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HEADQUARTERS 337TH INFANTRY

APO #85, U. S. Army,
26 June 1944.

SUBJECT: Lessons learned from Combat (Company "I", 337th Infantry).

TO : All Companies.

Following a recent conference of the officers of Company "I", a composite list of battle lessons was drawn up. All suggestions were considered and tempered by obtaining all viewpoints on the spot. Limitation and restraint were put aside in arriving at the conclusions listed below.

1. All men leaving the assembly area must travel light. Each man should take weapon and ammunition; one ration; canteen full of water; some sort of protective cover against the cool night temperatures. This item must be capable of being carried without hindering any movement. Most men carry a gas protective cover draped over the back of the belt. Suggest that a similar cover be specifically designed for sleeping and warmth at night. An entrenching tool.

2. In the line of weapons the BAR cannot be too highly praised. Use is recommended minus the bipod. Practice in firing from the hip is also a good idea for the training of BAR men. The M-1, Carbine, and Pistol are excellent although the Pistol has rarely been used in combat thus far. The new type LMG has not had enough action to judge it fairly. The 60mm Mortars went into the attack usually without base plates. However, some could have been used on several occasions when firing from a soft ground position. The rifle grenades proved very effective against enemy emplacements. As yet the Bazooka has not seen too much action but all men feel that it should still be carried just in case. Hand grenades, fragmentation, were used with good results in close in fighting. The Thompson sub MG scored well here also. Only one occasion called for the bayonet. That occasion is not to be disregarded. A case of having fired the last round from an M-1 and being confronted by the enemy at very close range.

3. Tactically, it was generally agreed that carelessness was apparent on many occasions. Dispersion cannot be emphasized enough. Men have a strong tendency to bunch up when under fire or even worse when advancing in the attack. Unnecessary shouting when passing verbal orders along the line gave away our location many times. Too much frantic repetition here was believed to have unnerved the men at times. Passing back word for an aid man to come forward was particularly bad in pointing out to close range enemy soldiers our position. The handling of the weapons platoon was a problem, particularly with the mortars. Staying too close to the rifle platoons to maintain contact and lack of speed in putting out accurate fire was very noticeable. Artillery forward observers should be with the assault units with direct radio contact with their battery. This to cut out the "middle man" situation which exists when calling through the Bn CP for counter-battery fire. It is believed that Bn staff members should visit the lines more often so as to have more than a map picture of the situation before and during prolonged advances in the attack.

4. Observations of the enemy methods of fighting were varied. A consensus of opinion has it that the German soldier has been vastly underrated. Considering the odds under which he operated and his ultimate end, the rear guard German soldier is definitely a cagy and thorough fighter, bordering on fanaticism. In one instance the Company was neatly "sucked in" and pinned down before the opening up of a bracketing mortar barrage. This device seems to be SOF and should be anticipated and countered by rapid flank movements. The German automatic weapons are often fired only to frighten advancing troops. The German "88" seems to be a very accurate weapon. They use it a great deal but never seem to fire many rounds at one firing. The usual number of rounds is between six (6) and eight (8) fired in one concentration.

By order of Colonel HUGHES:

Henry C. Triessler, Jr.
HENRY C. TRIESSLER, JR.
337th Infantry.

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