

after Action Report

Hq 2th AD

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OF AR 380-6 1958
BY Shaw ON 11/18/82

and prepare defensive plans for submission to Corps.

CORPS: At 1200A the Corps commander visited the Division CP at BOEVANGE and after conference with the Division commander issued the following oral instructions:

"Make reconnaissance in force across the OUR River during night 6-7 February and if a bridgehead can be maintained there, establish a bridgehead for future operations to the E."

Reason: The Corps commander believed that the bulk of the enemy strategic reserves E of the OUR River had been withdrawn due to pressure on the Russian front and local reserves drawn to the N by the VIII Corps attack. It appeared that the SIEGFRIED LINE was inadequately manned on our front.

OUR RIVER: One serious obstacle to the operation was the OUR River. A thaw had set in on the first of February and most of the snow had entirely melted. The OUR River was flowing at the rate of 10 to 15 MPH, was about ten feet deep and had swollen to several times its normal width. The approaches to the OUR River were steep and the terrain was generally very rough, permitting vehicular movement only on primary and secondary roads.

DIVISION: Res Comd was holding the Division front, was familiar with the terrain, and the Div Comdr decided to use this Comd for establishing the bridgehead. At 1500A the Division commander had a conference with the Reserve commander at his CP in BOXHORN. A detailed study was made of air photos and patrol information with particular reference to suitable crossing sites (several crossing sites being selected) and the following orders were issued:

"The Reserve Command will cross the OUR River beginning the night of 6-7 February, with one infantry battalion reinforced (later changed to 2 Inf Bns) and establish a bridgehead on the high ground N of DAHNEN. Concurrently construction of a permanent bridge at (P850672) will be started in order to enlarge and make permanent the bridgehead with the entire Reserve Command.

A vigorous reconnaissance will be conducted along the W bank of the OUR River to determine suitable crossing sites for the assault troops. At least three such sites will be selected.

The 44th Armd Inf Bn is assigned to the Reserve Command effective at once. The 50th Armd Inf Bn and one company 603d TD Bn will be prepared to pass to the command of Reserve Command and cross the river over the vehicular bridge any time after daylight 7 Feb.

Division Artillery and 25th Armd Engr Bn will be in direct support of Reserve Command. (Div Arty and 25th Armd Engr Bn notified of this immediately after the meeting).

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The entire operation during the hours of darkness will be by stealth. No artillery preparation will be fired.

CCB will be prepared to assume command of troops E of OUR River after establishing the bridgehead, and CCA will be prepared to assume command of the present troops of CCB upon assignment of CCB to command a bridgehead E of the river (CCA and CCB notified of this immediately after the meeting)."

RESERVE COMMAND: CO Reserve Command called a meeting of the COs of 9th Armd Inf Bn, 44th Armd Inf Bn and 86th Cav Rcn Sq Mecz, and at 1630A commenced planning the operation. The patrols projected to the W bank of the OUR River for night 5-6 Feb were increased and officers from the 44th Armd Inf Bn were assigned to accompany engineer patrols during the night 5-6 Feb and reconnoiter the W bank of the river.

ROTATION: The CG directed that arrangements be made with 17th AB Div for relief of Co C 15th Tk Bn, atchd to 17th AB Div on 6 Feb 45, with a TD Co of 603d TD Bn. This was arranged with 17th AB Div and CCA (15th Tk Bn) and CCB (603d TD Bn) notified to consummate arrangements.

SUMMARY OF OPERATIONS: Throughout the afternoon and evening the Division continued to improve its defensive position and prepare for submission to Corps detailed plans of defense including: complete disposition of troops, defensive fires, artillery fires and engineer plans. During the last half of the day this work went on concurrently with the planning and preliminary patrolling and reconnaissance for the river crossing operation.

6 Feb 1945

The Division continued to hold positions W of OUR River. Planning and Rcn were continued in accordance with orders issued 5 Feb 45.

RECONNAISSANCE: Two crossing sites were found on the N: Sites numbered 1 and 2. One crossing site was found on the S: Site number 3. It was believed that it would be possible for crossings to be made after dark by assault boats and that foot bridges could be constructed to facilitate crossing at all sites.

ENGR PLAN: Rcn indicated that a treadway bridge would be required on the KALBORN road on the approach to Bailey Bridge site. Assault boats were obtained for the crossings. Bailey bridging was obtained and made readily available for installation upon order. A Co was assigned to support 9th Armd Inf Bn crossing on the S and C Co was assigned to support the 44th Armd Inf Bn on the N. B Co was assigned to construct the Bailey Bridge. 1123d C Engr Gp was to assist in constructing the Bailey Bridge and maintain routes forward.

ARTILLERY: Div Arty displaced forward two Bns to support the crossing:
128th Armd FA Bn to (P901678)
212th Armd FA Bn to (P803706)

ATTEMPTED ASSAULT CROSSINGS: (Night 6-7 Feb): At 1900A assault troops of the 9th

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Armd Inf Bn with Engrs moved to site No 3 and commenced crossing operations. By midnight no troops were across the river. At 1900A troops of the 44th Armd Inf Bn moved to sites numbered 1 and 2. Site No 1 was abandoned early in the evening as unsuitable. By midnight no troops had been able to cross the river at Site No 2.

7 Feb 1945

Throughout the night 6-7 February the Div continued its river crossing operations. During the night site No 1 was abandoned and no further effort was made to cross there.

CG'S INSTRUCTIONS: Early in the morning CG issued the following instructions to the CO Res Comd:

Continue your operations today along the following lines:

1. Unless blocked by enemy action, continue ferrying in both battalions until at least one company is across and well established in a shallow bridgehead.
2. From that bridgehead, send one or two small patrols inland with the particular purpose of selecting routes for the further advance of the battalion. This must be very stealthy so as not to give away the location of the bridgehead.
3. Concurrently, construct a foot bridge so that troops on the far bank can be reinforced, evacuated or withdrawn and supplied by hand carriage.
4. As soon as foot bridge is in, expand the force in the bridgehead to as much of one battalion as can be employed against the objectives and continue the advance by day or night. It is desirable that both battalions be ready to advance at about the same time, but it is not necessary. If one is ready long before the other, push it out.
5. Work on the main road and bridges must be carried out day and night without interruption until completed except that I do not want personnel exposed to direct fire.
6. All personnel who were employed last night must be given a chance to rest today and rotation of work parties and patrols within both infantry and engineers must begin at once.

NORTH SITE (Site No 2): At the N site the 44th Armd Inf Bn and Engrs started from KALBORN at 1900A carrying the heavy assault boats by hand through the hills to the river bank, a distance of about 2 miles. By midnight troops were on the W bank. Repeated attempts to launch boats failed. One boat filled with men overturned in the stream. At 0845A the first boat was landed on the E shore. By 1000A a Co, reinf, had crossed. Work commenced on the foot bridge but despite repeated attempts the racing stream had not been bridged by mid-

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night. The whole operation was marked with great stealth and up until midnight was still a secret as practically no fire was received at the site or by the troops on the eastern shore despite the fact that several boats were swept down the stream. In accordance with instructions, the Co on the eastern shore remained quiet close to the shore.

SOUTH SITES (Sites No 3 and 4): The 9th Armd Inf Bn supported by engineers moved at 1900A to their site No 3 carrying the boats through the steep hills, a distance of approximately 4 miles. At midnight they reached the W bank of the river and by 0345A the first man reached the E bank. This was the first man of the Div to enter Germany on a tactical mission. By 0650A a Co, reinf, had been ferried across. At 0700A this Co pushed out of the E to a point 800 yards W of DAHNEN. At this time this crossing operation ceased to be a secret and the troops, crossing site and route to the crossing site were subjected to heavy fire. Attempts were made to install a foot-bridge at site No 3 but failed and finally this site was abandoned and the construction crew moved to site No 4. Repeated attempts were made there but as of midnight no bridge had been constructed.

BAILEY SITE (Site No 5): The road from KALBORN to the Bailey site, the site and the crossing were reconnoitered but no attempt was made to put in a bridge as it was covered by enemy fire from the E bank of the river. The Bailey bridging equipment was brought from CLERVAUX to the W of HEINERSCHELD in readiness.

17th AB Div: Early in the afternoon the 17th AB Div, which put 2 companies across the river about 0400A, was requested to move NE and take DAHNEN under small arms fire to enable the 9th Armd Inf Bn to take the town. The 17th AB Div was to move S to take DASBURG; and they stated they could make no movement to the NE and could give no assistance. Relief: At this time we received the first intimation that the 17th AB Div was to leave the III Corps by 10 Feb and that the 6th Armd Div might have to take over all or part of its front as there would be no other combat troops in the Corps except the 6th Armd Div and the 6th Cav Gp.

CORPS ORDER: The Div Liaison officer at Corps returned to the Div CP at approximately 1030A with the information that the Div was to be prepared to follow up its reconnaissance in force with a strong force or to attack on Corps order to the E in the Div zone with an objective the road from IRRHAUSEN through ARZFELD to LICHTENBORN. He also stated that the 17th AB Div was to be prepared to seize the road between KARLSHAUSEN and JUCKEN as well as the high ground in that vicinity and the 6th Cav Gp was to be prepared to attack in their zone on Corps order.

ASSAULT TEAMS: During the day the CG directed the formation of assault teams, to consist of engineers equipped with flame throwers to reduce pillboxes. 18 of such teams were formed.

PRECARIOUS POSITION: By the end of the day the determined effort to establish a bridgehead across the racing stream had placed the troops E of the River in a precarious position. Work was rushed without interruption on the foot-bridges behind the two shallow bridgeheads and troops were held in readiness on the W shore to render assistance to troops E of the River and to facilitate their withdrawal in

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the event of a major counterattack by the enemy from the SIEGFRIED LINE. Hot food and supplies were put across the river to them and nothing was left undone W of the River for the two companies E of the River who had to remain in order that the operation might succeed.

SUMMARY OF OPERATIONS: Throughout the period the Div vigorously pushed its crossing operation despite the torrential nature of the OUR River, using the maximum of stealth, to secure a bridgehead.

8 Feb 1945

The Division vigorously pushed the establishment of a bridgehead E of the OUR River.

NORTH SITE (Site No 2): After working steadily on this site since 1000A 7 Feb two foot-bridges (one a suspension and the other an assault boat bridge) were finished at 0945A. The remainder of the 44th Armd Inf Bn commenced crossing and by 1030A the entire battalion was on the E side. About the same time a direct hit by a mortar shell destroyed the suspension bridge. Up until the time the entire battalion commenced to cross, this operation had been kept a secret from the enemy.

44TH ARMD INF: The plan of the 44th Armd Inf was to move S to the W bank of the Bailey site and seize it to permit construction of the Bailey bridge. As soon as the entire battalion had crossed it moved out and by dark had enlarged the bridgehead to the depth of about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles with a 2 mile width and secured the W bank of the Bailey site. The Res Comd assigned to it Tr C of the 86th Cav Rcn Sq Mecz. By midnight the battalion had completed its organization of its bridgehead in front of the two sites.

SOUTH SITE (Site No 4): After steady work since early morning 7 Feb, the foot bridge at this site was finally completed at 1145A and the entire 9th Armd Inf completed its crossing late in the afternoon. Due to darkness no attempt was made to enlarge the bridgehead.

BAILEY BRIDGE (Site No 5): Late in the day the 44th Armd Inf Bn secured the W bank of the bridge site and by 1900A work was under way on the Bailey bridge. It was estimated that it would take until at least daylight to complete it.

CORPS: About 1030A the Corps Ln O returned to the CP with information that the Div would take over about two-thirds of the 17th AB Division sector when they moved out on the 10th. During the early afternoon the Corps Commander issued the following instructions to the Division Commander at CLERVAUX:

At 111800A 6th Armd Div will take over entire sector of the 17th AB Div. There will be attached to the 6th Armd Div at once three combat engr bns which can be used as infantry. Upon securing the bridgehead N of DAHNEN the 6th Armd Div will go on the defensive again.

This gave the Div a sector of approximately 20,000 yards and practically prohibited any great advance to the E. Corps plans for continuing to the E after establishing of the bridgehead were cancelled and the Division's plans to vigorously push

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the action E of the River curtailed.

DIVISION: The CG decided to assign CCA to command the 17th AB Div sector with the following troops:

15th Tk Bn
One Armd Inf Bn
Two Bns of atchd Engrs
One TD Co

CCA and the Div Arty were informed of this decision during the afternoon and evening and started planning the relief. That portion of the Div plan to establish the bridgehead with 3 Bns of Armd Inf was cancelled.

11TH ARMD DIV: The situation on our left (N front) became of increasing concern. The nearest element of the 11th Armd Div was about 5,000 yards N of us and just E of the river. 11th Armd Div was given the mission on 6 Feb to move SE and seize ESCHFELD, BINSCHIED and LICHTENBORN. It was reported on 6 Feb that the 11th Armd Div would not move forward until the 90th Div moved on to its N. The 11th Armd Div did not move on 7 Feb nor 8 Feb and at dark it was reported that they would not move 9 Feb unless the 90th Inf Div came up on the N. If the 11th Armd Div moves to ESCHFELD our flank will be partially covered and tie in on the final objective will cover a gap of only 1,000 yds. If they do not move up we will have an exposed flank of about 5,000 yds. The CG telephoned to Corps about this and received word that the 11th Armd Div had been ordered to atk and seize ESCHFELD.

9 Feb 1945 (See sketch #2)

BAILEY BRIDGE: Work was begun on this bridge at 1900A on the 8th and continued without cessation throughout the night (which was very dark), by the 1123d Engr Gp and the Div Engrs despite mortar and arty fire zeroed in on the site, which killed several and wounded others. Until the bridge was completed no armor could be put across to assist the troops on the Eastern shore. At 1355A the bridge was completed and tanks and TDs moved across to support the infantry on the E bank. This placed the Div in a much better position than it had been since the early hours of the 7th of February when foot troops first crossed.

OUR RIVER: During the day the stream decreased in width about 35%; the current diminished appreciably, and the water level dropped about two feet. The bridg-

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ing operations of the Div had been made at flood stage.

MERGER OF BRIDGEHEADS: Bridgeheads were initiated by landings of troops E of the River as follows:

070345A: 6th AD southern bridgehead (9th Armd Inf Bn)
070400A: 17th AB Div bridgehead (2d Bn 507th Regt)
070845A: 6th AD northern bridgehead (44th Armd Inf Bn)

It being unwise to extend the temporary bridgeheads until each possessed a foot-bridge, only one company from each battalion was crossed by ferrying the swift stream. Therefore throughout the 7th and 8th these bridgeheads were unable to connect up because of shortage of troops. At 0300A on the 9th troops on the S moved along the E bank of the river and joined with the 17th AB Div in their Z. At 1600A on the 9th, both battalions having completely crossed by foot bridges, the 9th Armd Inf Bn moved N along the Eastern side of the river and joined with the 44th Armd Inf Bn which had extended S and W to cover the road from KALBORN. By midnight the consolidated bridgehead was firmly established.

FLARES: During the night 8-9 Feb the enemy in the SIEGFRIED LINE in front of the bridgehead shot flares to illuminate the approaches to the pillboxes. The assault across the river on the night of 6-7 Feb and the attack on the enemy positions on the night 7-8 Feb had apparently led the enemy to expect a night attack on the night 8-9 Feb. None was launched.

PILLBOX: Late in the day on the 8th one company of the 44th Armd Inf Bn moved up on an occupied pillbox. Attempts were made with flame throwers and bazookas to break open the box without success and the company withdrew a short distance for the night. After dark the enemy laid machine-gun, mortar and artillery fire on the company, causing serious casualties, which made a further withdrawal out of direct observation of the SIEGFRIED LINE necessary early on the 9th. This company was replaced on the bridgehead line by a Rcn Tr on Feb 9, and withdrawn W of the River.

17TH AB DIV BRIDGEHEAD: Since landing in the pocket at 070400A Feb the two companies of the 17th AB Div were unable to advance on their objective, DASBURG. Inquiry developed that the 17th AB Div did not plan to put additional troops across or take other measures to secure DASBURG. Since it was apparent that no bridgehead would be made at DASBURG, the Div plans were revised to shorten and strengthen a shallow bridgehead E of KALBORN and short of the SIEGFRIED LINE defenses.

RELIEF OF 17TH AB DIV AND 6TH ARMD DIV TROOPS E OF RIVER: Planning for relief of 17th AB Div and of the tired troops E of the OUR R went on concurrently with the bridgehead operations during the day. CO CCA conferred with the 17th AB Div and worked out his plan. Corps ordered the relief to take place prior to 111800A Feb and control pass to 6th Armd Div prior to 111200A Feb. The plan for the N sector

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called for the relief of Res Comd by CCB on the 10th of Feb and extension of the bridgehead to the high ground vic of FRIEDFICHSEL and thereafter an aggressive defense by CCB. The plan for CCA called for the relief of all elms of the 17th AB Div by 111800A Feb and the defense thereafter within its zone. The plan for Res Comd was to assemble in rear of CCB to support it in case of a counterattack. To perform these missions, these commands were given the following troops:

CCA

44th Armd Inf Bn
15th Tk Bn
184th Combat Engr Bn (atchd)
1252d Combat Engr Bn (atchd)
Co B 603d TD Bn
Btry A 777th AAA Bn

Res Comd

9th Armd Inf Bn
69th Tk Bn
25th Armd Engr Bn (-)
Det 996th Engr Tdwy Br 6e
603d TD Bn (-)
777th AAA Bn (-)

CCB

50th Armd Inf Bn
68th Tk Bn
86th Cav Rcn Sq Mecz
284th Engr Bn (atchd)
Co B 25th Armd Engr Bn
Co A 603d TD Bn
Btry B 777th AAA Bn (- 1 Sect)

It was contemplated that the 50th Armd Inf Bn would relieve the 44th Armd Inf Bn early 10 Feb. The 44th would rest at HEINERSCHIED the night 10-11 Feb and occupy the left sector of the 17th AB Div Z late 11 Feb after a night's rest. It was also contemplated that the 284th Engr Bn would relieve the 9th Armd Inf Bn on 11-12 Feb.

COUNTERATTACK: During the day there were indications of a small build-up of enemy on the front and a counterattack at dark. At 1800A counterattack did come in on the S flank; but it was a very small one and caused no damage.

SUMMARY OF OPERATIONS: Div completed the Bailey bridge, consolidated its bridgeheads, made a juncture with the 17th AB Div and reinforced its troops E of the OUR R with tanks and TDs; and at the same time carried on its plans for relief of the 17th AB Div.

10 Feb 1945

The Div held its bridgehead over OUR River; protected N flank of III Corps Z; commenced the relief of 17th AB Div in its zone with elms of CCA. CCB relieved Res Comd and assumed responsibility for Div bridgehead sector at 1545A. Res Comd moved into assembly area and prepared to support CCB.

CCA (Hines): In process of relieving 17th AB Div in S sector of Division's new Z.

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CCB (Read): Relieved Res Comd at 1545A. 50th Armd Inf Bn completed relief of 44th Armd Inf Bn at 1300A. 9th Armd Inf Bn remained in position under control of CCB to revert to Res Comd upon relief.

Res Comd (Harris): Relieved of sector at 1545A. Prior to relief the Bailey bridge weakened by mortar fire and heavy loads gave way. Repair work started immediately 44th Armd Inf Bn was relieved at 1300A by 50th Armd Inf Bn and was assigned to CCA.

11 Feb 1945

DIVISION: With its southern boundary changed to include the 17th AB Div Z, the Div commenced its relief of the 17th AB Div. At 1024A the Div with attached units passed to control of VIII Corps. At 110950A the Div assumed responsibility of the 17th AB Div Z.

CCA (Hines): Upon being assigned the southern sector of the Div Z, commenced relief of the 17th AB Div within its Z. The 1252d Engr C Bn relieved the 194th Gli Regt at 102230A within its Z (overlay). The 44th Armd Inf Bn relieved the 507th Frcht Regt.

CCB (Read): Continued to hold within its Z (Overlay) and to maintain contact with flank elms. The 110 foot Bailey Bridge in vic (P853684) was rebuilt by the 178th Engr C Bn and was open for traffic at 111500A. The bridge site and vic was subjected to indirect MG fire.

12 Feb 1945

The Div completed relief of elms 17th AB Div within its Z during the night 11-12 Feb. The 41st Cav Rcn Sq Mecz 11th Armd Div was attached 111800A. CCB 11th Armd Div relieved 86th Cav Rcn Sq Mecz in zone north of Div bridgehead at 2300A.

CCA (Hines): 44th Armd Inf Bn completed relief 507th Frcht Regt at 120230A. 41st Cav Rcn Sq Mecz 11th Armd Div was attached to the command and closed in the vic KNAPHOSCHEID (P730585).

CCB (Read): 9th Armd Inf Bn was relieved in place by 284th Engr C Bn at 121420A. Upon relief the Bn moved to assembly area vic WEICHERDANGE (P750612). Elms of 86th Cav Rcn Sq Mecz W of OUR River relieved by elms of CCB 11th Armd Div at 2300A.

13 Feb 1945

The Div with the 41st Cav Rcn Sq Mecz 11th Armd Div, the 1252d, 284th and 184th Engr C Bns attached, continued to hold its bridgehead, to consolidate its positions within its zone and to reorganize its front line elms. 44th Armd Inf Bn was assigned from CCA to CCB.

CCA (Hines): With the 41st Cav Rcn Sq Mecz and the 1252d and 184th Engr C Bns

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attached, continued to hold within its zone. The 41st Cav Rcn Sq Mecz relieved part of the 44th Armd Inf Bn, the 69th Tk Bn relieved part of the 44th Armd Inf Bn and part of the 184th Engr C Bn and the 15th Tk Bn relieved part of the 184th Engr C Bn within their zone at 2400A.

CCB (Read): Continued to hold and defend its bridgehead E of OUR River.

14 Feb 1945

The Div continued to defend its zone, to consolidate its positions and to reorganize its commands.

CCA (Hines): Continued to hold within its sector, to consolidate its positions and to reorganize its command. The 44th Armd Inf Bn was relieved by the 41st Cav Rcn Sq Mecz and the 69th Tk Bn. Relief was completed by 140415A. Upon being relieved the 44th Armd Inf Bn displaced to its assigned assembly area under CCB command vic BOXHORN closing in that vic at 141200A. The 184th Engr C Bn was relieved by the 15th and 69th Tk Bns. Relief was completed at 132400A. Upon relief the 184th Engr C Bn prepared to displace vic TROIS PONTS (P670980). The 41st Cav Rcn Sq, the 15th and 69th Tk Bns upon relieving the 44th Armd Inf Bn and 184th Engr C Bn consolidated their positions and prepared to defend within their sector.

CCB (Read): Continued to hold its bridgehead E of OUR RIVER. The 9th Armd Inf Bn at the end of the period was enroute from its assembly area vic WEICHERDANGE to relieve the 284th Engr C Bn. The 44th Armd Inf Bn upon its relief by the 41st Cav Rcn Sq was attached to the Comd and displaced to vic BOXHORN in Comd Res. A footbridge was constructed across the OUR River vic (P843650), construction was completed 141800A.

15 Feb 1945

The Div continued to hold and defend its sector along the OUR River which is in the northern portion extended across the river for two km. Composition of Combat Commands:

CCA (on the S)

15th Tk Bn
69th Tk Bn
41st Cav Rcn Sq Mecz (atchd)
603d TD Bn
1252d Engr C Bn
184th Engr C Bn
Btry A 777th AAA Bn

Res Comd

25th Armd Engr Bn (-)
777th AAA Bn (-)

CCB (On the N)

9th Armd Inf Bn
44th Armd Inf Bn
50th Armd Inf Bn
86th Cav Rcn Sq Mecz
68th Tk Bn
284th Engr C Bn
Co 603d TD Bn
Co 25th Armd Engr Bn
Btry B 777th AAA Bn (-)

Div Arty

128th Armd FA Bn
212th Armd FA Bn
231st Armd FA Bn

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The 184th C Engr Bn was relieved from assignment to the Div at 1230A and was enroute to TROIS PONTS.

9th Armd Inf Bn completed relief in place of the 284th Engr C Bn which was enroute to WALHEIM by 1425A.

FO No 11 VIII Corps arrived this Hq 1500A. VIII Corps was to attack with the 90th and 11th Armd Div at H-hour 18 Feb to clear the enemy W of the PHUM R, and to effect a junction with XII Corps vic MAUEL. 6th Armd Div and 6th Cav Gp to atk in zones on Corps orders. Planning and studies began immediately.

16 Feb 1945

The Div continued to hold and defend within its Z. Reconnaissance and terrain studies were carried out by comdrs and staffs in preparation for future operations. No change in composition of troops.

17 Feb 1945

Rotation of troops in the defensive line continued to be carried out. Comdrs and Gen Staff held conference for planning and estimates after extensive reconnaissance throughout the day.

18 Feb 1945

Div continued to hold and defend its bridgehead. Div Comdr issued oral orders for attack H-hour 20 Feb. Task Forces and assault teams were organized and instructed. Reconnaissance was continued.

19 Feb 1945

The Div held and defended its bridgehead and made final preparations for the attack.

CCA (Hines): Moved the 161st Smoke Gen Co into position, sent out patrols and prepared for the attack.

CCB (Read): Continued reconnaissance and instruction of all Task Forces and assault teams. Troops were positioned for the attack. Composition of Task Forces:

TF BRITTON

9th Armd Inf Bn
1 Co Med Tk (- 1 Plat)
1 Plat TDs
1 Plat Engrs
1 Engr minesweeping Sq

TF BRINDLE

86th Cav Rcn Sq Mecz
2 Plats Med Tks
1 Engr Minesweeping Sq

TF BROWN

44th Armd Inf Bn
1 Co Med Tks
1 Plat TDs
1 Plat Engrs
1 Engr Minesweeping Sq

TF DAVALL (Res)

68th Tk Bn (-)
Co B 603d TD Bn
Co B 25th Armd Engr Bn (-)
Btry B 777th AAA Bn

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Supporting Arty: 128th Armd FA Bn - D/S TF Brown and TF Brindle.
231st Armd FA Bn - D/S TF Britton and TF Ward.
257th FA Bn - General Support.

20 - 24 Feb 1945

6TH ARMORED DIVISION ATTACK THROUGH SIEGFRIED LINE

1. Summary: 6th Armored Division attacked and penetrated the SIEGFRIED LINE on 20 February 1945 and by 24 February had secured an area in Germany on a front of 12,000 meters, 10,000 meters deep. The main defense line was penetrated by noon the first day after which the penetration was broadened and deepened in the northern part of the Division zone throughout that day and the 21st. The attack of the 22nd reached the Division objective and captured the balance of the SIEGFRIED LINE pillboxes in the southern part of the zone after which the area was completely mopped up on the 23d, and, in addition, that night a special force drove SE across the front of the 6th Cavalry zone to contact the north flank of the XII Corps and capture NEUERBERG for the use of the 6th Cavalry. The latter was accomplished shortly after noon on 24 February when the Division, under new orders, began the relief of the 90th Division. In addition to the territory gained and the personnel and material losses inflicted upon the enemy, more than 1,000 prisoners were taken, 32 towns and villages and about 200 pillboxes captured. The entire operation followed almost exactly the previously made plans and was carried out with such precision and success as to warrant a more complete description which follows.

2. Preliminary Operations: (See sketch #3). After its drive E from BAS-TOGNE, the Division relieved part of the 90th Division and part of the 26th Division along Skyline Drive on 26 January, the 17th Airborne Division moving in on the right (south) flank with the boundary passing just N of MARNACH. The situation quickly stabilized and in a few days all Germans were cleared from the west bank of the OUR River. Colonel Harris, Reserve Commander, took over command of the line which was held by two infantry battalions backed up by tanks and destroyers. In cooperation with the 17th Airborne Division, a reconnaissance in force was conducted, starting 6 February, across the OUR River, which was then swollen to a depth of 6 feet and more, and a width of over 100 feet. In an exceptionally well conducted operation, the difficult stream was crossed at two places, above and below the KALBORN - DAHNEN road, and by 8 February, a firm bridgehead 1,000 yards deep and 3,000 yards broad was established, covering the road and bridge site. A Bailey Bridge was installed and a few tanks and destroyers were crossed to support the bridgehead on 9 February. Footbridges, expanded to carry 1/4-ton trucks, were maintained on the flanks. In the meantime, the 17th Airborne Division had established a very small bridgehead N of DASBURG but had been unable to expand it sufficiently to include an approach. It was, therefore, abandoned when that Division was relieved on 11 February and its sector was added to the one already held by the 6th Armored Division. The Division's bridgehead in the N and the line W of the OUR River as far S and UNTER EISENBACH was firmly organized with CCA to the S of MARNACH and CCB in the bridgehead to the N. The latter included all of the infantry battalions backed up by tanks and destroyers while CCA was reinforced by two corps engineer battalions and the 41st Cavalry Squadron from the 11th Armored Division backed up by tanks and destroyers. This situation held until the day of the attack. Plans for the attack were started on 16 February. The 90th Division

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and the left flank of the 11th Armored Division jumped off on 18 February and by evening of the 19th had made such good progress that the Corps Commander deemed it essential for the Division to jump off the following day although the advance of the divisions to the N had not reached their previously designated objectives.

3. The Plan: a. By taking advantage of the bridgehead held by CCB on the left flank, an assault could be made against the SIEGFRIED LINE defenses without the necessity of forcing a crossing of the OUR River in the face of pillboxes that lined its banks from N of DASBURG to the S boundary. Therefore, the plan called for an initial penetration by CCB and an envelopment from the N. In the meantime, one of the Corps engineer battalions had been detached and orders from higher authority prohibited the use of the 41st Cavalry east of the OUR River. This left CCA too weak to effect a crossing on its front until the line had been turned.

b. (See Sketch #4). CCB organized for the attack with the two infantry battalions (9th Inf, Britton, and 44th Inf, Brown), and the 86th Cavalry Squadron, Brindle, which were in the bridgehead line, each reinforced by about two platoons of medium tanks, the infantry by a platoon each of tank destroyers, and each by engineers, to make the assault, the main effort to be made by the reinforced infantry battalions with the cavalry operating on the N flank against the pillboxes in its immediate front. The remaining infantry battalion, the 50th Inf, Ward, reinforced by tanks, destroyers and engineers, was prepared to exploit and the balance of the 68th Tank Battalion, Davall, with the remainder of Company A, 603d TD Battalion, and Company B, 25th Engineer Battalion, and the Antiaircraft Battery constituted the reserve.

c. CCA, now reinforced by the 161st Smoke Generating Company, and including 15, Lagrew, and 69, Kennedy, tank battalions and 1252d Engr Battalion (attached), selected positions to cause the maximum diversion by fire, smoke and movement on its front and thereby draw attention and fire away from the main effort.

d. The Division Artillery reinforced by the Corps artillery supported the attack.

4. Penetration of the Siegfried Line: At 0645, on 20 February, the Artillery laid an intensive preparation over the entire front for 20 minutes, then lifted for 10 minutes in order to give the Germans a breathing spell to come out of their pillboxes and man their outside defenses to meet a probable attack. Then for one minute all of the artillery concentrated on the small area of the first objective with a terrific TOT, which was a signal for the assault parties to attack. The assaulting troops found their greatest obstacles to be wire and booby traps. The diversion by CCA served its purpose in attracting much of the enemy artillery and mortar reaction. The 44th Infantry had taken its first pillbox by 0835 and the 9th Infantry by 0845. Thereafter, pillboxes fell in rapid succession and by noon seventeen, constituting their first objective, had been taken and the battalions were fanning out to the right and left to clean up the rest of the line from DAHNEN to the northern edge of the zone. In the meantime, the Cavalry on the N flank captured the pillboxes in its front and pushed through to secure the high ground along the Division boundary. The slow process of taking pillboxes continued throughout the day against moderate reaction. In the afternoon, the 50th Infantry was brought forward to the Skyline Drive and, during the night, crossed the river to exploit to the E in the morning.

The defense put up by the Germans was of low caliber, the greatest difficulties being those imposed by wire and mines and the physical difficulty of breaking into the pillboxes. Enemy fire, both artillery and mortar as well as

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small arms from the pillboxes, was comparatively light. One pillbox proved too strong to force by direct TD fire or explosive charges. It housed 12 Germans who remained in it throughout the night and until late the next day when 450 pounds of TNT against the door finally stunned them into submission. The 9th Infantry CP during the night operated from a captured pillbox less than 100 yards away without being molested except by an enemy patrol futilely attempting a rescue.

5. Exploitation of the Breakthrough: (See Sketch #5) a. The attack was resumed at 0400 on the 21st and the town of DAHNEN, the first town in GERMANY, other than small groups of buildings, to be captured by the Division, was cleared by the 9th Infantry by 0745A. An hour later, the Civil Affairs officer of CCB had posted his first military government proclamation in an enemy town.

b. The 50th Infantry reinforced jumped off at 0845A to the E and during the day cleared the pillboxes N of REIPELDINGEN, captured that town, then turning S, captured DALEIDEN before dark. This cut the main road E of DASBURG and placed the battalion well E of the Siegfried Line defenses and in a position to outflank the important crossing at DASBURG. In the meantime, the 44th Infantry and the Cavalry on the N flank continued to mop up and secure the N Division boundary, pending the arrival of the 11th Armored Division, which was attacking from the N toward our position.

c. At 1000A, Britton sent a platoon of infantry riding on a platoon of medium tanks rapidly S from DAHNEN to attack DASBURG from the rear, by-passing the pillboxes facing the river between the towns. This force reached the eastern outskirts of DASBURG in a few minutes and finding the roads impassable from debris and craters started cleaning the town on foot. Reinforcements in the form of the remainder of two companies rapidly followed on foot, cleaning out the pillboxes enroute and in the town, a slow process harassed by heavy mortar fire from the SE, which was not completed until 1700A. The 800-foot high bluff on the forward slope of which DASBURG stands is well filled with skillfully camouflaged pillboxes that cover all approaches and observation points to the west. Colonel Hines, CCA, was prepared with foot bridge and bailey bridge material and engineer equipment in defiladed positions back from the west bank to clear the road and construct crossings as soon as DASBURG was taken.

d. Darkness on the second day found CCB in possession of DASBURG, DALEIDEN, REIPELDINGEN and a secure line on the N flank, but with scattered groups of enemy in the wooded area between DASBURG and DALEIDEN, and the enemy in considerable strength still along the OUR River to the S of DASBURG from where he continued to harass and to block any attempt to cross the river. A strong patrol from the 15th Tank Battalion had entered UNTER EISENBACH during the day, but pinned down by fire, was withdrawn after dark.

6. Exploitation continues and mop-up starts: (Sketch #6) a. All during the night 21 - 22 February, the 249th Engineer Battalion worked on cleaning the road from the W and in installing a footbridge at DASBURG. At 0300A, on the 22d, one company of the 1252d Engineers crossed the footbridge and relieved the 9th Infantrymen in the town of DASBURG. A Bailey Bridge was started at once and was completed late in the evening of the 22d.

b. By 1000A, 22 February, three companies of the 1252d Engineer Battalion has been relieved from the southern part of the sector and had crossed on foot into DASBURG. Here they were met by one light and two medium tank companies of the 69th Tank Battalion, which had crossed the Bailey Bridge at KALBORN, and all were formed into a task force under Lt Col Kennedy of the 69th Tank Battalion. This force attacked S from the DASBURG - DALEIDEN road along the ridge through PREISCHEID shortly after noon, supported by the 15th Tank Battalion along the west bank of the river.

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all under CCA direction. One engineer company riding the light tanks and covered by fire from the medium tanks made a quick dash down the road to the S, capturing PREISCHEID and then AFFLER, and by-passing to the rear the pillboxes facing the river, some of which were not cleared until the following day. Kennedy's force made contact with Lagrew (15th Tank Battalion), who crossed some of his tankers dismounted at UBER EISENBACH late in the afternoon, thus securing the whole of the Siegfried Line positions on the Division front.

c. While the CCA operation was going on in the S, CCB continued the attack in the N and E. Ward's force engaged in a stiff fight all day S of DALEIDEN where he knocked out two German tanks and drove off others. He finally secured the hills S of the DASBURG - DALEIDEN road during the night. In the meantime, he had seized a crossing over the stream between DALEIDEN and OIMSHEID with two platoons while Brown, further N, secured the crossing at IRRHAUSEN intact during the afternoon and moved there with his whole force.

d. By dark of 22 February the Division had a secure line along its N boundary to include IRRHAUSEN, then generally SW to PREISCHEID and S to the junction of the IRSEN and OUR Rivers. Contact with the 11th Armored Division was made during the day N of LANGFUHR, and in the evening, S of REIFF, and later with the 90th Division a mile E of IRRHAUSEN.

e. During the night of 22 - 23 February, the 9th Infantry moved from DAHNEN to the E, passing in rear of the 50th Infantry, crossed the IRSEN River on foot, surrounded JUCKEN before daylight, and in conjunction with Brown's forces, consolidated on the Division objective by 0740A, 23 February. Vehicles were brought up during the day by way of IRRHAUSEN.

7. Added Mission: (Sketch #7) At 1300A, on the 23d, CCB was ordered to send a mounted task force rapidly to the SE to cut off any Germans retreating in front of the 6th Cavalry and to contact the left flank of the XII Corps at OBER GECKLER. Lt Col Davall, with one light and one medium tank company from the 68th Tank Battalion, Troop D of the 86th Cavalry, Company A of the 44th Infantry, a platoon of destroyers and two squads of engineers moved out from JUCKEN at 1630A, met their first resistance in the vicinity of KARLSHAUSEN, but continued the attack and advanced slowly throughout the night, making contact with the 319th Infantry of the 80th Division just N of OBER GECKLER at 0740A, 24 February. In the meantime, he had contacted the leading elements of the 6th Cavalry at KARLSHAUSEN and had captured numerous towns and many prisoners enroute. After daylight on 24 February, he attacked NEUERBURG with three strong patrols and secured the town at 1330A, turning the town and the entire area over to the 6th Cavalry and withdrawing his force to the Division zone. In the meantime, CCA had completed cleaning the area E of PREISCHEID.

List of Annexes

Sketch #3 - General area, positions, 19 February, and general plan.

#4 - Attack of CCB, 20 February.

#5 - Attack on CCB, 21 February.

#6 - Division attack, 22 - 23 February.

#7 ☒ Attack of TF Davall.

#8 - Statistical summary.

a. List of towns and units capturing them.

b. Pillboxes captured.

c. Prisoners.

d. Material captured or destroyed.

e. Division casualties.

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