

CANADIAN MILITARY HEADQUARTERSCANADIAN OPERATIONS - MEDITERRANEAN AREAExtracts from War Diaries and Memoranda (Series 29)

1. Further to my 24/AAI/1/5 (Hist), dated 16 Nov 44, attached are further Extracts from War Diaries and Memoranda dealing with the operations of Canadian formations and units in the Mediterranean Area.

2. These Extracts are circulated for general information only, and opinions stated are not to be considered as necessarily expressions of official doctrine.

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CANADIAN OPERATIONS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AREA

AUGUST - OCTOBER 1944

EXTRACTS FROM WAR DIARIES AND MEMORANDA

(SERIES 29)

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1. OBLIQUE AIR PHOTOGRAPHS FROM AIR OP AIRCRAFT (EXTRACTS FROM
A REPORT BY M.A.I.U., 1 CDN CORPS - 25 OCT 44).

(Copies of this report together with examples of photographs taken have been despatched by G.S., C.M.H.Q., to C.E. and B.R.A. First Cdn Army).

Introduction

A MAIU section at a Corps or Division HQ frequently receives demands for low oblique or panoramic photographs of the immediate front. D.A.P. Tac/R Squadrons can usually satisfy these demands but it is thought, that if these demands could be met by the formation itself using means under its own control, Tac/R aircraft could be used on other missions which cannot be done by the formation.

Experiments

1. CAMERA

With this in mind experiments were carried out using various cameras with various focal lengths. It was decided that the longest F.L. camera which could be handled in a Cub or Auster aircraft should be used for the following reasons:

- (a) With a long F.L. lens a better scale photograph of terrain in the middle distance is obtained.
- (b) With a long F.L. lens there is less photo distortion. The F 24 camera with a 14" lens or 20" lens is thought to be the best. The F 24 20" is not too heavy to use as a hand camera. Another advantage is that with the F 24 camera it is possible to cut off a few exposures at a time and reload the magazine this is not so easily done with a K 20 type camera.

2. CAMERA MOUNTING

A hand held mounting is considered the better, because

- (a) Any aircraft of the Air OP Sqn or Comm flight can be used.
- (b) With a fixed mounting considerable time would have to be spent on fitting and correcting a sight. Also with a hand held camera it is possible for the photographer to see just what picture he is taking. If he is familiar with the intentions he can get just the right photograph for the particular request.

3. AIRCRAFT

The Auster III or IV can be used.

At present, at Canadian Corps the photographer sits along side the pilot and takes photographs through the window opening (with the perspex removed) resting the camera cone on the frame.

If minor structural alterations were permitted a better position for the photographer would be in the seat behind the pilot in the Auster IV, with the camera protruding through the side perspex.

Results

At Anzio, between the 7 and 30 March the following was achieved at HQ 1st Armd Div (U.S.)

- (a) A complete panorama of the beachhead front was taken. These photos were taken at the height which the Air O.P. pilots operate. It was found a great advantage if the observer had enemy battery positions and other targets pinpointed on these photographs, rather than on vertical photographs, mosaics or maps. It was found that an observer could orient himself much quicker and could therefore engage the target in less time.

Prominent features were given the same artillery target number as those features on the vertical photographs so that targets of opportunity could be engaged quickly and easily.

The Artillery commander ordered 900 reprints of these photographs for distribution to every artillery and battery observer.

Many demands for copies were received from other artillery units, and the task got beyond the small divisional printing section so that Corps HQ (6th US Corps) set up a printing unit to cope with reprint demands for units outside the Division.

- (b) These same photographs were in use to infantry and tank platoon leaders for terrain study, to supplement the vertical photographs. Before an attack photographs were taken of the objective, annotated with company boundaries etc and distributed to platoon leaders. On one occasion the Commanding General decided at 1400 hrs that an attack would be made the next morning. Photographs were taken and 120 copies of 5 photographs were distributed to platoon leaders before the attack. Such rush demands could only be done if there is a processing unit at the formation HQ.
- (c) Low oblique photographs were taken of 40 bridges for the Chief Engineer. In many cases these bridges were just behind the enemy lines, others so far forward that it was not possible to get a daylight recce of the bridge. These photographs gave up to the minute data on a bridge, and if newly blown, the state of the demolition and supplemented information obtained from vertical photographs.

Photographs were also taken of roads and tracks in the forward areas to show conditions, and of rivers and ditches to show fording or bridging sites.

Under favourable conditions photographs would be available three hours after the Engineer had put in the request. It should be added that successful photographs were taken of a bridge in the rain.

- (d) Photographs were also taken of bivouac sites, gun positions etc to check camouflage and of enemy installations and defences to supplement measurements and ground photos for intelligence reports.

In all, the divisional processing unit developed 260 exposures and printed 3300 photographs during this period.

At Canadian Corps HQ although the unit had only been in existence a short time and efforts have been hampered by the recent bad weather, good photographs have been taken. The flying height does depend on the particular request but obviously the lower and closer to the target the better. Good photographs of the immediate front going back to a depth of 3-4000 yds have been taken with a 20" lens at 700 - 1000 ft. Such photographs are of use to company or battalion commanders and to engineer officers for bridge recce. Using the same lens, photographs taken at 4-5000 ft are of use to commanders for general terrain study.

Photographs have also been taken of captured battery positions and strong points to illustrate reports and of engineer bridges for the CE war diary.

Examples of photographs taken are attached as appendix "A".

Photographic Trailer

In order that the photographs are available for study and distribution in the shortest time possible a photographic trailer has been set up at Corps HQ to process the film and produce the necessary reprints.

1 EQUIPMENT

An inventory of the equipment thought necessary to operate a small dark room is given as appendix "B" but the most important items are as under.

- (a) Dark room, a fitted trailer or truck with large water tanks, capacity 40-50 gallons gravity or pressure feed. Two tank batteries, 12 V for emergency lighting system. Sink, lead covered draining board, benches and cupboards for storage of chemicals, paper etc.
- (b) F.24 contact printer.
- (c) Daylight developing tank.
- (d) Film dryer and print dryer or frame for drying film and prints if no 110V power available.
- (e) Small generator "Home light" type to operate dryers.

In the field during wet or damp weather a film and print dryer would speed up production considerably.

2 OPERATORS

Two operators, keen amateurs have been attached to this HQ from Reinforcement Depot. A RAF photographic Warrant Officer was borrowed for one month to train the operators.

Two operators are considered necessary so that one operator can develop or print while the other is mixing chemical, changing water, etc. One of the operators should be an N.C.O.....

(N.S. Rowe) Capt RGH
MAIU 1 Cdn Corps

2. FLASH-BACK TO FLORENCE (EXTRACTS FROM ACCOUNTS GIVEN TO HIST OFFR, 1 CDN INF DIV BY OFFICERS OF R.C.R., 6 - 8 AUG 44).

Lieut. Potts IO, RCR

The Bde took over from elements of 6 S.A.Armd Div. The RCR took over from 1st Bn Scots Gds, part of 24 Gds Bde. A Coy was responsible for a triangle area with its base on the ARNO river from PONTO VECCHIO to the second bridge west therefrom, B Coy were responsible for the bank of the ARNO from PONTO VECCHIO east to the 80 easting. C and D Coy were in reserve. A Coy had their HQ in the PIAZZA SAN SPIRITO. Their purpose was to watch the three bridges. The two on the left had been thoroughly demolished but PONTO VECCHIO had not been touched although at each approach a number of houses had been blown into the roadway producing a heap of fine rubble some 50 ft in length and up to 10 ft in height. This effectively blocked any vehicle penetration and the patrols were informed by local inhabitants that some of the rubble had been mined. Careful watch was also maintained on sewer entrances in the river bank west to the 78 casting and on a weir which crossed the river diagonally in front of these sewers and could have provided a passage for AFVs. Both A and B Coy patrols suffered from sniping and were informed by the partisans that these snipers were unfriendly Italian elements. No Germans were actually recognized on the south bank of the river. B Coy carried on some sniping duels and occasional fire fights with automatic weapons on suspected or observed enemy positions across the river. When A Coy reported sniping activities on their area the OC Major Liddell conferred with Capt Wilmot of the Brit Int Service 8th Army who was in liaison with a group of Italian partisans. These numbered some 250 and requested 20 TSMGs to increase their fire power. Col Ritchie offered instead 10 Tommy gunners from each of the reserve coys. At first light on 8 Aug a combined force started to clean up the triangle using what are reported to have been excellent battledrill tactics with some local improvements. The Canadian Tommy gunners were stationed to cover the killing area while the partisans passed through the houses shooting open locked doors but not finding it necessary to "mousehole" or use grenades. The civilians who were thus cleaned out of buildings were divided into two groups. Those found with arms (which included pistols, rifles and hand grenades, some of the latter being discovered in ladies purses) were removed to the rear area where they were investigated by Brit and Cdn FSS. All others were evacuated to the royal palace and retained there. During this operation partisans came under sniping fire and at least one sniper fired on was

reported to have fallen from his point of vantage but his body was not found. While the house cleaning operation was in progress the fwd elements of A Coy engaged in Bren and MG 42 duels with Germans on the north bank. In the afternoon mortar fire was directed on Major Liddell's HQ and corrections inferred observation from some building in the south area. A mortar bomb whose fragments suggested a calibre 8.1cm wounded 17 of the CRC 5 of whom had to be evacuated and several of the partisans including a leader whose name was reported as X. Capt Wilmot and his driver were also wounded and it was reported that X later died of wounds. The bn was withdrawn at 1800 hrs 8 Aug having suffered no other casualties.

Lieut. Myles, OC 7 Pl.

This pl was responsible for the waterfront between the centre and left bridges and kept careful watch on the weir. They suffered from some sniping, particularly water and ration parties. The casualties were confined to the food containers abandoned in haste. On one occasion a priest admitted the soldiers to his church and took them up to the tower whence they were able to locate and kill a sniper. The patrols along the river edge observed some German activity on the north shore and brought fire to bear without being able to certify any casualties.

Lessons Learned

1. Lieut Myles reported that his men were deficient in the ability to retain a mental picture of the area under observation, for example newly opened shutters or similar signs of enemy action. On return from the front the coy started special training to remedy this defect using the device known in scouting circles as Kims Game. He suggested that such practice might well have been carried out in earlier stages of training.
2. A Bren gunner with excellent cover from fire behind a wall 40 yds long reported anxiety about enemy counter-fire against the point which he was stationed. He apparently did not realize that he should change position between bursts.....

Lieut. P.B. Dickson OC 8 Pl A Coy.

8 Pl was assigned to cover the river front on both sides of the middle bridge. One sec was assigned on the left and two on the right so that the approach to the bridge was covered from both sides. The sec remained inside buildings and on the night of arrival faced the added difficulty of putting out a fire started by enemy tracer bullets in straw on the floor of the room. At 2200 hrs some sniping from roofs was experienced and regimental snipers were called in. They located the sniper on the roof of pl HQ and succeeded in driving him out. On the morning of 9 Aug the pl retired to a reserve position to protect coy HQ and to provide contact patrols with the RCR and the HPER on their left flank. These patrols operated along the river west of the weir and as far as the fourth bridge. During the day some German arty was directed into the pl area destroying some windows but causing no casualties. Occasional fire fights took place with Germans across the river. No casualties among the Germans could be verified but German stretcher bearers were seen in operation although they may have been gathering information. One Italian sniper who was killed was found to be armed with an Italian carbine. Throughout the period of occupation there were no difficulties with supplies of food or ammunition, the latter being used quite sparingly.

Lessons Learned.

1. ORs require considerable training in judgment of cover from enemy fire. They did not always realize that in the higher stories Italian walls are much thinner. In general there was a tendency to accept cover from view as cover from fire.
2. The men seemed well trained in the use of binoculars shading the lenses to prevent flash.
3. The need for soft shoes for patrolling in built up areas was very obvious. Army type boots are very noisy.
4. The ORs showed considerable judgement in declining German attempts to draw fire and so disclose their positions. These attempts included aimless bursts of fire and the use of civilian decoys including figures in female garb who were strongly suspected of being German soldiers.

Lieut. H.L. Watson, OC 9 Pl A Coy.

The pl took over from a group of South Africans and was responsible for a 60 yd frontage on the river bank astride the PONTO VECCHIO. The approach to the bridge had been filled up with piles of rubble from demolished buildings to a maximum depth of 10 ft. It was reported that some mines had been sown under the rubble but the South Africans had cleared routes which Cdns followed carefully thus avoiding casualties. The South Africans informed them that a British sec had been shot up by MG fire attempting to reach the bridge-head. The pl was further warned of a German standing patrol on the north bank to the right of the bridge. During the night this patrol gave away its position by smoking and the pl Bren gunners opened fire. No proof of casualties inflicted could be produced in the morning. During 9 Aug, 9 pl was withdrawn to the Art Gallery as a reserve position. Throughout the day the only activity consisted of sniping across the river. Civilians in female garb were constantly noted on the north bank and fire was directed in their vicinity as a warning. This pl did not have any difficulty with fascist snipers and were subjected only to SA fire from the Germans. No PIATS were used but were in readiness for use against AFVs, orders having been issued not to use them against buildings. The pl had some 7 men who had not been in action before and these gain valuable experience which they perhaps over-rated.

Lessons Learned

1. Normal kit for patrols was found cumbersome and it was recommended that some type of battle-jerkin be made up with separate pockets for Bren and TSMG mags, hand grenades and soft shoes.
2. Extra practice would be necessary for movement in streets to supplement normal patrol routine.
3. Best results were obtained by snipers working in pairs. This greatly improved observation and efficiency of fire.

Major R.G. Liddell, OC A Coy RCR.

The fwd pls were situated to watch the river front between the three bridges and the weir on the left. One pl was held in reserve to meet any enemy action by counter attack. These fwd pls

came constantly under harassing fire from MG 42s sited across the river. On the takeover excellent information was provided by the South Africans. The city engineer maps of FLORENCE were available and on these the IO was able to plot all sniper positions that had been observed and the information supplied by partisans patrols who were operating on both sides of the river. It was coy procedure to set two Bren gunners on each enemy sniper to provide both better observation and cross-fire. The Canadians were under fire also from snipers in the buildings in their own area and Capt Wilmot of the Brit Int Service offered the services of a group of partisans led by one X. Major Lidell discussed plans with them and arranged for 20 Tommy gunners from C and D Coys who assisted the partisans in the street cleaning. In the meantime sniper teams from coy HQ were sent out receiving information on the terrain and likely positions from the partisans. It was arranged that the Canadians should reply only to fire from the north bank and to keep off roofs. The reserve pl sent out one sec to locate a German MG which was found to be manned by Italians. No Germans were contacted at any time south of the river. The plan for the cleaning of the area was as follows. Some 300 men were available and at stand-down a cordon was drawn about the area fronting on the river from the PONTO VECCHIO west to the CAUSEWAY and some 800 yds in depth to the south. A pass word "Stop" with a reply "Victor" was arranged between partisans and Canadian river bank patrols. Canadian guides were posted at points in the cordon to further prevent confusion between allied patrols (Italian pronunciation not always clear to Cdns). The cordon provided at least two men at each break in the line of buildings. The Canadian Tommy gunners being assigned to this task. The remainder of the partisans started towards the river knocking at all doors and ordering all civilians to abandon their homes and leave all doors and shutters open. All civilians were brought back to coy HQ for examination by FS personnel. The PITTI PALACE was used as a general refugee centre but those suspected of fascist activities or whose names were in the local black book were kept in a special cage. Since this preliminary clearing took place after curfew it was assumed that all honest citizens had been removed from the area and that any subsequent movement was of a suspicious nature and would be fired upon. The partisans proceeded to close some of the shutters apparently in a prearranged pattern on the theory that snipers might close others for observation and thus betray their presence (If all windows were left open no snipers would dare to close any). At first light the partisans started again through the area from building to building searching each house from the top down and starting on the outside of the area working into the centre. Many weapons were found, enough to provide a load for two 15 cwt. Between 150 and 180 Fascists were rounded up in this drive, many of them armed. All were questioned and although some were able to account for themselves many of them were arrested and held. During these operations no partisans were reported wounded although jeep ambulances and stretcher bearers were held in readiness at coy HQ. There were no reports of Fascists being killed by the partisans and no Fascists bodies were actually located. While the partisans had a type of uniform, none of the Fascists brought in wore any identifying insignia. Telephone communication across the river was continuous and was used effectively by both sides. Sewers running into the river had been used for communication and the mouths of those on the north shore were covered at all times by partisans patrols. Much valuable information was obtained from partisans patrols who apparently had little trouble in crossing the river and establishing communications with partisans on the north shore. The information that they brought back about German formations was consistantly more conservative than that provided through Intelligence channels.

Observations on Partisans

It was noticed that these partisans were not Florentines but were from TUSCANY and northern areas who had infiltrated from behind the German lines. To avoid any suspicion of local animosity the Florentine partisans were employed only on the collection of information in their native city. This group had a list of fascist criminals prepared during German occupation and when prisoners were identified with this list they were separated from the other prisoners and from the statements of the partisans were executed. No actual evidence of this shooting was found. Excellent discipline was maintained at all times. Saluting within the unit and of Canadian officers was uniform and smart, the Italian military salute being used. One partisan who shot a personal enemy among the fascists was observed to be knocked down and dragged away apparently to custody. There was no sign of their having looted for their uniforms were simple in the extreme. Each man carried a water-bottle and no wine or liquor was consumed except at mess table where the ordinary Italian wine was served. Their dress was not uniform but generally consisted of a light shirt of the polo type either sports shorts or very loose slacks and soft rubber soled shoes. Most of them wore a canvas jerkin in which were sewn pockets for Sten mags and grenades. They were armed with the Brit type Sten Mk I and II, the Italian Army Breda pistol and a large assortment of other weapons rifles and ammunition. A water bottle was carried at all times. Steel helmets of any pattern were highly prized. They stated that these were particularly necessary because of Fascist snipers from above with dum-dum bullets. For identification the following symbols were generally worn. An arm band in red, white and green, a red star on a green and white background worn on the left pocket, a red necktie. They showed great respect for the Canadian soldiers and when one unidentified allied officer proceeded to disarm one of the partisans no reprisal was attempted. Major Liddell and Capt Wilmot obtained the weapon and returned it with apologies. The partisans received rations from AMG chiefly bread and meat and the Canadians supplied water. This was carefully portioned out to each sect and supplies covered with a wet sheet during daylight. A full meal was served in the evening and a mess table set up which carried crockery of most humble and fairly uniform type. Their military organization was roughly equivalent to that of a coy with sub-divisions to correspond to pls and sects. While the individual did not have passes to be in the area there was a blank pass for the whole group signed by Capt Wilmot and countersigned by Major Liddell....

Lessons Learned

1. The need of rubber or roped soled shoes and some type of battle jerkin for equipment on patrols.
2. A strict rule against looting or drinking during operations not only maintained fighting efficiency but prevented casualties from enemy booby-traps. A coy had instituted a strict rule in this respect and compensate for it by a coy party at the end of the operation. (Three demi-johns of wine consumed by the coy.)
3. There is need to combat a tendency to relaxation in training areas, not only a desire for sleep but the feeling of confidence which is not always justified.
4. At the conclusion of the operations discussion groups

were held among both officers and ORs. Valuable lessons were brought out but in general had application to the local type of fighting only.

5. The coys in the line needed more snipers from the scout pl. It was recommended that six teams be attached to each fwd coy.

3. CROSSING THE SAVIO RIVER 20 - 21 OCT 44 (EXTRACTS FROM AN ACCOUNT GIVEN TO HIST OFFR, 1 CDN DIV BY O.C. "A" COY, P.P.C.L.I.).

The plan was to form a brhd across the R SAVIO by sending fwd A & D Coys. Supporting fire of Arty and MMG was laid on. A Coy on left had first objectives, CASA MEDRI and CASA SACADINI 400 yds west of the river. We were to attack through C Coy at CASA VENERUCCI, a total distance of 1200 yds. D Coy on right had as its first objective C GRAZIANI. H hour was 1700 hrs 20 Oct 44.

We had very short notice and time only to make a quick recce from the windows of C Coy HQ. The FUP was behind those buildings, the SL the rd in front. Owing to the short notice the Coy was 15 minutes late in crossing the S.L., and so lost all benefit of the arty concentrations, and had instead a thoroughly awakened enemy who was expecting us because of the sp arty fire.

Wireless communication broke down immediately, and enemy fire bogged us from the time of leaving the F.U.P., for Jerry could see us all the way. 7 Pl, in the lead, was pinned down on the open fwd slope after progressing 300 yds. The remainder of the coy then wheeled to the rt where there was sporadic cover, but also a minefield. We reached the river just at dusk in a hail of enemy MG, Mortar and arty fire. 17 all ranks got across. The water at the crossing was waist high, the current swift and the water gap 15-20 yds. As we crossed an MG in enfiladed posn had us in direct and close fire.

Beneath the far bank we waited for the remainder of the coy, but no one came. It was decided to push on, taking advantage of a small draw leading towards CASA MEDRI, which was easily visible because of the "Artificial Moonlight" of the search-lights. A small recce patrol sent on ahead was fired on as soon as they got beyond the bank. One man volunteered to crawl on up to see if he could take out the MG post 20 - 25 yds distant. He was killed.

It was then decided to go south underneath the bank until a suitable line of approach could be located. 250 yds South we found a spot, and using it, got to within 75 yds of the house (CASA MEDRI). From the house quite a lot of noise emanated, including German voices. A two man recce reported 4 sentries guarding it and much activity, so I judged it to be a small HQ possibly of a Coy.

With our limited strength and lack of communication it was decided not to attack, but to recce the area around and fwd, partly to find out if D Coy had been successful in crossing. We moved 350 yds N skirting the track, and almost tripped over an enemy camouflaged posn, due N of CASA MEDRI. Some grenades were put in and we got 3 Ps W, killing two others.

This noise stirred up again the enemy's fire, and with the Ps W we went back down to the banks of the river. A Sgt was sent back with the Ps W, one of which was loaded with our useless 18 set, with orders to cross the river and report our posn and information to Tac HQ, to find out if D Coy had crossed, to bring back another wireless set and to get further orders.

We dug in along the bank, 25-30 yds in from the water's edge. When the Sgt got back it was 0400 hrs. He had a wireless set, information that D Coy had made several attempts in crossing and had not succeeded in staying across, and orders for us to consolidate where we were. He brought back a dozen men who had previously been pinned down. We now had a total strength of 27 across the river.

The night was quiet until 0800 hrs, Jerry probably not suspecting that we were across and in his lap. It was possible, however, that he had withdrawn, so a 4-man recce party was sent out at that time. They reported the enemy to be dug in all around us in considerable strength. The recce party had revealed our presence, and nearly all day, he laid down severe and accurate Nebelwerfers and arty. He also attempted several counter-attacks. It was 3 times necessary to call for arty D.Fs.

About 50 yds N of our dug-in posns the bank took a bend. An enemy sniper got in where he could enfilade our posns. We killed him. Since our posn was precarious we had to be watchfully aggressive. A strong fighting patrol was sent out to clear up two very worrying MG posns. Four Germans were killed and six captured, and these posns did not bother us again.

We were now low in amm, food and water. The Sgt again went across the river to give infm of any defences which Bde was clamouring for, and to get supplies. He returned with the infm that the Seaforth and LER were to attack through us that night (21/22), and that supplies would come up to us.

At 2000 hrs 21 Oct, our own arty and MGs fire came down, preparatory to the attack. By 2100 hrs D Coy Seaforth of C arrived in our posn and started to move through us. They were held up, and the Coy Comd called for 3" Mortar fire. Under cover of this and all the sp fire we could give them, the coy was able to infiltrate fwd towards the lateral rd (Easting 575). This coy was visible to us before they crossed the river and for several hundred yds before they reached our posn, because they were silhouetted in the searchlights. They must, of course, have been just as visible to the Germans.

Carrying parties came up with rations and amm in Everest Packs. By next morning (22 Oct) because of the hy rain which had began the preceding night, the river was impossible to ford. We remained in our posns all day and during the next night (23/24 Oct). Then I moved the coy fwd into some buildings, the brhd now having been considerably deepened by the Seaforth and LER. It was still impossible for the rest of the bn (PPCLI) to cross the river. On the night of 24 Oct the rest of the bn crossed, using an E.B.E. Sappers Bridge.

4. LESSONS LEARNED IN ACTION FROM PT 253 TO THE CORIANO
RIDGE, 1-13 SEP 44 (APPENDIX TO WAR DIARY OF 2
CDN ARMD REGT (Ld. S.H.) - OCTOBER 1944).

1. Appreciation of ground, and tanks capabilities.
A number of tanks bogged down or stuck which should not have occurred had crew comd made appreciation of ground before advancing over it.
2. All bow gunners should be given the job of covering the tk immediately to its front especially when travelling through long grain, etc. This proved very effective against Para Tps on our attack with PLDG's on Pt 253, Para Tps having many bazookas and determined to use them. They were only successful on one tank.
3. Likely posns of enemy should be sprayed with co-ax. This was carried out and very successfully on attack on Pt 253.
4. It is again stressed that men engaged in a battle should not dismount to investigate a bogged tank, etc, but should continue to fight the tk as long as possible. Our only two fatal casualties and two of our 5 wounded was caused by dismounting from tk and being shelled.
5. More information should be passed re our flanking tps and posns of our forward tps when we are to pass through them.....
8. In close country, direction is hard to keep. Therefore it is found for control easier to move on a narrow front: 1 up. 30 Tracer was used very effectively to indicate direction to leading tps by Sqn Ldr.
9. In close country all tks must be in visual contact with one another to prevent them shooting up each other.
10. During the night attack by enemy on our posn when with Inf, it is suggested that the tks be manned but not fired. The repelling of the attack to be left to the Inf unless they have withdrawn to the rear of the tks, in which case tks can fire (on previously fixed lines to repel the attack. It is most confusing to be in harbour with anyone firing any and everywhere.)
11. It is again stressed that night attacks on advances into enemy territory by tks, is a most dangerous procedure, both for keeping direction and fighting the enemy, as gunners cannot see to lay their guns. If and when it is decided to do a night attack, infm re ground tk obstacles, river crossings and enemy posns should be known when possible. A very detailed plan is necessary within the Regt especially in the control of fire, and between Sqn Comds so that there is no danger of engaging our own tps. The advance should be on as narrow a front as possible to ensure control and direction. Finally it is not recommended if at all avoidable.

12. During the counter attack on our posn at approx 1530 hrs 3 Sep 44, both "B" and "C" Sqn engaged with fire. Personally I feel that much too much ammo, co-ax, expecially was wasted. I doubt if it was asked of all personnel of both sqns, if they had seen any enemy you would not find anymore than ten at most that had. My point is this, that fire control is not exercised enough, and like measles, it catches and everyone opens up whether they see anything or not. I suggest that enemy be seen before fire is opened, and also that a slower rate be used, to prolong life of Browning barrels.
13. Goggles should be worn only on approach marches etc: when going into action should be left off as they definitely give ones posn away with the flash of the sun on them. Also periscopes when not in use should be lowered for the same reason. When the sun is behind the enemy, care with binoculars must be taken as they also throw out flashes from the sun.
14. Conservation of water should be stressed again.
15. The Infantry must expect some opposition when following tks through. It is impossible for tks to stop and search country and houses thoroughly, especially when they have a definite piece of ground to occupy as soon as possible.
16. Bde freq given to Sqns so they can net if necessary.....
19. Tks and Inf must make co-ordinate plans for defense against a night counter attack.
20. A tk from Sqn HQ was left at Battalion HQ Westmr's for communication and was very successful. 18 set in Sqns Ldrs tank was netted to "A" Coy and was very successful until aerial shot off tk during action.....

(J. Smith) Major
Commanding

"C" Sqn 2 Cdn Armd Regt LdSH(RC).

5. MORE ON THE AIR O.P. (EXTRACTS FROM THE WAR DIARY OF H.Q.,
R.C.A., 5 CDN ARMD DIV, SEPTEMBER 1944).

10 Sep 44

17 Cdn Fd Regt drew a quantity of coloured smoke today to do a special shoot for the purpose of indicating targets to the Kitty bombers.

11 Sep 44

17 Cdn Fd Regt fired several shoots today using coloured smoke, and the expedient proved very helpful to the bombers in the indication of targets.

24 Sep 44

Today the Air OP net was controlled by one of the CMO's sets, and the experiment proved a definite success. The CMO disseminates all infm received over the net, and uses the Air OP as an aid in locating HMs. Armd regts and Armd recce regt are on listening watch on the net. Appx 6.

USE OF AIR OP FLT

1. In order to clarify the purpose and functioning of Air OP Flts, the following explanation of their org and method of use is forwarded.
2. Air OP Sqns were developed by the arty to provide an additional means of giving inf, armour, etc, better observed fire under varying conditions of ground. These sqns are organized with three flts on the basis of one FLT for use by corps arty (AGRA) and one FLT to each div. The FLT itself consists of four secs each of one Auster aircraft manned by Gunner personnel assisted by a small number of RAF maint personnel. Generally the FLT can maintain three aircraft in action continuously, one sec being out of action for maint, repair, etc.
3. The primary function of the Air OP is to carry out observed shooting with arty guns against targets which cannot be observed by normal ground OP working from either a static posn or with the leading tps. However, the Air OP can provide a lot of infm which, apart from providing good targets for engagement, is of great assistance to the leading tps as well as providing infm on rds, etc, for Sapper use. This infm is continuously being passed from the air to the ground or, where security dictates, from the pilot on landing to the arty regt with whom he is working. This infm is received at wireless sets located at the RHQ of each fd regt and at HQ RCA; it can be readily passed to any fm or unit within the Div through the arty rep with that fm or unit. Any specific infm required by fms, CRE, units, etc, is easily obtainable by asking HQ RCA or the arty rep working with the fm or unit for it. Providing all personnel concerned understand that org and method of working there is no reason why the requirements of all arms, within the capacity of Air OPs, cannot be fully met.
4. The Gunner works the Air OP in one of two ways. The first way is to allot one Air OP sec to each of the Div fd regts; in this way each regt has an additional OP which can provide it with observation which cannot be provided from the ground. In other words, it becomes an additional OP party for that regt working in the air. It is netted to the regt freq and consequently any infm required by fm or unit can be obtained by asking the Gunner ofr rep for it; conversely, the Gunner ofr rep must pass all infm of value to the fm or unit with whom he is working as soon as it is received. The disadvantage of this method lies in the fact that all arty regts may have their Air OP in the air at the same time thus wasting flying time. On the other hand, all machines may be on the ground at any one time, requiring, when called for, some twenty mins to half an hr to become airborne and in posn to observe; thus air observation is not available during varying and uncontrolled periods.
5. The second way of working the Air OP FLT is to place all secs on a common Air OP net with control at HQ RCA and the net consisting of the four secs and the RHQs of arty regts. This method permits one aircraft to be in the air continuously throughout the hrs of daylight. Consequently, continuous obsn is provided on our immediate front thus enabling targets to be engaged as soon as they appear and provide a continuous flow of infm. This net is controlled from HQ RCA and, as mentioned above, all regts are on it with direct conn to whichever aircraft may be in the air at any moment. The

advantage of this method lies in the fact that continuous cover is provided. As in the first method, all fmns, units, etc, requiring specific infm may obtain it by asking their Gunner rep for it.

6. On occasions it may occur that one or more additional secs may be added to the Air OP Flt working with this Div. Due to the scarcity of Air OPs these occasions have not been frequent. They usually occur when additional med or fd regts are placed in sp or under comd of the Div and their provision is based upon giving the additional observation resources for these regts. Since CB is usually a big requirement from Gunners, the best way of employing these additional Air OP secs usually is to place them entirely at the disposal of the med regt in sp of the Div to give as closely as possible continuous CB observation and fire.

7. The method of using the Air OP now being used within 5 Cdn Army Div is the second one described above. It has been under trial for about ten days and it appears to meet our shooting requirements very well. Similarly, it is capable of meeting the requirements of infm for fmns and units of other arms. However, in order to provide leading armd units with quicker receipt of infm from the Air OP particularly during rapid mov it has been decided to include in the Air OP wireless net one set of each of the armd regt and armd recce regt on listening watch. If the Air OP is to fulfil its primary function of engaging targets it is important that these armd regt sets on the Air OP net do in fact remain on listening watch only except in cases of real emergency. This is essential to avoid the net becoming over-loaded and failing in its work. Normal requests for specific infm by armd units should still be obtained by asking their arty rep for that infm; he will pass the request to the Air OP through the set at his RHQ and the reply will be picked up by the armd regt set on listening watch. However, when there is a really urgent requirement for some specific infm, then the armd regt concerned can come on the air and request it direct. The wireless diagram showing the layout of this net is attached.

8. It is hoped that this explanation will clarify the use of the Air OP and ensure that all concerned know how it functions and how infm is obtained through it.

9. It is directed that the attached Air OP wireless net be taken into use forthwith.

AIR OP WIRELESS NET

