

ST. VITH

The 7th. Armored Division

in the

Battle of the Bulge

17 - 23 December 1944

A NARRATIVE AFTER ACTION REPORT

by

Donald P. Boyer, Jr.

7th ARMED DIV

DISPOSITIONS DAYLIGHT 23 Dec 44

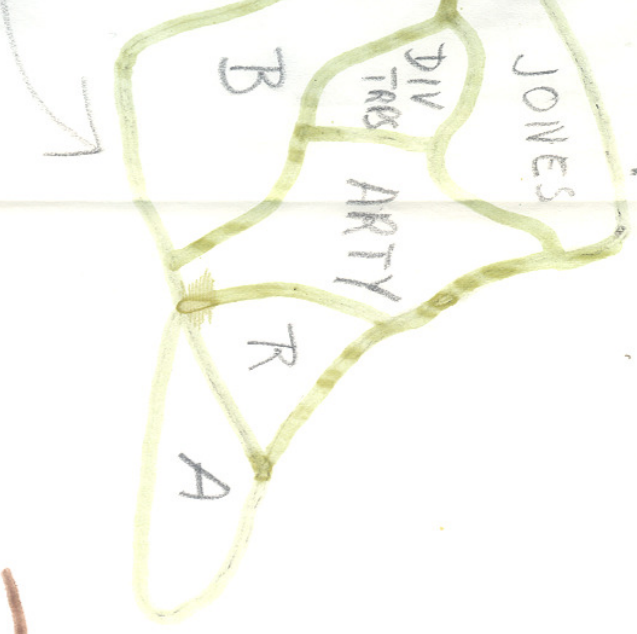
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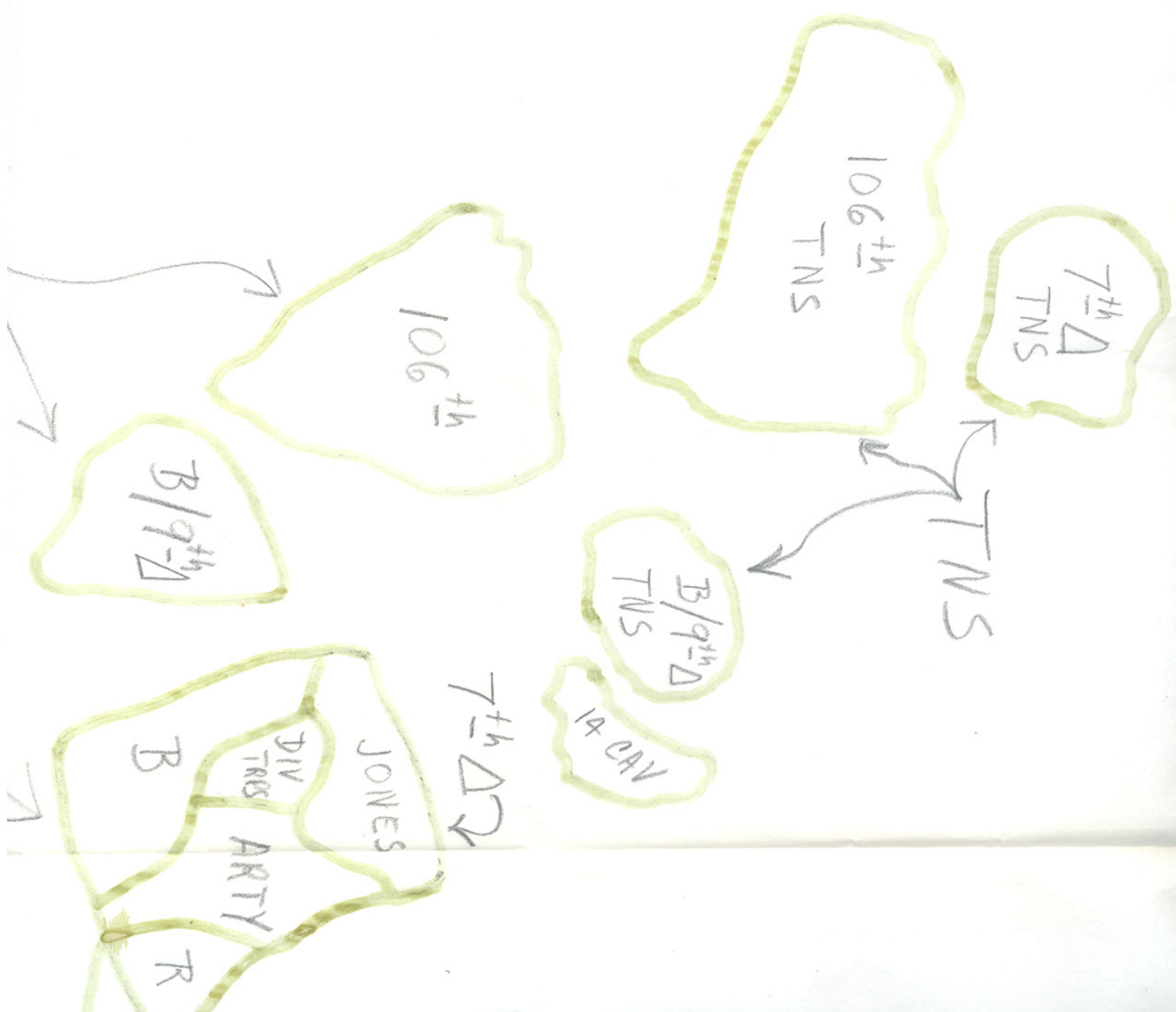
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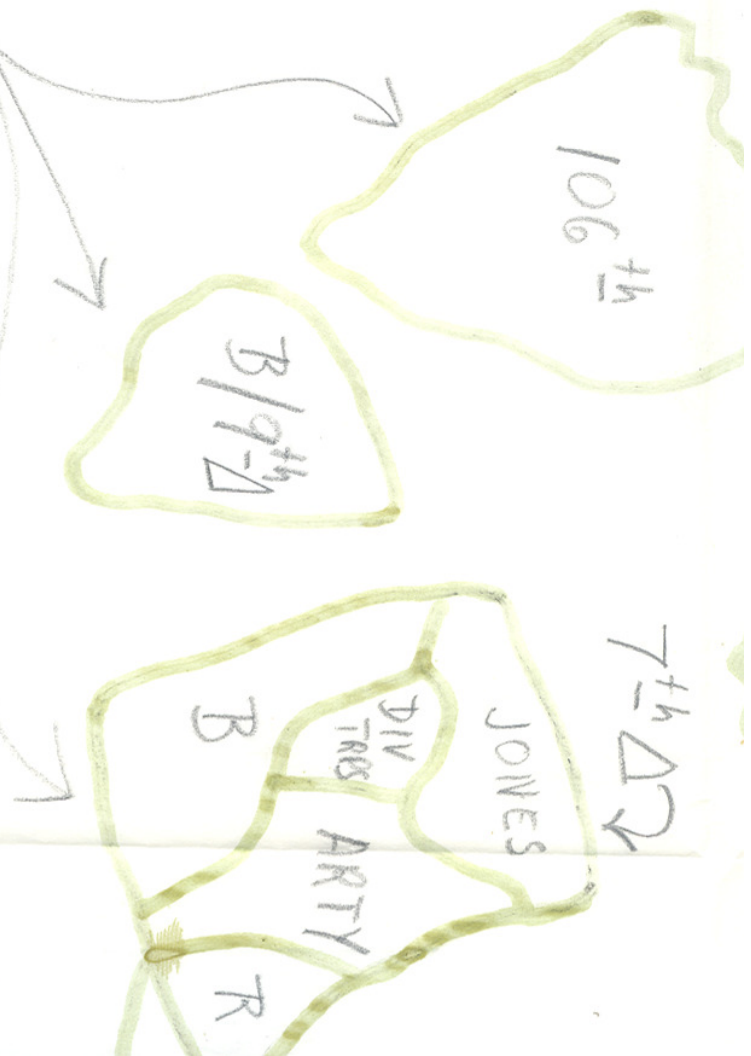


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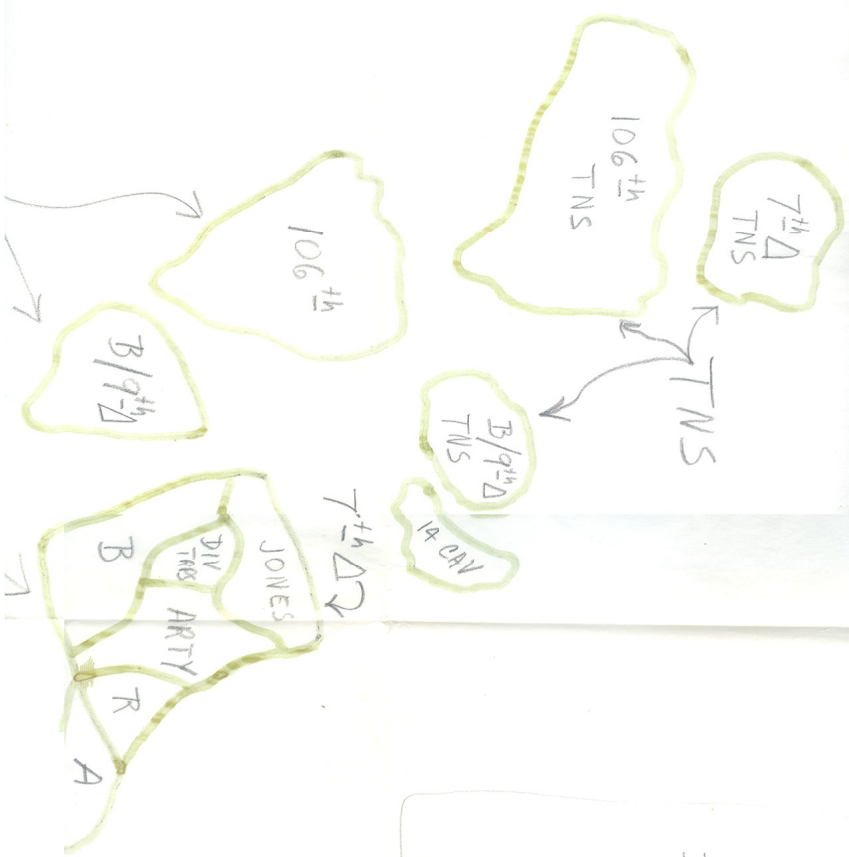
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7th ARMD DIV

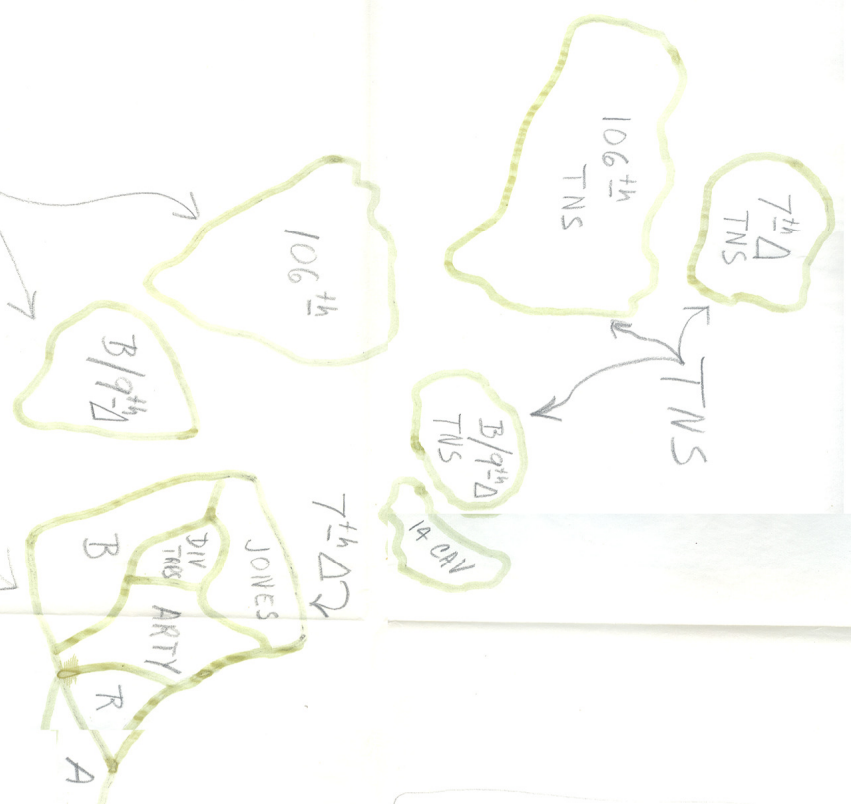
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-  Front Lines
-  Exit Routes (lettered)
-  Assembly Areas [∞]
-  After Withdrawal







COMBAT FILMS

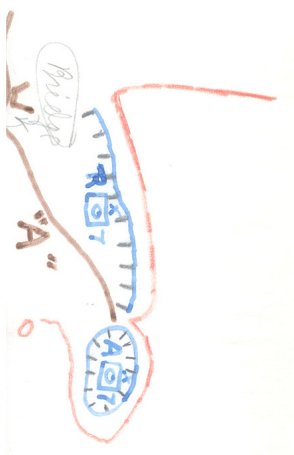
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7th ARMD DIV

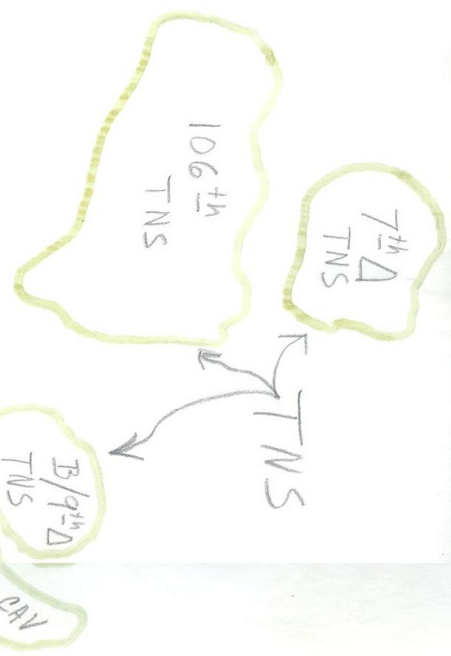
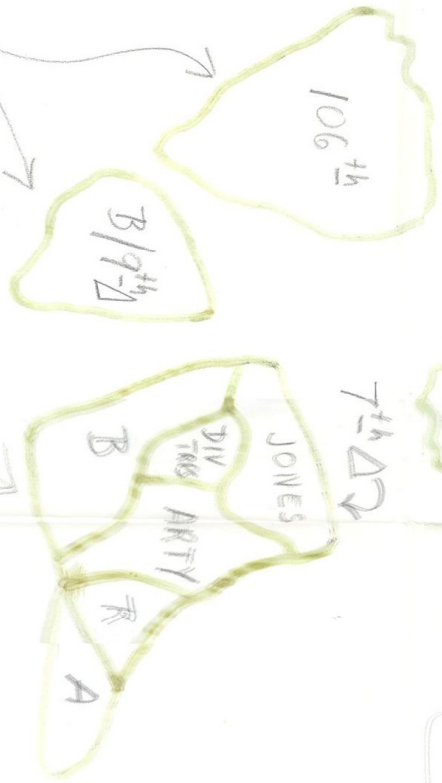
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-  After Withdrawal







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COMBAT
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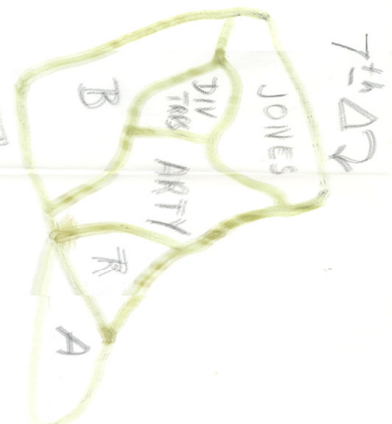
7th ARMD DIV

DISPOSITIONS DAYLIGHT 23 Dec 44

-  Front Lines
-  Exit Routes (Lettered)
-  Assembly Areas [∞]
-  After Withdrawal

40
+ 90

COMBAT
ELMS



7th ARMD DIV

DISPOSITIONS DAYLIGHT 23 Dec 44

- Front Lines
- Exit Routes (Lettered)
- Assembly Areas ∞
- After Withdrawal

Green Book
Boyer
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INTRODUCTION

ST. VITH, BELGIUM, is a name which always will kindle memories in the men of the 7th Armored Division — memories of the bitterest fighting we saw in the European Campaign since the outbreak of the war, coupled with heroic deeds by men of the 7th Armored Division. For six days the Germans hit us with "overwhelming odds", including a total of eight divisions and the "GROSS DEUTSCHLAND" (later identified as the "1st SS") Brigade.

ST. VITH

The 7th Armored Division
in the
Battle of the Bulge
17-23 December 1944

A NARRATIVE AFTER ACTION REPORT

by

Donald P. Boyer, Jr.
Major, Armored Infantry

The 7th Armored Division was the first armored division to be surrounded in the Battle of the Bulge. The 7th Armored Division was the only armored division to be surrounded in the Battle of the Bulge. The 7th Armored Division was the only armored division to be surrounded in the Battle of the Bulge.

What happened at St. Vith? The 7th Armored Division was surrounded at St. Vith. The 7th Armored Division was surrounded at St. Vith.

This Narrative After Action Report is an attempt to recount what did happen at St. Vith, which was held for six days by the men of all ranks of the 7th Armored Division against many forces who outnumbered the garrison by more than 4 to 1.

INTRODUCTION

ST. VITH, BELGIUM, is a name which always will kindle memories in the men of the 7th Armored Division -- memories of the bitterest fighting we saw in the European Campaign; memories of freezing weather, coupled with savage attacks by veteran Panzer and SS Panzer Divisions. For six days the Germans hit us with "everything in the book", including a total of eight Divisions and the "GROSS DEUTSCHLAND" (later identified as the "FUEHRER ESCORT") Brigade...

It was an epic stand - one which will not be forgotten by those of us who were there. Nor will we ever forget our many friends and "buddies" who didn't come out of ST. VITH! They died in their fox-holes as some Panther or Tiger tank blasted them with pointblank 88mm fire; they died when they were caught in the terrific artillery and "screaming meemie" barrages which swept our positions unceasingly; they died when their vehicles were ambushed on roads which were presumably "safe"; they died when locked in hand-to-hand combat! They were the men who stopped Von Rundstedt; they were the men who bought time with their lives -- time in which other Divisions could be shifted into position to our rear -- time in which other Divisions could arrive and prepare for the counter-attacks which finally "sealed off" The Bulge!

In the words of Mr. Ralph Ingersoll's controversial book, Top Secret: (pp. 270-271)

"Bastogne and St. Vith were the road centers the Germans had to have to support any drive strong enough to carry them across the Meuse. The story of the holding of Bastogne by the 101st Airborne Division and its subsequent relief by Patton's armies, is the history every newspaper reader knows.

"What newspapers did not tell was what happened back of St. Vith."

This Narrative After Action Report is an attempt to recount what did happen at ST. VITH, which was held for six days by the men of all ranks of the 7th Armored and supporting units against enemy forces who outnumbered the gallant defenders by more than 4 to 1.

While this report tells the story of those men who deserve so much of their country, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the debt which I owe to Miss Margaret Emerson, of the Historical Analysis Section, The Adjutant General's Office, Washington, D. C. Without her cooperation and assistance on innumerable occasions this report could not have been prepared. Also I wish to acknowledge the help which Mr. John C. Butler, of Historical Analysis, furnished in locating the original files of the various units.

To Mr. Ingersoll's Top Secret I am indebted for the quotation which accompanies the picture heading Chapter III; and to War Reports (Record of the Dispatches broadcast by BBC's War Correspondents with the Allied Expeditionary Force, 6 June 1944 - 5 May 1945), for the quotation with the picture preceding the APPENDIX.

Donald P. Bayer, Jr.
Major, Armored Infantry

22 July 1947

Romell P. Berger Jr.
Major, Armored Infantry

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Chapter I

NARRATIVE

REPORT



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ST. VITH

The 7th Armored Division
in the
Battle of the Bulge
17-23 December 1944

(A Narrative After Action Report)

1. INTRODUCTION:

"ON THE BELGIAN FRONT, Dec. 30 (AP) - They are all singing praise today for the soldiers of the Seventh Armored Division. . . It was the scrapping Seventh, slung swiftly into Belgium's side ten days ago, that put the brakes on the armored plunge and finally split the German penetration, forcing the enemy to fight a two-way battle. The boys sat grimly there alone in the St. Vith sector, taking a terrific mauling from a half dozen German divisions - denying them the use of that vital road junction, keeping them partly cut off from supplies and never letting them relax a moment to fight elsewhere."

That was the brief story as it appeared in the newspapers during those first dark days of what became known as the "Battle of the Bulge". Behind those few lines lay six days of bitter fighting in the ARDENNES, where the 7th Armored Division checked and held the center of Von Rundstedt's counter-offensive until other divisions could be shifted to repel this major threat to the Allied Armies.

For six days -- the 17th through the 23d of December 1944 -- the men of the 7th Armored Division denied to the Germans the key communications center of ST. VITH, BELGIUM, in a masterful fight against overwhelming odds -- a battle which has been described by General Marshall as "The splendid stand of the 7th Armored Division at St. Vith."¹

¹"The Ardennes battle deserves a prominent place in the history of the U.S. Army. The splendid stand of the 7th Armored Division at St. Vith, the tenacity of the 101st Airborne and elements of the 10th Armored at Bastogne, and the numerous examples of superb fighting qualities shown by the troops of other units were in the finest American tradition."
(Biennial Report of the Chief of Staff of the United States Army, July 1, 1943, to June 30, 1945, p. 44)

2. DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION:

a. General Situation --

When Germany unleashed its powerful assault on 16 December, the 7th Armored Division was in the North far from the target area. In position astride the Dutch-German border in the vicinity of HEBLEN, HOLLAND, and GEILENKIRCHEN, GERMANY, the Division was preparing for the forthcoming Ninth Army drive across the ROER River to the RHINE. In reserve for XIII Corps, the 7th Armored had two combat commands training and rehearsing for coordinated attacks to clear all enemy forces from the West banks of the ROER in the Corps sector, while the third Combat Command was West of the WURM river in HOLLAND, undergoing an extensive maintenance program. Division Artillery was in position South and West of GERDONSWEILER, reinforcing the fires of the artillery of the 84th Infantry Division.

As VIII Corps, far to the South, reeled under the heavy onslaught of two Panzer Armies on 16 December, the need for additional troops became acute. The 7th Armored Division was designated by Twelfth Army Group for immediate movement to VIII Corps Area, First Army, ² vicinity of BASTOGNE, BELGIUM. Warning instructions were received by the Division at 1730, 16 December, and shortly thereafter Brig. Gen. Bruce C. Clarke, Commanding General of CG-B, accompanied by the Assistant G-3, set out for BASTOGNE to report to Maj. Gen. Troy H. Middleton, Commanding General VIII Corps, and to learn the Division's mission. ³

² Report by the Supreme Commander to the Combined Chiefs of Staff on the Operations in Europe of the Allied Expeditionary Force, 6 June 1944 to 8 May 1945, p. 75.

³ After Action Report; 7th Armored Division, Period 1-31 December 1944 - "The Battle of St. Vith", p. 1.

Later instructions changed the assembly area to generally between VIELSALM and ST. VITH, BELGIUM,⁴ and orders were prepared to move the Division in multiple column over two routes (WEST and EAST). The West Route was through HEERLEN, HERVE, VERVIERS, STAVELOT, TROIS FONTS, and VIELSALM; while the East Route extended through AACHEN, EUPEN, MALMEDY, LIGNEUVILLE, and RECHT.⁵ The first unit to cross the IP on the West Route was the 87th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron at 0430, 17 December,⁶ followed by CC-B, CC-A, 814th Tank Destroyer Battalion, Division Headquarters (Main), 33d Armored Engineer Battalion, and Division Trains. CC-R led off on the East Route at 0800, 17 December,⁷ followed in turn by Division Tactical Headquarters, Division Artillery, and 203d Anti-aircraft Artillery Battalion.

From the very beginning the Division ran into trouble. Twice higher headquarters postponed the time of initial movement, and the last postponement arrived at Division Headquarters so late that the 87th Cavalry Squadron already was on the road in march column. For an hour the Squadron had to sit on the side of the road, but fortunately the Luftwaffe was not bombing the area.⁸ When the final march routes and road clearances did arrive at Division, there was not sufficient time for proper dissemination and many company commanders did not know their destination until they arrived in the ST. VITH-VIELSALM area. Also there was insufficient time to properly post the routes with guides, and the MP's were dropped along the routes almost as the lead unit arrived at the control point.

⁴ Loc. cit.

⁵ Ibid., Overlay No. 1, "Routes to Vielsalm-St. Vith Area".

⁶ After Action Report: 87th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, Month of December 1944, p. 2.

⁷ After Action Report: CC-R, 7th Armored Division, Month of December 1944, p. 6.

Thus the 7th Armored Division found itself moving South during the early morning hours of 17 December, "black-out", over a strange route, and not knowing the reason for the move from Ninth Army Area to First Army. Comments among the officers and men ranged from a truthful "We are in the dark", to speculations that perhaps General Patton and the Third Army had obtained a break-through and were racing for the RHINE.⁹ Adding to the uncertainty of the situation was the weather which was overcast and bitter cold. Daylight brought no relief after the bitterness of the night, and the gray, overcast skies -- accompanied by flurries of snow -- presaged another freezing week with no sunshine and poor aerial observation.

The absolute lack of G-2 information prevented the Division from briefing its units on what to expect,¹⁰ and the seriousness of the situation which was to face the 7th Armored was not to be known by many units until German 88mm shells and machine gun fire were to land on their marching columns, or until they found their routes of advance cut by German ambush parties.

⁸ This paragraph is based upon a personal interview of Maj. Boyer with Lt. Col. C. E. Leydecker, former G-3, 7th Armored Division.

⁹ See APPENDIX "B", "Narrative Account of Action, 38th Armored Infantry Battalion", p. 160.

¹⁰ Personal interview of Maj. Boyer with Maj. Gen. R. W. Hasbrouck, former Commanding General; Colonel J. L. Ryan, former CO/CC-R, later Chief of Staff; and Lt. Col. Leydecker, former G-3 -- all of the 7th Armored Division.

b. Events of 17 December:

At 0400 Brig. Gen. Bruce C. Clarke, Commanding General of CC-B, accompanied by Maj. Moeller and Maj. New, Assistants to the G-3 and G-2, reported to VIII Corps Headquarters in BASTOGNE (P5558).

There they were informed that the Germans had launched strong attacks during the previous day, had secured some penetrations, and that the 7th Armored Division was to assist the 106th Infantry Division which apparently had some units cut off -- employment of the 7th Armored was to be on the initiative of the Commanding General, Brig. Gen. R. W. Hasbrouck.

Gen. Clarke then set out for ST. VITH (P8588), arriving there about 1030 when he reported to Maj. Gen. Allan W. Jones, commanding the 106th Infantry Division. By that time the known situation in the area of the 106th was:

(a) Two regiments of the 106th Division (the 422d and 423d Infantry) had been cut off in the region of the SCHNEE EIFEL, East and Southeast of SCHONBERG (P9588). The other regiment (the 424th Infantry) on the South had been hard hit.

(b) German troops occupied HEUEM (P9388) between ST. VITH and SCHONBERG; WINTERSPELT (P9180) on the Southeast had been captured.

(c) To the North the Corps Cavalry which had held the LOSHEIM GAP (vic LO396) was retiring under heavy attack.

(d) CC-B/9th Armored Division had been attached to the 106th Division and was attacking to retake WINTERSPELT.

Gen. Clarke was requested by Gen. Jones to launch an attack East from ST. VITH to take and hold SCHONBERG, so as to provide an escape corridor for the surrounded Combat Teams. Pending the arrival of his Combat Command and other troops of the 7th Armored Division, Gen. Clarke prepared plans for this attack.

About Noon, Gen. Hasbrouck arrived at BASTOGNE where he reported to Maj. Gen. Troy H. Middleton, Corps Commander, who informed him of the orders given to Gen. Clarke and of as much of the hazy situation as was then known. After this briefing, Gen. Hasbrouck set out for ST. VITH by way of VIELSALM (P7089) where the Tactical CP of the 7th Armored was to be set up.

The men of the 7th Armored Division, however still did not know of the critical situation into which they were advancing. None of them realized that the Panzer columns of two German Panzer Armies had crashed

through the American lines and were racing Westward --- none of them were aware that even then the 1st SS Panzer Corps was striking for MALMEDY (K7804) in a bold attempt to seize the vital MALMEDY--EUPEN highway before reinforcements could be shifted to the threatened area.

CC-R which was leading the Division's East column reached its assembly area in the vicinity of RECHT (P8094) without incident. Yet the Division Artillery, which was following CC-R with only a short time interval, found the route cut by enemy troops several miles South of MALMEDY in the vicinity of the road junction at P8102, where a German column apparently proceeding West through WAIMES (K8403) had reached the MALMEDY--ST. VITH highway. ¹¹

The entire situation on the 17th of December --- both as to the location of friendly troops and of the enemy --- was most vague and fluid. Accurate information simply was not available.

¹¹ The attack order of the 1st SS Panzer Division ("LEIBSTANDARTE ADOLF HITLER"), a copy of which was later captured, prescribed the following axes of advance:

a. Main effort --- 1st SS Panzer Regiment (reinforced): BULLINGEN--LIGNEUVILLE--STAVELOT--LA GLEIZE--STOUMONT--AYWAILLE.

b. Secondary effort --- 1st SS Panzer Grenadier Regiment (reinforced): AMBLEVE--RECHT--WANNE--TROIS PONTS--BASSE BODEUX--WERBOMONT.



Another instance indicating the lack of knowledge regarding the enemy was the "head-on" collision at dusk East of ST. VITH (road bend at P880884) between a medium tank company (A/31) of CC-B and a German infantry column accompanied by tanks. A short but fierce fight at point blank range ensued during which 50 German infantrymen were killed or wounded, 3 German tanks disabled, and our forces escaped without casualties. The Germans fled leaving our tank company in possession of the ground.

Meanwhile Gen. Hasbrouck had arrived at ST. VITH about 1600.

En route from VIELSALM, the congestion on the roads caused by units withdrawing to the West had convinced him that the troops necessary for an attack Eastward from ST. VITH could never reach their line of departure prior to dark, which occurred at 1645 at this time of year. On arrival at the School House in ST. VITH, which housed the CP of the 106th Division and where CC-B was setting up its CP, he so informed Gen. Jones and Gen. Clarke.

German tanks could be heard to the East of ST. VITH, and enemy patrols were even then contacting the few Engineers (remnants

of the 168th Combat Engineer Battalion, and Hq. & Sv. Co., 81st Combat Engineer Battalion) which were the only troops available to Gen. Jones for the defense of this vital road and rail center. It was most apparent that unless a defense was established East of the town and east, there was grave danger of the Germans gaining possession of this important hub of road and rail network. And the Germans wanted ST. VITH badly, for it was the only rail center between the RHINE and the ARDENNES capable of serving as a rail depot for the support of the entire counter-offensive.

Gen. Jones remarked that he had thrown in his "last chips", whereupon Gen. Hasbrouck agreed that the 7th Armored Division would assume responsibility for the defense of ST. VITH from the East and the North. He then confirmed orders which Gen. Clarke already had issued to the 87th Cavalry Squadron and the 38th Armored Infantry Battalion, both of which became a part of CC-B. Up to this time only three units of the 7th Armored had been able to reach the town because of the crowded road conditions between VIELSALM--POTEAU--ST. VITH over which CC-B was advancing. These were one medium tank company (A/31), one cavalry recon troop (B/87) -- both of which had gone into position

on the ST. VITH—SCHONBERG Road to the East (vic P873885) — and one armored infantry company (B/23), which was covering the town on the Southeast (vic P862864).

It was only with the greatest of difficulty that CC-B was able to bring up its units, and all through the night Combat Command worked feverishly to build up the defenses of ST. VITH. It was impossible to bring forward a complete battalion, and companies had to be disposed piece-meal as they arrived. By midnight CC-B had completed its defenses with the 87th Cavalry Squadron (-B) on the North; the 38th Armored Infantry Battalion (-C), with A/31, B/87, B/23 attached, on the East and Southeast; and holding the 31st Tank Battalion (-A) and the 23d Armored Infantry Battalion (-B) in position on the high ground West of ST. VITH near RODET, also called SART-lez-ST. VITH (P8194). The Engineer troops (168th and H&S/31st) had been reformed into a Provisional Engineer Company and were attached to the 38th Armored Infantry.

The cutting of the Division's East route several miles below MALMEDY had caused all the Division Artillery to cross over to the Division's West route. Some units were able to detour directly West

from MALMEDY to STAVELOT (K7101), while others -- because of their position further to the rear of the column -- were forced by the congestion caused in STAVELOT by retiring units to almost retrace their route and detour by way of VERVIERS (K6823) and SPA (K6712).

On the West route traffic had been greatly delayed since Noon on the 17th due to the number of troops withdrawing to new positions. By nightfall the congestion was so great that the entire column was bottled up and brought to a stand-still on the road, extending from POTEAU through VIELSALM, TROIS PONTS, and STAVELOT.

Although the Division Artillery was still snarled in this traffic jam, one armored artillery battalion was available to the 7th Armored Division and constituted the sole artillery support of the Division until the afternoon of the 18th, when the Division Artillery finally was able to close in the ST. VITH--VIELSALM area. This was the 275th Armored Field Artillery Battalion (Separate), assigned to VIII Corps and in position near OBER EMMELS (P8290). They had remained in place despite the fact that no friendly troops were between them and the enemy, but had shifted their batteries so as to form road blocks with their guns sited for direct fire. When the 7th Armored Division started

to arrive at ST. VITH, the Commanding Officer of the 275th, Lt. Col.

Clay, offered his battalion's services to Gen. Clarke.

CC-R had no more than closed into its assembly area at RECHT (P8094), when a rumor drifted in that the Germans had occupied LIGNEUVILLE (P8099) -- less than 5 miles to the North --about 30 minutes after the Combat Command Headquarters had passed through the town. A quick reconnaissance confirmed the fact that the Germans were in the town, and the Commanding Officer of the 17th Tank Battalion (the only troops remaining under CC-R) was informed of the known situation. A decision was made to hold RECHT for the night, although the tanks were without infantry support, thereby protecting the Division from the North and giving the rest of the Division time in which to occupy their positions.

At 2045 the driver of the 7th Armored's Chief of Staff, Col. Church Matthews, arrived at CC-R's CP on foot and very winded. He reported that while driving from ST. VITH to RECHT, he and Col. Matthews had been ambushed by a German tank on the road East of RECHT. They had both dismounted and had become separated in the ensuing confusion. He did not know what had happened to the Chief of Staff.

CC-R directed the establishment of road blocks around RECHT, using one medium tank company (B/17), the Recon Platoon, and one light tank platoon (1/D/17), while the rest of the 17th Tank Battalion was held in mobile reserve South of the town (vic P8193). Later in the night, a medium tank company (C/17) was brought into RECHT to outpost the town.

CC-A, with the 40th Tank Battalion and the 48th Armored Infantry Battalion, had arrived at its assembly area around BEHD (P7681) at 1905, where it was designated as the Division Reserve. Due to the gravity of the situation East of ST. VITH and the increasing uneasiness over the RECHT area, the Commanding Officer, CC-A, was instructed at midnight to report to the Division CP in VIELSALM at 0700 next morning (18 December), by which time the situation was expected to have clarified. Also CC-A was alerted to move on 30 minutes notice any time after 0700 next morning.

During the afternoon CC-B/9th Armored Division, under the command of Brig. Gen. William M. Hoge, attacking to retake WINTERSPELT (P9180) had found the enemy West of the OUR River in the town of STEINEBRUCH (P8983). Attacking with its 14th Tank Battalion, CC-B/9th Armored had

driven the Germans back across the OUR. Passing the 27th Armored Infantry Battalion through the tanks, Gen. Hoge had then attacked ELCHERATH (P8982) and captured the town taking 100 prisoners from the 164th Volks Grenadier Regiment of the 62d Volks Grenadier Division. The 14th Tank Battalion was then ordered to attack in the direction of WINTERSPELT at 1530 to seize and occupy the high ground to the East. This attack was halted when Gen. Jones (CG/106th Div) informed Gen. Hoge that he could continue the attack but that CC-B/9th Armored would have to withdraw across the OUR that night.

After dark, CC-B/9th Armored broke contact with the enemy and moved back across the OUR to occupy a defensive position between WEPPELLER (P9084) and AUEL (P8880), with the line held from North to South by D/89th Cavalry Squadron, a Provisional Infantry Company, and A/27th Armored Infantry. In reserve were the 14th Tank Battalion, A/811th Tank Destroyer Battalion, and B/482d Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion, with the rest of the 27th Armored Infantry. Gen. Hoge's CP was established in BREITFELD (P8786). By their aggressive attacks during the afternoon of the 17th, CC-B/9th Armored had forestalled any efforts of the Germans to take ST. VITH from the South.



A typical tank-infantry attack forming
in a small Belgian village during the
ARDENNES counter-offensive, January 1945
(42d Tk Bn/11th Armd Div near COMFOGNE)

c. Events of 18 December:

At 0200 the Germans launched the first of the bitter attacks which were to be hurled at the 7th Armored Division during the next 6 days. Its objective was RECHT, and CC-R was hit from the Northeast and East. Every officer and man of CC-R's Headquarters was engaged in repelling this attack, and the only piece of equipment not used was the CP's main radio half-track.

The attack gained in intensity as mortar, machine gun, and semi-automatic weapons fire was placed on the town, and German tanks started moving in shooting flares so as to silhouette the American tanks. Without infantry protection, heavy tank losses were destined to be inevitable although C/17 was taking a steady toll of the German infantry who were attempting to close with their Panzerfausts. At 0245 the Commanding Officer of CC-R directed a withdrawal of the Headquarters to POTEAU (P7780), 3 miles to the Southwest, while the 17th Tank Battalion was to take up positions South of RECHT (vic P8193) from where they could place commanding fire on the town and along the road from RECHT to POTEAU. This position also would enable the 17th Tank Battalion to cover CC-B's Northwest flank.

This initial attack by the Germans, while successful in gaining the town of RECHT, became so disorganized as a result of CC-R's strong stand that the enemy was unable to exploit his gain until he had regrouped after daylight -- giving the Division more time in which to get set for the attacks which were to follow. At the time there was no identification of the enemy units which had attacked RECHT, but by nightfall of the 13th, they had revealed themselves as the 1st SS Panzer Grenadier Regiment of the 1st SS Panzer Division.

Stopped by CC-R, the Germans continued their "squeeze play" on the ST. VITH area when at 0800 they hit CC-B with a well-coordinated infantry attack from two directions, supported by heavy tanks. From the North the attack moved in on HUNNINGEN (P8489) and from the East against the lines in the vicinity of P8788. HUNNINGEN was lost temporarily, but an aggressive counter-attack was mounted by CC-B using 3 medium tank companies and 1 tank destroyer company (B/31; and 2 M Cos/14 & A/311, borrowed from CC-B/9th Armd) which recaptured the cross-roads at a cost to the Germans of 7 tanks and 1 armored car destroyed, with over 100 enemy infantry killed. On the East a second counter-attack was mounted

by CC-B with two medium tank companies (A & C/31) which restored the line and destroyed 1 German tank and 1 75mm assault gun. (Only 1 armored car was lost by CC-B during this entire action.) Again at 1130 the Germans attacked the East flank with about 2 platoons of infantry supported by a "Ferdinand" (88mm AG), but withdrew after losing 20 killed and having the assault gun knocked out and burned.

Later in the morning the Germans pushed out from REGHT to the Southwest and captured POTEAU (P7780). As many as 7 tanks were observed by the 17th Tank Battalion when the Germans moved to the Southwest, but the enemy armor remained at too great a range to be effectively engaged by the tanks of CC-R. (Just before daylight, C/17 destroyed a Mk IV or Mk V, when the Germans attempted to attack South from REGHT towards ST. VITH.)

The drive of the Germans to the Southwest was extremely serious for it placed the enemy astride the ST. VITH--VIELSALM Road, the main axis of communication and supply for CC-B/7th Armored and for CC-B/9th Armored. To remove this threat which would have forced the evacuation of ST. VITH, CC-A was ordered at 1010 to move from BEHD (P768L)

and attack to the North to retake POTEAU.

The route of CC-A led through ST. VITH which was then under heavy attack. Mortar concentrations were being placed on all road and road junctions entering and leaving the town as well as fire from many German 88's, which meant that CC-A's marching columns would make an excellent target. The situation was urgent, however, and CC-A could not wait for the enemy fire to subside and moved on through ST. VITH.

Immediately after capturing POTEAU, the Germans must have recognized its value for they started digging in their tanks and infantry along the woods to the North and East overlooking the cross-roads and the open ground surrounding it. They also occupied the houses in the little town with infantry, supported by several assault guns. In its initial attack at 1320, CC-A forced its way into POTEAU with a task force of infantry and tanks. The Germans immediately brought down an intense rain of fire from their tanks, assault guns, machine guns, mortars, and all other weapons they could employ. The fire was too heavy, and our task force was forced to withdraw to cover South of the cross-roads. It was then 1600, and Gen. Hasbrouck dispatched a message to the Commanding

Officer, CC-A, as follows:

"Imperative you seize POTEAU
this PM and hold it!"

Just as dark fell CC-A launched its second attack, and this time the cross-roads was secured. Covered by direct tank fire from the 40th Tank Battalion, the infantry of the 48th Armored Infantry Battalion dashed into town and cleared out the enemy, house by house. It was bitter fighting in the dark, but our infantry were aided by the light of 3 burning German tanks which had been destroyed by CC-A's tanks. The Germans did not surrender, nor did they run -- they stayed and fought it out until they were killed or blown up. Throughout the night there were little patrol actions in the POTEAU area, but CC-A's hold was never seriously threatened during the rest of the 18th.

The stand put up by the SS troops of the "ADOLF HITLER" Division -- for so they turned out to be upon the identification of the only two prisoners taken as from the 7th Co/1st SS Pz Gren Regt -- was an excellent index of the caliber of the troops facing the 7th Armored Division. Vigorous, well-trained, in splendid physical condition, superbly equipped -- and imbued with the idea that nothing could beat them, these SS troops

displayed

^ initiative and skill which stamped them as being the equal of the best divisions which Germany had employed at any time since 1939.

East of ST. VITH the Germans launched their strongest attack yet against the 7th Armored, when for three hours from 1445 to 1745 they attacked and reattacked the positions of the 38th Armored Infantry in the woods South of the ST. VITH--SCHONBERG Road. This assault was launched by an estimated battalion of infantry supported by 2 tanks and 2 assault guns. At the same time direct fire was placed on our positions by 2 tanks and 6 assault guns firing from the vicinity of WALLERODE (P8890). Initial penetrations were secured, but while A/31 engaged the tanks attacking with the infantry, C/31 from the North flank took the tanks and assault guns at WALLERODE under fire. By nightfall 3 Mk IV's had been destroyed and 6 armored cars, all of which were observed burning, while 1 assault gun was damaged. Then the infantry and dismounted recon troopers launched an infantry counter-attack, which after vicious hand-to-hand fighting succeeded in restoring the line and destroying 1 other assault gun.

The reaction of CC-B to this afternoon attack was characteristic of all the Division's fighting during the ST. VITH action, from 17-23 December. Reserves to counter threats were non-existent; to strengthen one portion of the line, another portion had to be weakened. When penetrations were secured, a medium tank company (C/31) and one armored infantry company (C/23) -- the only unengaged troops¹² -- were shifted to aid the 38th Armored Infantry. Before the following morning, however, they had been withdrawn and placed in the line on the North where an attack was threatening from that direction.

Between the attacks on the Eastern approaches to ST. VITH, one of the armored cars of B/87 knocked out and burned a Mk VI "Tiger". The German tank had approached the lines on the Northwest near the juncture of A/38 and B/87, and then turned Northward towards HUNNINGEN. The armored car which was in position just behind the front line, slipped out of concealment and started up the trail behind the "Tiger", accelerating in

¹² B/31 had gone into the lines near HUNNINGEN after the morning attack, and at 1300, A/23 was attached to the 38th AIB and placed in the line North of the ST. VITH-SCHONBERG Road, relieving B/87. "B" Trp was recommitted in the afternoon counter-attack.

order to close before the German could traverse his gun to the rear.

Suddenly the armored car pumped in 3 rounds of 37mm, and the Mk VI

lumbered to a halt, bursting into flames after an explosion inside the tank.

In addition to their losses in armored vehicles, the German infantry took heavy casualties during the attacks against the Eastern zone of CC-B. At first daylight on the next morning, 19 December, more than 268 dead Germans were counted in front of the positions of B/38, B/87, and the Provisional Engineer Company alone.

The pressure against ST. VITH was maintained from all directions, and while CC-A and CC-B were fighting on the North, and CC-B in the East, CC-B/9th Armored was under almost constant attack on the South. Starting in mid-morning, the 62d Volks Grenadier Division with a force consisting of at least two battalions and 10 to 15 tanks launched a coordinated attack which turned CC-B/9th Armored out of its positions at WEPPELLER and threatened STEINEBRUCH. Faced by ever-increasing pressure, Gen. Hoge was forced to shorten his line by withdrawing to a ridge North and West of STEINEBRUCH, extending through RODER-HARDT (P8683), DREIHUTTEN (P8884)

and the cross-roads at P8886.

When CC-R withdrew to POTEAU after the attack on RECHT during the early morning hours of the 18th of December, the road beyond POTEAU was found to be terrifically jammed with vehicles of various units which had been in the area before the German counter-offensive was launched. These vehicles were now trying to move West and had run into units of the 7th Armored Division moving East. Realizing that the traffic jam must be reduced before daylight if a catastrophe was to be averted, all personnel of CC-R's Headquarters were put to work on traffic control, and the Combat Command assumed direction of all traffic from POTEAU through PETIT-THIER (P7491) and VILLE-du-BOIS (P7289). By daylight some semblance of order had been restored, and the traffic had begun to move rather regularly. At 0720, the vehicles of CC-R's Headquarters -- at the rear of the now disappearing traffic jam -- cleared POTEAU, and at the same moment enemy fire fell on the cross-roads.

By 0905, CC-R had established its Headquarters in PETIT-THIER.

For all practical purposes it was a Headquarters without any troops, for the 17th Tank Battalion was fighting to the South of RECHT and was

separated from CC-R by the enemy who later in the morning pushed through and captured POTEAU. During the morning additional troops were attached to CC-R, including an armored infantry company (C/38), an armored engineer company (C/33) and a tank destroyer platoon (1/B/814). The armored infantry company was dispatched to the 17th Tank Battalion, where it arrived about 1600 after a round-about march through COMMANSTER (P7685), HINDERHAUSEN (P7987), and RODT (P8189).

The engineer company and the tank destroyer platoon were kept as the nucleus around which was built one of the most aggressive forces in the entire Division -- temporarily known as TASK FORCE ALBRIGHT, and later as TASK FORCE "NAVAJO". This little force was placed in position astride the road between PETIT-THIER and POTEAU at the road junction at P745915, where from time to time it was augmented by other units of squad size or smaller who were "lost" and unable to rejoin their parent outfit. By nightfall there were men from some 10 different battalions in TASK FORCE "NAVAJO" which by then was equipped with 2 TD's and 6 tanks or assault guns, plus 1 towed anti-tank gun.

The early morning hours of the 18th were ones of exasperation and anxiety for the Division Artillery. They still were crawling along unfamiliar roads congested to overflowing with traffic moving Westward, some of which failed to exercise any sense of road discipline. As the last units passed through STAVELOT, they came under machine gun and mortar fire from advance German units which had seized positions on the high ground dominating the town. One battery of the 203d Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion (Automatic Weapons - Self Propelled), swiftly swung into firing positions and with their quadruple-mounted caliber .50's and automatic 37's pumped a hail of fire into the enemy positions, neutralizing their fire, and setting the nearby houses ablaze. Under the covering fire of Battery "D", the rest of the column escaped Southward out of danger.

Meanwhile the Germans had brought up several direct fire weapons and were firing on a railroad bridge covering the road South, hoping to knock it out and thus cut off the antiaircraft battery. The battery was forced to withdraw to the North, and during the withdrawal lost 2 vehicles when direct hits were scored on them. It then detoured to the Division area by way of SPA (K6712), THEUX (K6417), LOUVEIGN (K5616), AYWAILLE (K5410),

and SAMREE (P5081).

The Division Artillery column, saved by the prompt action of D/203 at STAVELOT, closed in the vicinity of VIELSALM by Noon, 18 December, and that evening the artillery battalions were occupying firing positions near VILLE-du-BOIS (P7289).

During the day strong reconnaissance elements of the enemy slipped South of the defenders of ST. VITH and sped Westward, attempting to turn Northward through the area occupied by the Trains of the 7th Armored Division. There the Germans ran into a Trains road block at P480772, South of LA ROCHE (P4678), suffered 9 casualties, and were forced to withdraw. This road block was manned by a AAA section from B/203, which was attached to the Division Trains, together with D/203 (when it arrived) and Hq Co/33d Armored Engineer Battalion. When the Trains occupied the LA ROCHE-SAMREE area, the Trains Commander was directed to provide for the security of his command, but that no additional troops would be available. Using organic and attached troops, the Trains then established a series of road blocks at critical points surrounding the area, and it was against this cordon of defenses that the German reconnaissance elements had been brought to a

standstill.¹³

By midnight of the 18th/19th the 7th Armored Division found itself in position covering almost 52 miles of front, from VIELSALM on the SALM River, East through POTEAU--HUNNINGEN--and a point on the SCHONBERG Road about 1700 yards east of ST. VITH, thence South through NIEDENGEN--LOMMERSWEILER, and BURG-REULAND, and then West to the River OURTHE at LA ROCHE. Between POTEAU and LOMMERSWEILER the line was held in strength by CC-A, CC-B, and CC-B/9th Armored, while South of CC-B/9th Armored was the 424th Infantry Regiment. Between the right flank of the 424th near BURG-REULAND and the River OURTHE there were road blocks at critical points in the LA ROCHE--SAMREE area, with Company "D" of the 40th Tank Battalion and "A" Company, 33d Armored Engineers, of CC-A in the general area BEHO--COURTIL.

¹³ For location of road blocks established by Div. Tns., 7th Armored Division, see APPENDIX "B", map accompanying "An Account of Activities of the 7th Armored Division Trains".



Infantry advancing through the ARDENNES
to cut the vital ST. VITH-HOUFFALIZE Road,
January 1945

(75th Infantry Division)

d. Events of 19 December:

While the situation within the 7th Armored Division's horseshoe, for such was the shape which the Division's defensive arc had assumed, was generally under control, it was the presence of the enemy to the North, South, and rear that was disturbing. First Army already had reported that STAVELOT was occupied in force by tanks and infantry of the 1st SS Panzer Division; while on the South flank GOUVY (P7278) and CHERAM (P6677) were reported to be occupied; in the rear Division Trains had reported the unsuccessful attack upon their road block near LA ROCHE. (The reports on GOUVY and CHERAM proved to be false.) Other unconfirmed reports continued to arrive telling of deep and strong penetrations to the Southwest.¹⁴

¹⁴ Division fully realized the possibility of these deep penetrations -- perhaps by German units executing "Operation GREIF". This was a bold plan calling for the employment of reconnaissance and sabotage units equipped with American vehicles and weapons, and dressed in American uniforms, who were to infiltrate through the lines and then set up ambushes in the rear areas along the following axes:

(a) TROIS PONTS(P6798)--BASSE BODEUX(P6497)--VILLETES(P5994)--BRA(P5793)
--LA FOURCHE(P5495)--HARRE(P5296)--DEUX RYS(P4896)--Juncture of Force "A"&"B".

(b) RECHT(P7994)--PETIT-THIER(P7491)--VILLE-du-BOIS((P7189)--VIELSALM
(P7089)--SALMCHATEAU(P6987)--CR at P6586--HEBRONVAL(P6386)--REGNE(P6185)--CR
at P5487--MANHAY(P5390)--OSTRAND GRANDMENIL(P5290)--RJ at P4795--Juncture of
Force "A"&"B".

(c) Juncture of Force "A"&"B"--AISNE(P4597)--JUZAINNE(P4399)--BOMAL(P4299)
--RJ at P4198--TOHOGNE(K4000)--ONEUX(K3602)--AMAS(K3502)--OCQUIER(K3302)
--VERVOX(K3202).

A copy of Von Rundstedt's order notifying other German units of "Operation GREIF" had been captured by 7th Armored Division on 17 December.

These reports added to the uneasiness caused by the entire situation, and it was necessary to establish screening forces on the South flank. Originally only one armored engineer company (A/33) and one light tank company (D/40) were available for this mission, but later other forces had to be created. These two companies had remained in the BEHO area when CC-A moved North to attack POTEAU on 18 December.

Receiving orders to outpost GOUVY and CHERAM at first light on the morning of 19 December, D/40 started on its mission just before daylight. On approaching GOUVY the tankers found that Germany infantry were just starting an assault on the town and were spraying the houses with small arms fire. Attacking with blazing 37's and machine guns, "D" Company routed the enemy attack, forcing the Germans to withdraw rapidly Southward. Within the town itself was found a ration dump containing 50,000 rations which were sorely needed by the 7th Armored Division for they had been unable to resupply since arriving in the area.

Also discovered was an abandoned Prisoner of War Enclosure containing more than 700 Germans, guarded by only 1 officer and 8 MP's. These PW's were afterwards safely evacuated by the Division.

During the night of the 18th/19th there were noises of considerable activity and vehicular movement in the areas of RECHT (P8094), BORN (P8594), WALLERODE (P8890), and STEINEBRUCH (P8983), indicating the arrival of more troops to reinforce those already attacking the ST. VITH area. After midnight there was constant patrol and counter-patrol activity on both sides, and the Germans placed a great deal of harrassing fires on all roads and road junctions -- using mortars, 88's, and for the first time artillery firing battery and battalion concentrations. Two night attacks were launched against CC-B's Northern flank with infantry and tanks, apparently in an effort to seize HUNNINGEN. Both attacks were repulsed by the combined fires of the tanks of the 31st Tank Battalion and of the armored cars and assault guns of the 87th Cavalry Squadron.

In POTEAU the enemy continued his strong resistance to CC-A, and by 0850 was placing a tremendous amount of fire on the town and nearby positions. We held the town, although by all normal standards our position would have been considered "untenable", and the fire was so heavy that all movements within the town had to be restricted to the hours of darkness. CC-A launched an attack in mid-morning to relieve the pressure on the troops at the

cross roads, by clearing the enemy from the woods to the East and then to push North and take the high ground. From such a position CC-A would then be able to mount an attack up the POTEAU--RECHT road to recapture RECHT in a coordinated attack with the 17th Tank Battalion.

The fighting in the woods was extremely bitter, and after almost 5 hours of ceaseless attacks, CC-A was able to clear the enemy from the woods East of POTEAU as far North as the railroad track. The term "clear the enemy" is used advisedly, for each and every German soldier in the area had to be rooted out and killed; there were no enemy withdrawals and no surrenders. Not only did the SS troopers remain in their positions, contesting every inch of ground and making the 48th Armored Infantry pay a price for each area that was cleared, but their artillery plastered POTEAU and CC-A surrounding positions with especially heavy concentrations around 1100.

During this attack to clear the woods, the 40th Tank Battalion in support of the armored infantry destroyed 4 enemy tanks. The operation of our tankers was made more difficult by the pall of heavy smoke from the guns that continued to hang in the air, obscuring the sights and preventing

the gunners from making the necessary fire adjustments. This disadvantage was overcome for those tanks in fixed firing positions, by placing observers in foxholes to the flank or in front of each tank who then relayed the adjustments to the gunners in the tanks.

While attacking to relieve the pressure on the cross roads, CC-A gradually extended its positions laterally in an effort to contact the other Combat Commands, and by 1850 physical contact was established by the tying-in of patrols with CC-R on the left and with CC-B on the right.

At no time during the day was enemy pressure absent from any portion of the Division's perimeter, for the Germans were seeking a "soft spot". If they attacked one part of the line, and found it strongly defended -- they pulled back and tried again in another sector. Starting on the Northern flank at 0930, the enemy attacked in the direction of HUNNINGEN in an attempt to envelop CC-B's left flank. For more than 3 hours they attacked and attacked, employing more than 500 infantry supported by 5 tanks. At 1300 they finally withdrew, leaving behind them 1 tank burning and 150 dead. The other 4 tanks were hit and damaged,

but were able to withdraw in the direction of NIEDER EMMELS.

Failing to find a "soft spot" on the Northern flank, the Germans next hit the Southern flank when they moved in on CC-B/9th Armored at 1215 with infantry supported by tanks. Before their attack even got going 3 of their tanks were knocked out, and this sight so disheartened the rest of the force that they did not press the attack, withdrawing to try another portion of the line. At 1420, CC-B/7th Armored was hit in the right of its line by a reinforced infantry company with strong armored support -- 1 Mk V "Panther" and 2 assault guns. During the morning this part of the line had been reinforced by a TD section with 2 90mm guns (from A/814). This TD section quickly scored hits and in 3 rounds had knocked out the "Panther" and 1 of the assault guns, leaving the infantry to advance across open ground with most of their armored support already destroyed. On they came only to be slaughtered by the fire of the infantry (B/23), who held their fire until the enemy had closed to less than 50 yards. What was left of the attacking Germans leaving quickly fled almost 60 dead and dying.

By this time additional identifications had been made of the enemy formations attacking in the ST. VITH area. Of the 268 dead counted in front of CC-B's Eastern positions in the morning (killed during the afternoon attacks on 18 December), the infantrymen were found to be from the 164th and 183d Volks Grenadier Regiments (62d Volks Grenadier Division), while 2 of the knocked out tanks were from the 3d Panzer Regiment of the 2d Panzer Division. Papers were found in one of the assault guns which had been knocked out that identified the crew with the 2d Company, 1818th Antitank Battalion (18th Volks Grenadier Division). This unit was further identified when a prisoner taken by the 38th Armored Infantry, stated that he was assigned to the 2d Company, 1818th Antitank Battalion; that his company consisted of 14 tanks with the 75mm gun, of which 2 had been destroyed in the previous day's fighting; and that his company was supporting the attacks through the woods South of the ST. VITH--SCHONBERG Road.

An unusual identification also was made in this sector. During the fighting on the previous afternoon, one enemy platoon had broken through CC-B's lines and rapidly pushed down the reverse slope to exploit the gap.

At that time there were no troops between them and the town of ST. VITH, but as they dodged through the trees -- one of the heavy machine gun sections had quickly traversed its guns down a fire-break. When the "Jerries" crossed the open fire-break they were perfect targets, and there they lay: 19 Paratroopers each with 5-8 bullets in him. Although uniformed and equipped as paratroopers, under their camouflage jackets were shoulder straps with the Gothic "GD", the insignia of the "GROSS DEUTSCHLAND" Division, and in their pockets were Solbuchs showing that they did belong to the "GROSS DEUTSCHLAND".

CC-R continued to maintain its position astride the road between VIELSALM and POTEAU, with its TASK FORCE "NAVAJO" blocking any enemy moves from East to West along that route. In the afternoon a second Task Force was added to CC-R -- a Provisional Cavalry Troop, known as TASK FORCE WANKE, and made up of 3 Officers and 80 Enlisted Men who had been collected together from the remnants of the Corps cavalry and equipped with 4 armored cars and other vehicles. This Provisional Troop carried out patrolling for CC-R to the North, Northeast, and East and eventually made the link-up with units of CC-A just West of POTEAU.

At 1312, the 17th Tank Battalion (C/38) was released from CC-R and given to CC-B, and CC-B's sector was moved West to the vicinity of RODT (P8189) where it joined CC-A's sector. No change was made in the orders for the 17th Tanks, and they remained in position South of RECHT. Early in the morning one of the 17th's road blocks, manned by the AT Platoon/C/38 killed 6 Germans, and captured 4 with their brand-new half-track (less than 300 miles on the speedometer), when the German squad moved into NIEDER EMMELS. They were from the Division Signal Company, "GROSS DEUTSCHLAND" Division and stated that they had been directed to lay wire to NIEDER EMMELS which was occupied by their troops (the Germans).

Two events of great import occurred within the zone of the 7th Armored on 19 December: it was the first day that all of the Division Artillery was able to support the Division; during the morning it was discovered that on the South of the Division's zone although separated by a gap, was the 112th Regimental Combat Team of the 28th Infantry Division.

The Division Artillery was set up in firing positions near VILLE-du-BOIS, less the 434th Armored Field Artillery Battalion which was attached to CC-B and in position at KROMBACH (P8186). To these three

battalions (434th, 440th, 489th) was added the fires of the 275th Armored Field Artillery Battalion (Separate) and of the 965th Field Artillery Battalion, 155mm Howitzer (Separate). Both of these battalions were attached to CC-B, and were in position at HINDERHAUSEN (P7987) and at BRAUNLAUF (P8084), respectively. The three battalions attached to CC-B (434th, 275th, and 965th) were operated as a Provisional Field Artillery Group, with Hq/434 performing the duties of a Group Fire Direction Center. Throughout the rest of the ST. VITH action, this Provisional Group FDC functioned smoothly and continuously, without any increase in personnel, always bringing down fire where it was most needed by the front line units.

The 7th Armored Division learned of the presence of the 112th Regimental Combat Team at about 1030, when Col. G. M. Nelson, Commanding Officer, reported to the 7th Armored's Tactical CP in VIELSALM. Col. Nelson stated that his regiment was in a defensive position on the Southern edge of a woods about $1\frac{1}{2}$ kilometers South of HOLDINGEN (P7775). The location of the rest of the 28th Division (the 112th's parent unit) was unknown to the Colonel and, in fact, he had been completely "in the dark" as to the location of any friendly troops whatsoever until a patrol

of the 7th Armored had contacted his regiment.

Gen. Hasbrouck immediately contacted Gen. Jones and suggested to him that the 112th Regimental Combat Team be attached to the 106th Infantry Division, and be utilized to extend our Southern flank protection further to the West by placing the 112th in a defensive position on the right (West) of the 424th Regimental Combat Team. The Commanding General, 106th Division, concurred in this recommendation and Col. Nelson was directed to report to him for orders.

Gen. Jones' remaining Combat Team, the 424th, was in positions on the right of CC-B/9th Armored, extending South from MASPELT (P8782) to the vicinity of BURG-REULAND (P8679). Accordingly, Col. Nelson was directed to have his Combat Team fight its way to the BEILER (P8275) — LEITHUM (P8475) ridge and go into position there, with its left flank extending Northward to join the 424th near BURG-REULAND.

The only other change in dispositions occurred after dark on the 19th, when CC-B/9th Armored withdrew to new positions West of the ST. VITH--WINTERSPELT Road and the railroad. This move was made after mutual agreement between Gen. Clarke and Gen. Hoge, so as to avoid the

possibility of CC-B/9th Armored being cut off with no exit route for its vehicles, as its only route of evacuation from the positions previously held was through the town of ST. VITH. By 2400, CC-B/9th Armored was generally in its new positions between its "tie-in" point with CC-B/7th Armored on the North at P862864 and its juncture with the 424th RCT on the South near MASPELT. The Combat Command CP was established at NEUBRUCK (P8884).



LA ROCHE lies devastated after terrific
bombardment and shelling by both the Germans
and Americans, 16 January 1945

e. Events of 20 December:

The night of the 19th/20th was again filled with continuous patrol clashes along the entire Northern sector of the 7th Armored Division. One German combat patrol of 35 men attempted to capture the Rear CP of the 31st Tank Battalion at NEUNDORF (P8386), and were driven off only after a short but vicious hand-to-hand fight, in which the officers and men of the Battalion's S-1-4 Sections and the Recon Platoon killed 15 of the enemy and captured 5 prisoners.

Reports continued to arrive at Division of the presence of enemy forces to the South and rear of the positions held by the 7th Armored. Information obtained by our patrolling to the South in the region West of the 112th Infantry Regimental Combat Team's position, from the capture by these patrols and subsequent interrogation of German prisoners of war (including the translation of a German Field Order found on one), and reports from a Colonel Stone who, with a group of First Army service troops, had courageously remained at GOUVY -- all indicated that substantial enemy forces of all arms were by-passing our forces on the South with the intention of turning North and passing through GOUVY and CHERAM.

Consequently TASK FORCE JONES was created to further extend and protect our Southern flank. It was instructed to pay particular attention to denying the enemy the use of the road junctions at DREIFELD (P7779), OURTH (P7478), GOUVY (P7278), and CHERAM (P6677). The composition of this task force which included the 814th Tank Destroyer Battalion (less 2 companies), 17th Tank Battalion (less 1 company), and the 440th Armored Field Artillery Battalion is shown in detail in APPENDIX "A".

Throughout the 20th and thereafter, all artillery battalions were forced to employ every available man for the purpose of providing local security for their position areas due to the numerous German patrols -- some of them of considerable size -- which succeeded in filtering through our front line units due to the broken and wooded character of the terrain which lent itself admirably to this kind of tactics. Machine guns were emplaced to cover all possible routes of approach; trip wires were installed to give warning at night, and, in general, every precaution was taken to assure an all-around defense.

Enemy activity in the area of the Division Trains increased in both intensity and volume on this date. The road block 2½ miles Southeast of LA ROCHE was attacked by enemy infantry with some armor. This attack

was repulsed with severe casualties to the Germans. The road block 5 miles North of HOUFFALIZE was attacked for the second consecutive day. Although the attackers were driven off, it was not until our defending force had suffered heavy casualties in both personnel and vehicles.

The main German effort, however, was devoted to the seizure of our ration and gasoline supply dump at SAMREE. The road block South of this point was attacked at about 0945 by a reinforced German infantry battalion supported by artillery. All available service personnel (approximately 50 men) were placed in defensive positions which held until about Noon when a heavy fog settled over the area. By the time the fog lifted around 1300, the Germans had infiltrated our positions and were in houses in the village of SAMREE. Our defenses were tightened around the Northwest corner of the town where the supply points were located... At 1430, it was learned that the head of a task force of the 3d Armored Division had halted at DOCHAMPS (P4983), about 2 miles away. In reply to an appeal for assistance, a medium tank company was dispatched but on moving over a ridge 1000 yards North of SAMREE, three of its tanks were destroyed by the fire of German tanks Northeast of SAMREE, and the medium tank company never succeeded in reaching the town. In the meantime, the service personnel

defending the supply points ran out of ammunition and were forced to abandon the town at about 1500 when German tanks pushed into town. A counterattack was launched in an effort to regain the town at about 1530 with two medium tanks taken from the Division Ordnance Shop and a miscellaneous group of service personnel acting as infantry. The counterattack failed, however, both tanks being destroyed by enemy fire after reaching the Eastern edge of SAMREE, and the foot troops were stopped by a hail of small arms fire.

Throughout the attack on the Division supply points which began at 0945 and continued until 1500, with artillery fire on the town beginning at 1200, supplies of rations and gasoline were issued to the unit trains of the various battalions of the 7th Armored Division as well as to the 112th Regimental Combat Team (28th Division) and elements of the 106th Division. While one end of the dump was on fire and under attack, issues took place from the other end. Approximately 30,000 gallons of gasoline and 15,000 rations were issued under the most adverse conditions during the attack described above. Known casualties to service personnel from the attack on SAMREE were: 17 killed, 12 wounded, and 4 captured.

During the night of 20/21 December additional attacks were made on many of the road blocks in the Division Trains area but all were repulsed.

In the vicinity of POTEAU the 1st SS Panzer Division continued to aggressively engage CC-A, and it was only against the stiffest kind of resistance that this vital road junction was being held. At 0825 CC-A received the following message from the Commanding General: "Hold your positions at all costs," and at 0925 another message: "Imperative you command road leading into POTEAU from RECHT!"

At 1130 the Germans attacked POTEAU with the heaviest task force yet committed in this area -- almost 2 battalions of infantry supported by heavy tanks (believed to have been borrowed from the "GROSS DEUTSCHLAND", which was reported to have its CP in BORN). The enemy was unable to dislodge CC-A, and withdrew after leaving 4 of his tanks burning -- a proof to the accuracy of our tanker's fire.

A glance at Chapter IV, photostatic reproduction of Overlay No. 1 ("Situation 20 Dec 44"), will show in graphic form the major assaults of the enemy against the 7th Armored.

In the sector of CC-B, strong attacks were mounted by the Germans at 1730 and at 2120 against the Northern flank, and at 1740 from WALLERODE. All were repulsed at a cost to the enemy of 4 tanks destroyed, 4 tanks damaged, and 4 half-tracks destroyed. The attacks against the Northern shoulder were made by 12 tanks (2 Mk VI "Tigers", 4 Mk V "Panthers", and 6 Mk IV's), advancing in two waves. Of the tanks destroyed, one was a "Panther" and the others were Mk IV's.

CC-B/9th Armored received attacks throughout the day with the Germans attacking West from NEIDINGEN and LOMMERSWEILER at 0430, 0815, and 1620. All attacks were repulsed with heavy losses among the enemy infantry as the quadruple-mounted caliber .50's of the AAA battery with CC-B/9th Armored opened up when the Germans attacked across open ground.

On the Southern flank, now held by TASK FORCE JONES, the Germans attacked GOUVY and CHERAM. In the assault on GOUVY which lasted from 1200 to 1740, the Germans lost more than 100 killed. Two attacks were thrown at CHERAM by the enemy -- at 1300 and at 1715 -- both of which were repulsed. In the after-dark attack on CHERAM, one enemy direct fire weapon (tank or an assault gun) was destroyed by a 90mm TD section (C/8L4).

These attacks disclosed the presence of yet another German division: the 560th Volks Grenadier Division, of whom 26 prisoners were captured by TASK FORCE JONES.

The addition of the 560th Volks Grenadier Division to the known Order of Battle of German units attacking the ST. VITH area had raised the total number of enemy divisions to 6, plus one GHQ Artillery Brigade. By midnight of 20 December, the following units had been positively identified through interrogation of prisoners of war captured by the 7th Armored Division (the enemy divisions are listed in relative order of positions from North to South):

1st SS Panzer Division

"GROSS DEUTSCHLAND"

18th Volks Grenadier Division

62d Volks Grenadier Division

116th Panzer Division

2d Panzer Division

560th Volks Grenadier Division

401st GHQ Artillery Brigade

During the period, 17-20 December, a total of 37 German tanks, 5 assault guns, and 7 armored cars plus numerous motor vehicles had been reported to Division Headquarters as destroyed. (These reports were incomplete as some units did not report until after the Division had left the ST. VITH area.)



"This was ST. VITHE" — Armored Infantry
of the 7th Armored Division regain the town
in January 1945

f. Events of 21 December:

The situation on this date in the Division Trains area had deteriorated to such an extent that it appeared advisable to move the trains to a safer area in order to avoid their capture or total destruction, and to enable them to continue the supply of the Division which could not be accomplished much longer from the present area. By this time the 84th Infantry Division had taken up a defensive position in the vicinity of MARCHE (P2983), some 12 miles west of the 7th Armored Division Trains area. Accordingly the Division Trains were ordered to retire through the 84th Division and then proceed by a circuitous route to a new area in the vicinity of HARZE (K5306). This new position allowed the supply of the Division to be continued through terrain now held by the 82d Airborne Division which had pushed south towards our rear areas and whose front line was slightly in advance of the road, LA FALISE(P6289)--VIELSALM(P7091). This provided a very slender contact with the 7th Armored Division at the bridge over the SALM River at VIELSALM.

The movement of the Division Trains to the HARZE area left the rear of the ST. VITH forces "wide open" until and unless the XVIII Airborne

Corps, which now controlled the 82d Airborne Division plus the forces in the ST. VITH area, could push South and establish contact with TASK FORCE JONES. This the Corps was unable to do.

On the morning of the 21st, seven 8-inch howitzers as well as considerable equipment abandoned by a Cavalry Group was evacuated from the area southwest of POTEAU by a detachment comprising personnel and materiel from the 3 Service Batteries of the 7th Armored Division Artillery. The evacuation was accomplished under fire -- both small arms and mortar -- which was directed on the area by the enemy occupying the high ground northeast of POTEAU. The covering force for the evacuation was furnished by CC-R, who prevented the enemy from attacking the recovery units. All materiel rescued was moved to the rear, and later turned over to Ordnance personnel of the First Army.

During the day a force of approximately 300 German infantry infiltrated through the wooded area between RODT and POTEAU and gained the position area of the 275th Armored Field Artillery Battalion. The 275th held its ground, and diverted one battery to direct fire at point blank

range while continuing to execute fire missions with the other two firing batteries. The situation became critical, and it looked for a few minutes as if the artillery battalion was to be overrun, when the situation was saved by the arrival of a light tank platoon from the 87th Cavalry Squadron ("F" Co). Opening fire with 37mm canister, the tanks drove into the Germany infantry killing and wounding many of the enemy and putting the remainder to flight.

One of the outstanding actions was that of Troop "D", 87th Cavalry Squadron, which was operating on an independent mission of screening the Division's rear in the area, VAUX CHAVANNE(P5591)--BASSE BODEUX(P6497). At 1100 on the 20th, the Troop had been ordered to SAMREE to help defend that area against the attacks from the south. When "D" Troop arrived there that afternoon it found the town occupied in strength by the enemy with more than a battalion of infantry and a company of tanks. The Troop Commander thereupon moved his unit East along the road towards SAIMCHATEAU (P6987) so as to block the road and prevent the SAMREE force from hitting the Division in the rear. At the FRAITURE cross roads, the recon troopers ran into a German road block which they attacked and overran.

Then Troop "D" established a series of road blocks centering on

the cross roads at P576853). This was on the main route from HOUFFALIZE (P6172) to LIEGE by way of MANHAY (P5390), WERBOMONT (K5400), and AYWAILLE (K5410), or to the MEUSE at HUY (K2318) by way of BOMAL (K4200) or HAMOIR (K4405). This was one of the main routes of advance for the Fifth Panzer Army, and the initiative and resourcefulness displayed by this Troop in blocking for 3 days any advance up the main highway had a beneficial effect on the entire situation.

By the 21st, the Troop had collected around itself a sizeable little force reinforced by two 105mm howitzers, two AAA automatic weapons sections from the 203d AAA Battalion, a company of parachute infantry from the 82d Airborne Division, and 6 medium tanks of the 3d Armored Division. At 0500 the enemy launched his first attack, moving in on the assembly area for the troop kitchen and supply vehicles. Instead of the easy prey which they expected, the Germans reeled back with 17 killed and 16 captured.

This initial attack was followed by a number of other attacks, usually made by forces of between 50 to 100 German infantry. All were repulsed and Troop "D" continued to man this road block until 1800 on the 23d of December, when they were overwhelmed by a strong German attack made by

2 battalions of infantry supported by a company of tanks. Prior to the attack, the entire area was saturated with a heavy artillery preparation. All the tanks and armored cars were knocked out except one armored car which was damaged and later salvaged by the Germans after the road blocks had been overrun and destroyed. (On the 24th of December this armored car while manned by a reconnaissance unit of the 2d SS Panzer Division was recaptured by a squad of survivors of Troop "D" who were making their way cross-country in an effort to regain the friendly lines.) Before the enemy overran the cross roads they lost one known tank destroyed and an estimated 300 infantry killed.

Throughout the 21st, CC-A maintained its position in and around POTEAU, although receiving strong infantry and armor attacks in the morning and again just before dark. The enemy armor was allowed to come well out in the open, followed by the German infantry, when they were hit by the massed fires of two artillery battalions and of every American tank which could bring its guns to bear. This terrific concentration of fire stunned the Germans who broke and fled leaving many killed and wounded -- and 5 Mk V "Panthers" and 3 assault guns destroyed. Just as night came on

the enemy attacked again but not until after he had laid down heavy preparatory fires with his mortars and artillery. By 2000 hours the attack had been repulsed.

Between these two major attacks, there was heavy patrol activity by both sides. During the afternoon the Germans were able to infiltrate through the lines and establish an ambush on the road between POTEAU and RODT. It was an effective ambush until it was discovered, for this one block captured 8 "peeps" and knocked out 1 light tank, and among those taken prisoner were the Executive Officer, CC-A, with his Liaison Officer, and the Executive Officer, 48th Armored Infantry, with his Adjutant.

As LXVI Corps continued to be stalled at ST. VITH, the Germans realized that the failure to control the network of roads and railroads centering on ST. VITH was disrupting the timetable of the entire counter-offensive. The stand of the 7th Armored Division had left a dangerous salient in the German lines which threatened the entire northern flank of Fifth Panzer Army, preventing a link-up between the Fifth Panzer and Sixth SS Panzer Armies. All further westward movement of Sixth SS Panzer

Army had virtually stopped for lack of needed gasoline and ammunition, which were on the supply columns immobilized to the east of ST. VITH,¹⁵ or on the trains halted between PRUM and GEROLSTEIN.¹⁶ Accordingly,

orders were issued to II ^{SS} Panzer Corps to move to the south and take the town without delay.

All during the night of 20/21 December, tanks and other vehicles could be heard massing to the north, east, and south of ST. VITH. II SS Panzer Corps was moving into position, and at 1100, the all-out assault was launched.

¹⁵ This appreciation of the German situation is based upon First Army Report of Operations, 1 August 1944 - 22 February 1945, vol. 1, pp. 116 and 117.

¹⁶ The immobility of the supply columns was confirmed after V-E Day, when an officer who was captured on 18 December was released from prison camp. He reported that the roads leading east from ST. VITH through SCHONBERG, BEIALF, and PRUM were jammed bumper-to-bumper with supply vehicles which in turn were blocking the routes of advance for the build-up troops.

This officer also reported that on passing through PRUM on 20 December he saw tanks of the 2d SS Panzer Division moving to the front. He overheard one of the SS troopers remark that they were headed for ST. VITH.

The information on the trains was confirmed by a second officer, captured on 22 December. He reported that in the railroad station of PRUM and the yards at GEROLSTEIN he saw train after train with flat cars carrying replacement tanks, tank cars loaded with gasoline, and box cars presumably carrying ammunition and other supplies.

A German Lt. Col. who attempted to interrogate him, remarked: "You and your 'verdamer' Panzer Division have kept us from getting to Liege!"

From the time of the first attack on the 21st until the completion of the successful withdrawal of the 7th Armored Division across the SAIM River two days later, the enemy attacked unceasingly along the entire front of the Division. Throughout the 21st and until 2200 that night, the lines held against continuous assault by wave after wave, followed by wave upon wave of infantry, supported by heavy artillery and "screaming meemie" concentrations of unprecedented size and duration. Large formations of "Panther" and "Tiger" tanks joined in the assault from all sides, and smashed their way into the lines where they blasted the defenders from their foxholes with point blank 88mm fire. Time after time, the German infantry were forced to withdraw under the aimed short range fire of the gallant infantrymen, engineers, tankers, recon troops, and others who stood their ground and inflicted untold losses upon the attacking formations. Even the heavy tanks were forced to withdraw, leaving destroyed hulks battered and burning in their wake. /On that day the men of the 7th Armored performed, individually and collectively, deeds of heroism on occasion after occasion -- and individual soldiers not only engaged in hand-to-hand combat with the German infantry but also attacked the German tanks. In

several instances tanks were destroyed by a "bazookaman" who climbed from his 'hole, and pressed the "bazooka" against the side of the tank which had penetrated the lines, destroying the tank but also himself. Other men were observed to clamber on the back deck of a tank in order to drop a grenade down the turret. And still the Germans attacked . . .

Starting at 1100 with an artillery barrage on the northern and eastern positions of CC-B and an infantry-tank attack against the juncture of CC-B and CC-B/9th Armored, the Germans stepped up the scale of their assault until by 1300 the entire line of CC-B was aflame with enemy artillery, "screaming meemies", tanks, and infantry pouring a concentration of steel at the defenders, the like of which had never been seen before by the 7th Armored during the previous campaigns. As the enemy closed, they were met in turn by all possible concentrated fires that could be brought to bear -- but still the Germans attacked. Major attacks were launched against that part of the line held by the 38th Armored Infantry at 1100, 1230, 1400, 1610, and 1710; while the northern flank manned by the 31st Tank Battalion and the 87th Cavalry were hit with the principal attacks at 1300, 1730, 1805, and 1820. All attacks were turned back, and CC-B's ^{lines} continued to hold.

Then three heavy assaults were started by the Germans, with each directed along the axis of the main roads entering ST. VITH -- at 1650 from the East along the SCHONBERG road; followed by an attack down the MALMEDY road at 1835; with the last one starting up the FRUM road at 2000. Each of these attacks was preceded by heavy artillery and "screaming meemie" barrages lasting from 15 to 35 minutes, and closely followed by infantry and tanks. The Germans were not to be denied, and their relentless pressure since 1100 in the morning had left gaps in the line for which there were no reserves to replace the dead and wounded. By 2200 tanks were entering the town along all three roads, and CG-B started establishing a new line on the high ground West of ST. VITH.

A glance at Chapter IV, photostatic reproduction of Overlay No. 2 ("Situation 21 Dec 44") will show in graphic form the situation as it faced the 7th Armored Division on the 21st of December. For a full description of the attacks, see APPENDIX "B", Personal Reports for the 31st Tank Battalion (page 146) and for the 38th Armored Infantry Battalion (page 171). In both instances the reporting officers were in the front lines.

The first attack against CC-B/9th Armored was made at 0500, apparently in an effort to push the Combat Command back from its position south of CC-B/7th Armored, thereby unhinging the right flank of CC-B/7th Armored. The attack achieved temporary success when the enemy infantry were able to penetrate almost 400 yards. Just before daylight, CC-B/9th Armored started a vicious counter-attack using a task force made up of one medium tank company, an engineer company, and a platoon of infantry -- and by 0900 the line had been restored to its original position.

An incident of this attack saw the driver of an M18 TD, after his position had been overrun, move his vehicle through the original infantry position towards the German lines, through the enemy, and then south to the area of the 424th RCT. When the driver pulled back behind our lines and arrived at CC-B/9th Armored's CP, he could offer no explanation for his choice of route. During the entire trip not a shot was fired at the vehicle which, with its long-barrelled 76mm gun and large individually mounted bogies, closely resembled a German armored vehicle.

By noon the enemy had again returned to the attack and pushed a reinforced combat patrol in to the cross roads at P846817. By late

afternoon all the enemy infantry had been killed and their supporting tank knocked out. As the severity of the attacks on the north increased, the Germans started pushing in along the ST. VITH--STEINEBRUCH road, and by 1600 the 27th Armored Infantry was heavily engaged. This attack was driven off, only to be followed by a heavy artillery preparation and then the infantry and tanks started in again. They too were repulsed, but by dark the Germans were launching a series of attacks which culminated at 2130 in breaking through at the juncture between the two Combat Commands.

At about this time Gen. Clarke informed Gen. Hoge that the enemy had passed tanks into town from the north, east, and south; that CC-B/7th Armored was withdrawing to a new line west of ST. VITH. The two commanders agreed on new position areas, and that their Combat Commands would be joined at BAUVENN, a cross roads at P843861. As the Headquarters of CC-B/9th Armored prepared to move to its new CP to be established at MALDINGEN (P7883), it was shelled, killing 2 officers and 1 enlisted man, wounding 20. The Headquarters, however, continued the move.

While the enemy concentrated on the forces immediately around ST. VITH, the 424th Combat Team had received no major attacks. In the sector of the 112th Combat Team, the enemy attacked Northwest of WEISWAMPACH (P8172) but was repulsed. German patrols, however, continued to operate during the day and constantly were attempting to get through our lines. The 112th dispatched a strong combat patrol to TROIS VIERGES (P7570) to free a reported 500 Americans held prisoner there, but it was unable to get through because of strong columns of infantry and armor pushing West through the TROIS VIERGES (P7570)—SASSEL (P7568) area.

During the morning of the 21st, patrols from TASK FORCE JONES entered the towns of VAUX (P6576), MONT LE BAN (P6478), and BAGLAIN (P6679) but met only scattered enemy reconnaissance elements who hastily withdrew. The enemy was still strong in the GOUVY and CHERAM areas. About 1900 the Germans attacked CHERAM but struck a mined road, after which TF JONES placed artillery and mortar fire on the enemy column. By 2000 the threat was over and the enemy were withdrawing.

With the situation in the ST. VITH area becoming critical between 2100 and 2200, TF JONES was warned at 2230 that the 17th Tank Battalion must

be prepared for immediate movement. (At 0300 on the 22d, orders were received directing the 17th Tank Battalion to move immediately to KROMBACH and report to Gen. Clarke.) Along with the warning orders on the tank battalion, TF JONES also received the following instructions:

"Hold on east and pivot around on DIEFELD (P7679). Delay enemy, drop back on GOUVY (P7278) and hold like grim death towns of BEHD (P7581); BOVIGNY (P7082). We must have the road. Make liberal use of mines and know where they are."

As learned after the "Battle of the Bulge" had been liquidated, the taking of ST. VITH on 21 December was made the responsibility of II SS Panzer Corps, with its 9th SS Panzer Division and 2d SS Panzer Division.

"On 22 December II SS Panzer Corps with 2 and 9 SS Panzer Divisions, finally succeeded in wresting ST. VITH from 7 US Armored Division..."

(12th Army Group G-2 Report, "Destruction of the German Armies in Western Europe, 6 June 1944-9 May 1945", p. 20)

In this attack, II Panzer Corps with its two SS Panzer Divisions was assisted by LXVI Corps (18th and 62d Volks Grenadier Divisions, and the "GROSS DEUTSCHLAND" Brigade), plus the 1st SS Panzer Grenadier Regiment on the North and elements of LVIII Panzer Corps which was operating against the South flank and rear of the 7th Armored¹⁷



Armored Field Artillery of 7th Armored
Division in firing positions near VIELSALM,
December 1944

g. Events of 22 December:

Throughout the night of 21/22 December CC-B worked hard to stabilize the line West of ST. VITH -- generally along the high ground in the vicinity of P841879. By 0600 the line extended from RODT, to the East of NEUNDORF, and then Southeast of KROMBACH to a "tie-in" point with CC-B/9th Armored in the vicinity of BAUVENN.

The Germans continued to attack with their infantry and tanks, pushing their troops on through ST. VITH although our artillery was beginning to hamper their movements. By 0200 the German 928th Grenadier Battalion (Separate) had enveloped RODT from the North and was attacking the town from the rear -- splitting CC-A and CC-B. The enemy widened this penetration and by 1100, more than 16 tanks supported by infantry were attacking CC-A from the East. At 1135 RODT was captured by the Germans who destroyed a light tank platoon and a platoon of infantry who had grimly and bitterly contested every foot of ground although under attack from three sides for more than 8 hours.

¹⁷ Two official reports have enemy Order of Battle maps with this information plotted thereon:

a. First Army Report of Operations, 1 Aug 44-22 Feb 45, "Situation Map No. 9, Eupen--St. Vith--Bastogne".

b. Directorate of Tactical Investigation, British War Office, The German Counter-Offensive in the Ardennes, "Situation Map No. 4, 20-22 Dec 44".

All morning a few men from the units which had manned the Eastern defenses of ST. VITH infiltrated through the lines, but their numbers were pitifully few. Of four armored infantry rifle companies, a recon troop, a Provisional Engineer Company, and the three weapons platoons of an armored infantry headquarters company there were only about 200 survivors, of whom 90 had to be evacuated because of wounds and exhaustion. The rest were dead or missing. It was a terrible price, and the lack of infantry was to hamper CC-B's defense which by now occupied a new line extending from HINDERHAUSEN, across the main road half-way between NEUNDORF and KROMBACH, South to P8284. On the left was TASK FORCE BOYLAN; in the center, the 31st Tank Battalion; on the right the 17th Tank Battalion. The infantry were divided between the two tank battalions.

The one "bright spot" in the entire situation was when a 90-vehicle convoy succeeded in arriving in the Division area about 1500, bringing ammunition, rations, and gasoline -- for which the entire Division and all attached units (including CC-B/9th Armored, the 424th RCT, and the 112th RCT) were desperately in need. The artillery had less

than 20 rounds per gun prior to the convoy's arrival. The drivers of this convoy had been in their seats for hours on-end without sleep; they had driven through ambushes set up by many German patrols operating to the rear of the Division, and they had suffered some casualties. Their devotion to duty and their will to get the supplies through saved the Division and its attached units from almost certain disaster during the ordered withdrawal which took place the next day. Without the gasoline, many vehicles would of necessity have been abandoned... The artillery and other ammunition which they brought held the enemy back until the SALM River was crossed.

In the late afternoon the Germans started a drive to capture KROMBACH, attacking from North to South at 1700, 2000, and 2110. By 2315, their infantry were fighting in the town itself. CC-B/9th Armored also was receiving a heavy attack at this time and was slowly being pushed Westward toward BRAUNLAUF. They held on to their contact on the left with CC-B/7th Armored, pivoting back on Gen. Clarke's right flank and preventing an attempt of the enemy to separate the two Combat Commands.

During the fighting in the sector of CC-B/9th Armored, the Germans attacked and captured the CP of the 27th Armored Infantry and their Aid

Station. A counter-attack with 2 platoons of tanks and a platoon of infantry recaptured the GP and the personnel which had been taken by the Germans, including the battalion's Commanding Officer, Executive, and Staff less the S-2. By this time CC-B/9th Armored was defending South of GRUFFLINGEN and as far West as MALDINGEN, with the 3d Battalion/424th Infantry being attached to the Combat Command.

At POTEAU CC-A was receiving increasing pressure from the enemy who was continuing his efforts to outflank and turn the right flank of CC-A. Meanwhile the enemy forces on North (left flank) struck heavily at 2215 but were driven back. A measure of the bitterness of the fighting on all fronts is the following:

"The medical detachments from the Tank Battalion and the Armored Infantry Battalion located in a hunting lodge were caught in the path of the enemy attack on RODT. Under the direction of Captain Hallerstein all of the wounded men in the aid station who were able to use a gun took their positions and defended them until relieved when units of the Tank Battalion moved past them in their counter-attack on RODT." 18

¹⁸ Personal letter from Maj. Wolfe, former CO, Company "B", 40th Tank Battalion, to Maj. Gen. Hasbrouck -- March or April 1946.

Pressure continued to increase along the entire front, and as the 7th Armored Division shortened its lines and again regrouped, German infantry and tanks pressed strongly on all positions. Practically the entire Division area was now being engaged by long-range artillery fire, while to the North the enemy was along the East bank of the SALM River from East of TROIS PONTS to GRAND-HALLEUX, and in the South, along the high ground South of the highway running West from SALMCHATEAU. This meant that CC-B of the 9th Armored Division, the 112th RCT, the 424th RCT, three units of Corps troops (including the 275th AFA with the battered remnants of the 168th Combat Engineers), and the entire 7th Armored Division (less Trains) -- low on supplies and completely worn out after 5 days or more of continuous bitter fighting -- were left East of the SALM with only one certain exit route (a secondary road leading West from VIELSALM) and one probable route (road: SALMCHATEAU--JOUBIEVAL--LIERNEUX). It was then that the following message arrived from Field Marshal Montgomery, whose 21st Army Group was in operational control of First Army and all troops north of BASTOGNE:

"To Gen. Hasbrouck:
"You have accomplished your mission --
a mission well done. It is now time to
withdraw." 19



Armored Task Force of C3-B, 7th Armored
Division in ST. VITH after recapturing the
town on 23 January 1945

h. The Withdrawal (23 December):

The withdrawal of the 7th Armored Division was carefully planned and orders were issued orally, being later confirmed in writing. For the final written order, see APPENDIX "A", also Chapter IV for photostatic copy of Overlay No. 4 ("Dispositions, Daylight 23 Dec 44") showing the withdrawal routes and assembly areas.

Orders were issued at 0015 on the 23d, and provided generally for a withdrawal West of the SALM to assembly areas behind the 82d Airborne Division in the vicinity of LIERNEUX (P6289) -- with a covering force to fight a delaying action until the major portion of the Division and attached units had passed West of the river. Three routes ("A" - "B" - "C") were to be used, with the 424th Infantry, CC-B/9th Armored, and other attached units leaving first, followed by CC-B/7th Armored -- all using routes "A" and "B" covered by TASK FORCE BOYLAN on "B" and TASK FORCE JONES on "A". As CC-B/7th Armored would clear through the center, CC-A would drop back along route "C",

¹⁹ This message was delivered at the CP of the 7th Armored Division in VIELSALM by a personal representative from Gen. Montgomery. He was a Captain (name now unknown). A search of the records of the 7th Armored has failed to disclose any copy of this or a similar message, but the wording has been verified by Lt. Col. C. E. Leydecker, former Division G-3, as substantially correct. He states that he has never forgotten the terse, straight-to-the-point order -- so characteristic of General Montgomery.

passing through CC-R who would then cover that route. On the South flank, using route "A" would be TASK FORCE JONES which would furnish the final rear guard. The line of the SALM during the entire withdrawal would be held by the 112th Infantry.

CC-B/9th Armored (424th Infantry)

Although CC-B/9th Armored was the first unit scheduled to withdraw, by 0125 the Combat Command was locked in such heavy fighting that the withdrawal could not be made at the original time (0300). In the sectors of both CC-B/9th Armored and CC-b/7th Armored, the fighting continued unabated, while at the same time strong enemy forces were attacking the 82d Airborne Division near SALMCHATEAU (P6987). In view of the enemy's relentless pressure, Gen. Hasbrouck at 0500 radioed Gens. Clarke and Hoge that the withdrawal would have to commence, whether the circumstances were favorable or not.

At 0700 CC-B/9th Armored began to disengage, beginning at NEUBRUCK (P8384) and working successively back through MALDINGEN (P7883). CC-B/9th Armored's tanks and half-tracks carried the infantry of the 424th which were picked up near COMMANSTER (P7685), with as many as 14 infantrymen

on each tank. The route of withdrawal was on N26 to the junction with N33, West of BEHO (P7581), north on N33 to SALMCHATEAU (P6987), West to the road junction at P656857, then through LIERNEUX (P6289) to the MALEMPRE(P5689)—JEVIGNE(P5990) area, where CC-B/9th Armored closed at approximately 1200 hours. By mid-afternoon the Combat Command had been released from the 7th Armored Division and attached to the 82d Airborne Division, and was moving into position near LANSIVAL (P6090) and MANHAY (P5390).

CC-B/7th Armored

The plan of CC-B was to bring out all vehicles and troops in position near KROMBACH (P8185) and those Southeast of that town through BEHO (P7581) to VIELSALM (P7089). The one infantry company of the 424th at BRAUNLAUF (P8084) accompanied them. North of KROMBACH, all troops and vehicles were to come out through HINDERHAUSEN (P7987) to GOMMANSTER (P7685), and thence to VIELSALM (P7089). TASK FORCE BOYLAN, with a medium tank company, a company of TD's, and an infantry company was to hold HINDERHAUSEN until all other troops had left, and then fall back without delay.

The 965th and 275th Field Artillery had been withdrawn during the night, and the 434th Field Artillery remained in position until

TF BOYLAN was ready to withdraw, when the artillery battalion moved out.

As a result of the snow and intense cold of the previous 2 days, the ground was frozen solid and even the heaviest vehicles were able to move over roads and trails which normally would not have carried a 2½-ton truck. By 2300, CC-B had closed in its assembly area near XHORIS (K4807).

CC-A/7th Armored

Starting at 1530, CC-A began to pull back through CC-R's positions near PETIT-THIER (P7491). The armored infantry withdrew after the advance guard, covered by limited objective attacks made by the tanks. Then the tank battalion followed, after the 489th AFA had laid down smoke and a series of prepared fires which cloaked the withdrawal of the Combat Command. At 1035 in the morning CC-A had stood off a strong thrust by German armor and infantry, which was repulsed by 1230 hours. By 2000, CC-A was in its assembly area in the vicinity of HARZE (K5306).

CC-R/7th Armored

After CC-A had withdrawn through PETIT-THIER (P7491), CC-R started to fall back. At about this time information was received that an OP North of the road block at VILLE-du-BOIS (P7289) had been ambushed and destroyed.

This news indicated that the enemy were to the left rear of CC-R's position and caused a period of considerable anxiety. A strong patrol was immediately dispatched to the threatened area but found that the Germans had been repulsed by the road block at VILLE-du-BOIS, after the enemy had destroyed one of our armored cars.

When all vehicles had cleared the railroad underpass at P725900, it was blown and the final covering force was withdrawn 30 minutes later (time 1745). By 2000, CC-R had arrived in its assembly area. During the morning one of CC-R's TD's had been shifted to SALMCHATEAU (P6987), where it destroyed 6 enemy tanks before it in turn was knocked out.

TASK FORCE JONES (112th Infantry)

TASK FORCE JONES played perhaps the most important role of any of the Division's units during this phase of the ST. VITH action. Its plan was to withdraw after all other units of the Division, together with TASK FORCE NELSON (112th Infantry) whose screen was protecting the withdrawal from the East -- by passing one force through another until the entire task force had cleared SALMCHATEAU (P6987).

The withdrawal of TF JONES commenced at 1430 from its defensive positions at BEHO cross roads (P7682), BOVIGNY (P7082), and CIERREUX (P7184). Successfully disengaging by leap-frogging, the Task Force headed North towards SALMCHATEAU.

A few hundred yards South of that town an enemy ambush destroyed one light tank with Panzerfausts, and in SALMCHATEAU two light tanks were destroyed by an enemy tank or antitank gun. The Germans had moved in from the East. Also the enemy was contacted at CIERREUX where a company of the 814th TD Battalion destroyed two Mark VI "Tigers". The column withdrew to a point approximately $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles South of SALMCHATEAU after attacking against the enemy at 1930. Meanwhile a reconnaissance for an alternate route in the vicinity of ST. MARIE (on the SALM, South of SALMCHATEAU) was completed. Simultaneously, the rear of the column was attacked by tanks from the South and East which destroyed four M-36 TD's, a medium tank, two towed guns, and two other vehicles. Six of the German tanks were destroyed. The majority of our personnel then escaped on foot. As the enemy was pressing strongly, the alternate route was taken. In the creeks West of ST. MARIE an enemy ambush destroyed two armored cars and three $\frac{1}{4}$ -tons. Two Mk IV tanks then

attacked the column, destroying two more armored cars and three $\frac{1}{2}$ -tons.

Part of the column attempted to move towards POVEDREUX (P6985) and met an force of unknown strength, losing one armored car. The balance of the vehicles negotiated the creeks (two $\frac{1}{2}$ -tons and one armored car mired and abandoned) and moved North until they reached the road running from SART (P6587) to SALMCHATEAU, where contact was made with the outpost line of the 82d Airborne Division. From there the Task Force proceeded safely to its assigned assembly area.

The 440th AFA supported TASK FORCE JONES while it was the covering force on the South and most threatened flank during the withdrawal. Finding its own prescribed withdrawal route across the bridge at SALMCHATEAU cut off by enemy forces, it fought its way with vehicular machine guns blazing through the enemy and reached the bridge over the SAIM at VIELSALM. During this running fight small arms fire was received and returned at ranges as close as 50 yards. A direct hit by an enemy gun (presumably SP or AT) destroyed one of the battalion's field pieces and the entire crew of the self-propelled 105mm howitzer became casualties. By its bold and resolute action in charging the enemy with all guns blazing, the 440th was

able to regain friendly territory.

By midnight of the 23d, when the last units of TASK FORCE JONES and the 112th RCT had closed in their assembly areas, the 7th Armored Division had successfully accomplished the "impossible" -- a daylight withdrawal from contact with enemy forces superior in numbers and strength, while generally restricted to the use of one exit route.

3. IMPORTANCE OF STAND AT ST. VITH BY THE 7th ARMORED DIVISION:

The importance of the stand made in the ST. VITH area by the 7th Armored Division and its attached and supporting units can be summed up by quoting from First Army's Report of Operations:

"The elimination of the St. Vith salient was of prime importance to C-in-C West. Because of the delay imposed here the offensive was already almost three days behind schedule. . . Thus his hopes of reaching Liege through Verviers were smashed by the stalwart resistance of the troops defending along the northern shoulder of the Gap and at St. Vith.

* * *

* * *

* * *

"Without the communications center of St. Vith, focal point of five main highways and three rail lines, the enemy's armored infantry and supply columns were all practically immobilized. . . Traffic was jammed bumper-to-bumper for miles from the original line of departure and provided excellent targets for our artillery and fighter bombers. Also, lacking St. Vith and its high ground, the enemy could not launch his 'Operation Greif' in accordance with the plan.

* * *

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* * *

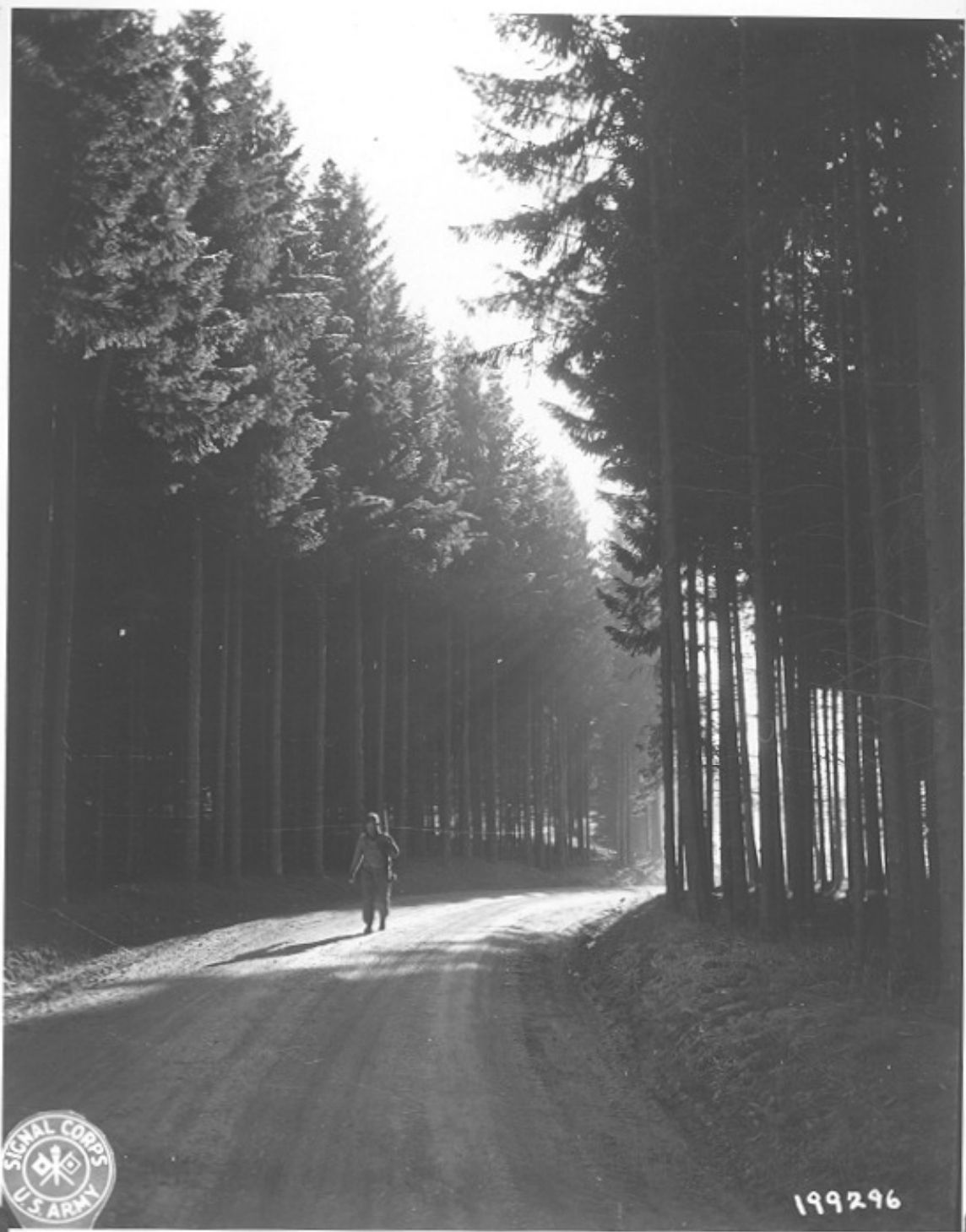
"The salient at St. Vith not only threatened the whole of Fifth Panzer Army's northern flank, but continued to prevent the westward movement of Sixth SS Panzer Army. This afforded First U. S. Army sufficient time to bring up reinforcements to a new defensive line running generally through Rochefort, Marche, Hotton, Stavelot, and Bullingen." ²⁰

²⁰ First U. S. Army Report of Operations, 1 Aug 44-22 Feb 45, vol. 1, pp. 116-117.

In addition to the above appreciation of the importance of the ST. VITH from the viewpoint of the American Army, it is interesting to note the reaction of the Germans. Field Marshal Keitel and Colonel-General Jodl, in commenting on the ARDENNES offensive after V-E Day, stated the reasons why the offensive failed -- the second of which in order of importance was:

"Tougher resistance than expected of, in themselves, weak U. S. troops especially in St VITH." ²¹

²¹ Directorate of Tactical Investigation, British War Office, The German Counter-Offensive in the Ardennes, Appendix "F", "Comments by Field-Marshal Keitel and Colonel-General Jodl on the Ardennes Offensive".



Although taken near BASTOGNE, this picture clearly shows the thick, dark forests of closely planted trees which make up the ARDENNES — trees so close together that the sun never penetrates except where a road cuts through the woods

STATISTICAL SUMMARY:

a. Nature of Terrain -

Rough, forested, rocky area between the SCHNEE-EIFEL and the ARDENNES. Frequent streams and numerous saddles added to the difficulties which channeled all vehicular traffic along the few narrow, torturous roads which served the area. ST. VITH was one of three key road junctions to the entire ARDENNES, and from it roads radiated to DINANT and LIEGE in the West and Northwest; to MALMEDY and STAVELOT in the North; to HOUFFALIZE and BASTOGNE on the South; and to SCHONBERG and PRUM in the East. Through ST. VITH ran the only East-West railroad extending from the RHINE through the EIFEL into the ARDENNES.

ST. VITH itself occupied a valley surrounded by high ground. North and Northwest of the town extended a ridge line from HUNNINGEN Westward which was 300 to 350 feet higher, and East of the town the high ground rose between 330 and 350 feet higher. To the Northeast at WALLERODE and immediately behind it was the highest ground, with WALLERODE being almost 400 feet higher than ST. VITH. Just Northeast of WALLERODE the ground rose an additional 200 feet.

b. Weather Conditions -

- 16 Dec -- Overcast; cloudy; penetratingly cold; snow flurries; poor aerial observation.
- 17 Dec -- Same turning to rain at night; ground soft and boggy; roads muddy and slick.
- 18 Dec -- Bitter cold; overcast; snow flurries; no aerial observation; ground soft; roads slick and becoming increasingly incapable of handling traffic heavier than light trucks.
- 19 Dec -- Same as 18th.
- 20 Dec -- Same as 18th.
- 21 Dec -- Bitter cold; overcast; snow; no aerial activity; ground and roads slushy. (All personnel were suffering from frozen feet and frost bite.)
- 22 Dec
and -- Bitter cold; overcast; deep snow (depths of 2 to 3 feet;
23 Dec deeper in drifts); no aerial activity; ground frozen, permitting limited cross-country movement of tanks.

c. 7th Armored Division -

- (1) Number of Officers and Men Assigned Unit Who Took Part in Action:

11,976 (Strength Report, 7th Armored Division and attached Tank Destroyer and Antiaircraft Artillery Battalions/16 December 1944)

- (2) Number of Casualties Suffered by Unit:

- (a) As reported for 7th Armored Division and attached Tank Destroyer and Antiaircraft Artillery Battalions and Truck Companies, at time "After Action Reports" were prepared - sometime between 1 January 1945 and 10 January 1945:

Killed in Action	-	43
Wounded in Action	-	382
Missing in Action	-	<u>740</u>
		1165

(b) As known upon inactivation of 7th Armored Division in final review of reports received from all sources:

Killed in Action - 228
Wounded in Action - 642
Missing in Action - $\frac{167}{1137}$ (Of whom about 120 are believed to have been PW's)

Note: It is believed that the above figures are substantially correct. Reports, however, were received from many sources and there is the possibility of there having been some duplication. (Percentage of error, either increase or decrease, is not believed to exceed ten percent.)

(3) Approximate Strength of Supporting Troops:

CC-B/9th Armored Division	3700
112th RCT (28th Infantry Division)	2000 (Estimated)
424th RCT (106th Infantry Division)	1700 (Estimated)
168th Engineer Combat Battalion	175
Hq & Sv Co, 81st Engr Combat Battalion	45
275th Armored Field Artillery Battalion	500
965th Field Artillery Battalion	500
14th Cavalry Group (Provisional)	<u>400</u> (Estimated)
	8020

(4) Vehicle Losses:

Tanks, Medium	- 73
Tanks, Medium (105mm How)	- 5
Tanks, Light	- 32
TD's	- 13
Carriages, 105mm How (SP)	- 2
Half-track Vehicles	- 72
Armored Cars	- 27

d. Enemy -

(1) Apparent Intentions:

(a) To gain the line of the MEUSE River; to turn North and capture NAMUR, LIEGE, and VERVIERS; to capture BRUSSELS and ANTWERP, thereby isolating the American First and

Ninth Armies, and the British Second and Canadian First Armies.

- (b) To utilize the ST. VITH area as a major supply installation for supporting the counter-offensive until LIEGE and NAMUR had been secured.

(2) Morale:

"SUPERIOR" -- all ranks of the German forces were flushed with their initial successes in smashing the American lines along a 60-mile front in less than 24 hours. The enemy were possessed of a fanatical determination that nothing could stop them, and the majority of the troops displayed a skill and initiative which stamped them as veterans from as well trained divisions as Germany had put in the field since 1939. All units were aggressive, and the tactics of all units to and including battalions were outstanding.

(3) Character of Enemy Fire and Observation:

All infantry assaults were supported by direct fire from medium and heavy tanks and assault guns. Artillery observation was "Excellent" to "Poor". After 18 December, the enemy employed divisional and corps type artillery and rocket artillery in copious quantities -- results, "Good" to "Poor". Mortars were first employed on the morning of the 18th, and continuously thereafter. Action took place in territory which was of Germanic origin, and many civilian contacts accurately reported to the enemy the location of Command Posts, tank and artillery dispositions, and other information which enabled the enemy in many instances to "pin-point" targets.

(4) Strength of Enemy:

<u>Type of Unit</u>	<u>Estimated Strength</u>
3 Volks Grenadier Divisions (18 VG; 62 VG; 560 VG)	21,000
3 SS Panzer Divisions (1 SS Pz; 2 SS Pz; 9 SS Pz)	30,000
2 Panzer Divisions (2 Pz; 116 Pz)	13,000
1 Panzer Grenadier Brigade ("GROSS DEUTSCHLAND")	<u>3,000</u>
	67,000
Supporting Troops (included 1 GHQ Artillery Brigade)	<u>20,000</u>
TOTAL ENEMY STRENGTH	87,000

(5) Enemy Losses:

	<u>Inflicted by 7th Armored Division</u>	<u>Inflicted by Supporting Units</u>
(a) <u>Vehicles (confirmed)</u>		
Tanks destroyed (all types)	113	20
Tanks damaged (all types)	15	15
SP Guns destroyed	4	?
AT Guns destroyed	6	?
Artillery pieces destroyed	2	?
Half-track vehicles destroyed	24	12
Staff cars destroyed	9	2
Other vehicles destroyed	46	2

**(b) Personnel (partly by actual count; partly by estimation
of observers)**

Killed	2460	Not
Wounded	1520	Reported
Prisoners	<u>326</u>	
	4306	

Note: These figures are recorded in "After Action Report, 7th Armored Division", December 1944, for the 7th Armored and for the supporting units, in: "After Action Reports", Combat Command "B", 9th Armored Division; 112th Infantry Regiment; and 424th Infantry Regiment.

The tabulations are not complete, for many officers and men who possessed "first-hand" knowledge of enemy casualties did not have the opportunity to report their figures during the action, and many of them subsequently were killed or missing in action.

Chapter II

OFFICIAL COMMENDATIONS



"Veterans they are, as the Tommy who watched them barrel down from northern Germany to meet Rundstedt testified: 'There's the bloody 7th', he said... 'They'll stop the bloody b_____ds. They're the bloody veterans...!'"

:
: Tanks of the 7th Armored Division :
: Attacking South down the MALMEDY :
: Road to retake ST. VITH in January :
: 1945 :
:

OFFICIAL COMMENDATIONS

7th Armored Division
for the
Action at St. Vith
17-23 December 1944
- - - -

In addition to the tribute paid the 7th Armored Division by General Marshall in his Biennial Report of the Chief of Staff (as quoted in foot-note 1, ante), the Division has received various other official commendations. These include a statement by the Secretary of War in which he cited five divisions, including the 7th Armored, for their defense of the ARDENNES; a personal message to the Division Commander from General Eisenhower; a statement by Field Marshal Montgomery; a proposed Citation by the French Government for the award of the Croix de Guerre with Palm to the entire Division; and a proposed Citation for award of the Distinguished Unit Citation.

Statement by Secretary of War Stimson

"The highest credit should be paid to all the ground force units which helped to halt the German drive in Belgium. There was the 1st Infantry Division which stoutly held a shoulder at Monschau, channeling the Germans to the south. The firm stand of that division added to the laurels it had won in Tunisia, Sicily and on the Normandy beaches. There was the 7th Armored Division which held at St. Vith like a rock in the midst of the initial Nazi onrush. It fought a defensive battle slowing the Germans and helping to protect the vital communication center at Liege. Then there was the 4th Infantry Division which helped to hold the southern shoulder in the Echternach area.

"The exploits of the 101st Airborne Division and elements of the 9th and 10th Armored Divisions in the gallant defense of Bastogne are already famous. By holding at Bastogne these troops deprived the Germans of a railroad and six highways which would have given impetus to the westward Nazi drive. The 82d Airborne Division bolstered the northern flank at Stavelot." 22

Personal Message from General Eisenhower

"From Gen. Eisenhower to Gen. Hodges:

Please transmit the following personal message from me to Hasbrouck of the Seventh Armored.

QUOTE The magnificent job you are doing is having a great beneficial effect on our whole situation. I am personally grateful to you and wish you would let all of your people know that if they continue to carry out their mission with the splendid spirit they have so far shown, they will have deserved well of their country. UNQUOTE." 23

Statement of Field Marshal Montgomery

As reported by Stars and Stripes:

"Montgomery praised all the American forces involved in the battle but specifically named the forces in three places along the Ardennes front where the Germans hit hardest.

The U. S. Seventh Armored Division's stand at St. Vith when 'this lone armored division stood off an entire Panzer army.'

The stand at the all important road junction town of Bastogne by the 101st Airborne Division.

The rally of several U. S. divisions on the northern or Monschau hinge of the breakthrough, including the 82nd Airborne Division's drive to reach the Seventh Armored.

When he was placed in charge of the troops north of the bulge, Montgomery related, he consulted with Lt. Gen. Courtney Hodges of the First Army regarding the isolated units around St. Vith.

'I think we ought to get those chaps back -- they've done their stuff, brave men,' he told Hodges." 24

22 Secretary of War's Weekly Summary on Progress of the War, issued 3 January 1945. Army-Navy Journal, 6 January 1945, p. 566.

23 Copy of original message is appended to Annex No. 1, After Action Report: Combat Command "B", 7th Armored Division, Month of December 1944.

24 First press conference held by Marshal Montgomery after assuming command of all Allied Forces north of the "Bulge". Stars and Stripes (Paris edition), 8 January 1945, p. 8.

Citation for Croix de Guerre with Palm -- Proposed by French Government
as Second Proposition for Citation in Orders of the French Army with
Award of the Fourragere

(First Proposition for Citation was for liberation of France in August
and September 1944, when 7th Armored Division spear-headed the Third
Army's XX Corps)

"On the 16th of December 1944, alerted in Rimbarg (Germany),
to come and stop the breakthrough made by the enemy in the
Belgian Ardennes, the 7th Armored Division received the order
to hold the waves of Panzer Divisions rolling down towards
France. Multiplying its counter-attacks, fooling the plans of
the enemy by the initiative of its bold movements, it succeeded
in holding alone from the 16th to the 23d of December by con-
stant fighting, especially bloody at St. Vith, Rodt and Gouvy,
with the enemy marching on a 40 kilometer front. In spite of
heavy losses, it held for four days instead of two the enemy
push, thus permitting by its own tenacity the arrival of Allied
support which broke down the dangerous German offensive already
slowed by four days of fighting with the 7th Armored Div-
ision.

"Under the command of Maj. Gen. R. W. Hasbrouck, the Seventh
Armored Division will remain in History as the valiant and un-
tiring unit composed exclusively of fighters with but a single
goal to attain -- the accomplishment of their mission with
absolutely no regard for their own lives." 25

Note: The First Proposition for Citation in Orders of the French Army was
not concurred in by Third Army although recommended by XX Corps. The
Second Proposition (for the stand at ST. VITH) was concurred in by Twelfth
Army Group, but with the non-concurrence of Third Army on the First Prop-
osition both Citations were disapproved by Headquarters European Command.
The French Government then was able to obtain the concurrence and approval
of Headquarters European Command for the Citation of three Battalions
of the 7th Armored Division for the Croix de Guerre with Palm -- two
awards: one for the Battle of France, the other for ST. VITH -- and
the award of the French Fourragere. These Battalions are the 23d Armored
Infantry Battalion, the 17th Tank Battalion, and the 31st Tank Battalion. 26

25 Correspondence on file with Decorations and Awards Branch, The
Adjutant General's Office, Washington, D. C.

26 23d Armd. Inf. Bn., 17th Tk. Bn., 31st Tk. Bn. cited twice for
French Croix de Guerre with Palm by Decision No. 274, and for the
French Fourragere by Decision No. 275, both dated 22 July 1946.
Copies of Citations on file with Decorations and Awards Branch, TAG.

Proposed Citation for Distinguished Unit Citation

BATTLE HONORS. -- As authorized by Executive Order 9396 (Sec I, WD Bul 22, 1943), superseding Executive Order 9075 (Sec III, WD Bul 11, 1942), the following unit is cited by the War Department under the provisions of Section IV, WD Circular 333, 1943, in the name of the President of the United States as public evidence of deserved honor and distinction. The citation reads as follows:

"7th Armored Division, with the following attached units:

203d Antiaircraft Artillery Automatic Weapons Battalion (Self-propelled)
814th Tank Destroyer Battalion (Self-propelled)
446th Quartermaster Truck Company
3967th Quartermaster Truck Company
275th Armored Field Artillery Battalion
965th Field Artillery Battalion

Combat Command "B", 9th Armored Division, including:

14th Tank Battalion
27th Armored Infantry Battalion
16th Armored Field Artillery Battalion
"D" Troop, 89th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (Mechanized), with attached Platoons "E" Troop and "F" Company
"B" Company, 9th Armored Engineer Battalion
"A" Company, 811th Tank Destroyer Battalion (Self-propelled)
"B" Battery, 482d Antiaircraft Artillery Automatic Weapons Battalion (Self-propelled)
"B" Company, 2d Armored Medical Battalion
"C" Company, 131st Armored Ordnance Maintenance Battalion

112th Infantry Regiment, with attached
229th Field Artillery Battalion
"C" Company, 103d Engineer Combat Battalion

168th Engineer Combat Battalion
Headquarters and Service Company, 81st Engineer Combat Battalion
3d Platoon, "F" Company, 423d Infantry Regiment

is cited for outstanding heroism during the Battle of the ARDENNES. These units distinguished themselves in combat against powerful and aggressive enemy forces consisting of more than 8 divisions, of which 3 were SS Panzer and 2 were Panzer, during the period 17-23 December 1944. The extraordinary heroism and gallantry of all ranks denied the Germans for more than 6 days the key communications center of ST. VITH, BELGIUM, which was essential to the success of the entire counter-offensive. All units were subjected to unceasing enemy tank and infantry attacks which mounted in ferocity as the

Germans still failed to gain their objective. By the second day, 18 December, the flanks were constantly threatened by enemy divisions which bypassed the ST. VITH area and pushed far to the rear, in an effort to encircle the 7th Armored Division and cut it off east of the SAIM River.

"Although penetrations of the Division's defensive cordon were temporarily secured, often with the aid of "Panther" and "Tiger" tanks which raked the front line positions with point blank fire, the enemy was repeatedly thrown back by the gallant troops who rose from their foxholes to eject the enemy in fierce hand-to-hand combat. Outnumbered and faced by a determined and fanatical veteran foe, the 7th Armored Division and attached units inflicted upon the enemy losses which included 133 known tanks destroyed and 4,306 known casualties. As these men continued to deny the ST. VITH area to the Germans, the entire counter-offensive lost the initial impetus gained during the first two days, and enemy supply columns became immobilized by the lack of the 5 highways and 3 railroads that centered at ST. VITH. The salient which this epic stand had created in the German lines threatened the entire northern flank of Fifth Panzer Army, prevented a link-up between Fifth Panzer and Sixth SS Panzer Armies, and denied maneuver room to Sixth SS Panzer Army thereby stopping its further westward movement. By 21 December the German timetable had been so disrupted that the enemy was forced to divert II SS Panzer Corps from the north and order it to secure the town without delay. With the arrival of this fresh Corps and its two hitherto uncommitted SS Panzer Divisions, the pressure became too great, and the forces which for 6 days had held the ST. VITH area so gallantly were ordered by the Army Group Commander to withdraw west of the SAIM and regain the friendly lines. Without the benefit of prepared defenses and despite heavy casualties, the 7th Armored Division and attached units had inflicted grievous losses on the greater part of 5 of the

8 enemy divisions engaged. This masterful and grimly determined stand by resourceful and gallant units is in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service." ²⁷

27

Correspondence on file with The Adjutant General.

Chapter III

ENEMY SITUATION



"...On the edges of the town you could see, like a picture-story in a book, where the German columns had broken through the perimeter defense and come right up to the edge of the houses themselves. You could see this from the burned-out tanks the Germans had left behind. The Germans had come in and one by one their tanks had been shot through until ... the trail of them was almost like a snake cut into little pieces..."

:
: Shattered wrecks of German tanks :
: and other military vehicles litter :
: both sides of a road leading into :
: the ARDENNES :
:

ENEMY SITUATION

St. Vith Area
17-23 December 1944

- - - -

1. GENERAL:

When the 7th Armored Division arrived in the ST. VITH area on 17 December 1944, information upon which to formulate an accurate estimate of the enemy situation was non-existent. By 20 December, the situation had clarified, and it was known that an aggregate of six German divisions were operating against the salient held by the 7th Armored. These known enemy divisions included: 18th, 62d, and 560th Volks Grenadier; 2d and 116th Panzer; and 1st SS Panzer. In addition, various units of the "GROSS DEUTSCHLAND" Division had been identified -- but the presence of the entire division was not accepted for it had been positively identified on the Russian Front just prior to 15 December. Later it was established that these units were part of the "FUEHRER ESCORT" Brigade composed of special employment troops, many of whom had served on the Eastern Front with the "GROSS DEUTSCHLAND" Division. To these six German divisions and the "FUEHRER ESCORT" (or "GROSS DEUTSCHLAND") Brigade, were added the full weight of II SS Panzer Corps with its 9th and 2d SS Panzer Divisions on 21 December. ²⁸

2. 7th ARMORED DIVISION G-2 PERIODIC REPORTS:

The day-by-day development of the enemy situation during the period 17-23 December 1944, is illustrated through the Division's G-2 Periodic Reports, copies of which are appended --

²⁸ Directorate of Tactical Investigation, British War Office, The German Counter-Offensive in the Ardennes, p. 18.

G-2 PERIODIC REPORT

SECRET
 : AUTH: CG, 7 AD:
 : INIT: :
 : DATE: 17 Dec 44:

FROM: 162100 Dec 44
 TO : 172400 Dec 44
 UNIT: 7th ARMD DIV
 APO 257
 US ARMY

No. 121

MAPS: GSGS 4336 & 4416, Scale 1/100,000, Sheets 13, 17, S1, T1, U1

1. ENEMY SITUATION AT END OF PERIOD

a. Enemy Front Line: A great deal of confusion exists as to the exact line occupied by the enemy at any given time, due to the extremely fluid conditions that exist. As of 1800, the front line in sectors of interest was generally, N to S, 8403, 8702, 8594, 8890, 9276, 9073, 8570, 7862, 8360, 8550.

b. Units In Contact:

- (1) 18 Inf (VG) Div - 8594 S to 8887 - Strength: Approx 5,500.
- (2) 62 Inf Div - 8887 S to 9077 - Strength: (?).
- (3) 116 Pz Div - 9077 S to 8673 - Strength: 7,500, 100 Tks.
- (4) 560 Inf Div - 8673 S to 8368 - Strength: (?).
- (5) 2 Pz Div - 8368 S to 8360 - Strength: 7,500, 100 Tks.
- (6) 26 Inf Div - 8360 S to 8552 - Strength: 6,000.

c. Reserves and Other Forces Capable of Intervention:

- (1) Elements of above Divs not yet committed.
- (2) 12 SS Pz Div.

(Note: It is believed that enemy's current practice of committing reserves in Bn or Regt strength supported by armor in ample strength will be effected as the situation dictates.)

2. ENEMY OPERATIONS DURING PERIOD

a. General Summary: Beginning at 160500 Dec, the enemy launched attacks, following fairly heavy Arty, along entire front from F0700 S to L1040. Attacks were made by groups of Inf ranging from 40 to 200 in number, and in general supported by Armor and ample Arty. Attacks continued today, with penetrations of friendly positions being made as outlined generally in Par 1 a. Enemy was able to link attacks N from P9586 and S from P9791 at SCHONBERG P9588, thereby isolating major portions of two Regts of the 106th Inf Div.

b. Operations of Component Elements:

- (1) An En Cln Incl 20-25 Tks (also Psnl carriers and wire Veh) observed moving W on Rd from OCHENBRACHE P7895 at Approx 1700.
- (2) Hvy Conc Inf Rptd in woods S MEYRODE P9390.

c. Miscellaneous: Combat Command "R" discovered a German ambush in general area P7896 on RECHT-LIGNEUVILLE Rd. Germans are using American Wpns and Vehs. (See Annex No. 1, "Operation 'GRIEFF'".)

3. MISCELLANEOUS

a. Tac/Recce Rpt: At 1300, large Conc Tks at L1929; 60 Trks and undetermined number foot troops at L0541.

b. Weather: 24 hour period beginning 172400 Dec - Cloudy and cold. Visibility 2 miles improving to 3 miles in PM. Humidity high. Temperature: Max - 40, Min - 36.

c. General: As of 1800, enemy held BORN P8594, WALLERODE P8890, ELCHERAT P8982, HECHESCHIED P9276, LUTZKAMPEN P8973, FAYMONVILLE P8602,

WAIMES P8403, BUTGENBACH K9104, and RJ at K9104. Enemy was on edge of KRINKELT L9704 and WIRTZFELD L9504. Rcn elements Rptd WALLERODE P8890 clear of enemy as of 2115.

4. ENEMY CAPABILITIES (Adopted from VIII Corps Per Rpt No. 182)
a. (1) The enemy can continue present counterattack to restore lost positions with the forces now on his front.

(2) The enemy can further reinforce his front line strength with additional reserve forces and mount an offensive.

(3) The enemy can take up an active defense of his present positions or those which he may fall back on.

b. Discussion: Capability No. 1 is being currently implemented. It is too early at this time to state any conclusions as to implementation of capability No. 2 but present indications based on statements of PW's taken from all enemy Divs listed in current OB notes favor this. Capability No. 3 with direction of the main effort depending upon which will offer the more probable success, likely to be implemented if he is stopped along present positions and his attack does not meet with success.

/s/ Murray

MURRAY

G-2

Annex No. 1 to Per Rpt No. 121

TRANSLATION OF GERMAN DOCUMENTS

I GHQ, 66 Corps
Abt. Ia.

CP, 15 Dec 44

Enclosed order of the Cmdr in Chief West and addendum of Army Gp "B" Cmdr as well as that of Feldjaeger Kommando Cmdr, for special attention. Will be made public shortly before beginning of attack.

Subject: Undertaking "GREIF"

1. Higher HQ planned to include in the operation the Undertaking "GREIF".
2. Undertaking "GREIF" could also include own forces with American equipment, American weapons, American vehicles, American insignia's - especially the 5-pointed yellow or white star.
3. To avoid confusion with enemy troops, the forces employed in Undertaking "GREIF" will identify themselves to our own troops:
 - a. During the day--by taking off their steel helmets.
 - b. At night-- by red-blue light signals with flashlights.
4. Forces of the Undertaking "GREIF" will also indicate the employment by painting white dots on houses, trees, and roads used by them.
5. Employment of forces of Undertaking "GREIF" is planned along the following roads:
 - a. Trois Fonts (5 km SW Stavelot), Bass Bodeux, Villettes, Bra, la Fourche, Haarrs, Deux Ryn, Roche a Freus.
 - b. Right (8.5 km NW St. Vith), Et. Thier, Ville du Bois, Vielsalm, Salmchateau, Roadcrossing at Point 444 (0.5 km N Joubienal), Hebronval, Regne, Roadcrossing at Point 538 (2 km SW Malempre), Monhay, Road Fork at Point 430 (Ostrand Grandmenil), Roadcrossing Point 200 (1 km N Mormont), Roche a fronc.
 - c. Roche a fronc, Aisne, Juzanne, Donal, Road Fork 2 km SW Homal, Tchigne, Dneux, Amas, Ocquier, Vervox.

For the General Command
SIEBERT, C o S

(Source: VIII Corps Per Rpt No. 182)

II

Soldiers of the West Front!! Your great hour has arrived. Large attacking armies have started against the Anglo-Americans. I do not have to tell you anything more on that. You feel it yourself.

WE GAMBLE EVERYTHING!

You carry with you the holy obligation to give everything to achieve things beyond human possibilities for

Our Fatherland and our Fuhrer!

von Runstedt
C in C West
General Feldmarshall

Dist: Feldjaeger Kdo z. B. V., G-3
66 Corps G-3, Chief of Section

(Source: 106 Inf Div Per Rpt No. 6)

SECRET
 AUTH: CG, 7 AD
 INIT:
 DATE: 18 Dec 44

FROM: 172400 Dec 44
 TO : 182400 Dec 44
 UNIT: 7th ARMD DIV
 APO 257
 US ARMY

No. 122

MAPS: No Change.

1. ENEMY SITUATION AT END OF PERIOD

a. Enemy Front Line: The front is in a highly fluid state. Generally speaking, forces of the Div hold or dominate the line PUTTEAU 7791 (incl) - CR 803927 - RJ 858902 - RJ 872885 - 864863.

b. Units in Contact: Only contacts determined through PW identifications were (1) Fus Co, 18 Inf Div (E of ST VITH) and (2) 7 Co, 1 Pz Gren Regt, 1 SS Pz Div (PUTTEAU 7791). Contact was constant throughout period with both Inf and Armd units, mostly of the two Divs represented above.

c. Reserves and Other Forces Capable of Intervention: In addition to major formations listed in Per Rpt No. 121, 1 SS Pz Div has entered the picture. How much of the Div is committed is unknown; uncommitted elements must be carried as reserve until located.

2. ENEMY OPERATIONS DURING PERIOD

a. General Summary: Enemy continued pressure on entire front, effecting penetrations or flanking thrusts where he found resistance weakest. In virtually every action entered into by the enemy, Inf forces supported by Tks and/or AG's were used. Pressure was maintained to the SE, E, and NE of ST VITH; RECHT 7994 was taken by the enemy at approximately 0300; Germans took PUTTEAU, were ejected, and counter-attacked the village in some force from the N and E at 1855. Penetrations by Tks to the N and S of the Div were made during the course of the period - Tks being reported controlling STAVELOT 7201 to the N and GOUVY 7279 - CHERAM 6677 to the S. Various penetrations further to the W were reported by various basically unconfirmed sources. The situation in the ST VITH area remained relatively quiet after approximately 2000, with the exception of a great deal of vehicular movement, including that of Tks, to the N of the town. Elsewhere on the front, things were fairly quiet after the fall of darkness except for mortar and S/A fire.

b. Operations of Component Elements:

(1) Armor - Operation of armor can be briefly summed up as that of support of Inf forces in offensive operations on entire front. Numerous movements of armor were reported on the front throughout period. Twenty plus Tks were in operation to E of ST VITH. After Inf force occupied RECHT, 7 Tks and 1 AG were reported therein. The Inf force operating vic of PUTTEAU was supported by SP AG's. Higher Hqs Rptd some 30 Tks operating vic of STAVELOT 7201, and Tks were Rptd to have penetrated positions to the S vic of GOUVY and CHERAM. A Rptd Atk by an Est 3 Tks and an unknown Amt of Inf vic of 858901 at 2125 failed to develop by end of period.

(2) Arty - There was little Arty Rptd during period. Intermittent shelling of ST VITH was noted however.

(3) Inf - Est 40 Inf armed with bazookas and S/A captured RECHT at approx 0300. Inf forces with Armd support cut road VIELSALM 7089 - ST VITH at PUTTEAU, occupied the village, and after being ejected therefrom, counterattacked at 1855. Efforts were repulsed. Inf to E of ST VITH brought pressure to bear on defending elements but were driven back to previous posns before darkness. Est 2 Bns Inf Rptd operating due E of town; additional forces to SE and NE. Small infiltrating parties were active along entire front. Automatic weapons, S/A, and mortar fire were heavy in all operations.

3. MISCELLANEOUS

a. Enemy Casualties:

- (1) PW's - 2. Total to date - 6056.
- (2) Est killed - 60.
- (3) Tks KO'd - 5.

b. PW Statements: PW from 7 Co, 1 Pz Gren Regt, 1 SS Pz Div, captured in PUTTEAU stated Co had 3 Rifle Plats (25 men each), Hvy Wpns Plat with 42 men and 4 Hvy MG's. Stated also that atk on PUTTEAU this morning was supported by 5 AG's (50mm long-barrelled AT guns on Mk III chassis). Unit has been in action for 3 days.

c. Enemy troops with American uniforms, using American vehicles, and firing American Wpns have been active at several points along front. Enemy's use of our Wpns has been particularly in evidence during period.

4. ENEMY CAPABILITIES - No Change.

/s/ Murray
MURRAY
G-2

SECRET
 : AUTH: CG, 7 AD:
 : INIT: :
 : DATE: 19 Dec 44:
 No. 123
 MAPS: No Change.

FROM: 182400 Dec 44
 TO : 192400 Dec 44
 UNIT: 7th ARMD DIV
 APO 257
 US ARMY

1. ENEMY SITUATION AT END OF PERIOD

a. Enemy Front Lines: No definite front line exists on the Div left flank. Our troops hold a general front line as follows: Vic POTEAU - 770917 - 780917; SE of RECHT 808937 - 813940 - 820940 - 822935; NW of ST VITH 844899 - 851902 - 859902 - 870888 - 873878 - thence SW to 862864 where contact is made with Elms 9 AD.

b. Defensive Organization: INF DUG IN 862905 to 863899 and at 876910; INF DUG IN 76219158 to 77329111; 75 INF DUG IN 68458994; Est Co INF DUG IN N and S of RR 805935. MG Posns Rptd at 76879212; 77209181; 77189159; 77189184; E of Br TROIS PONTS 6798.

c. Units In Contact:

Identifications by PW's

Fus Co, 18 Volksgrenadier Div	Vic WALLERODE 9089
2 Co, 1818 AT Bn, 18 Volksgrenadier Div	Vic WALLERODE 9089
1 Bn, 164 Inf Regt, 62 Inf Div	identified Vic 8676
Hqs Co, 1818 Engr Bn, 18 VG Div	identified by document

captured Vic 857903.

d. Arty: EN ARTY POSNS Rptd at 874905; 850934; 823948; 899930; En Arty believed to be going into Posn Vic 823949 at 1010; En Arty Rptd to be Conc NE of MEYERODE 8993.

e. Supply and Evacuation Establishments: Ammo and Supply Point Rptd at MEYERODE 8993; MSR - Rd E of RECHT 7994 to 822949 and then N on Rd from that point.

2. ENEMY OPERATIONS DURING PERIOD

a. General Summary: Considerable Tk and Inf activity during night of 18-19 Dec Vic 863898. En forces were aggressive throughout the day in Vic NDR EMMELS 838908 and HUNNINGEN 845898 and WALLERODE 975899. Local Atks were made employing Inf supported by Tks, all of which were repulsed. Units Rptd Hvy En S/A fire in RECHT sector during the morning hours. En Inf supported by AG and Tk fire continued to dominate the "no man's land" of PUTTEAU 7791. At 1618 approx 200 En were Obsd massing at 874905, and at 1645 an Atk of Inf with towed AT guns was launched toward ST VITH from direction of WALLERODE 8790 to NE. This Atk was repulsed. At 1645 an En force Est as 200 Inf were Rptd moving S at 667991. This force attempted a river crossing Vic TROIS PONTS but the Atk failed. Relatively strong En parties were active along both N and S flanks and in rear of Div. No ground was lost to En efforts during period.

b. Operations of Component Elements:

- (1) Air - No En air was Rptd over Div sector during period.
- (2) AT - In an abortive Atk on ST VITH at 1645, En towed AT pieces into battle area. Counter measures prohibited use of same.
- (3) Armor - En armor in form of Mk IV, V, and VI Tks, SP AG's, and Armd Cars were in evidence on all points of contact during period.

In the general area NE of ST VITH 8588 Armd Mvmt was recorded during hours of darkness; no Atk was effected during this period. Tks were noted at following points during period: 5 Tks 829928 at 0920 (E to W); Tks, number unknown, into woods just NW 864902 at 0840; 1 Tiger and 1 Mk IV, 2 others, type unknown, Vic 862898 at 0940; 4 Tks, type unknown, SW through NDR EMMELS 838908 at 0940; 5 Tks at 578000 at 1130 (unconfirmed); 3 Tks at RJ 773918 at 1427; Tks in support of Inf Atk Vic HUNNINGEN 8489 at 1310; Est 17 Tks E side of Br at TROIS PONTS 7977 at 1335; 9 (possible Mk III's N of PUTTEAU 7791 at 1440; 2 Tiger Tks 787935 at 1650; 3 or 4 Mk IV's just N of GOUVY 7278 at 1200 (unconfirmed); Possible Tks, number unknown, Vic 776920 at 1930; 2 Tks in Atk on Rd Blk at ORTHO 4871 at 1600.

(4) Arty - No Shellreps received during period. Only Light and Med Arty in limited amounts fired on targets in Div zone. Towns of HUNNINGEN and PUTTEAU Recd major portion of En Arty fire.

(5) Inf - En Inf extremely active on all fronts both from dug-in defensive Posns in laying fire on friendly Posns, and in Atks. Inf forces were used with and without armored support. Active efforts of infiltration were in evidence in entire sector, both by patrols and combat forces.

(6) Miscellaneous - (a) Three German ambulances were Obsd towing field pieces Vic RECHT 7994. (b) Inf was Obsd in American $\frac{1}{4}$ -Ton Veh E of Br at TROIS PONTS, and PW captured Vic GRUFFLINGEN 8281 was driving a US $\frac{1}{4}$ -Ton Veh. (c) Friendly Trps captured Parachutist 1 MI W of VIELSALM 7089 at 1800. (d) US H/T in German Veh Clm was knocked out by our forces. (e) Germans Rptd in Civ clothes in MALEMPRE 5688.

3. MISCELLANEOUS

a. Enemy Casualties:

(1) PW's - 46. Total PW's to date 6100.

(2) Est En dead - 230.

Est En wounded - 180.

(3) Veh casualties: 12 Tks, 1 AG, 5 Trks (one of which was carrying Ammo), 1 US H/T, 1 US $\frac{1}{4}$ -Ton, 5 German Stf Cars, 1 Ron Veh.

(4) Wpn casualties: 3 Arty Pcs, 5 Mortars, one 88 AT (towed), unestimated number of MG's.

b. Morale: In spite of evidenced aggressive spirit, PW's display no greater morale than those processed under conditions more adverse to the enemy. One factor to be considered in this respect is the failure of the higher commands to provide the air support which was promised for this operation. Two examples of desertion were encountered during period.

c. Enemy Supply: There is evidently no shortage of necessary gasoline and Ammo for this operation. As expressed by one PW, greatest difficulty of supply is in carrier vehicles from rear areas to front line positions.

4. ENEMY CAPABILITIES - No Change.

/s/ Murray
MURRAY
G-2

CONSOLIDATED IPW NOTES

PW's processed today: 46. Total processed to date: 6100.

UNITS IDENTIFIED:

- 4 - 1 Bn, 304 PGR, 2 Pz Div
- 2 - 2 Bn, 304 PGR, 2 Pz Div
- 3 - 38 Pz Sig Bn, 2 Pz Div
- 21 - 1 Bn 164 Inf Regt, 62 Volks Gren Div
- 2 - Div Fus Co, 18 Volks Gren Div
- 9 - AT Bn 1818, 18 Volks Gren Div (2 Co)
- 1 - 2 Co, 116 Pz Rcn Bn, 116 Pz Div
- 4 - 5 Btry, 2 Bn, 401 GHQ Arty Brig

PW STATEMENTS

PW's of 304 PGR state that only Hvy Plat is transported in H/T's; Rest of each Co has bicycles.

Mission of 1 Bn, 164 Inf Regt, 62 Div was to capture and hold the bridge at STEINBRUECK until arrival of 2 Bn. Each Bn has 8 HMG's, 4 Lt Hows, and 5-6 AG's. Assault Guns stated to be attached from Pz Div GROSSDEUTSCHLAND.

CO 62 VG Div - Col KITTEL
CO 164 Regt - Lt Col HILDNER

Div Fus Co, 18 VG Div: Co is stated to be the elite of the Div and is used only for special purposes. Strength - 200 (60% are under 18 Yrs of age). Co had 4 Tks attached. Wpns in Co: submachine guns, grenade launchers.

CG 18 VG Div - Gen HOFFMAN
Div CP - PRUEM

PW stated that there was a V-1 launching site at top of high wooded hill near BICHEL. (Hill is highest one there.)

2 Co, AT Bn 1818, 18 VG Div consisted of 14 Tks (75mm Guns). 2 Tks destroyed this AM. Others scattered in woods S of PRUMERBERG.

CO - 1st Lt PAGENEERG

2 Co, 116 Pz Rcn Bn, 116 Pz Div: Rcn Bn consists of 2 Cos. Unit has 6 AG's and 15 Panther Tks attached. During 4 day drive, Bn had suffered about 10-15% casualties. PW states there is enough gasoline and Ammo. Unit was promised air support but PW had not seen a single plane in 4 days. Markings of planes were supposed to be yellow "snakes".

Div Cmdr - Graf von WALDENBURG
Bn CO - Maj STEFAN

PW claims that there is a V-1 launching site in a forest Vic ADENAU. Prisoner thought 2 Pz Div was to make main effort, and that objective was LUXEMBOURG, with route of advance through main Rd UFLINGER-LUXEMBOURG; also thought his unit was temporarily Atchd to 2 Pz Div.

5 Btry, 2 Bn, 401 GHQ Arty Brig: PW's were captured 2 days ago Vic WEISSENBACH. According to statements, Brig has 5 Bns. Number of Btrys per Bn was not known. Each Btry has 4-105 Gun Hows, drawn by full tracked prime movers.

ALLIED PW CAMP: According to PW statement, camp for Allied PW's is located near BEUTHEU, Upper Silesia. There is a possibility that PW's work in the coal mines in this area.

* * * * *

Annex No. 2 to Per Rpt No. 123

Translation of Enemy Document Captured NE of ST VITH

Infantry Regt 294

TOP SECRET

Regtl CP 13 Dec 44

10 copies
copy

LIGHT SIGNALS, PYROTECHNICS AND SIGNAL AMMUNITION,
IDENTIFICATION PANELS USED ON THE WESTERN FRONT

Alarm Signal (Army, Navy, and Airforce)	- 1 white star as advanced signal - 6 red stars.
Out of the way	- Double or single star white and red several times in rapid succession.
We are here	- Single star white.
Advance fire	- Single star green.
Concentrated barrage	- Single star red.
Tank warning	- Violet smoke cartridge.
Request for marking own front lines	- 2 red stars with dark red trail.
Recognition of own troops by planes	-
Front line	Orange smoke signal.
Own troops	Swastika flag.

: SECRET :
 :AUTH: CG, 7 AD:
 :INIT: :
 :DATE: 20 Dec 44:

FROM: 192400 Dec 44
 TO : 202400 Dec 44
 UNIT: 7th ARMD DIV
 APO 257
 US ARMY

No. 124

MAPS: No Change.

1. ENEMY SITUATION AT END OF PERIOD

a. Enemy Front Lines: Beginning vic PUTTEAU 7791, the front line from W to E runs generally as follows: 773917 - 790914 - 800900 - 830900 - 840897 - 852902 - 857900 - 867888 - 872887 - 874877 - 863864.

b. Units In Contact: See Annex No. 2, IPW Report for a summary of identifications made through PW's taken during period. Briefly stated, elements of the following divisions were identified: 1 SS Pz Div, GROSS-DEUTSCHLAND Div, 18 VG Div, and 560 VG Div.

2. ENEMY OPERATIONS DURING PERIOD

a. General Summary: En Contd his aggressive action in vic NDR EMMELS 8490, HUNNINGEN 8489, & WALLERODE 9089 making several Atks towards ST VITH 8588 during the day employing Inf supported by Tks, and Tks without Inf. All Atks were successfully repulsed. An En Tk Atk coming S from RECHT 7994 toward PUTTEAU was repulsed at 1130/During afternoon En activity was Rptd in this same vic at 77739202.

On the S flank, GOUVY 7177 was Atkd by En Inf supported by mortar and some Arty fire at 1200. Hvy fighting was in progress throughout the afternoon until about 1740 when the Atk was repulsed. Hvy casualties were inflicted on the En during this engagement. At 1300 an En Ptrl attempted to enter CHERAM 6677 but was driven off. A more determined effort using stronger forces of Inf was made at 1715. This atk was also repelled. Further to the W, German Tks and Inf were able to infiltrate into and hold SAMREE 5081. According to PW the En now has 2 Bns of Inf supported by Arty and Tks in this town.

b. Operations of Component Elements:

(1) AT - AP fire from vic NDR EMMELS at 1540.

(2) Armor - Enemy armor or movement of armor was general throughout the sector. The following Tk locations and Mvmts were noted: Tk activity 866851 & 879900; Tk Asmbly area 88548600 at 0700. Tks in large Nos moving in NRD EMMELS at 0750. En Clm Incl Tks at 822950 at 0840. Hvy Tk Mvmt WALLERODE at 0850. 20 En Tks 881903 at 1000. 14 En Tks heard vic 8789 at 0800; Mk V or VI went into woods 887907 at 0920; 5 Tks moving along Rd at 778924 at 1025. En Tk Clm moving S along Rd 846915 - 846905 at 1045. 18 Tks Rptd at 87749007 at 1045. En Tks at 888880 at 1155. Armd Mvmt Obsd moving W on Rd 878923 at 1155. Tk at 778920 at 1250. Armor going into position WALLERODE at 2208.

(3) Arty - Intermittent Arty fire during period in PUTTEAU area. 6 Rds Arty fire vic LAROCHE 4678 at 1045, and at 1200 this town Recd fairly Hvy Arty fire. Hvy Arty Fire falling at 520820 at 1620. 3 Rds 88mm fell at RODT 8188 at 1630. 75mm and Hvy mortar fire fell at 846897 at 1725.

(4) Inf - Inf units Contd to play a dominant role at all points of contact, especially at GOUVY & CHERAM. Inf Rptd at following locations: DUG-IN INF vic 849909 at 0905. Est Approx 1 Co INF at 878885. Inf 842904 at 0807. ENTRENCHED INF AT 85539080, 842904, & 865887. 30 En Inf at 778921 at 1425. 1 Plat Inf dug in at 77119219. Bn of Inf at 77749265 at 1710. En Inf Ptrls Obsd vic 770920. Inf Ptrl moving S at 845902 at 2140. Inf in Atk P_osns vic 885887 at 2208.

(5) Engr - En Rd Blk manned by entrenched Inf at 518819.

(6) Miscellaneous - Hvy En Veh Mvmt & Tks from MEDELL 8892 to BORN 8593 was Rptd during day. Unconfirmed Rpt of 100 En located in MONT LE BAN 6478 this AM & 30-40 En Tks and Arty vic WANNE 7197 & 7398 at 1540.

3. MISCELLANEOUS

a. Enemy Casualties:

- (1) Total PW's - 32. Total to date - 6132.
- (2) Est En dead - 360.
- (3) Est En wounded - 275.
- (4) Veh casualties - 14 Tks & 11 other Vehs destroyed.
- (5) Wpns - 1 Arty Pc known to have been destroyed.

b. Action of En forces on our S flank during the day confirmed the information given in a Capt'd March Order from 1130 Inf Regt, 560 Inf Div, dtd 191400 Dec 44 which gave the Regtl Rte of Adv as follows; DINSFELD 7970 - ULFINGEN 7570 - CHERAM 6677 - ODEIGNE 5086 - PREINEUX 5186. Document also listed CP of 560 Inf Div and 20 Tks at SASSEL 755685.

4. ENEMY CAPABILITIES

En is capable of continuing his general offensive. The result of his offensive in the Div zone may be an Atk from the NE, SE, or S or any combination of these three to eliminate the salient now held by our units. To make this Atk the En can use uncommitted elements of units already in contact together with such other reserves believed to be in this area, namely: 11 Pz Div and 326 Inf Div, which as yet remain unlocated.

/s/ Murray
MURRAY
G-2

* * * * *

Annex No. 1 to Per Rpt No. 124

TRANSLATION OF CAPTURED GERMAN DOCUMENT

The original document was taken from a captured Staff Car of a German Major, Finance Officer, 58 Pz Corps, at DIEFELD 7678 on 202300 Dec 1944. If the following document is true, and there seems no logical reason to believe it otherwise, it would indicate a resurgence of strength unequalled since the breakthrough in Normandy.

Division G-1
116th Panzer Division

CP 19 Dec, 1944

Subject: Ration Strength

To the
 COMMANDING GENERAL 58th PZ. CORPS
 Rations

The ration strength of the Division as of 15 Dec., 1944 is:

Officers	403	Horses:	251		
Civilian Employees	46				
N.C.O.'s	3,034	Rations	Grade Ia	100	
Enlisted Men	13,440		I	21	
Volunteers (Eastern)	217		II	119	
	17,140		III	11	
				251	

Broken Down - Rations	Grade I	14,651
	II	500
	III	1,989
		17,140

Certified as to Correctness
 (signature illegible)
 Headquarters Corporal

Signed Dr. Palck

Annex No. 2 to Per Rpt No. 124

CONSOLIDATED IPW REPORT
 (Period 192400-202400 Dec 1944)

1. PW's taken to date	6100
PW's taken during period	32
TOTAL	6132

2. Units Identified:	No. PW's	Location
7th Co, 1st SS PGR, 1st SS Pz Div	1	Vic PUTTEAU
Div Sig Co, GROSS-DEUTSCHLAND Div	4	" NDR EMMELS
Div Fus Co, 18th VG Div	1	" " "
Div Hq, 560th Div	2	" GOUVY
Hq Co, 1129th Regt, 560th Div	1	" CHERAM
Hq Co, 1130th Regt, 560th Div	1	" GOUVY
1st Co, " " " "	12	" "
2d Co, " " " "	2	" "
3d Co, " " " "	5	" "
4th Co, " " " "	1	" "
14th Co, " " " "	2	" "
	32	

3. PW Statements:

7th Co, 1st SS PGR PW states his Co was leading Co of leading Bn in Atk. Mission was to seize PUTTEAU (775975) and secure roads leading from town. Some personnel were carried on Mk III Tks (50mm AT Gun) of which the Co had 5 Atchd. Co had strength of Approx 125 men. PW was taken in

PUTTEAU. Locations as given for some time past were:

15 Sept	HALDSCHMIDT vic SIEGEN
15 Oct	SCHWERFEN vic EUSKIRCHEN
15 Nov	SUEDHALRAERN vic WALDORF

Div Sig Co, GROSS-D Div PW's state that they had mission to lay wire to points thought to be occupied. Mission of the Task Force of GD Div was to take NIEDEREMMELS (8491), but was repulsed by our Tks. The second regiment of the Div is stated to be a Fusilier Regt. PW's do not believe that this Regt is in immediate area. PW's claim that there are no organic Arty, AT, or AA units in the Div, but that all these are Atchd. One PW mentioned an organic Panzer unit, one regiment of which was supposed to support the Atk this morning, but never showed up. It was reported to have 12 Tks of various types, and possibly 5 AG's. Div CP in woods at 8963. C/S and G-3 office in BORN 8593. CG is Col. Gen. v. MANTEUFFEL. CO of one of the Regts is Lt Col v. WERTHEIM. Repl unit of this Div is in GOTTEBUS, S of Berlin.

Div Fus Co, 18th VG Div PW states his Co contains Slovenes and Yugoslavs who would like to desert. PW was told that Allied propaganda leaflets contained names of deserters, which may deter others attempting to desert for fear of reprisals against their families.

Hq Co, 560th VG Div PW's (One Off and one EM). Message found on officer dated 141900 Dec, URGENT, to 1130th Inf Regt. "1130th Regt will march BINSFELD-ULFINGEN-NDR BESTLINGEN-GOUVY-CHERAM-MONTELBAN-ODEIGNE-FREZEL." (signed) NETTELBECK, Asst G-3. This message was to be delivered by the officer in person. No similar messages were sent to the 1128th or 1129th Regts. PW's believe that it rescinded a previous march order. No time was mentioned; PW's did not know when the Regt was to take up the march. PW's followed the route set in the message but could not find the Regt. Officer claims that the Div Hq radio truck hit a mine, and that there was no telephonic communication with the 1130th. He states that this message will not be transmitted to the regiment by other means. Believes Regt had already left on its original route of march; thinks this is reason he could not find it.

Hq Co, 1129th Regt PW had mission of guiding horse-drawn ambulance to MONT LE BAN to establish Med Coll Pt; was taken in CHERAM. PW's bicycle was marked with Red Cross, but he was armed with rifle.

1st, 2d, 3d, 4th Cos, 1130th VGR, 560th Div PW's were all taken vic GOUVY. This Bn was the forward element of the Atk which started South of LUXEMBOURG, and suffered heavy losses on the first day. 2d Co began the Atk with 85 men, and - at the latest - has a strength of 12. Most casualties were caused by mortars. The 1st Sgt of the 1st Co estimates the strength of the entire Bn as about 30 men. Other estimates run from 40-70. The PW's have deliberately been kept in ignorance of adjacent and higher units, and ultimate objectives. Supply had not caught up with the troops. They received no food for four days, but captured American rations in bunkers. The semi-automatic rifle, a copy of the American M-1, seemed to be in fairly frequent use, at least in the 1st Co. Weapons of the 4th Co are said to have been 4 or 5 81mm mortars, and 4 or 5 HMG's. From the

original strength of 120, a group of 60 men were withdrawn for separate employment as an assault unit.

14th Co, 1130th Regt (formerly called 10th Co) has no AT Guns. The weapons are 54 bazookas and Panzerfausts. At the beginning of the Atk, the 1st Plt went to the 1st Bn, the 2d Plt to the 2d Bn, and the third split up, mission unknown.

Personalities:	Div CO	Col LANGHAUSER (formerly CO, 1130th)
	CO, 1130th	Lt Col SCHUMANN
	1st Bn CO	Capt Pfeffer

OB COMMENT

The presence of at least part of the famous GROSS-DEUTSCHLAND Division on this front is the first instance of its employment in the West. As late as November a reliable source placed it in the East. Its presence here is supported by Signal Co PW's, and statements of PW's from the 1130th Regt, who had been told that they would be supported by this Div.

Further new units reported were the Pz LEHR Div whose 902d Regt yielded prisoners directly East of BASTOGNE, and the 11th Pz Div, as yet uncontacted but reported in the rear of the 560th Div.

A late arrival, "stop press", document places the strength of the 116th Pz Div on 15 Dec at the astounding figure of 17,140. Associated documents dated 14 Dec, found in the effects of an Oberstabzahlmeister Major Finance Dept) indicate that the LVIII Corps (Pz) controls both the 116th Pz Div and the 401st Volks Arty Corps Mtz. Another note, this one dated 15 Dec shows MANTEUFFEL as commander of the Fifth Panzer Army, distributing largess to men who have been on front line duty. This document coupled with the appearance of Manteuffel's signature on the original order for the offensive could well indicate the presence of the Fifth Panzer Army on this front.

OB TEAM #32

G-2 PERIODIC REPORT

SECRET
 : AUTH: CG, 7 AD;
 : INIT: ;
 : DATE: 21 Dec 44;

FROM: 202400 Dec 44
 TO : 212400 Dec 44
 UNIT: 7th ARMD DIV
 APO 257
 US ARMY

No. 125

MAPS: No Change.

1. ENEMY SITUATION AT END OF PERIOD

a. Enemy Front Lines: Lines remain unchanged in the N and E to ST VITH 8588. Enemy has succeeded in penetrating to ST VITH from due E and to the S of the town has reached a general line 869843 - 856837 - 838823 - 846765 - 760745. West therefrom, friendly troops are in control of GOUVY 7278, CHERAM 6677, and CR at 5785; situation in rear areas is too fluid and obscure to determine a line.

b. Defensive Organization: Strong point consisting of AT Guns, 1 US Med Tk, and Inf encountered at 497839; Rd Blks were encountered at 799742 and to N & E of SAMREE 5091.

c. Units In Contact: Elements of 18 VG Div, 1 SS Pz Div, GROSSDEUTSCHLAND Div, 560 VG Div, and 62 VG Div (For identifications, see IPW Rpt, Annex No. 1).

d. Artillery: Concentration of En's Arty to the E seems to be in the vic of WALLERODE 8789. Unconfirmed Rpts place HD 75mm Pcs on the high ground to the S of GOUVY 7278. Some Arty was emplaced to the SE of CR at 5785. Arty was active deep in the rear areas to the S flank. Most of the Arty in the entire area was 75mm and 88mm; some 105mm and 150mm was recorded. Some NEBELWERFER fire was reported to the E.

e. Reserves and Other Forces Capable of Intervention: No Known Change.

2. ENEMY OPERATIONS DURING PERIOD

a. General Summary: En was relatively quiet during period before dawn - there being recorded only Mvmts behind the lines, patrolling, infiltration, and S/A fire. Pressure was resumed during the morning, however, and maintained throughout the remainder of the period. Atks were launched during the day as follows: 10 Tks plus Inf vic NIEDENGEN 867849 at 0720; strong Inf vic 881883 and 881887 at 1225; Inf with Tk support E ST VITH 8588 at 1310; Tks and Inf with Arty preparation SE WALLERODE 8789; 5 Tks and Inf vic 839921 at 1510; Tks with Inf vic 872885 at 1650; Tks and Inf vic 838818 at 1715, and Inf vic 819899 at 1730; Inf on CR 5785 at 1815; Inf and Tks vic 868862 at 1915; Inf plus Armd Vehs on CHERAM 6677 at 1800; Inf vic 773917 at 2000. Numerous other "pressure points" were active throughout period. Most of the Atks were preceded by noticeable Mvmts of the Trps involved, and most of them were repulsed without loss of ground. However, enemy forces were able to penetrate our lines as indicated in par 1. a. In addition, En Cmbt Ptrls were active throughout the day, ambushing Vehs and sniping at traffic. Several Vehs were lost to these strong points. Hvy Mvmts of Vehs, particularly in the RECHT (7994), NDR EMMELS (8490), and the OBR EMMELS (8290) areas were noted.

b. Operation of Component Elements:

(1) Armor - Tks were involved in every action on the E front today. Numbers varied with the intensity of the particular Atk concerned, ranging from 3 to 10. Mvmt of Armd Vehs in larger numbers was noted behind the En lines on several occasions. Armd Vehs were also active on the S flank, not particularly in aggressive operations, but in Mvmt generally to the W.

(2) Arty - Arty was much more active during the period than previously noted during the operation. Nebelwerfer fire was also noted on the E front. Hvy Concs of Arty fire were noted for the first time -- this on the E front. Otherwise in the area, the Arty was in the form of harrassing fire, and generally of lesser calibers. Much direct fire of high velocity Wpns was employed. Some counterbattery fire (105mm) was received by our Arty in vic 795875.

(3) Engrs - Bridge blown at 365875 last night.

(4) Inf - Inf was predominant in all of the Atks listed in par 2. a., above. Inf forces were used recklessly and always in strength. Infiltration of Inf was apparent all over the area; Gmbt Ptrls were active on the main Rds in the area to the E behind our own lines. Concs of Inf were noted at numerous points deep behind our lines, Confirming Rpts that at least a part of the Inf has been motorized. Inf occupied the high ground to the N of PUTTEAU 7791 in some strength.

(5) Air - 1 En plane, identified as JU 52 (unconfirmed) flew into area at 2300 and left at 2304. No drop was observed.

3. MISCELLANEOUS

a. Enemy Casualties:

- (1) PW's today - 15. PW's to date - 6147.
- (2) No estimate on En killed and wounded.
- (3) 4 Tks known KO'd.

b. Supply and Equipment: En is vitally interested in capture of our equipment, and has put much of it to use against us. Several Vehs destroyed by our fire today bore original markings of the units of the US Army from which they came. Escapees state that En was careful to have them remove Vehs from immediate points of danger and conceal them. From higher Hqs interrogation of an SS FW, it was learned that Germans using American uniforms and using US Vehs would identify themselves as follows:

- (1) Wear PINK or BLUE scarf.
- (2) Overcoat or blouse would be opened
OR: One button on top opened.
- (3) Vehicles would have letters "C" or "D"
painted on left side of hood.
- (4) Tanks also would be marked with "C" or "D".
- (5) Germans in American uniforms would identify themselves to another German by knocking twice on their helmet.

c. Enemy's Probable Knowledge of Our Situation: En has captured a number of our O's and EM's of the command. Several Vehs have also been captured, and each has been thoroughly rifled. It is almost certain that there were documents taken that contained information as to the OB of the Div, and in all probability, dispositions of some of our Ttps. Parts of the Div SOI were also compromised.

d. Other Intelligence:

(1) A map (sketch) taken from the body of a dead German soldier identified as of the Div Fus Co, 560 VG Div, driving an American 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ -Ton Trk (from 28 Div Arty) loaded with German ammo and fuel, KO'd in REGNE 612858, showed the following route plainly and prominently marked: SOMERAIN 6375 - TAVERNEUX 6174 - N 15 to CNAMPHA 5983 - BELLE HAIE 5587 - MANHAY 5490 - GRANDMENIL 5290 - ESTINE 4590 - HEYD 4596 - DURBUY 3897. En soldier who escaped from the Trk and was later captured, stated they were taking supplies to their unit.

(2) An escapee who was captured by an enemy ambush party today stated that the En was so uniformed with camouflage suits that it was almost impossible to see them even at the shortest distance. He stated that he and the Off passenger with him were actually between members of the ambush on either side of the Rd and even then did not detect them.

4. ENEMY CAPABILITIES - No Change.

/s/ Murray
MURRAY
G-2

Annex No. 1 to Per Rpt No. 125

CONSOLIDATED IPW REPORT

21 Dec 1944

1. PW's taken to date - 6132
PW's taken during period 15
6147

2. Units Identified	Where Taken	No. PW's
1st SS PGR, 1st SS Pz Div	POTEAU (7791)	1
2d SS Pz Engr Bn, 2d SS Pz Div	GOUVY (7278)	1
1st Co, 1st Bn, Pz Regt GROSS-DEUTSCHLAND	(824894)	2
5th Co, 1129th VGR, 560th VG Div	CHERAM (6677)	1
7th Co, " " " " "	" "	1
Div Fus Co (1560), " " "	REGNE (6186)	1
Regtl HQ Co, 1130th VGR, 560th Div	GOUVY (7278)	2
Hq Co, 1st Bn, 1130th VGR, 560th Div	" "	1
2d Co, 1130th VGR, 560th VG Div	" "	1
3d Co, " " " " "	" "	1
14th Co, " " " " "	" "	1
14th Co, 1129th VGR, " " "	" "	1
Hq Co, 2d Bn, 1130th VGR, 560th Div	" "	1

3. PW's Statements:

6th Co, 1st SS Pz Gr Regt, 1st SS Pz Div PW was wounded. Reported original Co strength of 120 men which was now down to 16. States entire 2d Bn in immediate area with 3 line Cos and 8th Co with 4 Aslt Guns and some mortars. Bn also supported by 12 Aslt Guns from other units.

2d SS Pz Engr Bn, 2d SS Pz Div PW stated he joined unit in PRUEM. Last saw them at LUTZKAMP (855730) yesterday. He was dispatched on a mission of securing quarters for Div at ISTERPIGNY (6878). States Div consists of 2 Inf Regts with 3 Armd Inf Bns each, plus a Regt of approx 100 Tks of Mk IV, V, and VI's. Was with Adv Sec of Engrs. Has every reason to believe that Div is behind him on same route.

5th and 7th Cos, 1129th VGR, 560th VG Div PW's saw Tks and Armd Vehs in SAMREE yesterday, but they were not there today. Believes one Hvy Arty Pc of unknown Cal in Posn E of SAMREE.

14th Co, 1129th VGR, 560th VG Div PW states Co consists of 3 Off and over 100 men with 3 SP 75mm AT Guns, numerous bazookas, and Faustpatronen (first grenades). Believes Co stopped its advance on 19 Dec, S of GOUVY and is retreating slightly to the S.

Hq Co 1130th Regt, & Hq Co, 2d Bn, 1130th Regt, 560th VG Div PW's state that the customary Hvy Wpns Cos of the Regt have 8-31mm mortars, and an unspecified number of Hvy MG's. 1 Bazooka Plat is attached to the Regt. Div was too far to the rear to support the Regt in the action at GOUVY.

(Unit prisoners not included in above summary had)
(no information of tactical value.)

OB COMMENTS:

The further identification of the GROSS-DEUTSCHLAND Div cannot be amplified at this time until a more complete report is available. However, the identification should remove remaining doubt as to the presence of the division.

Identification of the 2d SS Pz Div removes this unit from the list of immediate reserves. The curious factor is its location, in view of info recently received from Higher Hqs giving the Southern Bdy of the Sixth Pz Army running approx from (8796) to (0893). Based on a slightly lower strength estimate of recent date by Higher Hqs, the strength of this unit might now be put at 8,000-10,000 men and 125 Tks and AG's.

Reserves not yet committed and immediately available in this sector would include the 11 Pz Div, reported in the rear of the 560th Div; 9 SS Pz Div, last placed SE ELSDORF; 326 VG Div, whose probable location is to the rear of 18 VG Div; 10 SS Pz Div, indicated by Higher Hqs in vic F3052.

Due to the comparatively small distances involved, and the excellent mesh of road and rail communications existing West of the Rhine, all uncommitted units in the West must be taken into account. These Divs are herewith presented:

6 SS Mtn Div	3 Pz Gr Div	710 Inf Div	2 Mtn Div
21 Pz Div	15 Pz Gr Div	2 Para Div	
9 Pz Div	49 Inf Div	7 Para Div	
6 Pz Div	59 Inf Div	8 Para Div	

OB TEAM #32

NOTE: Due to the fluid situation which faced the 7th Armored Division on 22 December and 23 December, as it consolidated its positions and then successfully accomplished the "IMPOSSIBLE" - a daylight withdrawal in the face of enemy forces superior in numbers and strength - no complete distribution was made of the G-2 Reports for those two days. Presumably only one copy of each G-2 Report was prepared, for the master copies on file in Washington, DC, with the AGO, War Department Record Branch, Historical Records Section, are one-page editions, partially typed, and filled in with other information by pen-and-ink in the handwriting of either the Division G-2, Lt Col Murray, or of one of the Assistants in the G-2 Section.

D P B

G-2 PERIODIC REPORT

SECRET
: AUTH: CG, 7 AD:
: INIT: :
: DATE: 22 Dec 44:

FROM: 212400 Dec 44
TO : 222400 Dec 44
UNIT: 7th ARMD DIV
APO 257
US ARMY

No. 126

MAPS: No Change.

1. ENEMY SITUATION AT END OF PERIOD

a. Enemy Front Lines: Once again the situation is so fluid that at the end of the period it is impossible to tie down the exact front occupied by the enemy or by ourselves. The line on the N flank: as far E as PUTTEAU 7791; further to the SE, the line generally runs from 779901 to 807870, S to 810854 (W of KROMBACH), E to NEUBRUCK, and SW to GRUFFLINGEN 8281, both incl for our Trps. On the S flank: Our Trps still control the towns of GOUVY 7177 and CHERAM 6677 and, generally speaking, intermediate points between.

b. Defensive Installations: As far as it is known the En has not restricted himself to the static posn of defense anywhere in the zone. His aggressive nature precludes such for the time being.

c. Units In Contact:

Identifications during period:

3 Bn, 20 PGR, 9 SS Pz Div	783914
Engr Bn, SS Pz Div	779918
Asslt Engr Co, GROSS-DEUTSCHLAND Brig	vic RODT 8188
3 Co, Inf Regt, " " "	vic ST VITH 8588
1 Co, 928 GHQ Inf Bn	RODT 8188

d. Arty: En continued the use of his SP Guns and Tks as his support fire for the Atking forces.

e. Supply and Evacuation Establishments: Civ Rpt TROIS VIERGES 7670 is a supply base for En Inf and Tk forces.

2. ENEMY OPERATIONS DURING PERIOD

a. General Summary: En contd his relentless pressure on the NE, E, and SE front during the entire period, though his pressure again was less during the hours midnight to noon than in the later part of the period.

Cln Mvmts were still in progress on the S flank, generally moving to the W. En Inf began infiltrating into RODT 8188 at 0400. An Inf Atk from rear on Arty Posns at 780916 at 0925, and at 1030 En Inf were closing in on RODT. An En Atk along Hwy 26 from ST VITH to 834847 was rptd at 1055. Seven En Tks and Inf were in RODT at 1055, and a large Conc of En forces in ST VITH at 1125. Rd out at 800893 at 1135. Strong En forces and MG fire at 775924 at 1230. Two En Tks rptd in JOUBIEVAL 654862 at 1430. An Est Co Inf entered GOUVY from S at 1340. Trps at KROMBACH were receiving direct and S/A fire from flanks. GOUVY rptd clear of En at 1525. En Cln at 712765 at 1605 and an unconfirmed rpt of 30 Lt Armd Vehs moving on JOUBIEVAL 6586 from S was recd at 1600. Cln of 50 En Vehs obsd moving fr LIMERLE 706748 toward GOUVY at 1632, and at 1655 En Veh Cln attempted to enter GOUVY from the S but was dispersed by Arty fire. Large En Atk reptd to be forming at 832846 and 828846 at 1840. En Inf and Tk Atk along RR tracks at 832864 at 1847. En forces were massing at RODT at 1832, and an Inf-Tk Atk fr E to W at 819867 at 2015. Our forces were forced out of THOMMEN 8181 at 2010. At 2140 Inf-Tk Atk on KROMBACH supported by AG's and at 2315 En forces controlled the town. An En Tk Atk supported by Armd Inf at 773913 at 2215. Inf rode Tks and carried bazookas. Ptrl of 3 En Tks with Inf support was in PUTTEAU at 2330 where hvy fighting continues.

b. Operations of Component Elements:

(1) AT - AT Guns at 809901 at 1635; Inf bazooka Tms rptd at PUTTEAU.

(2) Armor - 16 En Tks vic 806897 at 1050; Tks supported by Inf at 774914 at 1145; undetermined no Tks in RODT at 1250; 2 Tks 1425; 3 En Tks E of GRUFFLINGEN 8281 at 1425; 1 Mk VI at 811822 at 1535; Hvy Tks moved to 823862, turned around, and drove E at 2330.

Officers and men who today fought their way back through En lines from vic ST VITH rpt seeing a Tk Park of 35 Mk VI's vic NDR EMBELS 8390.

(3) Arty - Arty fire on vic 6890 during early AM fr Posns rptd in vic ENHAL 7193; Arty fire on vic 676852 at 0405; THOMMEN 8181 under hvy arty fire at 1651.

(4) Inf - Inf units with and without Tk support contd their aggressiveness in all sectors. Following locations reptd: Co Inf in woods fr 7790 to 7789; Est Bn Inf digging in 500 yds E of 576852; at 0405. 200 Inf rptd assembling in woods between 80608900 and 809900 at 0830; Inf in woods 820957 and 823900 at 0850; Bn Armd Inf rptd moving on Rd W ST VITH toward RODT at 0850; Inf and MG's at 776922 at 0925; snipers at 738903 and 727891 at 1015. Est Bn Inf in RODT at 1250; 25-man Ptrl at 845855 at 1555; 6-man Ptrl on high ground vic 707930 during afternoon. En Ptrl with bazookas infiltrated vic 773913 at 2210.

(5) Miscellaneous - Blue flares, and green and white combinations on E front at 0300. 4 Vehs and personnel around house at 782929 at 1330; house used for En Assmbly Area at 783927 set on fire by our Arty; at 1930, hvy S/A fire vic 7091; strong En Ptrl activity vic GRUFFLINGEN at 1832. Civ Rpts: 200 En Inf, 2 Tks, and Arty at 600-838 at 1055; Germans with US armor at RENGLER 6775 intend to move today or tomorrow.

3. MISCELLANEOUS

a. Enemy Casualties:

(1) PW's - 6. Total PW's to date - 6153.

(2) Est En dead during period - 175.
Est En wounded during period - 250.

4. ENEMY CAPABILITIES - No Change.

/s/ Murray

D P B

G-2 PERIODIC REPORT

SECRET
: AUTH: CG, 7 AD:
: INIT: :
: DATE: 23 Dec 44:

FROM: 222400 Dec 44
TO : 232400 Dec 44
UNIT: 7th ARMD DIV
APO 257
US ARMY

No. 127

MAPS: No Change.

1. ENEMY SITUATION AT END OF PERIOD

a. Enemy Front Lines:

(1) No physical contact at end of period.
(2) Front lines on Corps front as best as can be determined from latest available information: Just N RECHT 8092 to STAVELOT 7201 - TROIS PONTS 6998 - SALM RIVER S to SALMCHATEAU 6987 - Hwy N28 W to REGNE 6185 - thence to point just N CR at 5785. W of this point the situation is too fluid to determine a definite line.

b. Units In Contact:

(1) No physical contact.
(2) To XVIII Corps (Abn) front may be added 9 SS Pz Div (identified today in vic PUTTEAU 7791), running the total strength on the front to approx 83,000 and 500 Tks, discounting current losses suffered by the enemy's formations.

c. Artillery:

Although of lesser caliber (75mm and 88mm), and mostly in the form of SP AG's and Tk Wpns, the En has had substantial Arty support for the Opns to date. The En certainly has with his Divs their organic Arty, 'though it has not been brought seriously into play yet. Given time enough to displace his Arty (much of which is horse-drawn) forward to catch up with his Pz thrusts, the En's Arty fire should be greater than at any time the Div has been operating against the En. With the Obsn of the volume and variety of Ack-Ack thrown up at friendly aircraft today, and keeping in mind that most of his AA Wpns are dual-purpose, the additional support fire from these by the En is more than substantial.

2. ENEMY OPERATIONS DURING PERIOD

a. General Summary: Pressure was maintained by the En throughout the period until contact was broken — primarily with the characteristic Tk-Inf forces he has been using throughout the Opn. Hvy fighting was rptd in PUTTEAU 7790 at 0200. Just before and a dawn, parachutists were dropped at two points along the SALM River: just N of VIELSALM 7089 and E of SALMCHATEAU 6987.

Pressure was maintained along the entire Div front until contact with the En was broken: At 0200 hvy fighting in PUTTEAU, with Tk activity

to the N of the town, was rptd; around 0600, activity increased, although no Atk by armor developed. A dismtd Atk was launched on PUTTEAU at 1050, but it was repulsed. No further incident was rptd in this sector. In the GRUFFLINGEN 8281 - HINDERHAUSEN 7987 sector, En Armd Mvmts were heard in vic 803876 at 0200, followed by increased Veh Mvmts generally along that front until 0600, when an Atk was launched against GRUFFLINGEN. Trps were able to hold their own against this Atk, although pressure was contd until contact was broken. The sector to the S was the quietest of the fronts, there being little activity rptd during the night. No En activity of any consequence was rptd until mid-afternoon when Tks wererptd Atking fr BEHO 7681 to ROGERY 7384. That situation, too, cleared up without serious incident. No action was rptd at the CR at 5785 until late morning when En forces Atkd, cut Rd some 400 yds to N of CR, and capt'd 2 TD's, ko'd 1. Action was severe until our Trps were withdrawn fr picture. Posn at CR was completely overrun by En Trps.

b. Operations of Component Elements: (as above for all components not listed below)

(1) AAA - Friendly aircraft in support of our opns today drew extremely intense AA fire, both light and hvy over virtually entire sector to our front.

(2) Parachutists - Drops of unknown nos of parachute trps were obsd just N of VIELSALM 7089 and E of SALMCHATEAU 6987 just before dawn.

(3) Arty - Fire of Lt and Med Wpns were placed on front line Trps during period of contact; fire from generally S contd to fall on Trps vic CR at 5785.

3. MISCELLANEOUS

a. Enemy Casualties:

(1) Personnel casualties - no estimate.

(2) Vehicular casualties - 4 Tks known destroyed.

b. Weather: Contd clear and cold. Poor visibility until fairly late in morning.

c. Counter-Intelligence: Bldg in VIELSALM just vacated by Div HQ was accurately shelled by Lt Arty (75mm or 88mm) at 1640. No other points in the area were shelled. Certainly this is an indication that the German is getting some help fr agent spotters. Indications of use of agents in Civ clothes and in American uniforms have been too numerous to mention herein; proof of such too has been widespread, throughout area of opns.

d. Other Intelligence:

(1) 3-man Ptrl engaged in cutting comm wires at 740920 at 1430 was fired upon. The one killed member of the Ptrl was identified as of the 9 SS Pz Div.

(2) Discovery of a dummy parachutist dropping with regulation German chute was rptd late tonight vic WERBOMONT 5400. In the same drop, however, were real parachutists who were capt'd shortly after being dropped. Ruses by the En must not be allowed to cause relaxation of countermeasures against such appearances of the Germans.

(3) PW capt'd by 3d Armd Div today stated that En would Atk at dusk 23 Dec, fr vic 5785 with intention of taking MANHAY.

4. ENEMY CAPABILITIES - No Change.

/s/ Murray

Chapter IV

MAP NOTES

To assist the study of the defense of the ST. VITH area by the 7th Armored Division during the period 17-23 December 1944, a series of maps and overlays was prepared. They included:

Map No. 1 - "German Counter-Offensive Plan with Allied Front on 22 December 1944" (Scale: 1/200,000)

Map No. 2 - "7th Armored Division: Situation Map, ST. VITH Sector, 172000 December 1944" (Scale: 1/25,000)

Map No. 3 - "7th Armored Division: Situation Map, ST. VITH Sector, 202400 December 1944" (Scale: 1/25,000)

Map No. 4 - "7th Armored Division: Dispositions, 202400 December 1944" (Scale: 1/100,000)

Map No. 5 - "7th Armored Division: Dispositions, 22 December 1944" (Scale: 1/100,000)

Overlay
No. 1 - "7th Armored Division: Situation, 20 December 1944"
(Accompanies Map No. 4)

Overlay
No. 2 - "7th Armored Division: Situation, 21 December 1944"
(Accompanies Map No. 4)

Overlay
No. 3 - "7th Armored Division: Situation, 22 December 1944"
(Accompanies Map No. 5)

Overlay
No. 4 - "7th Armored Division: Dispositions - Daylight, 23 December 1944"
(Accompanies Map No. 5)

The originals of these maps and overlays have been included in TAB "X" accompanying the Recommendation of the 7th Armored Division for the Distinguished Unit Citation, as filed with The Adjutant General on 30 June 1947 by Major General R. W. Hasbrouck, former Division Commander.

Photostatic Copies -- Maps and Overlays

Maps 2, 3, 4, and 5, with Overlays 1, 2, 3, and 4 have been photostated with a reduced scale and are appended. Map No. 1 is not included but may be studied by referring to the basic map from which it was prepared (map facing page 104, First United States Army Report of Operations, 1 August 1944 - 22 February 1945, vol. 1).

#

96

RECHT



#

CITATION REPORT
MAP NO 2
7TH ARMD DIVISION
SITUATION MAP-ST VITH SECTOR-172000 DEC 44

NDR
EMMELD

ROOT
31
33
31
33

A/33
ROBERT
2 MI. NW
CC-A
40
BEHO
ALDRINGEN
MALDENEN
44

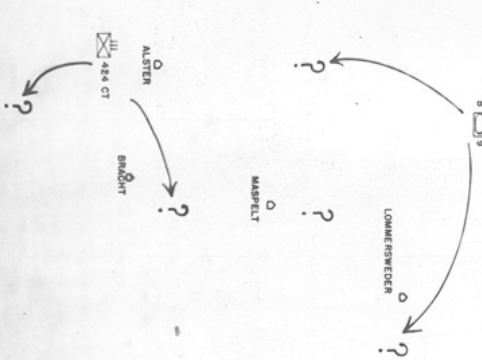
Scale 1:50,000

THOMMEN
GRUFFELINGEN

BRAUNLUF

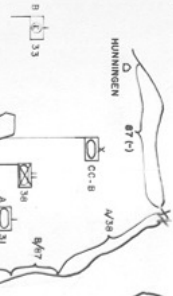
KROSBACH

HINDERHUSEN



GALMUSEN

NEIDINGEN



WALLEMOE

BOHN



2

HEGEM



WINTERSPELT

ELCHENBACH

WINTERSPELT

GROBLANSENFELD

SCHNELLEN

NUTZENICH

REITLAF

RAUSCHEN

OBERLANSEN

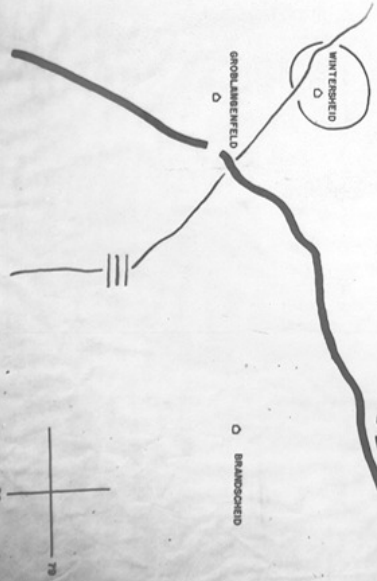
423

423

422

SCHONBERG

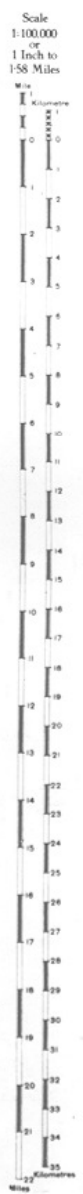
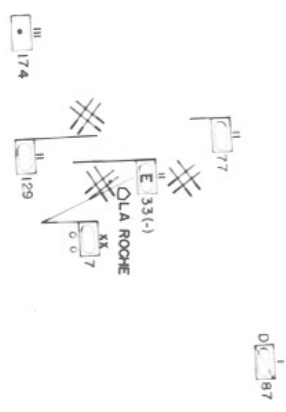
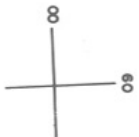
LAUSBERG



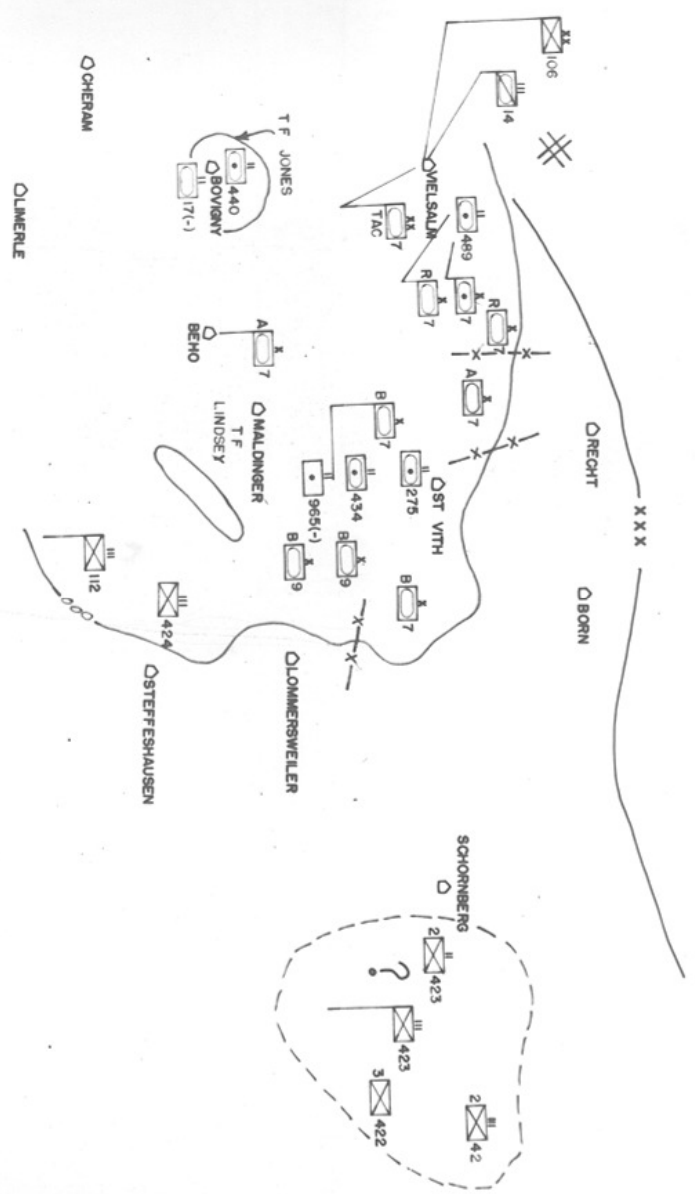
98

XXXX

CITATION REPORT
 MAP NO. 4
 7th ARMED DIVISION
 DISPOSITIONS - 202400 DEC 44



OHOUFFALZE



XX 7
O O MAIN

CITATION REPORT
MAP NO. 5
7th ARMD DIVISION

XX 82

SOY

#

LAROCHE

E L L E

XX 3 (-)

ODEIGNE

HOUFALLIZE

CHERAM

T F JONES

XX 7
TAC

VIELSALM

440

489

R X 7

A X 7

434

275

965

B X 7

B X 9

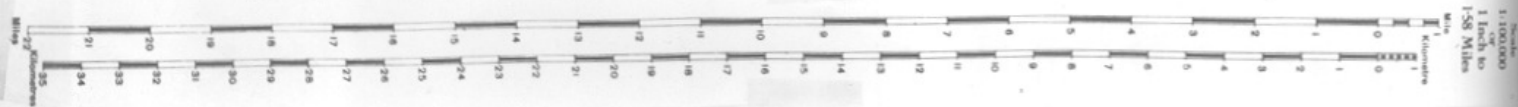
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424

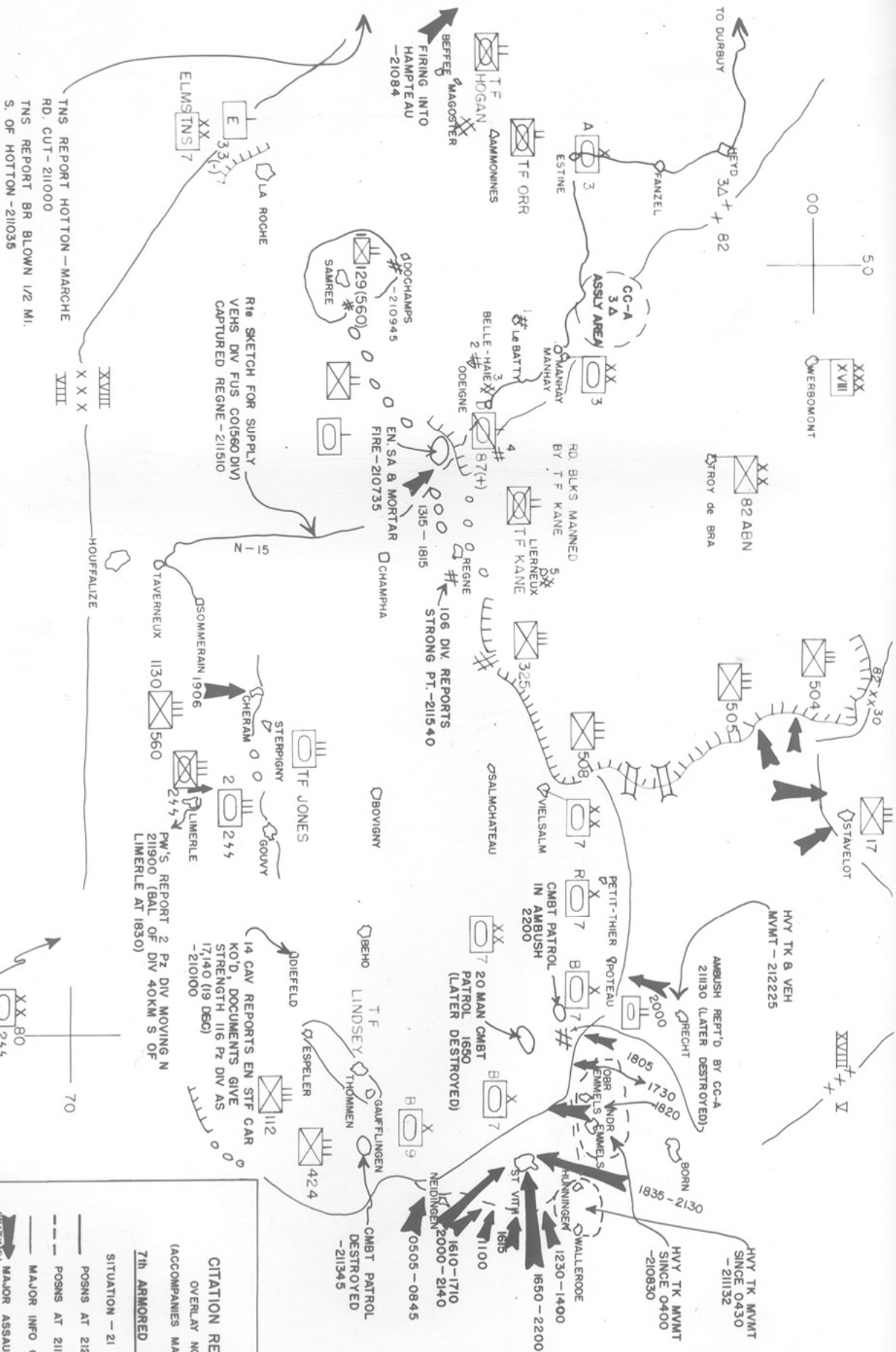
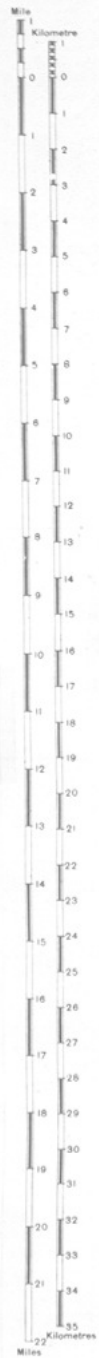
THOMMEND

ST. VITH

LEGEND
DISPOSITIONS - 22 DEC. 44
—— POSNS AT DARK, 22 DEC
----- POSNS AT DAWN, 22 DEC



Scale
1:100,000
or
1 Inch to
1.58 Miles



TNS REPORT HOTTON - MARCHÉ
RD. CUT - 211000
TNS REPORT BR BLOWN 1/2 MI.
S. OF HOTTON - 211035

Rte SKETCH FOR SUPPLY
VEHS DIV FUS CO(560 DIV)
CAPTURED REGNE - 211510

PW'S REPORT 2 Pz DIV MOVING N
21900 (BAL OF DIV 40KM S OF
LIMERLE AT 1930)

14 CAV REPORTS EN STF CAR
KOD, DOCUMENTS GIVE
STRENGTH 116 Pz DIV AS
17140 (19 DEC)
-210100

CMBT PATROL
DESTROYED
-211345

HVY TK MVMT
SINCE 0400
-210830

HVY TK MVMT
SINCE 0430
-211132

HVY TK & VEH
MVMT - 212225
AMBUSH REPT'D BY CCA
21130 (LATER DESTROYED)
RECHT

20 MAN CMBT
PATROL 1650
(LATER DESTROYED)

CMBT PATROL
IN AMBUSH
2200

PETTIT-TIER
PROTEAU

1805
1730
1820

1835 - 2130

1610 - 1710
2000 - 2140
0505 - 0845

1230 - 1400
1650 - 2200

CITATION REPORT
OVERLAY NO 2
(ACCOMPANIES MAP NO 4)

7th ARMORED DIVISION

SITUATION - 21 DEC 44

POSNS AT 212400 DEC

POSNS AT 211600 DEC

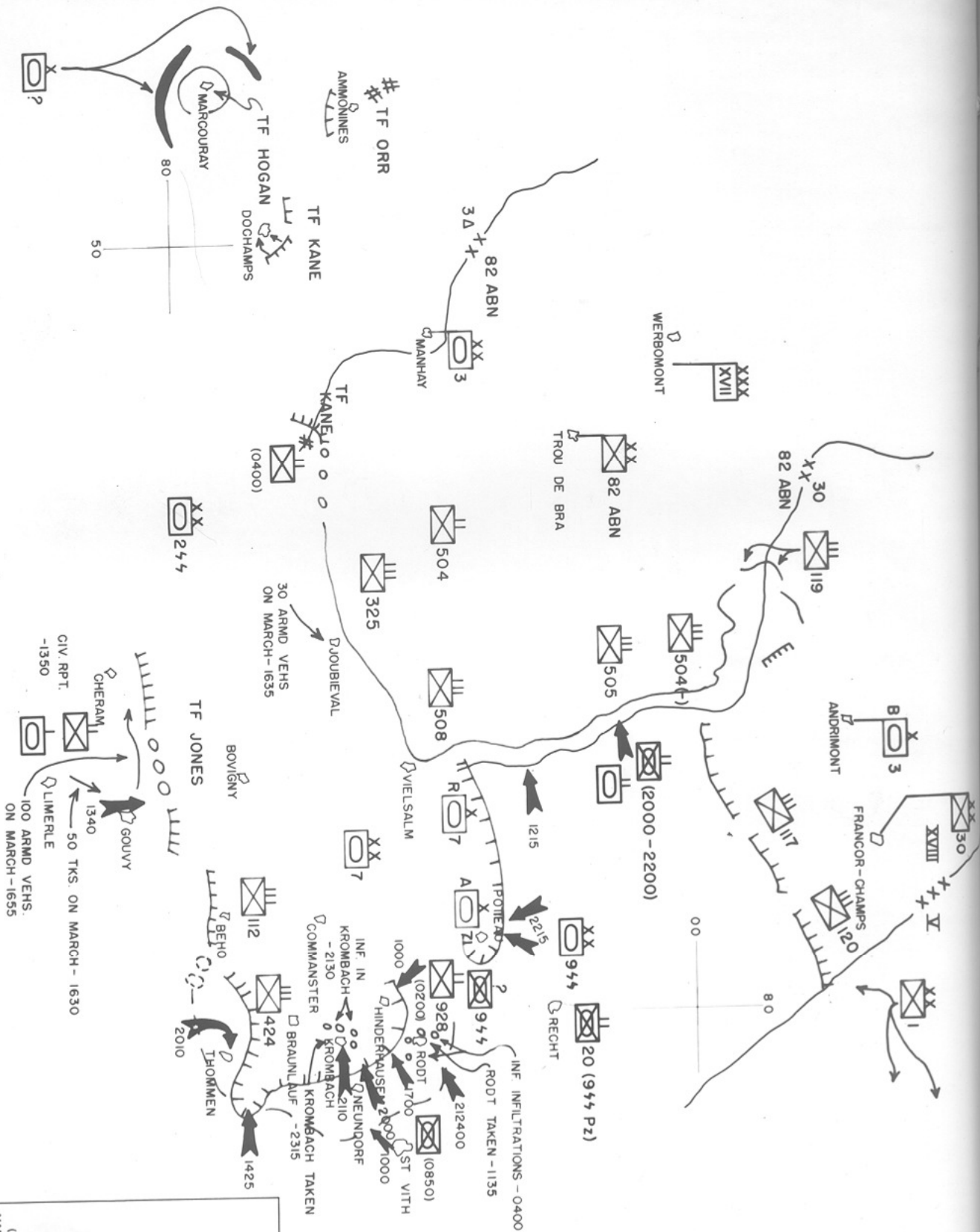
MAJOR INFO OF ENEMY

MAJOR ASSAULTS

(W/TIME)

MAPS: 1/100,000 (MARCHÉ, BONN, TRIER)

Scale
1:100,000
or
1 Inch to
1.58 Miles



CITATION REPORT
OVERLAY NO 3
(ACCOMPANIES MAP NO 5)

7th ARMORED DIVISION
SITUATION - 22 DEC 44

— POSNS AT DARK, 22 DEC
- - - POSNS AT DAWN, 22 DEC
— MAJOR INFO OF ENEMY
➔ MAJOR ASSAULTS
(W/TIME)
MAPS: I/100,000 (MARCHE, BONN, TRIER)

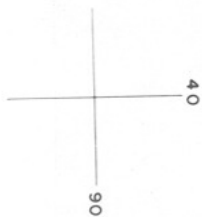
APPENDIX

Scale
1:100,000
or
1 Inch to
1.58 Miles

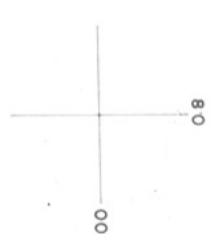
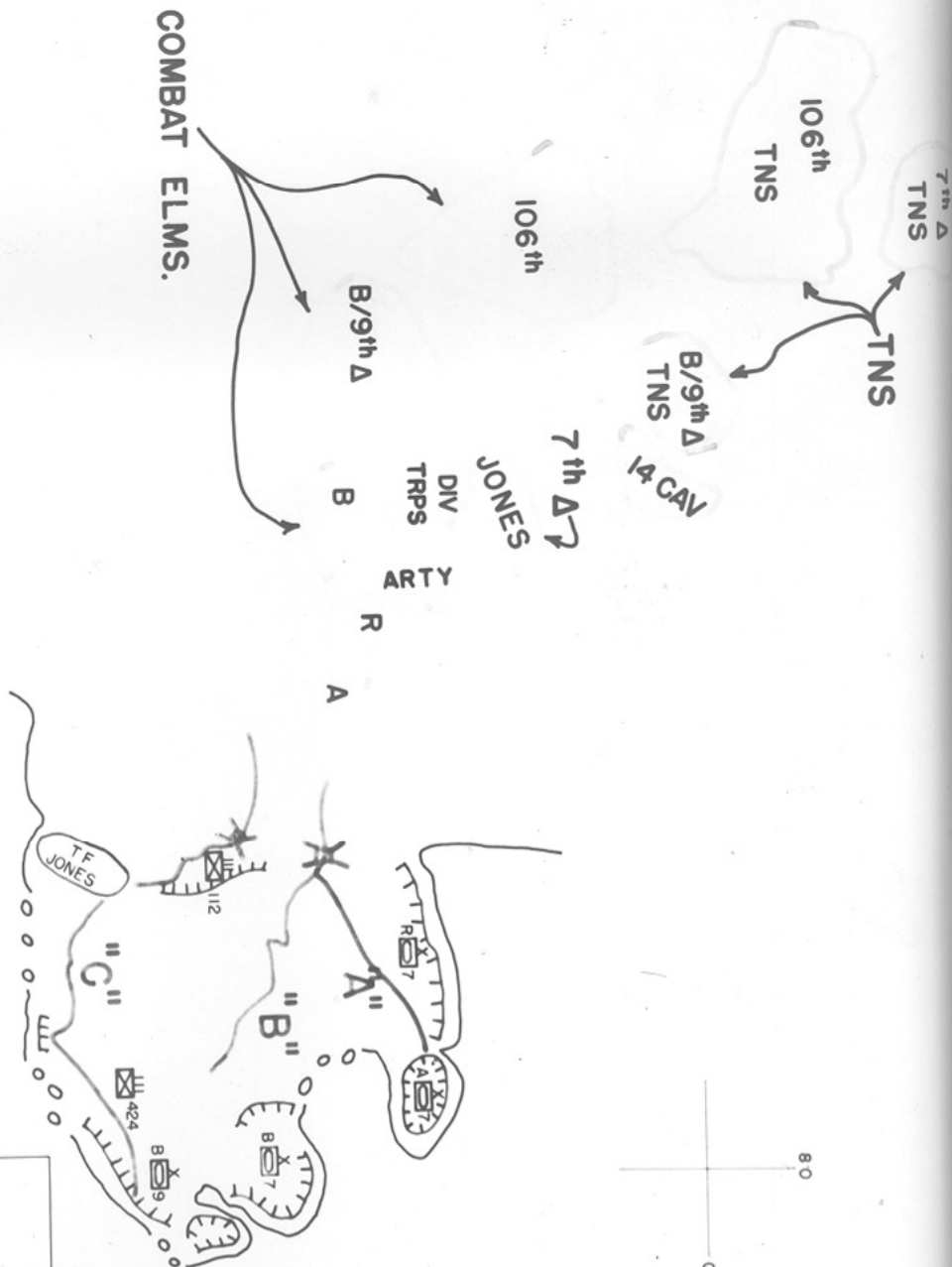


MAJOR ENEMY UNITS IN CONTACT - 17-23 DEC 44

- | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--------|--|-------|--|-----|--|--------------------|--|-----|
| | 18 VG. | | 62 VG | | 144 | | 116 | | 944 |
| | 560 VG | | 2 | | 244 | | GROSS - DEUTSHLAND | | |



COMBAT ELMS.



CITATION REPORT
OVERLAY NO 4
(ACCOMPANIES MAP NO 5)
7th ARMORED DIVISION

DISPOSITION - DAYLIGHT, 23 DEC 44

----- FRONT LINES
 ~~~~~ ENEMY CONTACT  
 "A" "B" "C" EXIT ROUTES (LETTERED)  
 ASSEMBLY AREAS AFTER WITHDRAWAL

MAPS: 1/100000 (MARCHÉ, BONN, TRIEN)

## APPENDIX

Included in the Appendix are various selected notes and reference material which were of assistance in the preparation of the Narrative After Action Report. Of particular interest is Appendix "B" -- a compilation of personal narratives of various unit commanders of the 7th Armored Division. These narratives were secured by Major General R. W. Hasbrouck, the Division Commander, in an effort to obtain a more personalized and vivid account of the actions of the Division's various combat units. In certain instances the personal narratives have been supplemented by selected combat interviews.





"Every man and every officer stood the test — some by quick thinking, some by swift improvisation, some by good planning, some just by sheer bravery, and some by guess and by God; but they all came through ... then they returned to the attack... It went in through snowdrifts and up hill-sides and through forests. It went in down ice-bound roads on which tanks slithered and slipped; it went in against an icy wind that froze your fingers and made chilblains on your face. Infantrymen, their wet clothes freezing on their wet bodies, slogged their way through the snow ... while the tanks slithered and skidded down the roads..."

:  
: 517th Parachute Infantry and :  
: tanks of 7th Armored Division :  
: advance along logging road East :  
: of ST. VITH in January 1945 — :  
: B/38 and B/87 were dug in behind :  
: such a road, 17-21 December 1944 :  
:

Appendix "A"

TROOP ASSIGNMENTS  
7th Armored Division

TROOP ASSIGNMENTS

170300d - March South

CC-A  
40  
48  
A/33

CC-B  
31  
23  
B/33

CC-R  
38  
17

DIV ARTY  
440  
434  
489  
A&C/203

DIV TRPS  
Div Hq  
87  
33(-A&B)  
203(-A, B, C)  
814

DIV TNS  
77  
129  
446  
3967  
B/203

172400d

CC-A  
40  
48  
A/33

CC-B  
87  
31  
38  
23  
B/33  
275  
168(-)  
H&S/81

CC-R  
17

DIV ARTY  
440  
434  
489  
A, C, D/203

DIV TRPS  
Div Hq  
33(-A&B)  
Hq&HqBtry/203  
814

DIV TNS  
77  
129  
446  
3967  
B/203

182400d

CC-A  
40  
48  
A/33  
D/87

CC-B  
87(-D)  
31(-)  
38(-C)  
23(-Plat/B)  
B/33  
A/814  
275  
Prov Engers  
Plat/R/423

CC-R  
17  
C/38  
C/33  
B(-)/814  
Plat/Rgn/814  
Plat/B/23  
6 M Trs/31  
1 Sec/C/203

DIV ARTY  
440  
434  
489  
A/203  
C(-)/203

DIV TRPS  
Div Hq  
Hq&HqBtry/203  
814(-)

DIV TNS  
77  
129  
446  
3967  
B&D/203  
Hq&HqCo/33

192400

CC-A  
40  
48  
A/33

CC-B  
87(-D)  
31(-)  
17(+C/38)  
38(-C)  
23(-Plat/B)  
B/33  
A/BL4  
275  
434  
965(-)  
Plat/C/203  
Prov Engrs  
Plat/F/423

CC-R  
C/33  
B(-)/BL4  
Plat/Rgn/BL4  
Plat/B/23  
6 M Tks/31  
1 Sec/C/203  
Prov Cav Tr

DIV ARTY  
440  
489  
A/203  
C(-)/203

DIV TRPS  
Div Hq  
Hq&HqBtry/203  
BL4(-)  
D/87

DIV TNS  
77  
129  
446  
3976  
B&D/203  
Hq&HqCo/33

-118-

202400

CC-A  
40(-)  
48  
Plat/A/33

CC-B  
87(-D)  
A/17(+Plat/C/38)  
31(-)  
38(-C)  
23(-Plat/B)  
B/33  
A/BL4  
275  
434  
965  
Plat/C/203  
Prov Engrs  
Plat/F/423

CC-R  
C/33  
B/BL4  
Plat/Rgn/BL4  
Plat/B/23  
6 M Tks/31  
1 Sec/C/203  
Prov Cav Tr

DIV ARTY  
440  
489  
A/203  
C(-)/203

DIV TRPS  
Div Hq  
Hq&HqBtry/203  
D/87(+reinf)

DIV TNS  
77  
129  
446  
3976  
B&D/203  
Hq&HqCo/33

TF LINDSEY  
Prov Cav Tr

TF JONES  
BL4(-)  
17(-A)  
C/38(-Plat)  
D/40(reinf)  
A(-)/33  
440

Atchd 7th Armd Div  
106 Inf Div (-2RCTs)  
112 RCT(-G)  
CC-B/9 Armd Div

G/112  
Prov Cav Det  
7 M Tks/31 & 40

(14 Cav Sps)

212198 - NO CHANCE

222400

CC-A  
40(-)  
48  
Plat/A/33  
C/38(-Plat)  
B/BLA

CC-B  
87(-D)  
17(Plat/c/38)  
31(-)  
38(-C)  
23(-Plat/B)  
B/33  
A/BLA  
275  
434  
965  
Plat/c/203  
Prov Engrs  
C/BLA(40/112)

CC-R  
C/33  
Plat/Ron/BLA  
Plat/B/23  
6 M Tks/31  
1 Sec/c/203  
Prov Cav Tr

DIV ARTY  
440  
489  
A/203  
C(-)/203

DIV TRPS  
Div Hq  
Hq&HqBtry/203  
D/87(reinf)

DIV TNS  
77  
129  
446  
3967  
B/203  
D(-)/203  
Hq&HqCo/33

TF JONES  
BLA(-)  
D/40(reinf)  
A(-)/33  
440  
Prov Cav Tr(4)  
7 M Tks/31 & 40

Atchd 7th Armd Div  
106 Inf Div (-2RCTs)  
112 RCT  
CC-B/9 Armd Div

TROOP LIST:

7th Armored Division

Hq & Hq Co  
CC-A, Hq & Hq Co  
CC-B, Hq & Hq Co  
CC-R, Hq  
147th Armd Sig Co  
87th Cav Ren Sq (Mech)  
17th Tk Bn  
31st Tk Bn  
40th Tk Bn  
23d Armd Inf Bn  
38th Armd Inf Bn  
48th Armd Inf Bn

Div Arty, Hq & Hq Btry

434th Armd FA Bn  
440th Armd FA Bn  
489th Armd FA Bn  
33d Armd Engr Bn  
Div Tns, Hq & Hq Co  
77th Armd Med Bn  
129th Ord Maint Bn (Armd)  
MP Plat  
Band

Supporting Units

275th Armd FA Bn  
965th FA Bn (155 How)  
168th Engr C Bn  
Combat Command "B", 9th Armd Div

14th Tk Bn; 27th Armd Inf Bn;  
16th Armd FA Bn; D/89th Cav Sq;  
B/9th Armd Engr Bn; A/311th TD  
Bn; B/482d AAA AW Bn; B/2d Armd  
Med Bn; C/131 Ord Maint Bn  
112th Inf Regt (28th Inf Div)

229th FA Bn; C/103d Engr C Bn  
424th Inf Regt (106th Inf Div)  
591st FA Bn

Hq & Sv Co/31st Engr C Bn (106th  
3d Plat/r/423d Inf Regt (Inf  
Div)

Attached:

203d AAA AW Bn (SP)  
814th TD Bn (SP)  
446th OH Trk Co  
3967th QM Trk Co

COMMAND

|                   |                       |   |                                 |
|-------------------|-----------------------|---|---------------------------------|
| <u>Army Group</u> | - 12th Army Group     | : | 17 December until 1330 hours,   |
|                   |                       | : | 20 December                     |
|                   | 21st Army Group       | : | 1330 hours, 20 December through |
|                   |                       | : | 23 December                     |
| <u>Army</u>       | - First Army          | : | 17-23 December                  |
| <u>Corps</u>      | - VIII Corps          | : | 17 December until 2230 hours,   |
|                   |                       | : | 20 December                     |
|                   | XVIII Airborne Corps: | : | 2230 hours, 20 December through |
|                   |                       | : | 23 December                     |

---

Command of the troops within the ST. VITH salient from 17 December through 1853 hours, 22 December, actually was exercised by two individuals acting in cooperation with each other — Maj. Gen. A. W. Jones (CG of the 106th Infantry Division) and Maj. Gen. (then Brig. Gen.) R. W. Hasbrouck (CG of the 7th Armored Division).

The command of Gen. Jones included Hq & Hq Co, 106th Div; 424th RCT; CC-B, 9th Armd Div; and effective 19 December, the 112th RCT of the 28th Div. The troops under the command of Gen. Hasbrouck included the 7th Armd Div, with the following attached units: 814th TD Bn; 203d AAA AW Bn; 446th QM Trk Co; 3967th QM Trk Co; 275th Armd FA Bn; 965th FA Bn (155mm How); and the 168th Engr Gmbt Bn. The last three units were VIII Corps troops which were in the area when the 7th Armored arrived, and were attached without the formality of orders from higher authority. On the 17th of December the 275th Armored Field Artillery Battalion was attached together with the 168th Engineers; the 965th Field Artillery Battalion on the 19th of December.

In addition to the above attached units, Headquarters and Service Company, 81st Engineers and the 3d Platoon, Company "F", 423d Infantry Regiment were attached to the 7th Armored Division with the concurrence of Gen. Jones. At 1300, 18 December the 14th Cavalry Group was attached to the 7th Armored Division by order of the Commanding General, VIII Corps. The Group was completely disorganized and had lost and abandoned a great deal of equipment. It was therefore concentrated at VIELSALM, and reorganized into a Provisional Cavalry Squadron (2 Provisional Troops and a Detachment), in which role it functioned from the late afternoon of the 19th through the 23d of December.

Effective at 1853 hours, 22 December when Gen. Jones was relieved of command of the 106th Division by the Commanding General, XVIII Airborne Corps, all troops in the salient came under the command of Gen. Hasbrouck. Prior to this time, orders had been received placing the 106th Division under the command of the 7th Armored, but as Gen. Jones was a Major General and Gen. Hasbrouck a Brig. Gen., the two commanders did not comply with the orders and continued to exercise their command on a basis of cooperation.

DIVISION TRAINS

"This was LA ROCHE"





AN ACCOUNT OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THE SEVENTH ARMORED DIVISION  
TRAINS FROM 18th TO 22d DECEMBER 1944

18 December:

On 18 December 1944, the 7th Armored Division Trains were ordered to move from VIELSALM to the vicinity of LA ROCHE and SAMREE. Trains units closed in the LA ROCHE--SAMREE area at approximately 1800 on 18 December. The 3967th Quartermaster Truck Company loaded with ammunition, the Division Ammunition Officer with his section, and the Division Quartermaster with his section established Class I, III, and V Supply Points at SAMREE.

On moving into this area it was noted that stragglers from numerous units were in wild confusion. All roads were blocked due to the confusion and indecision on the part of the officers accompanying the straggling elements. A traffic control system was established, and by 2400, 18 December, traffic was moving smoothly.

Road blocks 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 11, and 12 were established in the LA ROCHE-SAMREE area. (See sketch) Each of road blocks 1 -- 6, consisted of at least a section of antiaircraft artillery automatic weapons and from four to twenty dismounted personnel from the various Trains units. Road blocks 7, 8, 9, and 10 were established 19 December with miscellaneous Corps and Army Engineer units found in the area. Road blocks 11 and 12 were manned by clerks, cooks, mechanics, and other personnel of Division Trains Headquarters and other Trains units.

At approximately 1800, 18 December, shortly after moving into position, road block 11 stopped a German motorized patrol, destroying one motorcycle, killing four soldiers, and wounding an additional estimated four or five soldiers. Activity lasted for approximately thirty minutes. This block was pushed further South to approximately point 13 on 19 December. At this latter point, sporadic attempts were made by the enemy to pass during the next two days. No determined attack was made, however.

19 December:

On 19 December, at approximately 1600, road block 5 was attacked by a force consisting of American armored cars M-8, supported by infantry and two M4 IV tanks. We lost two half-tracks, one man killed, and approximately eight wounded. The attack was repelled and the bridge blown. After the bridge was blown, the block was established in its main position about one-half mile North of the original position. No further action was encountered at this road block.

On the morning of 19 December road block 1 was attacked by light patrols. The position was held without any known losses to either side. Attacks were continued on 20 December; the block lost all vehicles, and all men were killed except two. (Approximately twelve men lost) Enemy losses are unknown. (Estimated twenty-five to thirty personnel)

20 December:

At approximately 0700, 20 December, road block 4 was attacked by infantry and armor. The attack was repelled with six enemy motorcycles and one armored car destroyed. An estimated twenty-five Germans were killed and wounded. We had no losses. At approximately 1200 on the 20th, TASK FORCE HOGAN of the 3d Armored Division appeared on the scene. This task force had moved from HOTTON down the East side of the OURTHE River with HUFFALIZE as the objective. Upon reaching road block 4, the task force halted and assumed responsibility for the block. Train personnel were withdrawn and used to reinforce other blocks.

At approximately 0945, 20 December, road block 3 was attacked by advance elements of a reinforced German battalion. This was a determined attack, and all available service personnel were placed in defensive positions. (approximately fifty men) This defense held until about 1200, when a heavy fog settled over the area. The fog lifted at approximately 1300, by which time the Germans had infiltrated through our defenses and had entered houses in the village of SAMREE.

Our defenses were tightened around the Northwest edge of town, where the supply points were located. Beginning at approximately 1200 the position was shelled by artillery throughout the remainder of the day as was the village of LA ROCHE. At approximately 1400 two enemy light tanks entered SAMREE and were promptly destroyed by a light tank of the 87th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (Mechanized) which was present as an escort for elements of unit trains drawing supplies. (During the period of the engagement supplies of rations, gasoline, and ammunition were issued to the 87th Cavalry Squadron, 23d Armored Infantry Battalion, 38th Armored Infantry Battalion, 48th Armored Infantry Battalion, and elements of the 106th and 28th Infantry Divisions.)

At approximately 1430 it was learned that the head of a task force of the 3d Armored Division was halted at DOCHAMPS, approximately two miles North of SAMREE. The situation was explained to this task force's commander, and he decided to attack with one medium tank company. As the company moved over the ridge approximately 1000 yards North of SAMREE, three of his tanks were destroyed by German tanks from a position North-east of the town. One German tank was destroyed. The medium tank company withdrew to DOCHAMPS, and nothing was heard from it again.

By this time practically all automatic weapons of the original road block were out of ammunition. All except a small covering force were withdrawn to approximately 500 yards West of SAMREE where a new block was established. At approximately 1500 three German Mk V tanks entered SAMREE driving the covering force back to the position West of town. Approximately 30 minutes later we launched an attack against SAMREE with two medium tanks obtained from the shops of the Maintenance Battalion and a miscellaneous group of service personnel. The foot troops were stopped by small arms fire; the tanks reached the Eastern edge of the village before being destroyed.

While the road block in position West of SANKHE held, a defensive position was established East of LA ROCHE with the remaining personnel of Trains except for approximately seventy-five men who were held in a central reserve in the vicinity of the town. During the afternoon of 20 December all medical battalion personnel and all vehicles required for transporting the remaining personnel were evacuated to MARCHÉ and BOGHEFORT. All other personnel, except medical and the drivers, remained in defensive positions prepared to stay.

During the evening of the 20th, all positions repelled patrol actions except blocks 7, 8, 9, and 10, which had been manned by Corps or Army Engineers. During the night of 20/21 December these blocks withdrew, apparently completely out of the area since they were never seen nor heard from again. A few of the soldiers manning these blocks were found dead, but the main body which had been in the vicinity of BANDEUX disappeared completely.

During the fighting on the 20th and the evening of the 20th/21st, we lost approximately fifty men and officers killed, wounded, and captured. It is estimated that the enemy lost approximately two hundred killed, wounded, and captured.

#### 21 December:

On 21 December it was learned that the 84th Division was moving into MARCHÉ and establishing defensive positions in that area, some twelve to fifteen miles to our rear. It was also learned that Corps and Army Engineers had placed demolitions and were to blow bridges, trees, and other obstacles on all roads leading to the West out of LA ROCHE. Upon learning the situation, the Division Commander ordered Division Trains to evacuate its position around LA ROCHE and proceed through MARCHÉ to HANZE where the Trains could assume their normal function of supporting the Division.

The withdrawal was made on the afternoon of the 21st without loss of personnel or materiel. In addition a convoy of approximately ninety vehicles with ammunition, rations, and gasoline together with repaired combat vehicles were assembled in the MARCHÉ area for movement to the Division which by this time was seriously in need of supplies. The convoy arrived intact in the Division area at approximately 1500 on 22 December. Division Trains closed in the assembly area in the vicinity of HANZE by approximately 2400 on the 22d.

It is believed that but for the stand made by the 7th Armored Division Trains in the vicinity of LA ROCHE from the 18th through the 21st of December, the Germans would have moved directly through the gap between the 7th Armored Division in the vicinity of ST. VITH and the forces holding in the vicinity of BASTOGNE. In so far as is known there was nothing in this gap except for the Trains of the 7th Armored Division until 21 December to prevent the Germans from marching virtually unopposed to the MEUSE River. By holding until 21 December, First Army had time in which to move forces into the gap and block the Germans in rear of the position held by the 7th Armored Division Trains.

/s/ A. J. Adams  
Col., Inf.

Dw TNS Map

COMBAT COMMAND "A"

40th Tank Battalion  
48th Armored Infantry Battalion



"On the Alert" — dug-in tank of 7th Armored  
Division, near ST. VITH, December 1944.

April 5, 1946

Major General R. W. Hasbrouck  
Office of the Chief of Staff  
Army Ground Forces  
Washington, D. C.

Dear General Hasbrouck:

Unfortunately I do not have the necessary records to give you documented evidence of the operation around ST. VITH, however, I shall probably remember much that took place there for some time to come. So I am forwarding the following description of the most important actions in that operation:

1. The operations of TASK FORCE HUGHES ("D" Co/40th Tk Bn; Recon Plat; Mortar Plat/40th Tk Bn), commanded by Capt. Walter J. Hughes of Co. "D", 40th Tk. Bn., remained throughout the war one of the highlights of our combat experiences. A matter-of-fact review of this operation can be found in the Battalion After Action Report.

This task force, upon arrival in the ST. VITH--BEHD area, out-posted the battalion bivouac. When the battalion moved in to establish a line and secured the POTEAU area, the task force went under Combat Command control, operating some 20 miles in rear of the battalion, and without support of any kind initially. This task force was responsible for evacuating considerable quantities of supplies and several hundred prisoners of war. In addition, TASK FORCE HUGHES effectively defended the rear of the Division against superior numbers until the arrival of reinforcements. The Company Commander, First Sergeant, and senior officers and men of this unit were cited for extraordinary heroism. However, neither the unit After Action Report nor the individual citations faithfully recounted the trials and hardships of this operation, due to our policy of not including facts and figures derogatory to other units. This operation was particularly bright from our standpoint because of the complete disorganization of other American organizations in this area (Arty, AAA, QM, Ord).

2. Co. "C", 40th Tk. Bn. spearheaded the drive of CC-A in its attack to seize POTEAU, BELGIUM. POTEAU was held by the Germans in the following manner: the town itself was lightly held by enemy infantry, but the high ground to the North and East was heavily held; we were attacking from the Southeast; the open terrain surrounding the town (about 700 yds) was swept by machine gun, tank, and antitank fire. Considerable mortar and SP arty fire was also covering this area.

The initial tank-infantry assault was repulsed. The infantry was unable to negotiate the open terrain, and the tanks were drawing heavy direct antitank fire. A second attack was planned with the infantry moving in from the South and the tanks moving in fast from the only available direction, the original approach, and joining the infantry in the town. The infantry was again held up and could not advance.

In our present position we controlled the cross-roads and prevented the reinforcement of the town and cross-roads, but it was essential that we hold the town by night or the whole German Army would go through. I therefore ordered the lead platoon of "C" Co., led by Lt. Reeves, into the town without supporting infantry and directed the infantry to join them at nightfall at all costs.

This maneuver proved successful, and the town of POTEAU South of the canal was held and the cross-roads secured. A second company of infantry, C/48, was directed to take up positions North of the canal. This was accomplished under the cover of darkness by wading the canal which was waist deep and icy. This company remained in position without relief for 48 hours, although the weather was freezing and the enemy was firing at their foxholes with direct grazing fire.

The second platoon of C/40th had meanwhile secured positions in the edge of the woods, and had halted all efforts of the enemy to send armor into POTEAU. Three of the destroyed enemy tanks aside the road were set on fire at nightfall thereby lighting up the only approach for the enemy tanks and contributing materially to the defeat of a heavy and determined night attack.

Our tanks were at a serious disadvantage during the daylight engagements due to the way the heavy smoke from our guns hung in the air, disclosing the positions and blinding our gunners so that they were unable to quickly make adjustments. Capt. Nelson, Commander of "C" Co., corrected this disadvantage by establishing a line of tankers in front of the tanks to relay adjustments to the gunners.

3. With one tank company and three infantry companies engaged in and around POTEAU, only by a vigorous defense was the Combat Command able to maintain its position in the POTEAU area and to protect its line of communications during the next four days. It was necessary to send unescorted tank patrols through miles of closely wooded terrain as strong enemy bands were operating all around us. The Tank and Armored Infantry Battalion Headquarters and the Combat Command Headquarters served as strong points along this line, and only by the timely arrival of a tank section was the CP of the 48th AIB saved from a serious attack by a force of approximately 200 enemy infantry.

4. On 22 December 1944, the Combat Command was directed to swing its lines across the POTEAU--VIELSALM road preparatory to a withdrawal Westward. This maneuver conducted in an orderly manner on the night of the 22d and with very small losses. The further disengagement and withdrawal to the West was masterfully conducted by all hands in the face of a strong enemy attack -- with C/40 remaining in position until the last, some two hours after the departure of all infantry support.

Estimated Casualties:

| <u>OWN</u>                  | <u>ENEMY</u>   |
|-----------------------------|----------------|
| 200 Infantry                | 600 Infantry   |
| 12 Medium Tanks             | 10 Mk V Tanks  |
| 8 Light Tanks               | 5 Assault Guns |
| 1 Half-track                |                |
| 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ -ton Trucks |                |





Armored Infantry Battalion CP in ST. VITH  
after its recapture by the 7th Armored Division  
on 23 January 1945

Lafayette, Louisiana  
March 23, 1946

Maj. Gen. R. W. Hasbrouck  
Army Ground Forces  
Washington, D. C.

Dear General Hasbrouck:

I have searched my memory and will attempt to put down in writing the activities of the 48th Armored Infantry Battalion during the period 17-23 December 1944.

17 December:

As you know, the 48th was, at that time, part of CC-A which also contained the 40th Tank Battalion. The Combat Command moved South through VIELSALM on the evening of 17 December, and then turned East to bivouac in some small towns South of ST. VITH in the BEHO area. The weather, as you recall, was quite bad -- cold and rainy -- and moving our commands over the roads was made more difficult by the presence of artillery units of large caliber which were moving out of the area in a direction opposite to ours.

18 December:

CC-A was ordered to recapture and secure the important road junction at POTEAU. We moved out early on the morning of 18 December, and passed through the vital road center of ST. VITH whose defense was assigned to CC-B. At this time ST. VITH was under attack, and German mortar fire was falling in the city as we passed through. After moving West out of ST. VITH, we turned North toward POTEAU -- the road junction which controlled the main highway West to VIELSALM.

The Germans were already in possession of POTEAU, but after an all-day fight, culminating in a night attack we captured the town and dug in. In this fight we used all of our combined arms and supporting weapons. German armor was present but seemed reluctant, for the moment, to come out and fight. Their well-camouflaged positions were picked up on the edge of the forest to the East of the town, and they seemed to be playing a "waiting game" in order to pick off our vehicles. However, we outsmarted them and did not give them the opportunity. Our losses for the day was one half-track (Col. Rosebaum's) in vehicles. However, I had a number of casualties, including two company commanders wounded. The German casualties were quite heavy in personnel.

19 December:

On the morning of the 19th, we decided to attempt to push to the East, but large reinforcements of German infantry and armor, which included a large number of self-propelled guns were too much for our task force to penetrate. We did, however, extend our hold on the road junction by moving our forces farther to the North and East. At this time were without Division Artillery support due to its delay enroute, and for the first two days we massed the fires of the assault guns of the 48th and 40th to give heavy support. The system worked excellently.

CC-A was now stretched very thinly over a front of some 7000 yards, most of which was heavily wooded. At this time our dispositions were as follows:

I had two rifle companies and the heavy machine gun platoon in and around POTEAU in the active defense of that area;

My third rifle company was stretched along the road back toward ST. VITH for some 1500 yards, acting as a reserve, with the dual and triple mission of protecting the right flank of the forward forces, and of guarding the road which was our supply line and axis of signal communication;

My battalion CP was in the center of the company, adjacent to a small clearing where the half-tracks of one rifle company were located.

Approximately 1500 yards to the rear, at a curve in the road, was the CP of CC-A. Several thousand yards to the rear of CC-A, near a small town (BODT) were the remainder of the half-tracks and other vehicles of the 48th, as well as my Rear CP and administrative section.

The 40th Tank Battalion, as I recall, had one company with my forward forces under Lt. Col. Brown. The remainder of the tanks were disposed along the road between CP/CC-A and my vehicle area.

#### 20 December:

On the 20th of December the Germans sent a heavy task force -- approximately a battalion in strength and believed to be the famous "GROSS DEUTSCHLAND" troops -- infiltrating through the portion of our rear lines held solely by tanks. Part of this outfit operated an ambush on the road and captured a number of our personnel, including my Executive Officer and Adjutant. Lt. Col. Mente (Executive of CC-A) also was among this unfortunate number. Most of this brave group of officers and men escaped later as the Germans attempted to return with them to their own lines.

#### 21 December:

Throughout the 20th, 21st, 22d, and 23d, the Germans made repeated attacks and attempts to infiltrate our lines, all of which were repulsed. However, the two biggest attacks (which I shall describe) came on the 21st and the morning of the 22d.

On the 21st, a large coordinated attack with tanks, assault guns, and infantry was launched against our positions at POTEAU. We let their armor come well out into the open and then massed every available piece of artillery at our disposal on them; this seemed to stun them. At the same time Col. Brown moved his tanks into firing positions and opened up on the enemy armor. We stopped the attack "cold", knocking out five Mk V "Panther" tanks and two or three assault guns of the 75mm class, and inflicting heavy losses on the enemy personnel. Our losses were negligible and, for the most part, were due to frozen feet and "trench foot". As you know, the men had been in the snow and cold and for several days now. Incidentally, at least two of the tanks were knocked out by riflemen with "bazookas".

#### 22 December:

The second largest attack was on the morning of the 22d, and was directed at my battalion CP and the vehicle park of "C" Company's vehicles. This attack was made by possibly two or three German rifle companies.

The attacking force moved right in on us through the heavy foliage of the forest, and there was firing on three sides of my radio half-track. I used every available man to defend our position, including half-track drivers, radio operators, and runners. This was a close call. Several half-track drivers were killed at their machine guns, and several of our vehicles were destroyed by Panzerfausts. The attackers were right on us and even succeeded in driving off one of our half-tracks. The attack lasted for several hours, but we finally drove them off. Our losses were quite heavy, both in killed and wounded. In attempting to evacuate the wounded to the rear, via CC-B, some of our medics were fired on and killed. Following that, it was necessary to evacuate in half-tracks through POTEAU. The ground was littered with enemy dead.

During this attack, our rear echelon (consisting of the battalion administrative section, and the remainder of the half-tracks and vehicles) was subjected to a strong attack by infantry and tanks. Unknown to us, CC-B had been forced to withdraw to new positions the night of the 21st, and our rear and right flank was exposed. The Germans were now moving forward through ST. VITH and were attacking the rear echelon. Every available man, including mechanics, drivers, cooks, clerks, and others, were pressed into firing positions. It was through their heroic efforts that we were able to get them out with the rest of the Combat Command when we were ordered to withdraw on the afternoon of the 22d. In this movement, we maintained our positions in and around POTEAU, but moved all reserve and supporting units through POTEAU toward PETIT-FRIER (along the VIRISALE road).

On the night of 22 December we received several enemy attacks during the night. There was fighting every hour of the night in some part of the line as the enemy constantly attempted to infiltrate. It was evident that he was massing large forces for a full-scale attack and the ultimate encirclement of our positions...

#### 23 December:

On the afternoon of the 23d, we broke contact with the enemy -- making a daylight withdrawal. The operation was facilitated by well-planned artillery fires which included smoke, and was carried out without a casualty to the Combat Command. The timing, coordination, and precision of our movement caught the enemy by surprise. However, he was quick to recover, for as the last of my troops pulled out of PETIT-FRIER, the German artillery already had found the range and was shelling the small town.

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I know that the men felt that they had been slighted or overlooked when no award was made for our ST. VITH stand. I think the expression made by General Montgomery at the time we were withdrawn was significant of his belief that we had played an important role in the halting of the Von Rundstedt Offensive. At the time I left Germany I was under the impression that the 7th Armored Division was in line for the French Unit Citation -- the Fourragers. Can you advise me if this has fallen through?

/s/ Richard D. Chappuis  
Lt. Col., Inf-Res.

COMBAT COMMAND "B"

87th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron  
31st Tank Battalion  
38th Armored Infantry Battalion

Troops -- Combat Command "B"

During the period 17-23 December, more than one-half the major combat units of the 7th Armored Division were attached from time-to-time to Combat Command "B". Prior to the capture of ST. VITH by the Germans on the night of the 21st/22d, the lines were held from North to South by the 87th Cavalry Squadron (minus), the 31st Tank Battalion (reinforced), and the 38th Armored Infantry Battalion (reinforced). During this time the 23d Armored Infantry Battalion did not function as a combat unit manning part of the line for all its companies had been detached and were attached to the other three battalions. Units in the line were:

| <u>87th Cav</u> | <u>31st Tks</u> | <u>38th AIB</u> |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| F/87            | C/31            | A/38            |
| Plat/C/23       | C/87            | A/23            |
| A/17            | C/23(-Plat)     | MG Plat/Hq/23   |
| Plat/C/38       | B/31            | A/31            |
| Plat/D/31       | A/814(-Plat)    | B/38            |
| Sec/A/814       | B/33            | 3d Plat/F/423   |
|                 | A/87            | B/87            |
|                 |                 | MG Plat/Hq/38   |
|                 |                 | Prov Engrs      |
|                 |                 | B/23(-Plat)     |
|                 |                 | Sec/A/814       |

After midnight of the 21st/22d, when Combat Command "B" established a new line between ST. VITH and KROMBACH, the lines were held from North to South by TF BOYLAN and TF ERLBUSCH, to the right of which was added TF WEMPLE after 0800 on the 22d. The survivors of the 2 armored infantry battalions were divided between the two tank battalions.



"Waiting for those Tigers" — TD of the  
7th Armored Division, dug-in near ST. VITR,  
December 1944.

HEADQUARTERS  
THE COMMAND AND GENERAL STAFF SCHOOL  
at  
FORT LEAVENWORTH, KANSAS

5 April 1946

Major General R. W. Hasbrouck  
Headquarters Army Ground Forces  
Washington, D. C.

Dear General Hasbrouck:

In response to your request, I am submitting a report on the actions of the 87th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron at ST. VITH.

17 December

On the 17th of December, at about 1200, the Squadron CP was established at RECHT. Troop "B" was pushed to the East, and Troop "C" to the North -- both on security missions. The Squadron was placed under CC-B, and Troop "B" in turn under direct control of the Combat Command. The Squadron (-) was ordered to form a screen from the SCHOENBURG road up to the HEPPENBACH road, pushing well out to include MEYERODE, HERRESBACH, and HEUM.

Company "F" was sent to reconnoiter and outpost the town of MEDELL (originally selected for the Squadron CP) but found the Germans already in possession. Troops "A" and "D" moved East to their assigned positions but experienced considerable difficulty on the road due to retreating elements which blocked our advance. Troop "C" was pushed North to counter a tank threat, and occupied the high ground North of ST. VITH -- generally along the road extending East from HUNNINGEN. "A" Troop, moving East, found the Germans in WALLERODE, and then fell back along the general line of "C" Troop.

18 December

At dawn on the 18th of December, the Germans attacked Troop "C". (The strength of the attack was about 50 infantrymen, reinforced later by more infantry and tanks--of the Mark IV type, I believe.) At 1100, Troop "C" was reinforced by C/31, however, the high ground at HUNNINGEN had been lost.

A co-ordinated attack by "C" Troop and a company of the 814th TD's regained this ground in the early afternoon. In the meantime, Troop "D" had moved out on a mission to join CC-A but was diverted to a divisional mission; and "A" Troop had occupied a position North of ST. VITH, contacting A/38 on the right (East) and "C" Troop on the left (West) flank.

19 December

On the 19th of December, I moved the Squadron CP from a position just West of ST. VITH to a point about 1 kilometer Southwest of RODT (Sart-les-St. Vith). One platoon of Company "F" was sent on a road reconnaissance to VIELSALM, and the report was that the only serviceable road was through KROMBACH -- as the road from HINDERHAUSEN was only a trail and would break down after a few vehicles



had passed. (This report was verified by other reconnaissance patrols I had dispatched)

### 20 December

During the night of the 19th/20th, probing attacks by infantry and tanks were driven back by artillery and small arms fire. On the afternoon of the 20th, A/17 came under Squadron control and was placed in position with C/31 on its right and F/87 (reinforced) on its left at RODT. (I shall not discuss the actions of "A" and "C" Troops, as they have been covered by the report of Lt. Col. Erlenbusch on the 31st Tank Battalion.) In the Squadron sector, generally North of RODT -- where our left flank contacted CC-A, and our right flank, C/31 -- we received constant limited attacks from OBER EMMELS and NEIDER EMMELS, but all were repulsed.

### 21 December

On the 21st, a large German force of approximately 300 (as determined by questioning Lt. Ostrum -- who escaped after being captured) crossed the road between POTEAU and RODT and moved in on the gun positions of the 275th FA Bn at HINDERHAUSEN, about 1 mile to the rear of my CP.

Lt. Barnhill, with a platoon of light tanks, was sent to clean them out and to protect us from an attack in the rear. This occurred about dusk. This mission was accomplished by Barnhill -- aided by the valorous efforts of the 275th who were firing their guns at point-blank range. However, this contributed to the general uneasiness after 5 days of continual defensive fighting against an aggressive enemy with an overwhelming superiority in numbers. During the night of the 21st, there was considerable enemy armored activity in the Area OBER and NEIDER EMMELS, with attacks by infantry and tank teams supported by artillery; all were repulsed.

### 22 December

In the early morning hours elements of the 23d and 38th Armored Infantry Battalions were reforming in the Area KROMBACH, HINDERHAUSEN, and RODT. Enemy activity was aggressive and successful in placing a road block about 400 yards East of RODT on the road to ST. VITH -- between my CP and my front line troops (who maintained their positions). At the same time our West flank was threatened seriously, but one platoon, D/31, reinforced by one platoon, C/23, under Capt. Stine (F/87) held their ground. We were aware of the enemy penetration into ST. VITH during this same period of time.

Further information was received of the presence of German vehicles and men in ST. VITH, and at the same time a dangerous build-up of tanks and infantry was observed on my West and now open flank. Consequently, I gave orders for a relocation of the Squadron CP at KROMBACH. This was dictated for 2 reasons, namely: that the road reconnaissance had indicated the inability of my wheeled vehicles and 1/2 tracks to withdraw through HINDERHAUSEN to COMMANSTER, and secondly, the heavy casualties suffered by my Hq from the enemy's observed artillery fire.

During the process of preparing to move, the Germans attacked from West to East with dismounted infantry with small arms, and closing to a distance not greater than 200 yards. Utilizing a small trail Southward and

employing every available weapon, we succeeded in disengaging and moving our Hq to KROMBACH.

Orders were received to form a new defensive position about 1 mile South of our present position on a line North and East of HINDERHAUSEN and KROMBACH. The troops under my command were able to effect this move successfully with one platoon of Company "F" protecting the West flank. A/17 had to fight its way back through the previously mentioned road block East of RODT, moving cross-country and attacking in line with marching fire.

A/17, two platoons/814, F/87 were deployed around HINDERHAUSEN, protecting the Western and Northern approaches, then extending Eastward to contact Lt. Col. Erlensch (31st). An attack by the Germans that night penetrated the positions to the East by utilizing the railroad cut from ST. VITH, and enemy infantry reached the Northern fringes of KROMBACH. All Hqs were moved out except that of the 17th Tank Battalion, and Squadron CP closed at MALDINGEN at 0045.

### 23 December

At daybreak on the 23d, in accordance with instructions from CC-B, the withdrawal commenced through COMMANSTER and VIELSALM. I proceeded to COMMANSTER and then to HINDERHAUSEN to command the covering forces protecting the withdrawal.

The covering force fell back on COMMANSTER and organized a new position to protect a delay in moving out elements of the 434th FA Bn and the tail of CC-B which was moving very slowly. Unfortunately, the CO of A/17 lost contact with a platoon of tanks and a platoon of TD's -- and they had tied on to the tail of CC-B. This materially weakened the strength of the rear guard. (Several tanks and one TD had been lost covering the withdrawal of TF ERLENSCH (31st) and TF WEMPLE (17th) at HINDERHAUSEN.) A rather sharp action occurred at COMMANSTER in which we lost one medium tank and two TD's in a matter of seconds...

At last instructions were received to fall back on VIELSALM and to cross the SALM River. However, at a point about 2½ miles East of VIELSALM, I established a delaying position and sent a recon section back to COMMANSTER under Lt. Glorioso to regain contact, while I made a personal reconnaissance to VIELSALM where I received your personal instructions to hold there until relieved.

On a reconnaissance to SALMCHATEAU on the South I found Germans entering the town where they had just disabled a vehicle with a Panzerfaust. Upon return to the forward position, I found everything under control and functioning smoothly under the command of Maj. Cannon. One platoon of light tanks was sent to protect our vulnerable South flank on the road from VIELSALM to SALMCHATEAU. The recon section fought a delaying action back to our position, and we fired defensively with our artillery -- one concentration of which fell on my Hq, causing 4 casualties.

At dusk I withdrew to the outskirts of VIELSALM, prepared for a "last ditch" with my forces concentrated in strength. Shortly after arrival, and while consolidating, orders were received to withdraw. The bridge was guarded by an Engineer Lieutenant from the 82d Abn. Div. and a detail. The withdrawal was effected without event, and I reported to the Engineer officer when the last unit had crossed and then happily followed the Squadron to JOVIGNE.

That, in general, covers the action as I remember it at ST. VITH. I am loath to recommend any particular unit for outstanding work. All elements that I observed were harrassed night and day by savage attacks, yet their morale, courage, and tenacity was outstanding. Our casualties were heavy, but are a measure of the intensity of the fighting! I have listed them in the box below:

|              | AWARDS       |              | CASUALTIES |           |            |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|------------|-----------|------------|
|              | Bronze Stars | Silver Stars | KIA        | WIA       | MIA        |
| Hq & Sv Trp: | 1            | 5            | 1          | 7         | 7          |
| Trp "A"      | 2            | 2            | 4          | 14        | 1          |
| Trp "B"      | 4            | 0            | 6          | 15        | 71         |
| Trp "C"      | 2            | 3            | 3          | 11        | 0          |
| Trp "D"      | 1            | 1            | 5          | 16        | 11         |
| Trp "E"      | 4            | 2            | 1          | 2         | 10         |
| Co "F"       | 0            | 0            | 1          | 1         | 8          |
| <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>14</b>    | <b>13</b>    | <b>21</b>  | <b>66</b> | <b>108</b> |

Of the figures MIA, many were wounded and killed, but official confirmation could not be gained at the time of the report.

Of the five Silver Stars in Hq Troop and two in Troop "E", five of them were earned in the fighting with Division Trains (25 miles to the West, or rear).

Our service elements never knew from day to day which road was open; we relied on the Class I and III supplies found in ST. VITH and the general vicinity.

I am inclosing a letter (recommendation) from Gen. Clarke on the actions of Troop "B". From comments of the survivors of this troop, I firmly believe that Stewart accomplished a miracle in organization by personal leadership on the ground East of ST. VITH, which enabled the command to hold so firmly in the latter days.

This report is the best that I can do under the time element and with the resources available. I hope that this will help in securing recognition for the 7th Armored Division -- which it so rightly deserves.

Respectfully,

/s/ Vincent L. Boylan  
VINCENT L. BOYLAN  
Lt. Col., Cav.

Incl: Ltr fr Gen Clarke

HEADQUARTERS COMBAT COMMAND "B"  
7th Armored Division, APO 257  
U. S. Army

25 January 1945

Facts upon which to base a unit citation for Troop "B", 87th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (Mechanized), 7th Armored Division:

At 1000 on 17 December 1944, the Commanding General, Combat Command "B", 7th Armored Division, arrived at St. Vith, Belgium, after having been told by the Commanding General, VIII Corps, that the situation at St. Vith was serious and that the 106th Division had been badly overrun and needed help.

The situation at St. Vith was found to be critical. Two combat teams of the 106th Division had been surrounded and the other units had been badly depleted.

An effort was made to organize a force from the 7th Armored Division to attack east to Schonburg, Belgium, to relieve the two surrounded combat teams. Because of the traffic streaming to the rear it was impossible to bring up troops of the Division from those arriving in the Vielsalm area in time to launch such an attack. In middle afternoon the enemy approached from the east to within a few hundred yards of the town. In order to block this advance, all remaining elements of the 106th Division were rushed to form a road block to the east of town. The first unit of the 7th Armored Division to arrive was the 87th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (Mechanized). The squadron, less Troop "B", was sent to Medell to protect the left flank. "B" Troop was placed in the line on the left of the previously mentioned road block. Other troops were added to the right and left until the defensive line extended for 10 kms on the north and east of St. Vith. Troop "B" was in the center of the line dismounted. It received the brunt of many attacks and threw them back each time from 17 December until the night of 21-22 December when the enemy overwhelmed the line to the east of St. Vith, breaking through in three places and cutting off many of the defenders.

The units in the center of the line east of St. Vith, after they were overrun, were ordered to infiltrate and make their way back to behind a newly established line west of St. Vith.

"B" Troop went into the line on 17 December with a strength of 6 officers and 136 enlisted men. On 23 December, after the Battle of St. Vith, this troop had a strength of no officers and 47 enlisted men. On 21 December this troop repulsed two attacks, alone killing 200 Germans in so doing.

The stand of the 7th Armored Division at St. Vith is reported to have had a tremendously beneficial effect at that critical time. It disrupted the timetable of the German offensive and gained valuable time for the movement of reserves to counter the German threat. All units of the 7th Armored Division acquitted themselves with great distinction during the defense of St. Vith, but none bore more of the brunt of the battle and accomplished more with the means available than "B" Troop. The gallantry of the unit collectively and individually was outstanding.

I recommend it for a citation for its heroic stand at St. Vith.

/s/ Bruce C. Clarke  
BRUCE C. CLARKE

Brig. Gen., U. S. Army, Cmdg.



31st Tank Battalion, 7th Armored  
Division -- driving on ST. VITH --  
ready to launch an attack to capture  
WALLERODE, January 1945

COMMAND and GENERAL STAFF SCHOOL  
Fort Leavenworth  
Kansas

23 March 1946

Maj. Gen. Robert W. Hasbrouck  
Headquarters Army Ground Forces  
Washington, D. C.

Dear General Hasbrouck:

I received your letter of 14 March this past Tuesday, and I find it very difficult to single out a particular unit of the Division who by its action at ST. VITH, 17-23 December 1944, would not be worthy of a "Unit Citation" in its own right.

As you well know the units of the Division were split into Task Forces. Elements of as many as four units, in many cases, comprised a single Task Force. Yet the elements of these composite units of the Division fought side by side without friction and with the utmost confidence in each other. It seemed to me that every man and every officer felt the gravity of the situation, and, disregarding his personal feelings, was willing to do more than his part to accomplish the Division's mission. Thus every man and every unit fought as one man and one unit, with one common purpose and one common loyalty: that purpose being to stop the German offensive, and that loyalty being to the 7th Armored Division.

Perhaps if I recount, in more or less chronological order, the actions of the various companies and platoons under my command, 17-23 December 1944, you will, with similar accounts from other commanders, be able to piece together the events of the Battle of ST. VITH.

17 December:

The head of CC-B's column, with the 31st Tk Bn leading, arrived at PETIT-THIER, BELGIUM, about 1330, 17 December, and stopped for refueling after a night and day march from UBACH, GERMANY. At this time Gen. Clarke was in ST. VITH conferring with the CG, 106th Division. The head of the column moved out from PETIT-THIER in the direction of ST. VITH about 1400. The road soon became extremely congested because of the continuous stream of frenzied soldiers hurrying to the "safety" of the rear. By physically pushing retreating vehicles off the road, "A" Co of the 31st was able to reach ST. VITH about 1645. In the meantime I had conferred with Gen. Clarke, and had received instructions that the head of our column was to attack in the direction of SCHONBURG to relieve elements of the 106th Division. However, the time consumed in moving the column to ST. VITH, coupled with the fact that progress on the road in the direction of the town was practically impossible, prevented the execution of this plan. "A" Co (31st) was then ordered to take up a defensive position on the high ground about 2000 yards East of ST. VITH.

Lt. Dunn, the leading Platoon Leader of "A" Co, preceded the lead tank in a  $\frac{1}{4}$ -ton to reconnoiter for positions. About 1500 yards from ST. VITH, upon rounding a bend in the road, Lt. Dunn spotted 800 yards to his front: 3 German tanks and about 1 company of infantry moving in the direction of ST. VITH. He turned his vehicle around, issued instructions to his Platoon by radio, climbed in the first tank, and led his Platoon to the point where he saw the enemy approaching. The German force and the 1st Plat, "A" Co, met head-on at the bend of the road... The fight was short and at point-blank range.

CASUALTIES:

| <u>Enemy</u> |                | <u>Friendly</u> |
|--------------|----------------|-----------------|
| 3 Tks        | Destroyed      | 0               |
| 50           | Killed/Wounded | 0               |

"A" Co secured the high ground, blocked the road, and extended its position North from the road along the ridge. Here, using part of each tank crew as infantry, they defended against several small attacks during the night of 17-18 December.

"B" Trp, 87th Rcn Sq, which was in the area, was contacted and extended "A" Co's line through the woods. "B" Co, 23d AIB, which was the next unit to arrive in ST. VITH (about 1730), was sent to the Southeast to block that road and take up a defensive position on the high ground about 1500 yards Southeast of the town.

By 2400, 17 December, the 38th AIB had gone into positions on the high ground Northeast of ST. VITH with one company and augmented the Eastern sector with a second company. The remainder of CC-B was placed in an assembly area in the vicinity of SART-lez-ST. VITH (RODT). The 31st (-) closed into position Northwest of RODT by approximately 2300.

18 December:

Early on the morning of the 18th, "C" Co of the 31st was alerted and moved to ST. VITH as a reserve in case of an attack on the Eastern positions. About 0800 the enemy attacked from the North passing through HUNNANGE. To meet this threat, "B" Co of the 31st counter-attacked astride the ridge from their assembly position (Northeast of RODT) to HUNNANGE, hitting the enemy in the flank. "C" Co meanwhile hit the attack head-on from the direction of ST. VITH... This counter-attack drove the enemy back into a woods about 2000 yards Northeast of Hunnage. While "B" Co consolidated the position it had gained, "C" Co withdrew to ST. VITH.

CASUALTIES:

| <u>Enemy</u>     |           | <u>Friendly</u> |
|------------------|-----------|-----------------|
| # small vehs     | Damaged   | 0               |
| 1 Tk; 1 Armd Car | Destroyed | 1 Armd Car      |
| 100              | Killed    | 0               |

While this attack at HUNNANGE was being repulsed, the enemy had attacked the position of one company of the 38th which was defending the high ground East of ST. VITH. This attack was launched with a force of 4 tanks, 8 armored cars, and an estimated battalion of infantry, with direct tank fire and artillery support from the vicinity of WALLERODE. "C" Co arrived in ST. VITH from its previous mission in time to counter-attack the enemy as he was consolidating the position formerly held by the company from the 38th. In the meantime "A" Co (31st) had maneuvered one tank platoon so as to bring its fire to bear on the enemy infantry, while a second platoon placed its fire on the enemy gun positions near WALLERODE. Supported by the fire of "A" Co, "C" Co was able to drive the enemy back to WALLERODE, and the 38th restored its positions. The time was now about 1630, and "C" Co was withdrawn to a reserve position West of ST. VITH to refuel and resupply.

CASUALTIES:

| <u>Enemy</u>       |           | <u>Friendly</u>                        |
|--------------------|-----------|----------------------------------------|
| 2 Tks; 6 Armd Cars | Destroyed | 0                                      |
| ?                  | Damaged   | 3 Tks (ret'd to Dty, 19 Dec)           |
| 40% of Inf Bn      | Killed    | 0                                      |
| ?                  | Wounded   | 6 (slightly; treated and ret'd to Dty) |

During the afternoon attack against the 38th, "B" Co of the 23d was attacked on the Southeast flank at about 1400. This attack was successfully repulsed by B/23, with the aid of some elements of the 9th Armored Division defending the Southern approaches to the town.

At about 1000 — while "B" and "C" Cos were successfully engaging the enemy at HUNNANGE — we received a radio from the 17th Tk Bn that they had been driven out of RECHT, and had taken up positions South of that town. At the same time a messenger told us that the enemy had captured POTEAU (in our rear). After a personal reconnaissance to verify this new development, we placed "D" Co in defensive positions to the West and North of RODT.

The capture of POTEAU cut the road from VIELSALM to ST. VITH, and separated the combat forces of CC-B from their service elements. During the night of 17-18 December, Sv Cos of the 31st and the 23d had bivouaced near PETIT-THIER in order to relieve the congestion on the main road. When they attempted to rejoin their forward elements on the morning of the 18th, they were attacked by a German force from the vicinity of POTEAU. All men with the two Sv Cos, except those needed to drive vehicles, including kitchen crews, were hastily organized as infantry for the defense of the trains. 3 tanks which the Bn Maint Sec had just finished repairing were manned by mechanics of the Maint Sec and placed in position.



Lt. Whiteman (Navajo), with a platoon from the 23d AIB, took command of this composite force, and with the aid of the 489th Armd FA repelled the attack. The service elements then backtracked, and by the night of the 18th-19th, set up in the vicinity of KROMBACH. In that area they established a service park for all elements of the Division to their front. I have no knowledge of the casualties caused to either side in this engagement.

During the late afternoon of the 18th, "B" Co was reinforced with two troops of the 87th ("A" and "C"), and by 1900, had organized a strong defensive position with its left flank on HUNNANCE, then extending East along the high ground and then South to tie in with the 38th at a railroad underpass about 1000 yards Northeast of ST. VITH. Also during the afternoon, CC-A came up via KROMBACH and ST. VITH and went into position from RODT to POTEAU. "D" Co (31st) was then relieved of its defensive mission, and was placed in CC-B reserve about half-way between RODT and ST. VITH.

At 2000, the enemy attacked the Northern positions with infantry, estimated at a Bn(-). They struck our positions at a point 1200 yards East of HUNNANCE on the boundary between "A" and "C" Trps of the 87th. However, with the intense small arms fire of these Trps, supported by tank fire from the flanks, the right platoon of "C" Trp and the left platoon of "A" Trp forced the enemy to withdraw after bitter hand-to-hand fighting.

CASUALTIES:

| <u>Enemy</u>        |           | <u>Friendly</u> |
|---------------------|-----------|-----------------|
| 20% of atking force | Killed    | 0               |
| ?                   | Wounded   | 16 (evacuated)  |
| --                  | Destroyed | 2 Armd Cars     |

While this attack was in progress, we were contacted by a wire-team from the 275th Armd FA Bn (Corps Arty), which was then in position near OBER EMMELS. The CO of this Bn volunteered to fire any missions which we might have, stating that his maximum support fire would amount to 2 Batteries as the 3d Battery was employed as local protection for the Bn. This support proved to be very valuable during the night: once to break up an attack on the right flank and once to break up an attack on the left flank of the Northern defensive sector. Both attacks were estimated by our patrols to consist of approximately 150 infantry supported by several armored cars or light tanks.

CASUALTIES:

| <u>Enemy</u>        |                | <u>Friendly</u>                        |
|---------------------|----------------|----------------------------------------|
| 1 Armd Car (Rt Flk) | Destroyed      | 0                                      |
| 15% of each force   | Killed/Wounded | 3 (slightly; treated and ret'd to Dty) |

During the night of the 18th-19th, the Eastern sector withstood several attacks. I, however, have no intimate knowledge of the strengths of the attacks nor of the casualties as this was Lt. Col. Fuller's zone. One attack, however, came perilously close to breaking through the 38th at its junction with "B" Co of the 31st. As a result of this action, "B" Co of the 33d Armd Engrs, which during the day had been preparing a secondary position about 1000 yards West of ST. VITH, was put in on the right flank of the Northern sector so as to give B/31 some infantry protection for their tanks, and to assist them in maintaining contact with the 38th. Also "C" Co (31st), less 1 Platoon, was moved to a point about 200 yards in rear of the junction, B/31-A/38. There they were in position to prevent a break-through along the boundary or to go to the aid of the 38th or B/31, as the situation dictated.

19 December:

About 0600, the remaining platoon of C/31 was sent to the woods and high ground 1500 yards Northeast of RODT, prepared to counter-attack to the East or Northeast. Less than 2 hours later (0800), the enemy launched an attack from the North of NIEDER EMMELS in two columns. One column headed straight for the positions of the 275th AFA, while the second column consisting of 500 infantry and 5 tanks attacked the left flank of the Northern sector in an attempt to encircle the position from the West. The 1st Plat of "C" Co, in the face of this force, attacked the enemy in his Western flank while the TD's in HUNNANGE added their fire support. Supporting artillery fires were given by the 434th Armd FA Bn. (During the night the 434th had gone into position in the KROMBACH-NEUNDORF area.) Both this attack and the one directed at the 275th were repulsed.

CASUALTIES (HUNNANGE front only):

| <u>Enemy</u>                       |           | <u>Friendly</u>                                               |
|------------------------------------|-----------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 Tk                               | Destroyed | 0                                                             |
| 4 Tks (withdrawn to<br>NDR EMMELS) | Damaged   | 2 Tks (hit in track; repaired<br>and ret'd to Dty that<br>AM) |
| 150                                | Killed    | 0                                                             |

After this action, 1st Plat, C/31, took up defensive positions along the ridge running East-West through HUNNANGE, occupying a line from HUNNANGE to a wooded knoll 800 yards West of the town. The 275th Armd FA withdrew to new firing positions in the vicinity of HINDERHAUSEN.

All during the day, the Northern sector received an increased volume of artillery fire, and for the first time -- Nebel-werfer fire. No additional enemy attacks were launched that day against the Northern sector, although several sharp patrol actions did take place. (We suffered 10 casualties from artillery fire.)

The night of the 19th-20th was filled with continuous patrol clashes throughout the Northern sector. One German combat patrol of about 35 men attacked the Rear CP of the 31st at NEUNDORF, and were driven off only after a short but vicious hand-to-hand fight, in which the officers and men of the S-1-4 Sections and a section from the Rcn Plat killed 15 Germans and captured 5. (One of our men was seriously wounded and had to be evacuated, while 3 others were treated and returned to duty. One  $\frac{1}{2}$ -Trac and one "peep" were damaged but later repaired.)

20 December:

The enemy did not attack our Northern sector during the day, but he did give us our due in artillery fire. On several occasions we observed columns of enemy vehicles moving in a Northerly direction North of NIEDER EMMELS, but they were out of effective artillery range and ammunition was too precious for use on such targets. Throughout the day we also noticed a great deal of activity in the WALLERODE area, both tanks and infantry. (A group of about 75 men of the 106th Division who escaped from the SCHONBURG area reported seeing large concentrations of enemy armored units in WALLERODE.)

During the morning one company of the 17th Tks ("A") went into position on the ridge and extended C/31's position to the West. At the same time, 1 Plat, D/31, was placed in position about 200 yards in rear of the junction of CC-A and A/17, in order to insure positive coordination. A second platoon from D/31 was dispatched to KROMBACH to defend CC-B's CP.

Shortly after dusk (about 1730), the enemy launched a night tank attack from the area NIEDER EMMELS-OBER EMMELS against the 1st Plat, C/31. This platoon had no infantry support but had established an outpost line, using 2 men from each tank crew dismounted. As the attacking tanks drew nearer, 2 TD's in direct fire positions West of HUNNANGE moved back to positions about half-way down the reverse slope of the ridge so as to be able to fire into the belly of any tank crossing the ridge. The tanks held their position, and were directed by their Lieutenant to hold their fire until the German tanks were abreast of their position, and then to hit the sides of the tanks. This "ambush" was able to be planned because the outposts had given timely warning of the number of tanks, the type of formation, and the direction of attack.

The attack consisted of 12 Tks: 2 Tigers, 4 Panthers, and 6 of the Mk IV class, equally divided between 2 waves. As the first wave reached the crest of the ridge, the TD's and "C" Co's tanks opened fire almost simultaneously. The TD's hit and destroyed 1 Panther, while "C" Co destroyed 3 Mk IV's and got hits on 1 Tiger and 1 Panther. The second wave of German tanks fired several rounds, and then retired with the 2 remaining tanks of the first wave in the direction of NIEDER EMMELS.

As there were 2 Bns of artillery laying down a heavy concentration in the area of the attack, we never knew if infantry were present, following the tanks, or what. We suffered no casualties, and the light produced by the burning tanks was so bright that I believe it discouraged any further attacks on the Northern sector during the night of the 20th-21st.

CASUALTIES:

Enemy

Friendly

4 Tks

Destroyed

0

SUPPLY DIFFICULTIES:

It might be well to mention at this point some of the difficulties encountered in the problems of supply and maintenance. We held a supply dump at ST. VITH belonging to the 106th Division, and used it until it was exhausted (8,000 rations and 10,000 gal. of gas). Resupply from the rear was extremely hazardous because a goodly portion of the enemy had gone around ST. VITH to the North and South. As a result of these forces "slipping by" on the flanks, our Division rear area was a mixture of friendly and enemy troops. Some Corps and Army ASP's were in our hands; some were in the hands of the enemy; some changed hands frequently; while other supply points were destroyed or evacuated by retiring friendly troops. Division Trains were at LAROCHE, where they were heavily engaged in combat in order to keep from being overrun, and little help could be expected from that quarter. The supply problem then was one of running trucks through miles of enemy infested territory in search of friendly dumps having the desired type of supplies, and then coming back through miles of the same enemy infested territory to deliver the needed supplies to the combat elements.

The service facilities of the units in CC-B were pooled, and the Maint Sections were all consolidated under Capt LaFountain (Maint Off., 31st) who set up a small ordnance shop. Any friendly vehicles which could be evacuated to this shop were repaired there. At the same time this group salvaged many vehicles and weapons which had been abandoned in the area by retreating units before the arrival of the 7th Armored. This equipment was repaired, or, if beyond repair, was "cannibalized" for parts to use in the repair of other vehicles and equipment. Frequently this combined Maint Section operated under artillery fire, and many times they had to drop their work and engage in a small fight with enemy patrols which penetrated to their area. In one instance, a crew of 4 lost 1 man before they could withdraw from the scene with their equipment.

There are two cases that stand out in my mind as indicative of the determination and heroic efforts of the service personnel to keep the combat elements supplied. In the first instance, 7 trucks of the 31st, with a Corporal in charge of the convoy, set out from the vicinity of KROMBACH to obtain fuel from a dump near SAMREE. As no escort was available for sending with the convoy, only trucks with machine gun mounts were used. To help protect the convoy, 2 guards with rifles and "tommy guns" were placed in the rear of each truck, the guards having been recruited from volunteers among the various company kitchen crews. This convoy was gone for 2 days and during that time they "ran the gauntlet" of 4 enemy ambushes. When they arrived at their destination, they found one side of the dump burning and a light tank company from the 87th Ren Sq bitterly defending the other portion. Under these conditions the trucks were loaded to capacity, and then started on the return trip, hiding out in the woods that night. The next day they had only 2 engagements with the enemy, but in one of these attacks the Corporal in charge was killed and 3 men were wounded, while 1 truck was damaged so badly that it had to be towed the rest of the way. Arriving at KROMBACH at dusk of the second day, now commanded by a Pfc truck driver, it could report: "Mission accomplished!"

The other case is practically the same story. This convoy was commanded by Sgt. Trapp, and consisted of 3 trucks from the 31st and 1 truck of the 23d, with a defense crew organized very similar to the first one. Their mission was to obtain badly needed ammunition from a dump in the LAROCHE area. Their experiences were the same except that they had only 2 skirmishes and suffered 1 casualty. The ammunition dump was not guarded by either friendly nor enemy forces. Like the first group, they too returned at dusk of the second day, reporting; "Mission accomplished!"

#### 21 December:

The morning hours of the 21st were ones of extreme anxiety, and a great deal of movement was heard in the woods East of NIEDER EMMELS and in the WALLERODE area. That coupled with considerable patrol activity after midnight, could only mean one thing — the enemy was preparing a full-scale assault. Where it would strike and when it would strike were the questions uppermost in everyone's mind... Every suspicious area and every observed target was hit with liberal quantities of artillery fire in order to harrass and disorganize the enemy in his concentration areas.

At 1300, the Germans started pouring in the artillery, and for over an hour they raked the entire Northern and Eastern sector with heavy fire. At 1400, an attack was launched from the MEDELL area and directed down the AMBLEVE-ST. VITH road, striking at "B" Co's area (31st). The attacking force consisted of about 8 tanks and an estimated regiment of infantry (1500 men), supported by artillery and Nebel-werfer fire from the vicinity of WALLERODE.

In the first 10 minutes of combat, 5 "B" Co tanks were hit, of which 2 burned while the other 3 were immobilized by hits in the front gear housing, and 1 of these had a jammed turret. Only 3 undamaged tanks remained in this sector, as the other "B" Co tanks were defending a different portion of the line and their fire was masked from this area by intervening woods. Still the fight went on, with the 3 undamaged tanks aided by the 2 disabled tanks with free turrets smashing back at the attackers with heavy fire. B/33(-) was placing a curtain of small arms and machine gun fire between them and the advancing waves of German infantry, and their fire was augmented by the crew from the tank with the jammed turret. They had dismounted their machine guns and taken up the fight as infantry. Several of the uninjured tankers from the burning tanks had hastily grabbed rifles from killed and wounded engineers, and had jumped into foxholes where they were continuing the fight.

C/31(-), consisting of 8 tanks which had been backing up the junction of "B" Co and the 38th AIB, moved through the railroad underpass into the area of A/38, where they took up firing positions which enabled them to pour a murderous fire into the flank of the attackers. Sgt. Blair with a mixed tank platoon of 2 "A" Co tanks and 1 each from "B" and "C" Cos, all of which had been in reserve West of ST. VITH, was moved into position on the Northern edge of town so as to counter-attack any break-through on "B" Co's front.

This combination of forces with the support of a Bn of FA, finally stopped the attack when the leading elements of the German infantry were only 100 yards from "B" Co's positions. The attackers — those who were able — then withdrew in the direction of WALLERODE, followed closely by the deadly fire of all machine guns, tanks, and artillery.

CASUALTIES:

| <u>Enemy</u>                     |           | <u>Friendly</u>            |
|----------------------------------|-----------|----------------------------|
| 8 AT Guns                        | Destroyed | 3 Tks                      |
| 2 Tks (withdrew under own power) | Damaged   | 2 Tks                      |
| 400-500                          | Killed    | 0 (31st only)              |
| ?                                | Wounded   | 15 (seriously, incl 2 Off) |

While our attackers were withdrawing, a strong attack was launched from WALLERODE against the Eastern defensive sector. This attack was directed at that part of the line which was being backed up by "A" Co of the 31st. Again the attack was launched with an estimated regiment of infantry, supported by tanks and artillery, and was the strongest attack yet to hit the 38th. (It might be noted here that the 38th had been under almost continuous assault since 1300, and that it had received extremely heavy artillery fire during the attack against the Northern sector.)

When this new attack was discovered, 5 tanks of "C" Co which were then in the area of A/38, shifted into new firing positions in the sector of B/31, so as to fire at the flank of the attack. The combined fires of "A", "B", and "C" Cos of the 31st, when added to the fire from two companies of the 38th (A/38 and A/23), with the support of our 2 FA Bns, stopped this attack "cold".

#### CASUALTIES:

| <u>Enemy</u> |        | <u>Friendly</u> |
|--------------|--------|-----------------|
| 400-500      | Killed | ?               |

The time was now 1900, 21 December, and with the knowledge of the events of the past several days, it was obvious to every man of us in the ST. VITH area that tonight would be the real test.

All lines of the 31st were thinly held now because of the casualties sustained during the past few days. All our reserve had been committed except 1 Platoon of "D" Co, and no reinforcements from Division sources could be expected, since the entire Division was committed throughout an area which extended some 30-odd miles to the West of ST. VITH. We did know that the 101st Airborne Division was surrounded at BASTOGNE and also that the 2d Armored Division was attacking German columns in the DINANT area, and all around us were the Germans. We had made positive identifications of 9 German Divisions in the ST. VITH area, although we had deduced that only 3 of these Divisions were in force: the "GROSSDEUTSCHLAND" North of HUNNANGE, the 9th Panzer in the WALLERODE area, and the 1st SS Panzer directly East of ST. VITH. These 3 Divisions apparently were reinforced by elements of the other 6 Divisions. In other words we were outnumbered man for man on the ST. VITH front about 10-1.

This knowledge weighed with our mission clearly indicated the strategy of our future defense. To hold our positions and eventually be overwhelmed would gain no purpose for the Allied cause. Therefore, it was decided during the afternoon of the 21st that we would hold our present positions until the last possible moment and then drop back successively to new positions, defending each to the limits of our ability.

With this plan in mind, all administrative elements (Sv Cos, S-1-4 Secs, etc.) were cleared out of the ST. VITH-KROMBACH area and placed to the West of VIELSALM. The Northern sector was then given a plan to fall back to positions along the HUNNANGE-ST. VITH road, while the Eastern sector was to fall back on the Eastern edge of the town.

About 1930, the Eastern and Southeastern sectors received the heaviest artillery fire yet received by any unit up to this time. At 2000, B/87 and B/23 (all units with the 38th) sent a frantic message that the enemy had infiltrated their positions, and that they were receiving a heavy attack from infantry supported by tanks and AG's along their front. Almost simultaneously with this development, we received a message from "A" Co (31st)

that they were being attacked by infantry and tanks coming in along the SCHONBURG road.

Sgt. Blair's composite platoon, now on the Northern edge of ST. VITH, was directed to counter-attack out the SCHONBURG road to stop the penetration and to protect the right flank of "A" Co of the 31st. At the same time the Northern sector was directed to withdraw to their planned positions on the HUNNANGE road, and this withdrawal was started at 2015.

By 2030, it was apparent that the Eastern sector was being completely overrun. Therefore, the force on the Northern sector (hereafter identified as Task Force LOHSE) was directed not to stop at its intermediate position but to establish a line on the high ground West of ST. VITH with the left platoon on the wooded knoll 800 yards West of HUNNANGE and the right flank astride the ST. VITH-NEUNDORF road (generally along the line of the reserve position prepared on 18 December). The remaining Platoon, D/31, was ordered to protect our avenue of withdrawal and also to maintain contact with CC-B, 9th Armd Div, on the right, which at this time was also forced to withdraw from its position on the right flank of Fuller's sector.

As this regrouping was being ordered, my CP in ST. VITH was hit twice by direct fire from a tank or SP gun. Fortunately we had no casualties, and the CP was moved to KROMBACH. Gen. Clarke's CP was moved to COMMANSTER, and MALDINGEN was designated as an assembly area for vehicular stragglers (armd inf half-tracks and essential supply vehicles), while KROMBACH was designated as a straggler collecting point for men. Guides and traffic control in the KROMBACH area was accomplished by Rcn elements from the 31st and the 23d.

The 275th AFA was displaced to the COMMANSTER area, while the 434th AFA supported TF LOHSE in containing the enemy at ST. VITH. (In accomplishing this mission one battery was firing at a range of 1800 yards.) After the 275th had gone into their new positions and could again take over the support of TF LOHSE, the 434th displaced by battery to the COMMANSTER area, closing into position about 0300, 22 December.

Those were the steps by which CC-B regrouped after the break-through into the town of ST. VITH, but to go back to the situation in the Eastern sector at about 2030 in point of time...

As Sgt. Blair's platoon moved out the SCHONBURG road, it reached a road fork about 1000 yards East of ST. VITH. Here they were directed to hold, by order of the CO of A/31, and protect the withdrawal of B/23 and A/31. The enemy struck this platoon from two directions with tanks and SP guns, and the ensuing fight was so vicious that at one time Sgt. Blair's command tank was rammed by a German Tiger and turned over. This platoon continued to give the enemy as good or better than he was dishing out, but Blair was outnumbered. Finally all 4 of his tanks were burning, and those of the crews who were still alive (12 men) assembled under Sgt. Blair and made their escape on foot via a railroad cut to KROMBACH.



This valiant fight by Blair and his platoon allowed B/23 (or what was left of B/23 -- 1 platoon) and a TD Section to withdraw West of ST. VITH. "A" Co of the 31st was able to disengage with the loss of only one tank and withdrew through ST. VITH to the Southwest where they joined forces with elements of CC-B of the 9th Armored in the vicinity of NEUBRUCK. (At this time the enemy held the central portion of ST. VITH, so that "A" Co's withdrawal to the West was blocked.)

Amid all this confusion TF LOHSE was able to take up its new defensive positions in time to stop the enemy's forward elements as they emerged to the West of ST. VITH. Throughout the night the Germans kept up a steady pressure on this force, and by 0600, 22 December, the right flank -- C/31(-1 Plat) -- had dropped back some 500 yards to take advantage of more favorable terrain.

CASUALTIES (night of 21-22 December):

Enemy

6 SP Guns

Indeterminate # Inf

Destroyed

Killed,  
Wounded,  
Missing

Friendly

5 Tks, 31st Tk Bn  
Cmbt Vehs, "B" Trp, 87th Cav  
3 AG's, HQ Co, 38th AIB  
Mortar  $\frac{1}{2}$ -Tracs, HQ Co, 38th AIB

"B" Trp, 87th Cav  
AG, MG, Mortar Plats, 38th AIB  
"B" Co, 38th AIB  
2 Plats, "A" Co, 38th AIB  
2 Plats, "A" Co, 23d AIB  
2 Plats, "B" Co, 23d AIB  
Prov Engr Co (168th C Engrs)

(Capt. Foster, CO of "A" Co, 31st Tk Bn, was killed at 1600 when he was caught in the heavy German artillery barrage, while directing his tanks into better firing positions from which to repel the attack being launched against the 38th.)

During the night we collected in the KROMBACH area some 200 men who had managed to work their way back after their position East of ST. VITH had been overrun. Of these only about 100 were fit for further combat, and the remainder had to be evacuated because of wounds, complete exhaustion, or suffering from exposure. The able bodied were organized in a composite armored infantry company (38th AIB), and were set to work preparing defense positions on the high ground about 800 yards East of KROMBACH.

22 December:

By 0600, the information we had on hand relative to our situation and that of adjacent units painted a very grim picture. The enemy had broken through CC-A in the RODT area, and CC-A was being forced to withdraw further West. The Platoon from "D" Co (31st) backing up the

junction of CC-A and "A" Co of the 17th Tk Bn, was wiped out. At the same time the Platoon from "D" Co (31st) on the high ground East of NEUNDORF was fighting off an attack on their position. Both the 434th and 275th AFA Bns reported only 40 rounds remaining per gun, and that an ammunition convoy (already 1 date late) was still unlocated. At this time we still did not know where "A" Co (31st) was located. The only "bright spot" in the picture was the fact that the 17th Tk Bn (-2 Cos) was to arrive in KROMBACH at 0730.

In the face of these conditions we planned another defensive line with the left on HINDERHAUSEN, extending in a semi-circle along the high ground to the East of KROMBACH, with the right flank on the high ground about 800 yards West of NEUBRUCK, and at this point to tie in with CC-B, 9th Armored Division.

The 17th Tk Bn arrived in KROMBACH about 0745, and B/17 was directed to counter-attack on the NEUNDORF-ST. VITH road to relieve the pressure on TF LOHSE and allow them to withdraw cross-country through NEUNDORF to take up positions on the new line. 1 Plat, C/17, was sent to aid D/31 hold the high ground East of NEUNDORF until TF LOHSE and B/17 had cleared the town in their westward movement. The remainder of C/17 went into position on the high ground West of NEUBRUCK. TF BOYLAN in the RODT area successfully disengaged and withdrew to positions in the HINDERHAUSEN area, the left flank of the new CC-B position.

By 1500, the new defensive position had been established from right to left as follows: D/31 (-1 Plat, destroyed) occupied the high ground about 1500 yards Southeast of KROMBACH maintaining contact with CC-B, 9th Armored Division, at a bridge South of this high ground. The 17th Tk Bn extended to the left of D/31 in an arc along the high ground with B/17 astride the main road, half-way between NEUNDORF and KROMBACH. The composite armored infantry company with 6-57mm AT Guns attached occupied the area due North of B/17 along the high ground to include the Railroad. TF LOHSE (B & C/31, A & C/87, B/33, 3 TD's, and 1 Plat/B/23) extended the line from the Railroad tracks swinging North, then West to a point about 1000 yards East of HINDERHAUSEN. A/31, who rejoined us at 1200, was placed in position on the high ground about 300 yards North of the intersection of the RODT-KROMBACH, HINDERHAUSEN-KROMBACH roads, covering the gap between TF LOHSE and TF BOYLAN, and protecting the left flank of TF LOHSE. TF BOYLAN (87th Ren Sq(-) and A/17) was in position around HINDERHAUSEN. 1 Plat, B/814th TD was placed on the high ground immediately West of the intersection of the Railroad and the KROMBACH-HINDERHAUSEN road with the mission of protecting our rear.

CASUALTIES (occupying this position):

Enemy

?

Friendly

4 Tks

3 Mortar  $\frac{1}{2}$ -Tracs

1 TD

Several Vehs, 87th

20 Men (incl 3 Offs, 1 a Co CO)

The action for the remainder of the afternoon of the 22d, consisted of an artillery duel of about an hour's duration in the sector of TF LOHSE. Fortunately the 2 FA Bns had been able to obtain a resupply of ammunition during the morning, and we had been able to get a limited supply of ammunition for the tanks.

About 2000, the enemy striking in force with about 250 men and 4 SP Guns hit without warning the composite armored infantry company's position between B/17 and TF LOHSE. It soon appeared that the enemy were overrunning the infantry positions. The Plat/B/814 Northwest of the town was moved East across the Railroad tracks to take upposition on the high ground in the Western edge of KROMBACH. At 2015, and for the second time in 3 days, my CP was hit by direct fire. 1 Plat/A/31 was put in position at the RJ 100 yards North of the Railroad overpass to keep the enemy from turning North. Lt. Col. Wimple with 3 tanks and a platoon of armored infantry took up position astride the BRAUNLAUF-KROMBACH road about 200 yards West of the church. 1 Plat/D/31 was moved into position on the Southern outskirts of the town. The enemy attack was stopped, and his forces were contained in KROMBACH for the remainder of the night. (About 10 minutes before the enemy entered KROMBACH, the CP of the 31st Bn was moved to BRAUNLAUF.)

### 23 December:

The remainder of the defensive position held fast during the night of the 22d-23d, although vigorous patrol activity took place along the entire front. The sector occupied by TF LOHSE was attacked 5 times by combat patrols whose strength varied from 50-60 men each. On the right, the enemy broke through the 9th Armored Division along the NEUBRUCK road about 0230, and threatened to turn our right flank.

At 0430, the order came down from higher headquarters that all elements in the KROMBACH area would withdraw to the Division assembly area commencing at 0600, and during the next hour the plan of withdrawal was issued to all units. Also all dismounted personnel in the BRAUNLAUF area (included 1 Bn from the 106th Inf Div, who had only a few weapons and a small quantity of small arms ammunition) were mounted on 12 trucks of the Engineers with the 9th Armored Division, given complete instructions, and sent on their way so as to clear the area for the withdrawal of other troops.

At 0600, under the cover of prepared artillery fires, TF LOHSE withdrew cross-country to HINDERHAUSEN. A/31 held the Northern exit from KROMBACH until TF LOHSE cleared HINDERHAUSEN, and then withdrew as rear guard for the TF. The TF withdrew from HINDERHAUSEN to COMMANSTER over a trail made passable by the sudden freeze of the previous night. (Friendly Casualties: 1 Tk and 1  $\frac{1}{2}$ -Ton.) The rest of the withdrawal through VIELSALM to the assembly area was made without incident.

When my CP moved out of BRAUNLAUF at 0615, we received small arms fire from the enemy who were then entering the town from the South. After coordinating the withdrawal of the 17th Tk Bn and the 31st, we moved to COMMANSTER and joined TF LOHSE. (Friendly casualties: 1 man killed.)

At 0630, when the Germans in KROMBACH were giving all their attention to the withdrawing column of TF LOHSE, the 17th Tk Bn (-) attacked through the Southern part of KROMBACH and withdrew through BEHO and VIELSALM. (Friendly casualties: 1 Tk at KROMBACH.)

Shortly before the 17th drove through KROMBACH, D/31 (2 Plats) proceeded to BRAUNLAUF and forced the enemy back to the South, thus keeping the avenue of withdrawal open. As the 17th started through BRAUNLAUF, D/31 disengaged and fell into column as the advance guard for the 17th in the move to the assembly area.

CASUALTIES (D/31 only):

| <u>Enemy</u> |           | <u>Friendly</u> |
|--------------|-----------|-----------------|
| 3 AT Guns    | Destroyed | 2 Lt Tks        |
| 50           | Killed    | 0               |

In the meantime TF BOYLAN held at HINDERHAUSEN to cover the withdrawal of CC-B. They then withdrew to successive positions in their capacity as rear guard, finally withdrawing from the VIELSALM area at 1930, 23 December.

CC-B, with attached elements, closed in its second assembly area in the vicinity of HARZE at approximately 2300, 23 December.

In these pages I have tried to give you only the bare facts in my memory of the Battle of ST. VITH as I witnessed it. As a result, you will notice that in parts the detail is rather sketchy. To embellish these facts were acts (legends now) without end of personal heroism, gallantry, courage, soldierly sacrifice, and just plain "guts", that would overshadow the wildest yarn of the most vivid imagination. These legends tell the real story of ST. VITH, but unfortunately, only those men who were there will ever understand.

Those men who fought in this great campaign had an implicit faith and trust in the decisions of their superiors. Therefore, I hope that this information may in some way help you to obtain for these men what is rightfully theirs: A Unit Citation for the 7th Armored Division.

Respectfully yours,

/s/ Robert C. Erlenbusch  
ROBERT C. ERLENBUSCH  
Lt. Col., Cav.

SUMMARY OF ENEMY and FRIENDLY CASUALTIES, 17-23 Dec 1944

31st TANK BATTALION (less "A" Co)

ENEMY:

11 Tks (all types)                      Destroyed  
 7 Armd Cars  
 6 AG's  
 11 AT Guns

6 Tks                                      Damaged  
 # Small Vehs

Killed/Wounded  
 (estimated or  
 counted)

1080

PW's

5

FRIENDLY:

13 M4 Tks  
 7 M5 Tks  
 3  $\frac{1}{2}$ -Tracs  
 1  $\frac{1}{4}$ -Ton

2 M4 Tks  
 1  $2\frac{1}{2}$ -Ton Trk

2 M4 Tks)      Repaired  
 1  $\frac{1}{2}$ -Trac)      and returned  
 1  $\frac{1}{4}$ -Ton )      to Dty

Killed

33

Wounded (seriously & evacuated)

37

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"A" Co, 31st Tk Bn, which was attached to the 38th Armd Inf Bn through the night of 21-22 December, reported the following through the 38th:

ENEMY:

A/31

6 Mk IV's                                  Destroyed  
 1  $\frac{1}{2}$ -Trac

1 M4 (105mm How)

?                                              Killed

3 (incl CO)

?                                              Wounded

2



Entrance to "The School House" in ST. VITH,  
which in December 1944 housed successively the  
CP's of the 106th Infantry Division; CC-B, 7th  
Armored Division; and 38th Armored Infantry

PERSONAL REPORT

"Traffic Conditions, ST. VITH-VIELSALM Road, 17 Dec 1944"

POTEAU ROAD JUNCTION:

At Poteau, which was half-way between ST. VITH and VIELSALM (approximately 6 miles from each town), the LIGNEUVILLE-RECHT road joined with the one from ST. VITH, and then extended westward through PETIT-THIER and VILLE-du-BOIS to VIELSALM. About two hundred yards south of the RJ, the road leading from ST. VITH executed a sharp right-angle turn, crossed the railroad with an overpass, joined the LIGNEUVILLE road and turned sharply left to run parallel with the railroad to VIELSALM. Although quite insignificant looking and consisting of not more than seven or eight houses and barns, this little RJ at POTEAU was destined to play a "BIG" role in the days to come. However, none of this importance impressed me at the time...

NARRATIVE

My driver (Pfc Alfred Falter) and I arrived at this RJ in our "peep" at about 1230, 17 December. We were running about an hour in front of the 38th Armored Infantry Battalion which was the lead unit in CC-R's march column. As we arrived at this RJ, we were hit by a sight which we could not take in: a constant stream of traffic hurtling to the rear (to the West); nothing going to the front (to the East).

As we watched this stream of traffic dashing to the rear, sometimes moving at a steady pace, other times crawling; as we watched some driver pull out to the left and run double banked down the column with his horn blaring in an effort to get ahead of the vehicles before him -- Falter and I realized that this was not a convoy moving to the rear; it was a case of "every dog for himself"; it was a retreat!

Here would come an empty 2½, then another 2½ but this time with two or three men in it (most of them bare-headed and in various states of undress) in the rear, next perhaps an engineer crane truck or an armored car, then several artillery prime mover tractors -- perhaps one of them towing a gun, command cars with officers (up to and including several full Colonels) in them, quarter-tons -- anything which would run and which would get the driver and the few others he might have with him away from the front. It wasn't orderly; it wasn't military; it wasn't a pretty sight -- we were seeing American soldiers running away.....

We headed West towards VIELSALM, for there I hope to find information and orders. (When we started this move, Division had received no information as to the reason for the move to VIII Corps area. To us it had appeared to be a routine administrative march involving a troop shift from one Corps and one Army to a different Corps and a different Army. My personal thoughts had been that perhaps General Patton and his THIRD ARMY had achieved a break-through and were headed for the RHINE; that he probably

was screaming for armor, and that perhaps he already had borrowed the 9th Armored Division which had been furnishing the Corps Reserve for VIII Corps. I suspected that we were being shifted to VIII Corps as a replacement for the 9th Armored... Between EUPEN and MALMEDY a FIRST ARMY patrol had stopped me and asked me such curious questions as:

"Who is Micky Mouse's gal friend?"

"Who are 'Dem Bums'?"

"Who said 'Lay That Pistol Down'?"

This was the first indication that anything out of the ordinary had happened, and they informed me that German paratroopers had been dropped behind FIRST ARMY the night before; that it was believed that many of the "Jerries" were operating in American uniforms and with American equipment.)

About a mile further up the road at the little town of PETIT-THIER all traffic had stopped. In fact, it was the most perfect traffic jam I have ever seen. CC-B, moving to the East (to the front), had run into this large mass of vehicles moving West (to the rear -- on a narrow road which would barely support two-way traffic, not including tanks, at slow speed. The end result was that neither column could move. To further complicate matters, many vehicles headed for the rear had attempted to pass each other in the intervals between the tanks of the 31st Tank Battalion, which was leading CC-B, and now no one could move.

(As I studied the mass of vehicles streaming towards the rear, I could not figure out what was going on and why. The bumper markings offered no clues, for they were all different with a great number of them bearing the markings for Army troops. There were a large number of 2½'s marked "106 X - \_\_\_\_\_." These I took to be trucks from a 106th Infantry Division, but I had not known that there was such a division in the U. S. Army. "It is probably back in NORMANDY, and the trucks are up here on a 'trucking run'", I thought.)

As we could not advance any further on the road, I got out of the "peep" in front of the church in PETIT-THIER to see what information I could gather. The first officer I saw was an Ordnance Captain with an unusual shoulder patch: a rampant lion's head (gold on a blue background, edged in red). I couldn't help asking him his outfit. It was the 106th Division which had relieved the 2d Infantry Division about 6 days before. When I asked him "what the score was" as I pointed to the traffic jam, he declared that two Panzer Armies with at least six Panzer Divisions had hit his Division the day before (Saturday, 16 December); that he had evacuated ST. VITH, where his Division Ordnance Company had been set up in the railroad yards; that the Germans had been shelling ST. VITH since that morning (Sunday, 17 December); that his Division HQ was then pulling out of ST. VITH. When I asked him what was in front of ST. VITH, his answer was: "I don't know -- maybe some cavalry -- maybe nothing; everyone is pulling out!"

This was worse than anything I had expected to hear, although I should have realized that only some serious situation could have produced the rout that was before us on the road. I took over the driving of the "peep" and headed cross-country over the muddy, soggy fields in an attempt to reach VIELSAIM, obtain my orders, and be able to return to head off the 38th before it became involved in this traffic jam.



On the return trip from VIELSALM I stuck to the road and was able to leap-frog our way through the tanks and half-tracks of CC-B, which were hopelessly stalled by all the traffic that was blocking the road from ST. VITH. Time and again we had to pull off into some field and run parallel to the road for several hundred yards; time and again we got stuck, but each time we managed to get out somehow. Passing through PETIT-THIER, I headed for RODT where I found the Bn pulling into its assembly area.

Lt. Col. W. H. C. Fuller, CO 38th AIB, and I then headed back for POTEAU and then east to RECHT to obtain orders from CC-R which was establishing its CP in the latter town. All along the road to POTEAU, we found the same road snarl which had slowed me up so much several hours before. At CC-R, we still were unable to learn any information on the tactical situation, and so headed for VIELSALM where we understood Col. Ryan, CO of CC-R, was in conference at Division Hq. At PETIT-THIER the road jam was anything but improved; nothing could move now, and all the time more and more vehicles were backing up into ST. VITH. (I imagined that by this time they probably were blocking the road from RODT to ST. VITH, and I was wondering how we would move the 38th into ST. VITH, if that should prove where they were needed.)

As we would not proceed further in our  $\frac{1}{2}$ -ton, Col. Fuller climbed out and went forward to see if he could clear a path for us. When he did not return, I left Cpl Cox, the driver, and went up to locate the Col. whom I found talking with Lt Col Erlenbusch, CO 31st Tk Bn. The tanks were refueling before carrying out orders which had been received from Brig Gen Bruce Clarke, CG of CC-B:

"The 31st and such elements of the 23rd AIB as can be brought forward are to move to the high ground West of ST VITH - there to be prepared to launch a tank attack to the East through the town-- the attack to take place this afternoon."

It already was 1515, and from the looks of the road jam, neither the tanks nor anything else was going to reach ST VITH for a long time. Col Fuller, Cpl Cox, and I took over the job of clearing a path for the tanks, and we started getting the vehicles clogging the roads to move over to the sides. Slowly a path was beginning to open, and the tanks began to roll although at only a snail's pace and with halts every 50-100 feet. Several times we had to wave the lead tank forward at full speed when some vehicle refused to move over. Usually the sight of 30-odd tons of steel roaring down on him was all the persuasion we needed to get a recalcitrant driver to move over.

Several times senior officers in Command Cars attempted to pull out into a space which I was opening up, and each time I told him to get back, that I didn't care ~~who~~ he was, nothing was coming through except our tanks and anything else which was headed for the front, and to get out of the way.

I well remember some officer in a CAR, stopped on the side of the road, who, on hearing me bellowing at the truck drivers, yelled:

"Go get 'em, Major; give 'em Hell!"

Nor can I forget the First Sergeant from some artillery outfit, who climbed out of his  $\frac{1}{2}$ -ton, then headed for the rear, reached back for his tommy gun, and then turned towards the tanks, yelling back at his former companions:

"I'm going with those D \_\_\_\_\_ tanks. They know how to fight, and G \_\_\_\_\_ D \_\_\_\_\_ I \_\_\_\_\_, I joined the Army to fight — not run!"

One of the tanks slowed down, and the First Sergeant climbed up behind the turret. If only more of the officers and men in that bunch who were so helplessly fleeing to the rear in blind panic, had been possessed of the same fighting spirit!

Finally we were able to get one tank company and one armored infantry company through the traffic snarl, but as fast as the way was opened up behind them, some vehicle dashed out into the opening and once more started its mad dash for the rear. By the time these first two companies passed the NJ at POTEAU, partially organized units were coming to the rear in some semblance of order. They were mostly Corps Artillery, moving by battery and by section. Col Fuller and I had done all that we could and we felt that we had better return to our own battalion, where we found orders to report to Gen Clarke at CC-B in ST VITH.

After receiving our orders from Gen. Clarke, I had to make numerous trips between ST VITH and the battalion assembly area at RODT. Every time the road was more and more crowded with individual vehicles headed for the rear. By the time darkness had descended, Falter and I were making our trips in low gear. Usually I had better time by dismounting and walking ahead, completing my business, and then starting out once more for ST. VITH. Somewhere along the road I would pick up Falter still trying to inch his way forward, and then we would turn around and head back for ST. VITH.

"A" Company of the 38th was delayed by more than 2 hours in arriving at ST. VITH where it was to take up positions North of the town. And then I had to go back and help them get the half-tracks on the road. The fear-crazed occupants of many of the vehicles moving to the rear apparently had lost all reason in many instances, and would not allow the 'tracks on the road; some of these officers and men would not do anything which might delay by even one minute their reaching the "safety of the rear." It was then that I ordered Capt. Walter H. Anstey, CO of "A" Co, to force his way on the road even if he had to wreck or run over vehicles and their drivers — to pay no attention to the rank of anyone who might be fleeing and attempt to prevent him.

While getting "A" Company on the road, I had a narrow "squeak" when a light tank which was heading for the rear at full speed almost ran me down and crushed me between it and 1st Sgt. Burns' half-track. Luckily I escaped by leaping for the running board and then the hood of the 'track, but even then I felt Death brushing me — for the extra track plates on the side of the tank grazed my hips and tore a narrow slit across the seat of my pants without touching the skin.

Finally at 2015, "A" Company entered ST VITH, closely followed by "B" and Hq Companies. The original orders for "A" Company to move had been given to the Battalion Executive Officer at 1730, and by him to the Company not more than 5 minutes later. Yet it had taken 2½ hours for an armored

infantry company on its vehicles to move 3 miles -- because of the terrific traffic congestion on a narrow road.

There was one of the biggest tragedies of ST VITH -- that units withdrawing from the area in many instances lost control, with the result that the roads became heavily jammed with vehicles which apparently had lost all sense of "march and road discipline." The resulting traffic congestion prevented the reinforcements which were arriving (the 7th Armored Division) from gaining ST VITH in time to launch a counter-attack to save the 422d and 423d Infantry Regiments of the 106th Division, then cut off East of ST VITH.

DONALD P. BOYER, JR.  
Major, Infantry



7th Armored Division Tank Battalion  
CP in ST. VITH after town was retaken,  
January 1945

(Building on far side of street housed  
38th Armored Infantry Battalion's Aid  
Station, 17-21 December 1944)

DONALD P. BOYER, JR. (024563)  
Major, Infantry  
S-3, 38th Armd Inf Bn  
7th Armd Div, APO 257

PERSONAL REPORT

"Narrative Account of Action of 38th Armored Infantry Battalion,  
7th Armored Division, Battle of ST. VITH, 17-22 December 1944"

THE FIRST DAY  
(17 Dec 44 - Sun)

SITUATION - General:

At 0315, the 38th AIB received orders from CC-R, to which it was attached, to march at 0800 to the vicinity of VIELSALM, BELGIUM, followed by Hq, CC-R, and the 17th Tk Bn.

We were informed that the Division was marching to this general area, using two routes (East and West), but there was no information to indicate that the march was other than an administrative one. A glance at the large situation map quickly showed that we would be moving about 90 miles South of our present positions with XIII Corps, Ninth US Army, into the area of VIII Corps, First US Army.

We could not understand the reason for such a move, since the designated assembly area (VIELSALM) was well to the rear of the front, and so far as we knew, VIII Corps already had one armored division: the 9th Armored in Corps Reserve. With no information on the "why" of the move, rumors naturally were prevalent. These soon boiled down to two ideas, each of which I personally believed were capable of being the reason for the move:

1. General Patton and the Third US Army had secured a breakthrough and were running "hell bent" for the RHINE... That "The Old Man" was screaming for armor, and that the 7th Armored was on its way to the Third Army.

2. Same as the first story, except that General Patton had borrowed the 9th Armored Division, and we were to replace it as Corps Reserve for VIII Corps.

About 1330, when the 38th first hit the ST. VITH-VIELSALM road and saw the heavy stream of traffic moving West in what appeared to be a disorganized rout, we realized that this was more than a routine administrative march. We knew then that there was a serious emergency facing the American Army in this area.

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See Personal Report, "Traffic Conditions, ST. VITH-VIELSALM Road, 17 Dec 44", submitted separately, for description of traffic jamming this vital road.

The Bn CO, Lt. Col. W. H. G. Fuller, quickly diverted "A" and Hq Cos from their original route and ordered them into an assembly area at RODT (also known as SART-lez-ST. VITH). "B" Co also was diverted, but "C" and Sv Cos somehow became separated from the Bn column and were caught in the traffic jam on the road. This action concentrated the Bn (-C & Sv) within 3 miles of ST. VITH, which appeared to be a likely point of commitment.

Meanwhile, CC-B with the 31st Tk Bn and 23d AIB attached, had been all but immobilized by the maelstrom of traffic which jammed the road to VIELSALM. Moving West from this town to an assembly area near ST. VITH, the tanks had been forced to halt at PETIT-THIER by the mass of vehicles "fleeing" to the rear, and which had jammed their way into the most perfect road snarl one could ever expect to see. Lt. Col. Fuller and I helped the CO of the 31st, Lt. Col. R. C. Erlenbusch, clear a path which one medium tank company and one armored infantry company were able to use. Before the other tank companies could move forward, however, "fleeing" vehicles had double-banked each other and again closed the road.

#### SITUATION - ST. VITH:

Although unknown to us at the time, the situation in the ST. VITH area was critical by 1200. To the North the 14th Cavalry Group was retiring under heavy attack and their combat effectiveness was doubtful. East of the town the 422d and 423d RCT's of the 106th Infantry Division had been surrounded and were cut off in the SCHNEE-EIFEL. Communications with them was sporadic by radio. To the Southeast CC-B of the 9th Armored Division was attacking to retake WINTERSPELT, while on their South the 424th RCT of the 106th Division was retiring to take up new positions. South of them the situation was unknown.

By 1630 when Lt. Col. Fuller and I reported to Brig. Gen. Bruce C. Clarke, CG of CC-B, at the School House in ST. VITH (CP of 106th Div; also CP of CC-B), only 3 units of the 7th Armored had been able to enter the town because of the mass of vehicles "fleeing" for the "safety of the rear". These units were: 1 cavalry recon troop (B/87, Capt. R. J. Stewart); 1 medium tank company (A/31, Capt. R. C. Foster); 1 armored infantry company (B/23, Capt. D. J. Britton).

#### ORDERS:

1630: Gen. Clarke yelled "Boyer", and pointing to a 1/25,000 map, ordered:

"Go in town and get 'B' Co of the 23d, which you will find on the main street. Have them take up positions here (pointing to the Southeastern approaches to ST. VITH)!"

When I asked who would be on their right and left, I received the only answer which could be given at the time:

"We don't know about the right; CC-B of the 9th is there somewhere. On the left, some Engrs from a Corps Bn; further to the left, a recon troop from the 87th."

I relayed these orders to Britton, and he moved out with his company.

1645: Lt. Col. Fuller was ordered by Gen. Clarke to coordinate the defenses of ST. VITH with the CO's of the 81st and 168th Engr C Bns, then in position about 2400 yards East of the town and in the woods to the right of the SCHONBURG road. At the same time B/87, A/31, and B/23 were attached to the 38th.

#### OCCUPATION OF POSITIONS:

The build-up of a defensive cordon around the town was a "piecemeal" procedure with units being placed in the line as they arrived in ST. VITH. Traffic jams on the road to VIELSALM were still increasing as everyone who had been in this area "fled" out of it. It was only with the greatest of difficulty that companies of the Bn were able to force their way forward, and it took Capt. W. H. Anstey and his "A" Co, 2½ hours to move 3 miles. The situation continued critical until about 0700 the following morning, by which time troops were dug in along a U-shaped arc from the FRUM road on the South to the MALMEDY road in the North. (This was the sector assigned to the 38th by CC-B. On the left was first the 87th Cav Rcn Sq, and later the 31st Tk Bn. On our right was CC-B of the 9th Armored Division.)

No attacks were launched against our positions during the night, but there was constant probing by "Jerry" patrols, accompanied by sporadic small arms fire.

The weather which had been bitter cold all day with gray, overcast skies, turned into a cold, drizzly rain about 2200. The ground was muddy and soggy, making vehicular cross-country movement almost impossible.

#### ENEMY LOSSES FOR 17 DEC (actual count):

| <u>Destroyed</u>    | <u>Damaged</u>        | <u>Killed &amp; Wounded</u> |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 Mk IV (Prov Engr) | 1 AG-75mm (Prov Engr) | ?                           |
| 2 Mk IV (A/31)      |                       |                             |
| 1 AG-75mm (A/31)    |                       |                             |

#### THE SECOND DAY (18 Dec 44 - Mon)

#### THE FIRST ATTACK

0800: Medium small arms fire broke out along the entire front of B/38, accompanied by close direct fire from 2 tanks and 1 AG. The tanks created a "hellish" din by firing into the trees among our positions, decapitating branches and even tree tops, which dropped among and behind our foxholes. Within 10 minutes heavy tank and Panzerfaust fire had destroyed a light machine gun and its crew and had annihilated one rifle squad. This devastating fire temporarily overwhelmed the center platoon of "B" Co, and the platoon

withdrew about 300 yards. T/Sgt J. F. Revels, the Platoon Sergeant, quickly rallied his men and launched an immediate counter-attack. (No reserves were available to the Bn.)

0845: The impetus of the attack was shifting against the right platoon of "B" Co, commanded by 1st Lt. J. H. Higgins, and against the Engr Co, under the command of 1st Lt. W. E. Holland.

"Jerry" apparently was attempting to widen his initial penetration, and was employing a reinforced infantry company of approximately 150-200 men, equipped with an unusually heavy proportion of automatic and semiautomatic weapons. Morale of the enemy troops was excellent, as indicated by their strong, aggressive attack, while the skill with which it was executed showed that seasoned troops were involved in the operation.

0920: Contact had been broken, and the enemy had withdrawn leaving 1 Mk IV tank and 1 75mm AG behind as burning wrecks. (A/31 destroyed the tank, while a "bazooka" team from "B" Co destroyed the AG.)

#### THE SECOND ATTACK:

1130-1230:

"Jerry" still had not given up the idea of coming through us, and again he hit the right platoon of "B" Co and the Engr Co, this time using approximately 2 platoons of infantry supported by a Ferdinand. A Tk Sec from A/31, however, took the heart out of the assault when a ricochet shot stopped the Ferdinand and left it burning about 25 yards in front of our lines. The "Jerry" infantry were unable to stand up against the merciless hail of rifle and machine gun fire which was poured into their ranks, and they soon broke and fled, leaving about 20 dead.

Meanwhile A/38 and B/87 had been having rather a quiet time of it, although one of "B" Trp's armored cars had put on a real show by knocking out a Tiger. Capt. Anstey reported this "kill" to me, and described it with high glee. According to him, the armored car crew were full of "guts". They were in a concealed position near the boundary of A/38 and B/87, when the Tiger tank approached the lines at right angles and ran along a trail in front of the MLR. The armored car then slipped out of position and started up the trail behind the Tiger, accelerating in an attempt to get closer. At the same moment the German Tk Commander saw the armored car, and started traversing his gun to bear on the M3. It was a race between the Americans who were attempting to close, so that their puny 37mm would be effective in the Tiger's "Achilles heel" (its thin rear armor), and the Germans who were desperately trying to bring their '88 to bear so as to blast these "fools" who dared to attempt to fight a 60-ton tank with their little "runabout" and its "pop gun". Suddenly the armored car had closed to 25 yards, and quickly pumped in 3 rounds; the lumbering Tiger stopped, shuddered; there was a muffled explosion, followed by flames which billowed out of the turret and engine ports.



1300: "A" Co of the 23d, commanded by Capt. J. R. Foster, was attached to the 38th, and went into position in the line between A/38 and B/38, so as to relieve "B" Trp.

### THE THIRD ATTACK:

1445-1730:

"Krauts" apparently meant business this time, for they slashed into Higgins' platoon and Holland's Engrs with an estimated battalion of infantry attacking on a 2 company front, with direct support from 4 tanks and 8 AG's. While 2 of the tanks and 2 of the AG's attacked with the infantry, the other tanks and AG's placed direct fire in our positions from the vicinity of WALLERODE. Initial penetrations were secured, and it was only the heavy enfilade fire poured into their assault ranks by the MG Plat of the 38th, and the direct fire placed upon the support tanks and AG's by "A" and "C" Cos of the 31st which broke up the attack.

"C" Co of the 31st had been rushed to our sector after the first attack on a "loan" basis. By 1800 it was withdrawn and moved to the Northeast sector of CC-B's defensive zone, where almost ceaseless attacks were being thrown against the 87th Cav Ren Sq and the 31st Tks.

1745: After almost 3 hours of vicious fighting, much of it hand-to-hand, the "Jerries" were forced to withdraw. Our lines were still holding, although several gaps had been opened and some German patrols had infiltrated through. B/87 was pushed into the line to plug a gap which had been forced between B/38 and the Engr Co.

The night was reasonably quiet except for the ever-present probing attempts by "Jerry" patrols. Also a great deal of vehicular movement, including tanks, could be heard to our North in the vicinity of WALLERODE. '88s and, for the first time, artillery firing battery concentrations were placing continual harrassing fire on ST. VITH and all roads.

The weather was bitter cold, overcast, and there had been snow flurries during the day. Although the rain had ceased shortly after daybreak, the roads were slick and covered with a thin, oozy coating of mud.

### ENEMY LOSSES FOR 18 DEC (actual count):

| <u>Destroyed</u> | <u>Damaged</u>   | <u>Killed</u>              |
|------------------|------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 Mk VI (B/87)   | 1 AG-75mm (A/31) | 39 (see losses for 19 Dec) |
| 4 Mk IV (A/31)   |                  |                            |
| 1 AG-88mm (A/31) |                  |                            |
| 1 AG-75mm (B/38) |                  |                            |

THE THIRD DAY  
(19 Dec 44 - Tues)

The only major assault within the Bn sector was during the afternoon and was directed at "B" Co of the 23d AIB. Having failed through the center of the line on yesterday, the Germans apparently were aiming at the flanks of the Division in the hopes of finding a "soft spot". All day long we could hear heavy assaults being launched against the 31st Tk Bn on our left.

TASK FORCE BOYER:

At daybreak I made a quick survey of the line, starting with the Engr Co on the right and then continuing North to the SCHONBURG road. Holland was completing the reorganization of his company, but on his left "B" Co of the 38th was licking its wounds after yesterday's savage fighting. There was a gap between the 1st Plat (2d Lt. W. A. Jamiel) on the left and the 2d Plat (2d Lt. M. O. Van Fradenburg) in the center. In fact, the 2d Plat had suffered so heavily yesterday that I combined it with Higgins' 3d Plat. At the same time I told Higgins to take command of "B" Co, since Capt. W. A. Greene, the CO, had been missing since the 0800 attack yesterday.

0830: Lt. Col. Fuller directed me to take command of B/36 and B/37, and to readjust the line. Accordingly, I set up my GP in a foxhole about 50 yards to the rear of Van Fradenburg's 2d-3d Plat, for it was against this area that all of yesterday's attacks had been directed.

At the same time I was told that Holland's Prov Engr Co would be redesignated as B/168, and that on its right A/168 (Capt. Maher) would go in the line between Holland and Britton. (The original plan was for Maj. Mariano, S-3 of the 168th, to take command of the 2 Engr Cos, but he never assumed this command.)

1630: Holland reported to me, and told me that he considered the Engr troops as being under my command. This gave me a little Task Force of 4 companies, totalling approximately 450 men (380 in the line, with a reserve of 70 divided between 1/F/423 and H&S/81).

ENEMY IDENTIFICATIONS:

During the morning while the lines were being readjusted, I organized an officers patrol, made up of Higgins, Holland, "Rusty" Kattox (Capt., CO of Hq Co, 38th), and myself. We reconnoitered the scenes of yesterday's furious fighting and also the woods to our immediate front. The only "Jerries" we found were dead ones, most of them killed as they apparently tried to dig themselves in behind some tree or fallen log. Those who were not equipped with shovels had attempted to scoop shallow holes with their helmets, bayonets, and even with their finger nails. But the unerring accuracy of our rifle and machine gun fire had been too much for them...

The devastating effect of enfilade machine gun fire was aptly demonstrated along one firebreak in "B" Co's area. Yesterday afternoon the "Krauts" had broken through the line, and had immediately pushed a platoon of Paratroopers through to exploit the gap. They quickly dodged down the the reverse slope, but as they broke through the trees -- one of the heavy machine gun sections from the MG Plat (2d Lt. R. E. P. Moranda) on the far right flank, quickly traversed its guns and laid down the 'break. When the "Krauts" crossed the open 'break about 100 yards away, they were perfect targets... There they lay: 19 Paratroopers stretched out at almost parade-ground intervals, 5 yards apart, each Soldat with at least 5-8 slugs in his chest or throat.

In the combined areas of B/38, B/87, and the Prov Engr Co we counted more than 200 dead "Jerries". These were within our positions and did not include any who might be in front of the lines. We did count 49 bodies in front of "B" Co's original position. Also we were able to make our first identifications:

1. Pz Füs Regt, "GROSS-DEUTSCHLAND" - the 19 Paratroopers.  
(This was unexpected for so far as I knew, The "GROSS-DEUTSCHLAND" was a Panzer Div - one of the best as it always provided the guard for Hitler's Hq in the field.)
2. 164th VGR and 183d VGR (62d VG Div) - from shoulder straps and Soldatenbuchs on various dead.
3. 3d Pz Regt (2d Pz Div) - from shoulder straps and log books in 2 KO'd tanks.

#### THE FOURTH ATTACK:

1420-1510:

B/23 was hit by an estimated company of infantry supported by a Panther tank and 2 AG's. A 90mm TD Section from "A" Co of the 814th TD Bn had been attached to Britton in the morning, and the '90s soon accounted for the Panther and 1 AG. With their direct fire support knocked out, the enemy infantry were unable to stand up against the heavy rifle and machine gun placed on them, and they soon wavered and withdrew.

During the night there was little enemy patrol activity, although well behind the German lines we could hear much vehicular activity. Also a great deal of mortar and artillery fire was laid down behind our lines.

The weather continued cold and overcast, with occasional snow flurries.

#### ENEMY LOSSES FOR 19 DEC (actual count):

| <u>Destroyed</u>      | <u>Damaged</u> | <u>PW's</u> | <u>Killed</u>       |
|-----------------------|----------------|-------------|---------------------|
| 1 Mk V (Sec A/814)    | ?              | 1 (1818 AT) | 249 (killed 18 Dec) |
| 1 AG-75mm (Sec A/814) |                | (Bn/18 VG)  |                     |
|                       |                | (Div )      |                     |

Again the Bn had a relatively quiet day, although our rear areas were receiving constant artillery fire up to and including battalion concentrations. In addition, the "Jerries" kept searching out the valley to our rear with "screaming meemie" barrages, apparently in an effort to neutralize our mortars which seemed to be giving them a great deal of trouble.

At 1000, two direct hits from enemy artillery were scored on the building in which the Rear CP of the Bn was located. This was in a housing development East of the railroad, and this "zeroing in" forced Maj. A. T. McDaniel, the Exec, to move the CP in town to the School House. (When we first arrived in the area on the 17th, this was the CP of the 106th Div, and more recently had housed CC-B's CP. On the afternoon of the 18th, however, CC-B had moved to KROMBACH.)

ORGANIZATION OF FWD CP, 38th AIB, and COMMUNICATIONS:

Lt. Col. Fuller had established his Fwd CP in a stone house beside the SCHONBURG road, about 800 yards below the MLR. Assisting him, he had Lt. Col. W. L. Nungesser (CO of the 168th Engrs) and Lt. Col. T. J. Riggs (CO of the 81st Engrs). About 200 yards below this house was an old tavern, which functioned as an Engr Fwd CP.

Fwd and Rear CP's of the 38th were linked by SCR-300, SCR-510/SCR-508, and by EE-8 telephone. Communications from the 38th to CC-B were controlled from the Bn's Rear CP.

Fwd CP/38 and Fwd CP/Engrs ("The Beer Garden") were linked by an Engr-manned SCR-300 net and by EE-8 telephone.

Contact with the units in the line were as follows:

A/38, A/23, B/23 -- through Rear CP, then direct to cos: SCR-508/SCR-510.

TF BOYER -- SCR-510/SCR-509; SCR-300; EE-8 telephone (Boyer).

B/38 -- SCR-300 to 2-3/B/38 (Higgins & Van Fradenburg).  
SCR-510/SCR-509 & EE-8 telephone to 1/B/38 (Jamiel).

B/87 -- Rcn SCR-510/SCR-509 (Stewart, later Rogers).

B/168 -- Remote control hook-up through Fwd CP/Engrs, using SCR-300 or EE-8 telephone (Holland).

A/168 -- Same as for B/168 but no EE-8 'phone (Maher).

COMPOSITION 38th ARMD INF BN (Reinforced):

By now the forces making up the 38th and attached troops, with approximate effective strength reports, consisted of:

|                  |                  |                   |                |                 |              |                   |                       |
|------------------|------------------|-------------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| In the line:     |                  | <u>TOTAL: 970</u> |                |                 |              |                   |                       |
| <u>A/38(-AT)</u> | <u>A/23(-3d)</u> | <u>B/38(-AT)</u>  | <u>B/87</u>    | <u>MG/HQ/38</u> | <u>B/168</u> | <u>A/168</u>      | <u>B/23(-3d/A/23)</u> |
| 180              | 120              | 90                | 80             | 30              | 100          | 80                | 220                   |
|                  |                  |                   | <u>1/F/423</u> |                 |              | <u>H&amp;S/81</u> |                       |
|                  |                  |                   | 30             |                 |              | 40                |                       |

In support:

|             |                |                   |                 |                  |              |
|-------------|----------------|-------------------|-----------------|------------------|--------------|
| <u>A/31</u> | <u>1/A/814</u> | <u>Mortars/38</u> | <u>AG/HQ/38</u> | <u>AG Sec/87</u> | <u>TOTAL</u> |
| 55          | 31             | 40                | 25              | 10               | <u>161</u>   |

Uncommitted troops: (C/38 had been attached to CC-R on Monday, 18 Dec)

|                |                |              |
|----------------|----------------|--------------|
| <u>AT/A/38</u> | <u>AT/B/38</u> | <u>TOTAL</u> |
| 30             | 30             | <u>60</u>    |

Thus the total combat troops available for manning the defenses of ST. VITH from the East — after 3 days of action — did not exceed an estimated strength of 1191.

Major weapons supporting the front line troops included:

|                      |                    |                             |                 |
|----------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|
| <u>Tks (A/31)</u>    | 11 M4(76mm Gun)    | <u>AGs (AG/HQ/38)</u>       | 1 M4(105mm How) |
|                      | 1 M4(105mm How)    |                             | 2 M8(75mm How)  |
| <u>TDS (1/A/814)</u> | 4 M10A1 (90mm Gun) | (AG Sec/87)                 | 2 M8(75mm How)  |
|                      |                    | <u>Mortars (Mortars/38)</u> | 6-81mm          |

ARTILLERY SUPPORT:

At 1030, 2d Lt. Bundy (434th AFA) reported to me as an FO, and announced that the 434th was now supporting CC-B. This was welcome news, for prior to his arrival the entire Division had been supported by only one (1) Field Artillery Bn - the 275th AFA. They were VIII Corps Artillery, originally in support of the 106th, and instead of getting "panicky" on Sunday had remained in position and offered their services to the 7th Armored.

Since the 275th had to support the entire Division, there were not enough FO Parties for every battalion, much less every company. On the 18th, we had 1 FO for the entire 38th, and he was sent to B/87 (later A/23) since their positions offered the best observation. On the 19th, the situation began to improve when a Lt. Fox (275th) reported as Liaison Officer, bringing with him 2 additional FO Parties. These FO's were assigned to the flanks: Anstey on the North and Britton on the South, leaving only my force without artillery support. Stewart and I solved that problem by setting up a radio link with Fox, using one of "B" Trp's radio "peeps" at the Fwd CP and a Rcn SCR-509 which "Pop" gave to me. I would call my missions to the operator at the  $\frac{1}{2}$ -ton, Pvt. J. A. Whittaker, and he would relay them to Fox. This system worked very effectively, and Whittaker displayed such initiative and general "know how" that Fox soon told him to call the FDC direct. "WHITTAKER, this is DON..." became a familiar call, and it was never more than 4-5 minutes before I would hear: "DON, this is WHITTAKER; On the Way!"

The AG Plat (1st Lt. H. K. Boyd) and the Mortar Plat (1st Lt. E. H. Kennebrew) performed miracles in helping make up for the shortage of artillery. Boyd's normal 3 guns were augmented by the 105mm How from Foster's Tk Co, while Kennebrew's previous training of the Rcn Plat in the duties of a Mortar Plat enabled him to man 6-8ls. When you heard those mortars "cough" and their tubes "whang", it was very comfortable... Kennebrew's OP was with Holland, while Boyd found himself a 'hole just left of the SCHONBURG road, and their reactions to a target were automatic. Inevitably they already were issuing the fire orders before a rifle company could call in the mission.

#### FIFTH ATTACK:

0810-1030:

Anstey reported the massing of enemy tanks (estimated company) and infantry in the town of WALLERODE. At 1015, the tanks started moving South from the town and then headed towards A/38, with the infantry fanning out behind them. For over 10 minutes continuous battalion artillery concentrations were placed upon them, slaughtering the infantry, burning 4 tanks, and forcing the rest of the tanks to turn and flee through WALLERODE in the direction of BORN.

#### SIXTH ATTACK:

1530: 5 half-tracks, with a captured American M3A1 in the lead, dashed into WALLERODE from BORN, and then headed Southwest on the road leading into A/38's positions. When they had closed to within 25 yards of the lines, the American 'track was destroyed by tank fire from the left (Sec A/31), and "bazooka" teams from "A" Co quickly accounted for the 4 German 'tracks. By placing heavy machine gun fire on the burning vehicles, all personnel were killed except for 2 SS Troopers who were seriously wounded and taken prisoner. (Men were from 1st SS Panzer Division.)

1530: Patrols from B/38 and B/87 reported that "Jerry" infantry, estimated company of 150-200 men, were moving through the woods to the right of the SCHONBURG road in attack formations.

1540-1615:

"Jerry" opened fire with his "burp guns" about 150-200 yards in front of "B" Co and "B" Trp. At about the same time 15 mortar rounds dropped in the woods behind us. Although we could hear the Feldwebels "talking it up" among their squads, the "Krauts" never closed and by 1615, all firing had ceased.

Apparently "Jerry" had hoped that we would disclose our positions by prematurely opening fire, but in this he was disappointed. For 2 days I had been emphasizing to every man as I made my rounds of the foxholes every morning just after daybreak, that no ammunition could be wasted -- that for every round fired, a corpse must hit the ground; that in woods as we were, fire should be held until the "Kraut" was less than 25 yards away.

HEAVY VEHICULAR MOVEMENT:

All during the night there was heavy tank movement, accompanied by motor transport, to our North, to the Northwest, to our front, and South of us. After midnight the sounds of moving vehicles were almost continuous, and from 0100 to 0330, there was a great deal of traffic <sup>to our</sup> front where it sounded as if half-tracks and tanks were laboring up a steep grade. Remembering my map reconnaissance of this area, I fired various battery missions on the 3 North-South trails which I believed likely to be carrying this traffic (850, 1500, and 2700 yards in front of the lines), and also along the SCHONBURG road between these points. One salvo hit its target, either an ammunition carrier or gasoline truck, for there was a muffled explosion, then a larger one, and shortly afterwards a reddish glow above the trees. (This mission was fired at the RJ at 896888, where the road to WALLERODE left the SCHONBURG road, and from where a trail ran South to SCHLIERBACH and STEINEERUCK.)

The weather continued cold and overcast throughout the day, and by nightfall there wasn't a one of us who wasn't feeling the pangs of frost-bite in our feet and toes.

ENEMY LOSSES FOR 20 DEC (actual count):

| <u>Destroyed</u>             | <u>Damaged</u> | <u>Killed</u> | <u>FW's</u>               |
|------------------------------|----------------|---------------|---------------------------|
| 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ -Trac (A/31) | 4 Tks (275th   | 48            | 3 (2-1SS Pz Div)          |
| 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ -Trac (A/38) | or<br>434th)   |               | (1-164 VGR, 62<br>VG Div) |

THE FIFTH DAY  
(21 Dec 44 - Thurs)

All night long we had listened to the build-up of tanks and other forces on all sides of the Bn, while to the Northwest on the front of the 31st Tk Bn, heavy tank movement had been heard in OBER and NIEDER ENNELS since 0400. This looked like the preparations for a full-scale coordinated attack by tanks and infantry, probably along 4 main axes of advance:

1. OBER ENNELS--NEUNDORF (to isolate ST. VITH from the West).
2. NIEDER ENNELS--HUNNANGE--ST. VITH (to smash the Northern defenses, and link up with an advance from NEDELL).
3. SCHONBURG--ST. VITH (to smash the Eastern defenses, and link up with the HUNNANGE attack within ST. VITH).
4. STEINEBRUCK--BREITFELD--ST. VITH (to isolate the units fighting to the East of ST. VITH by linking up with HUNNANGE attack within the town).

This estimate of "Jerry's" intentions proved accurate, for by 1100, B/23 was attacked from the direction of BREITFELD after a 15 minute artillery preparation, and by 1200, A/23 and B/38 were bearing the full brunt of an infantry attack driving in along the SCHONBURG road. Within the next hour the entire Bn front was locked in combat from A/38 on the North through B/23 on the South. At 1400, the 31st Tk Bn reported that they had been receiving heavy artillery fire for almost an hour, and that now an estimated infantry regiment supported by a company of tanks was striking down the NEDELL road.

This was Von Hundstedt's "grand slam" play to seize ST. VITH before which he had been stalled for more than 4 days; this was his "all out" assault to smash the forces which had prevented his Panzer spearheads (already at STAVELOT and along the SALM River in the North, and well beyond HOUFFALIZE in the South) from linking up on a broad front.

After 1300 I was so heavily embroiled in the fighting within my own sector that I had no further knowledge of the general picture. Despite our standing there and tossing back attack after attack, by 2200 German tanks had blasted their way through the center of the line and were entering ST. VITH. Although I didn't know it at the time, the same thing had happened in the North and on the South, and tanks were also entering the town along the WALMEDY and PRUM roads. This cut off those elements of the 38th then East of ST. VITH, and those few men who were still alive -- dazed from almost 12 hours of continuous pounding by the artillery; rocked by 12 hours of ceaseless attacks by overwhelming forces of infantry, supported by heavy concentrations of Panther and Tiger tanks; and almost unnerved by 5 days of constant combat with no sleep, little food, and suffering from frost bite -- were forced to break up into small groups of 5-10 men each in an attempt to regain friendly lines by infiltration. I use the phrase "still alive", for of an estimated 670 men who had manned the line to the right of the SCHONBURG road in the morning (my force plus B/23), there were only approximately 185 men alive at 2300. The rest were dead or severely wounded.



## THE "ALL OUT" ASSAULT:

1150: Patrol from B/87 returned with information that an estimated battalion of infantry was advancing against our positions, 2 companies abreast, astride the SCHONBURG road.

1200: Heavy automatic and semiautomatic weapons fire broke out to my left: along the front of Foster's and Higgins' companies (A/23 and B/38).

1200-1315:

"Jerry" kept up an unceasing series of infantry assaults against Foster and Higgins' left platoon, making strong use of Panzerfausts, but their efforts to break through were unsuccessful. B/87 and Higgins' right platoon were only lightly engaged.

1330: The expected attacks against B/87 and the entire B/38 were launched in force. I estimated the assault troops to consist of 2 battalions of infantry, each battalion attacking on a narrow front with 2 companies abreast.

1345-1510:

The "Krauts" kept boring in, no matter how fast we decimated their assault squads. As fast as we would kick back one assault wave, another would return... It certainly looked as if the Germans were determined that they were coming through, but their spirit alone was not enough to sustain them against the merciless hail of small arms fire which we were hurling at them.

All machine guns were employing swinging traverse and taking a deadly toll... But again and again there was a flare of flame and smoke (the explosion could not be heard because of the general din) as some "Kraut" got in close enough to heave a grenade into a machine gun crew or to launch a dread Panzerfaust. (One caliber .50 squad which hithertofore had been dishing out a deadly hail of fire all along the front, was hit by a Panzerfaust which struck the barrel halfway between the breech and the muzzle. The gunner fell forward on the gun with half his face torn off; the loader had his left arm torn off at the shoulder and was practically decapitated; while the gun commander was tossed about 15 feet away from the gun to lie there quite still.)

The men were magnificent, and as long as there were targets, their fire never ceased. Whenever a machine gun was silenced by having its crew killed off, other men leaped from their 'holes to take over the gun so that its devastating fire could be continued. Artillery: we were using it like mortars, and never before had I seen artillery do such damage with almost no casualties because of "shorts". As fast as Higgins, Holland, or Rogers (new CO of "B" Trp, after Stewart was wounded Tuesday night) called for fire, I relayed the request to Shanahan (FO from 275th, who had reported to me just as the noon attack started). Within 2-4 minutes we could hear the shells whistling over our heads...

Frankly, I didn't see how our men could stand up to this pounding without any cessation and no replacements... And always there were more Germans, and more Germans, and then more Germans! Where they were all

coming from, I did not know but it looked as if battalion after battalion must have been massed up behind the original assault waves. That's the only way they would be able to keep on attacking, attacking, and reattacking for better than 1½ hours.

(Again and again the "Jerries" were able to emplace machine gun teams where they could rake our lines, and where it was difficult for us to get at them. Again and again I called on "Mike" Shanahan for fire to wipe out these guns. Whatever the fire commands, he always relayed them although he knew I was bringing down fire within 50 yards of our men. It was taking a terrific chance but I had no choice... Never once did the gunners of the 275th AFA make an incorrect laying! This was a credit to their training, for they had frequent changes in their missions and wide variations in their layings, and still the rounds came down accurately and fast. How they did it so accurately while receiving missions from more than 20 different FO's scattered throughout the ST. VITH horseshoe was beyond me...

\*\*\*COMMENDATION\*\*\*

1515: Contact had been broken all along the front, and the Germans had withdrawn. Quickly I dispatched orders to Higgins, Rogers, and Holland to readjust their lines, to redistribute ammunition, and to get their wounded out. How much time we would have I did not know, but I felt that this was only the "lull before the storm". Von Rundstedt apparently was making his supreme effort this day to reestablish the counter-offensive's timetable, the timetable which we had done so much to disrupt!

1520: Higgins arrived at my foxhole, and quickly we sketched what had taken place. When he asked for men from the Flat of F/423 which had been our reserve, I had to tell him that they previously had been used to plug gaps which were torn in A/23's line during the noon attacks. We had no reserves!

1545: I heard the "screaming meemie" batteries go off to our front, and for some reason I "knew" they were coming in on us. I remember yelling, "Down", and as we slid into our 'holes in came the worst hail of steel and screaming metal that I have ever seen or heard. Back and forth, right and left, then back and forth, and again right and left across our positions came the crushing, thumping, tearing scream of steel followed by steel. Huge gashes were cut in the logs over our 'holes, and all around us we could hear the crash and ripping of tree tops and even of trees as the merciless hail of steel swept and lashed through the forest.

Again and again we heard the anguished scream of some man somewhere who had been hit, and yet all we could do was cower in our 'holes with our backs against the forward walls, hoping that we would not receive a direct hit. It seemed as if our very nerves were being torn out by the roots as the screaming steel crashed around us, coming in with increasing and ever-increasing waves of hideous sounds.

1550-1620:

Artillery added its din to the heavy "screaming meemie" preparation that was being placed upon us, switching back and forth along the front and converging on the center of the line in the vicinity of the SCHONBURG road. After 1600, the preparation definitely was concentrated against the areas of B/38 and B/87... This time the main effort was to be through us -- they had failed through the center; now they would try the left! ("Jerry's" left; our right.)

1619: I could see the German infantry starting to come through the woods, running a few paces, hitting the ground, then getting up to run again. This was what I had expected -- that they would try to charge into our positions as the barrage was lifted at the last minute and before we could recover from the stunning shock of all the steel they had poured down on us... As I called out, "Heads Up!" and the men poked their heads out of their holes with rifles and machine guns at the ready, almost simultaneously the awful hail of steel was lifted from us and into the woods to our rear.

1620-1700:

This attack followed the same pattern as the two earlier ones, except that there was close support from tanks and AG's. Although we slaughtered the attacking echelons and very few "Krauts" ever managed to cross the logging road in front of our positions, "Jerry" kept boring in no matter how much we piled up the dead... Still he could not force a breakthrough. One AG which got within 10 yards of our lines was left a burning hulk with a beautiful deflection "bazooka" shot through its side armor, and in front of B/38, a Panther was destroyed on the logging road when one soldier with a "bazooka" climbed out of his 'hole, ran forward and pressing his tube against the fender-line, pulled the trigger. And as he fired, he slumped to the ground dead...

Our stubborn stand, however, was beginning to show signs of weakening; gaps were appearing which we did not have the men to fill. Had it not been for the deadly support of the 275th AFA, I feel certain that the "Krauts" would have forced a gap somewhere... The deadly massed fire that Shanahan was bringing down was a little bit more than "Jerry" could stand, and we could hear the screams and cries of his wounded in ever-increasing numbers. By 1705, the impetus of the German drive had been lost, and practically all small arms firing had ceased except for a few rifle shots when some "Kraut" exposed himself while trying to withdraw.

1715: Mortar fire started clumping into the woods around us, and once more we could hear the "burp-burp-burp" of the "Jerry" guns as they opened up with assault fire about 150-175 yards in front of us. As they moved in we could hear the guttural voices of their Feldwebels as they "talked it up" among their squads. This assault apparently was to be aimed at Jamiel's Platoon (left platoon, B/38) in an attempt to open up one side of the SCHONBURG road.

1735: Heavy tank fire could be heard above the small arms fire fight to our left. At about this time Higgins called over the radio with tears in his voice asking where were the TD's? I tried to relay this situation to Lt. Col. Fuller, but both the radio and 'phone hook-ups with the Fwd CP were out. I did reach Lt. Col. Riggs through Holland's 'phone, however, and emphasized that if we did not get TD support to break up this tank attack, I was afraid that some of the Tigers would get through.

1805: Jamiel reported that the Tk Sec from A/31 which had been covering the SCHONBURG road either had been knocked out or had withdrawn; that 2 Panther tanks were shelling his foxholes systematically, 1 hole after the other, with direct fire.

1844: 1 of the Panthers had been knocked out, and the other had withdrawn along with the German infantry.

1850: I called Lt. Col. Fuller through Holland's 'phone, and reported:

"Our lines are still holding. A few 'Krauts' got through, but we'll take care of them. I believe that we can hold through the night, but we must have relief in the morning."

1905: Higgins and I were preparing to "sweat out" the night, and I was about to leave him at my CP 'hole while I checked the line, when "Jerry" artillery and "screaming meemies" started coming in again. Once more they started a systematic raking of our entire area, and I knew that before long we would have tanks and infantry on us again. Far to our South (B/23) and to the Northwest (31st Tks and A/38) we could hear the scream of steel, as those positions also were subjected to the barrage.

This looked like "IT", as I told Higgins, and then I directed him to go to the Fwd CP and acquaint them with the desperateness of our situation; that I didn't believe we could hold back a new assault such as this one promised to be; that we needed tank and TD support; that we needed reinforcements and that we needed them in a hurry!

1935: Jamiel called over the SCR-300 in a voice so choked with emotion that I could hardly understand him:

"G\_\_ D\_\_ I\_, they've 2 heavy tanks here on the crest, and they're blasting my men out of their holes one at a time!

"They're all gone, and the same thing has happened on the other side of the road. D\_\_ I\_, can't you do something to stop 'em?"

Even over the radio I could hear the barking of the '88s, and Jamiel reported that one of the tanks was on the other side of the house in which he was in. Our position was desperate for we had not tanks to counter this slaughter. All I could do was use artillery, and I had little hopes of this proving to

be more than a nuisance value to Panthers or Tigers.

1945-1955:

The initial concentration was fired by Shanahan, was corrected by an FO with A/23, and then followed by several additional concentrations but they had no effect on the tanks. (During one of the corrected concentrations, the FO with A/23 was killed when he brought the fire in on his own position in an effort to destroy the tanks.)

During one of the earlier attacks, Foster who commanded the tank company, and the other Foster who commanded A/23, were both hit by German artillery or tank fire. The tank captain was killed, and the infantry captain was badly wounded.

2000: I could hear heavy tanks clanking and creaking down the SCHONBURG road, behind the MLR and towards the Fwd CP. We shifted machine gun and mortar fire to the road in an attempt to stop the infantry whom we knew would be following the tanks. By now it was quite dark, but still I hoped that if we stopped the infantry — someone would deal with the tanks in the town, and that we might be able to hold through the night. At the same time Shanahan placed all available artillery fires on the SCHONBURG road from the MLR East...

2015-2115:

For an hour we kept the SCHONBURG road under heavy machine gun and "bazooka" fire. Although 1 Mk VI was destroyed, and "Jerry" dead lined the ditches on both sides of the road, the "Krauts" still kept pressing forward to follow their tanks. We were unable to stop all of them, and for the ones we had killed we were paying a terrific price! No machine gun nor "bazooka" team lasted more than 10-15 minutes, and each gun already had been manned by several or more teams. As soon as one team was destroyed, it was replaced by other men who crawled into position only to be killed in turn a few minutes later. Finally I refused to pay the price any longer and directed "B" Co to hold up on replacing the teams along the road.

2200-2300:

Higgins and Lt. Col. Riggs came up with essentially the same information: That the Fwd CP had been wiped out; that at least 8 Panther or Tiger tanks were in town, and that infantry were pouring into ST. VITH. Higgins had tried to send a patrol across the road to learn the situation in A/23 and A/38, but the patrol could not make it. He also reported that Jamiel's entire platoon had been wiped out...

Lt. Col. Riggs and I then reported to Brig. Gen. Clarke, using Shanahan's FA FDC net, and asking them to relay:

"Road cut. At least 8 heavy tanks and infantry in town. What are our orders?"

About 45 minutes later, we received the following answer:

"To Riggs or Senior Officer present: Reform; save what vehicles you can; attack to the West through ST. VITH; we are forming a new line West of town."

2355: When Gen. Clarke's orders were announced to the assembled Co Commanders (Higgins, Rogers, and Holland), they insisted that their men were not in shape to launch the attack envisaged by Gen. Clarke. I agreed with them, especially when Rogers confirmed through his Maintenance Officer (then in ST. VITH) that at least 8-10 heavy tanks were in the town.

The decision was made to "peel off" to the right, carrying all personal and crew-served weapons. A messenger was dispatched to the Mortar Platoon to destroy their vehicles, but to salvage their mortars and bipods. Holland reported that the Tk Sec originally in support of his company had taken off earlier in the evening, and it was believed that they had regained the town ahead of the German tanks. Boyd's AG Plat we hoped would have been warned by Kennebrew whom we understood had escaped from the Fwd CP before it was overrun, and had gone to the School House to warn Maj. McDaniel. Higgins was to try once more to get word across the road to A/23, so as to tell them what we were doing and to direct them to "peel off" to the left through A/38, joining the 31st Tk Bn on their Northern flank across the WALMEDY road.

Rogers had 5 men severely wounded who could not be moved. These were to be left with an aid man who volunteered to stay with them, and in the morning he would try to surrender himself and them to a German medic. (Personally I was dubious of this arrangement, but there was nothing else we could do.)

Rogers was to order his Maintenance Officer who had "B" Trp's vehicles in the RR yards in ST. VITH to destroy such vehicles as he could not man with a crew, and to attack through the town and regain the lines being formed West of ST. VITH.

Higgins and I were to move out immediately, working our way down to the right, informing each Platoon Leader along the way of what we were doing. When we reached Britton's Co, we learned that their right flank had vanished and that the PRUM road was cut. According to 1st Lt. G. A. Taylor, who was the senior officer still with the company, the "Jerries" had been pouring tanks and infantry up the road into ST. VITH and Westward towards KROMBACH for more than 2 hours.

This was the "blackest" news of all, especially since snow had been falling for more than an hour and gave every indication of being almost knee deep by morning. When the column came down the hill, we swung out through the trees on an azimuth of 270°. The progress was slow for the forests were thick, the snow was getting deeper and deeper, and the men were experiencing difficulty in keeping up. Of the estimated 150 men with me, over half were wounded in varying degrees, and all of us were suffering from the pounding we had taken all day. Twice we avoided "Jerry" combat patrols by only a few feet, and as the gray light of dawn began to come up we still were not across the PRUM road. It was then that I issued orders to destroy all but personal weapons, to break up into small groups of 5-10 with a non-com or officer in charge of each group, and to attempt to infiltrate our way to our forces fighting somewhere to the West.

ENEMY LOSSES FOR 21 DEC (actual count):

| <u>Destroyed</u>       | <u>Damaged</u> | <u>Killed</u>                                                                                                 |
|------------------------|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 Mk VI (A/23 or B/38) | ?              | 268 (counted on 22 Dec, by the Medic who was left with "B" Trp's wounded. All were in front of B/87 and B/38. |
| 2 Mk V (B/38)          |                |                                                                                                               |
| 2 Mk IV (AG/HQ/38)     |                |                                                                                                               |
| 1 Mk IV (Engrs)        |                |                                                                                                               |
| 1 AG-75mm (B/87)       |                |                                                                                                               |
| 1 AG-88mm (A/23)       |                |                                                                                                               |

NOTE: All tanks and AG's, except the 2 Mk IV's credited to the AG Plat, were destroyed in what can be termed "hand-to-hand" combat: By "bazookas" at close range, by "daisy chains", and in one instance by a soldier who climbed on the back deck and dropped 2 grenades down the open turret.

THE SIXTH DAY  
(22 Dec 44 - Fri)

By morning the full extent of the price which the 38th AIB had paid for its stand began to be realized. There were no Assault Gun, nor Mortar, nor Machine Gun Platoons -- neither men, nor vehicles, nor weapons. "A" and "B" Cos consisted each of the Antitank Platoon plus the Co's half-tracks with their drivers. Of the attached troops, the picture was even "blackier" if such were possible. There was no A/23, and only 1 Platoon from B/23. "B" Trp had ceased to exist, as had the 2 Prov Engr Cos. The only "bright spot" was at 1200, when A/31 was discovered to be fighting with CC-B of the 9th Armored, with whom they had joined forces after fighting their way out of ST. VITH.

Throughout the morning various men worked their way back through the lines, but their numbers were pitifully few, and most of them came from A/38 and A/23. By mid-morning a composite armored infantry rifle company had been formed, consisting of approximately 110 men. This company and the 2 AT Plats with their 6-57mm AT guns were placed in position on the high ground Northeast of KROMBACH, where they became a part of the force under the command of Lt. Col. Erlenbusch, CO of the 31st Tk Bn.

About 90 other men filtered back through the lines, but they had to be evacuated because of wounds and almost complete exhaustion from their struggles to regain the lines. The 38th had done its job, and done it well, but it had paid a price. Those who were left had only the satisfaction that they had exacted a price far more terrific from the troops who had assaulted their positions in vain for 4 days, and who had broken through on the fifth day only after one of the most vicious attacks the 7th Armored Division had ever seen. Dead Germans actually counted totaled 604, and it was to be a rather accurate estimate if we said that they had lost in the neighborhood of 4-5 times as many killed but not counted, and 5-6 times as many wounded.

THE "TALLY SHEET":LOSSES 38th AIB (-C)(reinforced), 17-22 DEC:

| <u>Unit</u>      | <u>KIA</u>   | <u>WIA</u>      | <u>MIA</u>            | <u>Vehicles</u>       |
|------------------|--------------|-----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| HQ)              |              |                 | (Incl S-3; 2CO's,)    | 1 M4(105How)          |
| "A")-38th AIB    | 15           | 18              | 267("B"; Plt Ldrs-AG) | 2 M3(75How)           |
| "B")             |              |                 | (MG, & 1 Rifle Plt)   | 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ -Trac |
|                  |              |                 |                       | 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ -Ton  |
| "A")             |              |                 | 227(Incl 2d CO, "A")  | 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ -Trac |
| "B")-23d AIB     | 8            | 5(Incl CO's,    | (& 5 Plt Ldrs )       |                       |
|                  |              | "A" & "B")      |                       | 11 Arnd Cars          |
| "B" -87th Ren Sq | 6(Incl CO,   | 15(Incl Trp Ex) | 71(Incl 2d CO)        | 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ -Trac |
|                  | died of Wds) |                 | (& 2 Plt Ldrs)        | 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ -Ton  |
|                  |              |                 |                       | (?) 2 M3(75How)       |
| Prov Engrs       | 10           | 46              | 180(Incl CO, 81st)    | ?                     |
|                  |              |                 | (& CO, "B"-168th)     |                       |
| "A" -31st Tk Bn  | 3(Incl CO)   | 2               | ?                     | 1 M4(105How)          |
| <b>Total</b>     | <b>42</b>    | <b>86</b>       | <b>745</b>            |                       |

ENEMY LOSSES, 17-22 DEC (actual count):

| <u>Destroyed</u>      | <u>Damaged</u> | <u>Killed</u> | <u>PR's</u> |
|-----------------------|----------------|---------------|-------------|
| 2 Mk VI               | 4 Tks          | 604           | 4           |
| 3 Mk V                | 2 AG-75mm      |               |             |
| 10 Mk IV              |                |               |             |
| 2 AG-88mm             |                |               |             |
| 4 AG-75mm             |                |               |             |
| 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ -Trac |                |               |             |

DONALD P. BOYER, JR.  
Major, Infantry



COMBAT COMMAND "R"

17th Tank Battalion

Troops — Combat Command "R"

Although referred to as a Combat Command throughout the "Narrative Report" (Chapter I), CC-R — after 1312 hours, 19 December, functioned as a composite battalion with the mission of screening the North flank of the Division from CC-A's positions at POTEAU to include the VIELSALM—TROIS PONTIS road. For this mission it had the following troops:

C/33  
B/814 (1 Plat on 19 Dec; Co on 20 Dec)  
Plat/Rcn/814  
Plat/B/23  
6 M Tks/31  
1 Sec/C/203  
Prov Cav Tr

The units other than the Provisional Cavalry Troop were grouped together into TF "NAVAJO", while the Troop was known as TF WANKE.



Knocked out tanks — German and American —  
along road leading West from ST. VITH (picture  
taken from the air in January 1945)

COMBAT INTERVIEW

"Narrative Report of Action, 17th Tank Battalion, 17-23 December '44"

17 December:

The 17th Tk Bn left UBACH, GERMANY, in the morning as part of CC-R's march column, with the 38th AIB leading. Order of march for the 17th Tk Bn was:

Hq Co  
A  
B  
C(--Rear Det)  
D  
Sv  
Rear Det

No one knew what was in store for them, but as T-4 Swartack, of "B" Co, put it:

"There were all sorts of rumors flying around. Nobody knew anything about the breakthrough and the report got around that the outfit was being pulled back and was going to be sent home and then to the Pacific."

The Bn marched South through AACHEN and MALMEDY, heading down the road to ST. VITH. The leading elements of the Bn cleared LIGNEUVILLE about 1500. At the CR known as NDR EMMELSER HEIDE, the 17th Tk Bn headed Northwest towards its assembly area in the vicinity of ECKELSBORN, where the Bn CP was established. This area was about 1700 yards South of RECHT, where CC-R was setting up its Hq, with a railroad embankment in between. Cos "A", "C", and "D" occupied assembly positions in the woods South of the railroad while Sv Co moved into RECHT with CC-R's Tns. B/17 established roadblocks along the LIGNEUVILLE--NDR EMMELSER HEIDE Road, protecting the Eastern and Southeastern flanks.

At approximately 1700, an Arty Lt from a Corps FA Bn came into the Bn CP with the information that the bridge at LIGNEUVILLE had been blown by the Germans. (Lt Cagle, C/17, in command of the Rear Det, was marching behind the Bn with a 5-minute time interval. When he approached the town of LIGNEUVILLE, which the rest of the Bn had cleared without difficulty, Cagle found the road cut by enemy tank fire. To rejoin the Bn -- which he did not reach until Tuesday, 19 December -- he was forced to detour through MALMEDY, STAVELDT, TROIS PONTS, VIELSALM, BOVIONY, BEND, and ST. VITH.)

(A Recon Plat Sec had been posted in LIGNEUVILLE as road guides, and were fired on by an enemy tank when the Germans entered the town between the time Sv Co/17 passed and the Rear Det was due to arrive. Only Sgt Bruno escaped and he was not able to rejoin the Bn until 7 days later.)

During the night C/17 was ordered into RECHT to outpost Hq/CG-R. As their Tks moved through the underpass into town, enemy mortar and MG fire were placed upon the town from the North, with a few flares. Enemy Tks could be heard and German infantry were discovered to be infiltrating into the Northern outskirts. Pushing on into town, Co "C" was ordered by CG-R to cover their withdrawal. Bn dispatched 3 L Tks from "D" Co to evacuate Sv Co/17, which was saved except for 1 gas and 1 ammo truck destroyed by enemy fire.

### 18 December:

Between 0300 and 0400, C/17 was forced to pull back to the woods South of the railroad where A/17 had taken up firing positions. Being without infantry support (there was none with the 17th Tk Bn), "C" Co felt it could not hold the town any longer without taking prohibitive losses. (3 Mediums were lost while in town.)

Co "C" went into position, facing the underpass, on the right of "A" Co. Two Plats/D/17 were brought up behind "A" and "C" Cos, with some of the L Tks filling in gaps between the Mediums. (2 L Tks from "D" Co previously had gone into position on the RECHT--NDR EMMELSER HEIDE Road, and West of "B" Co, to protect the Bn's rear.) The railroad embankment was an effective Tk obstacle, forcing the enemy Tks to attack through the underpass, while the German infantry would have to cross open ground.

While moving into position "D" Co's Tks hit a treacherous bog which mired 4 L Tks so completely that they could not be recovered, and the enemy who by then had built up a line along the railroad embankment forced the abandonment of salvage operations. During the early morning hours B/17 reported the noises of traffic including tanks along the BORN--RECHT Road. Around 0500, a Mk IV or V dashed through the underpass and headed for "C" Co's position. In the ensuing fire-fight, the German tank was destroyed but not before it had knocked out a Medium from "C" Co. Just after daylight a second enemy Tk or AG attempted to attack through the underpass but was driven back by fire from A & C/17. Shortly afterwards "A" Co lost 1 Medium and had a second Medium damaged by fire from a German Tk which nosed up to the embankment and fired over it until forced to withdraw.

While the rest of the day was reasonably quiet for the 17th Tk Bn, the enemy was observed to be making a heavy troop build-up, including Tks, to the West. A number of motor vehicles (incl 2 trucks & 2 Volkswagens) were destroyed but the enemy Tks were at too great a range to be effectively engaged (2000 to 2500 yards). All day long a heavy battle could be heard raging in the ST. VITH direction, while the 275th AFA Bn in positions near OBER EMMELS was firing almost without rest in support of CG-B. (This was

the only available artillery. The Division Artillery had not arrived in the area, and the 17th Tk Bn did not have any FO's.)

At 1600 the Bn was reinforced by one armored infantry company (C/38, commanded by Capt East). C/17, on the right, was outposted by 1/C/38 while A/17, on the left received 2/C/38; the AT Plat was sent to B/17 on the Southern flank.

Around midnight several strong combat patrols infiltrated into the Bn area, and before they could be driven off, 2 Mediums (C/17) had been destroyed by Panzerfausts. Next morning 4 enemy dead were found within 10 feet of the tanks. One man's ID card showed him to be from the 1st SS Pz Gren Regt (1st SS Pz).

### 19 December:

Just before dawn Tuesday morning the Arty Btry (275th AFA) in position near 2/B/17 on the NDR EMBELSER HEIDE Road (826917) was moved to a new and less exposed firing position. To replace this Btry whose guns had been sited for direct fire when not engaged on normal Arty missions, the AT Plat/C/38 was used to set up a road block at 829916. (During the early morning hours Stf Sgt Buffington, 2/B/17, went out on a patrol to the East and found several enemy artillery pieces, well camouflaged, about 2000 yards from this new road block.) (At 0900 Cpl Beals' squad, AT/C/38, killed 6 Germans and captured 4 with their half-track. Under cover of the heavy mist then hanging over the area, the Germans had advanced to a building about 100 yards South of the road block -- apparently on reconnaissance.)

During the night there were constant noises of tank movements around RECHT and BORN. After daylight as many as 8 tanks at one time were observed moving behind RECHT, and at the same time the Germans attempted to move Arty into the town. C/17 destroyed 7 enemy vehicles, but 3 Arty pieces did get through. Before they could go into action, however, Lt Olson (Plat Ldr, C/17) had called for Arty fire which he directed on the enemy Arty, destroying it. The concentrations "not only knocked out the enemy artillery, but also knocked down half the embankment", according to Lt Goodman (C/17). Thus far the Germans had depended entirely upon mortars and AG's for their support fires, and the 17th Tks had received no enemy artillery fire.

Although the 17th Tk Bn was assigned to CC-R, the nearest units and Hq were those of CC-B in ST. VITH. CC-R, after being forced to evacuate RECHT the night of the 17th/18th had moved to a little town to the West, either PETIT THIER or VILLE-du-BOIS. Communication between Bn and CC-R was difficult for the direct route was controlled by the Germans, and enemy Tks were able to fire on anyone moving South from the positions of the 17th Tk Bn into the rear area of CC-B (near ROUPE). During the day 2 L Tks (D/17) which were outposting the Southern flank of the Bn were dispatched to ST. VITH to pick up Lt. Col. Warren, Actg CO/CC-R and escort him to Lt Col Wemple's CP. When he arrived, he brought the information that as of 1312 hours (19 Dec), the 17th Tk Bn had been released to CC-B.

Orders later received from CG-B were for the 17th Tks to hold their present positions. Although units of CG-B were to the right-rear (South and East) of the Bn, there was no physical contact between B/17 and the 87th or 31st; there was visual and patrol contact with a road block set up by the Recon Sq (87th Cav) near OBR EMMELS.

That night the Germans constantly stabbed at the lines of the 17th Tk Bn with combat patrols employing "burp guns", MG's, and Panzerfausts; also there was a great deal of activity and vehicular movement in RECHT. The only Tk loss to these attacks was 1 L Tk from "D" Co. Both on the Northern and Eastern flanks, the tankers could hear the Germans shouting, singing, whistling, and calling out "Hello" -- apparently in an effort to draw fire and make the Bn disclose its positions. The men held their fire, however, and called for Arty through the 2 FO's of the 440th AFA who had reported in about dark. According to Lt Files of "D" Co:

"Every time 'Jerry' tried to open up from RECHT, our artillery came down on him like a steel blanket. The artillery lost the range only once and that was when they came in on us for about five rounds, but considering the way it had to work, that was really a very fine percentage. It was really very wonderful artillery. It saved us..."

#### 20 December:

In the morning the Bn received orders from CG-B to move back to the vicinity of RODT to form a Cmbt Gnd Res, less A/17 and 1 Flat/C/38 which were to go into position near 8L4902 as a link between the 31st Tk Bn on the right and CG-A on the left.

After smoking RECHT and NDR EMMELS, the 17th Tk Bn pulled out at 0930 and headed Southwest to RODT. (All Tks which had been lost during the previous fighting were fired to insure positive destruction.) "B" Co was the rear guard and was attacked by a German L Tk which was destroyed by AT/C/38. As NDR EMMELSER HEIDE was evacuated, a German half-track with a Lieutenant, a 1st Sgt, and 2 Pvts came up the road and pulled alongside one of the houses. When they were fired on, they started to escape and then surrendered. The half-track was brand-new, with less than 300 miles on its odometer.

After arrival at RODT, further orders were received moving the Bn to an assembly area North of HINDERHAUSEN. Prior to executing these orders the 17th Tk Bn (-A & Flat/C/38) was directed to move to the vic of BOVIGNY to join TASK FORCE JONES; "A" Co and Flat/C/38 were attached to 87th Cav Sq, to remain in position. Moving via HINDERHAUSEN, KROMBACH, WALDINGEN, and BEHD the Bn arrived at BOVIGNY about 1500.

Orders from TF JONES to send "D" Co to CHERAM, "B" Co to GOUVY, "C" Co and AG's to DEIFFELT were not executed as CG, 7th Armd Div, directed that Bn be held in mobile reserve not to be committed without his permission. Accordingly, 17th Tk Bn went into position near COURFIL.

21 December:

17th Tk Bn (-A & Flat/C/38) remained in assembly area, via COURTIL and BOVIGNY; on "alert status"; no contact with the enemy.

22 December:

At 0300 Bn C received orders to move the Bn immediately to KROMBACH and report to Brig Gen Clarke, C3/CC-B. Under conditions which have been described as "snowing like Hell and black as pitch", the Bn moved up via MALDINGEN, BRAUNLAUF, KROMBACH. Co "C" (-), 38th AIB, was left with TF JONES. (At daylight C/38 was ordered to join CC-A at POTEAU.)

As Lt Col Wemple gives the story:

"We couldn't contact CC-B by radio but finally raised the 31st Tk Bn, Lt Col Erlenbusch, who said: 'Come into town, have REBEL (Lt Col Wemple) report to CP'. There I got the situation: 'We have evacuated ST. VITH and taken up a line on the high ground to the West. There are serious gaps in the line.'

"I felt I should fill the gaps without waiting for dispositions and so placed my strong 'B' Co between 'B' and 'C' of the 31st, with 'C' Co on the right flank South of the 31st' L Tks. (We had about 20 Mediums, 3 AG's, and 12 Lights at this time.) 'D' Co was sent to HINDERHAUSEN to relieve the FA who were being attacked by enemy infantry -- 300 man patrol said to be in the vicinity.

"About 1500 the entire force withdrew to a new line East of KROMBACH. 'C' Co was South of KROMBACH near 817860. Infantry from the 38th manned listening posts for the tanks, AT guns along the railroad embankment and the road to the South -- about 100 altogether. 'B' Co was to tie in with the 9th Armd Div on the right. Maj Dailey talked with the S-3 of the 9th Armd [CC-B/9 Armd Div] and made an agreement that the high knoll at 829849 would be the tie-in.

"After dark the Germans advanced along the railroad and knocked out an AT gun; a tank came down the road but was forced to withdraw under fire. In the meantime the enemy penetrated into KROMBACH by an unknown route, entering the Northern and Western edges of town. The AG Plat in KROMBACH was surrounded by dismounted enemy; 'bazookas' were fired at the AG's; our AG's backed down the road to MALDINGEN firing in front of them as they went. At some times they were firing 15 yards to their front. At the same time Enemy armor was heard in the vicinity of NEUNDORF. 'B' Co reported horse-drawn artillery to their front in the direction of ST. VITH, and a heavy concentration of enemy in the same direction -- also movements of armor on their front and right flank. Between 0200 and 0300 'C' Co fired on an enemy tank, hitting the turret and forcing it to withdraw."



23 December:

Early in the morning orders were given for the 17th Tk Bn to withdraw. "B" Co was to be the rear-guard covering the withdrawal of all the forces. "C" Co leading, started down the road to KROMBACH at 0730. It tried to go through a portion of the town but one Tk was hit by an AT gun which had gotten into the town during the night, and it became necessary to route the withdrawal South of KROMBACH cross-country over soggy ground.

Turning now to B/17, and Lt Hardin:

"The Co had been ordered to pick up outposts and all the infantry it could on its withdrawal. The first tank in the column bogged down in the soft ground. Smoke was called for, and the Arty threw both smoke and white phosphorous into KROMBACH, concentrating on a church steeple which, it was believed, was being used as an enemy OP. The unit managed to get the first tank out, but three others bogged down. While trying to get one out, we received AT and S/A fire. The Bn Cdr ordered the three tanks abandoned and the rest of the tanks took off.

"B' Co went on about half a mile, then pulled off to the side of the road where the preceding units had assembled. The tanks had only been in the area for a short time when snipers opened up. Two 'C' Co officers were hit. This was about 0900. Some of the foot troops made a fast reconnaissance of the area and reported that enemy tanks were approaching from the East. The Bn Cdr ordered the units to move out as rapidly as possible. 'B' Co pulled out after the other units with 25 to 30 foot troops hanging on each tank. They went through two towns with the infantry continually firing, and there was some enemy fire.

"The Co got into a clear area, reorganized, and went on to HARTZ (assembly area West of the SALM), reaching there about noon Saturday. A check up found that the men on the outside of the Tks included infantrymen from the 106th Div, the 23d, 38th, and 48th Inf Bns, and engineers from the 33d Bn."

According to Lt Mueller (Flat Ldr/B/17):

"The infantry were all over the tanks -- hanging on the sides, front and back. There were so many that we couldn't bring our guns to bear. But the infantry kept firing from all directions with everything they had: BAR's, M-1's, carbines. They may not have hit much, but they kept 'Jerry's' fire down. There wasn't any fog, and visibility was good, but the roads were slick as Hell, and it was a problem to keep the Tks from sliding once we got back on the roads."

Appendix "C"

ENEMY NOTES

ENEMY NOTES

The Original Plan:

"The original intention as laid down by the O.K.W. was to thrust forward with Sixth [SS] Panzer Army towards ANTWERP from the area MONSCHAU--LOSHEIM, crossing the R. MEUSE between LIEGE (K4723) and HUY (K2217). Fifth Panzer Army had the task of thrusting towards BRUSSELS via NAMUR (J9611) and DINANT (Q 9888) with the object of protecting the left flank of Sixth [SS] Panzer Army. In order to provide defense against the counter-attacks which were expected from the area RHEIMS, SEDAN, and CHARVILLE, Seventh German Army was to take over protection of the Southern flank of Fifth Panzer Army between NEUFCHATEAU and DINANT. About three days after the start of this assault, by which time it was estimated that the Allies would have sent forces from the North to the new battle area, Fifteenth German Army, under command of General Von ZANGEN, was to attack towards MAASTRICHT with a reinforced Corps group which was to be commanded by General BLUMENTRITT from the area of SITTARD (K6768). This thrust was to cross the R. MEUSE and link up with elements of Sixth SS Panzer Army in the neighborhood of TONGRES (K4045)."

— Directorate of Tactical Investigation,  
British War Office, The German Counter-Offensive  
in the Ardennes, December 1944—January 1945: A  
Study of the Initial Phases, p. 2.

## The Final Plan:

When the German Offensive was launched on 16 December 1944, the plan for the thrust by Fifteenth German Army was abandoned so as to concentrate all available troops with Sixth SS and Fifth Panzer Armies. The missions of the two Panzer Armies and of Seventh German Army, however, remained unchanged.

## German Order of Battle:

### ARMY GROUP "B" (F.M. MODEL)

| <u>Sixth SS Panzer Army</u>                            | <u>Fifth Panzer Army</u>                                                        | <u>Seventh Army</u>                    |
|--------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Elms Fifteenth Army<br>(attached)                      | <u>LXVI Corps</u>                                                               | <u>LIII Corps</u>                      |
| 246 VG Div<br>326 VG Div                               | 18 VG Div<br>62 VG Div                                                          | 5 Para Div                             |
| <u>LXVII Corps</u>                                     | <u>LVIII Pz Corps</u>                                                           | <u>LXXXV Corps</u>                     |
| 277 VG Div<br>3 Pz Gren Div                            | 116 Pz Div<br>560 VG Div                                                        | 79 VG Div                              |
| <u>I SS Pz Corps</u>                                   | <u>XLVII Pz Corps</u>                                                           | <u>LXXX Corps</u>                      |
| 1 SS Pz Div<br>12 SS Pz Div<br>3 Para Div<br>12 VG Div | 2 Pz Div<br>Pz LEHR Div<br>26 VG Div                                            | 352 VG Div<br>276 VG Div<br>212 VG Div |
| <u>II SS Pz Corps</u>                                  |                                                                                 | <u>In Reserve</u>                      |
| 2 SS Pz Div<br>9 SS Pz Div                             |                                                                                 | 11 Pz Div                              |
|                                                        | <u>O.K.W. RESERVE</u>                                                           |                                        |
|                                                        | 15 Pz Gren Div<br>9 Pz Div<br>Fuhrer Escort Brigade<br>Fuhrer Grenadier Brigade |                                        |

--- Ibid., Appendix "B".

Enemy Forces Attacking ST. VITH:

"Our Forces holding west of St VITH reported that they were in contact with elements of six German divisions, on 22 December. With the arrival of II SS Panzer Corps, fresh from its assembly area, the pressure upon our forces became too great and a gradual retirement was made from the town to the west, permitting the enemy to pass II SS Panzer Corps through to the VIELSALM area."

— Ibid., p. 18.

"On 21 December...7 U.S. Armoured Division, together with attached troops, withdrew west of St VITH in face of attacks by 9 SS Panzer Division, the Fuhrer Escort Brigade and two Volksgrenadier Divisions. Positions were held west of the town but east of the R. SALM."

— Ibid., p. 13.

"On 22 December II SS Panzer Corps, with 2 and 9 SS Panzer Divisions, finally succeeded in wresting ST. VITH from 7 US Armored Division which fell back to the north-west to gain better defensive positions."

— Headquarters Twelfth Army Group,  
Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2:  
Destruction of the German Armies in Western  
Europe, June 6th, 1944-May 9th, 1945, p. 20.

"December 22...Model... shifts now from insensate assault upon the 'shoulder' to stratagem and wile; he moves elements of the Sixth SS Panzer Army heretofore in reserve to the west to 'beef up' the German drive through St. Vith and the valleys of the Ourthe and the Ambleve."

— Hanson Baldwin, "Our Greatest Battle:  
The Full Drama", New York Times Magazine,  
15 December 1946, p. 68.

COMMENTS BY FIELD-MARSHAL KEITEL AND COLONEL-GENERAL  
JODL ON THE ARDENNES OFFENSIVE

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"The failure of the offensive is to ascribed to the following reasons in order of importance:-

- (a) Soft roads which made impossible the rapid advance of armoured units and hindered a breakthrough in depth into the MEUSE area.
- (b) Tougher resistance than expected of, in themselves, weak U. S. troops, especially in ST. VITH (the troops occupying the SCHWEE EIFEL in our opinion could have held out longer).
- (c) The inadequate training for such an attack of the leaders, subordinate commanders, and troops in many of the Divisions, especially the Armoured Divisions.
- (d) The widespread shortage of transport means, especially heavy prime movers (tracked).
- (e) The enemy superiority in the air which made itself felt in particular in the major fighting of 24 December.
- (f) In the uniform and promptly applied operational measures taken by the Allies.

We do not believe, with the troops and material then at our disposal, that the Supreme Command could have done anything better as it saw the situation: The Operation was fundamentally one of surprise, and to this extent we believe it was a complete success. Perhaps one or other exaggerated measure for the ensurance of its secrecy may have hampered the preparations for the attack. But such things have to be taken for better or worse, as solely in complete surprise did the chance of success lie. That this chance could not be exploited lay in the reasons cited above."

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20 July 1945.

(Sgd) KEITEL.

Gen. Field-Marshal.

(Sgd) JODL

Colonel-General.

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Extract Copy of APPENDIX "F", THE GERMAN COUNTER-OFFENSIVE IN THE ARDENNES, December 1944-January 1945: A Study of the Initial Phases, prepared by Directorate of Tactical Investigation, British War Office, dated 18 Sep 1945.

COMMENTS BY FIELD MARSHAL von RUNDSTEDT, GENERAL d Pz Tr  
von MANTEUFFEL, GENERAL d Inf BLUMENTRITT, AND GENERAL  
KRUSE ON THE ARDENNES OFFENSIVE

Reasons for Failure:

- 1) General Plan -- "The plan <sup>was</sup> far too ambitious for the available forces, ammunition and fuel. There were not enough troops to form a second wave of Pz and Inf Divs to consolidate the attack, or to secure the flanks.\*\*\* The basis of any plan should have been to execute a turning movement from the SOUTH (whether to LIEGE or to ANTWERP) and for this purpose, the Southern Army (5 Pz Army) should have been specifically strengthened. The decision to concentrate the main strength in the Northern Army (6 SS Pz Army) was a fundamental error which unbalanced the whole offensive."

--Von RUNDSTEDT

- 2) Speed of Allied Counter-Measures.
- 3) Superiority of Allied Air Forces after 25 December.
- 4) Shortages in Initial Manpower and Reserves.
- 5) Terrain.
- 6) Inadequate Equipment.
- 7) Limited Mobility of Artillery.
- 8) Shortage of Fuel.
- 9) ST. VITH -- "ST. VITH fell later than proposed in the original plan. The delayed capture influenced the operations in that the left flank of 6 SS Pz Army was left isolated even more than before."
- 10) The BASTOGNE Crisis -- "The holding out at BASTOGNE slowed down the attack operations and finally had a decisive effect on the whole operation. Owing to its holding out and blocking many good road communications which could otherwise have been used to bring up reinforcements, difficulties on the Southern flank were certain to arise."

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EXTRACTS from Document C.S.D.I.C. (U.K.) G.R.G.G.330(c), British War Office, dated 1 Aug 1945, THE ARDENNES OFFENSIVE, pars. 199-260.

Appendix "D"

NEWS REPORTS



# The New York Times

Sunday, December 31, 1944

## GERMANS STOPPED BY WORN DIVISIONS

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American Veterans of Months  
of Fierce Fighting Hurlled  
Back Into Battle

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### Seventh Armored Division Hard Hit

ON THE BELGIAN FRONT, Dec. 30 (AP) -- They are all singing praise today for soldiers of the Seventh Armored Division -- those often orphaned waifs of the Western Front who have been bounced from Army to Army and had their noses bloodied at almost every turn.

It was the scrapping Seventh, slung swiftly into the breach when the German spearhead was stabbing deeply into Belgium's side ten days ago, that put the brakes on the armored plunge and finally split the German penetration, forcing the enemy to fight a two-way battle. The boys sat grimly there alone in the St. Vith sector, taking a terrific mauling from a half dozen German divisions -- denying them the use of that vital road junction, keeping them partly cut off from supplies and never letting them relax a moment to fight elsewhere.

Often their own supplies were cut off. Sometimes they were sliced into separate segments by attacking armor. But they ploughed through the enemy lines to reach supply dumps or traveled back roads at night. When individual units were isolated, they formed deadly bands and wrought havoc among the German forces until able to rejoin the main body.

Now commanded by Maj. Gen. Robert W. Hasbrouck of Kingston, N. Y., and boasting as its most famous man, Lieut. Will Rogers, Jr., who is a popular platoon leader, the Seventh has fought under four Armies, British and American, during its four months in combat. It fought through Chateau-Thierry and the Argonne Forest, encircled Reims and captured Verdun.

### Consistently Mauled

Somehow the Seventh always got hurt. The latest big wound came late in October, when it was forced to hold a thin twenty-five mile line in the Weert sector of the Netherlands and had to face the brunt of an over-powering

German attack.

On Sunday, Dec. 17, it got word to come quickly. Swiftly it split into two combat teams -- one headed by Brig. Gen. Bruce C. Clarke of Syracuse, N. Y., and another headed by Col. Dwight A. Rosebaum of St. Joseph, Mo. General Clarke's crew struck into St. Vith and Colonel Rosebaum's covered the rear and north flank. Both promptly became fronts.

Officially, the Seventh was ordered to hold the St. Vith sector for two days. It held for five, despite all that six surrounding divisions could do.

Although officially they scrapped almost alone without outside help, the Seventh's troops actually accumulated one of the most savage little army of soldiers ever seen on any front -- straggling survivors of two semi-slaughtered units who had fought viciously back to that sector. They formed a semi-circle front, fanning eastward around St. Vith, which forms the hub of a road network. Slowly the German power crushed all around the Seventh.

Even back where the division's supply center was set up, the Germans came by the thousands. Col. Andrew J. Adams of Auburn, Ala., was in charge of the supply trains -- long lines of trucks carrying food and ammunition. He was assisted by Lieut. Col. Austin A. Miller of Huntingburg, Ind., as quartermaster. Everybody turned in and manned a defense system.

From almost every command post -- normally far behind the combat line -- combat command leaders could look at the battle a few hundred yards away at any time. Finally, after the fifth day, the Seventh was relieved and ordered into a "rest period".

That lasted only a few hours. The boys went back into battle elsewhere.

#### Newest Armor General

General Clarke, who coached wrestling at the University of Tennessee and Cornell, is the Western Front's newest armored-force general. As Colonel and commander of a combat team of the Fourth Armored Division coming across France, he spent more time behind German lines than in front of them.

The youthful tank expert, who is looked on by Lieut. Gen. George S. Patton, Jr. as one of the most outstanding combat team commanders in Europe, won his promotion to general by an end run through France on the flank of the American Third Army. His combat team raced across Brittany to contain the U-boat base at Lorient. Then he turned east and fought to the Moselle river. His crossing of the Moselle with his combat team under fire to sweep around Nancy and cause its fall is considered a classic of armored warfare.

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--- New York Times, 31 December 1944,  
"Weather Edition", p. 4:1.  
(This story on the 7th Armored Division was  
part of a 2-column feature on three divisions:  
1st Infantry; 7th Armored; 80th Infantry.  
In the "Late City Edition", which is on file  
in libraries, the 2-column feature on the  
divisions has been replaced by a 2-column  
by-line article by Wes Gallagher, entitled  
"2-Week Offensive in West Reviewed".)

Sunday, December 31, 1944

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FOE'S STRENGTH  
MINIMIZED,  
SETBACKS CAME  
-----Writer Analyzes  
German Breakthrough  
-----By Wes Gallagher

WITH AMERICAN FORCES IN BELGIUM. (Sunday), Dec. 31 -- (AP) -- The great lunge by Field Marshal Karl Gerd Von Rundstedt has given the Allied High Command its biggest scare of the war and, for a few hours, came close to delivering a blow which might have delayed the outcome of the war one or two years.

If Von Rundstedt had reached Liege he might have destroyed not only the American First and Ninth Armies but the British and Canadian forces as well.

Intelligence Maps Faulty

His place of attack was chosen carefully; his troops were gathered secretly on a 50-mile front from the Monschau Forest south to Trier.

In this area which served to cloak his 1940 drive through the Ardennes at the same spot, Von Rundstedt assembled at least twenty divisions, including most of his crack armored units.

Allied intelligence completely failed to detect and evaluate his movements. On the day before his attack American intelligence maps carried only the names of five worn-out infantry divisions in the area from the Monschau Forest to Trier.

This failure was one of the great contributing factors to German success. Another was an attitude which had grown up among the Allied officers, from the field to the high command, that the Germans were beaten and were incapable of a great offensive.

"Reconnaissance in Force"

On the morning of December 16, the Germans struck. They sent out two spearheads, one led by the First SS "Adolf Hitler" Panzer Division south of St. Vith, the other by the Twelfth SS "Hitler Jugend" Panzer Division north of St. Vith. These were

what the Germans called "reconnaissance in force". They were heavily armored combat teams designed to hit a terrific punch on a narrow front and go as far as they could.

At the same time the Germans ordered local attacks all the way from Monschau to Trier to divert attention from the main blow.

These two combat teams of two panzer divisions met with unexpected success. They burst through the thin American defenses and in the first 24 hours the spearhead to the north had made a salient ten miles wide and six miles deep. The one to the south of St. Vith, executing a pincers move to the north, had gone almost as well, penetrating five miles on a five-mile front.

Local attacks to the north of Trier also found a soft spot in the American lines in the direction of Bastogne.

#### St. Vith Key to Drive

Through these three gaps Von Rundstedt put on the pressure. The next day the north and south spearheads joined just east of St. Vith, making one salient 12 miles deep and 20 miles wide.

The road junction of St. Vith was vital to the Germans, who made a determined effort to take it, but the Combat Command of the Seventh Armored Division under Brigadier-General Bruce C. Clarke, of Syracuse, N. Y., had reached that Belgian town in an all-night race, and put up fierce resistance with the aid of regiments which had been overrun by the Nazi thrust.

This was the first of the famous stands of sheer courage that delayed the Nazi rush and, in the long run, saved the situation.

#### December 18 Critical Day

The third day, December 18 was the first of the critical days. The Twelfth SS Division, plunging northwest on the shortest route to Liege, ran head-on with the veteran American First Infantry Division rushing south. The meeting came just south of Butenbach, and the First with another American division, as yet unrevealed, on its left flank, halted the Twelfth SS, at least for the moment.

Von Rundstedt knew that he had to race west and then turn north faster than American divisions could be sent into the line running due west from Butenbach to the Meuse River. It was like rushing along opposite sides of a fence, trying to get to a gate at the end and through first.

The American strategy was clear, it was right out of the rule book. It was the job of the Allied High Command to keep the American Armies' Liege flank from being turned and to channelize the German effort due west. Exactly the same sort of race was in progress on a smaller scale in the south, where the United States Third Army was throwing up a fence.

Once the German offensive was channelized to the west efforts could be made to halt it or let it run, then try to cut it off with a flank attack.

Fortunately, the Ardennes area did not contain any key cities nor any great quantities of supplies, and Von Rundstedt's advances gained little of military value. Every mile to the north toward Liege was worth 10 miles to the west.

### 18-Mile Advance

The First SS Division on December 18, began a real race, tearing 18 miles west over mountain roads, then trying to turn north at Malmedy, Stavelot, and Stoumont, in the Liege direction. Here they met another American division which had raced south, and another fierce struggle ensued.

The next day Eisenhower threw in more troops, and so did Von Rundstedt, but the German Marshal was greatly handicapped by the failure to take St. Vith, where the United States Seventh Armored Division still held out, although virtually surrounded. The division was an island of resistance in the heart of the Nazi drive, splitting it. The same day, December 19, another "island" of American courage appeared. It was the 101st Airborne Division and other units which were rushed to the front in trucks and met the Germans at Bastogne for an epic defense.

Another crack American airborne division, the Eighty-Second, raced into line just west of Stoumont to make the first effort to blunt the First SS Panzer Division's westward drive.

### Patton Builds Flank

In the south from Luxembourg, General Patton threw up a flank defense composed of elements of the Fourth, Ninth, and Tenth Armored Divisions, and the Fourth, Fifth, Twenty-Sixth, and Eightieth Infantry Divisions.

In the center of the Ardennes breakthrough there was nothing to halt the Germans, and in the next few days armored combat teams drove 50 miles into Belgium, almost reaching the Meuse River between Namur and Dinant. These were only armored prongs, however, and gained little of military value.

Von Rundstedt had to turn north to get at the American and British supply bases and deal an all-out crippling blow. Time was precious. Every hour gave the Allies time to push in men.

### Knock-Down, Drag-Out Brawl

December 20 was the most critical day of the offensive. Von Rundstedt had poured in new panzer infantry divisions and made a "do-or-die" effort to move north.

The struggle ceased to become a matter of high strategy; it became a knock-down, drag-out brawl. Only American Doughboy courage stood between the German panzers and a great military victory. And the Doughboys held the gates to Liege against Hitler's prized war machine at Butenbach, Malmedy, Stavelot, and Stoumont. At night-fall the German dead were piled in heaps and German war machine wreckage burned brightly in the snow.

### First Drive Beaten Back

On December 22, General Patton started a drive from the south to relieve the surrounded 101st Division, and around Stoumont American attacks started to hammer back the Germans into a round salient.

At the same time the Seventh Armored fought out from St. Vith and with other elements pushed back the exhausted western elements of Von Rundstedt's men.

Von Rundstedt's first quick drive to grab at the rich prize of Liege had been beaten back with some broken fingers. The Nazi Field Marshal needed time to regroup for a new effort, and went on the defensive. He threw up an armored ring around the Belgium bulge and a rugged defense to Patton's drive from the south.

Within this ring he now is planning his next move and juggling his forces. Adverse weather again has come to his aid, cloaking his movements.

That is how the battle now stands.

\* \* \* \*

— Richmond Times Dispatch, 31 December 1944,  
p. 1:8.  
(This article appears in more detail in New York Times, "Late City Edition", 31 December 1944, p. 4:1)

RADIO  
STATION

WRNL

Richmond  
Virginia

A  
MERICAN  
B  
ROADCASTING  
C  
OMPANY

(The following news-cast was received at Radio Station W R N L, Richmond, Virginia, 2 March 1945.)

EUROPEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS, U.S. ARMY.

YANK COURAGE MARKS SAGA OF ST. VITH

WITH THE SEVENTH ARMORED DIVISION IN BELGIUM: -- Up in the hills of the Ardennes Forest in Belgium, around a town called ST. VITH, the 38th Armored Infantry Battalion of the Seventh Armored Division, aided by other elements of the Seventh, blunted Von Rundstedt's drive in this sector, and 'though The Bulge expanded to the south of them, they held on until ordered to withdraw.

Thrust into the line after a long road march, the Thirty-Eighth dug in quickly in the frozen hills one mile east of ST. VITH to meet the German drive. Considering the confusion caused by the badly mauled units retiring to reform, it was a difficult job expertly done. Directing operations and reorganizing scattered soldiers of other units were Lieutenant Colonel Wm. H. G. Fuller, Columbus, Georgia; Major Donald P. Boyer, Jr., Richmond, Virginia; and Captain Quintus Fredrickson, Aurora, Illinois.

From then on the Thirty-Eighth fought stubbornly, bitterly contesting every inch the Germans gained. When one defense line would become too precarious, or when tanks would occasionally burst through the thin cordon of defense, the Thirty-Eighth would not break and run -- they would bring their guns and rifles ably into play once more and halt the desperate Germans who were searching always for a weak spot.

For six days and nights, the infantrymen fought the Nazis during a situation so fluid that, when groups became isolated, they were able to infiltrate back to friendly lines to take up a fighting post once more. When vehicles were knocked out, men hung onto the available vehicles and returned to hasty assembly points where they formed into fighting units again.

Command Posts were moved rearward only when in locations far past the Army's definition of untenable. One company Command Post burned as enemy artillery rained heavily around it... The



besieged personnel pressed a half-track into service as the Command Post and pulled out from under only when direct machine gun fire forced its withdrawal. "Jerry" fired armor piercing shells as the half-track raced a mile away to set up operations again. Captain Walter H. Anstey, Providence, Rhode Island, whose "A" Company's Command Post was thus fired, personally led his company through enemy lines twice, and when the order came for a general withdrawal, he still had the major part of his company intact.

One night a Panther tank rampaged through when the Battalion had retired to a point just outside ST. VITH. The tank fired point-blank into the building where First Sergeant Alvie L. Davis, Magnolia, Mississippi, and Corporal John J. Tomko, Trenton, New Jersey, were giving firing orders from Headquarters Company's Command Post. They were unhurt but the adjoining room was demolished.

At KROMBACH, two miles from ST. VITH, where another defense line was set up, German tanks and infantry surrounded the Battalion Command Post. The command retired to a cellar when the shrapnel flew thick and fast from all directions... The Germans were so close that Sergeant Ellis D. Vaughan, Utica, Mississippi, scuffled with a "Jerry" in the darkness of an upstairs room.

German troops were close enough to call for the Command Post personnel to surrender. The group knew that they were surrounded, but they refused to accept the offer. Instead, although three-quarters of a mile behind the German lines, Major Alvin McDaniel, McComb, Mississippi; Corporal John L. Bohm, Bayside, Long Island, New York; Private First Class Alfred P. Curdao, Staten Island, New York; First Sergeant Davis; and Corporal Tomko worked their way back to friendly territory in the fog of the early morning.

Observing two German tanks lumbering over a small bridge, Corporal Cox (Battalion Headquarters) reported the fact and in a short time "Lucky Seventh" artillery plastered the bridge and demolished it. The German tanks were stalemated, and the Thirty-Eighth escaped the immediate danger.

The Thirty-Eighth Armored Infantry fought in a sector which the Seventh Armored Division held three days longer than ordered to by Supreme Headquarters... Four Nazi Divisions and one Brigade were stalled at ST. VITH, and the whole continuity of Von Rundstedt's drive was destroyed. When the order came for a withdrawal on a wide scale, it was done in an orderly manner.

# 7th Arm'd 'Ghost' Division Fought With Eight Corps In Four Armies

WITH THE 7TH ARMORED DIVISION OF THE 7TH ARMY, in Germany.—After 10 months, the 7th Armored (Ghost) Division, which "haunted" the enemy from Normandy to the shores of the Baltic, awaits its redeployment in the semi-nostalgic state which exists wherever soon-to-be-parted veterans assemble.

Its commanding general, Maj. Gen. R. W. Hasbrouck, its officers and its men can reminisce on a broad scope encompassing everything from classic armored drives to bitter unarmored-like defenses such as that at St. Vith.

Veterans they are, as the Tommy who watched them barrel down from northern Germany to meet Rundstedt testified.

"There's the bloody 7th," he said, almost unconcerned, to a small group of GIs looking for a morale booster. "They'll stop the bloody b——ds. They're the bloody veterans. We were with them in Holland, you know."

#### Here, There, Everywhere

The words, "with them in Holland," were the key. The division was always with someone, some place, first with one, then another. The "Ghost" was wont to appear almost anywhere it was not expected. It fought with eight different corps in four different armies.

Offensively, it battered its way over mountains and through forests, as well as over plains against defenders who had the advantage of well-prepared positions. Defensively? Well, it is credited with two of the great stands of the war. And that, even though armor was never intended to be a holding or defensive arm.

The finest of the German army and the worst of nature never dimmed its spirit or stunted its power. In a combat life which ran from Aug. 10, 1944, to V-E Day, May 9, 1945, the 7th, among other things, took 113,041 prisoners, destroyed 621 armored vehicles and captured 89 more, destroyed 583 field pieces larger than 50 millimeter and captured 361.

The number of enemy dead and wounded it left on its trail cannot be estimated.

A look at the combat route map of the division shows it went virtually from cellar to garret and back again.

#### Joins Patton's 3rd Army

After it landed at Omaha and Utah beaches, the division joined the 3rd Army. General Patton rolled the big "Seven" across the fields of France after the St. Lo breakthrough.

The cathedral city of Chartres fell and then Melun on the Seine river. Chateau-Thierry was freed. Rheims was liberated by encirclement and steel columns cut into Verdun, using the last gasoline to complete the sweep of France.

snow and St. Vith and von Rundstedt with the pick of the German army, panzers and panzer grenadiers and planes and tanks.

Ordered to hold for two days, the 7th dug in and slugged it out for five, blunting the impetus of the foe's push for Liege and breaking the continuity of his drive. After a short rest came the retaking of St. Vith.

Then, as part of the 1st Army, the division raced out of the Remagen bridgehead and tore German resistance to shreds, covering 140 miles in four days. The dash ended with the capture of the great Eder See dam, largest water capacity dam in Europe.

#### Makes German Panzers Quit

Afterward came reduction of the Ruhr pocket, which it had helped encircle. Slowly, then faster, it advanced. Resistance weakened, crumbled, ceased to exist. On April 16 negotiations were completed for the surrender of a German panzer corps, resulting in the complete collapse of the eastern sector of the pocket.

Into division enclosures, as a result of the surrender, came 20,302 prisoners, bringing to 37,383 the number taken out of the pocket by the division.

In northern Germany, again with the British 2nd Army, the 7th crossed the Elbe and swept to the Baltic Sea and a meeting with the Russians. On V-E Day it was processing prisoners of war. On that last dash the greatest need was for traffic control over thousands of prisoners streaming along the roads.

#### Heroic 'Box Score'

On its combat route map is the "box score" which gives the results, the job done, but leaves out the play-by-play account.

The statistician says the division traveled 2260 miles, destroyed 2653 miscellaneous enemy vehicles, capturing 3517. It used 3,127,151 gallons of fuel.

Division 105s expended 350,027 rounds: 76s, 19,209, and 75s, 48,724. Nine DSC's were awarded members of the division; 351 Silver Stars and 888 Bronze Stars for heroic service and 1047 more for meritorious service.

A captured German officer summed it up from his place in a PW enclosure.

"We consider the American 7th Armored one of the five best American divisions—perhaps the best," he said.

b—ds. They're the bloody veterans. We were with them in Holland, you know."

#### Here, There, Everywhere

The words, "with them in Holland," were the key. The division was always with someone, some place, first with one, then another. The "Ghost" was wont to appear almost anywhere it was not expected. It fought with eight different corps in four different armies.

Offensively, it battered its way over mountains and through forests, as well as over plains against defenders who had the advantage of well-prepared positions. Defensively? Well, it is credited with two of the great stands of the war. And that, even though armor was never intended to be a holding or defensive arm.

The finest of the German army and the worst of nature never dimmed its spirit or stunted its power. In a combat life which ran from Aug. 10, 1944, to V-E Day, May 9, 1945, the 7th, among other things, took 113,041 prisoners, destroyed 621 armored vehicles and captured 89 more, destroyed 583 field pieces larger than 50 millimeter and captured 361.

The number of enemy dead and wounded it left on its trail cannot be estimated.

A look at the combat route map of the division shows it went virtually from cellar to garret and back again.

#### Joins Patton's 3rd Army

After it landed at Omaha and Utah beaches, the division joined the 3rd Army. General Patton rolled the big "Seven" across the fields of France after the St. Lo breakthrough.

The cathedral city of Chartres fell and then Melun on the Seine river. Chateau-Thierry was freed. Rheims was liberated by encirclement and steel columns cut into Verdun, using the last gasoline to complete the sweep of France.

In 21 days, the 7th, not as yet given the name "Ghost Division" by the Germans, clipped off 620 combat miles, spearheading the drive of the XX Corps and Patton's 3rd Army.

Refueled, the division struck for Metz to establish a bridgehead over the Moselle river and for two weeks fought against select enemy forces before it was called to Holland.

In the muck of the Lowlands, the 7th was assigned the mission of protecting the 2nd British Army supply lines and the right flank of the 21st Army Group engaged in clearing southern Holland and the Scheldt approaches to Antwerp.

#### 20-Mile Defensive Front

The division was on a defensive front extending more than 20 miles when the German army threw a greater counter-drive at Meijel. Against odds of three to one, the 7th denied the enemy roads from Meijel to Asten and Liesel. It was credited with saving the campaign to clear the approaches to Antwerp.

Then came a brief stay with the 9th Army; then Christmas and

the surrender of a German panzer corps, resulting in the complete collapse of the eastern sector of the pocket.

Into division enclosures, as a result of the surrender, came 20,302 prisoners, bringing to 37,383 the number taken out of the pocket by the division.

service and 1047 more for meritorious service.

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# Battle BIOGRAPHIES

By Sgt Charles E. Campbell Jr



## 7TH ARMORED DIVISION

**C**ALLED the "Rattlesnake Division" by American war correspondents, who never knew where it would strike next, the 7th Armored Division wound up its trek from the Norman beaches to the Baltic Sea with the capture of 113,041 prisoners. Debarking at Utah and Omaha beaches 10 Aug '44, the 7th's first objective was the vital road center and famous cathedral city of Chartres, which it took after four days of bloody fighting. In its first 21 days on the continent the 7th raced 620 miles, liberating Melun, Chateau-Thierry, Reims, and Verdun before being forced to halt for lack of fuel. Retracing ground over which their fathers fought in 1918, men of the 7th were the first Allied soldiers to cross the Seine in this war. At Melun, they silenced and seized intact "Radio Paris," at that time the most powerful Nazi radio outlet in Europe.

Forced to wait six days at Verdun for fuel, advance units of the 7th stood up gallantly under heavy bombing by Nazi planes. Advancing over ground soaked by many days of rain that also denied them air support, tanks of the 7th attacked the perimeter defenses of Metz. The drive, on approaches zeroed in by Jerry artillery, was soon slowed to a crawl. Transferred before the actual fall of the city, but well after the resistance had been broken, the outfit was ordered to Holland, attached to the British 1st Army, and took Vortum. With the British 2d, the 7th protected a flank of the British-Canadian drive to clear the northern and western approaches to Antwerp. The 7th is now credited with saving this campaign from possible disaster. Outnumbered three to one, they held their ground.

**M**OVING into Germany and making plans for operations with the 9th Army, the division was suddenly ordered to St Vith in Belgium, where von Runstedt's winter offensive had suddenly swelled into the Battle of the Bulge. Rushed in to fill the gap before St Vith, the 7th held its "horseshoe" line for five days while the Germans employed a "bouncing ball" technique of attack, probing for weak spots in the line. Withdrawing only after Allied armies had been marshalled from along the entire front, the 7th retired to the new line that had been pieced together. Gen Eisenhower commended the tankers for holding five days when a two-day stand had been maximum Allied hope. On 23 Jan '45, the village of St Vith was once more in the hands of the 7th.

Transferred to Belgium for a well-earned rest, the division went back into action on 26 March when it broke out of the Remagen bridgehead as the center spearhead of a coordinated attack along the entire 1st Army front. Its tanks rolled unchecked up the autobahn for five days until finally ordered to stop. The tankmen covered 148 miles, and on the fifth day took the great Eder See Dam. Next assigned to help in the reduction of the Ruhr pocket, the division fought on a "one-tank front" over difficult terrain, down steep defiles which gave the defenders tremendous advantage and made massing of armor impossible. The climax was the surrender of a complete German Panzer Corps, which collapsed the eastern side of the pocket.

Another short period of rest and assembly was followed by a second assignment with the British 2d Army for operations north of the Elbe River. This last combat dash ended on the shore of the Baltic Sea east of Lubeck.

Arriving in the United States on 17 Oct '45, the outfit was inactivated and the story of one of the most colorful combat divisions was closed.

RHINE CROSSING featured transport of 32-ton medium Sherman tanks by 26-ton LCMs.

