Narrative account of 119th Infantry

HEADQUARTERS 119th INFANTRY
APO 30, U. S. Army

14 October 1944

SUBJECT: Documentation of SEIGFRIED LINE

TO : AC of S., G-2, 30th Infantry Division, APO 30, U. S. Army.

1. The particular segment of SIEGFRIED LINE encountered by this regiment is indicated on defense overprinted map. (Rimburg)

2. The terrain in this sector was particularly difficult for the operation. The main defenses appeared in the thick woods just South of RIMBURG. The woods were very thick and on a steep slope affording the enemy excellent observation over our entire area. The high ground to the East of the woods also aided the enemy's observation. The WURM River also aided the enemy's defense of the position. All bridges were blown and the steep banks of the river made fording impossible. This fact, coupled with the fact that the land on both banks of the stream was marshy, except places where roads led into the stream, aided the enemy considerably. Also the terrain West of the river was open, exposing all of our movements to the enemy.

The following are the type defenses found in our area:

1. Pillboxes: Both large and small type and also the camouflaged cottage type.

2. Field Fortifications: Foxholes, slit-trenches, "L" shape trenches, "V" shape trenches, and Anti-Tank ditches with firing steps constructed in them.

3. In most cases the fields of fire were excellent covering all possible approaches into the area.

3. In most cases field fortifications were used to supplement the Pillboxes. Field Fortifications in the form of "L" and "V" shape trenches were used along roads leading into the positions but a great many of these were not occupied. The Anti-Tank ditches were always covered by the fire from Pillboxes close by. Mine fields were found on all roads leading into the position but in general were not covered by fire or guarded. It was reported by the engineers that after four days several Teller Mines were found under the abuttments of the bridge at RIMBURG. However, enough pressure had not been exerted to detonate the mines. In many cases mines were found lying along the roads indicating that the enemy had not had time to place the mines before withdrawing. In the HERZOGENRATH area a great quantity of mines were found on all the streets and even on the sidewalks. In the streets the mines were laid under the cobble stones and usually had primer cord attached to another mine. In one case the mine lifting crew decided not to go into the logical place when the mine was being exploded. It was learned a few minutes later that the logical place to take cover also contained a mine which exploded simultaneously with the one being exploded in the street. A great many cases of booby trapped mines were reported. The Reigel, "T" mines and "S" mines were all encountered.

4. The enemy made a determined stand at Rimburg castle (843585) and made it necessary for us to clean it out room by room. He first delayed us with extensive mine fields along North East-South West road on West side of castle and had these mines covered by approximately ten MG's in addition to about one platoon of infantrymen, well dug in along the sides of the road. This road was also covered by the pillbox at (842585). The crossing at this point was also hampered by long range light artillery and some direct fire artillery. After a crossing had been forced by the infantry and mines neutralized the attacking tanks, were effectively employed to reduce the castle. It is thought that a great many of the pillboxes along the West edge of woods South of RIMBURG were used to a large extent for OP's originally. It wasn't until our troops started to work through the woods that strong resistance was encountered from the pillboxes. In a great many cases after the attack started to move and our troops began to close on the enemy, he deserted his pillboxes and took up defensive positions in the field fortifications surrounding the boxes. No

large caliber guns were found in these pillboxes; in most cases the largest caliber weapon found was the MG. Upon assaulting the line, the enemy's MLR appeared to be along the railroad on the West edge of woods South of RIMBURG. The AT ditch along the West edge of these woods was used as a defensive position for infantrymen, and the assaulting battalion was forced to withdraw on two occasions in order to shell the trench with artillery and mortars. The strongest resistance met in the entire sector was in the woods South of RIMBURG where a machine gun battalion was dug in well.

In taking the pillboxes South of UBACH in the area 863478 the enemy was found to be occupying the pillboxes temporarily but soon took to the field fortifications around the pillboxes when fired on by our tanks and TD's. The tanks also used WP and smoke shells to good advantage on the pillboxes as the smoke filtered through the ventilation system making the boxes untenable. In several cases artillery forward observers were captured in pillboxes without radios indicating that the wire communication system between the pillboxes was in good order. The cables (telephone) for the communication system were found buried from several inches to several feet under the ground. These cables were cut immediately upon their discovery. One counter-attack was launched along the boundary between two companies (843475). This attack was preceeded by a heavy artillery barrage with tanks firing from hull defilade. When the attack jumped off at 0530 the enemy advanced boldly across open ground in the vicinity 847473 and attacked generally North-West. One tank drove straight North-West along road at 844472 spraying fire from MG's as it went. The infantry, estimated at two companies, followed the tank at a distance of three to four hundred yards. After the enemy reached the woods 843475 his own artillery fired on him. His own fire, coupled with spraying type fire from our MG's and tanks, broke up the attack. At 0700 another morning a counter-attack was launched against the forces that occupied the pillboxes in the area of 864477. This attack was also preceeded by an artillery preparation and was made by infantry supported by four tanks. The infantry in a strong attack retook six pillboxes from our forces. Part of the attacking force occupied the pillboxes while another part continued the advance until stopped by our artillery and tanks. The force that continued the advance withdrew when our artillery fired leaving the troops in the pillboxes without contact. The latter readily gave up to our troops a few minutes later. The most effective weapon against tanks in this particular attack was the 105 Assault Gun. In both the counter-attacks mentioned, the enemy was seen forming for the attack some time before it started allowing for some preparation on our part.

5. Elements of the following enemy units were employed to meet our penetration.

42 MG Battalion
47 MG Battalion
57 MG Battalion
149th Inf Regt of the 49th Division
148th Inf Regt of the 49th Division

Originally these units had a fairly well defined defensive organization but after our attack turned to the South from the East all units appeared confused and as a last resort the enemy formed numerous battle groups made up from remnants of all units. Of all these units the 57th MG Battalion put up almost fanatical resistance in the woods South of RIMBURG refusing to fall back in the face of heavy mortar and artillery fire.

The morale of the German troops in general was very low. Some of the men had only been in the army several weeks and others had been classified as 4 F's and recently called up. With very few exceptions PW's were very glad the war was over for them. The exceptions in most cases were officers. The impression gained from talking to several German Officers was, that the defending forces were completely confused when our attack turned South. They were expecting our attack to continue to the East.

6. In general it can be said that the pillboxes as actual defensive positions did not offer the resistance expected. It appeared that the boxes themselves served more or less the purpose of shelters and a base for a strong point. It was also noted that the enemy had plenty of food in the pillboxes; enough to last almost indefinitly.

It is recommended that captured pillboxes be used only for CP's and that troops

not be employed in the pillboxes in order to defend them. Several cases were reported in which the Germans were able to retake pillboxes which we had captured due to the fact that not enough men were dug in on the outside of the pillbox.

Only one incident of the Germans infiltrating through our lines and occupying Pillboxes we had captured was reported.

/s/ OSCAR S. STONESIFER, Jr.
OSCAR S. STONESIFER, Jr.
Captain Infantry
S-2

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ATTACKING PILLBOXES

1st Battalion, 119th Infantry

1. From our experiences in attacking pillboxes we recommend the following methods of attacking a fortified line: Select a small area along the line of fortifications which enables good fields of fire of 155mm guns for direct fire. Concentrate on this area for a period of one or two days or sufficient time to definitely knock out a number of boxes in the zone in which ou wish to advance. Having knocked out those pillboxes that can be observed and fired on by 6 inch guns, then push through this gap with infantry and tanks. Push through a sufficient number of troops, tanks and TD's to roll up the flanks of the fortified lines by attacking the boxes from the rear and flanks. From our experiences we find that infantry, tanks and TD's have very little trouble taking a pillbox from the rear or flank, as pillboxes are not so heavily fortified in these places.

2. The tank assault gun (105) and the TD's 3 inch gun worked very effectively on the rear and flank of a pillbox but had very little effect on the front unless they are able to fire directly in the embrasures.

3. The Fort Benning method of attacking pillboxes using flame-throwers and pole charges was not effective as the Germans, knowing our plan of attacking pillboxes, have made elaborate communication trenches and gun positions which protect the pillboxes. The Germans gave orders that only sufficient men will stay in boxes necessary to man the guns. The remaining personnel are to stay outside in a well dug-in trench network to protect the boxes from being assaulted by infantry with flame-throwers and pole charges. The personnel use the pillbox for shelter during artillery concentrations but come out before infantry can advance. Gun positions were so dug that they covered all blind or dead space around the pillboxes. However, these positions can be overrn by tanks if the terrain is suitable as these positions are intended to keep the infantry from assaulting the boxes from a blind side.

4. Air bombardment would probably be effective if more direct hits could be had, as the heat destroys personnel in and around pillboxes.

5. 155mm self-propelled guns were used very effectively where fields of fire could be had. Taking from ten to twenty rounds to knock out each box, as it often took several rounds to knock off the dirt and other camouflage material before they were able to work directly on the pillboxes.

2d Battalion, 119th Infantry

1. During our recent attack on the defenses of the Siegfried Line, several observations were made in regard to the best method of neutralizing enemy pillboxes.

2. The method of assaulting a pillbox, that is with pole charges, satchel charges and flame throwers, followed by a final infantry assault, were left untried due to the fact that it does not provide close-in fire to cover and button-up the pillbox. Therefore, our assault companies, in conjunction with our tank support, devised an attack plan that rapidly and effectively neutralized eleven pillboxes.

3. An assault platoon moving with one section of tanks, advanced into or

through the defended area. When fire was received from the pillbox, or the entrenchments surrounding it, the tanks immediately placed machine gun fire and direct 75mm fire on the enemy positions. Also the artillery and mortar OP's placed fire on the open entrenchments.

4. The result of these fires was to make the enemy move into the pillbox proper. At this moment the tanks and assault platoons then moved forward, directing all fires on the pillbox embrasures. The result of these fires was to button up or neutralize the machine gun fire coming from the pillbox.

5. As a final stage in the Infantry-Tank assault the tanks continued to cover by fire while the assault platoon moved forward and took the pillbox--at times literally going in and knocking on the back door and ordering the occupants to surrender. In the few cases where surrender was refused the use of a satchel charge against the door brought quick capitulations.

6. One added attachment was used several times, and that was a platoon of self-propelled tank destroyers. When possible direct fire from the guns of these destroyers, in addition to the other fires, speeded up the process of buttoning-up and neutralizing enemy pillboxes.

3d Battalion, 119th Infantry

1. Thorough reconnaissance of area over which attack is to be made.

2. Find blind spots of pillbox.

3. Use heavy concentration of artillery and mortars to make entrenched enemy on outside of pillbox seek cover.

4. Move TD's and tanks into position to fire on embrasures with their heavy guns and machine guns.

5. Keep a continuous stream of machine gun fire going to cover infantry advance on pillbox.

6. No pole or satchel charges were used by this unit in attacking pillboxes, because charge does not make a hole or destroy much of the embrasures.

7. Once penetration is made, reinforcements pour through and attack boxes from rear. By doing this infantry can usually secure boxes before enemy is aware of what is happening.

8. Usually enemy will surrender if infantry and tanks can operate in rear of pillbox and fire at it.

TABLE OF AMERICAN CASUALTIES

Points of interest from an analysis of casualties of 2d Armored Division and 30th Infantry Division in penetrating the Siegfried Line

2 Oct 44 to 16 Oct 44.

1. 28% of total casualties occured in the 2d Armored Division
2. 72% of casualties occured in the 30th Infantry Division.
3. Casualties were sustained by units of branches as follows:

Infantry	84%
Armored	11%
FA	2.2%
Engr	2.2%
Others	.6%

4. Among officer casualties, 56% were infantry unit commanders and 18.4% were tank unit commanders. 25% of the authorized T/O infantry unit commanders became casualties; 26.6% of the authorized T/O tank unit commanders became casualties.

5. An analysis of the bulk of enlisted casualties is as follows:

Military Occupational Specialty	No. of Casualties	% of all Casualties	% of enlisted Casualties	% of T/O
		INFANTRY		
Riflemen	1115	42	55	49.5
Squad Leader	335	12.7	16.6	31.6
Ammunition Handler	160	6.1	7.9	10.1
Light Machine Gunner	63	2.4	3.1	20.5
Messenger	61	2.3	3.0	11.6
Platoon Sergeant	50	1.9	2.5	16.9
Mortar Gunner	29	1.1	1.4	8.5
		ARMORED FORCE		
Tank Gunner	57	2.1	2.8	5.5
Tank Driver	42	1.6	2.1	7.8
Tank Commander	36	1.3	1.8	13.2
		MEDICAL DEPARTMENT		
Litter Bearer	22	.85	1.1	5.4
Surgical and Medical Technician	21	.79	1.04	4.6

6. Distribution of casualties by type:

Killed and Died	12.2% (Last War Approx 25%)
Wounded	67 %
Captured	.3%
Missing	20.5%

7. In the 2d Armored Division 17.5% of the casualties were killed or died; while in the 30th Infantry Division 11.1% of the casualties were killed or died although 67% of the killed and died were members of the 30th Infantry Division.

From a medical casualty viewpoint, an analysis of these shows:

1. Causative agent:

HE shell, artillery, and mortar	66%
Gun shot wound	18%
Bombs	6%
Blast injury	5%
Secondary	5%

2. Combat exhaustion cases:

2d Armored Division	355
30th Infantry Division	241
Total	596

3. Seriousness of wounds:

	Slight	Serious	Total
2d Armored Division	535	87	622
30th Infantry Division	1,419	442	1,861

4. Enemy wounded treated totaled 349.

5. Deaths were divided as follows:

2d Armored Division	101
29th Infantry Division	115
30th Infantry Division	201
	417

6. Work performed by Evacuation Hospitals servicing the attack:

	41st Evac Hosp	91st Evac Hosp
a. Admissions direct:		
(1) U. S. Army	1221	1744
(2) Prisoners of War	68	261
(3) Civilians	15	54
Total	1304	2059
b. General classification of wounded:		
(1) Serious	190	560
(2) Slight	1031	1184
c. Total Admissions during period:		
(1) Disease, injury, wounded, Allies, POW, and Civilians, both direct and transfer	1945	1719
d. Total deaths during period:		
(1) U. S. Army	12	18
(2) Prisoner of War	4	-
e. Classification of wounds by causative agent (U.S.Army):		
(1) Gun Shot Wounds	272	269
(2) Shell wounds	854	1125
(3) Bomb Wounds	45	131
(4) Blast injury	47	98
(5) Secondary Missles	3	9
(6) Burns	-	26
(7) Others	-	86
Total	1221	1744

RECAPITULATION OF CASUALTIES SUSTAINED BY 30TH INF DIV AND 2D ARMD DIV
IN PENETRATING THE SIEGFRIED LINE, 2 OCT TO 16 OCT 44

UNIT	OCTOBER 1944															
	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	Total
2d Armored Division																
41st Armd Inf Regt		6	25	36	110	35	10	11	1	3	17	5	7	1	2	269
66th Armd Regt				7	15	18	10	5	10	9	8	8	13	17	7	127
67th Armd Regt			17	33	46	18	8		2	7	5		2	2	1	145
82d Armd Rcn Bn				2	5	12	3		4	1		1				28
92d Armd FA Bn				2		6			1		8		2			19
78th Armd FA Bn					1		3		1			1				6
14th Armd FA Bn					1	1										2
17th Armd Engr Bn				7	1	1	1	1		2	2	8				23
Maint Bn				3												3
Hq 2d Armd Div			1										1			2
Sub Total		6	43	90	179	91	35	21	19	22	40	23	25	20	10	624
30th Infantry Division																
117th Inf Regt	232	87	32	48	55	19	104	21	17	21	10		4	1	49	700
119th Inf Regt	68	104	169	27	177	28	42	18	40	28	21	13	20	8	82	845
120th Inf Regt	3	7	27	30	24	13	72	52	34	34	47	5	7	17	29	401
105th Engr C Bn	10	10	10	2	3		2		1		5					43
118th FA Bn		1	2		4	3	1	2	1		1					15
197th FA Bn	2		1			2	1						1	1	7	15
230th FA Bn				1		1					2	1		1		6
113th FA Bn											1					1
105th Med Bn																
MP Plat				1									1			2
30th Sig Co													1			1
Div Arty													1			1
Sub Total	315	209	241	109	263	66	222	93	93	83	87	19	35	28	167	2030
Total 2 Divisions	315	215	284	199	442	157	257	114	112	105	127	42	60	48	177	2654

NOTES ON THE MEDICAL SERVICE, 30TH INFANTRY DIVISION, DURING THE CROSSING OF THE WURM RIVER AND PIERCING OF THE SIEGFRIED LINE

The plan of the division for medical support during this operation was essentially as listed below. No unusual problems were encountered.

1. Company aid men from the infantry battalion medical sections crossed the river with their respective companies. Litter bearers followed closely behind, and adequate liaison was maintained at all times.

2. Battalion aid station personnel and the station crossed the river as soon as the engineers had a bridge across and open for vehicular traffic. Ample medical supplies were kept available at the river's edge at all times before the crossing of the river by the battalion aid station. Patients were carried by litter over a foot bridge prior to the establishment of a vehicular bridge.

3. The collecting companies performed much the same as usual. Until such time as the vehicular bridge was opened and the collecting companies could cross, the ambulance sections maintained advance loading posts in the vicinity of the river's edge in order to hasten evacuation. The ambulances were also the means of maintaining the battalion aid stations medical supply.

4. The clearing company's function did not vary, and it remained between 7 and 8 miles in the rear of the collecting companies.

5. In this operation, no unusual evacuation problems presented themselves.

APPENDIX "e"

RECORD OF GERMAN TELEPHONE CONVERSATION IN SIEGFRIED LINE PILLBOXES DURING ASSAULT

A member of the G-2 Section of XIX Corps while studying the inside of, and damage caused by our attack to, one of the SIEGFRIED Line pillboxes in PALENBERG (K8559) was surprised by the deep gonging of the pillboxes telephone. Lifting up the receiver he was delighted to hear the occupants of two other as yet undestroyed pillboxes discussing their present condition. Member of interrogation prisoner of war Team number 42 of 30th Infantry Division were quickly assigned to act as recorders of subsequent conversations. The journal for 4-5 October is reproduced below.

It is not believed that the Germans ever thought of the possibility of their enemies' so entering their communications net. Their wiring system apparently lets one pillbox talk to all in its group simultaneously. Other pillboxes found have bullet holes through the receiver and transmitter box, possibly indicating standing instructions to render them inoperative before withdrawing. If such was the case, the German soldier so assigned in this one failed in his mission. If the telephone box is destroyed, the permanent cable inside it is virtually impossible to put into such a condition that one of our field telephones could not be tapped on it.

042000 October 1944

Pillbox 244 calling 2 Company CP:
Hello, Lt HOFNER there? What's the password for tonight?
Lt. HOFNER speaking. Password for tonight is Gold-Silver.
Lt., I want to report two men missing since 1400 and I have up to now no casualties. That's all.

2015

Pillbox 244 calling 2 Company CP:
Lt. I want to report that I just saw 32 enemy tanks but a call from Battalion CP says they observed 57 tanks cross the bridge. Another thing - we are running out of rations. Any chance to get some food up to us? I still have a complete crew of 7 men -
Lt HOFNER: All right; of these seven men leave four inside and keep three at all times outside the bunker as guards. I'll try to get some food to you. (Note: This is standard procedure for the defense of a pillbox)

2111

Unidentified Bunker calls CP:
Please send an NCO, and one man on a bicycle. I have six casualties HAGEN WALLENTAG, ROEFLEN, SCHMIDT and FREDLEN - dead. I myself have a face wound.
CO - How did that happen?
Answer - We received mortar fire while defending the bunker from the outside.
CO - All right. I'll send somebody over and make arrangements for the evacuation.

2120

Unidentified Bunder calls CP:
Sir, two men of my crew are missing, one of them took the heavy machine gun with him. Their names are BULLERRADER and HATERGER.
CO: All right you make out an affidavit and let two witnesses sign it.

2125

CP calling a Bunker:
CO - Let BRUNNER bring the casualties to 2 Company CP; we have the truck ready, but be careful there might be some enemy tanks on the road by now.
Answer - Now damn it, What a mess! How can we evacuate under these circumstances? I'll see what I can do.

050015 October 44

Unidentified Bunker calls CP:
Sir, out of four men counting myself, two have become casualties. Furthermore, a dead man has been brought to my bunker. What can I do?
Answer - Evacuate them.
Caller - The dead one too?
Answer - Yes, of course, the dead one too.

0600

CP calls a Bunker:
EM: Is it you, Heinrich?
Answer: Yes, how is the general situation?
EM: Don't worry! (lowers his voice to confidential tone) our stuff has been rolling since 0215.
Answer: Thank God, I hope they make it!

0900

CP calls Bunker No 240
CO - JANOVSKY, if you see tanks coming from FRELENBERG call me immediately and ring four times.
JANOVSKY - I have a lookout posted.

0910

Bunker No 240 calling CP:
1st Sgt JANOVSKY - Sir, we sighted two tanks on the road MARIENBERG-FRELENBERG.

1030

Bunker No 240 calling CP:
1st Sgt JANOVSKY - Sir, I counted 80 tanks coming over the bridge, and I have one casualty. The Tommies (?) are running back but the tanks keep on coming.
Lt HOFNER - Did you say eight tanks?
Answer - No sir, e i g h t y! They came over the bridge in close column.
Lt HOFNER - Himmel Donnerwetter!! I'll request artillery barrage immediately.

1145

Bunker No 275 calls CP:
Will lay down heavy mortar concentration on railroad station PALENBERG. Please observe and report on effect.

1155

CP calling Bunker No 275:
Lt HOFNER - Pretty good hitting, but alittle too much left towards NORTH PALENBERG. Correct to SOUTH.

1200

Bunker to CP:
Lt HOFNER, Sir, the Americans shoot smoke shells along the whole line. I believe they prepare to attack.
(shortly after that another bunker gave report to the same effect).

1230

A Bunker to CP:
Sir, the Americans shoot incendiary shells and move towards the coal mine.
(Speaker appears to be very jittery).

1240

Bunker No 240 calling CP:
Sgt JANOVSKY - We received enemy fire. Three of my men are badly hurt: KUCHLER, EBERH ARDINER and SCHREITINGER. Two are shell shocked and one passed out. My

strength is now two or three men. The Americans apparently try to attack the coal mine under the cover of smoke. We will hold the bunker as long as possible and then ...? There is no way of retreat any more.
Lt HOFNER - We'll see if we can evacuate your wounded men after dark. Stay inside from now on. Heil!

1400

Bunker No 240 to CP:
Sgt JANOVSKY - What are we going to do now? American troops passed us and are already at the power station.
Lt HOFNER - Stay where you are.

1440

A Bunker calls CP:
Sir, the American troops are advancing towards the Battalion CP and by-passed us already.

1500

CP gives following order to two pillboxes:
Men, be careful, we think American tanks will try to attack the pillboxes from the rear.

1530

A Bunker to CP:
Sir, the Americans are at the Battalion CP and we are receiving fire.
Answer - Hell, yes, so do we.

1540

Pillbox No 244 to CP:
Sir, we receive machine gun fire from the direction of the coal mine.
Lt HOFNER - Just get inside.

1555

Lt HOFNER calls from a different bunker to CP:
Lt HOFNER - Is there any news?
Answer - No, they are still firing at us with machine guns.
Lt HOFNER - All right, I'll be back as soon as the artillery fire lets up.

1600

A Bunker to another one:
I can't get connection with the CP any more. How about you?
Answer - Hell, we can't get in touch with them either. That son of a - - - (HOFNER) beat it, without notifying us. Ten tanks approaching from the power station. What the hell are we going to do? -
First man: Let's try to make it back to our lines after dark.

1650

Between two pillboxes:
A - You know where HOFNER is?
B - I heard he left for the second pillbox on left of the cemetery.
Try to fight your way back tonigh.

1900

(WAGNER of CO-CP tried in vain to contact Sgt JANOVSKY. Said that he himself was in the second bunker on the left of cemetery).

1930

WAGNER to Sgt JOROSIN in Pillbox No 275:
WAGNER - Are you still alive?
JOROSEN - Yes.
WAGNER - I'll come over soon.

2000

(WAGNER tries to call CP but gets no reply. Seemed to have casualties in bunker and wanted to arrange evacuation for them).