

HEADQUARTERS
607TH TANK DESTROYER BATTALION
APO 230

13 January 1945

Subject: Battle Situations and Experiences.

To : Commanding Officer, 1st TD Brigade, APO 403, U S Army.

1. In accordance with your request for material on Battle Experiences and Situations, there is enclosed a group of same which I hope will be of help to other Units.

2. In addition to the enclosed experiences, we have found that in Indirect Fire precision adjustment with the 90MM Gun, its large probable error made the use of C in adjusting unsatisfactory, while the use of the Fork gave us satisfactory adjustments.

3. In your TD Information Letter Number 3, 1 Jan 45, some variations from our records were noted. Cumulative report should read as follows:

<u>BATTALION</u>	<u>TOTAL TANKS DESTROYED</u>	<u>TOTAL SP GUNS DESTROYED</u>	<u>TOTAL ARTY & SP GUNS DESTROYED</u>	<u>TOTAL ROUNDS FIRED</u>	<u>ROUNDS FIRED DIRECT</u>	<u>ROUNDS FIRED INDIRECT</u>
607	47	22	21	56213	6767	49446

HAROLD S SUNDT
Lt Col, 607th TD Bn
Commanding

1 Incl:
Battle Situations
(14 situations, 7 sketches)

HEADQUARTERS
7TH TANK DESTROYER BATTALION
APO 230

B2-6

4 January 1945

BATTLE SITUATIONS (M-36 Destroyer)

Situation No. 1: (see sketch #1)

Sgt Sheeran's destroyer had been given the mission of covering the under-pass which had been frequented by a tank. He had placed the gun at AG-16 to cover the under-pass in case the tank returned. While in position an Infantry officer came to the destroyer and wanted it to move out and fire on a pillbox. There were other destroyers available for this purpose and the gun commander so advised the Infantry officer. The officer insisted that Sgt Sheeran's gun move out on the mission. The gun commander refused and soon thereafter destroyed a tank as it pulled into the under-pass. However the Infantry officer departed in a "huff". I am not sure if the gun commander suggested calling for another destroyer. His platoon leader has no recollection of a request being given him for the mission.

Suggestion: That all Infantrymen be instructed to call for TDs through the Inf Bn CPs for missions, except in case of emergency when immediate action is required.

Situation No. 2: (see sketch #1)

At 1200 12 Dec 44 a request for fire on a pillbox NW of J-31 was made. J-31 was occupied by Infantry as were J-23, 24, 25 and Y-1, 2, 3, 4. While the platoon leader and gun commander were forward on reconnaissance of route and position, mortar fire drove the Infantry from J-31 into J-24. The only route available was the main North-South street known to be subject to anti-tank fire. A burned tank partially obstructed the street at a point opposite R-23. The risk was run and the pillbox fired upon. Houses 28 and 29 were also fired upon. No attempt was made by Infantry to occupy the pillbox. This was the third time this mission had been called for and fired.

Question: Was the risk justified by the result?

Suggestion: Is it doubtful since there was no "follow through" and the frequency of use of this main street only serves to attract anti-tank guns to the street.

Situation No. 3: (see sketch #1)

At 0900 13 Dec 44 a platoon leader was directed, at 2nd Bn CP, to contact Co G commander for a mission desired. No guide was furnished. The officer finally found the Company CP in Y-6. There he was told that Germans had infiltrated into the position during the night and that houses Y-26, 27, 29 must be presumed to be occupied by them. Nevertheless, he was urgently requested to move a destroyer to a point near Y-27 immediately and fire on house R-31, thereafter to remain in position to block any movement of enemy tanks from East to West past R-31. Platoon leader stated he had specific orders not to move past houses suspected to containing German Infantry due to danger of bazooka, rifle or machine gun fire into the open turret. He requested that houses Y-26, 27, 28 be checked over. He returned to 2nd Bn CP and awaited word of this check being made. At 1200 he received a report at Bn CP that the three buildings were cleared. He dispatched a destroyer on the mission. At 1500 a heavy fusi-

Incl 1 to Incl 1

BATTLE SITUATIONS, 607th Tank Destroyer Battalion:

Trade of small arms fire broke out in buildings Y-26, 27, 28.

Question: Were these buildings cleared as previously reported or had destroyers been unnecessarily endangered?

Result: Loss of confidence in reports of supported troops.

Situation No. 4: (see sketch #2)

On 10 Dec 44 the 3rd platoon of Co A, 607th TD Bn was supporting 1st Bn Inf. The TD of Sgt Burkhardt was supporting Co B (see sketch for disposition). At about 0730 approximately 10 rounds of HE hit building #13 (Co B CP). An Infantry observer at the Co CP reported the fire was coming from an enemy tank about 250 yards to the NE. The gun commander, Sgt Burkhardt, was unable to see this tank from ground level. Under cover of the dust caused by the explosion of shells hitting building he moved the TD just beyond the corner of the building, but being unable to observe enemy tank from the height of the TD's turret, he returned to cover of the building. He did not, as requested by the Co commander, move the TD beyond cover of the building and shoot it out with the enemy tank, but reported the situation to his platoon leader so that the other TDs in the area could take the enemy tank under fire if it exposed itself or if its position was located. The Infantry observer did not show the location of the tank to the TD commander.

Enemy Infantry, at this time, were observed moving to the vicinity of building #22 from the North along a route to East of buildings #8, 9 and 10. They were fired upon by the TD's machine gun.

The Infantry Company's commander elected to vacate building #13 due to casualties being caused to his men and asked the TD to cover his withdrawal. This was done. The Co CO did not inform the TD commander where he was going to move nor arrange a place for the TD to report at any new position.

After the Infantry had withdrawn from bldg #13, the gun commander moved to rear (south) side of bldg #15, but could not locate any of the Infantry. He then moved South across RR tracks about 200 yards to platoon assembly position in order to contact the TD platoon leader for instructions.

The reserve destroyer was not maneuvered. The destroyer on the East flank fired 50 cal MG at German Infantry but did not pick up the German tank.

After this action the Infantry Bn commander was reported to have stated the TD "ran away". Upon later discussion of this matter with the Ex officer of the 607th TD Bn, the Inf Bn CO expressed it as his opinion (1) that the TD should have moved from behind the cover of bldg #13 and sought out and shot the tank, notwithstanding the fact that the TD would not only have been under direct fire of the enemy tank, but also at a disadvantage, since he would have been moving and would not have had the exact location of the tank, and (2) that the TD should have remained by bldg #13 even though the Infantry had withdrawn. (Note: After extreme pressure had been relieved the same commander thought otherwise).

Conclusion: (1) The TDs were properly placed to stop any armored attack before same reached Infantry front lines; (2) the TD in charge of Sgt Burkhardt should not have moved from its covered position to engage the tank as this would undoubtedly have resulted in the TD being destroyed; (3) the TD should not have remained in front of the Infantry lines and, failing to have any place designated by the CO of Co B, moved to the proper place; (4) employment of reserve destroyer offered best chances of success.

Suggestions: Supported troops must be sure to give supporting troops their plans in order to insure continuity of support. Even though moves in towns are very short, the

BATTLE SITUATIONS, 607th Tank Destroyer Battalion:

ease with which dismounted troops conceal themselves is bound to give the armored units the impression that the Infantry have "run away" and left the armor uncovered. Undoubtedly there were men left in the bldg AE-13 to care for the wounded and cover the TD, but here again the plan was not given to the destroyer's commander. His failure to check the building while it was being fired upon is understandable as was the Infantry commanders haste to depart. A rally position would frequently be of value in similar circumstances.

Towed guns capable of being placed inside of buildings and sited to fire down routes of approach for tanks might well be employed. This increases the safety of forward elements against tank attacks and frees forward elements of the necessary elaborate security measures to adequately protect tanks and tank destroyers in front line positions. It also reduces danger of losing valuable equipment to a night-stalking team of the enemy. Continued experience and association of armor and Infantry almost invariably has resulted in elimination of episodes of this type. However, extreme battle strain will cause them to arise unless combined training and battle experience have reduced their causes to the minimum.

Situation No. 5: (see sketch #3)

A tank destroyer platoon was supporting an Infantry Battalion in the assault through a fortified town. The platoon was assembled in the vicinity of houses 2-28, 34 and 32. The Infantry had taken and cleared all of blocks J, R and S and bldgs 16 to 33 in block T. The Infantry commander requested fire be placed on a pillbox between T-1 and 2 to neutralize it while they assaulted the row of houses T-10 to 15. The Infantry commander wanted the platoon leader to send a destroyer up Rath Strasse, but from a study of the map the platoon leader considered the use of this route impracticable because of undue exposure from enemy held territory of block K and Q. The Infantry commander informed the platoon leader that the road running through block S near S-24 was open and passable, that his men were using it. As this gave a covered route, the platoon leader sent a destroyer to proceed over this route to a firing position between S-5 and 6. The destroyer left, but its commander found the road was not passable to vehicles due to fallen trees and debris. He returned and reported this to the platoon leader, who immediately made a foot reconnaissance of the route and verified that it was impassable. He continued his reconnaissance and found a possible route to another firing position at the West end of T-16, but was unable to make a detailed reconnaissance due to heavy mortar fire between T-27 and 29. The platoon leader returned and suggested that a tank make the reconnaissance inasmuch as a tank would have the benefit of a covered turret. This was agreed upon and the tank proceeded to the proposed firing position and, in addition, cleared a line of fire to the pillbox by shooting a hole in the wall that runs from T-27 to T-9. It then withdrew and the TD platoon leader was informed that the route was clear and the firing position good. The destroyer then proceeded at a rapid rate to the position which the tank had reconnoitered, running through the mortar fire. It fired ten rounds into the pillbox, neutralizing it with penetrations.

Conclusion: Personal reconnaissance of routes is most essential. What may appear to be a good route to some it not a good route to a tank or TD man. A good use of tanks for reconnaissance under fire is here demonstrated. Tankers verify passable routes for tanks or TDs. (Note: 105 Assault Gun might have been better than tank in this case, since it can demolish buildings better).

Suggestion: Complete reconnaissance must be made on foot whenever possible.

BATTLE SITUATIONS, 607th Tank Destroyer Battalion:

Situation No. 6: (see sketch #4)

The destroyer of Cpl Wiren moved up Rosenbergstrabe and fired on buildings pertaining to the brick factory from point A (see sketch). Then the engine of the destroyer failed to start. Sgt Gleet moved forward, by the same route, to pull Wiren's stalled destroyer in order to start it. A high velocity gun started firing South on the avenue. Sgt Gleet fired several rounds from point B in return and pulled back under cover. No more return fire was received.

Results: Later Sgt Johnson, from point C, saw a German tank partially within a building at point D. Two holes were in the tank. Building had been demolished. The German tank almost certainly had taken up his position to catch Wiren on the return trip.

Lesson: Always employ guns mutually supporting. A lone gun is often a lost gun.

Situation No. 7: (see sketch #5)

Pillbox P-3, camouflaged by a false brick house, came under suspicion when OP at point A (a three storied building) saw paper cups being tossed out a window. A TD took up position at point B and fired 6 rounds, knocking camouflage down and partially exposing a face of the pillbox. More would have been exposed by firing low and blowing other material obstructing view out of the way. Ten rounds were then fired but pattern was poor. Gunner was puzzled as to what point to shoot at. Visibility was poor. The view from OP at A did not help much because the view from the destroyer was so different.

Results: Occupants of the pillbox gave up due to fear. Poor pattern would ordinarily have given no results.

Lesson: Spend a few extra rounds clearing the way. Select a point to shoot at, using auxiliary aiming point if necessary, and then start pounding. Ten rounds should always give complete penetration if the pattern is good and if a partition or the roof are not hit.

Situation No. 8: (see sketch #5)

Pillbox P-4 was discovered by Infantry and preliminary fire placed on it from point C, knocking down the brick camouflage. However a brick wall and great quantities of debris and demolished box cars on the tracks partially obstructed the view and no attempt was made to clear field of fire. Twenty five rounds in groups 10-10-5 were fired to persuade the Jerries to give up. No specific point was picked to fire upon. Destroyer then moved to point D to get a better angle of impact. Still not enough effort was made to knock away some of the wall that was obstructing vision.

Results: The Jerries, except for the NCO were persuaded to give up. Engineers then blew a hole in doorway. Gas fumes overcame the NCO.

Lesson: Use a few extra rounds to clear the field of fire. Then pick a point (if aperture is still obscured, choose a point 10 feet down and 10 feet in from a corner) and start pounding. Ten rounds of APC will do the job if pattern is good. No. 5 and No. 10 might well be HE with T105 fuse or delay fuse setting.

BATTLE SITUATIONS, 507th Tank Destroyer Battalion:

Situation No. 9: (see sketch #5)

Two pillboxes (one port each) were mutually supporting and covering an overpass and RR crossing. However, P-1 had been taken by persuasion during the night. An assault team of one squad and one TD took up positions, the Infantry in house (H) and the destroyer at (I). The destroyer's mission was to fire 5 rounds on P-2 to button it up; while the Infantry planned to rush the box after the 5th round. This action took place at the first light. Only a dim outline of P-2 was visible to the gunner. Angle of impact 80°.

Results: Two rounds HE fired on P-2, knocking false brick front flat. Two rounds of APC fired on P-2 cut through the 4 inch steel aperture cover. The two holes were one inch apart. A round of HE had hit two inches above the opening made by the APC. The Jerry machine gunner was killed at his post. Six live Jerries in P-2 surrendered without a struggle.

Lesson: Always try to fire at aperture. It is weakest point in pillbox. Prearranged firing plan worked well because it was well within capabilities of gun and Infantry.

Situation No. 10: (see sketch #6)

Pillbox South of D-36 was the objective. A squad of Infantry plus some Engineers was brought to house J-1. A destroyer was brought to opening South of house J-16. At 1400 smoke was placed on houses and high ground North of pillbox. The destroyer then moved West about 75 yds in order to shoot past building J-10. The destroyer fired 5 rounds APC at doorway of pillbox. Due to haze, target was not clearly visible so an auxiliary aiming point was used for both range and deflection (actual settings used were 6 leads and 700). The first round (a sighting shot) was sensed by a lateral observer (plat Sgt) and the settings mentioned above arrived at for delivery of four succeeding rounds. Mortars swept houses D-35 to 28 and F-23 to 26 and Q-14 to 19. The Infantry jumped off after the 5th round and proceeded to the pillbox which fell without further action. Five Jerries surrendered. One, left behind in the pillbox, was dead. The Engineers followed up closely with composition 2 and blew the pillbox. All Americans returned to starting points. Action started at 1400 and ended at 1410 with the exploding of the C2.

Results: Penetration of pillbox reported. All Jerries left alive were completely dazed, coughing and covered with dust.

Situation No. 11: (sketch #7)

The gun commander reconnoitered a covered route to a firing position 150 yards from a pillbox. Angle of fire 10° from right angles to face of pillbox. At this position the right half of near side was not visible due to intervening buildings. The gun commander elected to shoot at a point on the blank wall about 15 feet from the left hand edge and 4 feet from lower edge of the pillbox. Five rounds of APC were fired. The gun commander reported he thought the fourth round penetrated and knew the fifth round had penetrated. Six PWs were taken out of this pillbox. They came out prior to Infantry assault and did not show any physical effect from the rounds fired. The PWs were very anxious to know what kind of "super" weapon we used which could go through their "impregnable" pillbox. They had given up as soon as they saw the pillbox could be penetrated.

BATTLE SITUATIONS, 607th Tank Destroyer Battalion:

Sit No. 11 (Cont'd)

Later examination showed that all shots had hit within 12 inches of center of impact. Two rounds had penetrated and hit the far wall and there was a considerable amount of rubble scattered throughout the room where penetration was made, with a pile of rubble about 18 inches high and 4 feet in diameter in the immediate vicinity of penetration.

Construction of the pillbox was as represented in sketch #7. This is reproduced from a sketch made of the particular pillbox described in the above situation. The concrete was of very good quality with reinforcing steel about every 12 inches both in width and depth throughout entire wall.

(In the following situations - Nos. 12, 13 and 14 - the same diagram as in situation No. 11 will be used. It was found that most of the pillboxes were of the same basic construction whether they had one or five firing ports and whether there were two or more compartments. Where there are several compartments, each one is constructed to be fought independently, even if the other is destroyed. However, in most of the pillboxes we assaulted the Germans did not fight them in this manner; ie, they would leave inner doors open ((probably when retreating from threatened compartment)) and so fumes and concussion from HE or cement dust from APC would drive out the occupants).

Situation No. 12: (see sketch #7)

Covered route to firing position was reconnoitered. Range was about 150 yards. Angle of impact right angle to rear side of pillbox. Face of pillbox exposed was a blank wall similar to that shown in sketch #7. The gun commander elected to fire at a point about 14 feet from left hand edge and about 6 feet above apparent bottom line of pillbox. Four rounds of APC, followed by two rounds of HE (T-105 fuse) were fired at and all hit this point. The gun commander reported he thought the fourth round of APC penetrated and that the two HE exploded inside of the pillbox. One German officer and five EM came out of the pillbox. All were badly shaken up and had bloody noses, were choking from dust and fumes and were extremely affected mentally. Examination of the pillbox later showed large piles of rubble just inside the point of penetration and that cement dust had been scattered throughout the pillbox, probably by the HE. Marks on the far wall indicated that the fourth round of APC and both HE had gone inside. All rounds fired had hit within about 8 inches from center of impact.

Situation No. 13: (see sketch #7)

Reconnaissance for firing on this pillbox disclosed that only covered route ended at a point from which the target could be fired upon from a protected position, except for an intervening shed with a rear wall of brick. Engineers assisted by blowing a hole through this wall and the TD was then able to fire from a covered position. The portion of the pillbox exposed was a corner (see sketch #7). The gunner could see approximately 8 inches of the machine gun aperture. The gun commander elected to shoot at the aperture, though the angle of fire would be about 40° from perpendicular. Six rounds of APC were fired, followed by two rounds HE with T-105 fuse. Two of the six rounds of APC hit the portion of the armor plate of the machine gun aperture exposed to view and both rounds penetrated, going inside and causing considerable damage. The other rounds hit one side or the other of the embrasure and ricocheted off without effect. The two rounds which penetrated, knocked

BATTLE SITUATIONS, 607th Tank Destroyer Battalion:

Sit No. 13: (Cont'd)

off the inner doors of the compartment, smashing the inner partition wall. The occupants surrendered.

Situation No. 14: (see sketch #7)

In this situation the mission was to "button up pillbox". The gun commander found a covered route with the firing position partially covered. The range was 125 yards. The portion of the pillbox exposed was the corner and part of the side where the entrance was located (see sketch). The gun commander did not designate any specific point for target and directed the gunner to fire 7 rounds in the general area "A", then fire was shifted to the general area of "B" and 8 rounds fired. APC, HE with delay fuse and HE with T-105 fuse were fired. No appreciable damage was noticed from the firing position. The TD later moved to a position on this pillbox comparable to that shown in sketch #7. Range was 75 yards. Again the gun commander did not designate any specific point target, but directed the gunner to fire in the general area of "C". 36 rounds were fired, some being APC, some HE with T-105 fuse, and some HE delay fuse.

Later examination of this pillbox showed that none of the shots had penetrated and that the deepest penetration attained was 3 feet. The effects of these rounds had been scattered over an area of about 6 feet high and about 20 feet wide.

The lessons to be learned from the above situations (Nos 11, 12, 13 and 14) are:

- (1) To obtain penetration, all shots must be as closely bunched as possible.
- (2) One round is sufficient to penetrate the armor plate at the MG aperture and therefore this is the best point to hit if it is at all possible.
- (3) To obtain maximum effect against personnel inside the pillbox, follow up with HE delay fuse after penetration is obtained.

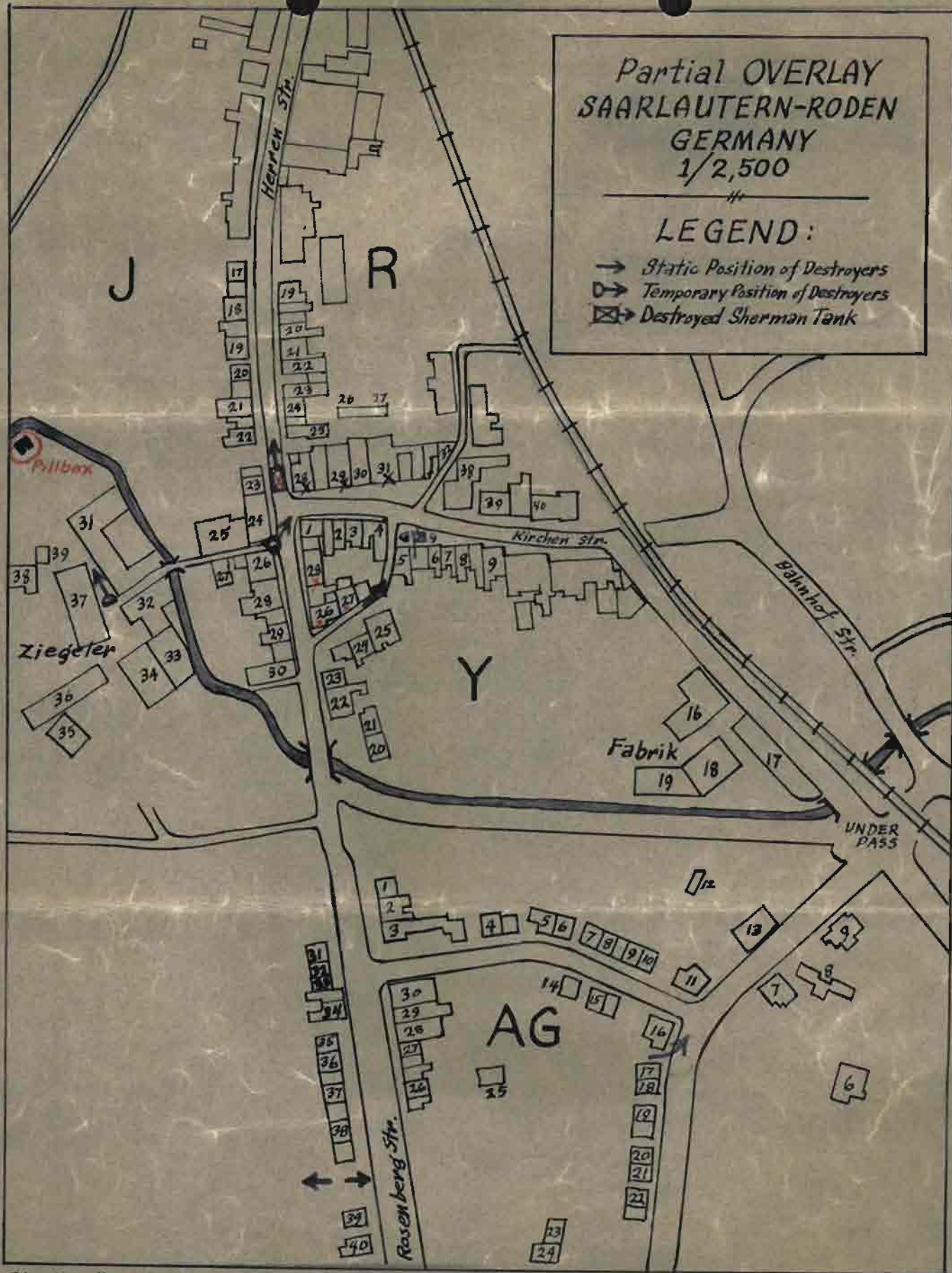
During the discussion that followed a conference on situations No. 11, 12, 13, and 14 the following points were brought out:

- (1) Universal experience of our gunners was that HE with T-105 fuse obtained practically no effect (ie, appeared to get only low order burst) when fired against a pillbox at a range of less than 1200 yards.
- (2) When the pillbox target is indistinct, due to either distance or haze, it frequently helps to aim at a distinct point (ie, top of fence post, tree fork, etc) and by them taking appropriate leads and elevation difference in the telescopic sight from this point, or a reference point to adjust on the pillbox. Once a hit is obtained in the proper area, the gunner, by using the same lead and elevation from this point, will be able to place the remainder of his shots in the same place on the target.
- (3) The best place to hit on a blank wall of a pillbox is a point about 10 feet from the edge and about 10 feet from the top horizontal line. This will allow approximately 6 to 8 feet for the side walls and the roof and on all pillboxes examined would have avoided both outside walls and inside partitions and would have obtained penetration into one of the rooms in the pillbox.

Partial OVERLAY
 SAARLAUTERN-RODEN
 GERMANY
 1/2,500

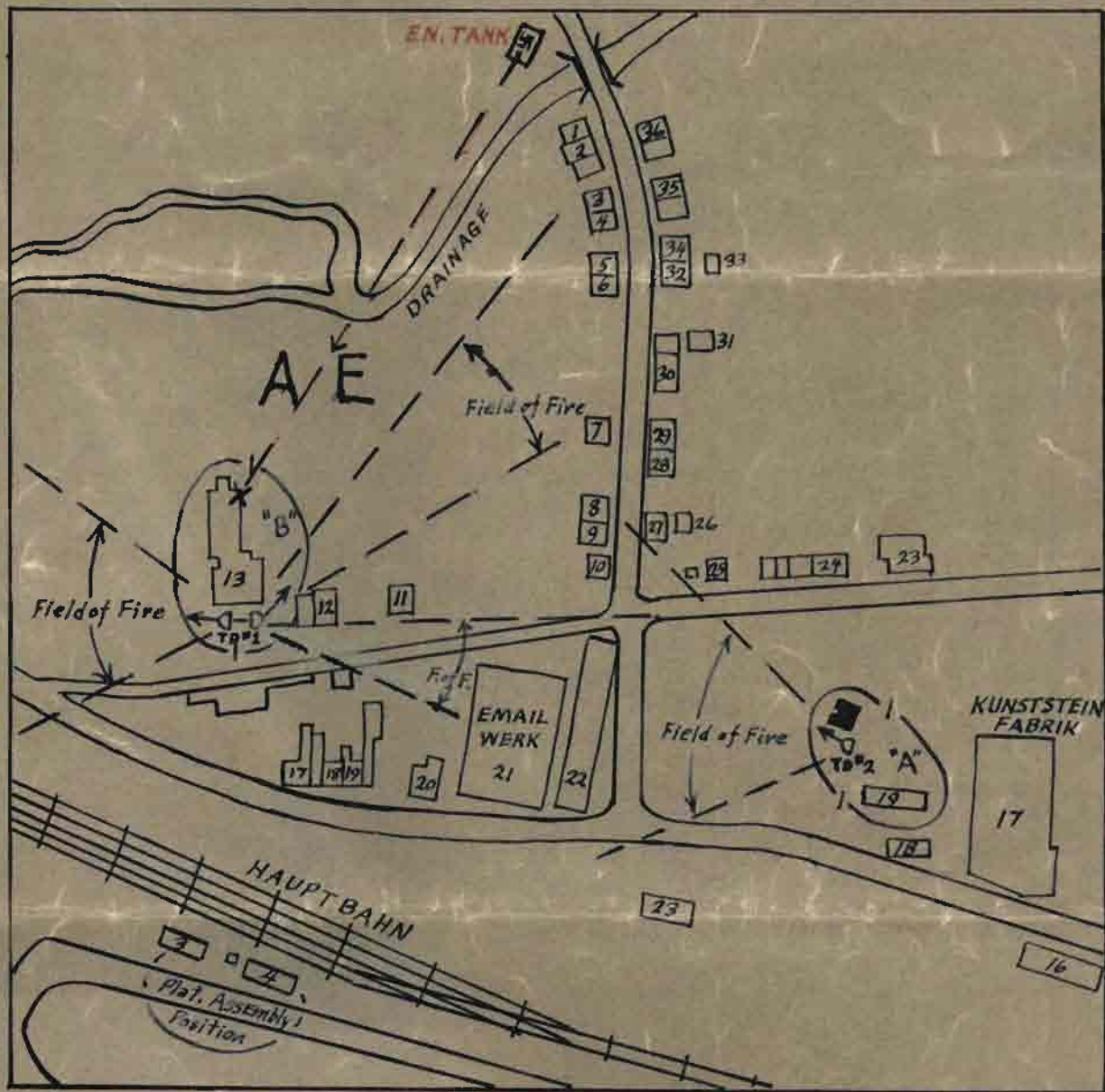
LEGEND:

- Static Position of Destroyers
- ⇄ Temporary Position of Destroyers
- ☒ Destroyed Sherman Tank



Sketch #1, to Accompany 1st, 2nd and 3rd Situations.

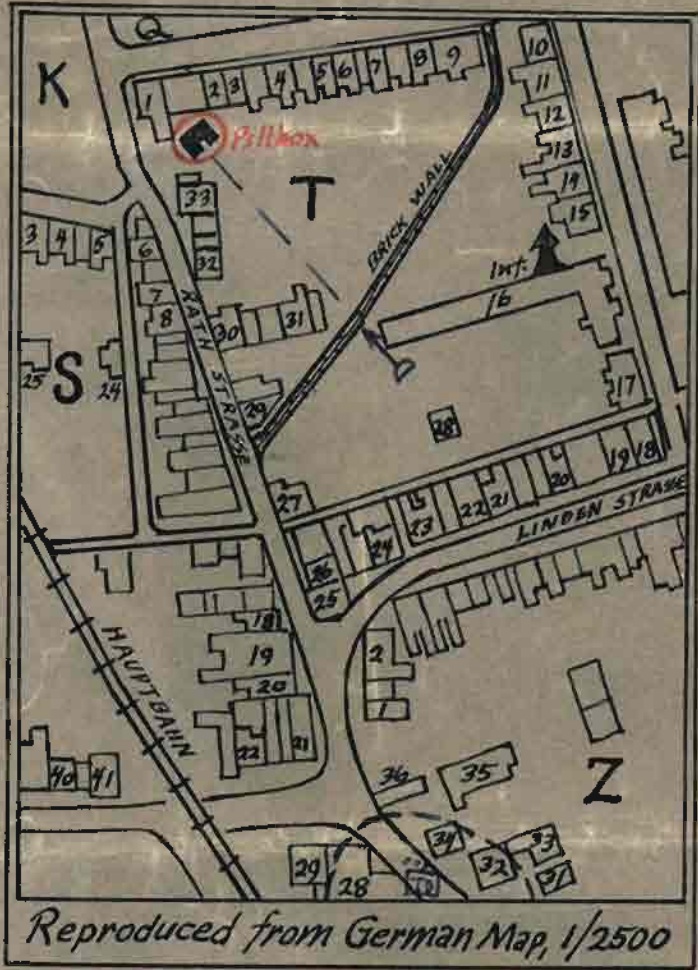
Partial OVERLAY
SAARLAUTERN (Roden) Germany
1/2500



Sketch #2 to Accompany 4th. Situation.



Partial OVERLAY
from TOWN PLAN, 1/2500
SAARLAUTERN (Roden) Germany

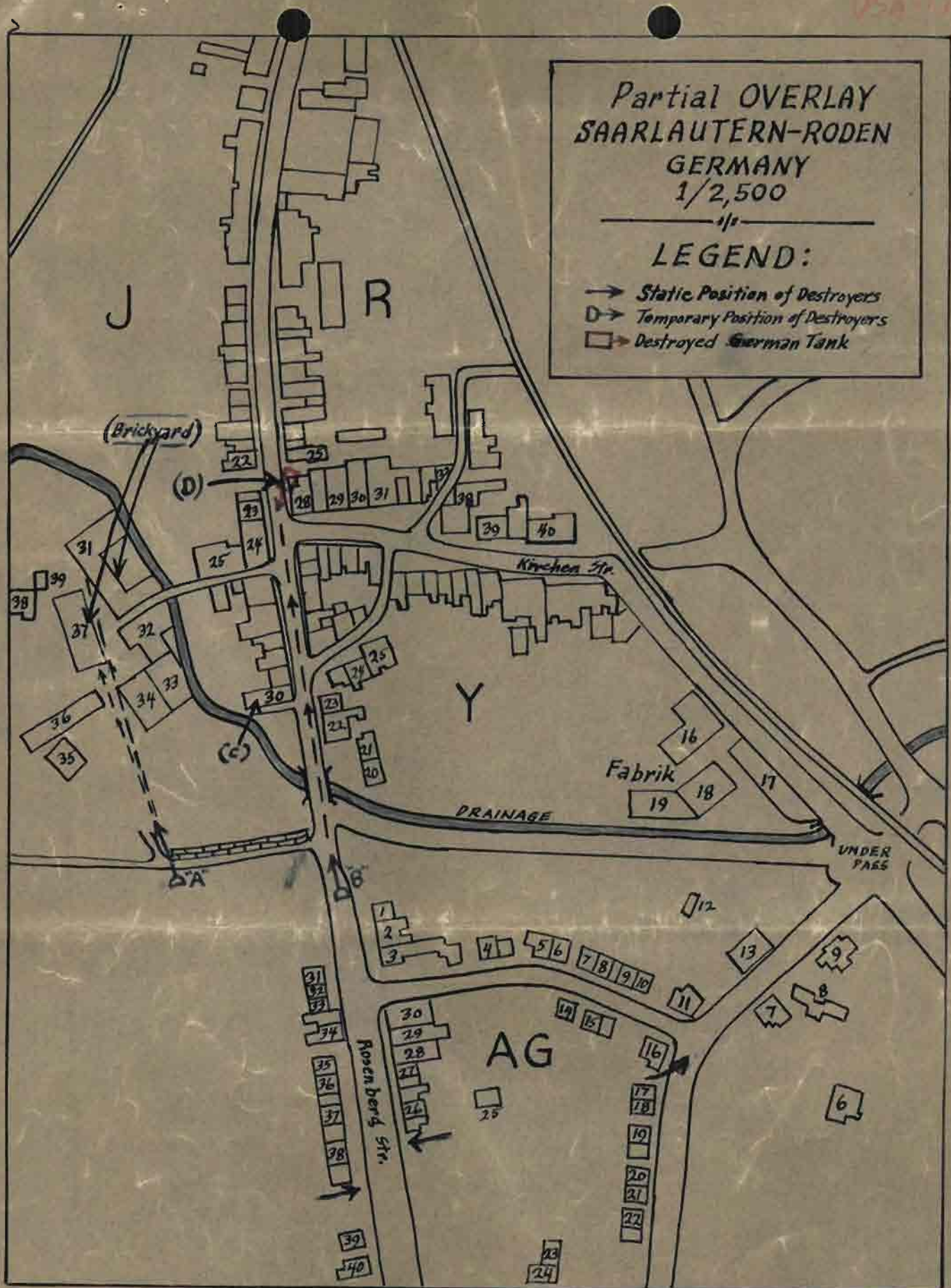


Sketch #3 to Accompany Situation No.5

Partial OVERLAY
 SAARLAUTERN-RODEN
 GERMANY
 1/2,500

LEGEND:

- Static Position of Destroyers
- D→ Temporary Position of Destroyers
- ☐ Destroyed German Tank

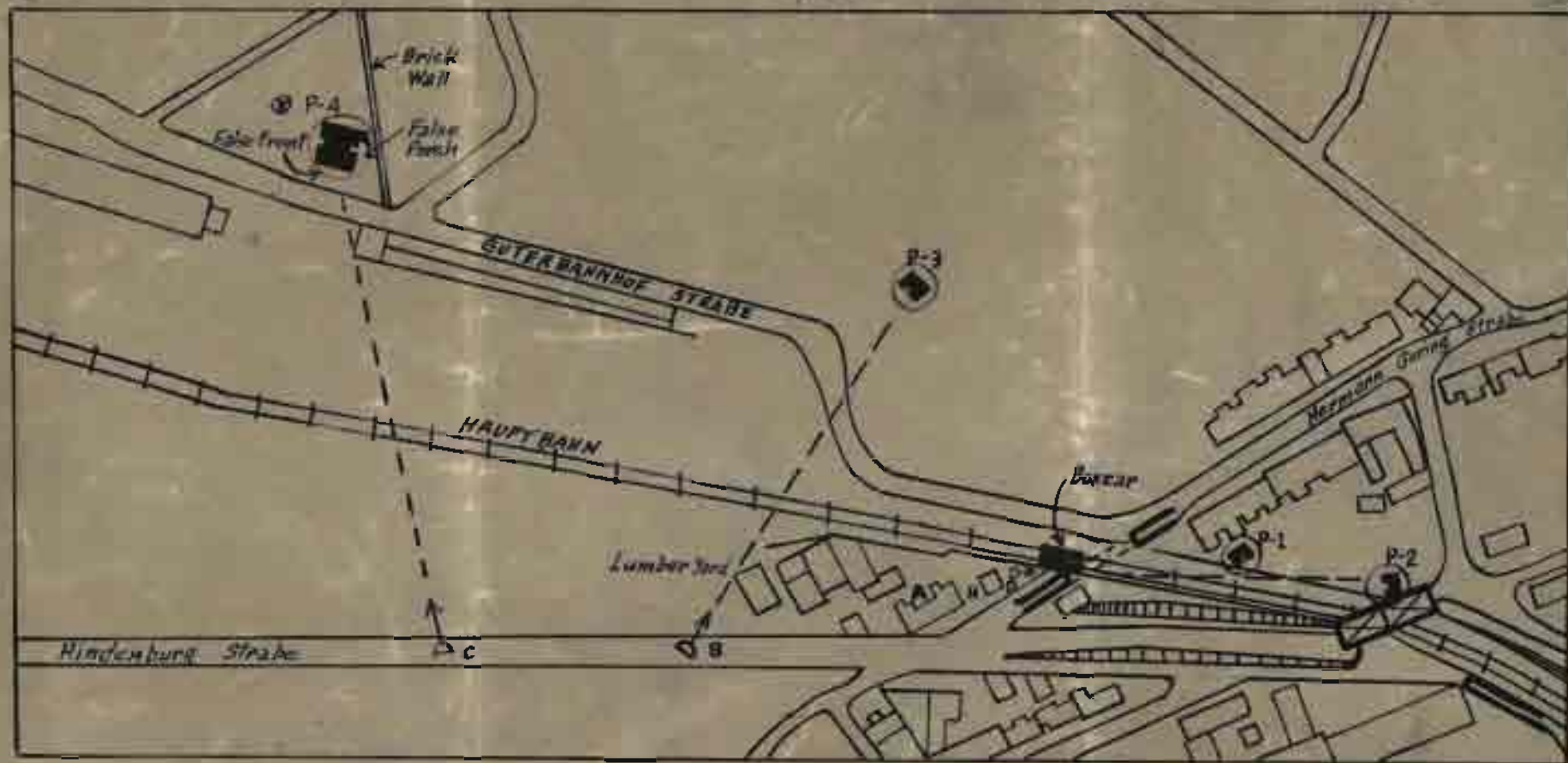


Sketch #4 to Accompany Situation No. 6

4 1/8

Partial OVERLAY
 from Town Plan
 Fraulautern, Germany

Enlarged to 1/2500 by 607 T.D. Bn.
 S-3 Section



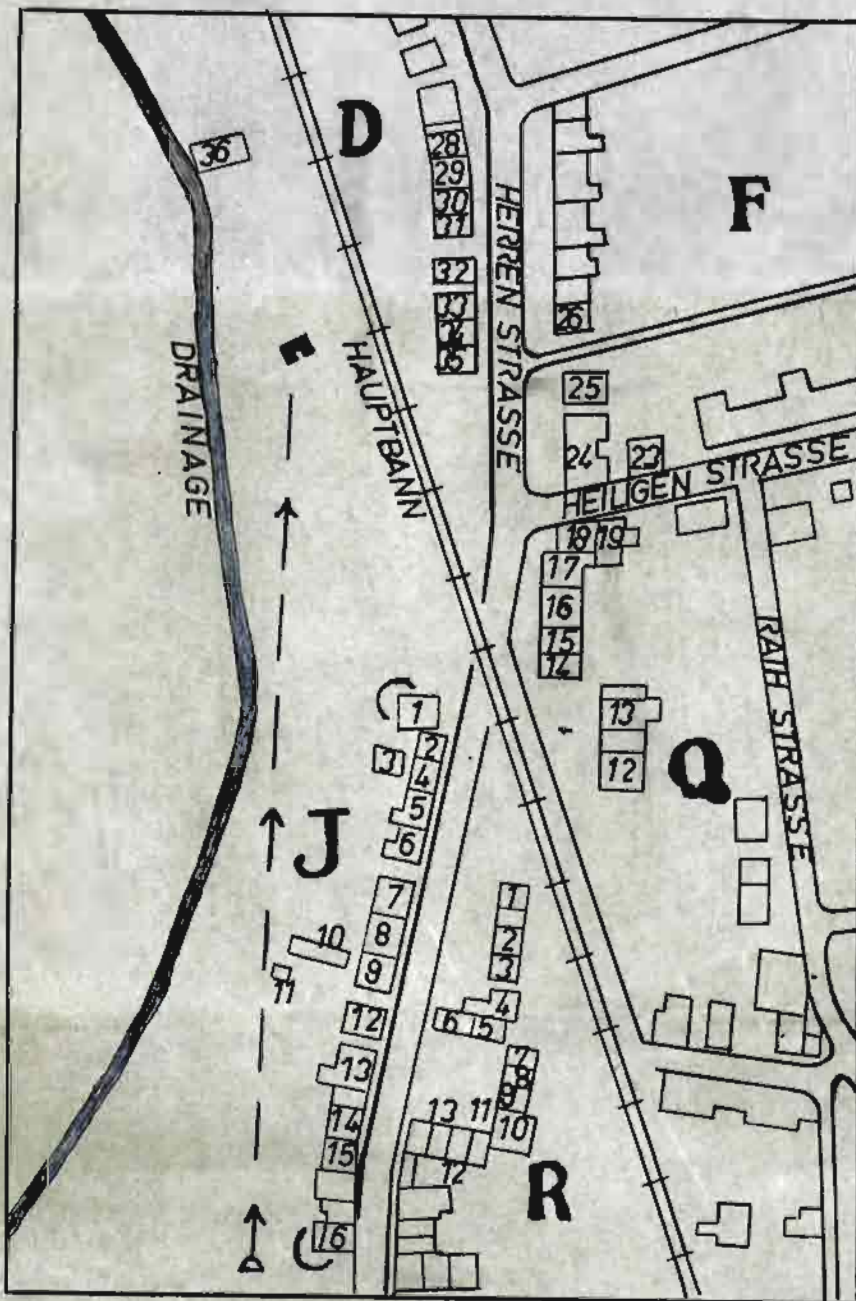
⊙ For more detail on P-4 see attached illustration.

LEGEND

- ⊙ - ENEMY PILLBOX
- D→ - TEMPORARY POS. of DESTROYER

J SA 923

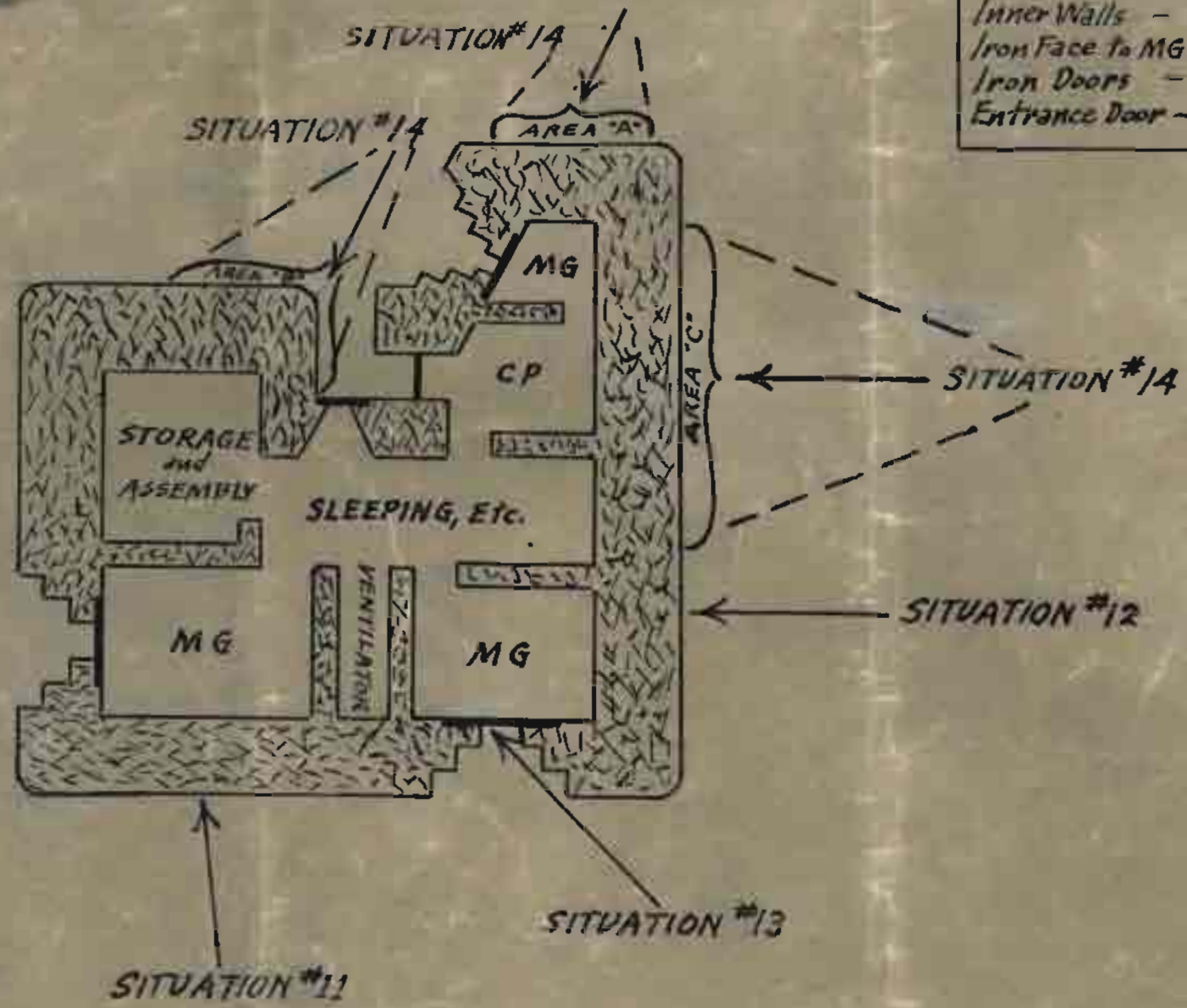
Partial OVERLAY
SAARLAUTERN, GERMANY
1/2500 (approx.)



SKETCH # 6
TO ACCOMPANY SITUATION NO. 10

TYPICAL PLAN of PILLBOXES in SAARLAUTERN AREA

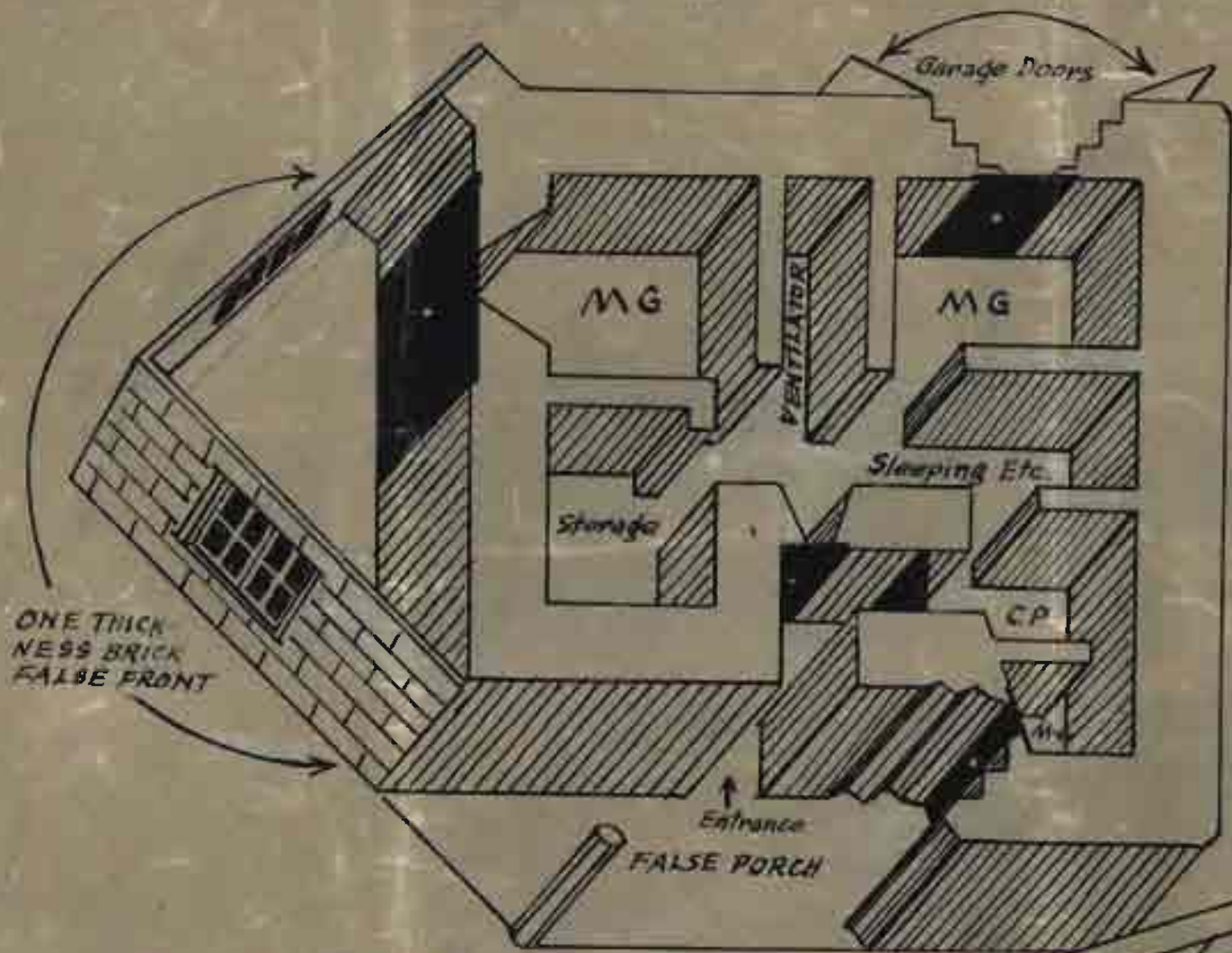
Outer Walls	-	6' Thick
Inner Walls	-	2' "
Iron Face to MG Pts	-	4' "
Iron Doors	-	1/2' "
Entrance Door	-	2' "



SKETCH #7

PILLBOX, Camouflaged as House (Isometric View)

GUTENRAHNHOF STRASSE



DIMENSIONS (APPROXIMATE)	
OVER ALL	40' x 40'
OUTER WALLS	6'
INNER WALLS	2'
IRON FACE to MG Ports	4"
INNER DOORS	1/2"
ENTRANCE DOOR	2"

HEAVY BRICK WALL