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Authority NMD7350P7

By MDJ NARA Date 4/25/00



BATTLE OF LAIATICO

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SUMMATION OF EVENTS PRECEDING BATTLE OF LAIATICO

During the latter days of June and the early days of July, the 1st Armored Division had been advancing north through the towns of Castelnuova, Bagno Al Marba, and Pomerance, Italy, southwest of Florence, meeting stiffening resistance with each mile. The increasing number of mines and the roughness of the terrain which kept vehicles roadbound were making armored progress more and more difficult.

The 88th Infantry Division relieved the 1st Armored Division during the period July 6-8. The 351st Infantry was originally placed in reserve and later committed on the left flank of the Division, with the 2d battalion relieving the 1st Armored Infantry Regiment of the 1st Armored Division on the high ground north of the town of Montecatini the night of July 8-9. On the same night the 3d battalion of the 351st Infantry advanced, meeting no resistance, and seized the high ground at coordinates (38.3-31.4) at 0110 hours 9 July. The 1st battalion remained in it's location 2500 meters northwest of the town of Saline, motorized in Division reserve.

The Division order stated that the regiment (minus the 1st battalion) would advance and seize the high ground in the vicinity of Palaisa some twenty-three kilometers due north. Company E, 1st Armored Regiment, a medium tank company; Company C of the 701st Tank Destroyer Battalion, and the 91st Reconnaissance Squadron were attached by the same order. At that time, it was anticipated that only isolated pockets of resistance would be encountered, and that the advance would be rapid.

BATTLE OF LAIATICO

First Day: 9 July 1944--On the left of the regiment was a wooded ridge some five hundred feet higher than the ground over which the regiment was advancing. From it's highest point, the ridge sloped downward to the north for 3500 meters and ended in a draw. North of the draw, the ground sloped up very steeply to a sharp hill some 150 feet higher than the surrounding terrain. On the crest of the hill was the town of Laiatico, commanding the ground for a distance of 4000 meters in every direction.

At 0400 hours the morning of the 9th, the regiment began advancing in a column of battalions over rolling grain fields that had been mowed clean. Occasional deep drainage lines running generally east and west broke the smoothness of the ground and offered the only available cover.

The 91st Reconnaissance Squadron was given the mission of covering the left flank, and as an added precaution, the 2d battalion was echeloned eight hundred yards to the left rear of the 3d battalion.

The 2d battalion was advancing with two companies abreast (Company E on the right and Company F on the left), each company in a column of platoons. Companies G and H followed in that order marching in a column of two's behind Company E at a distance of two hundred yards. As Company E reached (37.0-33.8) with Company H at (37.5-33.2), heavy rifle and machine gun fire was received on the left flank from the vicinity of (36.8-33.3). At the same time, two enemy flares (a white flare followed by a green one) were fired near the

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suspected enemy strongpoint. In a very short time an enemy artillery concentration fell on the 2d battalion.

The 2d battalion was temporarily split into two parts with Companies E and F in the draw at (37.0-33.7) and Companies G and H south of them. The battalion commander was somewhat rattled at the time, due to the fact that he had only recently joined the battalion--this being his first combat operation. However, the regimental commander, who was present with a small command group, bolstered the battalion commander by personally aiding in reorganizing the troops and urging them forward to clear the enemy strongpoint on the left flank.

In the meantime, 1st Lieutenant Foster C. Burch, Company H mortar platoon leader, had set up three 81mm mortars in the draw at (37.2-33.5). Within a short time the first mortar round was placed for adjustment. From his mortar observation post, Lieutenant Burch, although exposing himself to fire, could not observe the enemy machine guns due to their flashless and smokeless powder. Captain Radosevich, Commanding Officer of Company F, by SCR 300 radio, aided in directing the mortar fire from his forward position. The regimental commander, who was with Lieutenant Burch at the time, spotted about a platoon of Germans withdrawing along a road. Mortar fire was immediately placed in that vicinity causing several German casualties.

In the meantime, it was discovered that the SCR 610 radio belonging to the battalion artillery liaison officer was without an aerial and ineffective. The radio of the regimental artillery liaison officer had been demolished earlier that morning when his "jeep" had struck a mine, thus leaving the regiment without artillery support. However, by moving the regimental SCR 300 set, of the command group, to the top of a knoll, contact was gained with the 1st battalion, in Division reserve southeast of Montecatini. Through the 1st battalion artillery liaison officer, the 913th Field Artillery Battalion was contacted and soon artillery concentrations were placed in the area of the German strongpoint.

Company G was ordered by the battalion commander to move to the rear, around the south slopes of the hill mass at (36.8-32.5) and swing west in a flanking movement, while Company F executed a holding attack. After receipt of the order, the company commander of Company G, Captain Noon, had difficulty moving part of his company from a ditch located at (36.3-33.3) where the men had taken cover. The regimental commander could observe the slowness with which the company was accomplishing the maneuver from his location on the high ground north of the ditch. Together with the 2d battalion S-3, he moved about five hundred yards over open terrain to the ditch, receiving machine gun and sniper fire along the route--several sniper bullets kicking up dirt around his feet. Re-energized by the regimental commander, the company crossed the hill mass in short order and, taking advantage of the cover and defilade beyond, was soon enveloping the right flank of the German strongpoint--a great surprise to the Germans. In moving around for this maneuver, it was impossible to secure concealment in traversing the hill mass without countermarching a great distance to the east. The hill mass itself was exposed to sniper fire. Since speed was of the utmost importance, Company G infiltrated, on the run, in small groups around the east shoulder of the hill, receiving spasmodic sniper and machine gun fire but suffered no casualties. The Germans, in spite of their excellent

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Authority NM 73507
By W.D. NARA Date 4/25/00

observation on all movements did not, however, anticipate the maneuver.

Upon completing the movement over the hill mass, Captain Noon, quickly reorganized his company and moved out with two platoons abreast; one in support. Each assault platoon was deployed in a skirmish line with two squads in the assault. The route chosen took the company along the wooded slopes of the ridge running through the town of Orciatico. Then, Captain Noon turned northeast to strike the right flank of the German strongpoint. One section of light machine guns from the weapons platoon was emplaced on the high ground covering the advance by rapid overhead fire. The Germans were in position in the vicinity of three houses located on commanding ground, providing excellent observation as well as a good defensive position. The appearance of company G on the flank and rear of their strongpoint, created panic among the Germans. Two groups were quickly surrounded and captured—one group of twenty-seven and one of twenty-three. Eight Germans were killed in the action.

Company G completed "mopping-up" operations at 1130 hours and hastily reorganized. The advance of the battalion was then continued with Company G moving forward to (36.7-34.8), sidestepping to the east in front of companies E and F. Company E moved to (36.4-34.6) going into battalion reserve in that location. Companies E and G received very heavy artillery fire at this location which halted their advance. The terrain continued to be open, rolling terrain consisting mainly of mowed grain fields. The German artillery fire was systematically covering all drainage lines—the only cover available.

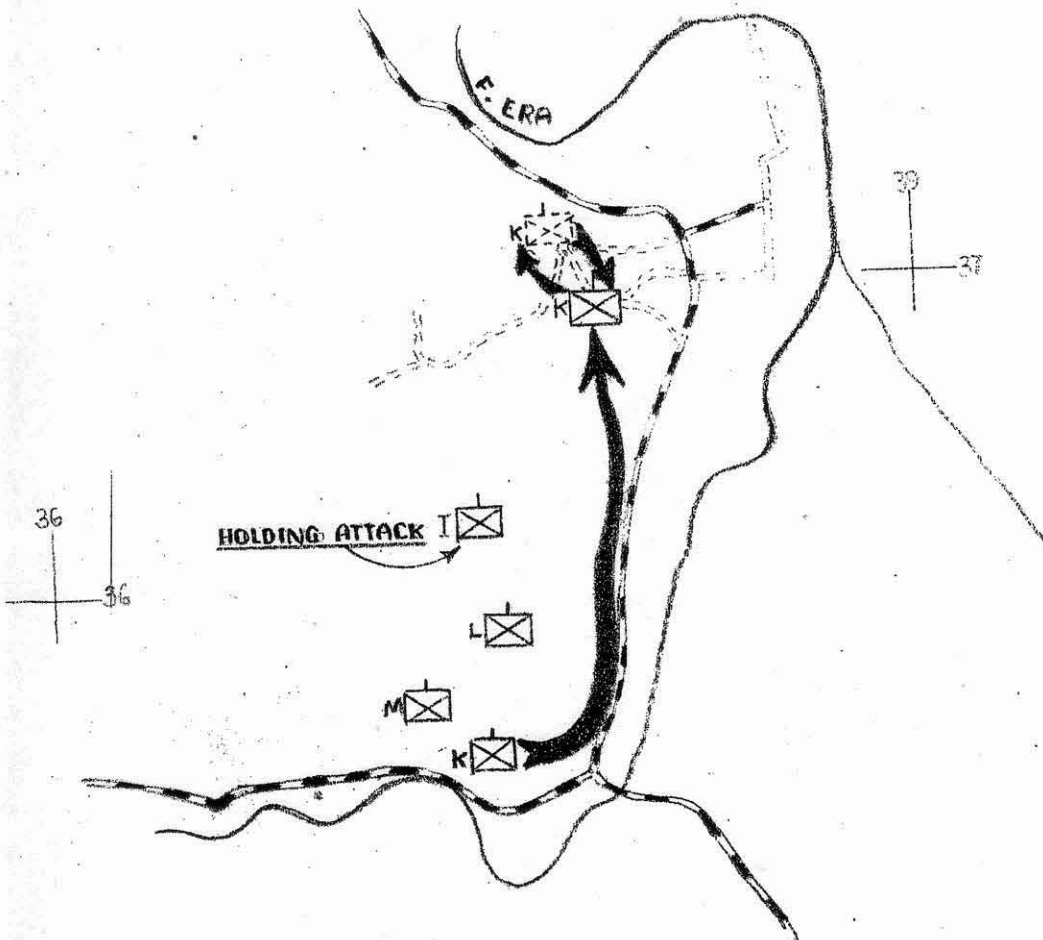
In the meantime, the 3d battalion was advancing in a column of companies in the order: Company I, Company L, Company M and Company K. At (37.3-35.8), shortly after the 2d battalion was fired upon, Company I advancing with two platoons abreast in the assault, received rifle and machine gun fire from the front and left flank. Due to lack of cover and concealment, as well as the excellent enemy observation from the high ground, Company I was unable to advance. The battalion commander immediately ordered Company K to move along a stream bed south of the hill on which Company I had been halted to (38.5-36.4) thence to swing northwest to capture the hill mass at (37.8-36.9). This mission was accomplished against light opposition, placing Company K in a good position to execute a flanking movement against the enemy strongpoint confronting Company I. However, as the scouts of the company came under observation on the forward slopes of the hill, they were met by heavy machine gun and artillery fire, some of it flat trajectory fire from self-propelled guns.

Upon reaching the summit of the hill, the assault platoon (1st platoon) of Company K was pinned down by intense machine gun and rifle fire. The terrain, a newly mown field with haystacks widely scattered, afforded little or no cover. S/Sergeant Geelan of the first platoon, voluntarily worked his way forward under the withering fire to gain better observation. Crawling some seventy-five yards to a haystack, he saw several enemy riflemen approaching the same stack, from the opposite direction. Moving to the left side of the haystack, he killed three Germans with his M-1 rifle. Approximately one hundred yards further to the left, a force of enemy was observed slowly advancing toward the platoon position to flank it from that direction. S/Sergeant Geelan opened fire on these

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FLANKING MOVEMENT CO. 'K'

9 JULY 1944

<p>MAP NO. 112-II-NW SCALE 1:25,000</p>

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enemy, killing five and forcing the remainder to withdraw. This action was instrumental in allowing the first platoon to continue to work its way forward around the crest of the hill down the forward slope where it was halted again by heavy small arms and artillery fire.

The terrain was flat and devoid of cover except for an irrigation ditch approximately one hundred yards to the rear. When the enemy placed a heavy concentration of mortar fire in the vicinity, the company commander of Company K, Captain Marks, realizing the exposed position, ordered the platoon to withdraw to the ditch. Private First Class Wright and his BAR team were left to cover the withdrawal of the platoon. As the platoon began the withdrawal, both the assistant BAR man and the ammunition bearer were wounded by a mortar shell. Private First Class Wright continued to cover the withdrawal of the platoon until his ammunition was exhausted, at which time he ran twenty yards to where the assistant BAR man lay wounded, took his ammunition and continued to fire until the whole platoon had reached the safety of the ditch.

The leading elements of Company K were now approximately seven hundred yards to the right front of the Company I positions, with Company L in reserve on the reverse slope of the hill south of the Company I position. Five medium tanks were moved forward to join Company K, two going into position on the hill and three in the stream bed on the right flank. When the situation and dispositions were explained to the regimental commander, the 5d battalion was ordered to reorganize and dig in. The battalion continued to receive heavy artillery fire, particularly on the Company K positions.

Just at dusk, the Germans counterattacked Company K with a force of approximately sixty men advancing toward the company from its left front and flank. By relay from the SCR 300 radio of the company commander of Company K to the battalion commander, thence to the supporting artillery, 913th Field Artillery Battalion, by the battalion liaison officer, heavy artillery concentrations were placed in and among the advancing German troops. In addition long range machine gun fire from one platoon of Company M in support of Company K, was also placed on the Germans. The counterattack was repulsed well outside of the Company K position. Many German casualties were created by the artillery fire, and the German forces withdrew hastily with much confusion.

The battalion commander of 3d battalion had been wounded in the arm earlier in the morning by shell fragments, but remained with the battalion until that evening, ascertaining that the battalion executive officer, Captain Ayres, was well acquainted with the situation before assuming command.

The 2d battalion had continued the attack with two companies abreast (F and G). Three tanks accompanied by the same number of tank destroyers, attempted to work up the draw at (37.0-35.4) but were stopped by artillery fire. In the meantime, the 2d battalion was subjected to heavy artillery, mortar, machine gun, and sniper fire from the ridge at (36.0-36.0) making it impossible to advance without suffering heavy casualties. Consequently, the battalion was ordered to dig in, reorganize and hold generally along the high ground (36.3-35.5)-(35.4-35.8).

DECLASSIFIED

Authority NMD 7350P7
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During the evening, artillery fire was placed continuously on the known enemy positions in front of the 2d and 3d battalions. Two companies of chemical mortars from the 84th Chemical Battalion had moved into position during the afternoon to support the regiment and joined their fires with that of the artillery.

The attached company of tanks had experienced great difficulty during the day due to the extensive mine laying of the enemy and did not overtake the advance Infantry elements until late in the afternoon. Six tanks were lost to mines before the regimental anti-tank mine platoon joined the tank company to remove mines along the route of march and expedite its progress. Had a few tanks been present when the 2d battalion received fire on its left flank earlier in the day, the enemy strongpoint could have been liquidated without delay. However, the regiment was deprived of important fire power throughout most of the day.

The regimental commander made plans for the continuation of the attack at 2230 hours, but after a telephone conversation with General Sloan, the Division Commander, temporarily suspended plans pending the arrival of Brigadier General Kendall, Assistant Division Commander, with instructions. Both battalions were alerted for an attack at any time during the night.

Casualties for the day:

	<u>2d Bn</u>	<u>3d Bn</u>
Killed	5	18
Wounded	42	28

Second Day: 10 July 1944— At 0240 hours, First Lieutenant Bodie, liaison officer of this regiment with the 350th Infantry, reported that the 350th was planning an attack at 0500 hours July 10th. As a result, orders were issued by the regimental commander to the 2d and 3d battalions to plan an attack at the same time. Since the Assistant Division Commander had not arrived at the command post, it was presumed that he had been unable to locate it during the night and that the division would probably launch a coordinated attack with both regiments. However, about 15 minutes prior to the set "jump-off" time, wire communications, which had been out all during the night, due to heavy artillery fire, were reestablished with the division command post, and the regimental commander was ordered to hold in present positions due to a counterattack threat which had developed on the division left flank. A Division Artillery Air Observation Post had reported enemy troops detrucking in the zone of the 34th Division on our left flank, a dangerous threat due to the fact that the 34th had been unable to keep abreast. However, the expected counterattack did not materialize and the regiment was ordered at 0805 hours to continue the attack with battalions abreast at 0900 hours.

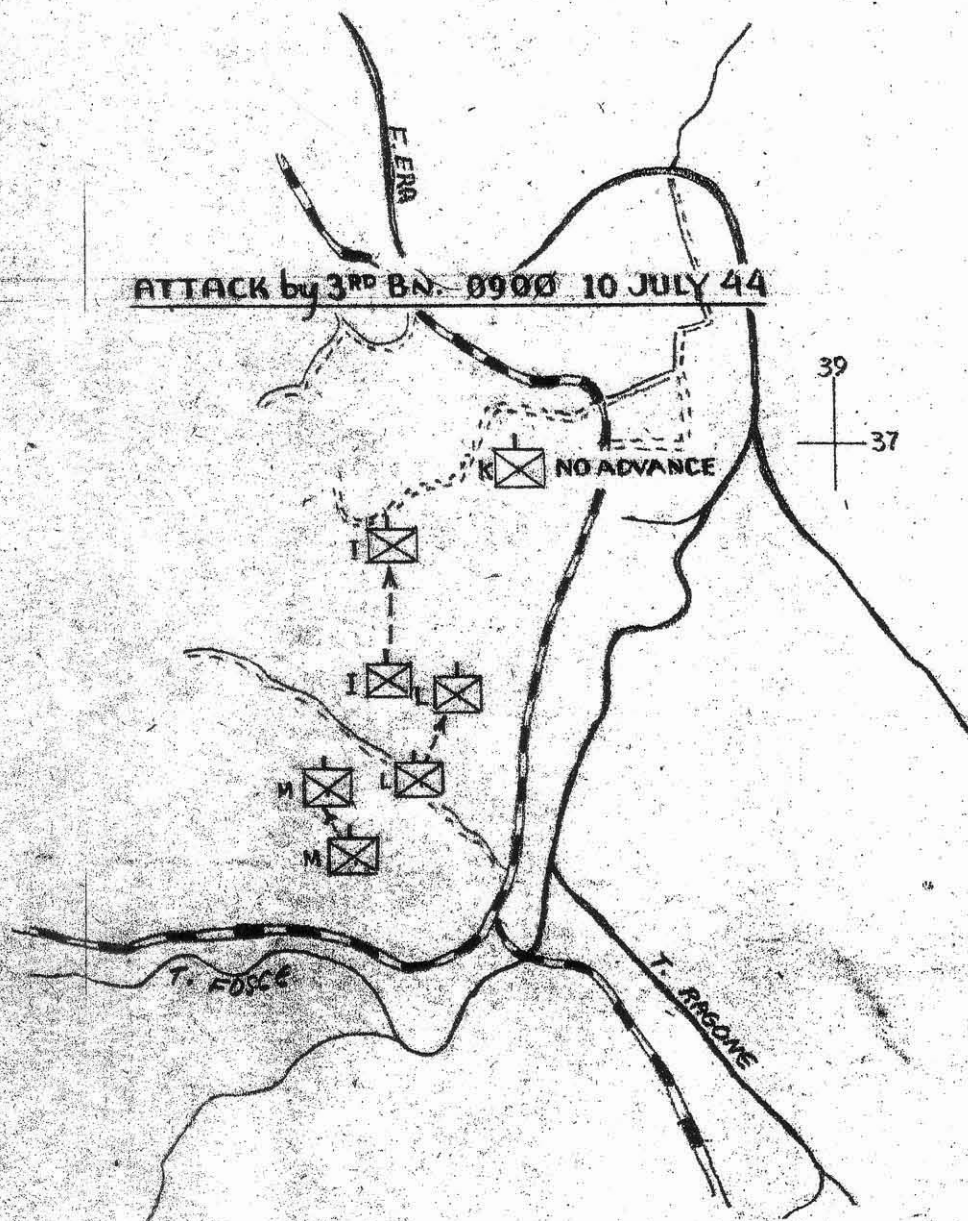
The 3d battalion launched its attack on time, with Company I moving forward to close the four hundred yard gap which existed between Company I and Company K (Company K was four hundred yards forward). Initially, the advance was rapid, but after moving some three hundred fifty yards to the forward slopes of the hill at (37.5-36.2), heavy mortar, artillery, and self-propelled gun fire fell upon them causing severe casualties. Captain

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ATTACK by 3RD BN. 0900 10 JULY 44



MAP NO. 112-11 NW.
SCALE 1:25,000

Glen H. Erickson, leading the assault of his company, was killed. The men dug in hastily and remained in position receiving long range sniper fire and intermittent artillery throughout the day.

The 2d battalion was more successful in its attack. At H hour, artillery concentrations were placed at (36.8-35.7) - (37.3-35.7) and (35.6-35.7). This fire, supplemented by the chemical mortars, was lifted to the high ground in the vicinity of Laiatico, continuing there throughout the attack. Advancing in a column of companies, a gain of more than one thousand yards was made before the companies were halted in the following positions by heavy artillery and small arms fire: Company G (36.2-35.7), Company F (35.2-35.9), Company E (35.5-35.0) and Company H (35.2-35.5). Due to the lack of cover or concealment, it was impossible to maneuver from these positions. Tanks were ordered forward to assist in the attack, but did not arrive until nightfall. Upon arrival they went into position behind Company G, remaining there without firing.

The Laiatico hill mass now confronting the 2d battalion (hills 214 and 196) presented a serious obstacle to our advance. Since it provided such excellent defensive positions as well as almost unlimited observation, it was without doubt the key point of the enemy's defense and must be liquidated before the advance of the regiment, as well as of the division, could be continued.

At 1720 hours, the 2d battalion again resumed the attack, the battalion commander believing that the heavy artillery fire had softened the resistance. Company G held while company F moved to the west to flank the enemy strongpoint. Progressing satisfactorily with two platoons in the assault, Company F came abreast of Company G. There the company was subjected to intense artillery, machine gun, and sniper fire, halting its advance at (36.0-35.4). On a trail leading up to this position, two booby traps were set off by the advancing troops, slightly injuring one man--the first reported instance of any man of the regiment being wounded thusly.

The 1st battalion (minus Company B) was released to the regiment from division reserve at 1100 hours on this date. Company B was held in the vicinity of Montecatini to protect the division left flank and provide security for the division command post. The battalion moved by truck to the road junction at (38.8-28.9) detrucking there at 1600 hours. The movement was completed by marching to (36.8-31.8) where, upon arrival at 1800 hours, the battalion went into an assembly area as regimental reserve.

Casualties for the day:

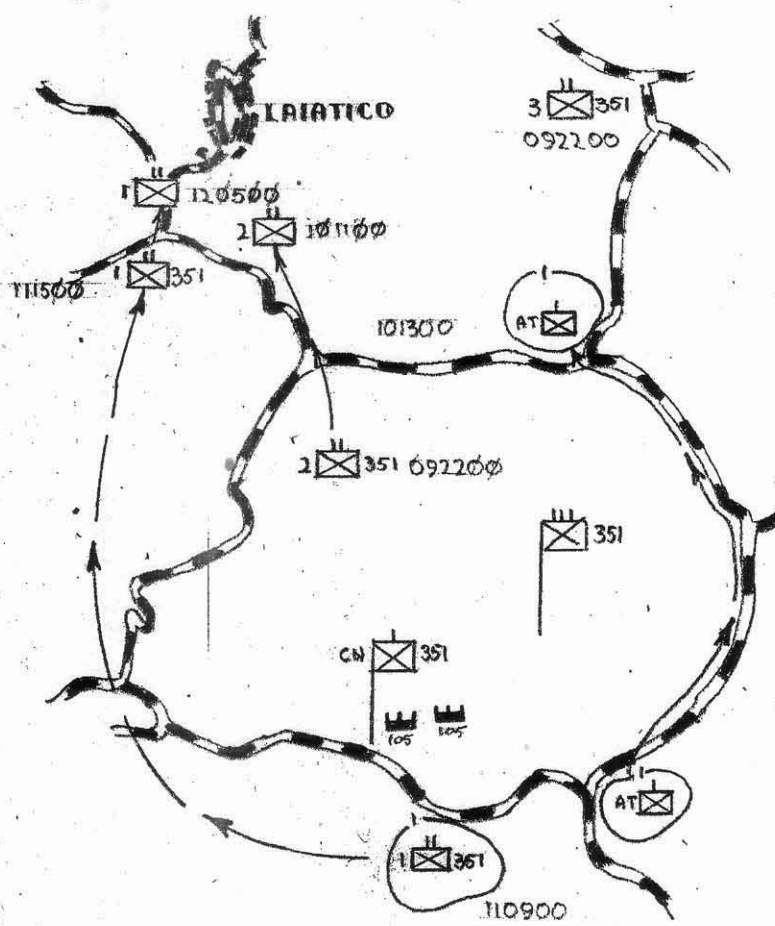
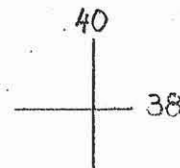
	<u>1st Bn</u>	<u>2d Bn</u>	<u>3d Bn</u>
Killed	2	3	13
Wounded	15	24	45

Third Day: 11 July 1944--The burden of the action was borne by the 1st battalion on this day. It was ordered by the Commanding General to move at 0900 hours, seize the road junction southwest of Laiatico at (35.0-36.5) and dispatch reconnaissance patrols from that point to the road junction 2500 meters

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Authority NMD 7350P7

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Disposition of Troops as of Darkness 9 July 1944.

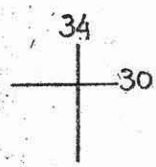
2nd and 3rd Bns attacked at 0900 hours 10 July--3rd Bn was unable to make any appreciable advance.

2nd Bn moved slowly reaching dotted position indicated at 1100 hours 10 July 1944.

At 0900 hours, 11 July 1944, per Div order, 1st Bn moved to RJ indicated.

1st Bn attacked from this location at 0300 hours, 12 July 44, advancing to positions indicated by dotted line where advance was halted at daylight.

Positions remained unchanged throughout the day.



Map No. 112-II
Scale 1/50,000

BATTLE OF LAIATICO (PART I)

to the northwest to contact the 34th Division. The 1st battalion (minus Company B) moved out on time, advancing under cover on the eastern slope of the ridge line running through the town of Orciatico. The move was unopposed and the battalion secured the designated road junction at 1200 hours by occupying the high ground at (34.8-36.4). A reconnaissance patrol, which was dispatched at once to contact the 34th Division, reached the previously designated contact point, finding neither the enemy nor the 34th Division.

At 1630 hours the 1st battalion from its position on the high ground was subjected to a counterattack by an estimated German company advancing southwest from the draws in the vicinity of (34.5-36.6). Our artillery concentrations, together with long-range rifle and machine gun fire, repulsed the counterattack before it had reached the 1st battalion positions—inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy. Under cover of a Red Cross flag, German aid men spent an hour retrieving their dead and wounded.

All day of the 11th, the 2d and 3d battalions remained in position under long range fire of small arms as well as artillery, mortar and self-propelled gun fire. At 1800 hours, an undetermined number of Infantry, supported by one German tank, counterattacked Company K. This attack was broken up by artillery and small arms fire, but had reached our outpost line before being repulsed.

During the day, plans were made by the regimental commander for a night attack by the 1st battalion from its flanking position, on the Laiatico hill mass—the 2d and 3d battalions holding in position. H hour was set at 0300 hours. During the late afternoon, the Assistant Division Commander visited the command post, approved the plan of attack, and remained for the night to follow the progress of the 1st battalion.

Casualties for the day:

	<u>1st Bn</u>	<u>2d Bn</u>	<u>3d Bn</u>
Killed	1	7	1
Wounded	22	12	18

Fourth Day: 12 July 1944— Prior to H hour, Company B was returned to the 1st battalion. The attack "jumped off" on schedule with Company C in the lead of a column of companies. After an advance of five hundred yards, Company C was fired upon from both flanks by German machine guns. An enemy strongpoint had been penetrated, but due to heavy flanking machine gun fire, Company C was unable to advance or exploit the penetration. The men of the company became widely dispersed and not under good control. The battalion commander then sent Company B around the left flank, across the Laiatico road to outflank the resistance confronting Company C. However, the maneuver was not pushed and daylight found the battalion disposed as follows: Company C (35.2-36.6), Company B (34.7-36.6) and Company A in reserve at (35.0-36.3). As daylight came, the enemy artillery fire increased in tempo and intensity since the battalion was under direct observation from Laiatico. Due to the fact that the troops on our left were not abreast of our regiment, artillery fire was received by the 1st battalion, from their left rear, a demoralizing direction, as well as

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By MDJ NARA Date 4/25/00

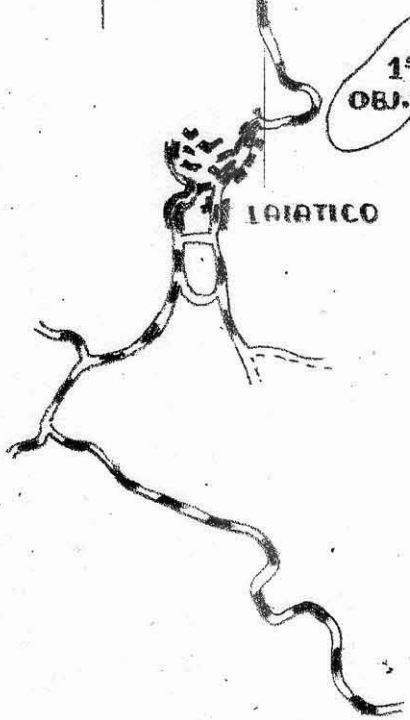
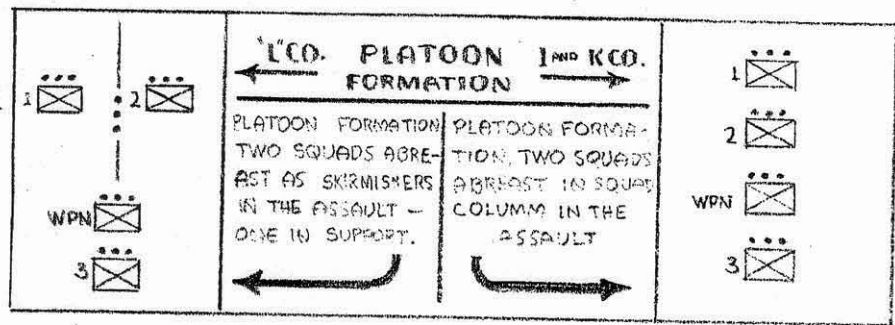
35

38

2ND
OBJ.

1ST
OBJ.

LAIATICO



PLAN of ATTACK
 MAP NO 12-11NW
 SCALE 1:25,000
 3RD BN.

35

37

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Authority NND 7350P7By MDJ NARA Date 4/25/00

from enemy gun areas north of Laiatico.

If the 1st battalion had pushed forward aggressively instead of proceeding with undue caution, it is believed that the Laiatico hill mass could have been flanked and captured in this night attack. As it occurred, daylight came with the battalion under direct enemy observation, resulting in sustained enemy artillery fire throughout the day.

Both Companies B and C were unable to either advance or withdraw since one movement was as exposed as the other. The company commander of Company C together with several key non-commissioned officers became casualties, causing the company to become badly disorganized. That night under cover of darkness, the battalion withdrew a short distance to covered positions and reorganized.

The 2d and 3d battalions remained in position throughout the day, reorganizing, reconnoitering and patrolling the terrain to the front. Intermittent small arms, mortar, and artillery fire was received. The town of Laiatico and the slopes of the hill surrounding it were given a heavy pounding by our own artillery. The chemical mortars kept the draws under constant fire with both high explosive and white phosphorous.

The 91st Division was moved into the gap between the 88th and 34th Divisions, during the day, but remained about six thousand yards to our left rear. Two platoons of the 88th Reconnaissance Troop had relieved the 91st Reconnaissance Squadron and were charged with the mission of protecting our left flank, as well as maintaining contact with the 91st Division.

During the afternoon, the regimental commander held a conference at the regimental command post, with the battalion commanders. Tentative plans were made for a night attack subject to approval of higher headquarters. At about 2100 hours, Brigadier General Kendall arrived with the division plans, and the battalion commanders were recalled to the command post to receive orders. The regiment would attack at 0300 hours, 13 July with two battalions abreast in the assault. The 1st battalion would assemble in regimental reserve, protect the left flank, and be prepared to relieve either the 2d or 3d battalion on their objective so that either might continue to the final objective, the high ground north of Laiatico. The 2d battalion would attack generally north, seize hill 214, and continue the attack to capture Laiatico and hill 196 as the first objective. 3d battalion would attack to the northwest and seize the ridge projecting east from Laiatico as its first objective. Both assault battalions would be prepared to complete the regimental mission by capturing the high ground north of the town. The battalion to first accomplish its initial mission, would be given the mission of taking the 2d objective. Company C, 760th Tank Battalion (medium), was attached to the regiment for this operation, in addition to the tank company already attached. No artillery preparation was planned for the attack in order not to destroy the surprise effect. At H hour, three successive 10 minute concentrations employing both light and medium artillery and chemical mortars were planned—the chemical mortars firing two rounds of white phosphorous to each round of high explosive.

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The attack was launched on time. The 3d battalion proceeded with greatest possible speed from its location, advancing in a column of companies in the order L, I, M, and K. Initially, resistance from one machine gun and a few snipers was received, but these were by-passed. Company L moved forward closely behind the supporting artillery fire (fifty to one hundred yards at times) at a rapid rate of speed. Company I was unable to maintain the pace, falling back approximately two hundred yards. The battalion commander, Captain Ayres, left his position with the leading elements to ascertain that Company I would not become lost. As an aid in maintaining direction, the 91st Field Artillery Battalion fired one round of white phosphorous every fifteen minutes upon the 3d battalion objective. Interspersed among the white phosphorous were high explosive rounds to prevent the enemy from suspecting the purpose of the white phosphorous.

Company L advanced rapidly over the rolling terrain, by-passing small arms fire of the enemy outposts, knifing into the defensive positions along the ridge projecting east from Laiatico (their first objective), penetrating as far as the battalion command post of the 1060th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, and overrunning numerous mortar positions. A few shots were exchanged, but the majority of the Germans, huddled in dugouts and caves to escape the artillery fire, were panic stricken and surrendered without resistance. In the ensuing action, a Grenadier Battalion Commander and Major Fabian, the combat team commander, were killed by hand grenades thrown into the command post by a sergeant (squad leader) of the first platoon of Company L. Confusion was so great among the Germans that over 100 prisoners were taken without the loss of a single American soldier killed. Not realizing that our soldiers could have penetrated so deeply into their position, German messengers and command post personnel continued to report to the command post, and, of course were killed or captured by members of the 3d battalion now occupying the building. By following the artillery so closely, Company L had prevented the Germans from getting set in prepared defensive positions before our doughboys reached them.

Since daylight was rapidly approaching, the battalion commander ordered that reorganization of companies be instituted with greatest possible speed preparatory to continuing the attack westward along the ridge toward Laiatico. A captured German battalion surgeon and his assistant immediately set to work aiding in the evacuation of both German and American wounded.

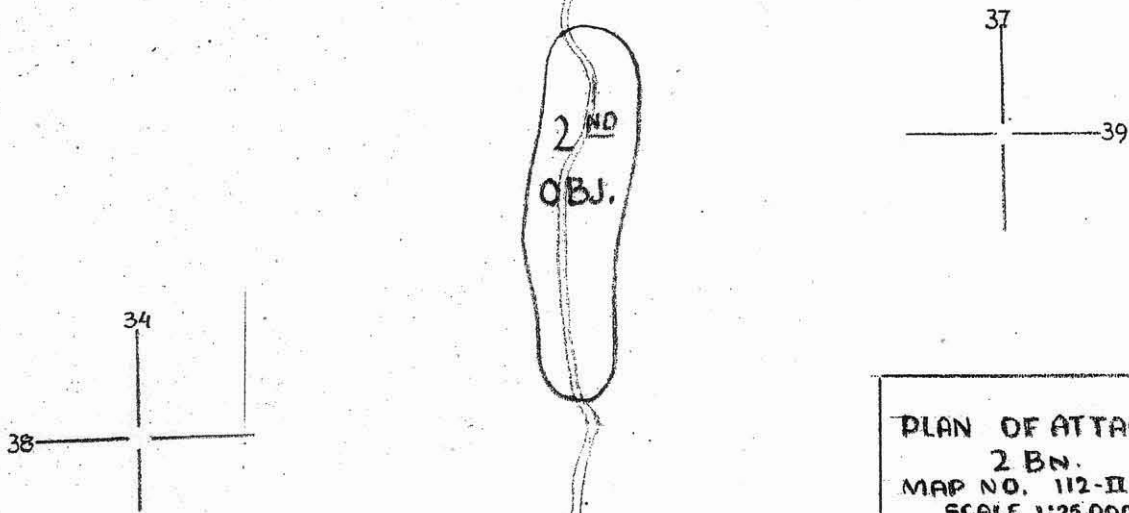
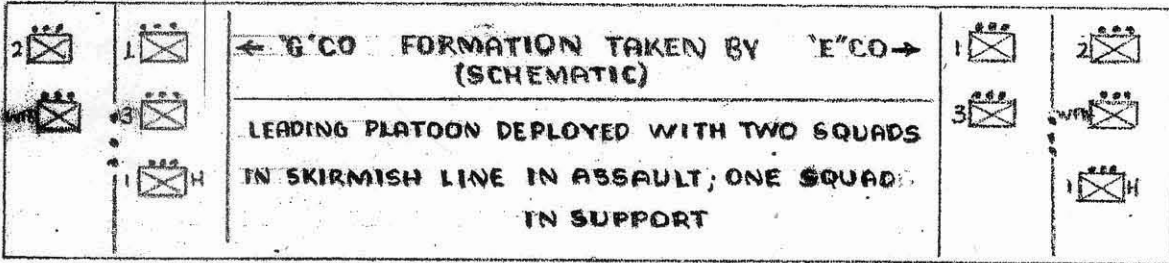
In the meantime, the attack of the 2d battalion was proceeding with similar success. At H hour, company E on the left and Company G on the right (the assault companies) moved at a double time from their positions on the ridge south of hill 214, down the forward slope of the ridge and up the southern slopes of hill 214. These groups, too, were following the supporting artillery fire at an unusually close distance. Company F in support followed Company G.

Moving with two platoons abreast, each with two squads deployed in skirmish line, Company G reached the summit of hill 214 at 0320 hours. This hill, which had proven to be an insurmountable obstacle in the daylight attacks, was captured with comparative ease. Here, also, due to the intense artillery fire which lifted only a very short time before the arrival of Company G, the

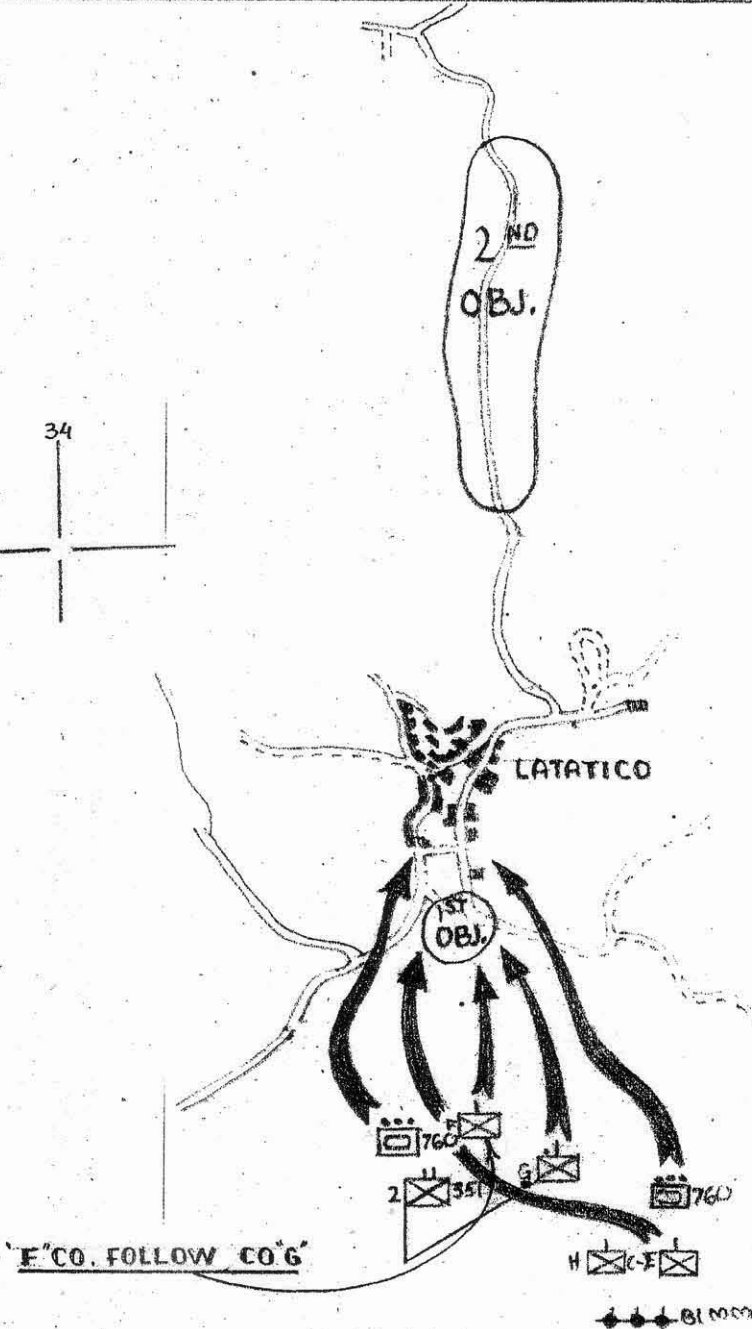
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PLAN OF ATTACK
 2 BN.
 MAP NO. 112-II NW
 SCALE 1:25,000



◆◆◆◆ 81 MCM

enemy was prevented from occupying the extensively prepared defensive positions along the terraces of hill 214. The muchly surprised Germans were routed from dugouts, foxholes and houses.

However, resistance was not absolutely nil on hill 214 as evidenced by the following account of the actions of T/Sgt Greiner, platoon leader of 2d platoon of Company G in the attack. While advancing up the slopes of hill 214, fire was received on the right flank from several mutually supporting machine guns deeply entrenched in prepared positions and covered by machine pistols. Sergeant Greiner secured two additional grenades, having had two in his possession, and by a torturous process of crawling into the face of crossfire of the enemy machine guns, reached the terrace just beneath one of them. While still receiving fire from the other position, he threw two grenades into the machine gun position above him, a distance of some twenty feet. He then assaulted the emplacement and found three dead and one severely wounded German there. A German heavy machinegun on a higher terrace opened fire. Sgt Greiner moved to a position on the flank of the newly located machine gun position. After considerable crawling and creeping, he was able to reach a point close enough to throw his remaining grenades into that position. Assaulting the position, he found one enemy dead and two severely wounded. The men of Sergeant Greiner's platoon then rushed the few remaining machine gun positions, succeeding in knocking them out--thus allowing the platoon to move on and assist in taking the company objective.

For the first time in the campaign, considerable bayonet fighting took place, during the advance of Company G. Sergeant Mericle bayoneted two Germans as they leaped at him from concealed positions. One German soldier succeeded in wresting the rifle and bayonet from Private First Class Martinez and was beginning to bayonet him before Sergeant Greiner shot and killed the German.

During the attack, communication by SCR 300 radio was maintained by the Company Commander of Company G with the battalion commander, as well as with Company E on its left and Company F to its rear. The SCR 536 net from company to platoon was not operating due to malfunctions of three of the sets. This had been the case throughout our campaign in Italy. The SCR 536 radio had been unsatisfactory from the beginning, due to the fact that it was too fragile to survive the rough treatment given by the rifle platoons. Captain Noon, Commanding Officer of Company G, utilized runners to maintain contact with his platoons--exchanging runners as the company reached its first objective.

After posting security to the front and flanks, reorganization was begun immediately. The one hundred and forty prisoners of war which had been captured were dispatched to the rear.

Meanwhile, Company E was experiencing rapid success in reaching its first objective. Employing a formation similar to that of Company G, the company crossed its line of departure at a double time following closely the pre-arranged artillery concentrations. By 0340 hours the first objective had been reached and one hundred thirty-five prisoners of war taken from the dugouts and houses where they were huddled to escape the artillery fire.

Many of the Germans were suffering from white phosphorous burns inflicted by our chemical mortars. Also, the high explosive artillery shell had taken a considerable toll. The resistance encountered by Company E within its zone was much less than that encountered by company G, the German outposts probably having been neutralized by the artillery and mortar fire. On hill 214 the company reorganized as the platoon of tanks from Company C, 760th Tank Battalion inched its way forward around the left flank of the battalion having been delayed by an enemy anti-tank mine field.

The first machine gun platoon of Company H, commanded by T/Sgt McCormick, was attached to Company E for this operation. As the crest of hill 214 was reached, Sgt. McCormick placed his guns in a firing position and himself went forward to the leading rifle platoon to get the situation first hand. A deep ditch which ran laterally across the objective was being mopped up by the leading elements of companies E and G. He began reconnoitering for a machine gun position along a sunken road leading into Laiatico in order to deliver fire on enemy automatic weapons firing south along the road. Sergeant McCormick noticed a large cave with a blackout curtain on the front at a trail junction nearby. At the same time, Lieutenant Sutker, of Company G, while moving along the sunken road in the direction of Laiatico was shot in the back and killed by small arms fire coming from the direction of the cave. Seeing this, Sgt. McCormick ran to the mouth of the cave, tossed in two hand grenades, the first of which did not explode, and started firing rapid fire into the cave with his carbine, shouting for the occupants to surrender or die. A large amount of shuffling was heard within the cave, together with loud noises similar to that made when a rifle is thrown or dropped to the ground. Then, in single file, fifty-two Germans moved out of the cave with their hands high in the air yelling "Kamerad". Strangely enough, none of the Germans were killed by the explosion of the fragmentation grenade--two were walking wounded. S/Sergeant Perrault, (Canadian-French) a machine gun section leader of Sgt. McCormick's platoon, who had joined him just prior to the surrender of the Germans, discovered a German who could speak the French language and relayed instructions to the prisoners to form quickly for movement to the rear.

At daylight, Lieutenant Buzick rejoined his machine gun platoon, assuming command from Sergeant McCormick. One machine gun section was placed on either side of hill 214. On the western slope a German machine gun firing from the roof of a house was neutralized by the west machine gun section. Several German riflemen, in position, fled behind a haystack as the machine gun fire of Lieutenant Buzick's left section began striking close by. The platoon of medium tanks of Company C, 760th Tank Battalion, operating on the left flank of the 2d battalion, had reached the vicinity and immediately placed two rounds of high explosive into the haystack killing three Germans behind it. The other Germans fled into two houses nearby which were immediately demolished by accurate tank fire.

At 0600 hours, Companies E and G had completed reorganization and began advancing towards their second objective--the high ground north of Laiatico. Company F which had been advancing in a column of platoons, continued to follow Company G, moving along the eastern edge of the town, mopping up isolated pockets of resistance, by-passed by the assaulting elements. Near the northern edge of town, sniper fire was received by

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Company F from the right flank. Sergeant Androwski of the first platoon, an expert rifleman, picked off two of the snipers with an M-1 rifle at 750 yards, causing the others to withdraw.

By 1100 hours, the 2d and 3d battalions had advanced three hundred yards north of Laiatico and were halted in that position due to heavy artillery, mortar and machine gun fire. Companies E and G were abreast west of the Laiatico road with F Company in reserve in the northern outskirts of town.

In the meantime, the 3d battalion had advanced up the "finger" ridge extending east of Laiatico, meeting steadily increasing resistance from German troops in secondary defensive positions, reaching a point five hundred yards east of the town at 1100 hours. At this time, the battalion was forced to advance over open ground devoid of cover and as a result, received intense, accurate artillery fire which halted its movement. At 1130 hours, two tanks arrived at the 3d battalion position to support the attack. The remainder of the medium tank platoon was disabled due to mechanical failure.

After reconnaissance, the 3d battalion commander, Captain Ayres decided to continue the attack at 1300 hours with the 1st objective as the high ground at (35.5-37.7). The battalion would advance in a column of companies in the order L- I - and K. Company M would support the attack by establishing a base of fire on the "finger" ridge. The tanks would move along the left flank of Company I near the eastern outskirts of Laiatico.

By 1530 hours the 3d battalion had reached its first objective, cut the road running north of Laiatico, and established contact with the 2d battalion. At that time, the heaviest enemy artillery barrage experienced since this regiment had entered combat, fell on the town of Laiatico and the northern outskirts thereof. Included in the shelling were nebelwerfers (Screaming Meemies) fired from three directions--north, northeast and northwest--made possible for the Germans, due to the advanced position of the regiment in reference to elements of the right and left. The heavy shelling continued throughout the afternoon and evening, and coupled with heavy enemy gun fire, prevented the advance of either of the assault battalions.

The 1st battalion, during the morning, was moved from its location at the left rear of the 2d battalion to a reserve position at (36.5-37.2) since the left flank was secured by our excellent observation to the northwest. As the 2d battalion moved, four tanks joined them, assisting in mopping up small pockets of enemy resistance which had been by-passed. Forty-two Germans were captured and several more killed by Company A, which was the leading company.

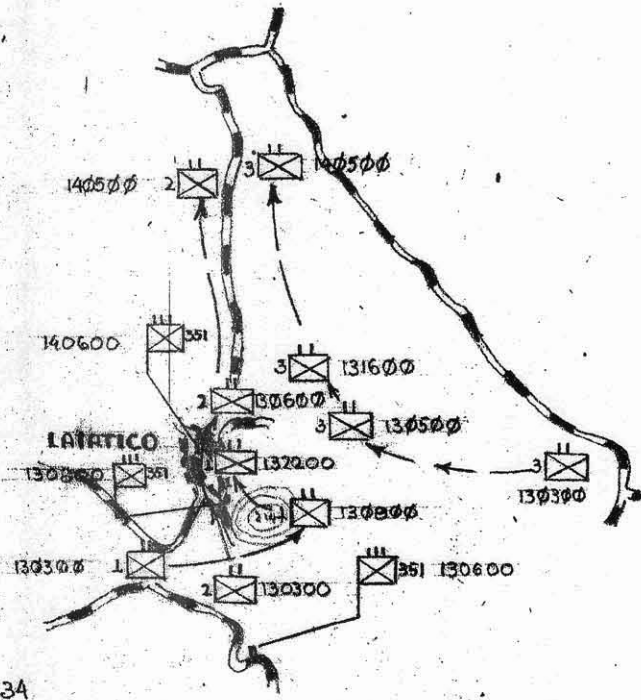
All day long, groups of from ten to one hundred Germans were observed withdrawing to the north from forward observation posts and heavy fire was placed on them, inflicting a high number of casualties. However, the German rear guard resisted stubbornly and together with the artillery fire prevented our movement forward.

This day had been one of the most victorious days in the history of the regiment. It is believed that the 1060th German Regiment was destroyed completely

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Dispositions of Troops as of H-hour
(0300) 13 July 1944.

LAIATICO and ridge running east
thereof captured as shown at 0600
hours.

1st Bn moved to new Res Pos at 0700
hours.

Advance halted until 3rd Bn attacked
again at 1300 hours advancing as
shown to 2nd dotted position.

2nd and 3rd Bns attacked at 2400
hours and advanced to positions
indicated. Regtl objective had been
reached.

1st Bn took up Res Pos in LAIATICO.

Map No. 112-II
Scale 1/50,000

ATTACK OF LAIATICO

along with some companies of the 1059th. The fifth company of the 1059th was attempting to make a relief at the time of the attack and were captured almost intact. Large numbers of small arms and other equipment were captured together with one 75mm anti-tank gun and one truck destroyed. When mopping up operations were completed at the end of the day, four hundred twenty-five prisoners had been dispatched to the prisoner of war inclosure. German casualties were estimated as at least three hundred killed or wounded.

At 2400 hours this 13th day of July, the attack was continued to seize the high ground at (35.5-38.7) completing the capture of the Laiatico hill mass--the regimental objective. The attack was launched with two battalions abreast--one on either side of the road running north from Laiatico. The 1st battalion in reserve, remained on the high ground in the vicinity of Laiatico. At nightfall, the German rear guard had evidently withdrawn, as no resistance was encountered in the attack. The enemy artillery had dwindled to normal harassing fires. By 0300 hours both assault battalions had taken and secured their respective objectives.

Casualties for the day:

	<u>1st Bn</u>	<u>2d Bn</u>	<u>3d Bn</u>
Killed	2	5	9
Wounded	8	2	4

The total casualties for the regiment during the Laiatico offensive beginning from the town of Montecatini totaled seventy-seven killed and three hundred twenty wounded. Most of the missing subsequently returned to their units.

However, with the reduction of this key point of the German defense line, the entire Division was able to resume its advance, continuing for a distance of approximately eleven kilometers before serious resistance was again encountered. The value of a night attack, well-planned and aggressively executed was clearly demonstrated. Speed and the utilization of close artillery support were established as the criteria for success. The fear of the Germans for the deadly white phosphorous shell of our chemical mortars was apparent.

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 Major, 351st Infantry
 S-3

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