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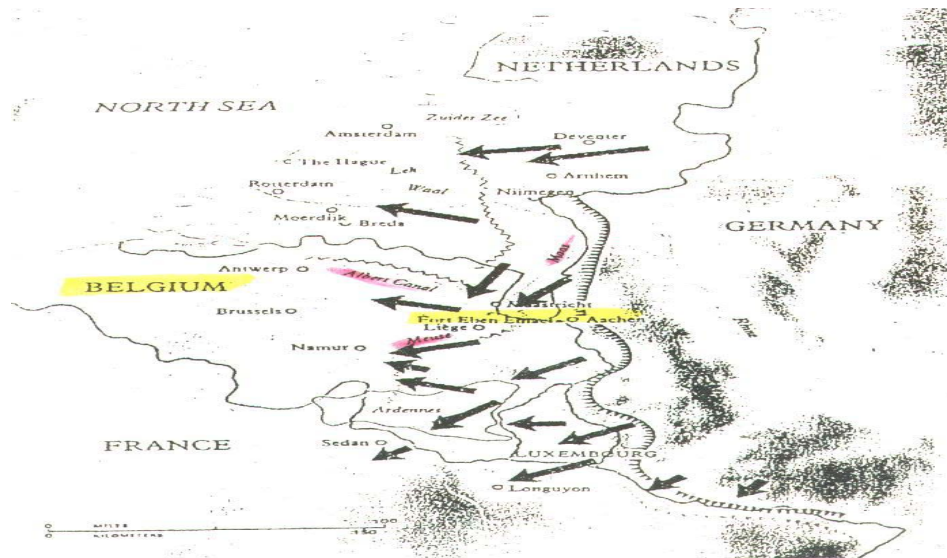
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**THE TAKING OF EBEN-EMAEL, GERMAN PARATROOPS, 1940**

The capture of Fort Eben-Emael by German paratroopers on the night of 10 May 1940 was perhaps the most daring and brilliantly executed commando action of the war. It combined planning with improvisation, and training with resourcefulness to bring about a victory which most would *have* regarded as impossible. In so doing it helped to change the course of history and bring about the defeat first of Belgium then of France. By 10 May 1940 Hitler the master of Central Europe. He had destroyed the Polish Army and occupied Czechoslovakia and Denmark. His troops were fighting a successful campaign in Norway and stood poised ready to launch a lightning strike against the remaining democracies in the West. The forces at his disposal, though fewer in number, were far superior in training and morale to the bulk of his potential adversaries, the French Army in particular being of dubious quality. Poorly trained, ill disciplined and still mentally exhausted from the blood-letting of the Great War, its members could no longer be guaranteed to fight with their customary panache. The British were of a high standard but few in number, and the Belgians and Dutch ill-prepared for war.



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More importantly, Belgium and Holland were still neutral. When Britain and France had declared war on Nazi Germany on 3 September 1939, Belgium had refused to join the old alliance, preferring to join the Netherlands in a policy of strict neutrality. Both non-combatants had mobilized their forces, placing the majority on the German border. At the same time they had strictly forbidden the Franco-British Army to enter their country to make effective preparations for their defence.

Britain had been forced to construct a series of wholly inadequate anti-tank ditches along the Franco-Belgian border during 1939. It was accepted that this created a dangerous gap of some 80km (49.7 miles) between the southern flank of the British temporary defences and the beginning of the massive French Maginot line, but this was discounted. The French felt that the densely wooded Ardennes, which occupied the bulk of this lightly defended front, were impassable for large modern armies and declined to place more than nine divisions, only two of which were up to strength, in the sector. Britain, which would later argue that she had concurred only so as not to upset her more powerful ally, did not argue.

Only Hitler and the German High Command fully realized the recklessness of this complacency. Top secret plans were implemented for a lightning strike through Belgium and the Ardennes deep into the heartland of France. The key to German success lay in speed. It would be essential therefore to capture the bridges across the Meuse and Albert Canal intact and to neutralize the massive defences at Eben-Emael in the first hours of the invasion.

Eben-Emael was considered impregnable. Constructed between 1932 and 1935 as the northernmost fortification guarding the strategically important city of Liege, it dominated the network of roads leading from Maastricht to the west and protected the Vroenhaven and Velrwezert high-bridges which cross the Albert Canal.

Eben-Emael, 900m (984 yds) long and 70Gm (766 yds) wide, was in

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essence a tight complex of interrelated infantry and artillery strong points coordinated to provide mutual defences and linked by Eben-Emael was considered impregnable to conventional attack. It was in essence a tight complex of inter-related infantry and artillery strong points, 900m (972 ft) long and 700m (756 ft) wide, co-ordinated to provide mutual defence and linked by kilometers of deep subterranean passages. Numerous barrack blocks, messes, cook houses, sick bays, store rooms and magazines were integrated into a single entity capable of sustaining 1200 servicemen for weeks, if not months. Eben-Emael was eventually assaulted from the air. Nine gliders were landed on the complex roof, taking the Belgian defenders completely by surprise. Within ten minutes the engineer commandos were in virtual control of the upper surfaces of the fortress with the garrison below at their mercy. Within hours Eben-Emael was in German hands and the road into Belgium was wide open.

Kilometers of deep subterranean Barrack blocks, officers' and NCOs messes, sick bays, machine rooms and magazines were all integrated into a single self-contained entity capable of sustaining 1,200 servicemen for weeks, if not months.

The fortress was protected on its north-east side by a sheer drop to the Albert Canal some 40m (132.1 ft) below. To the north-west the flood plain of the 'Rive Jeker had been raised by the fortifications to frustrate armoured attack from that direction. Anti-tank ditches and 4m (13.12ft) walls had been dug to the south and west. With its own generators, telecommunications and over-pressure filtered ventilation system. Eben-Emael was designed to withstand any form of attack experienced in the previous war. As history would prove, however, it was not geared for the next. Responsibility for neutralizing Eben-Emael and capturing the bridges was delegated to the Koch Storm Detachment formed amid great secrecy in Hildesheim in November 1939. Commanded by Captain Koch, it constituted the 1<sup>st</sup> Company of

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the 1<sup>st</sup> Parachute Regiment, the Parachute Sapper Detachment of the VIIIth Flying Division (at that time the only parachute division), the Freight Glider Unit, a beacon and searchlight detachment and airfield ground staff. The parachute company was ordered to take the three bridges at Vroenhaven, Veltwezelt and Canne, the sapper detachment overcome the fortress.

This detachment was unique. Consisting entirely of engineers who had volunteered for hazardous duties, it incorporated within its ranks some of the finest glider pilots of pre-war Germany. Under the command of Lieutenant Rudolf Witzig it had grown into a close-knit, confident and above all self-reliant unit. Its training, order of battle where possible its very existence, were unknown to the rest of the army.

During the six months before the operation its members were given no leave nor were they allowed to mix socially beyond their own numbers. Their mail was censored, they were not allowed to wear airborne badges and insignia and they were frequently moved around the countryside so as not to establish a pattern. Very few of the men had any real concept of the mission ahead of them and only Witzig knew the exact details.

The plan of attacks was as daring as it was simple. The group would make no attempt to breach Eben-Emael's impregnable outer defences. Instead it would land silently by glider on the roof of the undefended fortress from where its members would deploy to the various key points, destroying them before the enemy knew that he was even under attack.

The initial assault would be limited to the central installations with priority given to the destruction of infantry support weapons and anti-aircraft guns. Massive 50 kg (110.2 pound) hemisphere shaped cavity charges, transportable in two parts, would then be used to penetrate the armoured domes above the artillery positions.

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As May approached so the training became more specific. The detachment moved first to the sudetenland to practise attacking strongly fortified installations then to the Polish town of Gleiwitz to hone its demolition skills. Finally its members attended the Engineer School at Karlsherst to receive an introduction to the theory of fortress construction.

On the afternoon of 9 May Witzig at last received notification that the operation for which he and his men had planned and trained for so long was about to take place. The Koch Storm Detachment met according to plan at the Koln-Ostheim and Koln-Butzweilerh of airfields to receive its final briefings and at 4:30 a.m. precisely took off for its various destinations. The detachment was divided into eleven sections of seven or eight men each with its own glider. The take-off went well but almost at once complications set in. Two of the gliders, including Witzig's veered off course and were forced to land short of their objectives. The remaining nine, however, proceeded according to plan, dropped their tow lines some 30 km (18.6 miles) from the border and continued silently and effortlessly towards their objective.

At precisely 5.25 a.m. five minutes before the main German Army crossed the frontier, the gliders landed in a tight configuration, precisely on target. Sergeant Major Wenzel at once assumed command in the absence of the luckless Witzig and began to coordinate the operation. The nine teams left their aircraft within seconds of landing and moved effortlessly, two to the north of the complex, seven to the south, to locate their targets. The long and paying dividends. A crucial anti-aircraft post in the south-east of the complex (A) fell before its crew members realized that they were even under attack. Seconds later the small barrack block to its north also succumbed to the relentless barrage of German machine gun fire, grenades and bombs. Within ten minutes the congeners were in virtual control of the upper surfaces of the fortress and the garrison below was at their mercy.

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Allowing the Belgians no time to recover, explosive charges were now placed on seven of the reinforced artillery domes. Five emplacements were completely destroyed and with them nine of the fortress massive that the cavity charges would not penetrate the massive 6m (6.5 yd) diameter flat armoured dome protecting the 12cm (4.8 my revolving twin cannon situated towards the centre of the emplacement (B) two kg (2.2 pound) satchel charges were hurled into the barrels, destroying the breeches as they exploded.

To their chagrin, the two teams attacking targets in the north of the fortress discovered too late that their objectives (C) were in tact dummy installation uncharacteristically well protected by barbed wire. By a cruel irony the Belgians had intended to cover the entire upper surfaces with barbed wire and anti-vehicle obstacles some weeks earlier but had failed to receive the necessary materials. Had these arrived the fate of Witzig's men might have been very different.

By 8.30 a.m. the commandos had every reason to feel satisfied. Eben-Emael had been rendered ineffective. With the exception of the machine gun positions (D) overlooking the canal from the eastern perimeter and a lone emplacement on the east, the entire upper surface of the foreruns was in German hands.

Then the impossible happened. A Luftwaffe glider suddenly appeared from the east and landed with a jolt close to the wrecks of the other aircraft. To everyone's surprise and relief Witzig descended unharmed and immediately demanded a full briefing before resuming command. It later transpired that the glider's tow-rope had parted soon after leaving Köln, forcing it to crash-land in a field. Fortunately the landing had been comparatively soft and it had been possible to relaunch the glider with the aid of a Ju 52 towing aircraft. Once airborne Witzig had followed his original flight path, joining the battle some three hours late.

The counter-attack which Witzig's men had anticipated from the

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outset look some hours to materialize and when it did was initially ineffective. A number of Belgian artillery batteries to the north brought down fire on the German positions but failed to cause casualties. As the day progressed however, the Belgians began to appreciate the full immensity of their problems and brought up larger forces. By nightfall the German had been driven out of all but the north-west sector but not until they had managed to drop 100kg (220 pound) charges into the central ascent shafts, burying many of the hapless defenders alive.

Throughout the afternoon, elements of the 51<sup>st</sup> Sapper Battalion due to relieve Witzig's group attempted to cross the canal in rubber dinghies but were constantly frustrated by accurate gunfire from the remaining operational Belgian machine gun emplacement (D). Although Witzig was able to neutralize the effect of the gunfire to a degree by exploding hanging charges close to the observation slits in an effort to block them with debris, he could not do so completely, leaving the canal temporarily in Belgian control.

At approximately 7.00 a.m., elements of the Sapper Battalion skirted the remaining Belgian defences and approached the fortress from the west. Led by Sergeant Portsteffen they silenced the remaining ditch emplacement (E) and scrambled on to the emplacement roof. By midday, the remaining gun positions had ceased firing and what was left of Eben-Emael was firmly in German hands. The Belgians had lost 23 dead and 59 wounded in the day long engagement, the German six dead and 15 injured.

Considerable speculation followed, particularly in the neutral press, as to why Eben-Emael had fallen so easily. Treachery and subterfuge were blamed but in reality neither was present. Witzig had, in fact, relied on a brilliant plan, comprehensive training and excellent soldiering to win. His few men had never allowed the Belgians, who had outnumbered them by more than ten to one, to gain the initiative, instead causing them by more than ten to one, to gain the initiative,

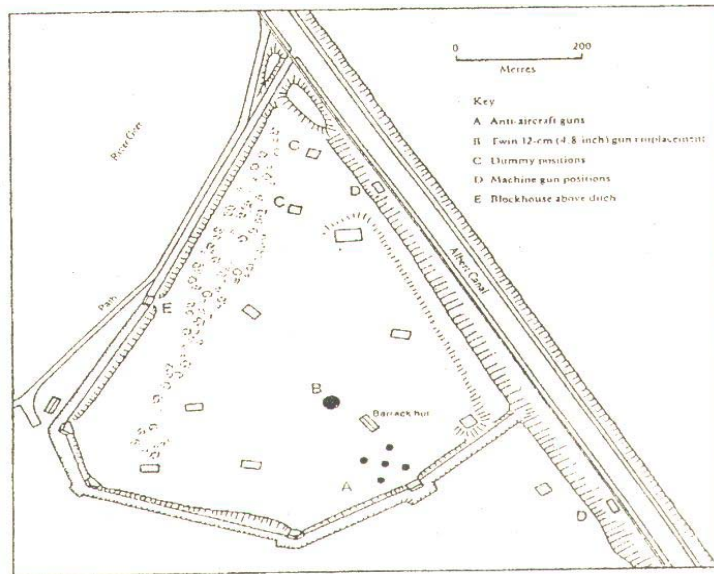
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instead causing them to become captives in their own fortress and as such stifling their will to fight. Had the garrison counter-attacked during the night it might well have driven the Germans off, but such was not the case.

The storming of Eben-Emael was the first engineers' attack ever made from the air. There have been few like it since.

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**BLOODY RIDGE, U.S. 9TH INFANTRY IN KOREA, 1951**

Bloody Ridge does not exist on any map. It was the name given by Stars and Stripes to a particularly vicious close combat battle fought between the men of the 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division, Eighth U.S. Army and the North Koreans for control of an ill-defined group of hills in the central highlands.

The engagement took place in August 1951 during the preliminary Kaesong armistice negotiations. At the time both sides were vying for territory in a series of independent, often futile actions along the unstable front line with a view to gaining their negotiators an advantage. Journalists were ordered to report activity generally so as not to give detailed information to the enemy. Indeed, they were so circumspect in their analysis of the battle which they christened Bloody Ridge that it is said that the men of the 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry who took part in it were unable to recognize their own exploits!

Bloody Ridge consists of three hills - 983, 940 and 773 - with their connecting ridges. Four razor-back ridges converge on the western extremity to form Hill 983, a sharp and well-defined point, and the highest peak on the ridgeline. To the east, separated from Hill 983 by a steep draw, lies the centre section of the complex approximately 1,000m (1,000 yds) long climaxing in a peak at Hill 940. To the east of that, a further 914m (1,000 yds) along the ridgeway, lies Hill 773.

At the time, Bloody Ridge was securely held by the North Koreans who had wasted impregnable network of interlocking trenches, bunkers and sangars capable of withstanding an artillery barrage. The available woodland had been used intelligently to provide excellent camouflage, making accurate aerial reconnaissance particularly difficult.

The ridge had been the subject of concentrated fighting well before the Americans arrived in the sector. On 17 August a South Korean

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division had attempted to take advantage of the uncharacteristically foggy morning to launch a frontal assault against the entrenched enemy. After eight days of bitter fighting, they had secured their objective only to lose it the very next day. In all they had suffered over 1,000 casualties, including nearly 300 killed or missing and had gained nothing.

Initial probing assaults by the 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment were no more successful. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion managed to seize Hill 940 on the morning of 27 August but were unable to consolidate and were forced to withdraw that same afternoon. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, attacking from the east on the following day, fared no better. It failed even to reach its objective on Hill 773 and was forced back to its start line by an unexpected nocturnal counter-attack.

Inexplicably, the regimental commander now compounded his losses by ordering the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalions to make a near suicidal frontal assault north against Hill 940. Not surprisingly, they were stopped in their tracks with heavy losses, particularly among the officers, and were only able to extract themselves with difficulty under the cover of massed 105mm howitzer fire supplied by the seven artillery battalions deployed in support.

The final survivors did not make it to safety until 4.00 a.m. Lieutenant Colonel Gaylord Bishop in command of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion ordered his men to remain on alert in case of attack but did allow them the luxury of their first meal in twenty-four hours. When the anticipated dawn attack failed to materialize, the exhausted and dispirited men were trucked to an assembly area to the south where they were introduced to their battle casualty replacements and given two hours to prepare themselves for another attack.

It is never a good time to introduce fresh reinforcements into a combat-hardened unit. Cliques form among the "old soldiers and mutual resentment quickly sets in. It is particularly dangerous to

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attempt to do this in the full of a battle. Troops need time to get to know each other, to bond as a group and to build up trust. Every soldier must know that the man next to him will not freeze in his first engagement, that he can be relied upon under fire. The introduction of raw recruits into the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion at this critical stage therefore did nothing to improve morale.

At midday on 31 August the battalion was again carried back the short way to the battle area, This time to attack Hill 773 from the east. Having debussed some way from their objective they formed into company lines, with Company C in the lead, to continue on foot. At the eastern tip of the ridgeline they veered left, deployed into single file and began their unenviable climb towards the unseen enemy. While this was going on Colonel Bishop had positioned himself in a observation post on high ground held by the 38<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment further to the east. In so doing he had hoped to be able to maintain overall control but had failed to take into account the morning fog and haze then prevailing in the area. He was soon out of touch with his leading elements who were forced to climb blind.

Advancing to contact, proceeding steadily towards the enemy perhaps for several hours until brought under effective fire, is never easy. It is particularly difficult with exhausted troops who know that when the fighting begins they will be caught on a narrow ridge from which they cannot easily deploy. Not surprisingly therefore, Company C began to lose momentum, stopping frequently to allow the scouts to ensure safe passage ahead.

When eventually Company C came under fire, from an unseen machine gun dug in some 150m (165 yds) to its front, it sustained immediate casualties including the commander, Lieutenant Orlando Campisi, and one of his section leaders. During the subsequent firefight both of the remaining officers were wounded leaving the company leaders and foundering. Fortunately the radio operator,

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Corporal John Traux, remained uninjured and was able to advise the still unsighted Bishop of the dilemma. Bishop at once ordered Company B, reinforced by clement of Company D, to move through Company C's position and continue the advance. Lieutenant Mallard, the battalion adjutant, was ordered to assume command of Company C and, in the absence of supporting artillery fire frustrated by the fog, to give the maximum amount of cover as was practical to the attackers.

Company B had hardly begun to move before it too began to founder. Lieutenant Joseph Burkett, in command of 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon, was ordered to spearhead the continued advance. He was given a radio with the Company and was told that the four machine guns available would provide covering fire but was otherwise given little direction. Ignorant of the North Korean dispositions (no one from Company C had been able to give him any real estimate of the direction of the enemy fire which had earlier caused them so much trouble) and with 16 of his 22 men inexperienced replacements, Burkett's main aim was simply to keep his platoon intact. Warily he advanced the 140m (153 yds) to the first of a series of knolls. Having ordered the bulk of his men to form a defensive position he proceeded with three of his 'veterans' to the top of the knoll, some 10m (32.8 ft) above, in search of the enemy.

Burkett now used his limited supply of grenades to excellent effect. Sheltering below the rim of the knoll he hurled a missile as far as he was able on to the top. As it exploded he and his colleague, stormed over the top to find the area unoccupied.

As the four stalwarts moved warily towards the next knoll some 50m (54 yds) away the enemy fire, although still random and sporadic, began to increase in intersity Suddenly the supporting fire from the four machine guns stopped. Burkett attempted straight away to radio company headquarters to order an immediate resumption but found to his disgust that the radio was dead. Hurling it to the grounds in anger (an action that could have don nothing to improve the morale of his

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men he ordered his platoon forward. Only later did he learn that the machine gunners had stopped firing because the fog was by then completely obscuring the forward troops who were beginning to move dangerously close to the line of fire.

As the advance continued Burkett was forced to concentrate more on the action ahead and less on the state of his men behind. The raw soldiers began to string out along the ridge destroying the final vestiges of order.

Suddenly Burkett spotted a well-camouflaged bunker ahead. The occupants began to hurl grenade after grenade at the Americans. Most fell harmlessly but others did not, landing among the petrified young conscripts most of whom just lay still, as if rooted to the spot, making no attempt to try to escape the explosions.

Three B.A.R. (Browning Automatic Rifle) teams were now sent forward by Captain Krzyzowski of Company B to assist the by now static 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon in the clearance of the bunker. When these proved unsuccessful Burkett at last abandoned attempts at frontal assault. Instead, he studied the terrain surrounding the bunker to seek an unlighted approach route. Through the fog he ascertained that both the bunker and his platoon were positioned on the north side of the ridge. He and a squad leader, Sergeant Charles Hartman, therefore slid silently down the south side of the ridge and proceeded to crawl to an area even with the bunker opposite. Once in position they hurled grenades into the enemy post, forcing the enemy into the open where they could be more easily neutralized by fire from the B.A.R.s. Having taken the bunker at tremendous cost, (both Burkett and Hartman were, in fact, injured in the final engagement), the remnants of the platoon were ordered pull back to the company perimeter. This allowed the enemy to regain much of the hard-won initiative.

The next morning, 1<sup>st</sup> September, brought the men of 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion a much-needed break. The sky was clear and bright, the fog cleared at

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dawn and the artillery positions were able to report that they could at last register on the enemy targets. Company A was ordered to take the lead with Lieutenant Mallard's Company C in support.

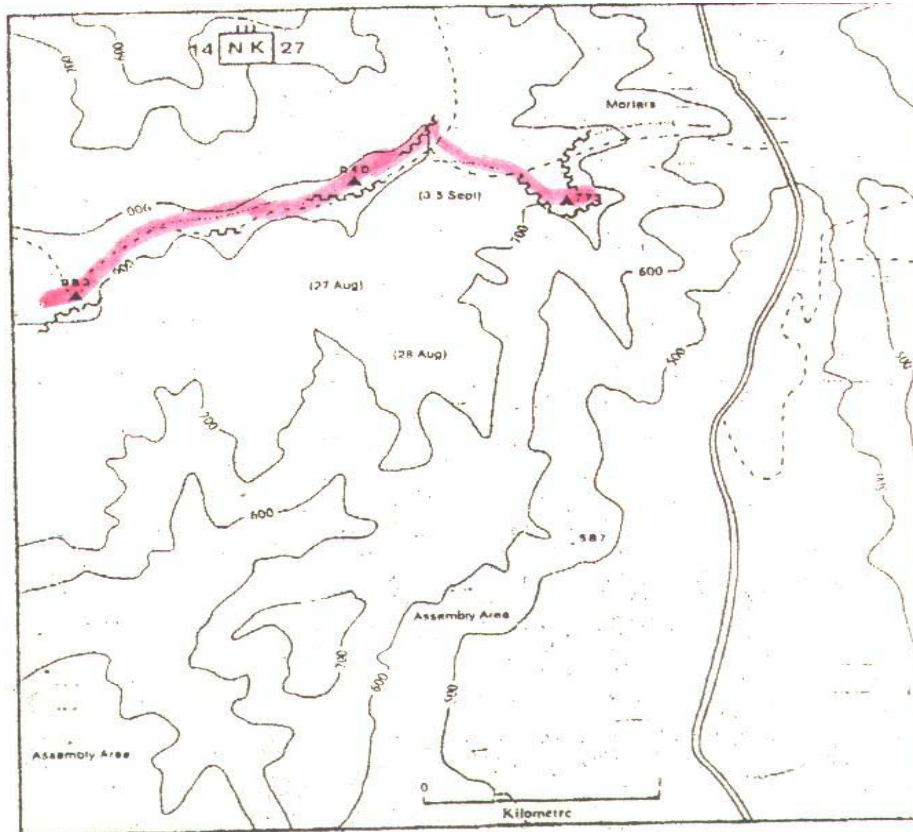
Company A advanced under cover of an artillery barrage without incident until the leading elements reached Burkett's bunker which surprisingly had not been reoccupied by a grateful enemy. When the company commander, Lieutenant Elden Foulk, and two of his platoon commanders were injured, the impetus again sapped and Company A came to a halt in the very ground occupied the day before by its colleagues in Burkett's platoon.

Colonel Bishop, still entrenched on his far away hill, now ordered Company B forward to take the place of Company A. After a five minute grenade engagement the bunker, severely damaged in the previous day's fighting, was overrun. By 10,00 a.m., Bishop was able to report that his men at last held the three prominent knolls leading to Hill 773 still some 250m (273 yds) away.

At 2.00 p.m., after only minimal rest and now down to 50 men, Company B resumed its advance towards the Hill. Having negotiated the first 100m (120 yds) without incident the hapless Americans came under concerted grenade attack from three independent bunkers. To compound their problems, a machine gun opened sporadic fire from Hill 940 to the left. Five men fell injured and yet again the advance faltered. By now, however, the company commanders seemed to have established a more consistent policy toward static enemy positions. Bazookas (3.5in rocket launchers) were brought forward and quickly destroyed the first bunker while concentrated fire from the battalion's 60mm mortars was brought to bear on the hilltop. Following Burkett's pattern of the previous day P.F.C. Edward Jenkins then crawled forward on the opposite side of the ridge to within throwing distance of the two remaining bunkers, silencing both with well placed grenades.

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As darkness approached, the 22 remaining members of Company A and 20 members of Company B pulled back to a battalion defensive perimeter. Early the next morning six replacement officers and 150 men joined the battalion, immediately destroying the trust and camaraderie which had built up among the survivors of the previous three days.

On 2 September, 9<sup>th</sup> Regiment at last began to make concerted use of its available potential. A tank and quad 50 flakwagon were deployed on the road to engage enemy positions on Hill 940. At the same time, Lieutenant Mallard was ordered to establish an observation post on the most westerly of the captured knolls. From there, he was to direct both the tanks and the two companies of heavy mortars which to date had played little part in the battle, artillery fire was directed independently on to Hill 940 and airstrikes were put in against the west end of the ridge. Only now did the battalion group begin to function fully as a unit. There was no formal attack on 2 September although a few

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fighting patrols were mounted to probe the enemy defences.

Hostilities on the next morning commenced at 10.30 a.m. with an air strike directed by Lieutenant Robert assumed command of Company A in lieu of the injured Lieutenant Faulk. Two flights of four aircraft each dropped a total of eight napalm and eight anti-personnel bombs on their targets, causing the enemy considerable losses.

Shortly after 1.00 p.m. Company C, now up to 85 men strong, resumed the attack. The riflemen were divided into three platoons. Two were made up of experienced soldiers, some of whom had only joined the battalion three days earlier. The third platoon consisted entirely of novices. Both 'experienced' platoons were pushed forward against a new ring to bunkers and were cut to pieces. At last flame-throwers, the ideal close-quarter anti-bunker weapon, were brought forward. Supported by the third platoon they soon made short work of the enemy positions allowing the remnants of the Lacaze a battalion officer who had recently company to move forward and secure the company to move forward and secure the peak of Hill 773.

Two days later Colonel Bishop's battalion occupied Hills 940 and 983 without opposition. The enemy had simply melted away to strengthen the next prominent position in the north, which would itself ultimately have to be taken.

To the politicians 1/9<sup>th</sup> Infantry had captured a 'crucial' hill and had therefore gained a victory although few successes could have been more Pyrrhic. Many lessons should have been learned on Bloody Ridge but unfortunately were not. Commanders have to be close to the battle not on a neighbouring hill. No battle can be won without planning and all available resources must be exploited at all times. Officers cannot hope to command respect until they have earned it. It is therefore ridiculous drafting young sub-lieutenants into a battle and giving them immediate they have earned it. It is pointless drafting raw recruits into

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a combat engaged unit. They will not mix, fit in or be of any real use.

The men of 1/9<sup>th</sup> infantry were unquestionably as brave as they were ill-directed. More planning and thorough prior reconnaissance would certainly have led to a speedier victory and, more importantly, to a considerable reduction in casualties.

**TUMBLEDOWN, THE SCOTS GUARDS IN THE FALKLANDS, 1982**

At about 4.30 a.m. on Friday 2 April 1982, 140 Argentine Special Forces landed at Mullet Creek on the British Falkland Islands. They immediately launched an attack on the Royal Marines barracks at Moody Brook just outside of the capital of Stanley and surrounded Government House. Simultaneously, larger forces landed near Stanley airport, which is situated on a small isthmus to the east of the town. The 61 Marines of Naval Party 8901, the Island's only effective defensive force, now completely outnumbered, were ordered by the Governor to surrender some four hours later at 9.25 a.m. Following the surrender, pictures of British POWs spread-eagled on the ground were distributed to the world's press by the gloating Argentine government.

Suffering a great embarrassment, the British Government ordered the creation of a task force to retake the Islands by force of arms if necessary. The carriers *Invincible* and *Hermes*, supported by the assault ship *Fearless*, sailed for the Falklands on 5 April to be joined four days later by the cruise liner *Canberra* which was by then carrying the nucleus of 3 Commando Brigade.

On 12 May, 5 Infantry Brigade, having in the Welsh Mountains, sailed from Southampton in support. Although its headquarters had been left intact, 5 Brigade itself, had been stripped of two of its three battalions when 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalions Parachute Regiment had been detached to Commando Brigade. The authorities decided to ignore the obvious course of action, which would have been to replace these top class battalions with battle trained line infantry units. The Green Howards, a highly trained Yorkshire regiment, then on 14 hours standby to go anywhere in the world, were not even considered. Instead social pressure prevailed and it was decided to fill the void with two Guards battalions, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Scots Guards and 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Welsh Guards, both then on public duties.

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By the time 5 Brigade landed at the San Carlos bridgehead, elements of 3 Commando had already advanced on foot well into the north of East Falkland and 2 PARA had won a remarkable victory at Goose Green. Immediately, 5 Brigade, with 2 PARA now under command, were brought forward along a southern axis to link in with the Commando brigade for a final assault on the Argentine static defensive positions guarding the approaches to Stanley. Only then was it fit enough to undertake a lengthy tab a cross the barren and uncompromising terrain of the Falklands. Reluctantly it was accepted that both battalions would have to be transported forward either by air or sea. The Scots Guards were embarked on intrepid and ordered to sail to Bluff Cove, then under 2 PARA control and within striking distance of the capital. Fearful of air attack however, Intrepid declined to sail beyond Lively Island, which was some way from her objective, leaving the guardsmen to complete the last seven hours of their voyage in open-topped LCUs, battling against heavy seas and driving rain. The fact that the young guardsmen not only disembarked in good order but were able immediately to take over 2 PARA's defensive positions despite their obvious discomfort and fatigue testifies to the extremely high standard of junior leadership within the battalion. Even so there were a few exposure cases one of whom only recovered after emergency resuscitation by his platoon commander, the now famous Lt, R.A. Lawrence.

On 9 June the battalion received its operational casualties. As soon as the battalion had settled into its new position, the reconnaissance platoon, under command of Captain R. A. Scott, was ordered forward some 12 km (7.5 miles) to establish a cover advanced patrol base within the enemy's area of operations. When the commanding officer, Lt Col M. I. Scott, received orders to prepare for an advance on Stanley he was forced to compromise the existence of the patrol position by sending a helicopter forward to extract the reconnaissance commander

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who was now required urgently for detailed briefing. Suddenly aware of the close proximity of the enemy the Argentineans brought down heavy mortar fire on the reconnaissance platoon's position forcing a to retire. In the ensuing withdrawal Sergeant Alum, the acting commander, and two of his guardsmen were injured, All three were evacuated by helicopter to the field hospital at Ajax Bax and subsequently made a fully recovery.

The original plan of the assault on Stanley required 45 Commando to attack Two Sisters, 42 Commando to attack Mount Harriortt and 3PARA to put in an attack on Mount Longdon Simutaneously, 1<sup>st</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> Duke of Edinburgh's Own Gurkha Rifles were to parrol Mounts Tumbledown and William with the Scots Guards advancing to their right to control 3 Commando Brigade's southern flank. Should the Gurkhas meet stronger than anticipated resistance which they were unable to overcome, it was planned that the Scots would assault the remaining enemy positions at first light on either 12 or 13 June. After consultation with his senior officer Lt. Col Scott reported that the plan as it stood would necessitate his men making frontal assault uphill in daylight across difficult and open ground. Fortunately the colonel's objections prevailed (it was subsequently discovered that the intended approach was dominated by ten Argentine machine guns) and 5 Brigade's original plan was abandoned. Instead the Scots Guards were ordered to assault Tumbledown at night using as forming up points positions to the west recently captured by the Commandos. 1<sup>st</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> Gurkhas were ordered to attack Mount William should it prove necessary while the demoralized Welsh Guards were kept in reserve.

The battle for Mount Tumbledown, which took place on the night of 13/14 June 1982, epitomizes the war for the Falklands (Malvinas). A series of small interlocking and interdependent engagements, it was won by a combination reconnaissance, and painstaking planning both at brigade and battalion level.

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The troops facing 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Scots Guards were no dispirited amateurs. Rather, they were drawn from the 5<sup>th</sup> Marine Infantry Battalion commanded by Carlos Robacio, one of the most experienced and efficient of the Argentine field officers. The Maripés were well armed and had been equipped with cold weather clothing far superior to that available to the British. They had since April dug in and familiarized themselves with the area and were fully up to strength. At the time of the battle they had even been reinforced by elements of the 4<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Regiments which had managed to extricate themselves from the fighting around Two Sisters and Mount Harriott two nights earlier.

Immediately before the battle, in anticipation of a British thrust east along the main track to Stanley, Robacio had redeployed O Company, the weakest of his fighting units, forward to fresh positions close to Mount William. He had reinforced N Company, dug into sangars on Tumbledown itself, and had formed a series of counter-attack groups situated in the area of battalion headquarters some two km (1.2 miles) to the rear.

Unaware of the enemy's precise strength, and ignorant of the recent redeployment forward of O Company, Colonel Scott ordered a three phased attack on Tumbledown to be preceded by a small diversionary attack from the south. It was planned that carrier based Harrier jets would provide fighter ground support while five batteries of 105 mm light guns together with the main guns of HMS Yarmouth and HMS Active would attempt to neutralize Argentinean strong points. The battalion mortars of 42 Commando and 1<sup>st</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> Gurkha Rifles would be made available to supplement the Scots' own support fire against individual enemy sangars.

It was envisaged that each phase of the attack would be mounted at a company strength. Immediately after the diversionary attack G Company, under the command of Major Dalziel-Job, would assault the

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western approaches to the mountain top itself. Finally, Right Flank Company, under Major Price, would mop up enemy resistance to the east. It was anticipated that Tumbledown would be in British hands before first light.

The attack was postponed for twenty-four hours to 13 June when it was discovered that there were insufficient helicopters available to transport the battalion forward to its forming up points. However the day was not wasted. Reconnaissance patrols were sent forward to observe the enemy positions closely and to establish as far as possible his new strong points. Finally it was decided to abandon the conventional NATO password system in favour of the less formal but more partial Hey Timmy! Although superficially a flippant point this simple expediency enabled the Scots to identify each other easily during the heat and confusion of battle considerably reducing the possibility of injury from friendly fire.

The initial diversionary attack consisted of three four-man assault sections supported by two Royal Engineers acting as scouts, artillery and mortar fire controllers, and a troop of the Blues and Royals mounted in Scimitar armoured cars. Amazingly, although the Argentineans were clearly anticipating an attack, the troops occupying the forward sangars were asleep and the Scots were therefore able to infiltrate deep into the enemy positions before opening fire. Once alerted however, the Martinis answered with heavy and accurate fire from several directions causing the Scots to take severe casualties during their withdrawal. Drill Sergeant Wright and Lance, Corporal Pashley of the Royal Engineers were killed, and six Guardsmen, including Major Bethell in command of the attacks, were injured. Nonetheless the assault served its purpose admirably. Robacio, assuring that the main attack would come from the south, made no attempt to reinforce his positions to the west from which direction G Company was about to mount its assault. The Scots were therefore

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able to leave their forming up point as planned at 9.00 p.m. and advance unnoticed, their movement shrouded by the noise and confusion of the diversionary attack to the south. By 10.30 p.m. they had obtained their objective without spilling blood. The western approaches of the mountain were in British hands and Left Flank Company was able to continue the advance as planned.

Almost immediately it began its ascent of the main feature of the mountain. Left Flank Company came under concentrated fire. Advancing with 13 and 15 Platoons forward and with 14 Platoon in reserve, the Company was soon forced to resort to the use of 66mm and 84mm anti-tank rocket launchers and M79 grenade launchers to clear the well-placed enemy sangars.

Argentinean resistance was brave, at times even suicidal. During the final stages of the battle, with little concern for themselves, the defenders called down mortar and artillery fire on their own positions in an attempt to stem the advance but to no avail. After seven hours of bitter fighting, much of it at the point of a bayonet, the Scots secured Tumbledown peak. Over 30 Argentine bodies were subsequently removed from the area. There were 20 prisoners taken and an unknown number of enemy put to flight. The cost to the British was seven Guardsmen killed and 21 wounded of whom 18 were evacuated to hospital.

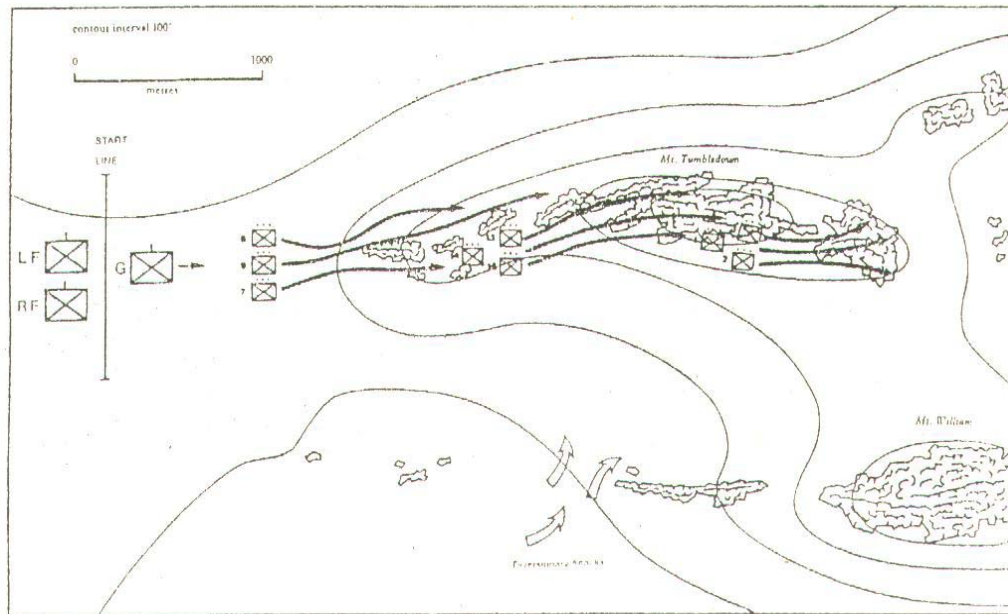
The sheer length of the main assault created difficulties for Right Flank Company which had yet to move against the remaining enemy positions to the east of the mountain. Their move had to be delayed to 6.00a.m., less than 30 minutes before daylight. Denied artillery and mortar fire (the former was unavailable and the latter out of action) the Company was forced to advance with two platoons forward using its own anti-tank weaponry to bludgeon its way through the enemy's sangars. In two hours of bitter hand to hand fighting, during which the Argentineans lost seven dead and fourteen captured and the Scots

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sustained five wounded, the Company secured the final highpoints on Tumbledown. At 8.15 a.m, some twelve hours after the diversionary unit had engaged its first enemy and with Tumbledown now firmly in their hands, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Scots Guards were ordered to cease fire. Less than a day later the Argentineans surrendered.



The battle for Mount Tumbledown proved that whatever the advantages of modern technology there is no substitute for physical fitness, team spirit and the will to win. Final victory had been gained through a combination of superior reconnaissance, clear and precise leadership, iron discipline and unremitting training.

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