



A 155mm howitzer of the 155th Sea Coast Defense fires a round on Bougainville during the Japanese attack.



The insistence on head-on thrusts up the hill began to take a terrible toll on American units. In the photo taken on March 15, a soldier on the ground buries his head in his hands, weeping over a friend killed on Hill 260.



This photo, taken on March 19, shows the crest of Hill 260 through a dense growth of trees. Artillery fire can be seen exploding on top of the hill. In the foreground are barbed wire fencing and discarded supplies.

HEADQUARTERS 2d BATTALION
182d Infantry
APO 716

18 March 1944

OPERATIONS OF HILL 260

From 0600, 10 March 1944 to 0800, 11 March 1944

Original Garrison

2nd Lt. Roush Commanding
2nd Lt. Hogan 2nd in Command

George Co. 36 Riflemen and 9 men from the 60mm mortar section.
How Co. 15 Men from Machine Gun section and 2 81mm observers.
Regt. Hq. Co. 2 Radio Operators.
2d Bn Hq. Co. 4 Intelligence Observers.
246th F.A. 6 Observers (1 Officer and 5 EM).
Aid Men 2 From 2nd Bn. Medical

Total - 75 EM and 3 Officers.

Rations for 5 days (90 cases "C")
Ammo for 3 days (3 units)
Water for 3 days (200 gal.)

The attack by the Japanese started at 0610, 10 March 1944 (See overlay). Lt. Hogan moved out from the Mortar CP at 0630, to make a personal reconnaissance for an attempt to restore the perimeter by local counter attack, this was the last time Lt. Hogan was seen.

The attack came at the South East corner of the perimeter and by 1020 the Japanese, estimated at one Rifle Co. with a heavy machine gun platoon attached, had penetrated to a point shown on overlay # 1.

There were an estimated 20 men of the garrison holding the South perimeter and 42 holding the Northern end. We had no communication at this time between the North and South, due to the Japanese having made the penetration between the two and they had then cut the wires.

Fox Co. received orders to retake Hill 260 at 0735 and moved out at 0755. Col. Lowry received orders to take charge at 0830 and left the Bn. CP at 0840. At 0830, George Co. was ordered to hold open the line of communication to Fox Co. At 0845, Easy Co. was ordered out, they reported across the Eagle River to Col. Lowry at 0910. George Co. had not yet moved from the R R L. Col. Lowry took personal command of Easy Co. and had radio contact with Fox Co.

At 0930, communication was made with Lt. Stone at the South end of Hill 260 and the decision was reached (it was then believed the entire South end was over-run by Japanese) to move Fox Co. to the North and reinforce the garrison, giving a strong holding force on the Northern end. This force arrived at 1020 and Lt. Stone, Fox Co. assumed command of the Northern perimeter.

300-1NF(182)7-0.3-Opn Rpt - Hill 260 - Bongamville - 2nd Bn - 182nd Inf - Regt - Americal Div
10-11 Mar 44

Operations On Hill 260, Cont'd.

Our casualties at 1030, 10 March 1944 were 16 EM missing, One Officer missing, wounded, not determined. Enemy casualties, 20 know dead, 20 additional estimated.

Easy Co. moved out from the East-West Trail at 1000, toward Hill 260. At 1045, the South perimeter had been reached and a personal reconnaissance was made to check the South perimeter garrison. An attack was ordered to reestablish the perimeter. A base of fire was set up at the South end (weapons platoon Co. E) and Lt. Oberle with the 3rd platoon Co. E was ordered to attack. This attack started at 1115 and stopped at 1330, after having gained approximately 35 yards. Lt. Ricker and a platoon of Fox Co. attacked at the same time and was stopped at 1200, gaining 5 yards.

A new plan of attack was devised, a double envelopment, and Lt. Willard was ordered, at 1405, to take his platoon inside the West wire, establish contact with Lt. Stone (Fox) and make his attack from the West, (see overlay) azimuth 90°. Lt. Karl with his platoon was ordered to move East and envelop the enemy from the East. He moved out at 1420 to envelop the enemy and cut their line of supply. The attack was to be launched after Lt. Willard had established contact with Lt. Stone. Lt. Willard started moving out at 1445.

Lt. Carlson was wounded at 1420 and Lt. O'Rourke assumed command of Easy Company.

At 1503, Lt. Karl came back wounded in the neck. He reported running into enemy machine gun and rifle fire (see overlay) which pinned him down and prevented his carrying out his mission. Lt. Karl was evacuated and Lt. Oertle, the Battalion S-2, then was given command of the 2nd Platoon Co. E and ordered to carry out the envelopment. He took a route just inside our wire (see overlay). A flame thrower was asked for by Lt. Oertle and as all trained flame thrower men had been wounded and evacuated Sgt. Denslow of the 60mm mortar section of Easy Co., volunteered. After two minutes of instruction by the Battalion Commander he accompanied Lt. Oertle and burned the Japs out of one pill box. He then returned, under machine gun fire, got the second flame thrower and returned to Lt. Oertle and got a second Jap position. For farthest advance of Lt. Oertle, see overlay.

At 1540 Col. Long came up to the Battalion OP, and inspected the front lines. He attempted to follow Lt. Willard's route to the North perimeter but was pinned down by machine gun fire. He withdrew and asked the Bn. Commander if there was anything he needed. The Battalion Commander stated that the perimeter would be reestablished in approximately 1 hour.

In the meantime Lt. Willard had made contact with Fox Co. and had launched his attack in conjunction with Lt. Oertle. The remainder of Easy Co. then attacked in the center under personal command of Lt. O'Rourke. The attack was stopped about 1700, only after Easy Co. had received over 50% casualties. For farthest advance see overlay.

It was then decided to use WP grenades to burn out the Japs. One hundred and fifty grenades were used and at 1800 we attempted to advance - still

Operations 0111 260, Cont'd.

Jap machine guns opened up and at 1900 it was decided to organize a perimeter for the night. A check was made and only forty six men were left and available for the perimeter. It was necessary to pull Lt. Willard and Lt. Oertle back to hold a perimeter.

Lt. Oertle was evacuated with severe WP burns. Lt. Hammett, 2nd platoon, Company F, assumed command of the 2nd platoon, Company E. Later Lt. Hurley was given command of this platoon.

By 2030, all troops were dug in, MG's sighted, etc., and the perimeter was checked by the Battalion Commander and Lt. O'Rourke.

A quiet night - several belts of MG ammo were fired at the Japanese, who could be heard moving on the Southeast shoulder. A few rounds of harassing 60mm mortars were also fired.

From 0600 to 2000, 11 March 1944

At approximately 0645 a fire fight again broke out in the South Section. From the greatly increased volume of Japanese MG and rifle fire it was apparent that the Japanese had made strong reinforcements during the night. Several new positions could be seen running down the S.E. spur from the O.P. Tree past the perimeter. A group of three MG's could be heard and the muzzle blast seen at the base of a large fallen tree twenty yards to our front. Several bazookas had been brought up the night before, but only one round left the tube and this failed to explode. A representative of the Regimental Munitions Officer came up and stated they were damp. Enemy fire steadily increased - Our 60mm mortars went into action, firing over 100 rounds. Japs were flushed into the open by this fire and about fifteen were killed.

At 0830, 300 rounds more of 60mm mortar ammo was brought up. Under a heavy MG and rifle and knee mortar barrage the Japanese attempted to over-run the South perimeter. One Jap platoon took part in this attack and an estimated 20 or more were killed. Only one Jap reached our line.

George company was ordered up to join Easy Co. about 1000. At this time Easy Co. had left, 3 Officers, all wounded and 33 enlisted men, 15 wounded. At 1057 George Co. Commander reported to be Bn. Commander. He was ordered to take George Co. to the West, guided by Lt. Willard, Co. E., and the 6 men left in his platoon. George Co. was to attack in column of platoons, azimuth 90° and take the high ground in the vicinity of the tree O.P.. Easy Co. with Weapons Platoon of George Co. as base of fire from E Co's positions.

George Co. took over an hour and a half to issue orders and move out. When the leading platoon had just gotten well started on it's route of advance, the Japanese opened an attack of their own from the S^WE shoulder and from the East. Over 150 knee mortar shells were thrown on our troops. George Co. could not move. Constant heavy machine gun and rifle fire came from the Jap positions. George Co. was suffering heavy losses. We called for artillery and mortar (81mm) fire against the Japanese but some fell short. The Bn. Commander was wounded. The Japanese had attempted to cut

Operations Of Hill 260, Cont'd.

our line of supply and evacuation. Capt. Dawson, Bn. Surgeon personally killed one Jap. The Bn Commander decided to immediately evacuate all wounded and move the Bn Forward Aid Station back to the vicinity of the Rear CP. The fire coming from the East was believed to be from a reinforced Jap Rifle Co. Several 90mm shells hit near the Artillery P. O. group but caused no casualties.

At this time the Bn. Commander suggested to the Regimental Commander a withdrawal to the base of 260 and covering the South end (South of OP tree) with heavy artillery and 81mm concentrations. The Regimental Commander ordered the withdrawal. At 1330 George Co. moved out first carrying the wounded.

Lt. Hammond with three or four men of George covered the withdrawal to the South West. Lt. O'Rourke with seven men of Co. E covered the withdrawal to the West and broke up a Jap attack from the North with heavy losses for the enemy. All withdrew leaving no known wounded behind. Artillery and 81mm fire hit the hill directed by Regt.

A road block was set up under Lt. O'Rourke at the base of Hill 260 and the troops withdrew to the Eagle carrying their wounded. Men were left along the trail in groups of two, twenty five to thirty yards apart to prevent Jap infiltration to the West.

At 1430, Col. Lowry contacted Baker Co. which came under his control. An order was given by the Regimental Commander to immediately move Baker Co. forward. An order in writing from the Division Commander directed that six 132d Inf. flame thrower teams, then on the way to join him were to be used in the attack. Baker Co. was moved to the base of Hill 260 and at 1530 upon the arrival of the flame thrower teams, the group moved out. The Bn. Commander leading with four scouts, an SCR-300 Radio, Baker Co., wire party, flame thrower party, and a reorganized George-Easy Co. under George Co. Commander.

At 1645 the Bn. CO entered the Fox Co perimeter and at 1715 acquainted the Baker Co CO with the situation. The flame throwers having been ordered forward, a base of fire was established on the North knoll outside our wire, consisting of 7 60mm mortars under Lt. Trauger of Fox Co. The LMG's of Fox Co. were ordered to support the attack with fire on the Southeast nose. The plan was for B Co. with one platoon to flank the Jap positions in the vicinity of the OP tree and flame throwers under Lt. Allen, 132d Inf., with one squad attached plus one platoon of B Co. in support to make a co-ordinated attack at 1800 and fix the enemy.

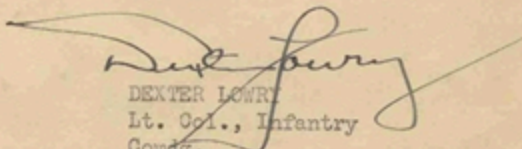
Preceding the attack the Regimental CO had the artillery deliver two concentrations on the Southeast nose and H Co 81mm mortars gave close support - approximately 25 yards in front of our "jump-off" line. B Co. pushed forward and the flame throwers knocked out two Jap pillboxes. At 1830, two flame throwers from the reserve moved up to, and blanketed the base of the OP tree with flame. When the flames died down the advance was continued toward the tree, but our troops still received Jap MG fire from holes at the base of the tree, the same area that had just been sprayed by flames.

Operations of Hill 260, Cont'd.

At 1915 the Battalion CO directed that the perimeter be formed for the night holding all ground gained during the attack. Fox Co. with 2 platoons of G Co. held a perimeter inside and just outside the wire of the original garrison. G and E Co. with weapons platoon and one rifle platoon of B Co. organized a perimeter on the North knoll in the vicinity of Parmalee's grave and extended down the ridge to the West. A small unit was placed well down the ridge where the telephone wires turned South in order to prevent the Japs following the wires into our positions.

At 1945 Col. Mahoney reported to the Bn. CO and after acquainting him with the situation and showing him the Bn. CP installations, the Bn. CO turned over command and started back to report to the Regimental CP.

At 2220 Col. Lowry reported to General McCulloch and Col. Long and gave them the situation as of 2015 when he left Hill 260.


DEXTER LOWRY
Lt. Col., Infantry
Comdg.