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SUPPLY OPERATIONS OF THE 508TH PARACHUTE INFANTRY REGIMENT (82D AIRBORNE DIVISION) IN THE INVASION OF HOLLAND, ARNHEIM OPERATION, 15 - 19 SEPTEMBER 1944. (RHINELAND CAMPAIGN)

(Personal Experience of the Assistant Regimental S-4)

Type of operation described: PARACHUTE INFANTRY REGIMENT IN AIRBORNE INVASION.

Captain Kenneth L. Johnson, Infantry
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SUPPLY OPERATIONS OF THE 508TH PARACHUTE INFANTRY REGIMENT
(82D AIRBORNE DIVISION) IN THE INVASION OF HOLLAND,
ARNHEIM OPERATION, 15 - 19 SEPTEMBER 1944.
(RHINELAND CAMPAIGN)
(Personal Experience of the Assistant Regimental S-4)

ORIENTATION

INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operations of the 508th Parachute Infantry in the invasion of HOLLAND, 15 - 19 September 1944. Particular emphasis will be given to the supply phases of this operation.

In order to orient the reader, the events leading up to this operation will be discussed with the object of bringing out the reasons for ordering its execution.

On 6 June 1944 elements of the Allied Expeditionary Force invaded the continent of EUROPE, by successfully landing airborne and seaborne forces on the CONTENTIN PENINSULA. The staggering mass of troops, supplies, and equipment pushed over the beaches in the first few days enabled the Allies to gain a foothold that the enemy was unable to dislodge. (1)

On 26 June the port of CHERBOURG was captured insuring, at least temporarily, the flow of supplies to support the rapidly advancing Armies. (2)

On 25 July the Second British Army and the American First Army swung out into the attack and after stiff initial resistance, blasted their way through the German defenses on the way to the SEINE. (3) To fully exploit the breakthrough successes, the Armies in the field were reorganized. The Third U. S. Army

(1) A-6, p. 24
(2) A-6, p. 56
(3) A-8, p. 135

under General Patton came into existance. General C. H. Hodges took over command of the First Army and General Bradley moved up to take command of the newly formed Army Group. At approximately the same time the Canadian First Army had become operational and was joined with the British Second Army to form the 21st Army Group under Field Marshal Montgomery. It is with this Army Group that we shall be concerned with in the invasion of HOLLAND. (4)

The exploitation of the enemy's collapse in FRANCE enabled the advance to continue and by 30 August no German soldier remained west of the SEINE. The Allied Armies were at Germany's door. (5)

THE GENERAL SITUATION

Throughout the battle for FRANCE the Supreme Commander had realized the dire necessity of increased logistical support for his lengthening supply lines and increasing troop strength. In fact, the diversion of the Armies in a rapid advance across FRANCE was a change from the original plan which was to secure the BRITTANY PORTS prior to attempting an exploitation. To date only the port of CHERBOURG was operating and this in not full capacity. The port of BREST, only recently captured, was discovered to be almost completely destroyed and found to be of no value. This discovery was the influencing factor in the decision to abandon the original plan of capturing the other BRITTANY PORTS. (6)

By early September the Armies had advanced to the point where our overextended supply lines were having a material

(4) A-6, p. 39
(5) A-6, p. 50
(6) A-6, p. 46-47

restraining effect on the scope of operations. (7) Aircraft of the Troop Carrier Command were utilized to help relieve the situation but were not available in sufficient quantity to entirely alleviate the critical condition. (The factor influencing the availability of aircraft will be brought out in a subsequent paragraph.)

Attention was now focused on the necessity of capturing the huge port of ANTWERP. The capture of this port was realized as being essential to the support of the Armies as they advanced toward GERMANY. (8) To expedite this capture, and to further exploit the rapid advance of the 21st Army Group in the north, the Supreme Commander decided to divert the bulk of his supplies to Montgomery's forces in order to insure their ability to continue the advance. Second priority, in the matter of supplies, was given to General Bradley's 12th Army Group on Montgomery's right so that he could protect the flank of the Northern Army Group. (9) In addition to the capture of the port of ANTWERP the strategy involved the advance of the 21st Army Group to the north and the attack of the RUHR from the northwest. (See Map A) (10)

On 8 August 1944 the First Allied Airborne Army was activated in ENGLAND under the command of Lt. General Brereton, formerly commanding general of the Ninth Air Force. (11) This army was to be made up of all Allied airborne units and sufficient troop carrier aircraft to transport it. It was given the mission of preparing itself for action in the immediate future. Combined training was carried on within the restrictions imposed by the lack of aircraft. The Supreme Commander had found

(7) A-6, p. 60; A-9, p. 70
(8) A-6, p. 62
(9) A-8, p. 198
(10) A-6, p. 62
(11) A-2, p. 5

it necessary to divert some troop carrier aircraft from the Army to use in supplying the forces in FRANCE. (12)

When the decision had been reached by the Supreme Commander to exploit the 21st Army Group, the First Allied Airborne Army was allocated to Montgomery. (13) Several airborne operations were planned in rapid succession but the ground armies reached the airborne objectives before the missions could be executed. (14) These dry runs served the purpose of giving the newly formed airborne army staff experience in planning large scale airborne operations.

OPERATION MARKET GARDEN

Operation Market Garden was born about 10 September 1944. (15) The general plan involved the use of elements of the Airborne Army to seize the vital bridges over the MAAS, the WAAL, and the RHINE (LEK) in the path of the advance of the Second British Army. This phase of the operation to be known as "Market". The ground effort, to be known as Operation Garden, was to be executed by the 30th British Corps, spearheaded by the Guards Armored Division. The Corps had the mission of advancing from the general line of the ALBERT ESCAUT CANALS to the ZUIDER ZEE and initially cutting off the enemy troops in western HOLLAND. The advance of our troops on the ground was to be in a very narrow corridor through the towns of EINDHOVEN, NIJMEGEN, and ARNHEM. In general one road was to be used most of the way. (16) (See Map A)

The First Airborne Army consisted of two Corps; the American XVIII, composed of the 82d and 101st Airborne Divisions, and

(12) A-6, p. 49
(13) A-8, p. 198
(14) Personal knowledge
(15) A-2, p. 9
(16) A-9, p. 71; A-8, p. 227; A-2, p. 9

British Airborne Corps, composed of the 1st British Airborne Division, the 1st Polish Parachute Brigade and the 53d Lowlands Division (Air Transportable). For the purpose of this operation the American Divisions were attached to the British Corps and this Corps was given the responsibility for executing the detailed planning in coordination with the Troop Carrier Forces. General Brereton further directed that the British Airborne Corps land with the airborne elements of the assault forces and take command of operations on the ground until a link-up with the 30th Corps was effected. (17) The XVIII Corps was given the responsibility of supervising the aerial resupply phase of the operations. (18)

The detailed plan as announced, called for the operation to be executed in daylight hours on 17 September 1944. Two air corridors were to be used in the flight from ENGLAND. (See Map A) Drop zones were designated as follows: 1st Airborne Division with the 1st Polish Parachute Brigade to drop in the vicinity of ARNHEM, the 82d Division in the vicinity of NIJMEGEN and the 101st Division generally around EINDHOVEN. The 52d Lowlands Division (Air transportable) was to be landed in the vicinity of ARNHEM as soon as airstrips could be prepared. (19)

In arriving at these decisions the current enemy situation had been carefully considered. The location of flak guns, the enemy day and night fighter capabilities, and the location of enemy ground forces were the primary factors weighed in arriving at these decisions peculiar to airborne operations. The flak was expected to be fairly heavy on the northern route from flak barges off the Dutch Coast, and on the southern route from

(17) A-2, p. 10
(18) A-9, p. 85
(19) Personal knowledge

the front line troops that it would be necessary to pass over. Enemy fighter activity was expected to be at a minimum. (20) The 15th German Army was known to be evacuating WESTERN HOLLAND and the 7th and 5th Panzer Armies had formed a line along the ALBERT CANAL and south to the ARDENNES. In the area of our operations elements of the 5th Infantry Division were thought to be present along with the 347th, 712th and 719th Infantry Divisions. One badly shot up Panzer Division was known to be in the ARNHEM area. Generally speaking the enemy forces in this area were disorganized or in the process of reorganization. Our rapid advance to date had done much toward hampering communications, supply lines and the maintenance of the integrity of the units. In spite of these difficulties the combat efficiency of the units was reported to be fairly good, however, they were lacking in equipment giving us a slight edge in overall efficiency. (21)

The weather conditions for the operation were expected to be good and no difficulty was anticipated in mounting the airborne phase. (22) Logistical support for the airborne units was to be initially by air until contact with the ground forces was made. A series of parachute drops containing rations, ammunition and medical supplies was scheduled in advance. These drops were to be automatic for the first four days and consisted of about 264 tons daily for each American Division. (23)

The terrain in the area of operations was considered to be only fair for airborne operations. (24)

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(20) A-2, p. 11, 12, 13; A-3, p. 6
(21) A-5, Annex: A-2, p. 14
(22) A-3, p. 6
(23) A-9, p. 83
(24) A-5, Annex

THE DISPOSITIONS AND PLANS OF THE 82D AIRBORNE DIVISION

The 82d Airborne Division, consisting of three parachute, and one glider Regiments was in ENGLAND, in the vicinity of LEICESTER and NOTTINGHAM, reorganizing and re-equipping after operations in NORMANDY. The general mission given the division was to land by parachute and glider and seize and hold the highway bridges across the MAAS RIVER at GRAVE, the WAAL at NIJMEGEN and the high ground between NIJMEGEN and GROESBEEK. In addition a general perimeter was prescribed, as indicated on Map B. (25)

Due to the overall size of the operation the availability of aircraft was limited. The three parachute regiments plus one battalion of artillery, the engineer battalion and elements of the Division Headquarters were to drop by parachute on D-Day. Fifty gliders, of the 1,002 normally required, were to be landed initially. The rest of the gliders were to come in on D plus 1 and 2. (26)

The 504th P.I.R. was given the mission of securing the bridge at GRAVE, dropping on Drop Zone O, and to assist in the capture of the 4 bridges across the MASS-WAAL Canal. The 505th, to be dropped south of GROESBEEK on Drop Zone N was to organize and defend the GROESBEEK HEIGHTS and attack the two southernmost bridges across the MAAS-WAAL CANAL tying in with elements of the 504th. The 508th was to drop on Drop Zone T with the most difficult missions assigned. (27) To hold Drop Zone T for the landing of the gliders on D plus 1. To hold the high ground from WYLER to NIJMEGEN and to establish road blocks along the base of the hills. This side of its front alone was almost five miles long. Also it was to assist the 504th in capturing

(25) A-7
(26) A-9, p. 99; A-8, p. 227; Personal knowledge
(27) A-9, p. 105

the two northern bridges on the MAAS-WAAL CANAL. Finally, to be prepared to seize the bridge across the WAAL at NIJMEGEN. (See Map B) (28)

THE SITUATION OF THE 508TH PARACHUTE INFANTRY REGIMENT

The 508th was presently located at its base camp in NOTTINGHAM, ENGLAND. This regiment was not originally a part of the 82d Division but had been assigned to the division in January of 1944. (29) After participating in the NORMANDY invasion the unit was returned to ENGLAND about 14 July 1944. The regiment had suffered heavily in casualties and had left what little equipment it had in FRANCE. (30) The task of re-organizing was a great one and required the full time efforts of everyone, especially the supply personnel.

Because of the large number of replacements that had been required to bring the unit back to its effective strength an intensive training program had been undertaken in an attempt to restore the combat efficiency of the regiment. Although the surviving officers and men had profited greatly by their combat experience, it was a difficult task to attempt to reach the peak of efficiency that the regiment had possessed prior to the jump in NORMANDY. The 508th had been the first parachute regiment to receive men directly from the induction center and take them through all phases of training, including jump training, as a unit. Because these men had been carefully selected initially there had been a very small turnover since the regiment was activated in the fall of 1942. Every man had become a highly trained fighting machine capable of individual or group opera-

(28) A-5, p. 2; A-9; p. 98
(29) Personal knowledge
(30) Personal knowledge

tion. (31) These facts are brought out by the writer in defense of the opinion that it is a waste of highly trained specialists to employ airborne units in long periods of sustained combat.

While the units of the regiments were training, supply personnel were engaged in equipping the outfit. As in previous operations the need for special authorizations in individual and crew served weapons was recognized by the commanders and supply services. (32) Within certain limitations imposed by space and weight and the higher commanders, smaller units were allowed to arm themselves pretty much as desired. This was particularily true of the individual weapons. (33) Battle lessons learned in NORMANDY had decreed an abundance of automatic weapons when fighting in hedgerow country. The terrain in HOLLAND was reported to be generally open, and with longer fields of fire. In anticipation of this the majority of men were equipped with M-1 rifles in respect to their own preference. (35) Incorporating other minor variations in the quantity and type of equipment, brought about by the experiences of the various commanders, the supply phase of the preparation for combat proceeded according to plan.

Intelligence information received from higher headquarters indicated a number of troops in the vicinity of NIJMEGEN. About 4000, or more, S. S. Troops were known to have recently moved from ARNHEM and to be presently quartered in barracks in NIJMEGEN. Other troop units were known to be quartered in two colleges on the outskirts of town. Flak reports indicated that they were approximately ten light and thirty-three heavy anti-

(31) Personal knowledge
(32) A-1, p. 5
(33) Personal knowledge
(35) Personal knowledge

aircraft guns in the immediate vicinity and that their employment in the duel role of an anti-aircraft or ground weapon was normal. In addition small detachments of labor troops were known to be in the 508th's area. (36)

The principle terrain feature in the area was the high ground south of NIJMEGEN, the immediate objective of the 3d Battalion, 508th. This hill mass was the only high ground in HOLLAND, and in order to control the surrounding area it must be kept in our hands. The principle road running through the zone was the main road from EINDHOVEN through NIJMEGEN to ARNHEM. The area was capable of being inundated, consequently all roads were built up above the surface of the ground. A number of canals and waterways ran through the area making all bridges assume tactical importance. (37)

PLAN OF THE 508TH PARACHUTE INFANTRY REGIMENT

As has been previously stated the 508th was to land south of NIJMEGEN with the mission of seizing the key terrain, mentioned in the preceeding paragraph, securing the glider landing zone, establish road blocks and to assist in seizing two bridges across the MAAS-WAAL CANAL. To accomplish this mission the 3d Battalion was to initially seize and organize the high ground from WYLER to NIJMEGEN, a distance of about five miles, establishing such road blocks as were necessary to deny the enemy access to the area. The 2d Battalion, less D Company, was to contact the 504th by attacking the two bridges across the MAAS-WAAL CANAL at HATERT and HONINGHUITE, and to establish road blocks and security in the northwestern sector of the regimental

(36) A-5, Annex
(37) A-5, Annex

area. The 1st Battalion was to attack the village of DE PLOEG, with a further mission of attacking the railroad and highway bridges across the WAAL at NIJMEGEN. The division commander anticipated that at least a regimental combat team would be needed to capture these bridges, but wishing to take every advantage of surprise, he ordered the regimental commander to commit one battalion in the effort as soon as possible. However, the regimental commander was given full authority to deviate from this mission if the integrity of the rest of his area was threatened. D Company was ordered to secure the drop zone for the glider landings on D plus one. Although no reserve was constituted as such it was contemplated that the 1st Battalion would be made available to act in this role if needed. The mission of the regiment was one of attack and defense. To initially seize certain objectives and then to hold them until ground forces had taken over the area. It was planned that elements of the Guards Armored Division would reach the 508th on D plus one. (38)

FINAL PREPARATION AT BASE CAMP, MOVEMENT TO AIR FIELDS

With the mission announced to all commanders, that phase of preparation to be completed at the base camp was rushed to a conclusion. Crew served weapons, ammunition, communication equipment and everything necessary for the assault stage of the operation was rolled into aerial containers, marked for easy identification, and loaded on trucks to be transported to the airfields. All personal belongings left behind were stored in mess halls.

(38) A-5, p. 3; A-4, p. 104; Personal knowledge

routine matters are SOP and were not actually planned specifically for this operation. They did, of course, include the latest combat lessons learned. The following details are brought out to acquaint the reader who has not had airborne experience with the details of airborne operations, and further to impress upon the reader the importance of the recovery of the equipment bundles.

SUPPLY PLANS AND PREPARATIONS AT THE AIR FIELDS, 15,16 SEPTEMBER

The Parachute Infanrty soldier has two ways of getting the equipment that he needs to fight with to the ground. One is on his person, and the other is an aerial delivery container. The considerations governing the amount of equipment that he can jump with are several. He wants to have enough ammunition and rations to sustain himself as long as possible and yet not interfere with his mobility. He can carry nothing that will interfere with the functioning of his parachute, or that may cause him injury when landing. NORMANDY had taught us that a lot we thought necessary could have been left behind. For the HOLLAND jump each man carried, in addition to his individual weapon and basic load, his gas mask, one K ration, two D rations, two gammon grenades, two fragmentation grenades, one WP grenade and his mussette bag, containing essential personal equipment. The largest article omitted was the anti-tank mine carried by each individual jumping into NORMANDY. (41)

The aerial delivery containers, commonly called bundles, were loaded into para-racks located on the belly of each ship or carried inside, conforming to the tactical loading of the

(41) Personal knowledge

aircraft. In other words, if a squad was loaded on one ship the bundles containing it's crew served weapons and ammunition would also be carried in that aircraft. A platoon consisted of 3 rifle squads and one 60 mm mortar squad. Each rifle squad contained 1 LMG team, 1 BAR team and 5 riflemen. This platoon required 3 aircraft to transport it, and 18 bundles for it's equipment. These bundles were loaded as follows:

3 bundles, each containing one LMG and four boxes of ammunition.

3 bundles, each containing seven boxes of machine gun ammunition.

5 bundles each containing 20 rounds of 60 mm ammunition.

1 bundle containing one 60 mm mortar complete.

3 bundles containing anti-tank mines.

1 bundle containing rifle grenades.

1 bundle containing one rocket launcher and ammunition.

1 bundle containing medical supplies. (42)

The loading plan for other units was basically the same, modified only to fit the different types and quantity of equipment. The basic load of ammunition, medical supplies, signal supplies, spare parts for weapons, CP equipment, maps, and everything that a unit needs to fight were dropped in these containers. In effect these bundles constituted the combat trains of the unit. The number of bundles carried was of course limited by the number of aircraft. No aircraft was allowed to go partially loaded. After all T/O & E equipment and basic loads were rolled into bundles, there was space left for approximately twenty bundles. These were loaded with mortar ammunition,

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(42) A-12; Personal knowledge

batteries, mines and demolition material in excess of the amount authorized. These additional supplies came in very handy a few days later, replacing lost bundles.

For the purpose of identification each bundle was marked with a symbol for the unit to which it belonged and the color of the parachute attached to the bundle indicated the type of supplies it contained. Blue for weapons, (rations on resupply drops) green for Class III, red for Class V and white for Medical and signal. The importance of recovery of these bundles becomes more apparent as one realizes that they contain all the units fighting equipment.

There were two more echelons of the regiment in this attack on NIJMEGEN. Four one quarter ton trucks and trailers were to be brought in on D plus 1 by Glider. These gliders were not a part of the regimental serials but were under division control. The rest of the regiments transportation, amounting to 20 2 1/2 ton trucks, 11 1 ton trailers, 2 ambulances, 9 1/4 ton trucks and 5 1/4 ton trailers was to constitute the seaborne echelon. The vehicles contained the kitchens, kitchen personnel, bedrolls, maintenance personnel and equipment and other organizational property normally carried in field trains. This echelon remained in the base camp to move to a staging area on order of XVIII Corps. No definite date was set for its arrival in HOLLAND but it was expected to arrive by D plus 15. Until it did, no one would eat a hot meal or have access to any personal equipment that was not carried by the individual. Further, the regiment would have no organic transportation other than 4 Jeeps.

As was previously stated re-supply for the division would be by air, automatically for the first 4 days. The regiment was to assist the division in recovering the resupply, by furnishing a 30 man detail under the supervision of the regimental munitions officer. Supplies would then be issued by the supply service concerned upon demand. The division supply points were to be located in the vicinity of the re-supply drop zones. (Drop Zones T and O) Evacuation of casualties was to be to the division clearing station where they were to be held until they could be evacuated through British channels. (43) Normal ammunition and G-4 reports were required to be submitted effective upon landing.

While at the airfields all personnel were thoroughly briefed in all phases of the mission. Dispersion over wide areas due to weather, enemy activity, or other causes, is always a definite possibility in Airborne Operations. To enable small groups to reach the objective and to conduct their activities so as to contribute to the advantage of the unit as a whole, it is necessary that each and every man know the job that the unit is to do. Wide distribution was also given to maps and photographs. (44)

Following the briefing the final pilot jump master conference was held. The foremost question in everyone's mind was the flak and enemy aircraft that we expected to encounter. The 508th, flying the northern route, was expected to pass over a considerable number of flak guns. It was hoped that some of them would be neutralized by combat aircraft prior to the time we passed over the area. The air support plan included the use

(43) A-5, Adm O.; Personal knowledge
(44) Personal knowledge

of British and American Bombers and Fighters to attack airfields and flak installations throughout the general area of our operations. Fighter cover for the 1544 Troop Carrier Planes and 478 Gliders in the initial D-Day lift consisted of 371 British and 548 American Fighters. These aircraft were to fly cover below around and above the troop carrier aircraft. (45) The provisions for air-sea rescue were discussed, check points gone over and last minute weather reports checked. When the conference ended everything that could be done to insure the success of the operation had been coordinated. In spite of the ambitious nature of the plan, with the 508th jumping some 50 miles in front of friendly troops, everyone had confidence in the ability of our troops to defeat the enemy wherever we met him.

D-DAY 17 SEPTEMBER 1944

The morning was cloudy with a ceiling of about 1000 feet. Nothing remained to be done except the loading of personnel on the aircraft. Amid a feeling of unbelief, that after standing here on this peaceful airport in ENGLAND a few hours would find us far behind enemy lines, the planes were loaded. At ten hundred hours the first elements of the 508th were airborne proceeding toward their objectives in three serials, 1st Battalion, 2nd Battalion, and 3rd Battalion.

After reaching the channel the sky cleared and was cloudless the rest of the way to our destination. As we passed over the coast of HOLLAND the first signs of enemy flak could be seen bursting throughout the column. (46) The fighter aircraft es-

(45) A-14, p. 346; Personal knowledge
(46) Personal knowledge

corting the paratroopers took the AA guns under fire and effectively reduced the volume of enemy fire. The flight over the peaceful pastoral landscape was uneventful until about 15 minutes from the drop zone when fairly heavy AA fire took the aerial train under attack. Machine gun, 20 mm, and 88 projectiles could be seen and heard striking and bursting throughout the flight. Fortunately casualties among the troopers were light. (47)

The planes approached the drop zone exactly on course and schedule in the face of medium to heavy AA fire from the vicinity of NIJMEGEN and the drop zone. The regiment parachuted to earth at 1323 hours. (48)

The regimental headquarters, 1st and 2nd Battalions landed directly on Drop Zone T with the 3d Battalion landing about 700 yards to the southeast. One of the aircraft crash landed on the drop zone and the troopers were seen to walk from the aircraft with their parachutes still on their backs. The drop pattern was confined to a small area greatly facilitating assembly. Resistance on the drop zone was initially light consisting primarily of 20 mm AA weapons and their crews. Most of the gun crews rapidly withdrew when the 2000 odd paratroopers descended upon them. By 1500 hours all units had moved from the drop zone toward their initial objectives.

The regimental supply section consisting of two officers and 6 EM remained on the drop zone to recover all equipment and supplies that had not been carried off by the units of the regiment. A temporary regimental supply dump was to be established on the drop zone. (See Map C) No effort was to be made

(47) Personal knowledge; A-11
(48) Personal experience

to recover the personnel and equipment parachutes at this time. Most of them had been carried off of the open fields into wooded areas so as to be concealed from aerial observation. A number of them also were carried off by troopers to be used in lieu of bedding.

D Company had reverted to regimental control upon landing, and less one squad, the executive officer, and other headquarters personnel, were taking up positions on the drop zone. The missing personnel in D Company had been forced to jump about 2 minutes from the drop zone, when the right motor of their plane was shot off. From its positions in the vicinity of the drop zone, D Company patrolled as far as the WYLER KAMP ROAD. (See Map C). (49)

In the meantime the 1st and 3rd Battalions had captured their initial objectives by 1855 hours. (50) The 2nd Battalion having the furtherest to go did not secure their initial objective until 2030 hours.

The 1st Battalion, after organizing a defensive position in the vicinity of DE PLOEG, sent A and B Companies, re-enforced with the 81 mm Platoon and a light machine gun squad from battalion headquarters, into NIJMEGEN. They were ordered to feel out the defenses of the city particularly the highway bridge across the WAAL, and if possible secure it. With the regiment scattered from NIJMEGEN to GROESBEEK and from WYLER to HATERT, and with no regimental reserve, a larger force could not be spared.

To acquaint the reader with the organization of this parachute regiment, it might be well to explain it at this time.

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(49) Personal knowledge
(50) Personal knowledge; A-11, A-14, p. 346

The regiment consisted of 3 battalions. Each battalion having 3 rifle companies and a battalion headquarters company, the battalion headquarters company, in addition to its other platoons had a four gun 81 mm platoon and a four gun light machine gun platoon. Without weapons companies the lettering of the rifle companies within the battalions became somewhat different. The 1st Battalion consisted of A, B, and C Companies, the second of D, E, and F Companies and the third of G, H, and I. The TO strength of a rifle company was about 120 EM and 8 officers. (51)

As A and B Companies advanced into NIJMEGEN they were joyfully welcomed by the Dutch Burghers. Without making any reconnaissance they pushed on into the city encountering only a few scattered enemy. (52) Just after dark they approached a traffic circle about 8 or 10 blocks from the highway bridge. The enemy appeared in force and directed heavy fire upon our troops completely halting their advance. A heavy fire fight continued the rest of the night. Meanwhile the CO of A Company took his 2nd Platoon and set out to destroy the control tower for the bridge demolitions that had been reported by the Dutch underground to be nearby. (53)

The building was located and was found to be heavily defended by infantry with machine guns and automatic AA weapons. A fierce fight developed and ended suddenly when one of the sergeants in the platoon dashed up to the building and threw some hand grenades through a window. The building was set on fire and the enemy withdrew. No attempt was made to use the demolition equipment. In attempting to return to their unit

(51) Personal knowledge
(52) A-18, p. 43
(53) A-18, p. 44

this A Company Platoon was cut off in the city, and was forced to remain there until British Armor entered the city. (54)

The 3d Battalion also made an effort to reach tne NIJMEGEN bridge on D-Day. G Company was sent in from a different direction but met with no more success than had A Company. After fighting all night they finally approached to within 400 yards of the bridge. (55)

The regimental CP was located as shown on Map C. Other than the action described so far no enemy contact in strength was reported throughout the day. Reports from units at the end of D Day indicated that all personnel had been accounted for, except the plane from D Company and the personnel from 2 other aircraft that were seen to drop about 2000 yards east of the drop zone. All of these troopers eventually rejoined their units.

The rapid assembly of the unit and the speed with which the initial objectives were taken were the direct result of a highly successful parachute landing, plus the fact that light enemy resistance was encountered on the drop zone.

Darkness found all elements of the regiment occupying their initial objectives and preparing to hold them against the counter-attacks that would probably be forthcoming. Supply personnel on the drop zone worked as long as they could see recovering supplies and equipment, without any enemy interference. The task of recovering this equipment was tremendous and of vital importance. As can be readily understood, it was impossible for the combat troops to carry the complete basic load dropped in equipment bundles and maintain their mobility. Neither could they remain on the drop zone to recover and store all the sup-

(54) Personal knowledge
(55) Personal knowledge; A-10, p. 46

plies, at the expense of neglecting their mission. The supply personnel of the companies and battalions remained on the drop zone, and assisted the regimental S-4 in the recovery of supplies for their respective units. In some cases they made several trips between the drop zone and their organizations carrying ammunition and supplies to them. The difficulties of battalion S-4's to establish supply points for their units was magnified by the distance from the drop zone to the objectives and the size of the area covered by each unit. Also the fact that the defenses of the Regiment were not mutually supporting and that there were 1000 yard gaps in the defense perimeter made it difficult to locate a safe place to store any supplies. (56)

The problems of the regimental S-4 were somewhat different in that he, at this time, was primarily interested in collecting everything left on the drop zone and not immediately concerned with getting the supplies to the front line units. Of course, the S-4 realized his responsibility in that effort and assured himself that the battalion supply officers were acting according to the SOP for this phase of supply operations.

The temporary location of the regimental supply dump had been designated as the drop zone. As soon as transportation or sufficient carrying personnel were available it was to be moved to a safer location in the vicinity of the regimental CP.

As indicated on Map C, the drop zone was on the eastern flank of the area with only elements of a company between it and Germany. Insofar as a glider landing was to take place in this area on D plus 1 it was not anticipated that the enemy would be able to launch a large scale offensive before this echelon

(56) Personal knowledge

of the division arrived. In view of that and because of the other committments of the regiment a company was all that was spared for protecting the drop zone. This planning led to an unexpected turn of events on the following day.

D PLUS 1 - 18 SEPTEMBER 1944

In the early hours of the morning a platoon from E Company, reinforced, attack the railroad and highway bridge across the MASS-WAAL CANAL at HONINGHUTIE. The bridges were strongly defended and before they could be captured the railroad bridge had been destroyed and the highway bridge slightly damaged. At the cost of half the platoon the bridges were finally seized and held until the 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment sent relief in the AM. (57) (See Map D)

The Commanding Officer of the 1st Battalion ordered A Company out of NIJMEGEN shortly after daylight and left B Company to maintain contact with the enemy. The 1st Battalion had been ordered to reorganize and be prepared to attack either toward WYLER, from which direction a threat was developing or to support G Company that was still fighting in NIJMEGEN. G Company was ordered to withdraw from NIJMEGEN, in order to strengthen the regimental positions, shortly after the 1st Battalion received its order. This, of course, left the 1st Battalion available for the threat from WYLER. (58)

In the meantime D Company and the supply personnel on the drop zone were hit by a counterattack from the southeast, just as they were crawling out of their parachute lined fox holes. The attack developed slowly at first and appeared to be only a

(57) A-18, p. 47
(58) A-18, p. 46-47; Personal knowledge

series of patrol actions. (59) The company commander reorganized his forces to block the most likely avenues of approach and so that he could most effectively cover his mile of frontage. (See Map E) Supply personnel hurried to complete recovery operations, but were unable to recover a number of bundles that were now under fire from 20 mm AA guns. It is interesting to note that these guns had been abandoned or captured when the regiment landed but that they had not been rendered ineffective. These guns were now teaching us a not to be forgotten lesson.

Recovery efforts were abandoned when one of the supply personnel was killed by this increasingly heavy volume of fire. Efforts were now concentrated on moving as many of the recovered supplies as possible out of the danger area. A horse and wagon was taken from a farmhouse in the vicinity of the drop zone and as many supplies as possible were loaded on to it. Enemy fire suddenly increased in intensity making it impossible to move the wagon out of defilade.

Just prior to this time a messenger had arrived from the regimental CP ordering either the S-4 or assistant S-4 to come to the regimental CP at once. Also to bring as many SCR 300 radio batteries as possible. The S-4 left immediately taking with him 4 of the 12 batteries that had been recovered.

From then on the situation developed rapidly. D Company had lost contact with their 1st and 2nd Platoons. After ordering elements of the 3rd Platoon to join him the company commander went to investigate. When they were fired on from the 2nd Platoon's positions in VOXHILL, (See Map E) by a German machine gun, they correctly surmised that this platoon had been

(59) Personal knowledge

surprised and captured intact. The company commander was also unable to locate the 1st Platoon and being unable to disengage themselves remained in his present position. (See Map E) (60)

The enemy, capitalizing upon their success, now launched a determined attack from the east directly towards the drop zone. The rest of D Company took the enemy under effective fire and halted their advance about 250 yards from it's positions. The enemy occupying the old 2nd Platoon position attacked, in a secondary effort, directly across the drop zone from VOXHILL. (See Map E) The assistant S-4 immediately organized the supply personnel and D Company headquarters personnel on a defensive position. This force was able to bring heavy fire upon the attackers utilizing the weapons and ammunitions available in the supply dump. A 60 mm tube that was recovered was pressed into action. Firing as rapidly as possible without a base plate or bipod surprisingly accurate fire was delivered on the enemy and the attack momentarily halted. The neglect of some unit in not recovering its organic mortar had helped save the day in this area.

About eight aircraft appeared over the area at this time. Thinking they were friendly the defensive group hurriedly looked for an orange smoke grenade to identify themselves. Before one could be located the aircraft were identified as enemy. Failing to recognize their own troops, these aircraft contributed heavily to the defeat of the attackers by strafing them several times. (61)

In the meantime the assistant S-4 had contacted the regimental CO on the D Company SCR 300 and notified him of the critical situation. The CO said to hold at all costs to save

(60) Personal knowledge
(61) Personal experience

the vital supplies and that he would order the 1st Battalion to counterattack at once. He also stated that he would try to get a forward observer to come forward immediately and adjust artillery fire on the drop zone. The assistant S-4 accurately located the friendly forces on the ground by map and the CO caused some fire to be delivered shortly thereafter. (62)

The 1st Battalion having been ordered to counterattack, sent C Company forward to seize a line of departure just northwest of the drop zone and recalled B Company from NIJMEGEN to assist in the attack. (63)

Back on the drop zone D Company was fighting a delaying action and almost everyone was pinned to the ground. The 1st glider lift was due to land on this drop zone at 1400 hours and as of noon it was principally occupied by the enemy. (64)

At 1230 hours the situation improved when the 1st Battalion, with B and C Companies abreast and A in reserve, debouched from the woods to the north of the drop zone. (See Map E) In the face of heavy 20 MM fire they rapidly advanced on the flank and rear of the enemy. The elements of the 3rd Platoon of D Company were in the path of the attack and opened fire on what they thought were enemy troops. The 1st Battalion promptly returned this fire and before mutual recognition was effected at least one man was wounded. (65)

As soon as the 1st Battalion started their attack the enemy lifted his fire from the supply group and concentrated on this new threat. The S-4 personnel immediately set out in the direction of regimental CP with their wagon and all they could carry. (See Map D) This actually amounted to about 1000 lbs

(62) Personal experience
(63) A-18, p. 17
(64) Personal knowledge
(65) A-12

of supplies. About 3/4 of a mile from the drop zone the small group was strafed by an enemy fighter but miraculously came through unscathed. This group was traveling across country, and as the soil was soft the going was pitifully slow. About half way to the regimental CP, the 1st Battalion S-4 happened across the supply group as he was searching for some lost equipment bundles. He had a group of about 10 men with him and as his unit was the most heavily committed at the time the assistant S-4 turned over to him the bulk of supplies, including the nearly worn out horse and cart. The supply group continued on now carrying only the regimental supply of batteries and some signal equipment. When the group reached the 3rd Battalion area a message was sent to the 3rd Battalion S-4 notifying him that the 1st Battalion had what extra ammunition was presently available. Without further incident the group reached the regimental CP and after notifying the regimental CO and S-4 of its actions established a supply point, without supplies, a short distance from the CP. (66)

While the supply group was making its cross country trek, the 1st Battalion continued its attack and by 1400 had secured the drop zone. The timing was perfect and the gliders started to land just as the battalion finished its job. 16 AA guns and 149 prisoners were captured, most of the AA guns for the second time. (67) The glider landings were generally successful, with 413 of the 450 arriving safely. (68) Of the missing a number were seen to land beyond the drop zone in enemy territory. These gliders brought in a battery of AA, 3 battalions of artillery, a medical company and four 1/4 ton trucks and trailers for

(66) Personal experience
(67) A-7, p. 3
(68) A-7

each regiment. All four of the 508th vehicles arrived safely. The 319th Field Artillery Battalion arriving in this lift was placed in direct support of the 508th. (69)

Following the glider landing by about 10 to 20 minutes 135 B-24 bombers dropped 261 tons of supplies. (70) The drop was scattered and a large number of bundles landed in no man's land and had to be recovered after dark. Depending upon various estimates about 60 to 80% of this drop was recovered. (71) The recovery was a tremendous task and everyone the division could spare was used to assist, including the glider pilots. (72) It is General Gavin's opinion that 1/3 of a combat force is necessary to recover and handle resupply by parachute. (73)

Throughout the rest of the 508th sector the enemy continued sporadic and uncoordinated small scale aggressive efforts. Pressure was increasing along the WYLER, BEEK, GROESBEEK front. Most of the activity was originating from the southeast. (74) The only troops remaining in NIJMEGEN at the present time were the platoon from A Company cut off near the bridge. The 1st Battalion was now located from WYLER to KAMP along the drop zone. The 3rd Battalion was in its organized positions in the vicinity of BERG EN DAL. The 2nd Battalion was just south of NIJMEGEN maintaining contact with the 504th at HONINGHUITE and HATERT.

By the end of the 18th shortages were developing in certain supplies. One of the 1/4 ton trucks that had arrived with the gliders was made available to the supply section and some additional supplies were recovered from the vicinity of the drop zone. By now, however, the drop zone had been fought over

(69) A-7, p. 4
(70) A-4, p. 5
(71) A-4, p. 5; A-9, p. 109
(72) A-9, p. 109
(73) A-9, p. 109
(74) Personal knowledge

twice and some equipment and supplies not previously recovered had been damaged. The other battalion supply officers were notified to make similar searches and to insure that supplies on hand were carefully conserved. A battle losses report was submitted to the division to be forwarded to the United Kingdom and included in the first available resupply. A trip was made to the division supply points and some rations and ammunitions from the resupply were drawn at that time. The Regimental Ammunition Sergeant and five men remained at division to help secure bundles. The rations drawn from division were distributed to the troops on the 18th, but sufficient quantity was not available to issue each man a complete ration. (75)

Perhaps the most critical shortage of supplies at this time was in batteries. The use of wire communication was limited because of the distances involved between units. Consequently the drain on the small stock of batteries was heavy.

To sum up the supply situation on D plus 1 it can be said that as usual in airborne operations everything was in short supply.

D PLUS 2, 19 SEPTEMBER 44

The day started off with everyone being cheered by the news of the British Guards Armored Division contacting elements of the 82nd Division at 0830. (76) This contact made additional troops available within the airhead and resulted in a change in the missions of the 508th. The 2nd Battalion of the 504th P.I.R. relieved the 508th's 2nd Battalion, which was ordered to take up positions from KAMP to VOXHILL to strengthen the south-

(75) Personal knowledge
(76) A-9, p. 104

east portion of the airhead. The mission of taking the NIJMEGEN bridges was given to elements of the 504th and 505th P.I.R.'s with British Armor attached. The 508th was further ordered to secure the highway from NIJMEGEN to WYLER to prevent resupply of the defenders in NIJMEGEN. (See Map F)

BEEK was seized by the 3rd Battalion and a strong road block established there. Throughout the 19th, this road block resisted strong enemy counterattacks. A Company with a platoon of G Company attached, attacked HILL 759. (See Map F) One of the fiercest fights of the campaign resulted, and only out of sheer determination was the poorly supplied and understrength A Company able to remain on the objective. Initially surprising the enemy and taking the hill they resisted strong counterattacks throughout the day and night. (77)

B Company jumped off the same time as A Company and captured WYLER establishing strong road blocks reenforced by 2 57 mm guns from B Battery of the 80th Airborne AA Battalion. (78)

The 508th repelled counterattacks throughout its sector all during the 19th, and tenaciously held onto it's positions in the face of ever increasing resistance. (79)

The resupply for the division was delivered late in the afternoon with a serious setback. The weather was so bad only 60 aircraft had been dispatched and of the 60 only 36 dropped supplies. The drop was made from an excessively high altitude and only a negligible amount was recovered. (80) The weather also resulted in the cancellation of the 325th Glider Infantry lift scheduled for D plus 2. This was also a serious setback as those troops were badly needed in capturing the NIJMEGEN

(77) A-10, p. 49; Personal knowledge
(78) A-18, p. 50
(79) Personal knowledge
(80) A-4, p. 5; A-9, p. 110

Bridge. The division was still without an effective reserve. The 508th had had all of its units committed since its arrival and was forced to take a unit away from one mission to be employed elsewhere when a reserve force was needed.

Rations in sufficient quantity for everyone were not available. After issuing all that could be drawn to the rifle companies the rations were supplemented with captured German items. On the evening of the 19th, the 508th was in serious need of mortar ammunition, medical supplies, signal supplies and rations. A requirement for mines was filled by division and these were utilized to re-enforce road blocks in the regimental area. No one was actually without ammunition, but on the other hand no one had anywhere near their basic load. (81)

The serious effect that weather has upon Airborne Operations was well illustrated this day. No reserves of supplies were on hand and an abortive air drop made the supply situation so critical that the success of the operation became marginal. (82)

Other than the continual recovery of supplies no operations were undertaken by the supply section of the 508th. Supply operations had become purely the mechanics of picking up what was rationed out by division according to the success of the air drop and passing it on to the units of the regiments. Until such time as the corridor leading into the airhead from the south was operational for supply vehicles, operations continued in the same manner. (83)

Rec [illegible] exp[illegible]

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(81) Personal knowledge; A-9, p. 110
(82) Personal opinion
(83) Personal knowledge

SUMMARY:

With the arrival of the Guard Armored Division the purely airborne phase of Operation Market was ended. Much hard fighting remained for the 508th before they were withdrawn, 54 days later, and the supply situation, by no means favorable at this point, was to become worse. (84) The author has attempted to point out what supply operations are conducted immediately prior to and following an airborne landing. Once regiment had contact with the ground forces the area occupied lost its identity as an airhead and soon reverted to a normal supply system.

The 508th had successfully carried on a daylight airborne operation involving a long flight across enemy territory and a parachute jump in the face of fairly heavy AA fire. Although the Regiment was stretched to its utmost it successfully accomplished its missions. The rapid assembly and movement to its initial objective had resulted in complete surprise demoralizing the enemy in most cases. Thus the 508th had capitalized on its most potent weapons, surprise and mass.

The NIJMEGEN bridges had not been captured. The mission although assigned had not been expected to be accomplished with the small force available to the 508th. Had the British units made contact with the Regiment as had been planned it is very possible that the bridge could have been taken without the terrific loss of life, later expended in the effort. This delay on the part of the British was not the fault of anyone except the enemy. (85)

For its "Superior gallantry, self sacrifice, and loyalty" (86) the 508th as part of the 82nd Airborne Division was award-

(84) Personal knowledge
(85) Personal opinion
(86) A-18, p. 117 (Quoted from citation)

ed the Militaire Willems Orde, Degree of Knight Fourth Class. This award included the authority for all members participating in this operation to wear the Orange Lanyard of the Royal Netherlands Army. This was the first award of this honor to any non Dutch unit.

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

1. DAYLIGHT OPERATIONS

The value of daylight operations was clearly demonstrated in this operation. This is not to say that this is always the case, as many factors will affect it. In planning this operation, for example, the enemy fighter capabilities were carefully analyzed. His ability to interfere at night, with his night fighter force in much better condition than his day fighters, was a consideration. That anti-aircraft fire would be more effective in daylight was a prime consideration. A transport aircraft, unarmored, without self sealing gas tanks, flying at slow speed is an excellent target for even small arms fire. The amount of enemy present in the area of operations and their ability to interfere must be reckoned with. Although greater surprise might be achieved at night this advantage is counter balanced with difficulty of assembling in darkness.

In this operation, the 508th was able to move, to its objectives within one and a half hours after dropping, giving the enemy little time to react. The fact that it was daylight assisted the pilots in finding the drop zone, and resulted in a near perfect landing pattern. This excellent landing pattern coupled with the lack of opposition on the drop zone are the

two factors that insured the rapid assembly of the unit and the recovery of the bulk of its supplies.

In my opinion the decision to drop the airborne units in daylight, in this particular operation, was the principle contributing factor to the success of the operation. It resulted in a great saving of man power and supplies in that the bulk of the personnel and equipment arrived on the drop zone ready for combat immediately.

2. THE MISSION AND OBJECTIVES

Operation Market Garden was in itself an ambitious plan. The objectives and missions assigned to the 82nd Division, and the 508th in particular, were correspondingly ambitious, and in the words of General Gavin, "The outcome of this operation was marginal the first few days."

The 508th was only able to attack the key NIJMEGEN bridge with a force of two companies, when the division commander himself believed that at least a regiment was necessary to take it. This bridge was one of the largest in HOLLAND and on the main route of advance of the ground forces. It had been designated in orders from higher headquarters as one of the principle targets of the operation and yet had to be neglected initially.

The area in which the 508th operated contained the highest ground in HOLLAND, and had to be dominated in order to make the rest of the area tenable. The west boundry of the regimental sector, along the MAAS-WAAL CANAL contained two bridges that had to be captured in order to insure lateral communication between elements of the division. The enormous area itself, not

considering these objectives, had to be cleared of enemy to prevent them from operating within our perimeter.

To accomplish all these missions the regiment was extended to the limit, and was not able to constitute a reserve until several days after landing. The defense employed by the regiment was not mutually supporting, and if one unit needed help it was necessary for another to be pulled off of its objective to assist them. The calculated risk taken in this plan put a great deal of faith in the inability of the enemy to counter-attack, and in the arrival of the ground forces according to schedule.

The missions assigned were actually beyond the normal capabilities of the regiment. They were assigned as a result of the planning of higher headquarters whom I believe placed too much weight on the assumptions that the enemy was disorganized, that the ground forces would not be delayed, and that the weather would permit continuous successful resupply.

3. PROTECTIONS OF DROP ZONES AND LANDING ZONES

The landing of the glider echelon on D plus 1 very nearly resulted in disaster. The 1st Battalion was still fighting on the outskirts of the landing zone when the gliders appeared overhead. This predicament came about because of insufficient measures being taken to secure this vital area. The reasons, of course, can be traced to the fact that there were just too many jobs for too few units. However, I believe the importance of this mission was not fully realized, and that it was somewhat neglected in the planning phase.

The landing zone was on the perimeter of the area, and,

after the battalions had moved to their objectives, was a considerable distance away from any other friendly troops. The actions of the higher commanders in minimizing the threat in this area was probably felt by the "D" Company commander and undoubtedly influenced his actions. The loss of one platoon was due to the lack of alertness on the part of the platoon leader, and of course increased the threat to the area.

When the danger was made known to the regimental commander he acted quickly and decisively and committed a sufficient force to insure its recapture. Nearly losing this area to the enemy brought home its importance. Had it not been recaptured it is quite possible that the majority of the gliders could have been lost and that the scheduled resupply drop would have fallen into enemy hands. No radio communication was available with the air force. To inform them of any last minute changes a message would have had to be relayed through XVIII Corps in ENGLAND.

4. RECOVERY OF EQUIPMENT BUNDLES

Although the majority of the equipment bundles initially dropped were recovered, enough of them were not to cause several shortages. Every bundle dropped contained essential equipment, and the loss of even one caused a shortage.

Sufficient personnel were not available to assist in the recovery of these bundles. There are no troops assigned within an airborne unit whose specific duty is recovery of bundles. Any personnel used in this task, other than the supply personnel in the combat echelon, must be taken from the fighting units. The question arises as to whether these riflemen are more urgent-

ly needed in their primary duty or whether some of them should be utilized initially in the recovery of equipment bundles. Ideally each company would collect all its own bundles and carry the supplies and equipment off the drop zone when they move to their objective. As has been brought out no transportation is available initially and it is impossible for the complete basic load to be hand carried at one time.

In any event some provision must be made in the prior planning for the immediate recovery and movement to a safe place of all bundles dropped. To go further every bundle must be recovered, even if it has to be fought for. One bundle containing a machine gun or a mortar might very well be decisive.

In this operation some bundles were unnecessarily damaged by enemy fire because they were not promptly recovered from the drop zone.

5. AERIAL RESUPPLY

Of the two resupply drops made only sixty to eighty per cent was recovered on the 18th and on the 19th the recovery was negligible. The Airborne unit being no different in that respect, than any other type unit needs constant dependable resupply to continue to operate. The loss of one days resupply load causes shortages that are felt immediately. Giving a resourceful enemy credit for knowing that weather conditions have curtailed aerial resupply operations they maybe expected to exploit this set back promptly.

Normally resupply missions are conducted at low altitudes by the same slow unarmored aircraft that carry the paratroopers and tow the gliders. These aircraft are not capable of satis-

factory performance in anything but good weather, and with little resistance from flak or fighters. By satisfactory performance I mean getting to the drop zone with everything that they started with, and do not mean to detract in any way from the heroic job performed by these aircraft throughout the war. If the success of the mission is to be guaranteed the resupply must either be dependable or sufficient quantity must be taken in with the initial drop to last until the ground supply lines are opened.

Well done Turkey

The resupply in this operation was directed at the division and not just the 508th. Not wishing to stray beyond the scope of the regiments operations, the resupply drops are considered objectively in the light of their effect on the status of supply in the 508th.

The results of a failure in the resupply system are immediately felt and have far reaching effect. The efficiency of a soldier is reduced by a shortage of rations and also by a feeling of being isolated. The shortage of ammunition means that the fight cannot be vigorously carried to the enemy. The enemy, becoming aware of this situation becomes a greater threat and the success of the entire operation hangs in balance.

6. DESTRUCTION OF ENEMY EQUIPMENT

The failure of the assault echelon to destroy the enemy weapons abandoned and captured on the drop zone resulted in many unnecessary casualties. This failure can be traced to either the lack of training, or the assumption by everyone concerned that ground once taken would not be lost. Obviously in a situation of this type, with all units over-extended and the

situation very flexible, ground is likely to change hands several times in the early stages of the campaign. Two courses of action are opened to the attacker in this case; either he must destroy the weapon or he must take it with him to use against the enemy. The latter is not desirable, except in an emergency, and only creates an additional supply problem.

7. ACTION OF THE ENEMY

The enemies action in attacking the poorly defended drop zone was either a shrewd maneuver on his part or a stroke of luck. In any event we must assume that the enemy is resourceful and intelligent enough to realize that a landing zone has a tactical importance. The enemy, having airborne troops of his own is aware of the normal build up necessary is an airborne operation and can be expected to exploit this knowledge to the fulliest. Assuming that the enemy intentionally attacked the drop zone he was to an extent successful. Although he did not destroy the gliders upon landing he caused a battalion to be pulled off of another objective, and also caused a considerable lose of supplies.

LESSONS

1. Daylight operations, enemy situation permitting, are preferable to night operations in that they permit the rapid assembly of the troops, and insure a rapid attack on the objective.

2. Mission and objective must be assigned that are within the capabilities of the unit involved.

3. Drop zones and landing zones that are to be used in

the build up, must be sufficiently protected from the start, and should assume an importance, at least equal to that of the objectives, in the planning phase.

4. Provisions must be made for the recovery of all equipment and bundles immediately after landing.

5. In its present state, continuous aerial resupply is dependent upon favorable weather conditions and can not be relied upon for daily requirements.

6. Because of the normal fluid situation in an airborne operation any enemy material captured, that can not be advantageously used, should be destroyed to prevent the enemy from recapturing it.

7. The enemy can be expected to understand the normal sequence of events in an airborne operation and to act decisively, within his capabilities, to prevent the attacker from being re-enforced or supplied.