I who had attacked the slope on 11 March had not seen that the military crest masked a topographical crest south of the wooded area and some forty feet higher. (37) (See Map F)

The two company commanders returned to the regimental CP and with the S-3 reported to the regimental commander. The attack order issued contained substantially the

(36) (37) Statement of Captain Cavanaugh

following information:

An enemy force occupied MOUNT BIJIANG. The strength of this force was estimated as a reinforced rifle platoon. The force was being reinforced nightly by small groups of the enemy who infiltrated into the position from the south and from the far shore of LAGUNA DE BAY.

Company I would attack south across BROWN CREEK bridge and move generally up the north slope of MOUNT BIJIANG. Company I would guide on the unimproved road that wound up BIJIANG to disappear in the trees on the military crest. Company D would attack from the west. The objective for both companies was the crest of MOUNT BIJIANG.

Upon capture of the objective, Company D would protect the organization of the objective by Company I and would then return to regimental reserve. The Commanding Officer of Company D asked if this meant that his company was to return to the regimental perimeter that night. He was assured that Company D was to be back within the regimental perimeter before dark.

Other details concerning the air strike and the use of artillery were brought out at this time. The artillery had registered on the trees marking the supposed crest of the objective. (See Map F) Smoke on the trees laid by artillery had been used to mark the target for the attacking aviation.

The use of communications was brought out in detail. No SCR-536s were available to Company D since the regimental communications officer had picked them up for repair. An SCR-300 was to be used to maintain communications with regiment and a special command channel was set up for the operation. Additional radio communication would be provided by the artillery set carried by the artillery forward observer. Green smoke signals were to be used to mark front lines for the air strike and also for identification between companies. Radio silence was to be in effect at first. After leaving BROWN CREEK bridge each SCR-300 was to be turned on and the operators were to listen in for messages from regiment. It was anticipated that Company D would not be in position to attack until after Company I, therefore Company I was to call for the prearranged artillery fires. Company D was to signal by code on the SCR-300 when the company was ready to attack.

(38)

What were plans - 5

The company commanders returned to their companies and completed plans and preparation for the attack to be made the following day. At Company D the men were told to leave their packs behind. Extra ammunition was carried instead. Only one 60-mm mortar was to be carried and the rest of the mortar section carried ammunition. A total of twenty-four rounds of ammunition was carried for the mortar.

BACK in BINYAN the 2d Battalion commander called his staff together for a conference. After discussing the tasks to be accomplished on the thirteenth it was decided that the battalion executive officer, referred to hereafter as

(38) Statement of Captain Cavanaugh.

executive officer, would visit regiment the following morning to get a complete story on Company D and the reported mission that had been assigned the company. (39)

THE ATTACK ON MOUNT BIJIANG

At 0715 on 13 March Company I had cleared the perimeter. Company D, 95 men strong, followed. Each company moved in a column of platoons with one file on each side of the road. Distances between men varied from five to ten yards while distances between platoons had been set at fifty yards.

Executive officer arrived from the 2d Battalion. He recognized Company D and ran after it, leaving the perimeter. His jeep driver placed the vehicle in the regimental motor park and waited for executive officer to return.

Company I had cleared BROWN CREEK bridge and Company D was turning out of the column to proceed up the creek when executive officer saw the company commander. By the time a brief orientation on the situation had been completed the company was almost in position to launch the attack. ^{where} Executive officer decided that he should remain with the company.

Company D continued to advance to the west along BROWN CREEK. Order of march within the company was 3d Platoon, company headquarters with radio and the 60-mm mortar, followed closely by the 1st Platoon and at a greater distance behind the 1st Platoon was the 2d Platoon. One squad from leading platoon furnished the point. This squad was as far in front of the remainder of the platoon as visual contact would allow, usually at least one-hundred yards ahead of the

(39) Personal knowledge.

next squad. During this approach the company commander marched with the company CP group immediately in front of the 1st Platoon. As the company moved farther to the west the commander decided that his place was nearer the front of the column so that a change in direction could be made without requiring the leading platoon to retrace its steps. At 0850 the company was halted and the company commander, with radio operator and runners, moved up to the 3d Platoon where he remained when the column moved out at 0900. The rate of march was increased and soon the direction was changed. A branch of the creek that appeared to afford a covered route towards the objective had been found and the point had followed it at a signal from the platoon leader. (See Map F)

Underbrush and scattered trees masked observation of the objective. Although the general direction of advance was known to be correct the distance to the objective was a matter of conjecture. At about 0945 rifle and machine-gun fire was heard from the area of Company I and it was presumed that Company I had made contact. Artillery fire was heard and then seen as continued advance by Company D brought back into view the trees marking the objective.

Rifle fire from the point halted the company momentarily. An enemy outpost consisting of two men had been overrun and the enemy killed.

The advance was continued some hundred yards without opposition. About two hundred yards remained to go before the 3d Platoon reached the objective. Rifle and automatic weapons fire brought the platoon to a halt. A firing line

was quickly built up with all three squads on the line.

The company commander went forward and saw that the fire was coming from the left front and front of the platoon. He also saw the objective, marked by the tall trees, to the left front of the attacking platoon. (See Map F)

The company commander crawled back down the slope and ordered the 1st Platoon to move to the right of the 3d Platoon and attempt to find the enemy flank. The 1st Platoon leader, in compliance with instructions, took his platoon back through the trailing 2d Platoon, then back up a route that offered concealment towards the high ground. (40) (See Map F)

The artillery forward observer had his radio set in operation and with the company commander brought artillery on the area from whence the enemy fire was coming.

The 1st Platoon took up the fire fight with two squads. A runner from that platoon reported to the company commander. The platoon leader sent the following message: "Held up by enemy fire from front and left." The runner added that the majority of the fire was from automatic weapons. The runner was sent back to his platoon leader to continue the fire and hold his present position. (41)

At this time, although considerable fire was being received, it was believed by both executive officer and the Commanding Officer of Company D that the enemy main positions had not been found. The fact that Company I, some two or three thousand yards in front of, and attacking towards Company D was also fighting the enemy-reinforced platoon,

(40) Statement of Captain Cavanaugh; (41) Personal knowledge.

supported the belief that an enemy outpost was holding up the company.

The company executive officer, on instruction from his commander, went to the 3d Platoon leader and ordered him to disengage his platoon, take the platoon to the rear to the 1st Platoon, and come up on the right flank of the 1st Platoon. (See Map F)

The company commander hoped to accomplish two things by this maneuver. First, he wanted to establish definitely the enemy flank. Second, he needed to move about one hundred yards farther from the objective in order to have the prescribed five hundred yards between his troops and the planned artillery concentration. (42)

The 2d Platoon and company headquarters remained in position about three hundred yards behind the 1st Platoon.

While the leader of the 3d Platoon was receiving his order, the company commander moved to the right flank of the 1st Platoon. He expected to direct the 3d Platoon into position as it came up on line.

From the new position the company commander found that he had excellent observation of the objective. He could see the 1st Platoon in position and realized that the enemy had missed a bet by not flanking his company to allow the use of enfilade fire against his attacking platoon. (43)

A runner reported to the company commander from the 3d Platoon. He stated that the platoon was on the objective.

This was a distinct surprise to the company commander because:

(42) Statement of Captain Cavanaugh; (43) Personal knowledge.

- (1) He had observation on the objective and could see there were no troops moving around on the objective.
- (2) He could hear the 3d Platoon to his right front and the objective was on his left front.

The company commander told the runner to take him to the leader of the 3d Platoon. The runner complied and soon had the company commander on the topographical crest of MOUNT BIJIANG. (44) (See Map F)

Forty feet lower and three hundred yards north of the company commander was the objective that he had believed was the crest of MOUNT BIJIANG. It was covered by the 3d Platoon with a squad. The north side of that objective was masked, observation to the north and northeast from the 3d Platoon position was masked by the objective. (See Map F)

A runner was sent to bring the 2d Platoon up to the topographical crest. The fire from the 1st Platoon had ceased and a runner was sent to bring that platoon up also, if the resistance had been overcome. Both platoons were brought up. The artillery forward observer came up with the 1st Platoon.

A rapid reorganization of the company and organization of the topographical crest of MOUNT BIJIANG was accomplished. While the company commander made his reconnaissance, the company executive officer supervised the reorganization. It was learned that there were two killed and four wounded from fires from the enemy outpost. The 2d Platoon leader had, without authority from company, committed one of his squads to evacuate the wounded.

(44) Statement of Captain Cavanaugh.

A squad leader from the 3d Platoon was given a green smoke grenade and ordered to take it to the tree-covered objective and mark the company position to regiment and to Company I. He was also instructed to have his squad watch for the return green smoke signal that would acknowledge receipt of the message from both regiment and Company I.

The squad accomplished the first part of their mission; the smoke grenade was ignited. No return smoke was seen. Enemy fire, the first that had been received from the crest, harassed the squad as it recrossed the open ground returning to the company area. (See Map F)

Regiment was notified by radio that Company D was on the objective.

It was decided that the ground could best be defended with the troops available by placing the 1st Platoon on the southeast, and have the 2d Platoon cover the rear and flanks with observation and fire from positions on the reverse slope of MOUNT BIJIANG. The machine gun with the 3d Platoon was placed to cover the ridge leading into the 3d Platoon position. The machine gun in the 1st Platoon was placed to cover the gap between the 3d and 1st Platoons. The 3d Platoon moved back over the crest of the hill and went into position as ordered by the company commander. Company headquarters was set up in a small depression on the rear of the 1st Platoon. The one 60-mm was placed near the CP. Personnel in this area included the company first sergeant, artillery observer with his radio and operator, a runner from the 3d Platoon, battalion executive and the mortar gunner and assistant gunner. (See Map E)

Company I had received word that Company D was on the objective. The company commander then withdrew his attacking platoons straight to his rear to take advantage of some cover afforded. This displacement did not materially affect the volume of fire that his rifles were placing on known Japanese positions; however, the volume of return fire did decrease. Japanese soldiers were seen by men in Company I moving back up the slope toward Company D. Attempts by the Commanding Officer of Company I to advance his platoons back to their forward positions were met by heavy fire from his left flank. This information was sent to regiment. (45)

Fire was beginning to fall on the troops on the objective. At first small-arms fire from those Japanese returning from the fight with Company I was directed into the 3d Platoon. Very little return fire was heard from Company D the first few minutes. Then, as the enemy came into view the two machine guns and the entire 3d Platoon opened fire. Its effect was murderous. When no more movement could be seen, the fire lifted. For a moment the only sound was a squad leader in the 3d Platoon calmly calling for the aid-man. The company commander informed the battalion executive that two men were wounded.

Mortar fire, at first only scattered rounds, fell within the position. From the ridge on the south automatic weapon fire from more than one weapon began to rake the 3d and 1st Platoons with oblique fire. The 60-mm mortar was given a target and fired three or four of its rounds. The machine guns were silenced for the length of time that it took the enemy gunners to move to new positions. Mortar

(45) Personal knowledge.

fire was falling within the position of Company D at the rate of twenty to thirty rounds a minute. The fire was very accurate but the large number of duds prevented many casualties. Small-arms fire was equally as accurate but more effective. The infantry communications sergeant, kneeling in his "covered position," was shot through the mouth. At 1330 hour six wounded and two dead had been evacuated to the 2d Platoon position by members of the 3d Platoon.

Small-arms fire was also inflicting casualties in the 1st Platoon. Initially the 3d Platoon had borne the brunt of the fighting; now the 1st Platoon was getting its share also. The platoon leader had built up a firing line with all his men in an irregular line with the left flank swinging back to the north. The enemy did not attempt to flank the position from this side and the line held nicely.

At 1400 a message from regiment was received informing Company D that Company I was moving to BROWN CREEK, thence by the route of Company D up to assist Company D. A request for additional ammunition for the rifles, machine guns, and mortars, for hand grenades and for water was sent to regiment. This message was received at about 1410 hours at regiment. The regimental S-4 had organized a carrying party and had assembled most of the ammunition requested by Company D. By 1500 the carrying party was ready to leave the regimental perimeter. (46)

The radio of Company D was out for the rest of the action, the last message sent or received by this radio was the request for supplies made by the company commander.

(46) Personal knowledge.

Mortar and automatic weapon fire continued to fall on the company. The enemy was seen moving individually to fall behind a slight rise in the slope that protected them from rifle fire from either of the forward platoons of Company D. (See Map E) Some hand grenades were thrown but the range was too great for either side to use them effectively. The Japanese continued to crawl forward under their own fire to throw their grenades. Each was killed as soon as his presence was discovered. One of the enemy shot the leader of the 1st Platoon through the head. This sniper was killed by a hand grenade from the platoon's position.

Battalion executive watched the platoon sergeant take charge of the platoon and continue to direct fire upon the enemy. He was taking a cue from the former platoon leader, observing each man to insure that all were carrying their share of the fight. Two rifles that were being manually operated were replaced with weapons secured from the wounded by the new platoon leader. Satisfied that the new platoon leader could handle his job, the battalion executive returned to the company command post. There it was learned that the company executive officer had also been wounded. The two wounded officers were placed in the company command post for the time.

Machine-gun ammunition was exhausted. There was less than a grenade per man left in the company position. The first sergeant pulled three or four men to help him load machine-gun ammunition belts with ammunition taken from the wounded. With two men working on each belt, four belts were refilled and returned to the guns. The guns went back into

action for a few minutes. So long as the two machine guns could be kept in action the enemy could be kept well down the slope, some fifty yards from the front-line platoons. To keep the enemy from moving up into the positions, both rifles and machine guns were needed.

At 1545 hours the battalion executive moved to the 2d Platoon area. Observation from the top of the hill was obscured by dust and smoke. It was imperative that more supplies be obtained at once if the position was to be retained. Information of the location of Company I was also urgently needed. Until Company I could be located it was impossible to use artillery on the north slope of the hill. There was no smoke nor dust in the 2d Platoon area but observation was masked by the hill itself. There was no information about either Company I or the supply party.

No fire was falling on the 2d Platoon area. The platoon leader had difficulty in keeping his men down in position. He was cautioned that he could expect the enemy on either flank and was instructed to watch for Company I and for the supply party and to send word at once if either was seen.

The battalion executive returned to the company command post. Here observation was still obscured by the cloud of dust and smoke that covered the hilltop. The company commander was located; it was learned that he had been wounded while in the company command post area. Battalion executive gave the following order to the company commander: "Prepare to withdraw with your entire company by the same

way you got up here. Commence withdrawal as soon as you are ready."

The company withdrew by platoon. The first platoon was sent back through the second platoon position. There the wounded were picked up and moved to the rear. The two dead were left near the 3d Platoon position. Some five minutes were lost in searching for the two wounded officers. They were found helping each other down the hill. The 3d Platoon held the enemy by increasing the fire to maximum rate with all rifles. Some of the enemy was able to slip up into the holes so recently vacated by the 1st Platoon.

As soon as the 1st Platoon had cleared the hilltop, company headquarters followed. The company commander moved over to join his remaining platoon. The battalion executive began crawling from his position on the left flank of the 1st Platoon to a position in rear of that platoon before withdrawing to the 2d Platoon area. As executive officer moved through the company command post area, he saw the 60-mm mortar. It had been taken out of action and was ready to be moved out. The officer decided to destroy the mortar with a grenade. As he placed the grenade in the mortar tube, the mortar gunner returned and claimed his mortar. The grenade was withdrawn from the tube before the pin was pulled, and the mortarman moved back down the hill with his mortar. It was later learned that he had helped evacuate a wounded man and had returned for his weapon.

The battalion executive then followed the gunner to the 2d Platoon position where it was found that only three men and the platoon leader were in the position. The remainder

of the thirteen-man platoon was assisting in the evacuation of the wounded. The 1st Platoon could be seen about two hundred yards to the rear of the 3d Platoon. Some of the men could be seen digging positions to cover the withdrawal of the men between the 1st Platoon and the enemy.

At the same time men from the 3d Platoon began their withdrawal. Each man was directed to the rear by the platoon leader or the company commander. The last two men to leave the position were those two officers.

It had been anticipated that the withdrawal would be difficult. It was completed during daylight hours and contact with the enemy was rather close; however, the enemy did not pursue the company by movement, and initially, when back in their position, concentrated on reorganization and neglected to pursue with fire. This respite allowed the company to complete the move to cover in the BROWN CREEK defile. The 2d Platoon protected the company rear but the enemy did not regain contact in spite of the fact that Company D, with a number of casualties in the column, moved slowly.

Six hundred yards from BROWN CREEK bridge, Company D was joined by Company I. In over two hours the Commanding Officer of Company I had been able to move his company from their original positions on the north slope to the 3d Platoon position.

Several trucks and ambulances were seen near the BROWN CREEK bridge.

The battalion executive, with the two company commanders, reported to the regimental commander who had personally

accompanied the supply party to BROWN CREEK bridge. The company commanders were instructed to bring their companies to the bridge and await trucks that would haul them back to the regimental perimeter. Informal reports on casualties and other information regarding the day of fighting was given at this time. Company D had suffered four men killed in action and twenty-four wounded. There were seventy-five known enemy dead. (47)

Members of the regimental medical detachment had preceded the supply party by a minute and had moved on the double to the area where Companies D and I were resting. Aid men with litters evacuated the wounded and, before the reports were finished, had the wounded on ambulances and were on the way to the regimental aid station.

In addition to the twenty-four wounded who were evacuated the Commanding Officer of Company D had been painfully wounded. He was hit in the shoulder and two bullet holes in his helmet attested to the fact that he had been shot at and missed as well as shot at and hit. In spite of his wound he remained with the company, rode back to the company area in the lead truck and inspected his company at the command post. After the evening meal had been finished, this company commander inspected his company, now back on the perimeter. His actions and bearing were such as to inspire confidence in his men and promote esprit de corps in his unit.

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

The initial success of Company D in reaching the objective attested to the soundness of the plan conceived

(47) Personal knowledge; statement of Captain Cavanaugh.

by the regimental commander. Complete surprise was obtained by the attacking company, and the outstanding leadership and aggressiveness of that company commander exploited the advantage fully. Inadequate security posted by the Japanese commander to warn him of enemy movement to his rear contributed to the success attained by Company D. It is also believed that the Japanese commander made a tactical mistake in moving his entire force forward from his prepared positions to repulse Company I. A minimum of three observers and a squad of riflemen to protect them should have been left on the crest of MOUNT BIJIANG to permit continued observation of the terrain to his front and flanks. Some means of communication, visual, wire or other electrical means, between the Japanese commander and his outpost would have greatly assisted him in preventing the surprise that was achieved by his enemy.

The loss of the objective was due primarily to the overwhelming weight in numbers enjoyed by the Japanese. Mistakes were made by the American commanders, however, that if corrected at once, would have possibly turned the tide of battle. The use of artillery by the defenders was in error. Inadequate use of existing artillery compelled the platoon leaders to expend excessive amounts of small-arms ammunition. The proper use of artillery that was available might have given the company complete fire superiority.

Another mistake made by the American officers involved the supply plan. The regimental S-4 anticipated the supply requirements of the company correctly insofar as amounts and items that would be needed were concerned; however, the

movement of the supplies to the company's position was not performed correctly. An advanced supply point should have been installed near BROWN CREEK bridge. This installation would have enabled the supply officer to cut the distance from front line to supply point by one-half. Supplies requested by Company D could have been delivered within two hours after receipt of the request. Supplies would have been left on trucks at this position during daylight hours and moved back to the security of the regimental perimeter to remain during hours of darkness. The break-down of the logistical support was due partly to the inability of the rifle company commander to estimate his needs far enough in advance. It is believed that the decision of the Commanding Officer of Company D to leave additional supplies behind and to exclude any carrying party from his company echelon was sound. The carriers would have slowed movement of the column greatly and may have enabled the enemy to observe the company in its advance on MOUNT BIJIANG.

During the latter stages of the fire fight there was a tendency of all officers and noncommissioned officers to allow themselves to become engaged in the fire fight. This was true in the case of every officer except the platoon leader of the second platoon. Control suffered as a result.

During the withdrawal the Japanese commander was in a position to inflict considerable additional damage to Company D. His failure to pursue Company D by fire made the withdrawal easier and less costly than had been anticipated.

The results seen of the air strikes and the artillery left no doubt as to their relative accuracy. The artillery

in support of the infantry had been much more accurate and had inflicted considerable destruction on the Japanese. There was no indication that the air strikes had caused any casualties.

The training of the men and officers in Company D was a tribute to all echelons of the entire regiment and particularly to the company officers and noncommissioned officers. Officers were quick to correct mistakes made by their men, and were alert, showed great personal courage, and each by his own example inspired the men under his command. Each order was given within the writer's hearing was quickly and efficiently complied with to the best ability of the recipient.

One last criticism advanced by the writer concerns the communications employed. The statement that communications were inadequate is correct. A practical remedy for this or similar situations is difficult. The basic fault in the communications employed was that radio and visual means were relied upon to the exclusion of other means. The use of runners entailed the use of a slow method of sending messages. Motor messengers could not cross the bridge. Even the use of a runner-motor messenger relay with a relay point at BROWN BRIDGE would have been unsatisfactory because of the time element. Other visual signals, blinkers, signal flags or some similar device would have been satisfactory; however personnel trained in the use of that type of visual signaling devices were not available to the regiment. This is one of three instances known to the writer when visual signaling devices could have been used.

LESSONS LEARNED

1. Surprise is invaluable when a small unit is attacking a numerically superior enemy.

7 — 2. Unit commanders at all levels must take every precaution to prevent the enemy's achieving surprise.

3. Aggressive action and rapid exploitation of the advantage gained results in mission accomplished with fewer lives lost.

NB0. 4. In any operation a commander must be designated who has authority over all units participating in the operation.

W 5. At company and lower level, troop leading procedure must include a personal reconnaissance of the terrain under consideration; aircraft from division air section may be used to transport the commanders over the terrain in a reconnaissance.

6. Platoon leaders and company commanders must guard against the tendency to participate in a fire fight to insure that they are in control of their own unit and keep abreast of the situation. (There is seldom time for the leader to use firing a rifle.)

7. Every means of communication available to a commander will often be needed; and every effort must be made to have the maximum number of means available.

NB0 8. Signal security must not be over-emphasized as it tends to slow down or stop the flow of information.

9. Trained replacements must be available to replace battle casualties among leaders at all levels and among technicians on essential duties as well.

10. Inadequate logistical support may, even at company and lower level, lead directly to a tactical failure.

11. The use of combat troops to evacuate casualties weakens the combat efficiency of the unit and should be used in emergency only.

12. Subordinate commanders must report promptly any change in their own situation that may affect their commander's estimate.