

Normandy Armored RSOP and Survey

By Lt. David E. Olson, FA

Shortly after D-day the forward elements of our armored artillery battalion hit the beach in Normandy and were met by our glider-borne Liaison Officer who gave us first-hand information on the terrain into which were soon to disappear and the hazards that awaited us. "Just like the jungle," he said.

Map reconnaissance had indicated that the fields were small and the terrain flat (a hundred-foot hill was mountainous!). Foot reconnaissance showed tree lines bordering each field, narrow twisting lanes with steep banks on each side, deep ditches along the tree lines which proved to be obstacles for our M7s in some areas, and (most important of all) an utter lack of observation from the ground. It became apparent that we would have to change some of our SOPs, especially those concerned with RSOPs and Survey, in order to meet the problems confronting us.

First of all we changed the composition of the Bn Comdr's party. Now we use 3 ¼-ton: the BnC's, the RO-and-Survey O's, and the Com O's. When the area into which we must go into position is given to us by the DivArty Officer, these three vehicles with their officers plus 5 reconnaissance and survey men take off for the new area. The five enlisted men help perform the survey, but they also provide some protection against the machine pistol artists and snipers who will likely still be lurking in some Normandy hedges long after the Armistice is signed.

The Communications Officer immediately selects the CP and the Battalion Commander and the Reconnaissance and Survey Officer choose the GPs. Routes of entrance, availability of alternate positions, and the proximity of other installations are considered. A stake is driven in the center of each gun position.

The Battalion Commander and the Communication Officer return to a rendezvous point previously agreed upon, where they meet an officer and the wire crews from each battery. These representatives (they may be the BCs, Executives, or Assistant Executive Officers) are shown their positions and given suggestions by the Battalion Commander as to how the positions can be utilized most advantageously. Wire crews begin to lay wire to the CP, which had been indicated to them by the Communications Officer. In the meantime the Reconnaissance and Survey section have begun their survey, usually starting with the registering battery. Often, if the situation is moving rapidly, the representative of the registering battery will bring along one M7 which will begin registering immediately so that corrections will be available when the remainder of the battalion comes into position.

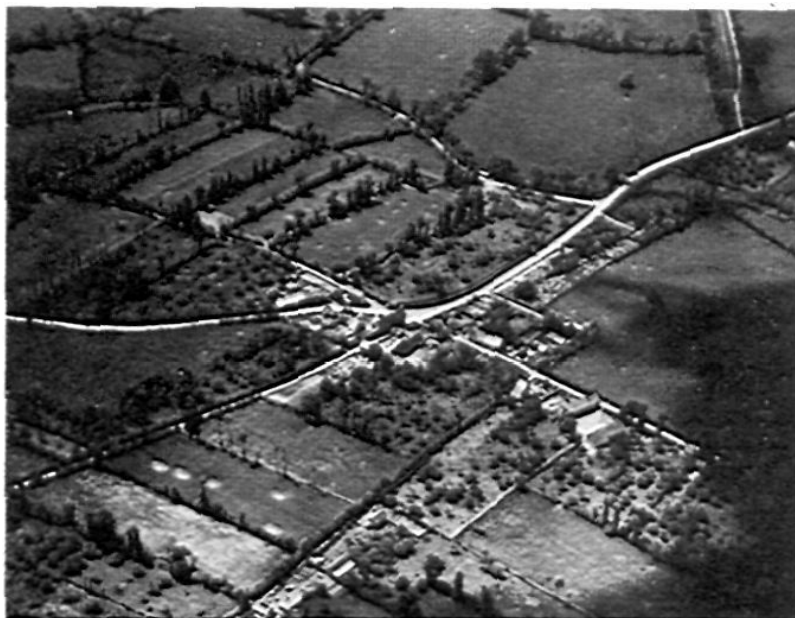
After the officer representative has analyzed the situation he returns to his battery, and it is displaced forward in the order specified by the Battalion Commander. The Communications Officer brings Headquarters Battery and the forward echelon of the FDC up so that fire missions will not be interrupted during the displacement.

An Armored Artillery Survey setup—

combining the survey and reconnaissance sections and streamlining both of them, plus the jungle-like countryside of Normandy—presents a discouraging picture from the survey point of view. There is one redeeming feature, however, and that is the map situation. The 1/25,000 battlemaps are excellent horizontally, although not too good vertically.

After the positions are selected by the Battalion Commander and Reconnaissance and Survey Officer, a position area survey is initiated. The poor observation makes it difficult to pick up points identifiable both on the map and on the ground and suitable for obtaining initial direction. As a result we use the compass needle (on what we call the Master Instrument) on the registering battery's orienting line, and from there carry direction to the remaining orienting lines. To catch large errors we check the computed azimuth against the azimuth obtained by measuring with the master instrument.

At each position the Survey Sergeant draws a base line from a grid intersection in the center of our sector (which serves as a Base Point) and the battery position. Thus a base angle can be placed on the executive's stake just as soon as the azimuth of the orienting lines is ascertained. The Executive sends this information (if the Survey Officer hasn't already) in his executive's report, along with the coordinates of his position and the grid intersection that he's tied in on. Just as soon as the Reconnaissance and Survey Officer is free he returns to the new CP and checks the plots, base angles, and the laying of the batteries by comparing the compasses with the azimuths of the base lines which have been measured or computed from the chart. Alternate position surveys are run by the battery teams. Coordinates of the new position and the azimuth of the orienting line, computed from the azimuth of the initial OL,



Berigny, south of the Forest of Cerisy, is surrounded by typical Norman terrain. Hedgerows on low banks make fine defensive positions and snipers' posts. Road intersections shown here are typical of this entire area; they make good sites for AT guns, for use against any type of traffic.

are sent to FDC. In the event that the alternate position must be occupied, a base angle is awaiting in the new position.

Distance is handled by inspection or by inspection and short traverse. Vertical control is usually carried, especially if the area is the least bit rugged or any doubt arises concerning vertical control on the portion of the map we are using.

Our rapid occupation, which we have yet to use here in Normandy, is the Fort Sill "shoot from the hip method." As far as tying the battalion together is concerned, the battery executive reports to FDC the coordinates of his

position, the azimuth of his OL, and the base angle on which he is laid. As soon as possible, the Reconnaissance and Survey section locates the battery positions accurately and carries direction to the OLs. Then any correction necessary can be made and the battalion can again be tied in on any point.

We think the Fort Sill methods are absolutely sound. So must some of the Nazis captured here in France, because they have a great deal of respect for what they *still* insist on calling "Automatic Artillery."

THE CORPS R.O. IN COMBAT

By Lt. Col. Joseph R. Couch, FA

Few duties performed by an artillery officer, in fact by any combat officer, are more important than those of the battery RO. In the final analysis it is *observed* fire that causes the greatest damage to the enemy, and the RO must direct a large part of such observed fire. The successful RO must possess physical stamina, skill, initiative, courage, and aggressiveness, all of the highest order. In our battalion of 155-mm M1 howitzers, Corps Artillery, we have attempted to train the ROs to perform their duties in line with the missions of the Corps Artillery. In many respects their duties will differ from those of an RO or forward observer with a direct-support battalion. By study, trial, and error during the North African, Sicilian, and Italian campaigns we have developed the principles outlined here. Each RO is thoroughly instructed and provided with a brief list of his duties. His activities are checked constantly by his battery commander and officers of the battalion staff. His general missions (listed in order of importance) are to (1) direct the fire of his battalion upon hostile batteries, (2) direct fire upon enemy tanks, vehicles, troop concentrations, and strong points in reinforcing the fires of the divisional artillery, (3) provide accurate and timely information of enemy and friendly troops, and (4) in a defensive role serve as a sentry, always alert to prevent damage or destruction to his battalion and to supported troops by enemy shellfire, enemy attacks, and counterattacks.

PREPARATION FOR HIS DUTIES

An RO must prepare himself carefully and completely before setting out to locate and establish his OP. He must be thoroughly instructed by the battalion commander and battalion staff officers before he departs. The successful accomplishment of his mission will depend largely upon his preliminary planning and preparation. His preparation should be conducted according to the following plan:

1. The RO reports to the battalion CP for instructions. If a displacement is underway and no battalion CP is set up he reports to the battalion commander or S-3 on reconnaissance.

2. His battalion commander or S-3 explains to him:



Russian 76-mm gun fitted with German muzzle brake and mounted on an ex-Czech chassis (known as Pzkw-38), destroyed on a mountainside near Esperia.

(a) Enemy and friendly situation. Location of front lines and support troops.

(b) Mission of the battalion.

(c) Our fire possibilities and capabilities, including maximum ranges, right and left limits, and ammunition status.

(d) The terrain as known to them. A map is generally used. Upon rare occasions part of the situation can be pointed out on the ground.

(e) Communications, including any variations from normal procedure.

3. Then the RO checks his equipment. He must have in his possession (a) maps, (b) instruments, (c) radio with extra batteries, (d) hand reel and wire, (e) prearranged codes, codex machine, radio call signs, and (f) food and bedding.

4. The RO must constantly bear in mind that an observer without communications is of no value. Before he leaves plans must be made for wire laying, relay stations, and necessary steps to insure constant and

reliable communications. This is the observer's responsibility and cannot be delegated not excused.

LOCATION AND ESTABLISHMENT OF THE OP

Only after he has completed his preparation does the RO set out to locate and establish his OP. He should bear the following points in mind at all times:

(1) He must always know his location. He should take speedometer readings, follow his maps carefully, take compass bearings—in short, he must be able to report his location at any instant.

(2) The RO always checks with friendly troops as he goes forward. This is highly important, as situations change rapidly and the battalion commander seldom possesses complete information when he sends the observer forward.

(3) The most obvious or most conspicuous OP should not be selected if a less obvious one can be employed. This may prevent spotting and neutralization by the enemy.

For Corps Artillery purposes height is a more important factor than proximity to the front lines, for the observer's primary mission is to see far back into enemy territory where hostile batteries will be located—but *both* height and proximity to the front should always be sought.