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By *epj* NARA Date 1/18/2017

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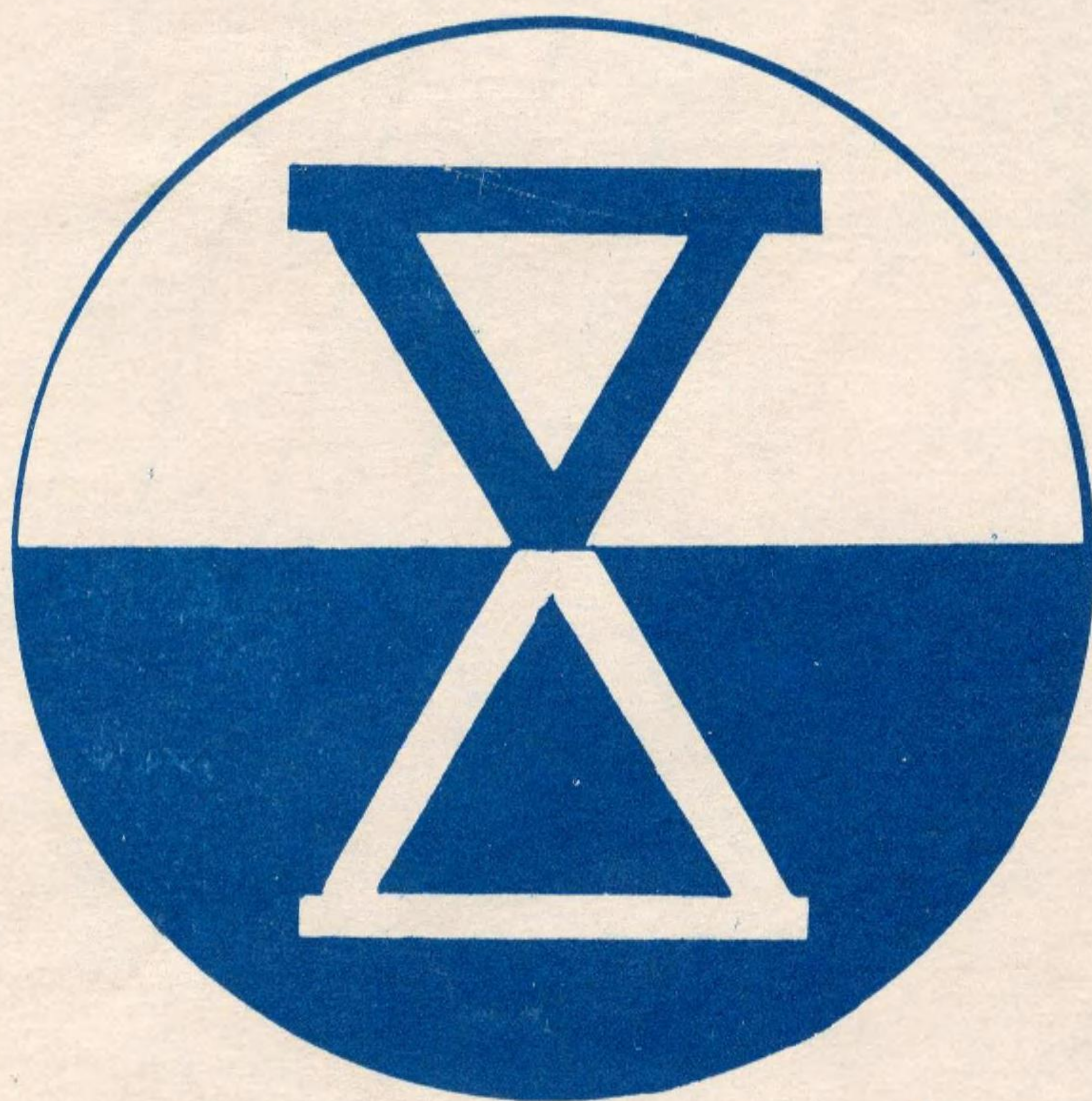
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# COMBAT NOTES

NO. 4



G-3 SECTION  
X CORPS APO 909

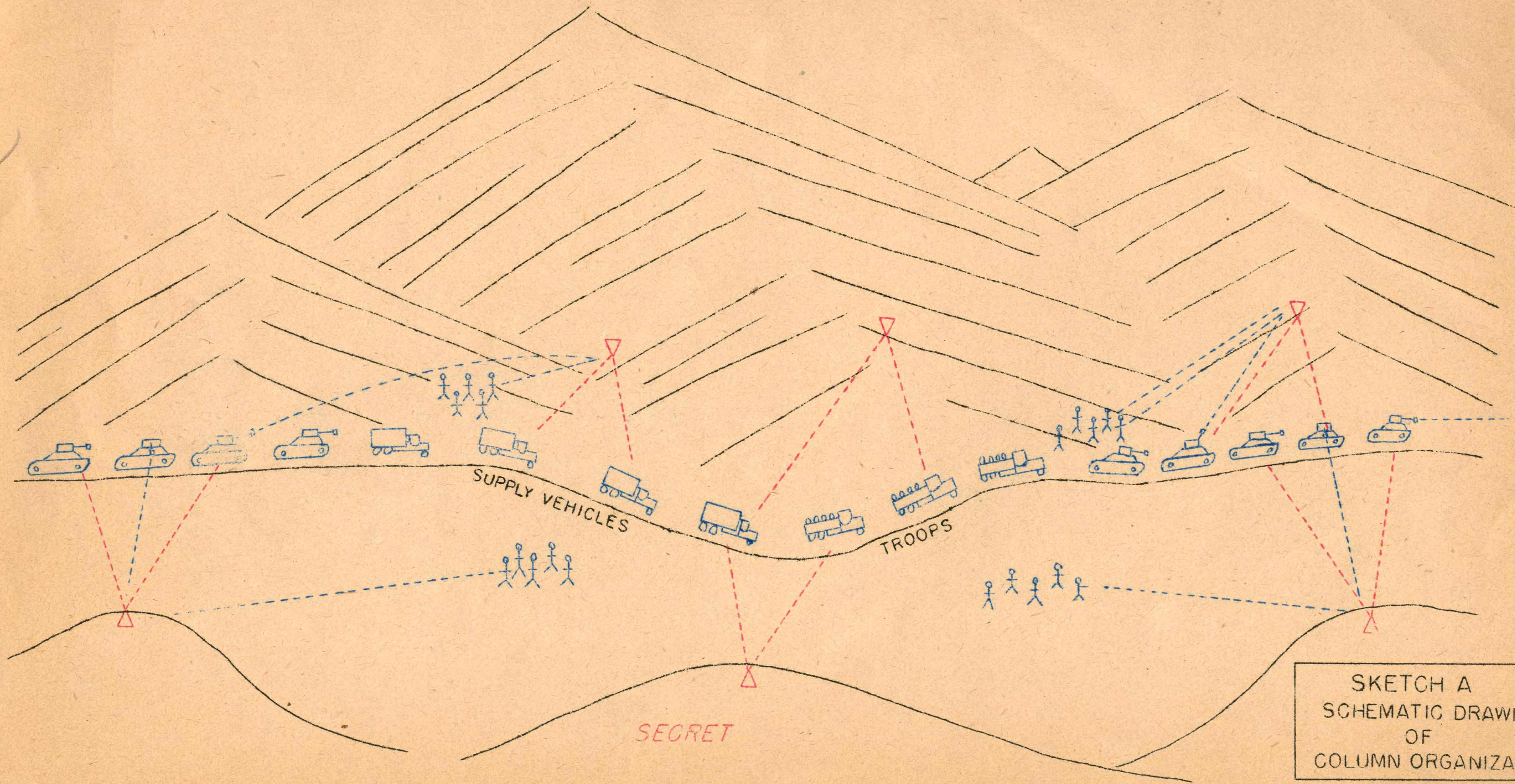
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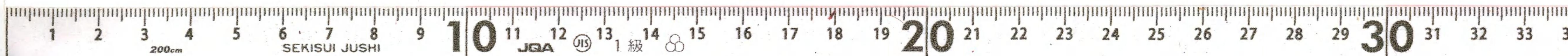
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SKETCH A  
SCHEMATIC DRAWING  
OF  
COLUMN ORGANIZATION

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HEADQUARTERS X CORPS  
APO 909 US ARMY

## COMBAT NOTE

1. The following extract from Part II, CCF in the Attack, by S. L. A. Marshall, is published because it highlights some of the problems of column discipline and protection.

"On the night of 27-28 November, TF X, composed of two infantry companies, was sent north from Town A, to open the MSR to Town B after receipt of the first report that CCF had cut the road. It moved in trucks after having first swept the ridges immediately north of town A -- the one area where there were commanding ridgelines right next to the MSR. A supply convoy was supposed to follow in its wake, moving under its protection. In the forefront of the TF moved one platoon of medium tanks. Another platoon was assigned to follow after the truck convoy, serving as a rearguard for the column as a whole.

The subsequent breakdown of this column, as it ran into an ambush installed by CCF (the force was estimated at less than 3 battalions of enemy) in the open country beyond the Town A ridges can be attributed largely to the manner in which the armor was handled. On a small scale, the action and reaction was almost identical with the misfortunes of Y Infantry Division's column on the road between two similar towns, three days later. Whereas the safety of the thin-skinned vehicles, once they came into the fire gauntlet, depended almost wholly on rapidity of movement, the armor stopped to engage as soon as CCF fire began to rattle against its sides. This in turn blocked the road and subjected the motorized elements to a punishing fire from the flanks, which they were in no position amply to return. Argument and pleading with the tankers proved largely futile. They had not been placed under direct command of the TF leader, and they were largely insensible to the effects which their tactics were having on the friendly elements to their rear.

In an effort to save the TF from total ruin, the officers with the infantry elements (and the Air FO as well) sought to intervene with the armor, and to persuade it to desist from fire and keep moving. Those farthest to the rear could not even understand what

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was happening and did not realize that it was the armor, more than the enemy, which had produced the paralysis. About half of TF X's personnel got through this ambush finally; fifty percent of its vehicles had been lost. The supply convoy was lost altogether; the personnel were either killed or captured. Notably, the tanks, which by their fire had brought the other elements into jeopardy, escaped without loss.

Those who were in best position to observe the ambush and breakdown of this small column, agreed that the losses had been due less to the direct effects of the CCF fire than to lack of control within the armored force, lack of communication between it and the motorized element, and the failure of the tankers to understand what their halt-and-fire tactics were doing to the train behind them.

This is a relatively new problem for US armor and motorization in joint movement via the road. Its common denominators are emphasized by the identity of experience between TF X and Y Inf Div's column. They should perhaps be given rather close study in common, since there are several major lessons to be emphasized, and the problem is likely to be a recurrent one for so long as enemy tactics are directed toward crossing the rear and closing the escape route. What is plainly indicated is that short of clear appraisal of the problem, and the determination of SOP's which will assure tactical unity within the column, the presence of armor does not of itself assure additional protection to a motorized column moving through enemy country over narrow roads, and may vastly increase its vulnerability. What is intended as a shield becomes in fact a drag upon all movement, in a situation where mobility is requisite to safety.

In the case of Y Inf Div, the armor was interspersed through the length of the column. With TF X, it was used as a covering force front and rear. The results were alike dismal, because in both cases the means of control and communication had not been made firm prior to movement."

2. Lessons to be learned from these incidents are basic:

a. Tactical unity of forces: Task Force commander must command and control all elements of the force.

b. Planned method of operation: Supporting forces must be specifically informed whether their mission is to aid the rapid movement of a column or eliminate enemy opposition.

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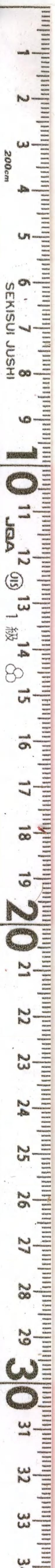


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c. Continuous communication: The Task Force commander must be capable of giving instructions to all elements enroute.

d. Combat alertness: Awareness of effect the action of one element of a force has on the operation and security of the others.

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