

BLF

REPORT ON OPERATIONS NIGHT 25/26 AUGUST 42.(Location EL MREIR Depression)
87652765.By *22*

(For movements read in conjunction with Sketch attached)

OBJECT: 28(NZ) (Maori) Bn to raid the escarpment in area 876276 and 876277.ADDITIONAL TFS IN SUPPORT :*
4, 5 and 6 Fd Regts NZA.
58 Fd Regt R.A.
One Bty 64 Med Regt R.A.
Dets NZE.
One Coy less 1 Pl 23 NZ BN.PLAN :

As per 5 NZ INF BDE O.O. No 5., and verbal instructions issued at C.O's and Coy Comd's conference.

NARRATIVE:

1. The raiding force, consisting of 28 (Maori) Bn less One Coy incl a detachment of NZE, arrived at ASSEMBLY AREA 87732756. without incident at 0200 hrs. Brief talks were delivered by the C.O 28 Bn, the Brigadier 5 Inf Bde and short services were conducted by the Maori Chaplain and the R.C. Padre.

2. The march on to ^{the start line} S.L. commenced at 0330 hrs and all Coys were in posn at 0350 hrs. The clearly marked line of march - white taped from A.A to S.L facilitated and expedited this stage of the operation. The force was still undetected by the Enemy at this time, 0350 hrs or 2 minus 10. Z-10.

3. At Zero hour - 0400 hrs - the arty commenced its bombardment on Task 1, and simultaneously the inf moved forward from the S.L. B Coy on left flank, and A Coy on the right, with BN HQ and Bn Reserve Pl at left-rear of A Coy. The axis of advance was due NORTH (360 degrees) By Zero + plus 8 Coys were within 150 yds of the E Dan -nert wire. The tps halted at this point for 1½ mins while the arty completed Task 1, and switched to Task 2. Visibility practically NIL owing to the dust and smoke caused by the combination of H.E. and Smoke shells.

4. THE ATTACK

Z+plus 10 under smoke cover the sappers dashed forward found the triple dannert wire and blew sufficient gaps to enable a quick advance by fwd pls. The flashes from the bangalore torpedoes exploding was the cues assauling tps to get in, and get in they did, guided to the gaps by the flashes of the torpedoes.

Z+plus 13 fwd pls were through the wire, and encountered slight opposition from E LMGs for the first time. This opening burst from the E LMGs revealed their posns, which actually assisted us in dealing with them quickly.

A Coy swept through inside the wire and along the escarpment, B Coy cleaning up the floor of the depression approx 350 yds from the edge of depression.

The rate of advance for both Coys was uniform throughout. Enemy opposition was very slight. The bayonet was used to good effect. A number of hand grenades were thrown into pits, and the enemy surrendered in small groups and were smartly withdrawn in small batches.

were smartly

Assembly Area
Start line

Note

l.c.

5. THE WITHDRAWAL:

The withdrawal had been timed for Z plus 35. At this hour RG Verrey flares were fired from Pt 69 ~~8769~~ 8769 2757, and A Coy HQ ~~87883X~~ 87832767, at 5 min intervals. On this signal being given A Coy returned to its own lines EAST along grid 277, B Coy and Bn HQs returning along the same route as that taken by them on the approach march.

Although the withdrawal was orderly and at a moderate pace B Coy was unfortunate in missing one offr and 2 ORs wounded, now presumed P.W.

At Z plus ~~40~~ +40 the ~~E~~ laid down a defensive barrage ^{from} SOUTH of Pt 69 in a line running due NORTH along our FIL, and on the whole Bn area. This fire caused two casualties. The last covering party ^{passed} through our own wire at Z plus 65.

6. TOPOGRAPHY:

~~xxxxxx~~ The ^{small hill at} ~~point~~ 87632767 is shown on the map. This was Task 2 of the arty, but OC B Coy discovered another low hill 200 yds EAST of ~~xxxxxx~~ it.

This latter knoll discovered by OC B Coy is not shown on the map.

The descent into the depression from the SOUTH was a very gradual slope, but on the EAST and to the NORTH the escarpment rose more steeply to a height of 12 or 15 feet.

7. Climatic Conditions:

There was a bright moon with a clear sky until approximately 0100 hrs. For the remainder of the night clouds occasionally passed across the moon, reducing visibility and obscuring the NORTH Star. Maintenance of direction during advance was accordingly slightly hampered, and compasses had to be used to check direction.

There was a moderate wind blowing from the N.N.E varying at times to N.N.W throughout.

8. E. POSNS

E posns were more or less in conformity with previous information. Fwd elements occupied sangars dug down to an average depth of 2 to 3 feet. It was noticeable that there was a single line of sangars about 10 yds from the edge of the depression all the way round. Other better prepared posns were from 200 to 300 yds further back to the WEST. In some cases these were well constructed dug-outs.

9. Arty SUPPORT:

It was terrific. At Z plus 8 the dust and smoke caused by the bombardment was so dense as to temporarily blind our own tps, making contact between sections and platoons very difficult during the vital stages of the advance.

When smoke shells were put down a little later it intensified our blindness.

We noticed that one or two guns were still firing H.E when when smoke should have been employed.

10. P.W.

Total captured 31. O.R. ^{plus 4 wounded ORs} Identification :- 10 and 12 Coys 3 Bn 39 Regt Bologna Div. These PWs were of a poor type physically, and were badly shaken by the arty fire, and were in no condition to offer proper resistance. No officers were taken.

11. CASUALTIESOWN:

2 ORs killed.

15 ORs wounded.

1 offr 2 ORs wounded presumed PW. (MISSING)

2 ORs missing.

Det NZE

2 wounded.

1 missing and wounded. - OR.

ENEMY

Unable to ascertain exact number but their casualties in dead was heavy. (Approx 60. 35 of them by the bayonet. A number of E Inf were seen escaping into the darkness.)

12. Captured Arms and comments in General

Two Bredas. 9 magazines.
2 Flats were destroyed. (Mounted A.A guns)
16 MG posts destroyed.

The whole operation was executed in keeping with the plan, no confusion arising whatsoever at any stage.

Regarding Arty supporting fire we learnt that :-

1. A greater margin of safety should be allowed between the objective and further arty tasks, when arty fire cannot be observed. In this case a considerable number of shells evidently intended for pimple 87632767 (Task2) were falling amongst our Inf while mopping up was in progress.
2. The smoke shells used being night time, and following a very heavy H.E barrage tended to obscure completely the approaches to obstacles and were quite unnecessary.
3. To maintain contact between pls, tps must not be closer than 150 yds from own arty barrage. This will minimize casualties as fully 60 percent of our casualties were caused by our own shells. Morally the effect of some of our shells landing among us was far greater than that produced by (E) fire.

Further to para 6, maps are at fault in that the knoll referred to by OC. B Coy is NOT shown, and was the cause of some confusion.

In conclusion, the steadiness and bearing of all ranks including the ~~detachment~~ of Engineers during both the attack and the withdrawal was admirable.

Guoaga

Lt. Col. Comdg Offr.
C.O. 28 (Maori) Battalion.
1
N2
Bn.

REPORT ON RAID OF NIGHT 25/26 AUG 42.

By :- W Porter. Capt. M.C.

O.C.

A. Coy.

(Map Ref: Eastern end EL MREIR Depression)

Part played by A Coy.

NARRATIVE

28 NZ (Maori) Bn.

ATTACK

Start line

- 0350 hrs Formed up on (S.L) right of B Coy - 1 ~~platoon~~ front 2 pls in rear. Frontal 200 yds. Attached were 4 sappers with bangalore torpedoes.
- 0400 hrs *North* ZERO. - began advance with first flashes of own guns. Bearing due NORTH. Night cloudy, unable to follow (N) Star - Moderate northerly wind.
- 0407 hrs Blinded by smoke and powder from H.E shells - unable to see more than 10 yds. Noticed one gun firing short. Shells landed amongst men. 4 casualties from own shells.
- 0409 hrs Smoke was laid across our front., unable to move as 1 or 2 guns were firing H.E. 20 yds across our front.
- 0410 hrs One bangalore was rushed fwd on axis of advance - unable to see wire until almost on top of it. Gap blown 20 yds. Smoke so thick but flash of bangalore directed pls through gap.
- 0411 hrs Reached (E) trenches - attacked with bayonets.
- 0425 hrs Enemy surrendered. - continued advance behind and along (E) dannert wire, mopping up (E) trenches. Very little opposition, if any. Noticed H.E shells landing all round. This gun had not lifted on to its third task marked on sketch 111a. A casualty from from own guns.
- 0430 hrs Reorganized coy and prepared to carry on with advance but soon found we had reached end of objective - checked up on ground to see own casualties.
- 0435 hrs Red and green flares fired due SOUTH - signal for withdrawal. unable to answer signals as Verrey pistol was missing with the runner, who had become a casualty during the early part of the attack. Formed up pls in coln of threes and began withdrawal. Walked over single dannert wire and then extended Coy - bearing taken due EAST. *East*
- 0440 hrs Ran into (E) Mortar fire all along front of Coy area.
- 0445 hrs Reached double apron wire in front of own minefield.
- 0450 hrs Arrived at Coy HQ. Immediately checked on casualties. Final check up were 5 slightly wounded - all caused by own H.E shells PWs accounted for by this Coy were 16 known. Killed-unknown. MG posts captured - 16.

LESSONS LEARNT FROM ATTACK:-

1. Calibration of field guns - this must be known by inf units ~~before~~ concerned before doing an attack with arty support.
2. Smoke bombs should not be used at night as it hinders approach to any known obstacle.
3. Impossible to keep in contact with pls if closer than 150 yds to own arty barrage. - minimizes casualties.
4. After inf has penetrated (E) posns arty should lift NOT less than 300 yds *from* of the final objective.

27 Aug 42.
28 (Maori) NZ. BN.

(Sgd)

W. Porter. Capt. MC.
O.C. A COY.

REPORT ON RAID OF NIGHT 25/26 AUG 42.

By :- Capt. MR. Ruhi. **PENE.**
O.C B. Coy.
28 (MAORI) BN.

(Read in conjunction with Sketch of Arty Tasks)

TIME:

NARRATIVE.

Z to Z+10. B Coy advanced on given axis (360 degrees) and took to earth at approx Z+7 with centre of fwd line 50 yds from derelict tank in the minefield. We had approached to within 20 and 25 yds of arty barrage. *Engineer det.*

When the Arty put down smoke the **ENGINEERS** immediately blew huge gaps in the ~~E~~ wire through which my two fwd pls passed in double time. We then charged at a steady pace but the line veered in a N.N.W. direction owing to the nature of the ground - it fell away from the brink of the low depression, and we had gone some distance before I managed to swing the line back to the original axis.

There was a big knoll on my left which I took to be ~~the~~ **TASK 2** of the Arty, and which made my Left Boundary.

On advancing further my attention was drawn to another knoll on my right, also in the depression. The area on which I was moving had a front of 200 yds between the two knolls and incidentally was being plastered by the arty. (Own).

I realized then that the knoll feature referred to in the Arty Task 2 was the one on my right. However, I ~~managed~~ realized that the momentum of the advance had to be kept and so decided to push on to the escarpment, wheel the whole line to the right, and doubling back withdraw southward inside the area I had already covered. This I did and enroute cleaned up all dugouts in our path.

There were many dugouts and slit trenches within the depression, the majority occupied by ~~E~~ tps. Few of these ~~troops~~ ^{tps}, approx 12, were taken P.W., the remainder bayoneted.

We discovered no mortars or ~~Ed~~ guns, but a late arrival stated that a mortar was placed on the WESTERN side of the ~~the~~ area vicinity 87622773.

There were NO tanks, ~~and~~ but only derelict M.T.

During the withdrawal, when the arty ceased fire at Z+50, my Coy was 100 yds SOUTH of the ~~E~~ minefield moving back to ~~3rd~~ the Start Line. *South*

~~E~~ mortars opened up when our arty. ceased fire and shells followed us all the way back.

REPORT by 2 late arrivals who had stayed back ~~in~~ in an endeavour to bring back 3 wounded men:-

(1) ~~E~~ MGs on northern escarpment directly in line with original Coy axis.

(2) ~~E~~ MGs SOUTH of depression and 300 to 350 yds WEST of where bangalore torpedoes were used.

(3) Mortar which was used against us during withdrawal in vicinity 8760 2773.

All ranks wish to express their admiration for the fine work of the Engineer detachment.

Casualties - As submitted to BN.HQ.

(Sgd) MR. Pene. Capt.

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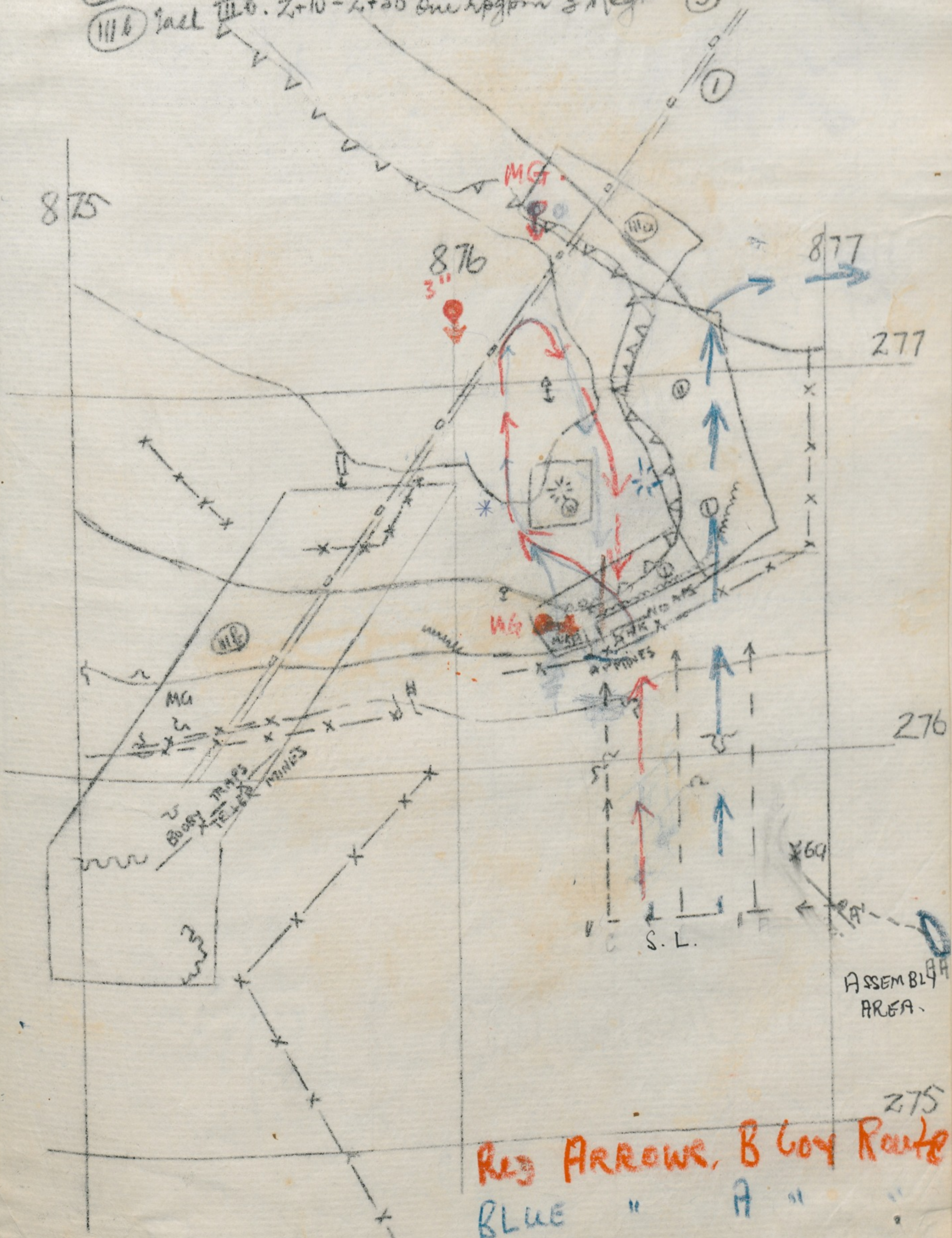
Further note on captured arms :-

2 Breda MGs and 9 Magazines.
2 Fiats (mounted A.A destroyed)
17. ORG.

PW

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- ① TASK I Z-Z+5 SLOW.
Z+5-Z+10 RAPID incl 2 rpg smoke
- ② TASK II Z+10-Z+25 SLOW
- ③ TASK IIIa Z+10-Z+50 One rpg per 1 Regt
- ③ TASK IIIb Z+10-Z+50 One rpg per 3 Regt.



* Pimple NOT marked on MAP.

Report on a successful operation undertaken by all but C Company of the Battalion on the night of 25th and 26th of August 1942.

REFERENCE: Archives New Zealand = Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwanatanga

WAI 1 1665 DA 68/1/32-33, pp.37-42