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ASSAULT ACROSS THE SAUER

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ABSTRACT

COMMON REFERENCE: Sauer River Crossing, 80th Infantry Division,
7 February 1945

TYPE OPERATION: Deliberate River Crossing

OPPOSING FORCES: US

12th Army Group
3d US Army
XII US Corps
80th Infantry Div

GERMAN

Elements of the LIII Corps including:

9th Volks Grenadier Division
212th Volks Grenadier Division
276th Volks Grenadier Division
352d Volks Grenadier Division
416th Volks Grenadier Division

SYNOPSIS: On 7 February 1945, the 80th Infantry Division began crossing the Sauer River in the allies offensive against the German homeland. German forces, having been thwarted in the Battle of the Bulge were in poor shape both in personnel and equipment, and offered little resistance to the crossing. The Sauer River itself became the 80th Division's more substantial foe. Swollen to twice its normal width and with currents of as much as seventeen miles per hour, the Sauer exacted a high toll in men and materiel. The assault had been underway three days before the first bridge was in place. The division objective was secured fourteen days after the operation was begun. The Fourth Armored Division then passed through the 80th and the "race to the Rhine" was on.

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After Action Reports, 80th Infantry Division, August 1944 to May 1945

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INTRODUCTION

In the pre-dawn darkness of 7 February 1945, soldiers of the 80th Infantry Division, the "Blue Ridge Division", moved into their assault boats and slipped into the rapid current of the swollen Sauer River. Not destined to become an action of legend, nor even an action of major importance by any account, this assault was simply a small piece of the Allies broad front drive to the industrial heart of the Third Reich. To the soldiers of the Blue Ridge Division, who conducted the daily, dirty business of fighting World War Two without acclaim, whose only glory was the next sunrise, and who carried the day, this account is dedicated.

Staff Group D drew heavily on primary reference materials, to include the operations reports of XII Corps and 80th Infantry Division, contemporary Field Manuals and doctrinal publications of the period and the Corps and Division operations orders for the crossing of the Sauer. Books from the US Army Historical Series and Eisenhower's Lieutenants by Russell F. Weigley were most useful in setting the stage and assessing the value of the operation. We are particularly indebted to Sergeant First Class Robert Cordell, of the Combat Studies Institute of CGSC for his help in locating source documents and his advice on this project. Our Academic Advisor, Major Robert D. Stacy, also was of great assistance in editing and proofreading.

CHAPTER ONE

THE STRATEGIC SETTING

The 80th Infantry Division's crossing of the Sauer River is a small piece in the jigsaw puzzle of World War II. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a glimpse at the strategic setting before narrowing our scope to study the crossing in detail.

Dawn on 1 September 1939 marked the beginning of World War II in Europe when units of the German Wermacht rolled across the Polish border. Two days later, Great Britain and France declared war on Germany. The initial attack into Poland was extremely successful, and the Poles were forced to surrender within a month. The war was to last almost six years and more than thirty million people would die.

Having captured Poland, Hitler used the winter months to plan the campaign against the Allies. On 10 May 1940, the Germans again attacked. Initially rolling forward against Belgium and Holland, the Germans deceived the Allies into believing that their strategy was the same as that used during World War I. The Allies overreacted.

The main German attack in reality was through the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and the Ardennes. Virtually unopposed,

the Germans moved through the Ardennes and against the main French defense positions on 12 May. It was too late for the French to shift their reserves, and on 14 May there was a fifty-mile hole in the French line as the foot-mobile French infantry attempted to maneuver against German tanks and Stukas. Two days later, the German armor was on the Aisne and rolling into open country.

The Germans reached the sea at Abbeville on 21 May, cutting off the northern Allied armies. The rout was complete and evacuation of the Allies' armies commenced. By 26 May, the British were for all practical purposes out of the continental war. The campaign for France lasted another three weeks, and on 22 June, a cease-fire was signed. By 25 June, the armistice negotiations were being conducted at Rethondes, in the same railway carriage in which the Germans had surrendered to Marshall Foch in 1918. In less than six weeks, the Germans had defeated France, Belgium, and Holland.

A comparison of the casualty figures highlights the strength and completeness of the German campaign. The Germans suffered approximately 27,000 killed, 18,000 missing, and just over 100,000 wounded. On the other hand, the Dutch and Belgian armies were completely destroyed while the British lost over 68,000 men and all their heavy equipment, to include tanks, trucks, and guns. Adolf Hitler

was to control the continent of Europe for the next four years.

Approximately one year later on 22 June 1941, the Germans launched Operation BARBAROSSA, the invasion of Russia. While initially successful, military and political errors in late July and early August doomed the campaign. The one factor that sealed the German fate was the early arrival of the most severe winter in half a century. The German drive ended on 5 December 1941, only twenty-five miles from Moscow.

On 7 December 1941, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, and the United States entered the war. At the Arcadia Conference in Washington two weeks later, Great Britain and the United States reaffirmed the Allied strategy, to defeat Germany first. They decided on an air bombardment of Germany through 1942, and the clearing of the North African coast if possible. Further, they tentatively agreed to invade the European continent in 1943.

French North Africa was invaded in the fall of 1942 and by January 1943 was liberated. The allies then agreed on the invasion of Sicily as a continuation of the operations in the Mediterranean. It was at a conference in Casablanca that Churchill agreed with Roosevelt's desire to force the Axis Powers into an "unconditional surrender." This

agreement would change the complexion of the war and lengthen it. It has been concluded that this decision provided the motivation for the Axis Powers to fight to the bitter end.

In May 1943, the British and American planners met in Washington for the Trident Conference. Several key agreements were made here. First, the Allies agreed to advance from Sicily to Italy. Second, a firm date of 1 May 1944 was set for the cross-channel invasion.

In August, at the Quadrant Conference in Quebec, the Allies reaffirmed the decision to cross the Channel, and the British agreed to an upgrading of offensives in the Pacific against Japan. The tide of the war in the Pacific had turned in 1942 after the Battle of Midway, and the pressure against the Japanese would continue to mount for the next eighteen months.

ALLIES ATTACK EUROPE

On 3 September 1943, British and Canadian troops of the 8th Army made an assault crossing of the Straits of Messina and landed on the European continent for the first time since 1940. Simultaneously, the Italian government signed an armistice with the Allies while the Germans started to pull out from southern Italy. Six days later, the 5th US

Army, under General Mark Clark, landed at Salerno. Thus began the long bitter fight up the Italian boot. On 4 June 1944, Rome fell, but the German forces in northern Italy would hold out to the end of the war.

On 6 June 1944, the Allied Forces crossed the English Channel in Operation OVERLORD. The Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force's (SHAEF) objective was to seize and secure a lodgement area on the Continent from which further offensive operations could be conducted.

The Allied Headquarters had developed a timetable for the operation based on the expected German reaction and the availability of men and supplies. However, in the initial phases, they were thrown off schedule due to stronger German resistance than had been anticipated. Fortunately for the Allies, Hitler's intransigent nature resulted in victories as numerous German forces became trapped and besieged in coastal ports. By refusing to release the reserve forces or to allow any German forces to retreat without his permission, Hitler placed his commanders in an untenable position.

Seven weeks after the crossing of the Channel, the Allied Forces had established a salient that, at its deepest penetration, was only thirty miles deep along an eighty mile front. The combined British, Canadian, and United States

forces had suffered over 122,000 casualties. These losses were quickly replaced and on 23 July 1944, the Allied Forces were virtually up to strength.

The German losses during this period were approximately the same, but their replacements numbered only 10,000 men--less than one twelfth of the Allied number. Despite this asymmetry, the German forces had been able to contain the Allies in the hedgerows of Normandy.

Once established on the continent, the Allies had two objectives. First was the capture of the political heart of Germany - the city of Berlin - while the second objective was the capture of the economic soul of Germany - the Ruhr industrial area. This objective was considered the logistics lifeline of the Germans, and for this reason, the Allies assumed that Hitler would mass his forces in the north to protect the Ruhr area. One of Eisenhower's guiding principles was the destruction of as many German forces as possible. Therefore, the concentration of troops in the north added to the significance of the area. For this reason, the Ruhr industrial area became the primary objective for the Allied Forces in northern France.

Four avenues of approach existed from northern France into the Ruhr area. General Eisenhower selected the avenue

of approach north of the Ardennes via Maubeuge and Liege as the primary avenue of advance. The freedom of maneuver and the availability of airfields were two of the reasons for this choice. The circuitous route south of Ardennes along the Metz-Saarbrücken-Frankfurt axis was selected as the secondary avenue of advance with the industrial complex just south in the Saar Valley as an intermediate objective. The main avenue was assigned to the 21st Army Group under the command of Field Marshall Bernard Montgomery while the 12th Army Group, under General Omar Bradley, would move along the secondary axis.

The decision on whether to attack on a broad front or with a single thrust was hotly debated. Initial plans had the 21st Army Group attacking to capture the Ruhr industrial area from the north. The First Army of Bradley's 12th Army Group was to cross the Rhine and attack the southern Ruhr area along the southern avenue. As part of this operation, General George Patton's Third Army would move along the third avenue of approach. After crossing the Moselle, Patton was to advance through Alsace-Lorraine, and cross the Rhine River in the vicinity of Mannheim and Mainz, and attack the Saar industrial complex. (As a result, Bradley's command was divided on two different axis of advance.)

On 25 July 1944, the Allies attacked to break out of "hedgerow" country. First Army made the main attack,

Operation COBRA. In the north, Operations GOODWOOD and SPRING were supporting attacks made by the British and Canadians, respectively. Due in large degree to the superb close air support provided by the IX Tactical Air Command, operation COBRA was a success as the Allies burst out of their salient and began racing across France. By the end of August, the Allied Forces were arrayed across France with the 21st Army Group under Montgomery in the north and the 12th Army Group in central France under Bradley. The 21st Army Group consisted of the 1st Canadian Army and the 2d British Army. The Canadian Army was driving towards the Belgian city of Bruges while the 2d British Army was moving towards Brussels and Antwerp. The 12th Army Group consisted of the 1st Army commanded by Hodges, and the 3d Army commanded by Patton. On 31 August, Third Army was 150 miles ahead of the OVERLORD timetable. With the bulk of the supplies still coming over the beaches at Normandy, the Army had simply outrun its logistics lifeline. This situation was to persist as the priority of supply was to Montgomery's main thrust in the north.

GERMAN FORCES

The German Army was in a precarious position. The months of June, July, and August had seen one German defeat after another on both the Eastern and Western fronts. In

five years of war since the invasion of Poland, the German losses were over 3.6 million men, including 114,215 officers. These figures include dead, missing in action, and physically disabled.

At the beginning of September 1944, the Field Army (Feldheer) strength was estimated to be at 3,421,000 officers and men. The majority of these men (2,046,000) were concentrated on the Eastern front against the Russians. Fighting on two fronts, the German strength was quickly being attrited. The continuous pressure on both fronts prevented Hitler from shuttling divisions back and forth.

During 1944, Hitler became increasingly involved in the military decision process. For example, a commander even of Generalfeldmarschall Gerd von Rundstedt's prestige, could not move a corps more than a few miles without Hitler's approval. The attempt on Hitler's life in July 1944 further limited the influence of the field commanders and General Staff. In effect, the prewar system of command and control had been abolished.

In September 1942, Hitler had issued a directive on unyielding defense that stripped field commanders of initiative and authority. Hitler directed that no army commander or army group commander would undertake any

"tactical withdrawal" without his expressed permission. This order was apparently never rescinded and deprived the German field commanders of their chief operational concept--maneuver.

In early September, Hitler issued a directive stating his "intention." In it he ordered that the retreating German armies must stand and hold in front of the West Wall to gain time for the rearming of the West Wall defenses. Hitler designated a battle line running from the Dutch coast, through northern Belgium, along the forward positions of the West Wall segment between Aachen and the Moselle River, and thus along the western borders of Lorraine and Alsace.

The German Forces had some extremely serious problems. While the Allied problems were caused by overwhelming success, the German problems were caused by significant failures. Losses of personnel and equipment had been extremely high. At the end of August 1944 when the German 1st Army had retreated across the Meuse River, it consisted of only nine battalions of infantry, two batteries of field guns, ten tanks, three flak batteries, and ten 7.5-mm guns--not a very formidable threat.

On 5 September 1944, Generalfieldmarschall Gerd von Rundstedt assumed command of the combined German Armies

on the German western front. Considered a great strategist, von Rundstedt was well known to the German soldiers and his return was expected to bolster their morale.

On paper, the armies he commanded were impressive. They consisted of forty-eight infantry divisions, fourteen panzer divisions, and four panzer brigades. However, out of these forces, only thirteen infantry divisions, three panzer divisions, and two panzer brigades were close to full strength.

The bulk of the above divisions were grouped under Generalfieldmarschall Walter Model's Army Group B whose front extended from the North Sea to a point south of Nancy in Lorraine. In Army Group B, Model commanded four armies--15th Army, 1st Parachute Army, Seventh Army, and First Army (arrayed north to south respectively).

In the south, the German left wing was formed by Army Group G under the command of Generaloberst Johannes Blaskowitz. Consisting of just seven divisions arrayed under LXVI Corps and 19th Army, Army Group G was tasked with establishing a cohesive defensive line west of the Vosges Mountains in the area between the Nancy sector and the Swiss border.

Patton's Third Army axis of advance would strike directly into the German's First Army front, brush against the northern flank of the 19th Army, and threaten to sever the weak connection between the two Army Groups.

On 6 September, Hitler appointed General der Panzertruppen Otto von Knobelsdorff as commander of the First Army. Knobelsdorff was recognized as a brave commander, but was conceded to be "no towering tactician." He had fought well on the eastern front, but at the time of his appointment, he was still weak from previously received wounds.

Two days later, the 1st Army and 19th Armies were grouped into Army Group G. Blaskowitz would be the chief ground commander opposing Patton's Third Army during September 1944.

The lull during early September allowed the German First Army to rebuild its strength substantially, however, it still remained markedly weak in antitank defense. Therefore, the main defense against mechanized attack would be the natural antitank barrier formed by the Moselle and other rivers. Artillery and communications support were also extremely limited. Thus, Army Group G tenuously held a line along the Moselle.

By 1 September, the German First Army had a combat equivalent of three and a half divisions in the Thionville-Nancy sector, with reinforcements close behind. On 5 September, the German 1st Army held a loosely formed front stretching from Sedan in the northwest to an ill-defined boundary south of Nancy. The 1st Army was given the mission of defending the major and industrial area around Longwy and Briey, as well as that of the Saar.

An organized defense now existed in the German First Army sector. Although it was dangerously thin and the only reserve for Knobelsdorff's First Army was the 10th Panzer Brigade, the Western Wall was growing stronger daily as reinforcements arrived.

THIRD ARMY

The Third US Army at the beginning of September 1944 was an aggressive, confident unit that reflected the personality of its commander. General Patton had commanded the ground elements of the Western Task Force in the landing in North Africa in 1942. After numerous campaigns in Africa and Sicily, he was brought to England as commander of the Third US Army. Third Army became active on the Continent on 1 August 1944.

Third Army was composed of three corps. The VIII Corps was commanded by Major General Troy H. Middleton and was

containing the isolated German forces at Brest. This corps was in actuality so far removed from the Third Army's area of operations that, in effect, it was an independent corps. On 5 September, the VIII Corps would be assigned to the Ninth US Army.

The XII Corps was commanded by Major General Manton S. Eddy. This corps was in the southern portion of Third Army's sector. General Eddy's corps consisted of the 35th Infantry Division, the 4th and 6th Armored Divisions, and the 2nd Cavalry Group assigned to it. On 26 December the 80th Division was assigned to the corps.

The remaining corps was the XX Corps that was commanded by Major General Walton H. Walker. It operated in the northern part of the Third Army's sector.

September of 1945 found the Third Army halted in defensive positions out of supplies. In spite of this combat continued in the Third's sector until 21 October when General Bradley ordered the drive on the Rhine. The period 26 September through 7 November was referred to by General Patton as "Forcing the line of Moselle" and was the most unproductive period of the war for the Third Army. On 9 November Third Army commenced limited offensive action directed toward reaching the Rhine. Severe supply limitations continued to restrict the maneuver ability of

the Army. In spite of heavy losses suffered by the Germans in France, they continued to put up a strong resistance. Allied logistics coupled with terrain favored the defense, aided the enemy. Rains in November, the worst in years, created flooding which hampered offensive actions.

Through mid December the Third Army was still hampered by a supply shortage and made only limited advance toward the Rhine. As the Army continued to gain strength and supplies, they were caught completely off guard by the German counteroffensive in the Ardennes.

On 16 December Hitler struck back with his long-planned counteroffensive. Hitler intended to strike through the forested Ardennes, cross the Meuse River, and recapture Antwerp, thereby trapping four Allied armies in the north. Allied intelligence early noted the assembling of strong armored forces near Cologne, but, most intelligence officers assumed that these were intended to counterattack once the First and Ninth Armies had crossed the Roer. Before dawn on 16 December three German armies totaling 25 divisions struck along 70 miles of Ardennes front thinly manned by six American divisions.

The most notable German success occurred south of St.-Vith, where by nightfall of the second day two panzer corps of the Fifth Panzer Army had broken into

Luxembourg and headed toward the Meuse River by way of the Belgian road crossing at Bastogne. In the meantime, General Eisenhower had alerted the only American divisions immediately available as theater reserves, the 82d and 101st Airborne Divisions, under the 18th Airborne Corps. He ordered the divisions to Bastogne, there to be used as the First Army commander directed.

Eisenhower directed also that Patton call off his offensive against the West Wall in the Saar and turn to strike the south shoulder of the German penetration. As the armored penetration deepened, Eisenhower put all forces north of the Bulge under Field Marshal Montgomery, while Bradley retained command of the forces to the south. Montgomery hurried troops of his own 30th Corps to reserve positions west of the Meuse to forestall a German crossing of the river. On 25 December the winter skies cleared, and for the first time, allied air power was employed effectively and turned the tide of the German offensive threat.

On the day after Christmas, the 4th Armored Division of the Third Army, having begun to attack four days earlier, broke through to Bastogne from the south. Hard fighting remained before the narrow corridor into the town could be expanded, and the Germans continued through 3 January 1945,

to try to capture Bastogne, but without success. Having relieved Bastogne, Patton's Third Army continued to attack northeastward from the town toward Houffalize in the center of the Bulge. Collins' VII Corps of the First Army began a similar attack toward Houffalize from the north on 3 January. The object was to rejoin the First and Third armies and to trap any German units still remaining in the western tip of the Bulge. At last, on 16 January, patrols of the two armies linked at Houffalize. Hitler in the meantime had reluctantly concluded that his bold counteroffensive had failed. On 8 January he ordered the German Forces to fall back to a line close to the German frontier and the rest of his forces to evacuate the tip of the bulge. Thus the American pincers which closed on 16 January failed to trap sizable numbers of German troops.

In planning for a winter counteroffensive, Hitler at one point had considered striking not in the Ardennes but in Alsace. When the Ardennes counteroffensive began to go badly and it became obvious that Eisenhower was moving divisions from the south into the Ardennes, he looked again toward Alsace. As the plan was finally determined, the German First Army was to attack southward from the West Wall through Bitche and the Wissembourg gap, while the Nineteenth Army launched a subsidiary thrust northward from the bridgehead around Colmar. The two attacks, under the code

name Nordwind, were to link east of the Saverne gap, trapping that part of the US Seventh Army in northern Alsace and recapturing Strasbourg, a city politically important to the French.

The attacks began just before midnight on 31 December. The thrust from the Colmar bridgehead gained little ground, and the attack through Bitche was stopped after two days of fighting, but the main force moving through the Wissembourg gap made gains. By 25 January the Germans had been stopped with the loss only of the northern corner of Alsace as far south as the Meuse River, at the closest point still 12 miles from Strasbourg. On 29 January the Allied armies swung over to the offensive.

CHAPTER TWO

THE TACTICAL SITUATION

In the broad view, the Sauer River crossing by the 80th Infantry Division of the XII U.S. Corps was representative of the overwhelming superiority enjoyed by General Eisenhower and his Allied Command. By 3 January 1945, 3,724,927 Allied soldiers had come ashore in Western Europe. Although casualties through 3 January totaled 516,244, this left over 3.2 million men to take on the German forces.

Allied superiority in the West was at least 2 1/2 to 1 in artillery, 10 to 1 in tanks, and 3 to 1 in aircraft. Since precise figures are not available concerning opposing forces in the Sauer River crossing, it is assumed that the same advantages generally apply to the 80th Infantry Division attack.

The 80th Division's crossing of the Sauer River came on the heels of the Allied operations against the German Ardennes counteroffensive. After the Allied success in the Battle of the Bulge, the German Army was highly demoralized. Heavy losses left them struggling to present a credible defense against attacks into the German homeland.

The allies had three courses of action available for carrying the war into Germany. The first was a major

offensive into the Ruhr in the north, with "spoiling attacks" in the south. The second option was to launch the main attack in the south through the Eifel region. The third option was a balanced attack in both the north and south. A lack of resources made the two prong thrust unacceptable. Eisenhower opted for the major effort in the north by Montgomery's 21st Army group. At the same time, he gave Bradley permission for limited offensive operations in the Eifel with his 12th Army Group.

Bradley was not eager to pass up the opportunity to carry the war into Germany in the 12th Army Group sector. He ordered Patton's Third Army to go on the defensive except for "the probing attacks now in progress." This provided Patton with the latitude to conduct offensive operations in the context of the strategic defensive.

Patton ordered Eddy's XII Corps into battle to attack from its positions around ECHTERNACH northeast to seize BITBURG. Hence, the course of action was set for the 80th Division. As part of the XII Corps plan, they were to cross the Sauer River in section and seize an objective supportive of the overall corps plan to take BITBURG. 80th Division's mission, assigned in XII Corps Field Order #14, dated 3 February 1945, was to:

- Attack 070200 February 1945 across the Sauer River.

- Initially assist 5th Infantry Division (the corps main attack by seizing high ground northwest of BOLLENDORF.

- Continue to attack to the northwest and north in zone to seize objective [OBJ 80th Div].

- Maintain contact with III Corps [on the left].

The options of the German Army were limited. The disastrous Ardennes counteroffensive had left units understrength, demoralized, and without many of the basics in supply and other support. The primary dictum was to defend from West Wall (Siegfried Line) positions against Allied attacks into Germany. Given their shortages in personnel and equipment, the defense would be flimsy, at best.

Elements of the 352d Volks Grenadier Division opposed the 80th Division from the east bank of the Sauer River. The unit consisted of 60% Navy and 10% Luftwaffe personnel. Only 30% were Army combat veterans. Since its commitment on 16 December 1944, the division's strength had dwindled from 8,000 personnel to approximately 2,000 personnel. Due to the excessive casualties, all infantry elements of the division were consolidated into one regiment.

In summary, the courses of action taken by the opposing commanders were charted by higher headquarters. The 80th Infantry Division was to attack across the Sauer River in

sector. The 352 Volks Grenadier Division was to defend against Allied attacks from positions in the West Wall. The Allied course of action was feasible, given the favorable combat power ratio in each division sector. The 80th Infantry Division, augmented with two Armored Infantry Battalions, a tank battalion, and a combat Engineer group, had the combat power to effect an objective. The German course of action was not feasible since they did not have the assets to offer a credible defense against a superior force.

In addition to the advantages in combat power, the 80th Division had one other factor in its favor. In September 1944, the V U.S. Corps had attacked in the same area. The 5th Armored Division had scored a breakthrough in the vicinity of WALLENDORF only to be halted by a lack of forces to hold the corridor open. Hence, XI Corps, in its planning, learned from the deficiencies in the V Corps experience. This time, XII Corps would move into the WALLENDORF corridor only after securing the high ground commanding it.

XII U.S. Corps strength was 82,018 on 1 February 1945. Estimated enemy strength facing the XII Corps 1 February 1945 was 11,500. 80th Infantry Division strength was approximately 14,000. Estimated enemy strength facing the

80th Infantry Division was 5,000.

The XII Corps Commander, MG Eddy, had 4 divisions for the crossing of the Sauer River and the attack on Bitburg. The 3 infantry divisions were the 5th and 80th, both experienced, and the 76th, an inexperienced infantry division. The 80th Infantry Division had arrived in France on 3 August 44, and had experienced over 5 months in combat. The 4th Armored Division was a veteran of previous fighting.

Facing the XII Corps on 1 February 1945 were, from North to South, the 276th, 9th, 352d, 212th, and 416th Volks Grenadier Divisions. They were supplemented with several machine gun and fortress battalions. In general, the Volks Grenadier Divisions were weak. From a starting strength of approximately 10,000 for each Volks Grenadier Division, they had been attrited to approximately 2,000 each.

The reason for this weakness within the XII Corps sector was that the remnants of 2 panzer divisions still within the German Seventh Army had moved north. The only remaining Armored reserve, the 2d Panzer Division, had been used to counter the attack on Pruem before the XII Corps operation got underway in February 1945. This unit would not have an effect on the Sauer River crossing.

The only Volks Grenadier Division that was not badly

attrited was the 212th Volks Grenadier Division, located near the confluence of the Sauer River with the Moselle River, protecting the city of Trier. (This was south of the 80th Division sector on 7 February 1945 by approximately 12 miles, opposing the 76th Infantry Division and the 2d Cav Regiment.) Although still an effective force, the 212th Volks Grenadier Division was not to be used against the 80th Division attack.

The enemy forces opposing the XII Corps garrisoned the forts of the Siegfried Line with strong points and supports in the principal towns.

The supporting units for the 80th Infantry Division were:

305th Engineer (C) Battalion, which did support and demolition work on the far side of the River, and cleared enemy obstacles.

1135th Engineer Group, which supported the crossings. The assault boats were operated by the 150th and 166th Engineer (C) Battalions of the 1135th Engineer Group. The 166th Engineer Battalion also supported the Division in obstacles and demolitions preparation, and in reconnaissance of the river line.

Co A, 91st Chemical Mortar Battalion which blinded the

enemy positions and observation points with smoke to support the crossing operations. (The 80th Division used smoke to mark likely crossing sites and draw the enemy's fire, and then sent its boats over elsewhere.)

811th Tank Destroyer Battalion (SP), which fired direct fire on Siegfried line positions.

702nd Tank Battalion, which also supplied direct fire on the Siegfried Line.

633 AAA AW Battalion (Mbl), which fired .50 caliber weapons at enemy personnel and positions.

410th Field Artillery Group, which reinforced the fire of the 80th Infantry Division Artillery.

2d Platoon, 60th Field Hospital.

With the exception of the German units previously mentioned, supporting units opposing the 80th Infantry Division are unknown.

The personnel replacement system on the American side consisted of providing individual replacements. A review of losses and replacements for the 80th Infantry Division for the month preceeding the River Crossing illustrates the replacement system.

Month of January 1945

<u>Casualties</u>	<u>Officers</u>	<u>EM</u>
KIA	14	225
WIA	65	1717
MIA	<u>3</u>	<u>82</u>
	82	2024

Reinforcements and Returned to Duty (RTD)

<u>Officers</u>	<u>EM</u>	<u>Officers</u>	<u>EM</u>
53	1689	42	981

Battle fatigue cases, whom medical officials had determined would never be able to enter front line duty, were assigned to the Signal Company and MP Plt, various Headquarters Companies, and to Class II and Class V salvage, collection, and disposal teams.

German units generally had been severely attrited in previous offensives. Individual and unit replacements were generally not available and were not provided, with the exception of the 560th Volks Grenadier Div, discussed later.

Personnel shortages for the 80th Division consisted mostly of engineer and artillery enlisted personnel. Most German Volks Grenadier Division's were short approximately 8,000 personnel per division. It is assumed the shortages crossed the whole range of necessary specialties, with infantry losses very severe.

U.S. personnel replacements, although in a high state of morale, generally did not have an opportunity to train with their unit before they were committed to battle.

The replacements provided to the Division were generally sufficient for it to maintain an effective fighting strength. Shortages of personnel on the German side were disastrous. They could not counterattack, but

had to maintain a defensive posture throughout the battle. Because of their severe personnel shortages, they could not take advantage of the precarious position of the Americans on the German side of the Sauer River in the critical days following the river crossing. The relatively few number of men the Americans were able to put across the River on 7-9 February 1945 could have been successfully counterattacked if the Germans had had more men.

In spite of the large losses of men and equipment and the vast amount of territory the Allies had reclaimed, the German Army fought with great determination. Perhaps the recalling of the beloved Field Marshal von Rundstedt by Hitler and his appointment as Commander-in-Chief, West "brought a resurgence of morale." 1 Hitler's own unshaking belief that "even though a German military victory might be impossible, the war somehow could be brought to a favorable end." 2 It almost seemed now that the Germans believed in a "kind of nihilistic syllogism which said: Quit now, and all is lost; hold on, and maybe something will happen to help." 3 Perhaps another factor was at work as well. The senior German officers were able (time and again) to avoid a complete rout of their forces through skillful and daring tactical maneuvers. This had to have raised the spirits of those who fought under these officers.

The American Third Army had an intense feeling of

optimism. There was at this time a contagious feeling that the final victory of World War II was close at hand. 4 The American soldier of that time was possibly "the best-paid and best-led soldier of any army up to that time. . . . He was also better clothed than any of his Allies or his enemy." 5 A new and more palatable C ration in the form of spaghetti and meat balls had been introduced. Thanksgiving dinner was served to all the men who could be reached. It consisted of a pound of turkey and a half-pound of chicken. Troops in forward positions were rotated so that as many men as possible would enjoy this meal. 6 Other morale enhancing factors were being provided to U. S. troops as well. "Clubmobiles were continuously utilized. Passes were authorized to Paris, Luxembourg, and the XII Corps Rest Camp at Nancy. Also motion pictures, USO shows, and the Division band were continuously scheduled. In addition, a few lucky officers and soldiers got 30 days of rest and recuperation in the States. Possibly of all the "morale services" the most effective and appreciated were mail from home and the supply of cigarettes. From early October on, a special daily train loaded with 400 tons of mail was dispatched to the army area with letters and packages. 7

Only one aspect of the campaign was not going well for the Americans. During the wet autumn and winter the incidence of trenchfoot in the Third Army was higher than

other units on the Western Front. During this period the mud was deep, and the weather continually wet and cold. Respiratory disease was also a definite problem. By February new provisions for the laundering and issue of clean socks, extensive educational campaigns, and tightened disciplinary measures helped to reduce the number of trench foot cases. 8

The Germans opposing the Third Army did not seem to have the same medical problems, because many of the troops were veterans of the Eastern Front and had taken the lessons from the winters on the Russian Front and applied them at the West Wall. 9

Doctrine and Training

By the time of the Sauer River crossing, the 80th Division had been in active combat for six months. As part of XX Corps it had seen combat in the Battle of the Argentan-Falaise Pocket. In late August, 1944, it was attached to the XII Corps as part of the drive to Verdun and St. Mihiel. On 1 September 1944, the 80th Division conducted a river crossing of the Meuse River at St. Mihiel and eleven days later, after two unsuccessful attempts, established a bridgehead across the Moselle River.

Although the 80th Division had conducted river crossing

operations in combat which provided significant training and experience for the divisional staff, the training impact of these operations at the lower levels was partially negated by the heavy casualties that the division experienced in six months of fighting. 128% of its original infantry strength and 25% of its engineer strength had become casualties during that period. A large number of these men were returned to duty, but it is clear that a significant percentage of relatively untrained infantrymen paddled their assault boats out into the 17 mph currents of the Sauer River during the early morning hours of 7 February 1945.

The 80th Division was opposed in sector by the 352D Volks Grenadier Division conducting a defense of the Sauer and Our River lines. Initially designated as the 352 Infantry Division, it was one of the first enemy divisions destroyed on D-day. It was withdrawn from the line and reorganized as the 352 Volks Grenadier Division with 60% Navy, 10% Air Force, and 30% of the servicing personnel. This process, including training, spanned six months until it was again committed to combat on 16 December 1944. In ten days its strength of 8,000 men was reduced to 3,000 men and the 352 Volks Grenadier Division was rested for five days and recommitted on 31 December 1944. After the loss of about 1,000 more soldiers, it was reorganized into one regiment and its remaining two regiments were dissolved.

Though experienced at defensive operations, it is again possible to postulate that continuous combat, combined with hastily trained members of the sea and Air Forces, and incredible casualties had taken their toll on the 352d Volks Grenadier Division's combat proficiency.

Engineer Doctrine and Technology

In order to better appreciate the mechanics of the Sauer River crossing it is first necessary to detail some of the technical characteristics of the floats, rafts, and bridges of the 1945 Army inventory. A brief description of each major item of equipment follows:

The Assault Boat, M2, was a metal boat weighing about four hundred pounds. It displaced about two tons and had a crew of three engineer personnel. Its principal use was to ferry the assault waves of infantry. It could transport twelve combat loaded infantrymen.

The Assault Boat, M1, like the M2, was a metal boat. It weighed about one half as much as the M2, and with its 3200 pound displacement could transport nine combat loaded infantrymen.

Pneumatic floats were elongated rubber donuts, displacing six or twelve tons. Passengers simply jumped on the floats and, as an awkward team, paddled through the water.

The footbridge, M1938, consisted of 432 feet of personnel treadway and man-portable boat floats. It was suitable for personnel traffic only. It was primarily used in short span crossings of less than one hundred feet. The M1938 was used frequently in XII Corps but not in the crossing of the Sauer because of the width and the current.

The Infantry Support Raft (ISR) was used to ferry vehicles, large equipment and troops. It was capable of ferrying a fully loaded two and one half ton truck. The ISR consisted of six M2 Assault Boats connected to form three floats across which was laid a treadway for the ferried vehicle. The ferry was usually powered by a 22 horsepower motor organic to the light pontoon companies. Six ISR's could, depending on river width and current, cross an infantry regiment in about six hours. The materials of three ISR's could be combined to fabricate a light treadway bridge of almost one hundred feet length capable of passing light vehicles.

The Pneumatic Pontoon Bridge, M3, consisted of a ten ton rated deck supported by regularly spaced pneumatic floats. The bridge set also had two sets of trestles for construction at either end. Thus the bridge was actually a hybrid fixed and floating bridge. Normally constructed for four ton capacity, it could be reinforced to handle a

sixteen ton load --- very carefully.

The Ten Ton Pontoon Bridge, M1938, was a variation of the M3 using metal rather than pneumatic pontoons. The reinforced bridge would carry an eighteen ton load under risk conditions.

The 25 Ton Pontoon Bridge, M1940, was similar to the M1938 but the pontoons were much larger. Like the M3, it had a short trestle section at the ends to connect the floating bridge to the banks. This arrangement obviously required longer construction times. It could support up to 35 tons (medium tank) in currents of five feet per second. The pontoons could also be used to construct rafts for ferrying medium tanks.

The Steel Treadway Bridges, M1 and M2, were pneumatic pontoon bridges, the decks of which were two parallel treads. These bridges were capable of crossing up to thirty five ton tanks. While the M2 appeared less substantial than the M1940, it could carry the same load under somewhat higher stream velocities and required less than one half the time to construct than the M1940. One complete set of M2 Treadway is 864 feet long.

Engineer units of World War I were principally organized as labor forces for trench and fortifications

construction. Even though one could conceive of the engineers' role in mobility operations as a critical element of maneuver, there was no requirement for an engineer force oriented to dramatically facilitate tactical movement. The tactics of the day were viscous. The horse-drawn, mule-trained Army was immune to slush-rutted Main Supply Routes. And even if a legitimate mobility requirement had existed, the ability to overcome nature by technology did not.

By 1940 the technology of mobility was developing rapidly and it was becoming apparent that the engineer force and its doctrine were changing as quickly. The forcing function, if the German blitzkrieg of Spring 1940 was not enough, was the Army's decision of 1937 to fully motorize itself. This time, unlike any previous era, the engineers had a whole host of technological responses that included motorized road graders, power shovels, bulldozers, and pontoon and fixed bridging. Relative to the invention of the transistor, the engineer technology of 1940 was admittedly mundane. But, as far as bridging was concerned, the Assistant Chief of Engineers was to exult that the Army would finally "discard the type of equipment used by General Grant's army in the 1860's."

By 1945 the U. S. Army had essentially discarded all of its 1940 bridging as well. As it turns out, it is not

too significant that bridging technology was rapidly evolving and that the U. S. Army did not have the equipment on hand when the war broke out that was ultimately required to win. What is important is that a research and development organization was in existence prior to Pearl Harbor that was geared to producing engineer equipment. It was the pre-war efforts that in a very real way made the Sauer River crossing possible.

While the Army's bridging program probably fared no better nor worse than any other development program during WWII, it was unable to produce an "ideal" bridge, even by early 1945. Though appropriately-sized bridging was well into production by 1942, its capacity was based on the erroneous supposition that the main battle tank would not exceed 30 tons. Thus, by January 1943, when the decision was made to produce a larger American tank comparable to the 45-ton British Churchill, there was no alternative but to return to the drawing boards. After a remarkably brief design period, procurement of the M2 Treadway Bridge began. When the official gross weight limit for army vehicles was increased to 50 tons in February 1944, it was obvious that yet another bridge, this time the M4, must be developed. But procurement of the M4 was not begun until November 1944, so the M2 Treadway was the main bridge available for the Sauer River crossing.

It is most fortuitous that the M2 Treadway development and procurement moved quickly. The 25-ton Pontoon Bridge that was on hand in early 1942 required at least 15-25% more construction time than any other bridge of this era. Furthermore, it could carry the 35-ton medium tank, if reinforced, in current velocities no greater than 5 feet per second. The basic problem in the bridge program all along had been the excessive attention to minimizing bridge transport requirements. Since the 25-Ton Pontoon's marginal performance in the swifter rivers was a result of nothing more than pontoons that were too small, it was finally determined to procure the larger inflatable pontoons of the M2. Once again, in the interest of saving transport weight though, the M2's deck was a double treadway rather than a full roadway. Had production of the M2 Treadway been deferred until 1944, when the technical problems of producing what eventually became the M4 Bridge were resolved, it is quite possible that the 25-Ton Pontoon Bridge would have been the largest bridge available at the Sauer River crossing. That is, it is very likely that the Sauer River crossing would have failed without the M2 Treadway Bridge.

While it is beyond the scope of this paper to detail the process of crossing rivers in combat, it is necessary

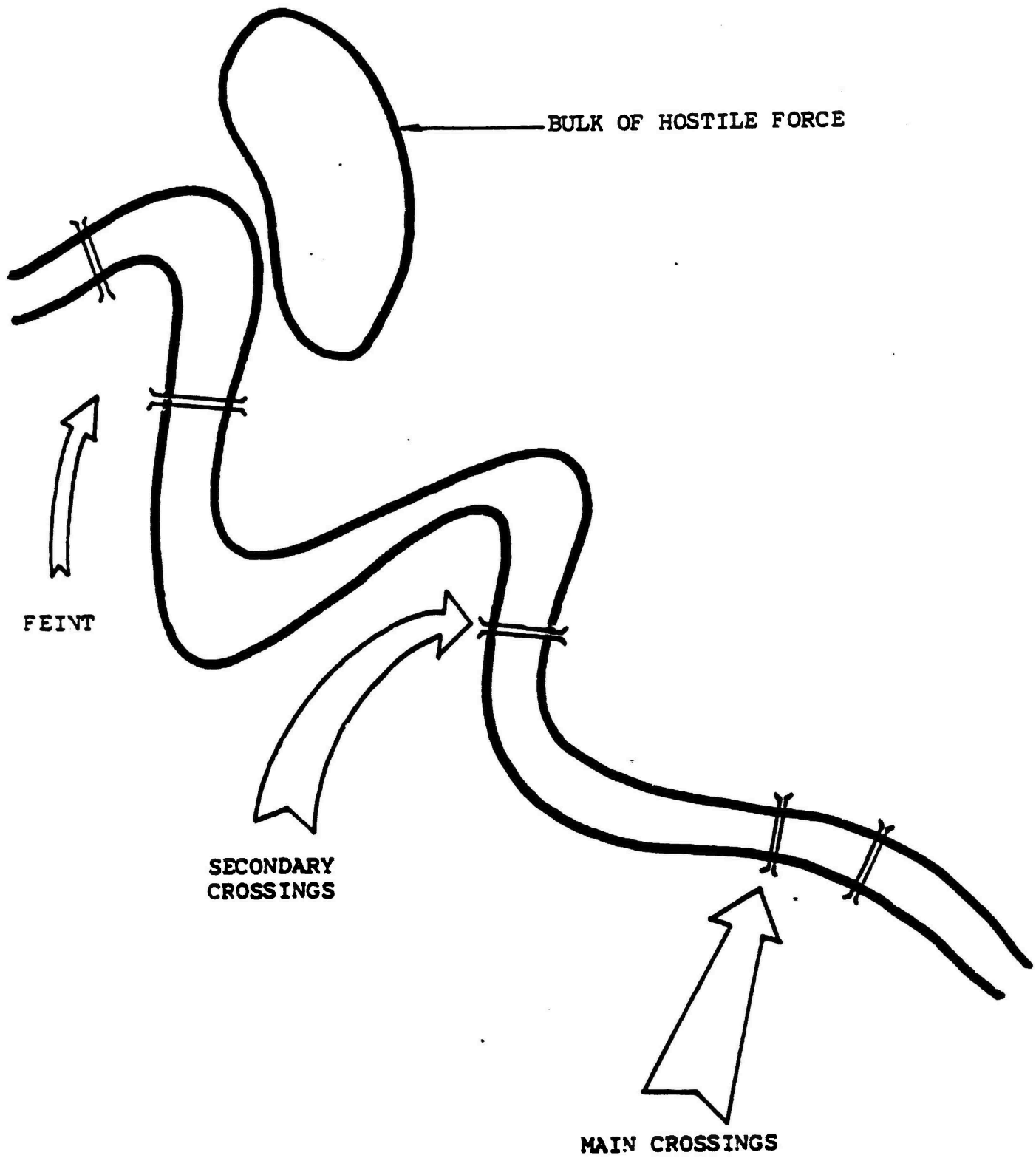
that we address certain basic information pertinent to the Sauer crossing. First, a brief discussion of the 1945 doctrine of river crossing will be presented, followed by a description of the equipment available for use at the Sauer.

The Tactical Procedure

The Sauer River crossing was, by doctrine, a deliberate river crossing in that the opposite bank of the river was strongly held by the enemy. In order to effect a deliberate crossing the general scheme of the day was to cross on a broad front with well-organized fire support. The hasty river crossing on the other hand was to be undertaken against a "lightly held" enemy bank where it was possible to cross a portion of the attacking force immediately to establish and hold a bridgehead.

Since a division usually crosses as a part of a larger force, its mission may be to force the main crossing, make a secondary crossing, or conduct a feint. (See figure K.) The force landing on the far bank, regardless of the division's mission, normally has three objectives. First, the force moves onto an objective which eliminates direct small arms fire along the crossing front. The second objective is a position which, when captured, will protect the pontoon bridge sites from observed artillery fires. The third and final river line objective is that position which protects

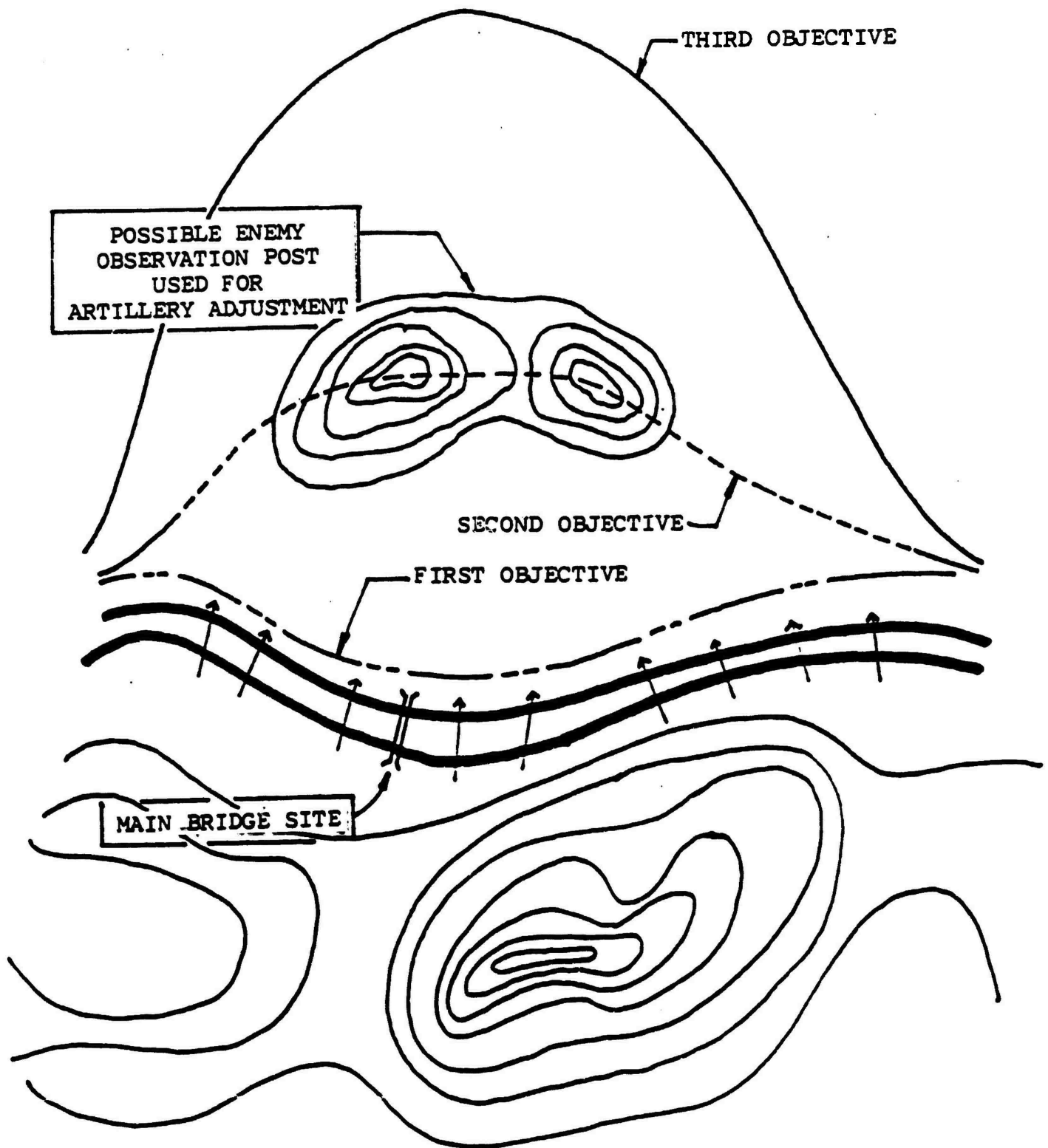
FIGURE K
TYPICAL CORPS PLAN OF ATTACK
OF RIVER LINE



the bridge site from all enemy artillery fire. (See Figure L.)

The type of bridging to be used in a river crossing (bridging is used here generically to include boats and rafts) is a function of the type of crossing (hasty or deliberate), the attacking force's mission (main, secondary or feint), and the phase, or time, of the attack. Then, as now, the bridges were classified as assault, combat support, or permanent as depicted in figure M.

FIGURE L



Type of Bridge	Tactical Requirement	Example
Assault	Mobile	Assault boats
	Easily assembled	Light Footbridges
	Installed under pressure	Rafts
	Speed of Assembly	
Combat Support	Installed Out of Direct Fire; Out of Observed Indirect Fire	Float Bridging Pontoons Boats
	Medium Vehicular Capacity	Composite Floating-Fixed
		Fixed Bridge Set Timber Trestle
Permanent	Immobile	Conventional Civilian
	Custom Design	
	Cost-Effective	

Fig. M River Crossing Spectrum

The relationship between the types of bridging equipment employed at the river line and the maneuver plan of attack can best be understood by analyzing the crossing sequence of lead battalions of a hypothetical division in a doctrinal scenario. Later as we discuss the Sauer's crossing at the divisional level, a clear picture of which can only be formed if the reader can relate engineer crossing efforts to simultaneous actions of maneuver battalions. The sequence can be summarized as follows:

Operation	Conveyance
Attacking rifle companies with their artillery forward observers form leading wave	Assault Boats M1 M2 Pneu recon boats 6-ton pneu floats* 12-ton pneu float*
A second wave of the battalion including the mortars or heavy weapons platoon; and the first echelon of the battalion CP	Storm boats

Provided this first series of waves proceeds satisfactorily the crossing will continue, preferably using the M2 boat

Secure immediate vicinity of opposite shore. Engineers commence bank preparation and rig the ferry line

Pass the infantry battalion reserve rifle company followed by the battalion HHC(-) and the battalion medics

Assault boats
M2
Storm boats
Footbridge M1938

The decision to install the footbridge is based on a number of variables. Under ideal circumstances an engineer platoon can install 300 feet in about 30 minutes, so its employment is usually based on its availability and the tactical requirement to pass battalion vehicles, which requirement would dictate that the unit forego the footbridge in favor of the assault rafts.

Cross the antitank platoon;
commence crossing regimental
vehicles of priority

Infantry support Raft

Engineers commence construct
of float bridging

Float Bridging
M1 Steel Treadway
M2 Steel Treadway
M3 Pneumatic Pontoon

Operation

Conveyance

A typical infantry regiment has about 260 vehicles to cross of which about 150 could be considered essential on the far shore. As the engineers continue float bridge construction, rafting continues:

Cross artillery units

Raft Combinations: e.g.,
M2 Assault Float Boats
Treadway Float Rafts

Cross all remaining
motorized elements of the
assault battalions with
supply trains

Pontoon Bridges
M1 Steel Treadway
M2 Steel Treadway
M3 Pneumatic Float
10-Ton Pontoon
25-Ton Pontoon

In a task-organized combined arms situation the tanks would be crossed as soon as the float bridging has been installed.

While a successful assault on the far shore is difficult one may expect even stiffer enemy resistance as the attack is pushed toward the second objective. As seizure of the second objective denies the enemy his ground observation of the river crossing sites, mechanized and armored counterattacks must be considered inevitable. Therefore, it is imperative that antitank weapons and selected ammunition vehicles be crossed prior to the movement to the second objective. Since the installation of pontoon bridging is contingent upon the seizure of enemy observation posts, one can only conclude that a successful rafting phase is absolutely critical to the operation.

German tactical doctrine for the defense of a river line was to defend the high ground near the water's edge with infantry and antitank weapons at likely crossing sites coupled with the maintenance of armored counterattack forces to respond quickly either to destroy enemy crossings at lightly defended areas or to repel any penetrations. Emphasis was placed on destruction of the enemy bridgehead by counterattack as quickly as possible even if this initially meant a piecemeal commitment of small reserve forces as they became available. Should these local counterattacks fail, forces sufficient to push the attacker into the water would then have to be assembled.

THE LOGISITCS SITUATION

The supply situation before the battle was very satisfactory. Troops had been fed mostly "A" rations with fresh fruits and vegetables. Large mobile reserve stocks of POL had been accumulated in the Corps rear and there were sufficient stocks of ammo. The most significant major end item shortages were 1/4 ton trailers (20 ea), 1/4 ton jeeps (6 ea), M-7 grenade launchers (231 ea), 30 caliber machine guns (27 ea), 2 light tanks and 1 medium tank. The infantry suffered from a lack of long handled shovels (for digging vehicles out of mud), lanterns, wire cutters, coats and test equipment. Battlefield recovery during January 1945 had been excellent and the recovery teams were commanded by the 80th ID CG. The only logistics problem that impacted on the start of the river crossing was the poor road network on the near shore. This caused delays/problems in moving equipment and/or supplies to the river line because the roads were narrow (1 or 2 lanes wide) and poor surfaced.

Supplies were satisfactorily available to 80th ID during the battle. The only critical shortages that slowed operations were lack of tire patches, tires and tubes for wheeled vehicles. The poor road network on the near shore hampered movement of supplies and equipment to the river line. The lack of bridging over the Sauer River though was the real problem because once the equip/supplies got to the

river line, they couldn't get across except by assault boat during the period 7-12 February. Once the class 40 bridges at Wallendorf (0700 hrs 12 February) and Dillingen (13 February) were opened, the conditions of the supply roads west of the Sauer (along with German resistance and limited bridging) accounted for much delay in mopping up the bridgehead. The only wheeled vehicle that could handle the mud in the bridgehead was the M29 (Weasel) cargo carrier. Most track vehicles still had flotation devices for mud operations that had been installed during the fall of 44. Issues of new equipment during February 1945 almost equalled losses. Also the supply of armored vehicles was excellent. Thus the supply situation did not significantly impact the battle. The lack of bridges to allow movement of supplies and equipment to the enemy side of the river, and then the poor road network did significantly slow down securing the bridgehead plus the build-up of supplies to continue the attack toward the Rhine.

LEADERSHIP

A discussion of the leaders, their influence on the battle, or their personality traits would be incomplete without first discussing the freedom of action given to the major commanders. The degree of freedom to wage war that the opposing commanders-in-chief (Allied and German) had was probably the most important factor in the outcome of the war on the Western Front.

The German Commander-in-Chief West was Field Marshal von Rundstedt. He had recently been recalled from Bavaria where he had been resting since being relieved by Hitler in July 1944. Von Rundstedt was replacing General Model who was relieved on 4 Sept 1944. Model was relieved for being too pessimistic and for failure to counterattack as Hitler desired.

As previously stated, von Rundstedt's reappearance in the West "brought a resurgence of morale" as he was highly regarded by the officers and soldiers of the German Army. However, two problems plagued Rundstedt's command until the end of the war. These were losses coupled with the inability to reconstitute decimated units due to the war on the Eastern Front and Hitler's orders which seemed to take away all the local commanders' initiative.

Von Rundstedt exercised an illusory "supreme

command" in the field under OKW (General Staff, Berlin). The relationship between OKW and OB West, by late 1944, had fallen into one of complete distrust. Hitler and the OKW staff "mistrusted the field commanders and sought evidence of treason in each defeat suffered at the hands of the Allies." 10 The distrust and suspicion felt by field commanders caused them to be fearful for their lives and to fear exercising initiative. They referred all important decisions to OKW.

In addition, von Rundstedt faced another handicap. Hitler had issued an order to "hold at all costs." This was not based upon a specific theatre operation, but was a long-standing order forbidding any voluntary withdrawal. Hitler saw this policy as a panacea for every tactical situation. He forbade von Rundstedt to relinquish voluntarily a single concrete pillbox or bunker on the West Wall. This order was enforced even if it permitted the enemy to cut off significant numbers of tactical units. Hitler went so far as to write "no army commander or army group commander could undertake any tactical withdrawal without the express permission of the Fuehrer." 11 This order severely restricted Rundstedt. It deprived him and his subordinate commanders of their chief operational concept - maneuver.

General Eisenhower, on the other hand, was given complete freedom of action and he did his best to give as much initiative and control to his subordinate commanders as possible.

Eisenhower had two American Army Groups under his command as well as Allied units. These two Army groups were commanded by Generals Bradley and Devers. Their headquarters and concept of how they exercised command reflected their personalities. Devers played it loosely, leaving planning mainly to his army commanders and authorizing his staff to seek information at lower levels. Bradley exercised much closer control over his army commanders and employed his staff in intricate, detailed planning. 12

General Patton's Third Army was assigned to Bradley's Army Group. Patton also exercised close control over his Corps and Division commanders. He employed a staff that was experienced and battlewise. It was filled with men who had served with Patton during the North African and Sicilian campaigns. Most came from the cavalry arm and were "thoroughly imbued with the cavalry traditions of speed and audacity." 13 Patton placed responsibility on his staff and corps commanders when it came to implementing his concepts and decisions.

Both the army group and army exercised command and logistical functions. The Corps commander only exercised command functions and was thus afforded time to concentrate on tactical matters. "Equipped with modern means of communication and transportation, the corps commander had regained a measure of the control and influence over the actions of his divisions that the advent of mass armies and rapid-fire weapons had originally taken away."

14

In spite of the Germans' expert withdrawal from the Ardennes, they suffered heavy losses. They conducted the withdrawal under the handicaps of an acute shortage of gasoline and a vastly superior, almost predominant, Allied air force. They saved most of the remaining units, although large numbers of tanks and artillery pieces had to be destroyed near the end for lack of spare parts and gasoline.

The result of these losses left the German commanders with only an option for a passive defense augmented by mortar fire. They simply had no reserves for determined counterattacks. They were also lacking antitank weapons for their corps. The Volks Grenadier divisions had not yet received their allotment of assault guns as well. The only real deterrents to the Americans were the weather and the raging Sauer River. The poor weather severely restricted the Americans use of tactical air power.

The Americans, on the other hand, enjoyed a capability that seemed almost unlimited. This capability was only in numbers initially due to the poor weather, restrictive terrain, and swollen rivers. The rain and melting snow caused the supply roads to turn to mud. This caused severe delays in the Americans' ability to move men and heavy equipment to the Sauer River. Once at the river, it would take days before heavy vehicles could cross to reinforce the established bridgeheads. American commanders were then restricted on the amount of fire power and logistic support they could bring to bear upon the Germans. Even tactical air was reduced to almost zero by the poor weather conditions. As a result, the American edge in combat power and maneuver was negated by weather conditions. 15

The small unit leadership in February 1945 was extremely good within American units. Probably the best testament of the effectiveness of American small unit commanders comes from the Germans. In a captured German "Battle Experiences" staff publication the enemy wrote about American soldiers, tactics, and combined arms coordination. "American tactical leadership was rated highly, learning with surprising rapidity as it seemed to do, from its own failures and from the enemy." 16 The advance across France and the successful defeat of the German counteroffensive in

the Ardennes were largely due to the courage and tenacity of the men and commanders concerned. Even as the river crossing began over the Sauer, the determination and ingenuity of the officers and men in the small units marked the difference between success and failure.

German small unit leadership was also good. As mentioned earlier, the cadre of the Volks Grenadier Divisions were survivors of divisions that had been destroyed by the Soviet armies and sent to the Western Front. These men produced a veteran cadre, but were leading inexperienced troops. Another important aspect was that the Germans were so short of infantry units by this time that they "could provide little more than conglomerate artillery and antitank units hastily converted to infantry roles." 17 This fact had to have had somewhat of a negative aspect due to the limited infantry training received by these units' officers and noncommissioned officers.

As of 19 August 1944 Major General Manton S. Eddy, who had won distinction as a division commander, was named commanding general of the XII Corps. "General Eddy had been a Regular Army officer since 1916, but was not a West Pointer. During World War I he saw much combat, served with a machine gun detachment, and was wounded. Eddy was well known to General Patton and the Third Army staff since he had commanded the 9th Infantry Division in North Africa and

Sicily. Later, in Normandy, Eddy received the DSC for his brave and aggressive leadership of the 9th during the Cherbourg operation." 18

Major General Horace L. McBride, who commanded the 80th Infantry Division, was graduated from West Point in 1916 and later served as a field artillery battalion commander in the Meuse-Argonne offensive. He had joined the 80th Infantry Division, a Reserve formation, as its artillery commander. In March, 1943, McBride was promoted to command the division. After completing stateside training, he deployed the Division to Europe.

A discussion of particular Army, Corps, and Division commanders for the Germans is beyond the scope of this analysis. These officers were being replaced and relieved so rapidly that it is difficult to discern any stable command structure. All these changes were initiated in Berlin, not by von Rundstedt. The officers involved were almost all capable, battle tested officers. As vacancies occurred, or were purposely created on the Western Front, many high-ranking officers would be relieved from duty in the East and promoted to still higher commands in the West, bring with them the experience, tactics, and techniques derived from the hard months and years of battle on the Eastern front.

COMMAND, CONTROL, AND COMMUNICATIONS

Command, control, and communications played a very important role in the Sauer River crossing by the 80th Division in February 1945. Detailed planning of these functions in the days prior to the crossing contributed to the successful accomplishment of the division's mission. The functions will be broken down and an overview given of the planning used.

The division was habitually task organized into Regimental Combat Teams. Each Regimental Combat Team consisted of infantry, artillery, engineer, signal, medical, and tank destroyer units. These units were reinforced with additional engineer assets prior to the river crossing.

Besides using task forces for the operation, all intelligence assets available were used to provide detailed intelligence information to the division. In the days preceeding the Sauer River crossing, a tremendous amount of intelligence information was gathered from prisoners of war, flash and sound units, and corps intelligence assets. This information provided the G2 with a clear picture of the defending German forces. The order of battle for the enemy included assignments to platoon level.

The 80th Division staff did a thorough job of preparing the order for the operation. The division was short many

officers, but this shortcoming was more than adequately made up for by the close work of the staff. The order prepared by the staff was detailed and relied heavily on standardized procedures. The operation plan closely integrated the efforts of all combat, combat support, and combat service support units. The operational plans for the additional engineers provided for their employment with the Regimental Combat Teams to facilitate coordination and control. The plan called for the establishment of a bridgehead across the Sauer River. Expansion of the bridgehead was planned for future operations, but the initial mission gave the 80th Division time to build up adequate forces for the next mission.

The division had been fighting together long enough for the units to develop a great deal of trust in each other. The order was written to allow subordinate commanders the opportunity to exercise initiative in planning and conducting the crossing operation. Due to the severity of the weather and the nearby enemy, the commanders were not able to rehearse the crossing. Previous river crossing operations had given the units a chance to perfect their techniques. The bad weather proved that this experience was invaluable as the division met conditions much worse than it had faced on previous crossings.

The command relationships for the Sauer River crossing remained unchanged from recently completed operations. The 80th Division had been and remained subordinate to XII Corps. 80th Division prepared to attack in the north supporting the main assault further south. Each assaulting regiment was reinforced by an Armored Infantry Battalion from the 4th Armored Division for the river crossing.

The worsening weather did cause the division to limit the scope of the mission to facilitate unity of effort. The depth of the objectives was limited to give the division time to build up combat forces on the enemy side of the river. This would enable the assault forces to systematically eliminate the enemy from the far shore and provide secure control of the crossing sites for follow-on forces.

Communications were planned to ensure security and surprise. While the enemy had to be expecting a river crossing soon, the division worked hard to provide security to prevent early detection of the actual crossing date. The division made maximum use of wire and messengers to pass information on the upcoming operation. Radio traffic was maintained at its previous level. Any sudden increase or decrease in radio transmissions would have given the enemy information about the future crossing. The division was able to maintain these methods of communicating for several

days until the crossing commenced.

The scheme for command, control, and communications during the river crossing was simple but planning was detailed. Maximum use of previously established procedures helped the 80th Division accomplish the mission successfully.

CHAPTER THREE

CHRONOLOGY OF THE BATTLE

On 1 February 1945, the 80th Division occupied a line generally running from Diekirch in the Northwest to Haller in the Southeast, approximately five kilometers west of the Siegfried Line defenses. The period between 1 February and the attack on 7 February was marked by aggressive patrolling and steady movement forward to the Siegfried Line against virtually no enemy resistance. By 2 February, elements of Combat Command B, 4th Armored Division (attached to 80th Division), were in Hoesdorf, overlooking the Our River. Elements of the 318th Infantry Regiment were in Bibelbach and Beaufort just above the Sauer River. On 3 February 1945, XII Corps issued its operation order for the attack into the Siegfried Line and Germany. The 80th Division issued its field order at 0900 on 4 February.

Artillery activity from 1 through 6 February was light on both sides. The enemy's shortage of artillery and mortar ammunition kept his activity low, but it increased sharply on 6 February. The US artillery units kept busy supporting Combat Command B, 4th Armored Division and with displacing forward to positions from which they could better support the upcoming attack. Artillery available for the attack included the four battalions of the 80th Division Artillery

and the 404th Field Artillery Group which had two light battalions and one medium battalion. In addition, one company from the 702d Tank Battalion and one company from the 811th Tank Destroyer (TD) Battalion were attached to artillery battalions for fire control effective 5 February.

Artillery fires in support of the division attack were scheduled to commence at 0120 hours, 7 February 1945, with intermittent preparation fires. Prestockage of ammunition for the division attack consisted of the rounds for the preparation plus 200 percent. This amounted to over 800 rounds per battalion.

At 0200 hours, 7 February, the 80th Division attacked across the Our and Sauer Rivers, with the 318th and 319th Infantry Regiments leading the assault. The attacks were supported by demonstrations by the attached 51st and 53d Armored Infantry battalions. Additionally, the 811th Tank Destroyer Battalion and 702d Tank Battalion further supported the attack with direct fires against Siegfried Line positions on the far bank. The 317th Infantry Regiment was in division reserve in the town of Diekirch, where it remained for the first five days of the operation.

Division artillery initiated the attack on units occupying the Siegfried Line, the enemy's supporting

artillery and mortar units, and the enemy's deeper positions. The identification of enemy artillery and mortar locations during the past 6 days resulted in most of the enemy locations being attacked during the preparation. A total of 153 missions (5248 rounds) were fired by 80th Division Artillery units on 7 February. Included in this total were 64 Time-On-Target missions and 22 counterbattery missions. Enemy artillery was concentrated during the day on bridgehead sites and defense of the enemy's fortified positions along the Siegfried Line, while heavy mortar fire was concentrated on the crossing sites. The 313th Field Artillery Battalion was the only unit to receive enemy counterbattery fire during the day.

The 318th Regiment attacked in the southern portion of the division sector where the 2d Battalion spearheaded the attack. At 0300 hours leading elements of the battalion began crossing the Sauer River in assault boats about 500 meters north of the town of Dillingen. The swift current of the river, coupled with heavy enemy mortar fire, made the ferrying operation difficult. By 1200 hours, only one company had completed the crossing. During the afternoon and evening, the remainder of the battalion crossed the Sauer, secured a bridgehead on the far bank, and prepared to continue

the attack to the northeast. In general, German opposition at the crossing site was not severe, with the enemy relying heavily on rugged terrain, steep cliffs, and heavy woods to impede the US attack. On the first day of the attack, the 3d Battalion remained in an assembly area on the high ground overlooking the crossing site and prepared to follow the 2d Battalion. L Company of the 3d Battalion did, in fact, cross and was attached to 2d Battalion for the remainder of the day. The 1st Battalion, 318th spent the seventh of February in an assembly area at Haller as the regimental reserve.

The 319th Regiment's attack in the north met with mixed success on the first day. Two companies and the command group of the 1st Battalion launched the assault crossing approximately 400 yards north of the confluence of the Our and Sauer Rivers at Wallendorf and reached the far bank prior to daylight. One company was unable to cross before daybreak and was forced to remain on the friendly shore for the remainder of the day by heavy mortar fire. Those elements which did cross launched a series of successful assaults against enemy pillboxes. By the end of the day, the battalion was 1000 meters into the Siegfried Line and occupied the high ground overlooking Wallendorf from the northwest.

Two companies from the 2d Battalion, 319th Infantry

Regiment made an assault crossing of the Our River at Hoesdorf and established a bridgehead. As was the case with the 1st Battalion, one company was unable to cross prior to daylight and was fixed on the friendly shore by heavy mortar fire and loss of assault boats due to the swift current. The 3d Battalion occupied an assembly area 1 kilometer south of Hoesdorf and prepared to cross the Our River.

In summary, a total of four infantry companies from the 318th and 319th Infantry Regiments successfully crossed the Sauer and Our Rivers on the first day. This initial success was achieved in spite of the flooding of the two rivers, a condition which proved to be a greater hindrance than the meager German forces defending from Siegfried Line defensive positions.

During the day of 8 February, the remainder of the 3d Battalion, 318th Infantry Regiment completed crossing the Sauer River and joined with the 2d Battalion in clearing the woods and high ground overlooking the crossing site. At the same time, the 1st battalion moved to the assembly area previously occupied by 3d Battalion, overlooking the Dillingen crossing site. From this location, the battalion prepared to cross the Sauer River.

In the 319th regiment's sector, the 1st and 2d Battalions were achieving mixed results. The 1st Battalion experienced some success as it continued to improve its position on the high ground overlooking Wallendorf. Meanwhile, A Company, 1st Battalion, had successfully crossed the Our River under the cover of darkness and had captured the town of Wallendorf.

The 2d Battalion found itself unable to maneuver on the eighth due to extremely heavy enemy fire. Hence, the battalion spent the day in a defensive position, holding its bridgehead.

The 3d Battalion remained in its assembly area, unable to be committed until something broke loose on the far bank.

Artillery support for the attacking forces remained at a high level on the eighth. A total of 156 missions were fired in support of the infantry with the main effort being to destroy enemy pillboxes in the fortified line. Direct hits were achieved on two pillboxes. Heavy rain prevented the use of aerial observers and the Pozit Fuze produced numerous early bursts caused by the rain. Consequently, most missions were fired using quick fuze.

The enemy responded with equally heavy artillery

and mortar fires. Most of the artillery fire was concentrated on our bridge sites. Mortar and Nebelwerfer units were very active. Hoesdorf and Kleinersdorf as well as units in the 318th Infantry sector were subjected to heavy artillery fire.

On 9 February, things continued to progress smoothly in the 318th Regiment's sector. By early afternoon, the 3d Battalion completed crossing the Sauer River. The battalion immediately launched an attack north through the 2d Battalion and advanced nearly one mile through heavy woods before halting for the night. The 2d and 3d Battalions continued operations to expand and mop up in the Dillingen bridgehead.

Things started to look up in the 319th's sector on the ninth. Having strengthened its foothold on the previous day, the 1st Battalion continued to systematically reduce the pillboxes on the high ground overlooking Wallendorf. At the same time, the 2d Battalion regained its freedom of maneuver. D Company finally succeeded in crossing the Our River under the cover of darkness and, at 0645, the 2d Battalion attacked to the north to expand their bridgehead. The 3d Battalion attempted to cross the Our River in assault boats at the Wallendorf site, but was forced to abandon the effort by heavy enemy mortar and artillery fire.

The battalion returned to its assembly area south of Hoesdorf.

Artillery usage dropped slightly on 9 February with only 105 missions being fired. In addition, the 80th Division Artillery received support from the 183d Field Artillery Group and 5th Division Artillery as they fired counterbattery missions and attacked enemy communications centers. Tanks and tank destroyers attached to Division Artillery were used for direct fire on the enemy pillboxes. Several 4.5-inch rockets mounted on tank chassis were employed for the first time, but their fires were not very effective because of considerable dispersion.

The liaison planes from Division Artillery were pressed into service on the ninth to resupply the 1st Battalion, 319th Infantry. The failure to complete the installation of fixed bridging caused this battalion to run low on Class I and Class V supplies. In all, 34 missions were flown with 80 pound payloads being airdropped during each mission.

Enemy artillery, mortar, and Nebelwerfer fires increased. Interdictory fire was placed on the bridge sites while heavy shelling occurred in the 319th Infantry sector and at Hoesdorf (P9343). Hoesdorf

recieved over 200 rounds of artillery during one attack.

10 February found two battalions of the 318th Infantry Regiment renewing the offensive. At 0730, the 1st Battalion attacked to the north and seized key high ground along the northern edge of the woods east of Biesdorf. The 3d Battalion received attachment of L Company, 317th Infantry. It then launched an attack to the east to clear the peninsula formed by the southward bend of the Sauer River. At the same time, the battalion outposted the Dillingen bridge site against snipers attempting to hamper bridging activities at that location. The 2d Battalion continued to mop up enemy resistance in its zone of advance.

The 1st and 2d Battalions of the 319th Infantry began a coordinated advance to the northwest toward Ammeldingen. The attack moved slowly in the face of heavy enemy fire from the pillboxes in their respective sectors. The 3d Battalion remained in its assembly area around Hoesdorf.

The remainder of the 317th Infantry Regiment continued in division reserve in its assembly area around Diekirch.

Artillery support took on a new twist on the tenth.

A 155mm Self Propelled howitzer was used to fire a High Explosive (HE) round with a Concrete Piercing (CP) 105 Fuze at a pillbox. 24 hits were scored from 4100 yards, but no penetrations were achieved. The range was reduced to 2000 yards, and the test was very effective as it required only one or two rounds to penetrate a pillbox. 75mm tank guns and 76mm Tank Destroyers were used for direct fire on pillboxes but they had very little effect. Subsequently, these two weapons were used in a harassing role.

In other missions on the tenth, poor weather prevented the use of aerial observers in the morning, but a break in the weather permitted their use in the afternoon.

The enemy continued to fire Harassment and Interdiction (H&I) missions at the bridge locations, thus preventing the completion of any river crossing spans. Most of the enemy's fires landed along the river with the 318th Infantry bridge site being hit the hardest. Over 500 of the enemy were captured by the division on the tenth.

On 11 February the 318th Infantry continued to expand its bridgehead on the Sauer River. The 1st Battalion consolidated the positions it had gained the previous day and continued to mop up in the wooded area

east of Biesdorf. The 3d Battalion seized the high ground overlooking Bollendorf and continued to clear enemy pockets of resistance in the area southeast of Dillingen. Having cleared resistance in its sector around the Dillingen bridgehead, the 2d Battalion launched an attack to the northeast and captured the town of Biesdorf. This attack effectively penetrated the Siegfried Line in the battalion's sector. Having accomplished this, the battalion redirected its efforts southward to mop up previously bypassed Siegfried Line defenses.

The 319th Infantry continued its deliberate advance toward Ammeldingen with the 1st and 2d Battalions. During the day, the 3d Battalion moved into position to cross the Our River, and commenced crossing operations at 2330 hours.

The lighter enemy resistance reduced the use of artillery. Only 71 missions were fired. The tank and tank destroyer companies continued to concentrate on the pillboxes and infantry. G Btry fired direct fire on pillboxes. The Chemical Mortar Battalion was used to fire on infantry and Nebelwerfer positions. Poor visibility limited the use of aerial observers. Enemy artillery fire was light but the flow of prisoners to our lines from enemy pillboxes continued.

The 12th of February was a significant date in the 80th Division's attack into Germany. A class 40 Treadway bridge was finally completed across the Our River at Wallendorf and opened at 0700. At 0915, 2d Battalion, 318th Infantry made contact with 319th Infantry at the east end of Wallendorf, joining the two bridgeheads of the 80th Division. 3d Battalion made contact with elements of the 5th Infantry Division in the vicinity of Bollendorf, linking the two XII Corps bridgeheads.

The assaulting regiments of the division continued offensive operations. 1st Battalion, 318th Infantry made a limited objective attack to the north, securing the key terrain south of Cruchten. 2d Battalion, in addition to linking up with the 319th Infantry, continued to attack to the south and west to reduce enemy pillboxes. The 3d Battalion was relieved in place above Bollendorf at 0400 by the 2d Battalion, 319th Infantry. After being replaced, the battalion moved generally north, taking up positions on the right of the 1st Battalion, south of Cruchten.

In the 319th Infantry sector, the 1st and 2d Battalions continued their operations to reduce Siegfried Line defenses. At approximately 0700, the 3d Battalion crossed the Our River and attacked through

the 1st Battalion to seize the high ground 1000 meters northeast of Ammeldingen.

The remainder of the 317th Regiment continued in its division reserve mission.

The renewed offensive spirit of the regiments resulted in an increased use of artillery. 103 missions were fired with very little response from enemy batteries.

13 February marked the end of the initial phase of the 80th Division's crossings of the Sauer and Our Rivers. Both the 318th and 319th Infantry continued mop-up operations against remaining resistance on the far shore. The 2d Battalion, 319th Infantry captured Ammeldingen while, at 0830, the 3d Battalion seized the key terrain 1 kilometer northeast of the town. In preparation for the next portion of the operation, the 317th Infantry moved from its Diekirch assembly areas into positions to cross the Sauer River and press the division attack to the north.

By the end of the thirteenth, a firm bridgehead was established across the Our and Sauer Rivers and two bridges were in operation. All organized resistance had been smashed. The 80th Division prepared to push the attack to the east.

As our infantry gained momentum, several units developed a new technique to destroy enemy pillboxes. They would first outflank the pillboxes, and then drop satchel charges down the ventilator shafts. This technique was very successful and relieved the artillery of this mission.

Besides firing 90 missions on the thirteenth, Division Artillery was able to move the 313th Field Artillery Battalion to Beaufort and the 512th Field Artillery Battalion to Ammeldingen.

During the period 14-17 February 1945, the 80th Division expanded the Sauer - Our bridgehead, then reduced, isolated, or by-passed fortifications, and prepared to continue the attack to the northeast either to seize the divisional objective or to facilitate the impending XII Corps exploitation. The division main effort on the right was conducted by the 318th Infantry reinforced by the 2d Battalion, 317th Infantry and was aimed at expanding the bridgehead line to the north on the line Bollendorf - Bitburg. The 319th Infantry on the left was directed to expand the bridgehead northwest laterally along the banks of the Our River and also to the north. The enemy was relatively strong in the 319th sector and made this a slow, costly process. Division retained the 317th Infantry (-) in

reserve.

The 318th Infantry spearheaded its expansion of the bridgehead on the Division right with the attached battalion from the 317th Infantry. By the end of 17 February, the entire regiment was dug in on the high ground south of Cruchten, and the attached battalion was attacking toward the high ground overlooking the town of Nusbaum.

The 319th Infantry on the left approached its task of expanding the bridgehead both laterally and in depth by ordering the 2d Battalion to clear and defend the high ground vicinity Ammeldingen on the Regiment's left flank. In the center, the 3d Battalion, 319th Infantry cleared and defended the high ground 1000 meters northeast of Ammeldingen, and on the Regimental right flank, the 1st Battalion cleared and defended the high ground north of Wallendorf. On 16 February the 319th Infantry shifted over to the offensive with the 3d Battalion attacking from positions in contact to clear fortifications Northwest of Niedersgegen. The attack was met with heavy enemy artillery and small arms fire and suspended at 1215 hours. The 2d Battalion was then ordered to occupy the positions vacated by the 3d Battalion as they crossed the line of departure. Once complete, the 3d Battalion conducted a rearward passage of lines and occupied an assembly area near Wallendorf.

These actions were completed during the afternoon of 16 February.

The 317th Infantry (-) in Divisional reserve was motor marched from Diekirch across the newly established fixed bridging on the 14th and 15th of February. The Regiment then occupied an assembly area vicinity Bollendorf.

By the end of 17 February 1945, the 80th Division considered that the deliberate river crossing of the Our and Sauer Rivers had been completed. The bridgehead line stretched from the boundary with the 5th Infantry Division on the right along the line Nusbaum - Cruchten - Niedersgegen - Ammeldingen.

From the 18th through the 24th of February, 1945, the 80th Division continued the attack to the northeast. Combat Command B of the 4th Armored Division was attached to the 80th Division in order to facilitate transition from the deliberate attack to the exploitation. During the evening of 23 February, Combat Command B captured the town of Ginspelt and one bridge across the Enz River. The conditions were right to start the exploitation, and on 24 February, Combat Command B was attached to the 4th Armored Division which was passed through the 80th Division. The race to the Rhine was on.

ENGINEER SUPPORT OF THE SAUER RIVER CROSSING

While there is no detailed engineer after action report of the Sauer River crossing, the combination of maneuver reports, task organizations, tables of organization and equipment and published doctrine may permit us to surmise adequately the course of engineer activities during the week of 7-14 February 1945.

The commander of the 80th Division's engineer battalion, the 305th Engineer Battalion, was charged with the responsibility of planning and supervising the river crossing operation. He was supported by the 1135th Engineer Combat Group which consisted of the following units:

- 88th Engineer Combat Battalion
- 133d Engineer Combat Battalion
- 150th Engineer Combat Battalion
- 166th Engineer Combat Battalion
- 528th Engineer Light Pontoon Company
- 613th Engineer Light Equipment Company
- 997th Engineer Treadway Bridge Company
- 24th Armored Engineer Combat Battalion (-)

This combination of units along with their assigned equipment and reserves represented a more than adequate assemblage to pass the 80th Division across the Sauer-Rur confluences.

The basic plan was to make an initial crossing with two infantry regiments abreast, the 319th Infantry in the north and the 318th Infantry in the south. Ideally, each regiment would want to cross two battalions abreast in assault boats,

although presumably because of somewhat restricted space, the 318th Infantry in the south attacked in column with the 2nd Battalion first, followed by the 3d Battalion.

The initial movement across the river was by means of M2 assault boats. In order to move two battalions of two companies abreast in the 319th Infantry's sector and two companies of the lead battalion abreast in the 318th Infantry's sector, a minimum of 102 assault boats were required. Within the division area there were at least 304 assault boats available, so, at least initially, there was no transport constraint to moving the assault wave. The bulk of the crossing effort the first day was directed at crossing the assault boats, a monumental task in current velocities that were averaging more than 17 feet per second. Efforts were made by engineers in the 318th Infantry sector to conduct rafting operations, but shortly after the restraining cables were in place they snapped and the rafting effort was abandoned.

By the end of the first day, the plan would most surely have called for initiation and completion of the assault phase, and for extensive rafting operations to have been completed, passing at least two artillery batteries for each infantry regiment passed by the assault boats. This would have required both reasonably favorable stream

conditions and assault boat availability. Since the M2 Assault Boats were used in the configuration of the Infantry Support Rafts, their timely return from the far shore was essential. Of the 304 M2 Assault Boats noted above, 161 were lost during the crossing operation. It is reasonable to assume that the bulk of these losses occurred on the first day. It is also reasonable to assume that given the enemy situation, few crews volunteered for multiple round trips. If we assume that 75% of the M2 losses occurred the first day and assume that none of the boats returned for multiple trips, by the end of the first day the number of assault boats available was reduced dramatically.

This reduction had two immediate effects. First, the Division was never again able to cross as many personnel as it had on the first day, and secondly, rafting operations were doomed.

The second day of the crossing, 8 February, saw the passage of two more companies, I and L of 3d Battalion, 318th Infantry. The engineers continued preparation to install M2 Steel Treadway Bridges at Wallendorf and Dillingen. Therefore, crossing means were still limited to the use of M2 boats. The engineer picture remained unchanged for two more days. While there must surely have been continuing efforts to

operate raft sites and install treadway bridging, there is no indication that any substantial progress was made until the fifth day of the crossing. At noon on 11 February, over one hundred hours after the attack began, the 150th Engineer Combat Battalion reported an M2 Treadway under construction at Dilligen. The beginning of this bridge coincided with the opening of Treadways by other Corps units of the 1103d Engineer Combat Group at Echternach and Weiterbach. Treadways in the 80th Division sector were not completed until 0700 hours on 12 February at Wallendorf and noon on the thirteenth at Dillingen.

It is hard to imagine a debacle so great as to account for more than three days of inactivity. While there is every indication that the engineers wished they had additional time to plan for this crossing, the only logical explanation for their apparent lack of success must lie with the river. Even though one may successfully argue that enemy resistance was well organized, that alone can not account for the delay. The simple fact is that the river was sufficiently treacherous to preclude a doctrinal buildup at the riverline. The current was such that all bridging and rafting smaller than the new M2 Steel Treadways could not be constructed, regardless of the enemy situation on the far shore. A river to be crossed does not a crossing make!

CHAPTER FOUR

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ACTION

The 80th Division's attack across the Sauer River was an essential part of the XII Corps and Third Army offensive. By 24 February 1945, the XII Corps had pierced the West Wall and had established a front along the Pruem River. In completing this action, the corps took 600 casualties, including 125 killed. At the same time, over 3000 German prisoners of war were taken.

Recovering rapidly from the shock of German counteroffensive in the Ardennes and Alsace, the Allied armies early in January 1945 began an offensive that gradually spread all along the line from the North Sea to Switzerland and continued until the German armies and the German nation were prostrate in defeat. 19

The fighting in the mud and pillboxes of the West Wall was as bitter as any fighting that had preceded it in Normandy. Germany was still able to mount a stout defense even after the losses experienced in the Battle of the Bulge. The Germans continued to resist the Allied offensive for more than two months. 20

However, by 3 January 1945, with the defeat of the Wehrmacht in the Ardennes, the ultimate defeat of Germany was just a matter of time. On 4 January 1945,

Patton's Third Army started on the offensive to push in the southern portion of the bulge. On that day, "the Allies began, in effect, their last great offensive of the war in Europe." 21

The long term significance of the 80th Division contribution is that,

Beginning on 4 February . . . , two corps of the Third Army in just over three weeks had penetrated the West Wall in some of the most forbidding terrain to be found along the Western Front. At its widest point, the penetration measured more than twenty-five miles. . . . Although the Rhine still lay some fifty miles away and terrain still might constitute a major obstacle, the enemy's prepared defenses lay behind, and only a miracle could enable the Germans to man another solid front in the Eifel. 22

Although the 80th Division's river crossing did not decide the outcome of the war, it played an important part in the victory of the Third Army.

No evidence remains as to whether the 80th Division gained any significant lessons learned from the crossing of the Our-Sauer Rivers. The passage of years does enable us, however, to analyze the plan and its execution in terms of the principles of war and draw appropriate conclusions. These conclusions are drawn based on the present doctrinal framework which orients and focuses primarily on the enemy, and we must recall that tactical doctrine of the 1940's was based on seizure and retention of terrain as its focus.

In terms of the principles of war, the intent of the

80th Division's plan was to achieve tactical surprise by crossing the river at the least likely crossing points. In so doing, they hoped to strike the enemy where he was weakest and minimize casualties. The plan, therefore, required assault crossings at sites which did not support putting up the fixed bridges critical to enlarging the bridgehead. In the execution, the major enemy quickly became the swift flowing rivers which exacted a majority of the casualties. Once the assault battalions were ashore in suitable strength, they had to expand the bridgehead laterally to seize suitable fixed bridging sites before they could even bring bridging down to the river. Thus, assault forces were required to brave the river currents and light German resistance and then expand laterally rather than in depth against heavily fortified positions. Lateral bridgehead expansion efforts dissipated the Division's ability to mass and concentrate toward the objective and violated these two principles of war.

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3. The Last Offensive, p. 10
4. Cole, H. M., The Lorraine Campaign (United States Army in World War II: The European Theater of Operations, Washington: Historical Division, Department of the Army, 1950), p. 1
5. The Last Offensive, pp. 9-10
6. The Lorraine Campaign, p. 596
7. The Lorraine Campaign, p. 597
8. The Lorraine Campaign, p. 593
9. The Lorraine Campaign, p. 594
10. The Lorraine Campaign, p. 37
11. The Lorraine Campaign, p. 38
12. The Last Offensive, p. 15
13. The Last Offensive, p. 13
14. The Last Offensive, p. 16
15. The Last Offensive, p. 106
17. The Last Offensive, p. 106
18. The Lorraine Campaign, p. 16
19. The Last Offensive, p. vii
20. The Last Offensive, p. ix
21. The Last Offensive, p. 1
22. The Last Offensive, p. 115

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F.O. 69

CG 80TH In.

HQ 80TH INF DIV (Reinf)
LAROCHETTE (P9133)
040900A Feb 45

4 Feb 45.

No. 30

MAPS: GERMANY - 1:50,000

1. a. Annex No 1 (Int) (later).
b. (1) XII Corps Atks 070100A Feb 45. seizes high ground Vic BITBURG (L1353).
(2) 5th Inf Div Atks on right of 80th Inf Div.
(3) Atchd 80th Inf Div: 702d Tk Bn; 811th TD Bn (SP); 633d AAA AW (Mbl) Bn; Co A, 91st Cal Bn; 51st and 53d Armd Inf Bns (initially).
(4) Spt 80th Inf Div:
(a) 410th FA Gp: With two (2) light Bns, and one (1) medium Bn.
(b) 1135th Engr C Gp:
150th Engr C Bn 613th Engr L Equip Co. (less one
166th Engr C Bn (1) Plat)
88th Engr Hv Pon Bn 528th L Pon Co
(less one (1) Plat 997th Engr Trdwy Br Co
Co A, and Co B) One (1) Co 24th Armd Engr C BN
(c) XIX Spts Atk with Fi Bars.
2. 80th Inf Div (Reinf) Atks 070200A Feb 45, crosses OUR and SAUER Rs, breaches SIEGFRIED LINE and continues the Atk NE - Overlay.
3. a. 318th Inf:
(1) Atchd: 53d Armd Inf Bn Co B, 811th TD Bn (SP)
Co B, 702d Tk Bn
(2) Atk in Z. seize Objectives Nos 3, 4, 5, and 6. Continue Atk NE on Div O - Overlay.
(3) Protect Div right (SE) flank by blocking hostile routes of approach.
(4) Employing 53d Armd Inf Bn, feint crossing on right of Z, engage by fire of all Wons, hostile forces Vic Obj No 6 - Overlay.
b. 319th Inf:
(1) Atchd: 51st Armd Inf Bn Co C, 811th TD Bn (SP)
Co C, 702d Tk Bn
(2) Atk in Z. seize Objectives Nos 1, 2, 7 and 8. Continue Atk NE on Div O - Overlay.
(3) Protect Div left (NW) flank by blocking hostile routes of approach.
(4) Employing 51st Armd Inf Bn, clear hostile forces W of OUR R, N of HOESDORF. Feint crossing on left of Z. engage by fire. hostile forces E of OUR R - Overlay.
c. 317th Inf: Div Res. Be prepared to Adv in either Regtl Z to:
(1) Hop up by-passed hostile groups.
(2) Atk and Seize Obj No 6 or to:

- (3) Protect Div left (NW) flank - Overlay.
- d. 702d Tk Bn:
 - (1) Co B Atchd to 318th Inf.
Co C Atchd to 319th Inf.
 - (2) Remainder of Bn, emplace all available Wpns for fire on targets E of OUR and SAUER Rs. Coordination of fire by Div Arty.
Cross R on Div O.
- e. 80th Inf Div Arty: Co A, 91st CMI Bn Atchd (Par 3j):
 - (1) Fire intermittent preparation on hostile Fwd Elms, commencing 070120A Feb 45.
 - (2) Coordinate fires of Tk and TD Fr initial position.
 - (3) Annex No 2 (Arty)
- f. 811th TD Bn: #277
 - (1) Co B Atchd 318th Inf.
Co C Atchd 319th Inf.
 - (2) Remainder of Bn emplace all available Wpns for fire on targets E of OUR and SAUER Rs. Coordination of fire Fr initial positions by Div Arty. Cross R on Div O.
- g. 633d AAA AW (Mbl) Bn:
 - (1) Normal Spt missions. Particular attention to bridges over OUR and SAUER Rs.
 - (2) Emplace Wpns of two (2) Btrys to fire on ground targets E of OUR and SAUER Rs. Fire control by Div Arty.
- h. 80th Cav Rcn Tr: Div Res. Cross R on Div O. Be prepared to screen Div left (NW) flank on Div O.
- i. 305th Engr C Bn:
 - (1) Plan and supervise R crossing Opns of supporting Engrs.
 - (2) One (1) Co Dir Spt each assault Regt.
 - (3) Execute systematic destruction of pill-boxes and bunkers following Adv of assault Echs.
- j. Co A, 91st Cal Bn:
 - (1) One (1) Plat Atchd 314th FA Bn.
 - (2) One (1) Plat Atchd 905th FA Bn.
- k. 305th Med Bn: Normal Spt missions.
- l. Div Tps: Normal Spt missions.
- x. (1) EEIs:
 - (a) Determine which pillboxes of the Siegfried defenses between ANMELDINGEN and BOLLENDORF are occupied.
 - (b) Determine the size and location of enemy reserves, particularly Tk or assault gun units, capable of intervening in Div Z.
 - (c) Determine width and depth of GAY R. between NIEDERGEGEN and its junction with SAUER R, condition of banks and approaches at possible bridge sites, condition of existing bridges, and localities suitable for fording of Ft Trs, Vehs, and Tks.
- (2) In order to prevent re-occupancy by infiltrating hostile Trs, destroy all pill-boxes immediately upon capture.
- (3) Fires of all supporting Trs (including Atchd Tks and TDs initially) directed at "buttoning-up" pill-boxes.
- (4) Max use of smoke to blind hostile observation.
- (5) Use of WP grenades in mopping up pill-boxes recommended.
- (6) Civilians E of OUR - SAUER Rs (GERMAN BORDER) will be considered non-combatant enemy. Non-fraternization policy becomes effective upon crossing R.
- (7) Yellow panels displayed through 8 Feb 45.

(8) Weather permitting. Air Spt missions available on call
(G-3 Air).

4. Adm details: No change.

5. a. Index to SOI: 1-30.

b. Axes [Sic] Sig Com: Overlay.

c. Map Coordinate Code:

(1) Effective: 062359A Feb 45.

(2) Code Word: PLUNGE.

(3) Point of Origin: PB060.

d. Geographical Code No 12 effective 062359A Feb 45.

McBRIDE
Comdg

G3

HQ 80TH INF DIV
In the Field

ANNEX NO 1 (INTELLIGENCE) TO FO #30

051600A Feb 45

MAPS: LUXEMBOURG and GERMANY; 656S 4414, Sheets
6003, 6004, 6103, 6104; Scale 1/25,000.1. SUMMARY OF ENEMY SITUATION:

a. See Appendix #1 (Overlay of enemy situation) and Appendix #2 (SIEGFRIED Defenses supplementing overprint map).

b. (1) Following the collapse of the ARDENNES offensive, and concurrent with the RUSSIAN Atk, the GERMANS were forced back to the SIEGFRIED defenses. Their present strategy is to defend along the SIEGFRIED Line, utilizing for the most part Volksgrenadier Divs, and miscellaneous Fortress Bns. The 6 SS Pz Army (1 SS, 2 SS, 9 SS, and 12 SS Pz Divs) is reliably Rptd enroute to the Eastern Front; the 9 Pz and 3 PG Divs are in contact against the First US Army; the 116 Pz and 15 PG Divs are Rptd in the COLOGNE area; leaving only the 11 Pz Div (loosely in contact Vic TRIER), 130 Pz Div (Rptd NW BITBURG), and the 2 Pz Div (unlocated) capable of C/Atkg any penetration made by the Third US Army.

(2) (a) Facing the left flank of the 80th US Div is the 352 VG Div. Due to excessive casualties since 16 Dec, all Inf Elms of the Div have been consolidated into the 915 Regt, with the 914 and 916 Regts temporarily dissolved sent estimated Div strength: 2000.

Component Parts:

915 Regt	352 Fues Co
1352 Arty Regt	352 AT Bn
352 Engr Bn	

(b) Facing the right flank are Elms of the 212 VG Div. This Div is Rptd to be composed mainly of Navy, GAF, and AA personnel. Present estimated Div strength: 2500.

Component Parts:

316 Regt	212 Fues Bn
320 Regt	212 AT Bn
423 Regt	212 Engr Bn
212 Arty Regt	212 Field Repl Bn

(3) Fr interrogation of PWs the following enemy actions are probable:

(a) The enemy's mission is "defend to the last man"; however, a secondary line of defense along the E bank of SART River is contemplated.

(b) Due to the shortage of MGs, it was recommended that the MGs be set up and fired from outside the pillboxes (in order to get wider fields of fire); however, in some instances this has been left to each squad leader's individual decision.

(c) Bunkers are used extensively for shelter and CPs.

(d) Two guards are on guard outside each occupied pillbox at night.

(e) There are many minefields and AT defenses.

2. ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF INFORMATION:

- a. Determine which pillboxes of the SIEGFRIED defenses between ANMELDINGEN and BOLLENDORF are occupied.
- b. Determine the size and location of enemy reserves, particularly Tk or Asslt G units, capable of intervening in Div Z.
- c. Determine the location, extent, and defense pattern of enemy minefields, AT defenses and demolitions in Div Z of Atk.
- d. Determine width and depth of GAY River between NIEDERGEGEN and its junction with SAUER River, condition of banks and approaches at possible Br sites, condition of existing Brs, and localities suitable for fording of foot Trs, vehicles and Tks.
- e. Determine pinpoint location of enemy Arty and mortar positions.

3. RECONNAISSANCE AND OBSERVATION MISSIONS: SOP

4. MEASURES FOR HANDLING PRISONERS AND CAPTURED DOCUMENTS: SOP

5. MAPS AND PHOTOGRAPHS: Omitted.

6. COUNTERINTELLIGENCE: SOP

7. REPORTS AND DISTRIBUTION: SOP

McBRIDE

OFFICIAL:

/s/Fleisher
FLEISHER
6-2

2 Incls:

- 1 - Appendix #1 (Overlay)
- 2 - Appendix #2 (SIEGFRIED defenses)

(Compiled by PI Team #69 from photo interpretation, MII and OSS Reports).

SIEGFRIED LINE

1. This defensive position exists in the area stretching SE from RODERSHAUSEN (P8956) to BERGSHEID (P9254) to GEICHLINGEN (P9451) to NIEDERSGEGEN (P9546) to GENTINGEN (P9245) to ROTH (P9148) along OUR River back to RODERSHAUSEN. (Note: This first line extends from OUR River to GEICHLINGEN (P9451) to METTENDORF (P9951) to CRUCHTEN (P9845) to SCHANKWEILER (L0345) to FERSHWEILER (L0441). This area is spotted with pillboxes, bunkers, obstacles, temporary defenses, etc.) Overlay to accompany this Appendix indicates defenses which supplement those marked on overprinted map 1/25,000.

2. The bunkers are of three main types:

1. Small bunkers ○ : These are moundlike bunkers, covered with earth and grass on the roof and sides. There is one loophole for weapons, primarily MGs, and are camouflaged by means of paint and natural growth. They are 3 to 4 men bunkers.

2. Medium bunkers ⊖ : The size of these bunkers is Approx 4 Yds long, 4 Yds wide and 3 1/2 Yds high of which 1 1/2 Yds is usually below ground surface. There are 3 loopholes for weapons. These bunkers are designed for light Inf weapons, primarily MGs. They have only earth on the roof, cupola shaped, with the sides exposed and are camouflaged by means of paint and natural growth. They are 6 - 7 men bunkers.

3. Large bunkers ● : The size of these bunkers is Approx 8 Yds long, 8 Yds wide and 5 Yds high, of which one Yd is usually below ground surface. There are three loopholes for weapons. These bunkers are designed for heavier weapons. This size bunker is generally found at strategically important positions. Normally they are exposed and without a covering of earth on the roof or sides. Their camouflage consisting of paint and natural growth. Their capacity up to 20 men.

3. Some Notes on Bunker Detection:

a. Vineyards - It has been observed that bunkers are built frequently behind or into the stonewalls forming the terraces of vineyards. These stone walls are generally of irregular appearance and show occasional holes where stones are missing. At any point, where the wall shows signs of great irregularity and perfection and where at the same time bulges and the thickening of the wall become evident, bunker positions can be expected.

b. Clearing in woods - The maps of this region show ordinarily only large clearings, where small clearings exist, bunkers or natural defense positions may be expected.

c. Hedges between fields - At points where hedges, small rows of stones, or bulges of unusual height, bunkers can frequently be found.

d. Other likely bunker positions -

- (1) Small mounds in fields and hills.
- (2) At road junctions and road bends.
- (3) On top of hills, covering approaching terrain and roads.
- (4) At all entrances to villages.
- (5) At roads and fords.

4. SUPPLEMENT TO OVERLAY OF ADDITIONAL DEFENSES TO OVERPRINTED MAPS.

SIEGFRIED LINE

1. Tunnel along LUXEMBOURG Border starting 4 meters from road at (P916512) to (P907512). The tunnel is 2 meters high and 1.3 meters wide and built of concrete. Tunnel leads into pillbox at (P916512).

2. Two pillboxes at (P915486) and (P914486) are situated between custom house and castle, concealed by heaps of stone clods. Fields of fire towards VIANDEN church and RR station.

3. Pillbox at (P920480). This pillbox is newly constructed and of considerable size. Camouflaged with red bricks and as a stable.

4. Pillbox at (P928469). This pillbox is 3 meters below surface of earth and cannot be detected by observation. It is supposed to be used as CP with wire connections to other pillboxes in Vic. An emergency exit facing W is 20 meters long.

5. Two pillboxes at (P916482) both opposite BETTEL Br. They are situated on either side of tavern OUTHAL-SCHENKE, one camouflaged as a barn. AT 6 in one pillbox. The other one camouflaged as garage and terrace, pillbox has MG emplacement inside. Both connected pillboxes have a field of fire towards BETTEL Br and road leading S.

6. Two pillboxes located on each side of road at (P922469) and at (P921469). Pillboxes are connected by tunnel which is approximately 4 meters long. Two fields of fire, one towards the BETTEL mill and the other one between BETTEL and ROTH.

7. Pillbox at (P976423) disguised as wooden shack. Field of fire DILLINGEN.

8. Concrete tunnel located at (P979424) to (P991424). Tunnel connects highway with forest and possibly leads further to an OP at (P993428). OP is about 20 meters high, constructed of wood in a pine grove. Range of view: BEAUFORT, EPELDORF, BIGELBACH, JUNGENBUSCH and the high ground of BERDORF. (Note: This point shown as Trigonometrical point on map 407.4 meters high).

9. Pillbox at (L088392) has 3 floors, 60 feet deep. It is constructed in clock fashion with one large dome and about 10 smaller ones.

Field of fire 360°. Well camouflaged by trees and bushes.

10. Pillbox at (L007400) well camouflaged as barn.

11. Pillbox at (L010400) opposite Br concealed by wall. Field of fire towards Br. (Note: Ten others in Vic).

12. Pillbox at (L010403) camouflaged as house and barn. (Note: Two others in Vic).

13. Pillbox at (L012400) camouflaged as cottage. This is the only house between road and river. Field of fire covering road coming from WALLERBILLIG.

14. Pillbox at (L060356) is located in garden surrounded by walls. Fields of fire toward ECHTERNACH Br.

15. Pillbox at (L058361) camouflaged as wood shack.

16. Pillbox at (L057362) concealed in HITLER YOUTH Bldg.

17. Pillbox at (L032379) concealed in a villa. Color of Bldgs is yellow green.

18. Pillbox at (L029381) opposite WEIDERBACH Br, camouflaged by wall. Br destroyed.

19. Mines: Minefields located between road and river at (L049362) to (L051362).

20. (P931517) fuel bunkers, nearly completely underground.

21. (P937483) (P938482) first aid bunkers, which, according to informants, can harbor at least 300 men. Bunkers are built deep into mountain with only the door visible.

22. (P93304885) bunker camouflaged to look like a cellar of a house.

23. (P932495) (P933494) personnel bunkers, holding 50 - 75 men, built into the ground covered with earth. Also at (P934492) (P93354875).

24. WEILERBERG (P918454) strongly fortified by 10 - 15 bunkers especially on SW slope.

25. (P93154880) three-story bunker, located on copse in a small valley. Top story for personnel; 2d story for first aid, bottom story for ammunition.

26. (P919480) church steeple in ROTH fitted out as OP.

27. (P934468) used as Arty OP.

28. (P952427) this mountain NE of REISDORF is considered as excellent observation point to cover the SIEGFRIED Line - sector NE of WALLENDORF.

29. (P976423) large bunker, camouflaged giving the appearance of a Bavarian Chalet. About 40 feet high.

30. (P985403) defensive position, cut into rocks covering DILLINGEN Br. Watch for loopholes for weapons plainly visible when crossing DILLINGEN Br.

31. Hv weapons bunker (L018397) directly at river bank. Appears as a white, square house with green window shades. Location about 100 Yds downstream from the now demolished BOLLENDORF Br, directly behind chateau.

32. (L000402) (L010402) on the side of the highway along the SAUER River there are 8 - 10 medium sized pillboxes at distances from 50 to 200 Yds, irregularly spaced, mostly connected by trenches. Some smaller bunkers are well camouflaged along the edge of the woods in this area.

33. (L033378) the road has been mined at this point next to the pond (Approx 25 feet deep and 25 feet wide). Should the road be blown up at this point, the pond would flood the immediate area and would present a difficult obstacle. There is, however, a small very steep path which could be used as a detour (Approx 200 Yds E of the road) running parallel to the WEILER Creek.

34. (L034397) (L037386) between these points the woods on the E side of the road have been thinned out to give a clear field of fire from the natural rock defensive positions along this route.

35. (L039407) large farmhouse, believed to be reinforced with concrete and to serve as a strong point.

36. (L049366) continuing from the mill, upstream along the FRACKEN Creek valley with its steep slopes and natural rock defenses are numerous bunker defenses.

37. Area (L060355-068362-070358-063354) very dangerous terrain in this rectangular area, protected at one side by the SAUER River, on the other side with trenches, Tk obstacles and minefields.

38. Dragon's teeth located: From (L061362) to (L063358). Five rows of dragons teeth. Most Western row 1.5 meters high, most Eastern row 0.5 meters high. Rows of dragons teeth skipping road at (L063358). Dragons teeth line follows along road from (L063358) to SAUER River at (L069358) and skipping road at (L069359).

a. Metal plates round, 0.80 meters in diameter covering unknown obstacles, on road at (L063358).

/s/ Michael E. Derbin
MICHAEL E. DERBIN
Captain, Infantry
O/C, PI Team No 69.

LEGEND MII

- SMALL BUNKERS, 3 - 4 MEN
- MEDIUM BUNKERS, 6 - 7 MEN
- LARGE BUNKERS, 30 MEN COVER
- 〰 MINED AREA
- * REFERENCE TO PARAGRAPH NO ON ATTACHED
MII REPORT (SUPPLEMENT)

LEGEND PI

- | | |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| □ PILLBOX | ⚡ FIELD GUN |
| ⦿ AA GUN | ⚡ NEDELWERFER |
| △△△ AT DITCH | ✂ ROADBLOCK |
| 〰 DRAGON TEETH | ✕ BRIDGE OUT |
| XXX BARBED WIRE | ⌋ GUN ENPLACEMENT |
| 〰 COMM TRENCH | ⊗ CRATERED ROAD |
| 〰 FIRE TRENCH | u UNOCCUPIED |
| ? POSSIBLE | ⌒ SUPPLY DEPOT |
| B BARRACKS | ⚡ MACHINE GUN |

G3

NO 6

Auth: CG 80 Div Arty
 Init: *JME*
 Date: *7* Feb 45

HQ 80 DIV ARTY
 Vic FELS (P909328)
 042300 A Feb 45

FA ANNEX

ANNEX NO 2 FO 30 HQ 80 INF DIV

FO 19:

MAPS: LUXEMBOURG 1:25000

1. a. Omitted.
 b. FO 30 HQ 80 Inf Div
2. 80 Div Arty Spts Atk 80 Div. Forty (40) Min intermittent preparation; twenty-five (25) Min accompanying fires.
3. a. 313 FA Bn.
 (1) Reinf 905 FA Bn initially. D/S 317 Inf when Regt is committ
 (2) Exercise fire control Co A 702 Tk Bn Fr initial Posn
- b. 314 FA Bn. Atchd: One (1) Plat Co A 91 Cal Bn.
 (1) D/S 318 Inf.
 (2) Exercise fire control Btry C and one (1) Plat Btry A 633 AAA (AM) Bn (Mbl).
 (3) Exercise fire control Co A 811 TD Bn Fr initial Posn.
 (4) Exercise fire control Co B 702 Tk Bn Fr initial Posn.
- c. 905 FA Bn. Atchd: One (1) Plat Co A 91 Cal Bn.
 (1) D/S 319 Inf.
 (2) Exercise fire control Btry B 633 AAA (AM) Bn (Mbl)
 (3) Exercise fire control Assault Bn TF 080E operating within sector 319 Inf.
 (4) Exercise fire control Co C 811 TD Bn Fr initial Posn.
- d. 315 FA Bn. *Hempseed*
 (1) Rein 905 FA Bn.
 (2) Exercise fire control Co C 702 Tk Bn Fr initial Posn.
- e. 410 FA Bn.
 (1) 512 FA Bn:
 (a) Reinf 314 FA Bn initially.
 (b) Reinf 313 FA Bn when 317 Inf is committed.
 (c) Exercise fire control Co B 811 TD Bn initial Posn.
- (2) 276 FA Bn: *Headless*
 (a) B/S.
 (b) One (1) Ln 0 & Two (2) FO and parties to each 314 and 905 FA Bns for use w/51 Inf Bn and 53 Inf Bn.
 (c) Displace to Vic (P9440) during hours darkness night 5 - 6 Feb.

(3) 974 FA Bn. **HARKEN**

(a) Reinf 314 FA Bn.

(b) Displace to Vic (P9539) during hours darkness night of
5 - 6 Feb.

f. 633 AAA (AW) Bn (Mbl).

(1) Btrys A, B, and C: Pars 3 b (2), c (2).

(2) Btry D: Answer calls for fire from 314 Bn and 905 FA Bn.

(3) AAA FCS: Btry C position.

x. (1) Displacements initiated on 0 this Hq.

(a) D/S and Reinf Bns coordinated by D/S Bn Comdr.

(2) Ln Com responsibility D/S Bn Comdr.

(3) Firing Chart: Map 1:25000 1000 M Grid.

(4) SIC: REISDORF (P9442) opens 051000 A Feb.

(5) Min Rn line all Bns: Fwd Inf Elms.

(6) Plan of Fires: (Incl No 1).

(7) Scd of Fires: (Incl No 2).

(8) Bns which are to occupy new positions will register one How
from dummy position.

(9) Am: Dump amount for scheduled fires plus 200% - will
include 400 Rd Pozit Fz, 200 Rds WP, 200 Rds HC, per Bn.

4. No Change.

5. a. (1) Com: Wire. Upon displacement, 313 FA Bn and 315 FA Bn lay
to Sw C.

Rad: SCR 284 and 600 Series alternates to Tp Com. SCR 193
operate continuously.

(2) Sw C: REISDORF (P9442); opening to be announced.

b. CPS.

DIV ARTY - No Change.

FDC - REISDORF (P9442); opening to be announced.

Others - Rpt changes.

MackELVIE

Comdg.

OFFICIAL:

/s/ ELEGAR

ELEGAR,

6-3

Incl No 1 - Plan of Fires (Later)

Incl No 2 - Schedule of Fires (Later)

DISTRIBUTION:

"F"

50°

CHALMEDY

SAINT-VITH

50°

BASTOGNE

SEPTIM

SEDAN

49°30'

FRANCE

Adapted from Defense
Mapping Agency Tactical
Pilotage Chart E-2D,
Edition 3-GSGS

BELGIUM, FRANCE, LUXEMBOURG, AND GERMANY

Scale 1:500,000

One Inch -
Approximately
2.89 Miles

VERDUN

Approximate Operations Zone
of the 80th Infantry Division
(7 February 1945)

Approximate area
covered by following map

DEKISCH

STELLRUCK

ECHTERNACH

LUXEMBOURG

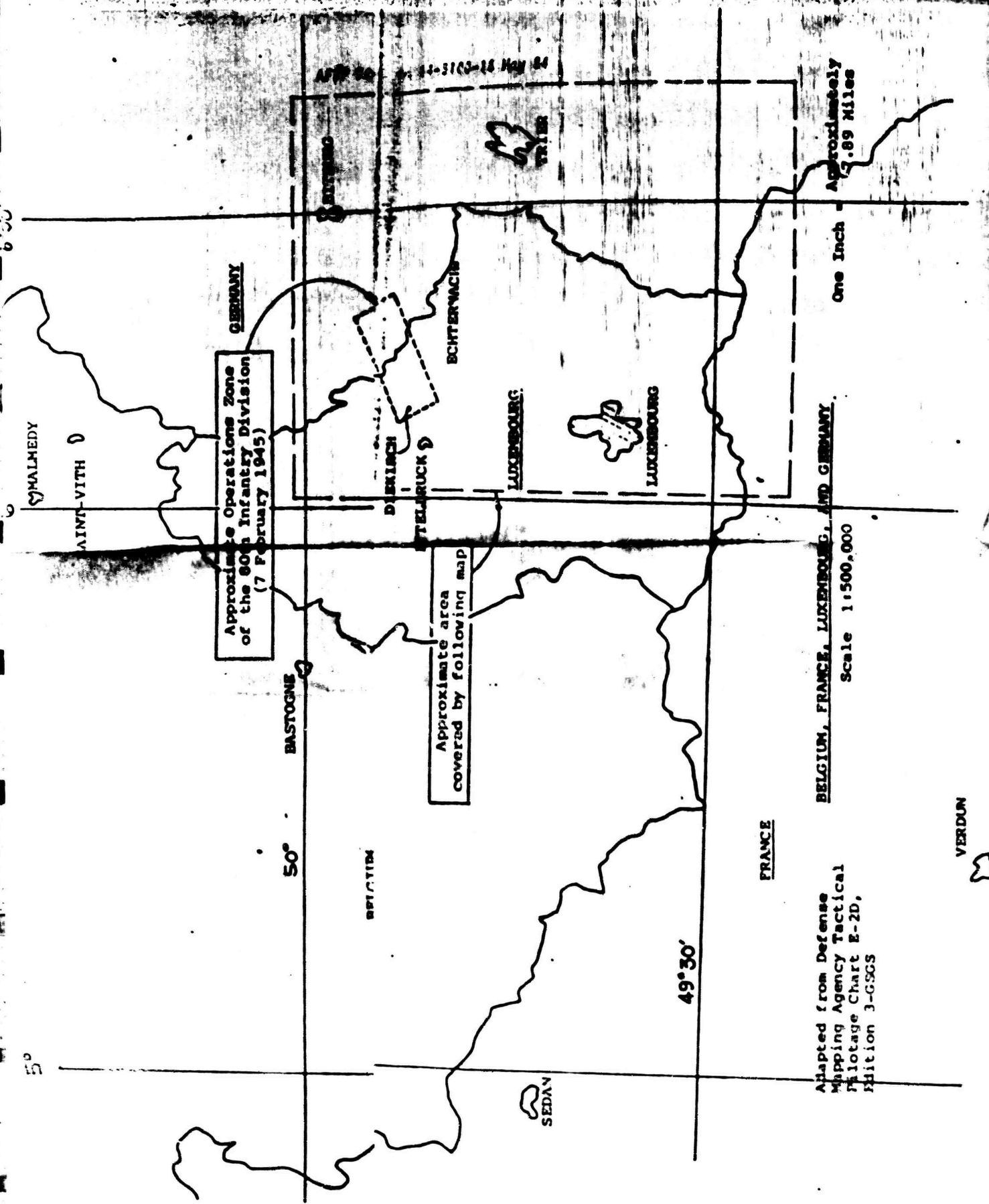
LUXEMBOURG

STUTTGART

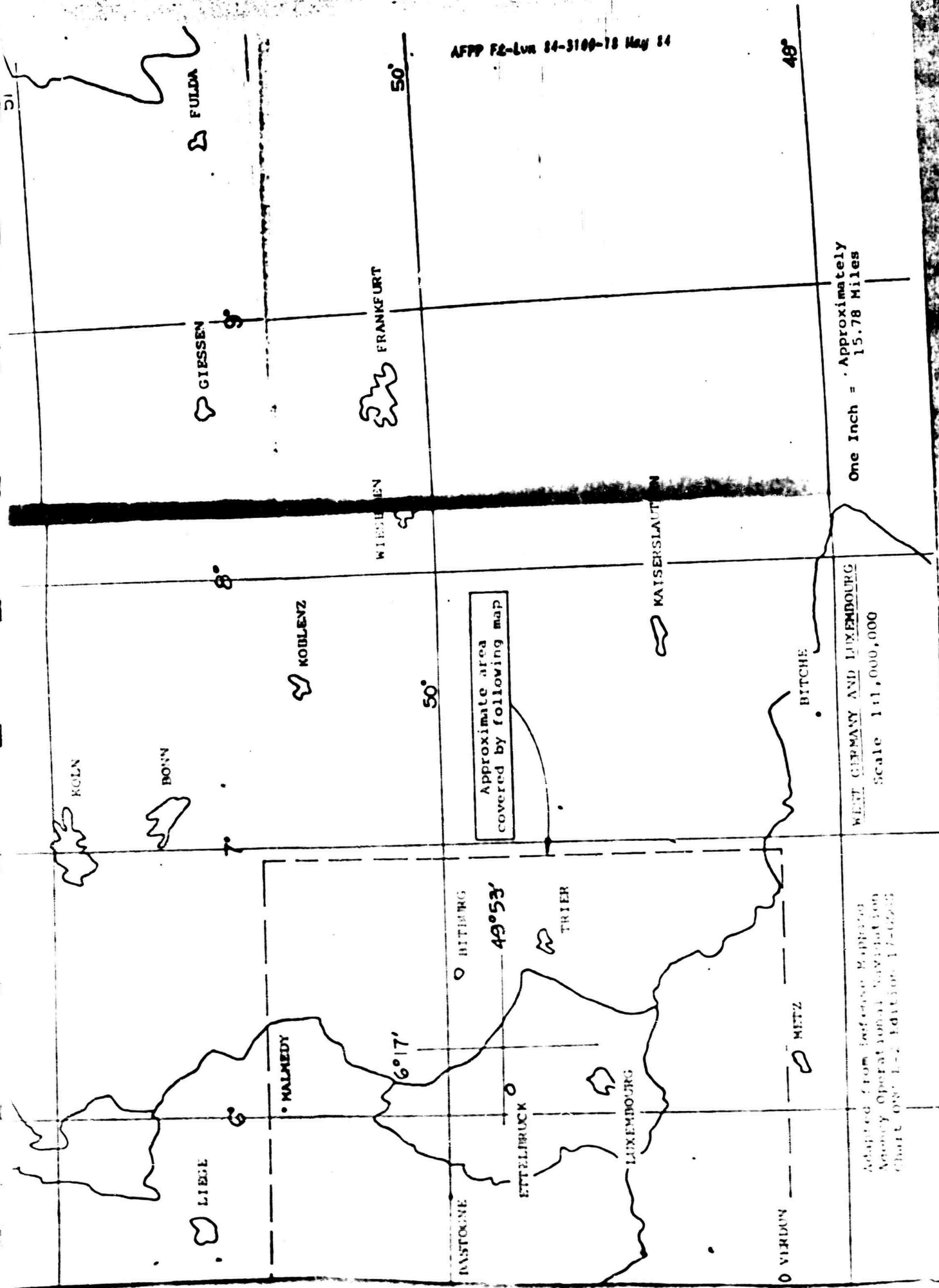
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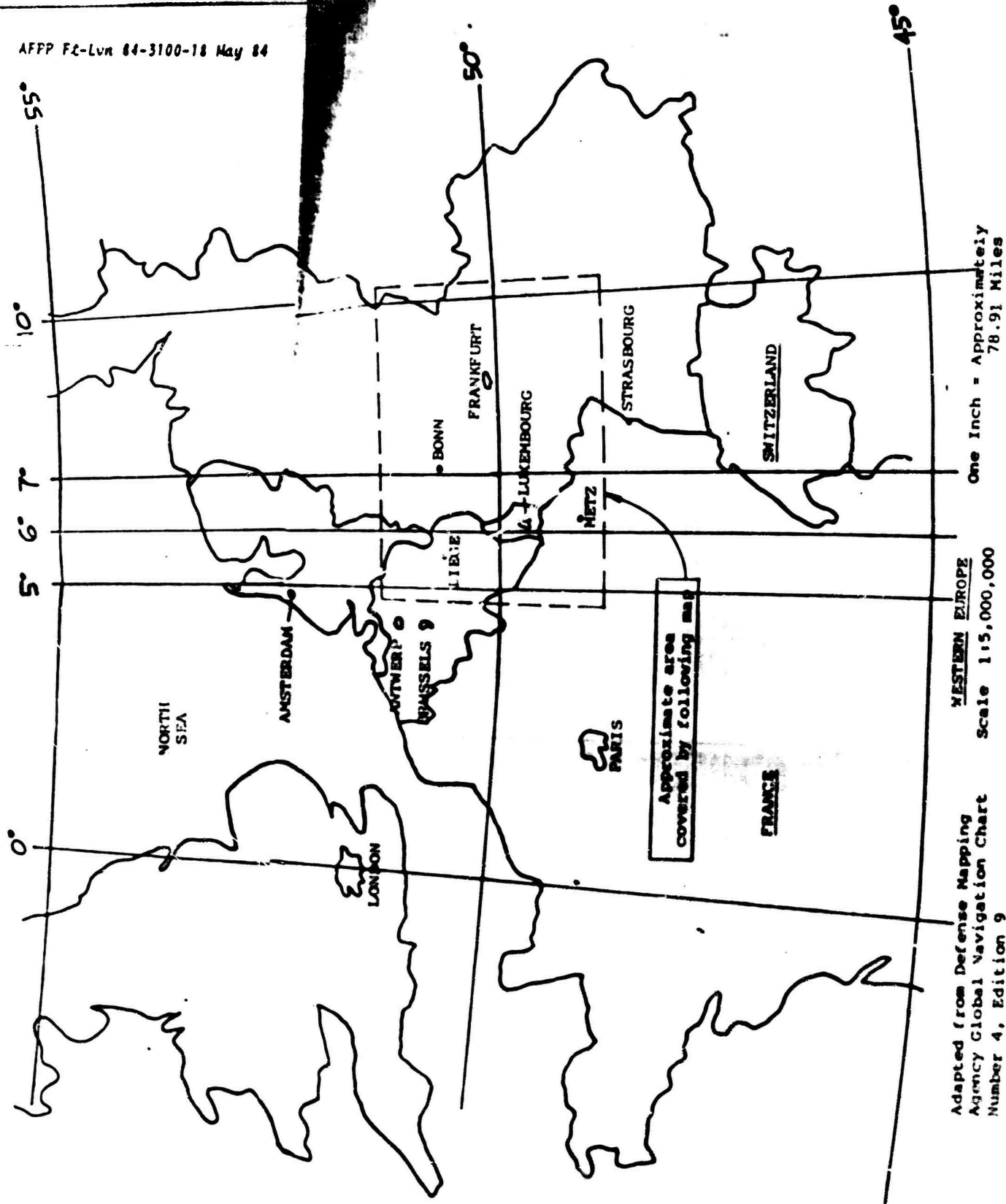
49°

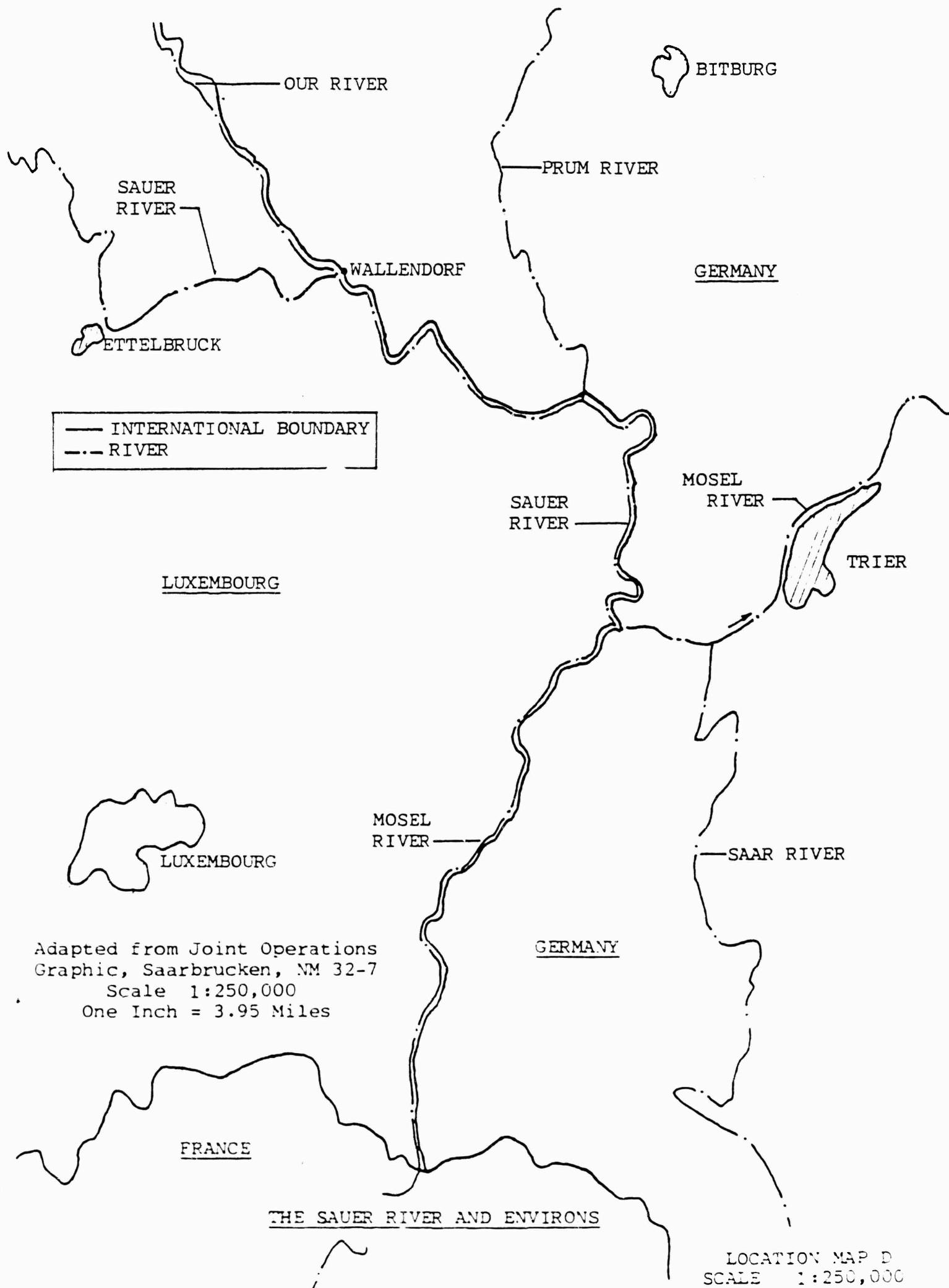
One Inch = Approximately
15.78 Miles

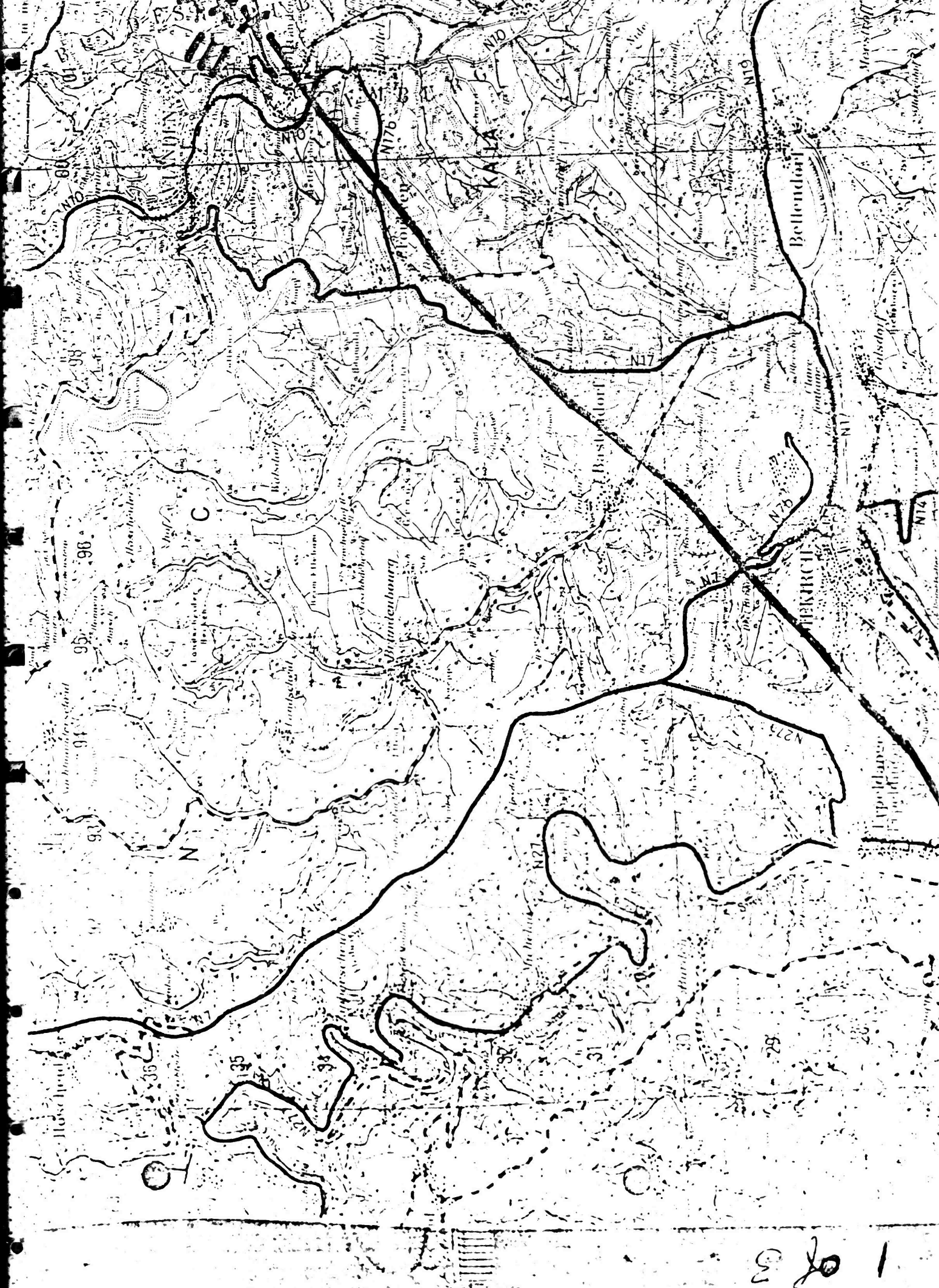
WEST GERMANY AND LUXEMBOURG

Scale 1:1,000,000

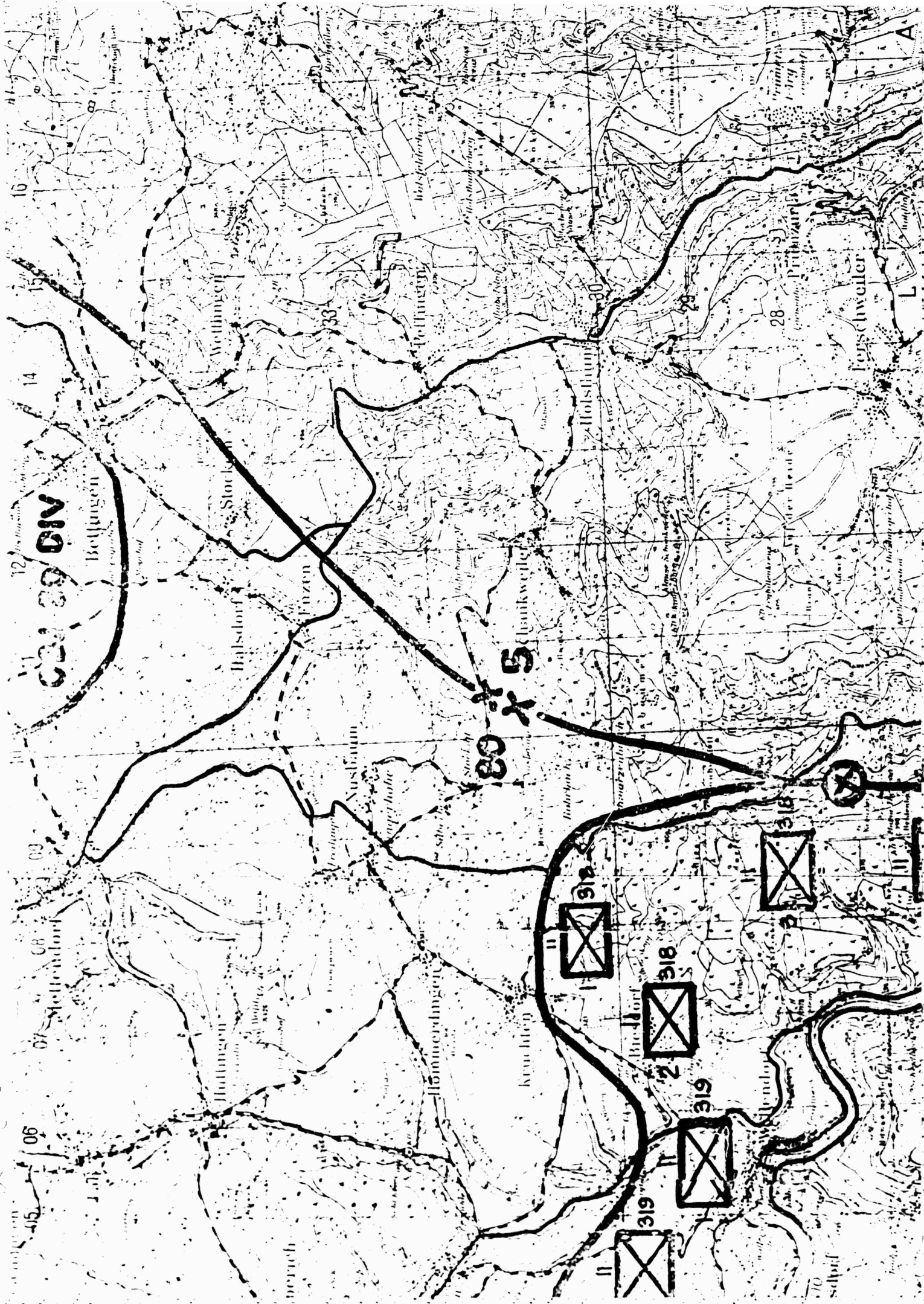
Adapted from Reference Mapping
Agency Operational Navigation
Chart ONE L-2 Edition 17-62-55







1 of 3



02:30 DIV

02:30 DIV

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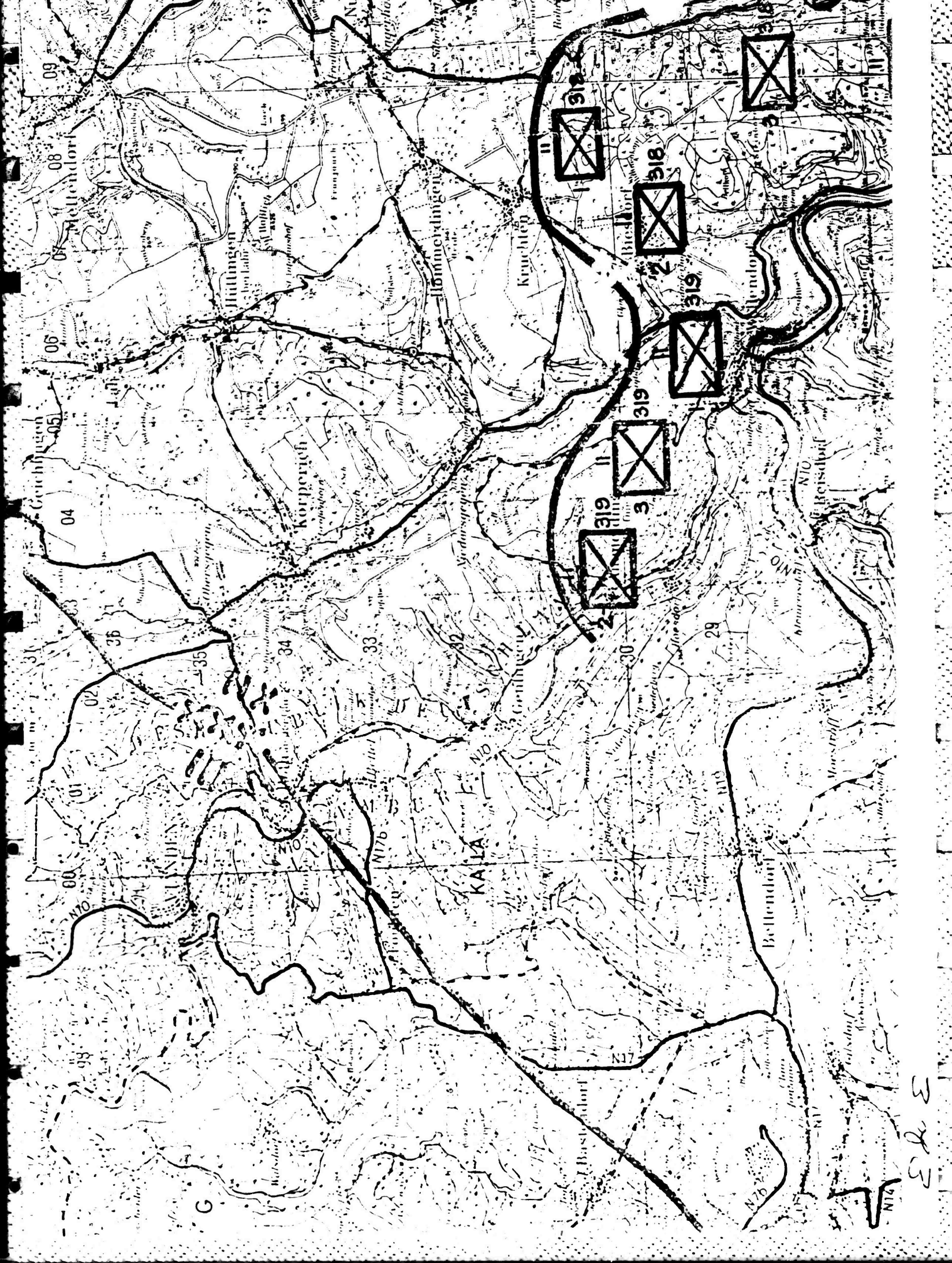
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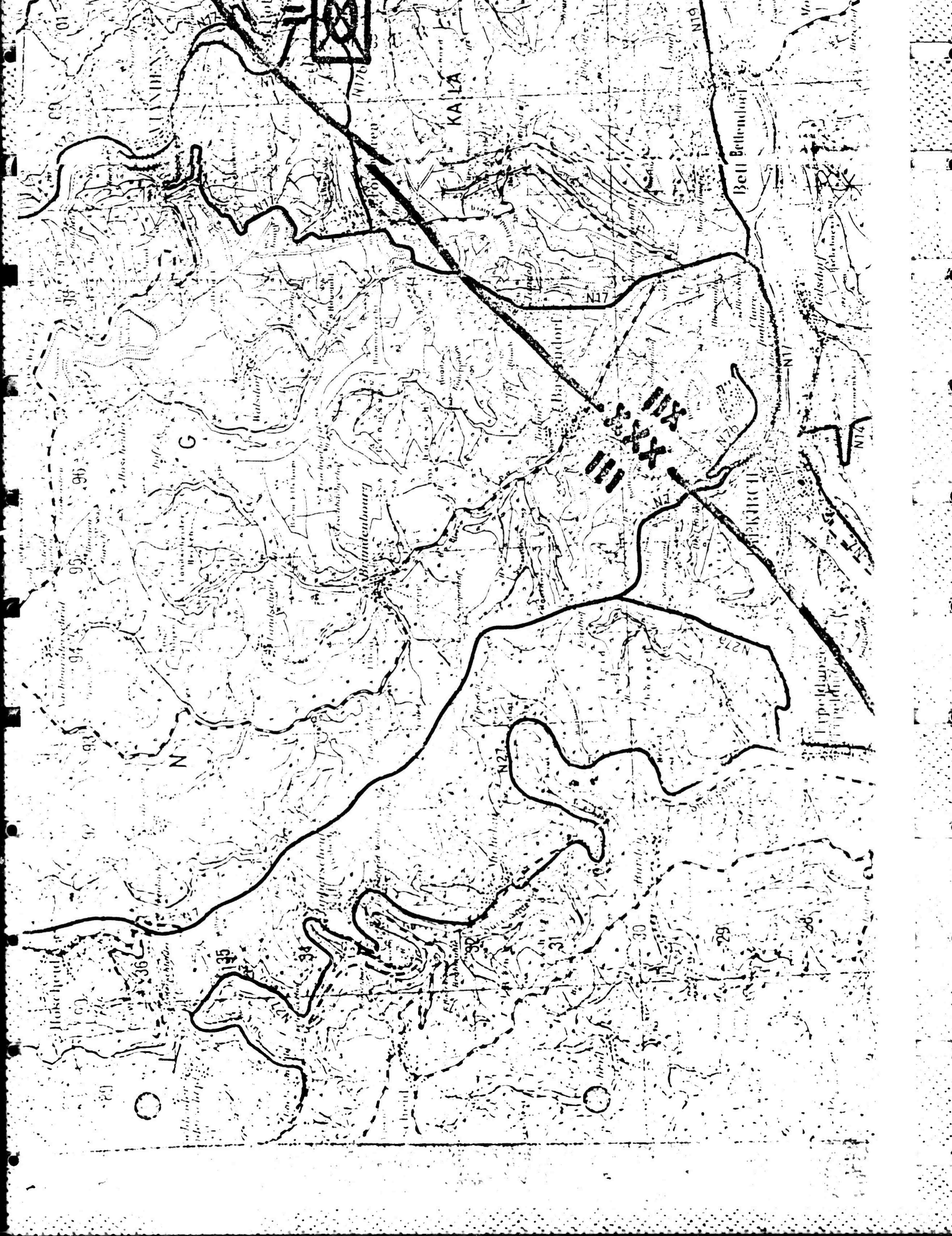
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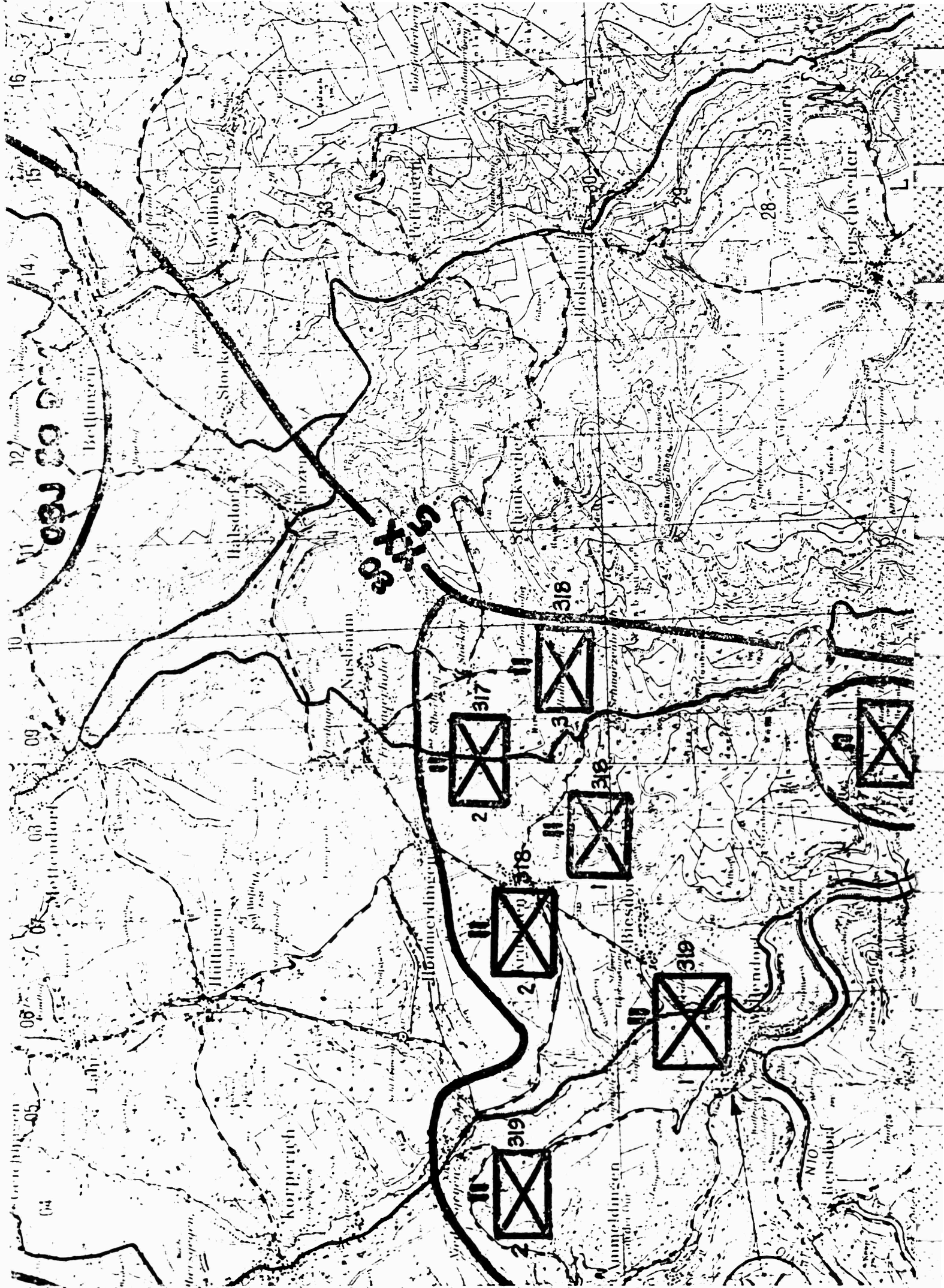
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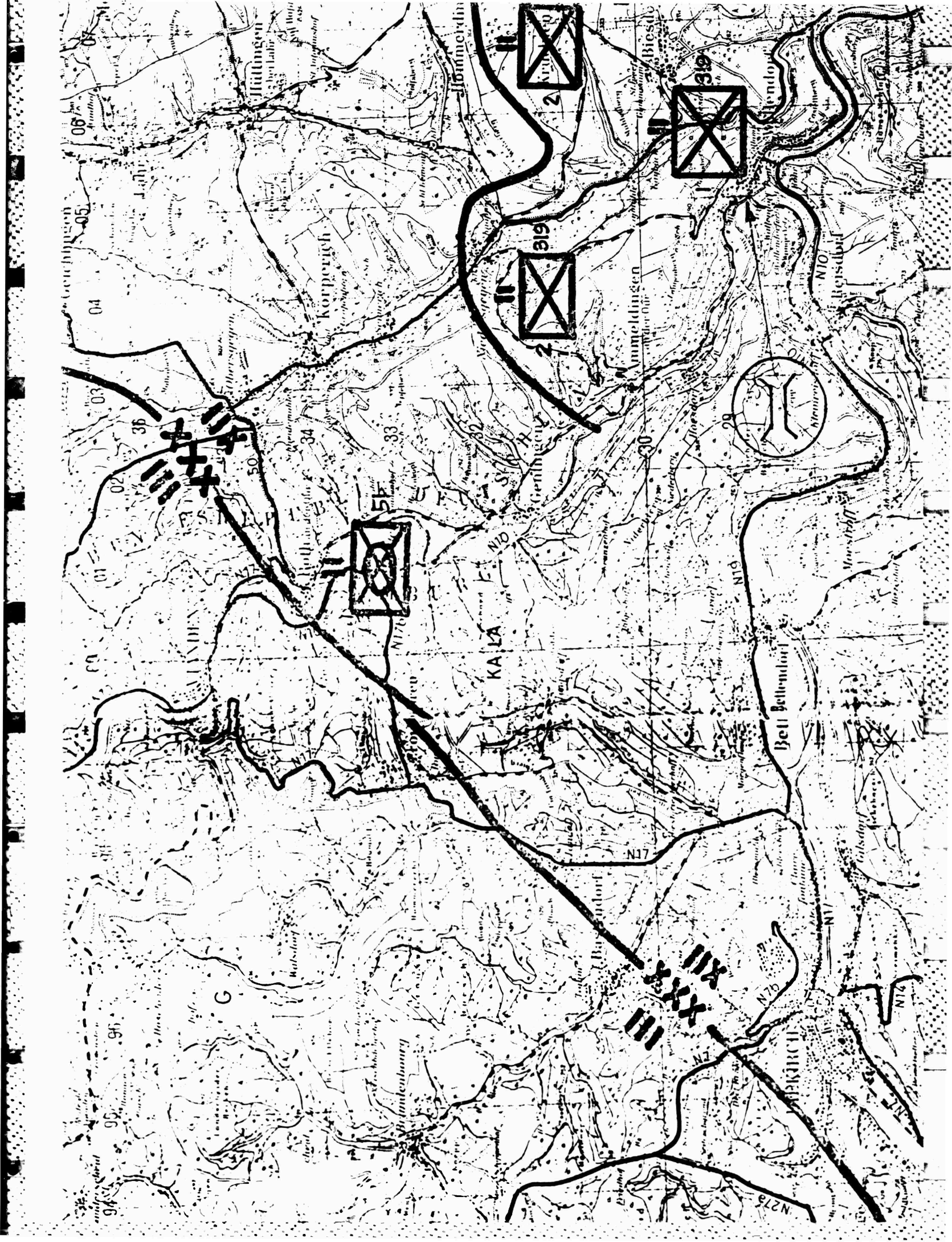
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APPENDIX 3

80th INFANTRY DIVISION

"Blue Ridge Division"

The division insignia is a white bordered escutcheon of gold emblazoned with three azure blue mountain peaks. It symbolizes the three "Blue Ridge" States, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia, from which the majority of the 80th's World War I personnel were drawn.

HISTORY OF THE 80TH DIVISION

Since the 80th Infantry Division's crossing of the Sauer River is the focus of this paper, it is necessary to take a closer look at it the unit. The division had been originally organized from men from West Virginia, Virginia, and Pennsylvania, in August 1917 at Camp Lee, Virginia, and in May 1918, the "Blue Ridge" Division deployed overseas to France. During the fighting that followed, the 80th Infantry Division operated in northern France in the vicinity of the Meuse River and through the Argonne forest. It performed admirably during the war and was the third most active division in the AEF most days in contact after the Second and First Divisions.

The Division was demobilized on 5 June 1919 at Camp Lee, Virginia but was reconstituted in June 1921 and allotted to the organized Reserve.

In July 1942 the 80th Division was reactivated at

Camp Forrest, Tennessee. The period from July 1942 through July 1943 was marked with the receipt of troops and unit training. July 1943 through August 1943 the Division participated in the Second Army, Tennessee maneuvers. In September 1943 the divisions moved to Camp Phillips, Kansas and in November 1943 they participated in the California-Arizona Maneuver Area under Pacific Defense Cmd.

The Division was initially commanded by MG Joseph D. Patch. In June 1944 the 80th embarked for the European theater of Operations and arrived in England. Shortly after arrival MG Horace L. McBride assumed command. Although the division did not participate in the D-day landing, on 3 August it moved from England to Les Dunes DeVilla Varres (Utah Beach) France. The Division initially was assigned to Patton's Third Army, XX Corps and upon arrival in France was in virtually continuous combat until the surrender of Germany.

August through 21 October 1944 the 80th Division conducted mopping up, river crossing counterattack, and defensive operations under the control of XV, V, XII, XXI Corps.

On 21 October 1944 General Bradley ordered the 12th Army Group to drive to the Rhine. 80th Division as part of

Third Army spearheaded the attack.

On 19 December 1944 the 80th Division was reassigned to the III Corps to assist in the attack on the southern flank of the "Bulge."

On 26 December 1944 the 80th was reassigned to the XII Corps and in February 1945 made the assault river crossing of the Sauer River, which will be addressed in more detail in subsequent chapters.

Throughout the war the 80th sustained 25,472 casualties or 180% of assigned strength. They participated in the campaigns of Northern France, Ardennes, Rhineland, and Central Europe, and captured 212,295 POWs.

The US TO&E infantry division of World War II was designed to be lean and streamlined. This structure was the result of General Lesley J. McNair's (Army Ground Forces Commander) personal philosophy on tactical organization. McNair's overriding guideline was to concentrate a maximum of men and equipment in offensive striking units capable of destroying the enemy's capacity for resistance. He attempted to do this by minimizing the number of noncombatant soldiers, holding down nontactical overhead, and by making tactical staffs small and efficient. Headquarters companies, staffs, and administrative personnel were kept

small by eliminating unnecessary links in the chain of command and by reducing paperwork. Combat units were streamlined for quick, decisive action. They consisted of only those personnel and equipment that were required at all times. Other assets were held in a reserve pool under higher headquarters. These pools were intended to maximize the use of these assets by preventing idleness and allow rapid massing for concentrated use. Transportation and special equipment of all kinds was usually pooled. As a result of McNair's ideas, the infantry divisions had been restructured in 1942 from the old square divisions of 22,000 men to a triangular division of about 15,000 men. By 1943, the strength of the infantry divisions had decreased to an authorized level of 14,253. The division had three infantry regiments, a field artillery brigade, and auxiliary units (reconnaissance troop, engineer battalion, etc.). The principle individual weapons were the 30 caliber rifle and the 30 caliber automatic machine gun. Mortars and 105-mm howitzers provided indirect fire while 57-mm antitank guns and antitank rocket launchers were designated to counter the armor threat. Tanks were attached as needed.

80th INFANTRY DIVISION

WORLD WAR TWO

COMMAND AND STAFF

Comdg Gen	7 Jul 1944	Maj Gen Horace L McBride
Asst Div Comdr	7 Jul 1944	Brig Gen Owen Summers
	7 Mar 1945	Col George W. Smythe
	1 May 1945	Brig Gen George W. Smythe
Arty Comdr	7 Jul 1944	Brig Gen Edmund W. Searby
	19 Sep 1944	Brig Gen Jay MacKelvie
CofS	7 Jul 1944	Col Max S. Johnson
	10 Jan 1945	Col Samuel P Walker
ACofS G-1	7 Jul 1944	Lt Col Leon O Clayton
ACofS G-2	7 Jul 1944	Maj Richard R. Fleisher
	15 Sep 1944	Lt Col Richard R Fleisher
ACofS G-3	7 Jul 1944	Lt Col Augustus G Elegar
ACofS G-4	7 Jul 1944	Lt Col Erland L. Sandberg
ACofS G-5	7 Jul 1944	Maj Edmund A Ball
	16 Nov 1944	Lt Col Edmund A Ball
Adj Gen	7 Jul 1944	Lt Col John W. Trone
CO 317th Inf	7 Jul 1944	Col A Donald Cameron
	3 Oct 1944	Col Warfield m Lewis
	4 Dec 1944	Lt Col Henry G. Fisher
CO 318th Inf	7 Jul 1944	Col Harry D. McHugh
	13 Sep 1944	Col Milton C. Shattuck
	26 Sep 1944	Col Lansing McVickar

	15 Jan 1945	Col James S. Lockett
CO 319th Inf	7 Jul 1944	Col Orion L Davidson
	22 Nov 1944	Col William N Taylor
	13 Feb 1945	Col Normando A Costello

STATISTICS

Chronology

Campaigns

Activated	15 Jul 42	Northern France
Arrived ETO	7 Jul 42	Ardennes
Arrived Continent (D+58)	3 Aug 44	Rhineland
Entered Combat	8 Aug 44	Central Europe
Days in Combat	239	

Casualties (Tentative)

Individual Awards

Killed	2,614	DSC	3
		DFC	
		Legion of Merit	
Wounded	10,795	Silver Star	67
Missing	654	Soldiers Medal	3
Captured	397	Bronze Star	355
	-----	Air Medal	12
Battle Casualties	14,460		
Non-Battle Casualties	11,012		

Total Casualties	25,472		

		Fws Taken	212,29
Percent of T/O Strength	180.8		

COMPOSITION

Organic Units

317th Infantry	80th Reconnaissance Troop (Mecz)
318th Infantry	305th Engineer Combat Battalion
319th infantry	305th Medical Battalion

80th Division Artillery

313th Field Artillery Battalion (105 Howitzer)
314th Field Artillery Battalion (105 Howitzer)
315th Field Artillery Battalion (155 Howitzer)
905th Field Artillery Battalion (105 Howitzer)

Special Troops

780th Ordnance Light Maintenance Company
80th Quartermaster Company
80th Signal Company
Military Police Platoon
Headquarters Company
Band

ATTACHMENTS

Antiaircraft Artillery

633d AAA AW Bn (Mbl)	9 Aug 44 - 13 May 45
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Armored

702d TK Bn (-Co D)	8 Aug 44 - 27 Feb 45
Co D 702d Tk Bn	8 Aug 44 - 1 Mar 45
CC B (4th Armd Div)	29 Jan 45 - 4 Feb 45
CC B (4th Armd Div)	21 Feb 45 - 24 Feb 45
702d Tk Bn	11 Mar 45 - 7 Jul 45

Cavalry

42d Rcn Sq (2d Cav Gp)	23 Nov 44 - 6 Dec 44
2d Cav Rcn Sq (2d Cav Gp)	1 Dec 44 - 6 Dec 44
16th Cav Gp	27 Mar 45 - 31 Mar 45

Chemical

Co A 91st Cml Mort Bn	5 Jan 45 - 12 Jan 45
Co B 91st Cml Mort Bn	5 Jan 45 - 28 Jan 45
Co A 91st Cml Mort Bn	28 Jan 45 - 10 Mar 45
Co A 81st Cml Mort Bn	11 Mar 45 - 18 Apr 45
Co B 81st Cml Mort Bn	27 Mar 45 - 12 Apr 45
Co A 94th Cml Mort Bn	29 Apr 45 - 1 May 45

94th Cml Mort Bn (-Co A)

29 Apr 45 - 11 May 45

Infantry

328th Inf (26th Div) 4 Oct 44 - 14 Oct 44

53d Armd Inf Bn (4th Armd Div) 4 Feb 45 - 9 Feb 45

51st Armd Inf Bn (4th Armd Div) 4 Feb 45 - 18 Feb 45

53d Armd inf Bn (4th Armd Div) 20 Feb 45 - 21 Feb 45

Tank Destroyer

610th TD Bn (SP) 9 Aug 44 - 25 Sep 44

691st TD Bn (T) 16 Sep 44 - 18 Sep 44

808th TD Bn (SP) 25 Sep 44 - 21 Dec 44

Co C 602d TD Bn (SP) 4 Oct 44 - 14 Oct 44

610th TD Bn (SP) 23 Nov 44 - 6 Dec 44

610th TD Bn (SP) 21 Dec 44 - 28 Jan 45

Co A 631st TD Bn (T) 7 Jan 45 - 20 Jan 45

802d TD Bn (T) 28 Jan 45 - 4 Feb 45

811th TD Bn (SP) 3 Feb 45 - 4 Jul 45

Co B 603d TD Bn (SP) 4 Apr 45 - 9 Apr 45

DETACHMENTS

(Attached To)

Infantry

319th Inf XX Corps 10 Aug 44 - 15 Aug 44

319th Inf VIII Corps 16 Aug 44 - 21 Aug 44

319th Inf	XII Corps	22 Aug 44 - 27 Aug 44
319th Inf	4th Armd Div	11 Sep 44 - 15 Sep 44
1st Bn 318th Inf	4th Armd Div	12 Sep 44 - 15 Sep 44
1st & 2d Bns 318th Inf	4th Armd Div	24 Dec 44 - 28 Dec 44
319th Inf	4th Div	26 Jan 45 - 28 Jan 45
3d Bn 317th Inf	4th Div	26 Jan 45 - 25 Feb 45
2d & 3d Bns 318th Inf	4th Div	26 Jan 45 - 25 Feb 45
319th Inf	4th Armd Div	29 Jan 45 - 4 Feb 45
318th Inf	76th Div	1 Mar 45 - 3 Mar 45
319th Inf	76th Div	8 Mar 45 - 9 Mar 45
318th Inf	10th Armd Div	16 Mar 45 - 18 Mar 45
1st & 3d Bns 318th Inf	10th Armd Div	19 Mar 45 - 22 Mar 45
318th Inf	6th Armd Div	30 Mar 45 - 1 Apr 45

ASSIGNMENT AND ATTACHMENT

To Higher Units

DATE	CORPS	ARMY		ARMY GP & OTHER	
		Asgd	Atchd	Asgd	Atchd
11 Jun 44	XII	Third		ETOUSA	
1 Aug 44	XII	Third		12th	
7 Aug 44	XX	Third		12th	
8 Aug 44	XV	Third		12th	
10 Aug 44	XX	Third		12th	

17 Aug 44	V	Third	First	12th
23 Aug 44		Third		12th
26 Aug 44	XII	Third		12th
19 Dec 44	III	Third		12th
26 Dec 44	XII	Third		12th
10 Mar 45	XX	Third		12th

(-) Indicates relieved from assignment.

COMMAND POSTS

DATE	TOWN	REGION	COUNTRY
1944			
13 Jun	Liverpool (Adv)	Lancashire	England
14 Jun	Sandiway (3/4 mi SW Pettypool Hall) (Adv)	Cheshire	England
7 Jul	Sandiway (3/4 mi SW; Pettypool Hall (MB)	Cheshire	England
31 Jul	Salisbury (marshalling area V-1)	Wiltshire	England
3 Aug	St-Jores (1/4 mi NE)	Manche	France
9 Aug	Montsuer	Mayenne	France
11 Aug	Amne (vic SW)	Sarthe	France
13 Aug	St-Mars	Sarthe	France
15 Aug	Jublains	Mayenne	France
17 Aug	Alencon	Orne	France
17 Aug	Almeneches	Orne	France
26 Aug	Valetien (1/4 mi NE)	Aube	France
27 Aug	St-Flavy (2 mi E)	Aube	France
28 Aug	Villesseneux (1 1/2 mi NE)	Marne	France
30 Aug	La Veuve (1/2 mi E)	Marne	France
1 Sep	Vignot (2 mi E)	Meuse	France
3 Sep	Girauvoisin (1 mi E)	Meuse	France

4 Sep	Limey (1 mi SW)	Meurthe-et-Moselle	France
12 Sep	Mamey (2 mi E)	Meurthe-et-Moselle	France
18 Sep	Dieulouard (1/2 mi N)	Meurthe-et-Moselle	France
19 Sep	Dieulouard (6 mi S)	Meurthe-et-Moselle	France
25 Sep	Dieulouard (2 mi S)	Meurthe-et-Moselle	France
27 Sep	Dieulouard (2 mi N)	Meurthe-et-Moselle	France
29 Sep	Belleville	Meurthe-et-Moselle	France
13 Oct	Ville-au-Val	Meurthe-et-Moselle	France
10 Nov	Mailly	Moselle	France
11 Nov	Liocourt	Moselle	France
13 Nov	St-Epvre	Moselle	France
16 Nov	Lesse	Moselle	France
24 Nov	Charbonnages	Moselle	France
28 Nov	St-Avoid	Moselle	France
18 Dec	Bining	Moselle	France
20 Dec	Luxembourg		Luxembg
21 Dec	Dommeldange		Luxembg
22 Dec	Reckange les Mersch		Luxembg

1945

6 Jan	Oberfeulen		Luxembg
24 Jan	Wiltz		Luxembg
28 Jan	Fels		Luxembg
18 Feb	Bettendorf		Luxembg
26 Feb	Mettendorf	Rhineland	Germany
6 Mar	Rittersdorf	Rhineland	Germany
11 Mar	Mondorf	Rhineland	Germany
13 Mar	Beurig	Rhineland	Germany
17 Mar	Losheim	Rhineland	Germany
19 Mar	St Wendel	Rhineland	Germany
20 Mar	Glen-Munchweiler	Pfalz	Germany
21 Mar	Kaiserslautern	Pfalz	Germany
21 Mar	Bad Durkheim	Pfalz	Germany
24 Mar	Rockenhausen	Pfalz	Germany
27 Mar	Mainz	Hessen-Nassau	Germany
29 Mar	Wiesbaden	Hessen	Germany
30 Mar	Lich	Oberhessen	Germany
31 Mar	Neukirchen	Hessen-Nassau	Germany
1 Apr	Homburg	Hessen-Nassau	Germany
4 Apr	Oberzwehren	Hessen-Nassau	Germany
7 Apr	Gotha	Thuringia	Germany
12 Apr	Dietendorf	Thuringia	Germany
13 Apr	Weimar	Thuringia	Germany

14 Apr	Gera	Thuringia	Germany
16 Apr	Limbach	Saxony	Germany
19 Apr	Schesslitz	Bavaria	Germany
22 Apr	Nurnburg	Bavaria	Germany
29 Apr	Ziegelsdorf	Bavaria	Germany
30 Apr	Ergoldsbach	Bavaria	Germany
2 May	Frontenhausen	Bavaria	Germany
3 May	Simbach	Bavaria	Germany
5 May	Vocklabruck	Ober Oester-	Germany