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HELL ON WHEELS IN THE

DRIVE TO THE ROER

2d Armored Division

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IN THE
DRIVE TO THE ROER

**HELL ON WHEELS IN THE DRIVE TO THE ROER
(THE EMPLOYMENT OF THE 2nd ARMORED DIVISION IN
A LIMITED OBJECTIVE ATTACK)**

A RESEARCH REPORT PREPARED

BY

COMMITTEE 5, OFFICERS ADVANCED COURSE

THE ARMORED SCHOOL

1948-1949

MAJOR LINDEN K. CANNON, Jr.

MAJOR ALEXANDER G. FRASER, Jr.

MAJOR THOMAS S. JONES

MAJOR EUGENE SAFFOLD

CAPTAIN DAVID E. FOSTER

CAPTAIN JAMES D. McLANACHAN

CAPTAIN MAX R. MACHNICKE

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PREFACE

This report describes the 2nd Armored Division's limited objective attack from 16 to 28 November 1944 in the ROER River Offensive against a grimly defended segment of the SIEGFRIED LINE. To find an example of a limited objective attack by armor in World War II is difficult because tanks by their nature seek always to thrust deep and break free in the enemy's rear areas where they can wreak the maximum damage. In this operation the attack was limited by the ROER River from any hope or possibility of a breakthrough.

Although the term limited objective is familiar to all military students; no official, printed definition is available. The definition at the beginning of Chapter II that a limited objective is normally within the enemy battle position was hammered out by our committee with the help of faculty members of the Command and Staff Department, The Armored School.

In order to present a clear, unbroken narrative of the action, many interesting sidelights have been omitted. Those which are vital to a thorough understanding of the operation have been added as appendices. Since this report is a study of an armored limited objective attack, the tank actions have been stressed. Although infantry and artillery participation has not been described in detail, the vital necessity for combined arms teamwork must not be overlooked.

We are indebted to Major M. J. L. Greene and Mr. Joe M. Hibbs, both of the Research and Evaluation Department, The Armored School, for their meticulous editing of our manuscript. Their helpful suggestions are responsible for whatever clarity and unity the reader may find in our narrative.

Records and accounts of the planning phase are meager, no doubt because they were never written down in permanent form until they became decisions and orders. However, Major Greene provided us with ample after action reports, unit histories, and documents dealing with the battle.

We were particularly fortunate in obtaining first hand accounts from members of the 2nd Armored Division who participated in the events. Brigadier General John H. Collier, former commander of CCA; Colonel Paul A. Disney, who commanded the 67th Armored Regiment; Lieutenant Colonel Frank M. Muller, assistant division G-4 during the operation; Major H. S. Long, Jr., commander of the 2nd Battalion, 66th Armored Regiment; and Major Paul A. Bane, executive officer of the 3rd Battalion, 67th Armored Regiment gave their time generously to answer our questions. We gratefully record our thanks to them and to Major General Ernest N. Harmon, former division commander, for their interest and assistance.

Major Linden K. Cannon, Jr.
Major Alexander G. Fraser, Jr.
Major Thomas S. Jones
Major Eugene Saffold
Captain David E. Foster
Captain James D. McLanachan
Captain Max R. Machnicke

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A month before the Battle of the Bulge the newspaper headlines in the United States screamed "~~ALLIES~~ STRIKE FOR FINAL VICTORY IN THE WEST."¹ The November Offensive on the Western Front had jumped off. Preceded by Third Army's push 8 November in LORRAINE toward the SAAR, the entire front from the SCHELDT to the VOSGES drove forward on 16 November toward the RHINE. Little wonder that Hanson W. Baldwin, military analyst of the New York Times exclaimed exuberantly, "A great Allied attempt to end the war with Germany this year started last week...."²

But the men of the 2nd Armored Division had a more limited objective. Not BERLIN, but a slight rise in the muddy ground north of GERONSWELLER, GERMANY, was their goal³ and they expected a dogged, desperate battle to get there. They had good reason. Along with the rest of the Allied Armies they had outrun their supply lines in the wild dash from NORMANDY across FRANCE; and now after a month's delay they faced a reorganized German army securely defending the famous SIEGFRIED LINE area.

To the south the grim battle for AACHEN just ended had demonstrated the enemy capability of tenacious defense. And we now know from a postwar statement by the commander of the German XLVII Corps, which opposed the 2nd Armored Division, that he had been ordered to hold ~~at all costs as part of the~~ counter-offensive which Hitler was even then planning. "Neither the (German)

troops nor (their) leaders knew at this time that an advance on MAASTRICH was intended to take place from the bridgehead at ROERMOND in connection with the offensive in the ARDENNES. Therefore the unconditional demand that no ground be given up."⁴

These defenders facing the 2nd Armored Division held a deep belt of strongly fortified towns stretching to the ROER River, with mutually supporting fields of fire surrounding each town. An attacker could find little cover in the gently rolling fields between these fiercely defended strong points. Besides these fortifications a sea of mud covered the entire battle area, restricting wheeled vehicles to paved roads and making the going, even for tanks, almost impossible.⁵ To his staff General Simpson, the Ninth Army commander, said succinctly, "I expect one hell of a fight."⁶

In General Eisenhower's overall plan the First, Third, and Ninth Armies were to attack to the RHINE with General Simpson's Ninth Army protecting the left flank of the First.⁷ Ninth Army assigned its main effort to XIX Corps, commanded by Major General Raymond S. McLain. This Corps was composed of three veteran divisions - the 2nd Armored Division commanded by Major General Ernest N. Harmon, the 29th Infantry Division commanded by Major General Charles H. Gerhardt, and Major General Leland S. Hobbs' 30th Infantry Division. The 2nd Armored Division's combat record went back to the NORTH AFRICAN landings and the SICILIAN campaign,

while all three divisions had been outstanding in the NORMANDY campaign and the ST LO breakthrough. (See Appendix I-C for background of 2nd Armored Division.)

XIX Corps planned its main effort with the 29th and 30th Divisions making a combined attack on JULICH to establish a bridgehead across the ROER. The 2nd Armored Division protecting their northern flank would drive northeast to two objectives, GERFONSWILLER and BARMEN, from its positions along the line WAURICHEN-BEGGENDORF.⁸ (See Appendix VIII-A for map.) By going as far as the first objective, GERFONSWILLER, the 2nd Armored Division would seize the high ground at hill 98 dominating LINNICH on the ROER River. Then the 102nd Infantry Division would pass through to reach the river and make a crossing. The capture of the second objective, BARMEN, would deny the enemy his last north-south communications west of the ROER and protect the left flank of the 29th Division attack on JULICH and its subsequent crossing of the ROER. From an assembly area in the vicinity of BARMEN the 2nd Armored Division would prepare to follow the 29th across the ROER.

For the 2nd Armored Division the operation was divided into two distinct efforts. Poised like a boxer on the line WAURICHEN-BEGGENDORF it planned first to throw a left jab northeast to GERFONSWILLER, and then a punch with the right due east to BARMEN. Brigadier General I. D. White's Combat Command B would make the left jab to GERFONSWILLER and then turn its sector over

to the 102nd Division of XIII Corps which would drive on from GEREONSMETER to LINNICH. At that time the Corps boundary would shift to south of EDEREN. (See Appendix VIII-B for map.) The punch with the right would be made by Combat Command A, commanded by Brigadier General (then Colonel) John H. Collier, after CCB's attack and after the 29th Division had cleared SETTERICH. Then it would drive through SETTERICH, EDEREN and FREIALDENHOVEN to seize MERZENHAUSEN and BARMEN. (For attack order see Appendix VI.)

On the left of the 2nd Armored Division the front curved back beyond WAURICHEN. CCB's drive would deepen a salient already created by the German possession of GEILENKIRCHEN to the left rear of WAURICHEN. The 84th Division of XIII Corps was placed under British 30 Corps for the reduction of GEILENKIRCHEN to widen the salient before XIII Corps passed the 102nd Division through CCB at GEREONSMETER to make XIII Corps' main effort against LINNICH.

"To sum up, the mission of the XIX Corps was to establish a bridgehead at JULICH and to advance within striking distance of LINNICH. The mission of British 30 Corps was to facilitate the movements of the XIX and XIII Corps by reducing the GEILENKIRCHEN salient."⁹ XIII Corps had the mission of carrying the ball beyond CCB's objective at GEREONSMETER to seize a bridgehead at LINNICH. Thus 2nd Armored Division's mission was a limited objective attack between the main effort of XIX Corps on the right to JULICH and XIII Corps' main effort on the left to LINNICH.

Due to unfavorable weather the attack originally planned for 10 Nov was postponed day by day until 16 Nov. At 1245 that day, following an air strike greater than the memorable carpet bombing at ST LO, the armies attacked.¹⁰ In the 2nd Armored Division sector CCB's initial objectives, IMMEDNORF and PUFFENDORF fell the first day, but the reduction of APWEILER required three days. The 9th Panzer Division counter attacked the morning of 17 Nov in the biggest tank battle in 2nd Armored experience¹¹ delaying the capture of ~~GERSTENWALDER~~ until 20 Nov. Meanwhile CCA attacked 18 Nov through EDEREN and FRIEDENHOVEN to secure MERZENHAUSEN and BARMEN, which fell 28 Nov.

This operation demonstrates above all that ARMOR DRAWS ARMOR. The German commanders considered the presence of 2nd Armored Division such a threat that they drew in all available armored units to meet it. The 9th Panzer Division, 15th Panzer Grenadier Division and 10th SS Panzer Division were all committed against the 2nd Armored Division despite the necessity to hoard every tank for the ARDENNES counter-offensive. Yet the 2nd Armored Division was making only a limited objective attack blocked by the ROER River from any possibility of a decisive breakthrough. On each flank a corps main effort thrust out for a bridgehead-- XIX Corps' 29th Division against JULICH on the south and XIII Corps' 102nd Division toward LINNICH on the north. What would have happened if these German tanks had counter-attacked either of these infantry drives? The psychological effect of armor in

drawing enemy strength appears clearly in this action.

In referring to the campaign, General Simpson said that heavy weight German armor caused a high battle loss rate to our lighter armored and gunned tanks. However, he added that the 2nd Armored Division inflicted heavy losses on the 9th Panzer and 15th Panzer Grenadier Divisions and diverted this enemy armor from attack against our infantry divisions.¹²

NOTES OF CHAPTER I

1. New York Times, Sunday 19 Nov 44.
2. Ibid.
3. Ninth United States Army, Operations IV, Offensive in November, 4th Information and Historical Service, p. 8.
4. Statement, Gen. d. Pz. Tr. Heinrich Freiherr v. Luettwitz, comdr. XLVII Corps in the Rhineland, Allendorf, 11 June 47, (Translated by Christensen) p. 7.
5. Op. Cit., Ninth Army, p. 37.
6. Ibid., p. 8.
7. Letter of Instruction, Twelfth Army Group, 21 Oct 44.
8. Op. Cit., Ninth Army, pp. 5-8 and 37 (All facts in remaining portion of chapter are from this document unless otherwise noted).
9. Ibid., p. 8.
10. Report of Operations, First United States Army, 1 Aug 44-22 Feb 45, p. 73.
11. Op. Cit., Ninth Army, p. 65 and statement Col. Paul A. Disney, former commander 67th Armored Regiment, in interview Fort Knox, Ky Nov 48.
12. Op. Cit., Ninth Army, p. 251.

CHAPTER II

PLANNING A LIMITED OBJECTIVE ATTACK

The 2nd Armored Division's limited objective attack required especially careful planning. This type of attack varies from the normal armored operation which seeks a break through followed by exploitation in the enemy's rear areas. It is an attack in which the objective is within the enemy battle position and the commander has no intention of continuing the attack immediately beyond that point. No plans are made for an exploitation and all effort is directed toward taking, securing, and defending the objective.

Since the objective is within the battle position, the tactics employed are like those of the penetration rather than the exploitation. The objective is relatively close and it is defended by an organized enemy. Resistance will be continuous and immediate heavy counterattacks may be expected.

Being close, the limited objective offers fewer avenues of approach and fewer choices of maneuver plans than a more distant objective. This restriction of maneuver makes detailed planning more possible than for an attack on a distant objective, which offers infinite variations and possibilities for maneuver. The deliberate planning is more necessary because of the heavy resistance which is likely to be encountered. This applies equally to the 2nd Armored Division's objectives of GEREDNSWEILER and BARMEN.

The timely receipt of the XIX Corps order afforded General Harmon and his staff ample time to make complete plans for this limited objective attack against a strongly fortified position. He ordered the division engineer to construct a large sand table representing the division zone of attack. This table proved to be an invaluable training aid during the weeks of preparation which followed. Key personnel from each combat battalion were oriented hereon. Each battalion commander ordered the construction of smaller sand tables representing the terrain in their particular zones.

Each company commander briefed his tank crews on the battalion table so that when H-Hour arrived all crew members knew the part that they would play in the overall plan. This type of planning, so necessary in an attack against a strongly organized position, paid great dividends because it eliminated all hesitation and confusion.¹

Because of the flatness of the ground in the division zone, built-up areas assumed an importance not normally given them. These areas commanded virtually all crossroads and bridges. (See appendix IV for terrain study.) Around all these key points the Germans constructed defensive positions in depth all the way back to the ROER River.

In addition the enemy dug extensive anti-tank ditches between these strong points. These ditches were approximately ten feet wide and often eight feet deep. Two were encountered in

the division sector, one beginning northwest of APWEILER and extending south to a point west of LOVERICH, with several gaps near FLOVERICH. A more continuous ditch protected the western approaches to EDEREN and FREIALDENHOVEN. Neither of these ditches had been completed but were tied in with a system of fire trenches and foxholes.

Added to the obstacles, presented by natural and prepared defenses, was the mud. Soil trafficability was the concern of everyone from the Army Commander, Lt. Gen. W. H. Simpson, down to the Sherman tank commanders, who were to make the assault. General Harmon realizing that the condition of the soil was a deciding factor of the date of attack personally checked the soil daily.

The division drew up elaborate plans to overcome expected obstacles. First the anti-tank ditches had to be bridged--a problem increased by the anti-tank fire covering these ditches. Included in the plan was the decision to drive certain tanks into the ditches and quickly doze them over thereby forming a bridge. Another method was a bridge, improvised by the 17th Armored Engineer Battalion, capable of supporting a medium tank and transported by a T-2 Tank Retriever (see plate 2). This retriever would accompany the leading tanks prepared to bridge any ditch they met. It was expected that, despite the addition of track connector extensions (duck bills), the boggy ground would still mire the vehicles.



Plate 2

A tank retriever similar to that improvised by the 17th Armored Engineer Battalion for crossing Anti-Tank ditches.

U. S. Army Photo graph

190093

All light and medium tanks carried logs approximately nine feet in length and four to six inches in diameter. These logs would help increase flotation. Lashed in bundles they were carried on the rear decks of the tanks. However, it was seldom necessary to use them because the tanks traversed the ground easily in first and second gear. The area covered by the fighting was dotted by log piles, after the tank crews decided to cut loose their unused burden.²

Additional obstacles confronting the division were minefields and barbed wire concertinas employed to block avenues of approach and gaps in the prepared defenses. The numerous minefields, both anti-tank and anti-personnel, which the enemy had prepared were gapped by the engineer units attached to each assault battalion.

General Harmon, realizing that secrecy in the attack was practically an impossibility, devised a very effective plan of deception. This was to confuse the Germans as to when the assault battalions moved to their attack positions. Several nights before the attack tank platoons, first from CCB and later CCA, moved in and out of WAURICHEN and BEGGENDORF during the night. The first few nights this movement received hostile mortar and artillery fire and also caused the enemy to discharge flares along his front. Eventually this movement ceased to alarm the Germans. Except for the usual amount of harassing and interdiction fire the front remained quiet.

Logistics

The logistical situation within the division was generally adequate; however, some problems did arise. Although the tank strength was almost 100%, about half of the M4's were of the old model, armed with 75 MM guns. Track connector extensions for full track vehicles had not been received in sufficient quantity by the division. Therefore the division G-4 arranged with a manufacturer in LIEGE, BELGIUM, for the production of these attachments. By D-day nearly three-fourths of the vehicles had been equipped. After the installation of these extensions, tests indicated a considerable gain in cross country mobility. Some new equipment was received and a great deal of maintenance was performed on all organizational equipment. Certain ammunition in short supply was rationed by Army. The shortage of 105 MM, 81 MM and all HVAP was especially serious. (For detailed logistic report see Annex VII.)

Plan of Fire Support

The division artillery commander after studying the terrain and available enemy information devised a plan of fire support. By utilizing the 14th, 78th, 92nd, 65th and 83rd Armored Field Artillery Battalions (105 MM HOW), and the 258th and the 557th Field Artillery Battalions (155 MM Gun) he prepared an extensive thirty minute preparation to be fired prior to the time of attack. In addition to the artillery units mentioned above the 84th Infantry Division on the north flank agreed to place the

fire of its battalions on the initial objectives in CCB's zone of attack.

To thicken the artillery and to add additional close support to the leading elements of CCB, the artillery commander's plan provided for the massing of all assault gun and mortar platoons in centralized firing positions. Each platoon set up a fire direction center and fired first on prearranged missions during the preparation and then on-call missions, after the attack had been launched. In addition, an air observer from the 92nd AFA Bn adjusted fire on targets of opportunity. All platoons were placed on a common radio channel and were tied in to the air observer and also to division artillery fire direction center so that calls for fire from forward observers could be answered. This plan was intended to secure maximum fire support to the initial assault from the available weapons.

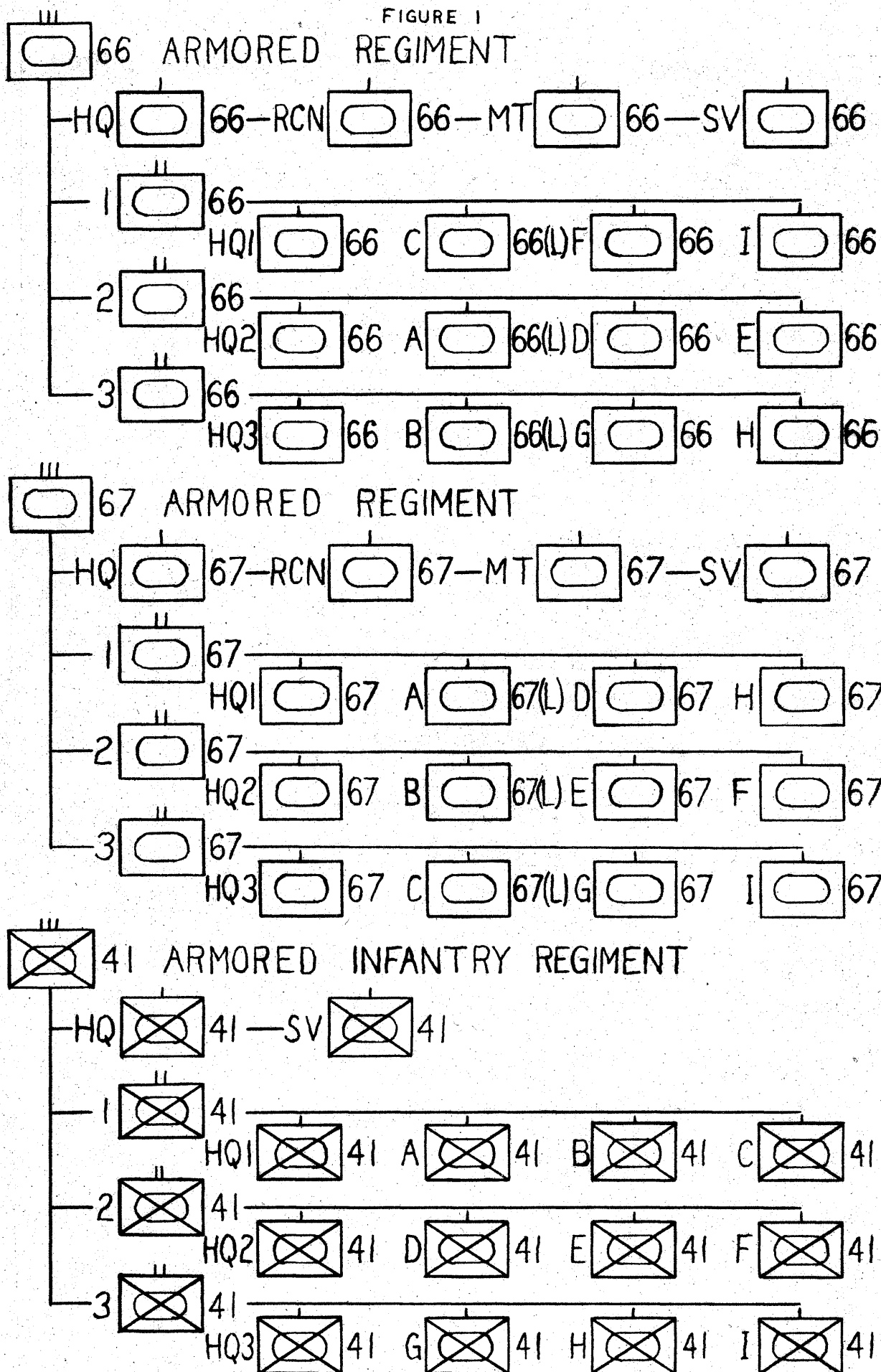
Preceding the thirty-minute artillery preparation the Allied Air Forces provided saturation bombing of enemy supply and communication centers and assembly points in the ROER River valley and towns east of the line of departure. IMMENDORF, FLOVERICH and LOVERICH were each struck by a squadron of fighter-bombers. Damage in the towns, though extensive, did not hinder the passage of the assault waves (see Appendix III for description of air preparation).

Order of Battle

The 2nd Armored Division's lack of armored infantry was especially serious in an attack of this kind against a fortified position. It was necessary to attach infantry from other divisions to make up the lack. It must be remembered that the 2nd Armored Division was one of the old "heavy" armored divisions, which was later replaced by the present light armored division. In the heavy division there were two armored (tank) regiments and one armored infantry regiment (see Figure 1 for organization) - a total of six tank battalions and three infantry battalions compared to the four tank and four infantry battalions in the present division. In other words there were roughly 50% more tanks and 25% less infantry in the heavy than in the present division. (However, one of the companies in each tank battalion was a light tank company.) One battalion of the 406th Infantry Regiment, 102nd Infantry Division which attacked with CCB on Nov 16, was not sufficient. Therefore, on

DETAILED REGIMENTAL ORGANIZATION

FIGURE 1

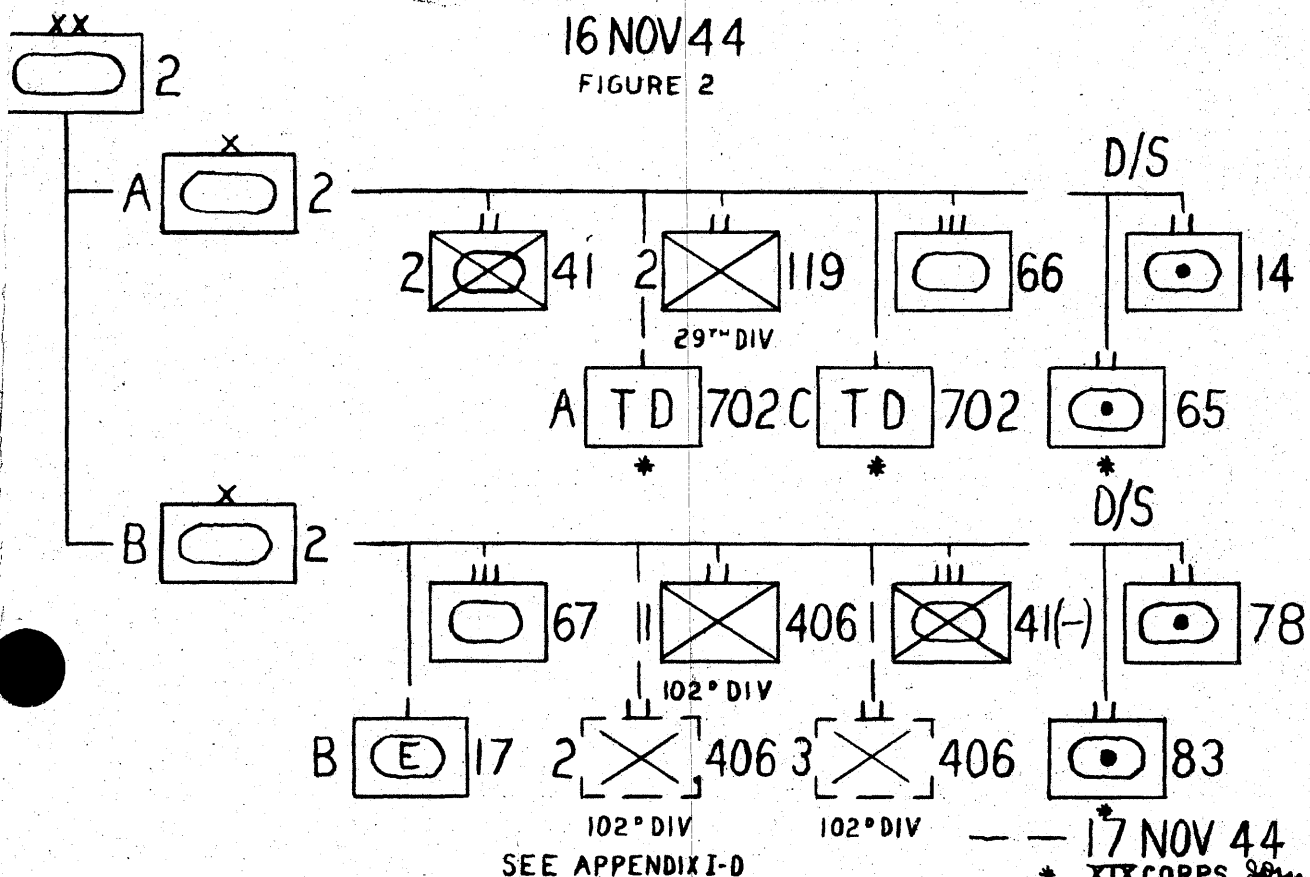


Nov 17, it was reinforced by the entire regiment. (See Fig 2 for attachments.)

MAJOR ATTACHMENTS

16 NOV 44

FIGURE 2



The general enemy situation indicated a delaying action on successive positions to a strong defensive along the ROER River. The sector in front of the 2nd Armored Division was defended by elements of two infantry regiments. A reconnaissance battalion and a separate machine gun battalion formed the main line of resistance, with one locally formed battle group (kampfgruppe) consisting of approximately forty tanks and one regiment of



All this detailed planning paid off in the assault 16 Nov. The air preparation, followed immediately by the execution of a coordinated artillery plan, stunned the defenders. Careful integration of attached infantry units into the division assured maximum striking power to the assault echelons. Although the measures for bridging the anti-tank ditches were found to be unnecessary, the detailed orientation of each individual on the sand tables gave the troops a confidence which added to the violence of their assault. Force 1 reached its objective within eight minutes and the attack was executed exactly as planned.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER II

1. Personal interview, Colonel Paul A. Disney, former Commander of 67th Armored Regiment, at Fort Knox, Kentucky, November 1948.
2. Ninth United States Army, Operation IV, Offensive in November (4th Information and Historical Service) p. 56.

CHAPTER III

THE ATTACK--FIRST DAY

Its detailed planning completed, the 2nd Armored Division attacked in column of combat commands, CCB leading. CCB had the mission of seizing the high ground north of GERFONSWELLER. To effectively cover the zone, General White (see Plate 3) organized his combat command into three task forces and assigned them that part of the zone most favorable for their employment. Colonel Paul A. Disney's tank heavy force struck on the south and captured LOVERICH and PUFFENDORF with a successive objective attack. Colonel Hillyard in the center seized FLOVERICH with his balanced tank-infantry force. Colonel James C. Reeves' infantry heavy force took IMMENDORF in the north.

Since the tremendous air bombardment preceeding the First and Ninth Armies' attack required favorable weather, D-day and H-hour could not be determined definitely in advance. Corps order set D-day as the first clear day after 10 November.

In preparation for the all out offensive, plans required units to move to attack positions during the period 10-11 November. During daylight on the 10th, assault guns and mortars of the 67th Armored Regiment and the 41st Armored Infantry Regiment, and the howitzers of the 78th and 83rd Armored Field Artillery Battalions moved forward to indirect fire positions prepared to support the attack. Division halted movement of other troops at 2330 Nov 10 upon receipt of orders postponing the attack. The units returned



Plate 3

BRIGADIER GENERAL I. D. WHITE
Commanding General
Combat Command B

to their original positions.¹ From 12 to 15 Nov the division was alerted daily. Finally, at 0400 hours 15 Nov Division received instructions from XIX Corps that D-day would be 16 Nov, H-hour to be announced. General White moved his combat command into attack positions beginning at 0020 on 16 Nov (see Appendix VIII-C for map). All units closed into their positions before daylight.

The three task forces of CCB attacked on a front of 3200 yards (for detailed composition see Appendix I-D). Task Force 1, commanded by Colonel Paul A. Disney, moved into its attack position in the BEGGENDORF-DRINHAUSEN area. Initially it was to seize LOVERICH, PUFFENDORF, and the high ground to the north. Task Force 2, under Lt. Col. Harry L. Hillyard, from its attack position 1,500 yards north of UBACH, was to take EDOVERICH, and strike for the high ground southeast of APWEILER. Task Force X, initially under Lt. Col. James C. Reeves, occupied an area in and around WAURICHEN.² Its mission--the capture and holding of IMMENDORF on the left flank. These forces planned to work independently in taking the three initial objectives; then cooperate in attaining further gains toward GERONSWEILER.

The air and artillery preparations the morning of 16 Nov proved very effective. 1204 American and 1188 British heavy bombers participated.³ They hit practically all of the towns in the immediate front of the 2nd Armored Division from the line of departure to the ROER River,⁴ (see appendix III for detailed study of the air strike). The weather did not clear sufficiently

for the air mission until late in the morning. Finally, word came at 0840 that H-hour would definitely be at 1245 and that the air strike would precede the attack. The artillery fired a 30 minute preparation beginning at H minus 30. It included the fires of 2nd Armored Division Artillery, 84th Infantry Division Artillery, battalions of XIX Corps Artillery, and the assault guns and mortars of the 67th and the 41st AIR. Five battalions fired concentrations on known command posts and gun positions, then seven battalions massed their fire on the three objectives, IMMENDORF, FLOVERICH, and LOVERICH; while SETTERICH and PRUMME RN on each flank of the objectives received similar treatment. APWEILER and PUFFENDORF were fired on after the attack jumped off.

Promptly at 1245 CCB crossed the line of departure with three task forces abreast covering the entire division zone of attack.

Task Force 1

Colonel Disney divided his tank heavy force into three teams built around 1st Bn, 67th Armored Regt, 2nd Bn, 67th Armored Regt, and 3rd Bn, 41st Armored Infantry Regt respectively. Major Clifton B. Batchelder, commander of the 1st Bn, 67th Armored Regt, commanded the right (south) team. It consisted of 1st Bn, 67th Armored Regt (-), a platoon of Company B, 17th Armored Engineer Bn, and a platoon from Company B, 702d Tank Destroyer Bn (90mm).

Batchelder's force had the mission of enveloping LOVERICH from the south and protecting the right flank of the left force

by neutralizing enemy fire from the east and northeast. Having accomplished these missions, it was to be prepared to assist in the attack on PUFFENDORF and the high ground to the north.

Lt Col. Lemuel E. Pope commanded the left (north) force which consisted of the 2nd Bn, 67th Armored Regiment reinforced by Company H, 41st Armored Infantry Regiment, and a platoon each of engineers and tank destroyers. The mission of this force—to cross the line of departure on order, pass to the north of LOVERICH, capture PUFFENDORF, and organize it for all around defense.

Lt. Col. Marshall L. Crowley, Jr., commander of the 3rd Bn, 41st Armored Infantry Regiment, led an infantry force of two companies. His mission—to assist Batchelder's tank force in the capture of LOVERICH by approaching the town from a different direction, clear and organize it for defense.⁵

Colonel Disney's scheme of maneuver called for an attack on successive objectives in column of battalions. His objectives successively: LOVERICH, PUFFENDORF, and the high ground approximately 1000 yards northeast of PUFFENDORF (see map Appendix VIII-C). The 1st Bn 67th AR (Batchelder's) planned to lead off and quickly envelop LOVERICH. The infantry battalion (Crowley's) less one company, would proceed directly into town so as to arrive shortly after the tanks. The plan for taking this first objective had several advantages, two of which were: the tanks had ample room

for an enveloping maneuver from the south, and the infantry received the most direct route. As soon as Colonel Disney satisfied himself that Batchelder could handle LOVERICH (before it was mopped up) he planned to commit Pope's force to bypass LOVERICH to the north and quickly seize PUFFENDORF. On the other hand, if Batchelder could not handle LOVERICH then Pope would be directed to provide assistance.⁶ Batchelder's force would next take HILL 102.6 or assist in PUFFENDORF.

Major Batchelder's team crossed the line of departure promptly at 1245. Lt Robert E. Lee's Company D (medium tanks) led with the 1st and 2nd platoons abreast. These two platoons fanned out to the right and eastward under the direction of their platoon leaders as soon as they had crossed over the drainage ditch on the edge of BEGGENDORF (see figure 4). The 3d platoon followed the 2nd on the right to cover the advance. Lt. Lee had placed his strength on this flank because he expected serious opposition from the east. The platoons advanced rapidly over the fairly level terrain just to the right of the coal mine, east of BEGGENDORF. Capt Francis E. Pfaff, commanding Company A, moved a platoon of his light tanks to cover the advance of the mediums and to protect their right flank.

The attack started well. Within three minutes after the jump-off the first prisoners started coming in. The force crossed several trenches protected by concertina wire barriers without incident. At 1249 the 2nd platoon reported receiving antitank fire from the vicinity of SETTERICH (in the zone of the 29th

The tanks of Company D's first platoon arrived in the orchard on the east of LOVERICH only eight minutes after they had crossed the line of departure at BEGGENDORF (see Plate 4). This represented a distance traveled of approximately 1200 yards. The speed and violence of the tank assault following closely on the heels of the artillery fire stunned the enemy in LOVERICH to such an extent that they gave up in large groups.

The light tanks and infantry soon arrived to complete the task of clearing the town and making it secure. The shock action provided by the tanks made the job of the infantry easy as they advanced into town from BEGGENDORF.

Two companies of armored infantry, Company G on the right and Company I on the left, arrived at the town shortly after the tanks, killing 20 to 30 Germans and capturing about 100 who were flushed out by the tanks. Company A (light tanks) reorganized on the eastern edge of town after aiding the infantry in the mop-up. Company G (infantry) secured the right flank for defense against possible counterattack from SETTERICH, to the southeast.

As soon as the light tanks and infantry arrived in LOVERICH, Lt. Lee moved his company of medium tanks to the high ground north of LOVERICH. This move provided security for the town. From this position he could see the next objective for his force, HILL 102.6, north of PUFFENDORF.

The suspected presence of minefields around LOVERICH did not deter Colonel Disney from using tanks for the assault. Some

Plate 4

Tank assault of Company D, 67th Armored
infantry on LOVERICH.

U. S. Army Photograph



tanks were lost to mines but enough got through to accomplish the mission. The tanks which were blown-up by mines, for the most part, merely lost tracks and were returned to unit in about 24 hours.

Colonel Disney, realizing that Batchelder's force could handle LOVERICH without assistance, moved Pope out. Pope's force crossed the line of departure and moved between LOVERICH and FLOVERICH in the direction of PUFFENDORF. The battalion attacked cross country, in a column of companies with Company B's light tanks leading. The infantry followed with Company's E medium tanks bringing up the rear. Pope's troops bypassed LOVERICH at 1400 and secured PUFFENDORF at 1455.⁸ This force encountered very little opposition taking PUFFENDORF (see Fig. 5, second phase). Four tanks mired in the soft ground and six others were blown up by mines. (see Plate 5.)

Major Batchelder received orders from Colonel Disney to attack his next objective, HILL 102.6, at 1400 hours. The attack proceeded in a similar manner to the assault of LOVERICH. Boggy ground made the advance difficult, but the battalion soon occupied the hill.

The enemy reacted strongly and his heavy artillery fire made it impossible for the battalion to hold the top of the hill. Major Batchelder pulled his tanks and infantry back to the draw just south of HILL 102.6. From here he could command

the hill by fire and at the same time have his troops in defilade (see Fig. 5, third phase).

After Pope's force took PUFFENDORF, the enemy plastered the town with artillery and mortar fire. This fire came in almost continuously throughout the afternoon and night. Colonel Pope received instructions from Colonel Disney to dig in for the night and resume the attack on GERBONSWEILER at 0800 the next day.

Task Force 2

Colonel Hillyard's Task Force 2 attacked on the left of and simultaneously with Task Force 1. Task Force 2 consisted of the 3rd Bn 67th AR (Hillyard's Battalion), 1st Bn 41st AIR, and supporting engineers and tank destroyers. The force contained a fairly well balanced ratio between tanks and infantry. The tank battalion was minus Company I, held in combat command reserve.

Colonel Hillyard planned for Task Force 2 to make a frontal assault on FLOVERICH at H-hour with a medium tank company leading. The infantry would follow at 200 yards with light tanks and engineers in support. The tank destroyers received the mission of silencing any direct fire from IMMENDORF, APWEILER, or FLOVERICH. With the capture of FLOVERICH the force would continue on to the high ground south of APWEILER.

Captain James L. White, commanding Co G 67th AR, moved his 16 medium tanks (one under normal strength) through the 3rd