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7th Armd Division's Part in Reduction of the RUHR POCKET

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A RESEARCH REPORT

Prepared at
THE ARMORED SCHOOL
Fort Knox Kentucky
1949 - 1950

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Robert W. Hasbrouck
Major General, U.S.A.
Commanding

ARMORED DIVISION IN THE REDUCTION OF A POCKET
(7th ARMORED DIVISION'S PART IN THE REDUCTION
OF THE RUHR POCKET 5-16 APRIL 1945)

A RESEARCH REPORT PREPARED

BY

COMMITTEE 5, OFFICERS ADVANCED COURSE

THE ARMORED SCHOOL

1949 - 1950

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MAY 1950

FOREWORD

The Research Report prepared by Committee No. 5 and devoted to the part played by the 7th Armored Division in the reduction of the Ruhr Pocket should be of consuming interest to all students of armor. Seldom has an Armored Division engaged in so many diverse types of action within such a short period of time. The eleven days covered by the report saw the division successively engaged in: (1) An attack out of a defile to gain space in which to deploy, (2) An attack against a hastily prepared defensive position, (3) The breakthrough of this position and, (4) An exploitation of the breakthrough which, at times, became a pursuit.

This report indicates how the Combat Command type of organization, aided by the Armored Division's splendid communication system, permitted the flexibility in organization which was essential to maximum success in such a succession of rapidly changing situations.

I am in full agreement with the committee in its conclusions as to the lessons learned from this operation. I do wish to call attention, however, to one factor which the committee had no means of evaluating, but which I consider to have contributed in no small measure to the expeditious completion of our mission. This was the Corps Commander's thorough understanding of the employment of armor including an appreciation of the inadequacy of its Infantry elements to meet some situations and its sensitivity to terrain. General Van Fleet's provision of additional Infantry was timely and adequate. Much of the terrain within the Corps zone presented considerable difficulties to armor. Accordingly he insisted, over some objection by his Infantry Commanders, that our division's zone of action be so defined as to include such of the terrain as offered some possibility for armored action. This resulted in a zone of action for the 7th Armored Division which snaked its way throughout the corps zone, encroaching here and there on an Infantry division's zone and, on one occasion, moving directly across the zone of one division. This unconventional but practical plan paid big dividends when the armor broke loose for long gains in the occasional areas where the terrain favored typical armored action.

As the Committee Report indicates, the Ruhr pocket was divided into two parts as the action towards its reduction progressed. We of the 7th Armored felt that we played an important part in the III Corp's reduction of the northern half of the

pocket. Some of our long advances made when the terrain favored armored action undoubtedly assisted the advance of the Infantry divisions of the corps by threatening the flanks and rear of the German units in their front. On the other hand, it was the action of the Infantry divisions on our flanks which helped us immeasurably as we struggled through that part of the country where our tanks could not maneuver. It was the well coordinated and wholly cooperative action of Infantry and Armored divisions which brought about the final satisfactory result.

/s/ Robert W. Hasbrouck
ROBERT W. HASBROUCK
Major General, U. S. A. (Ret.)

PREFACE

At the outset, this study was directed toward portraying the actions of both the 7th and the 8th Armored Divisions in the parts they played in the reduction of the RUHR pocket. It early became evident that the time allotted and available research materials would not permit a near complete study of either of these divisions, so it was decided to limit this study to the 7th Armored Division which had a more active and interesting campaign.

The action of the 8th Armored Division in its part of the reduction of the RUHR pocket is a story in itself. It is hoped that at some future date a similar study of that action can be undertaken. It is well for the reader of this report to keep in mind that such a study would possibly bring to light aspects of the use of armor in the reduction of a pocket not considered in this work.

In preparing this report, consideration has been given to all material made available to the committee by The Armored School and by previous members of the 7th Armored Division. As there is no published history of this division, the main sources of information have been after action reports and the memories of those who were with the Division during the time of this action.

Lack of detail in the after action reports and annexes thereto have in many instances precluded a well rounded history to include material and personnel losses, replacements, orders

issued, and an insight into the logistical problems. In making the study the committee did not ignore these problems, but was handicapped by the lack of detailed and confirmed data.

The committee wishes to acknowledge its indebtedness to Major General Hasbrouck and other former members of the 7th Armored Division who have contributed a wealth of information on this action. They have graciously submitted maps, pictures, pamphlets, and letters with a desire to aid this work to the limit. Without their help this study would have been no more than an elaboration of a few after action reports.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

To the military historian World War II was a military vehicle of gigantic tasks resulting in achievements in the field of military science that embraced all sciences and every profession. In the military leader was found the culmination of all these forces. It was he who developed the plans that placed this vast store of knowledge at work. It was he who executed these plans against the enemy.

One such plan was the encirclement and reduction of the RUHR area by the US First and Ninth Armies in March and April, 1945. The ultimate success of this great operation was due to the manner in which the military leader at all echelons of command exercised his responsibilities in conducting the activities of war within the scope of his assigned mission.

This study will concern itself with the reduction of this RUHR pocket and, specifically, with the operations and plans of the 7th Armored Division, commanded by Major General Robert W. Hasbrouck, (see figure 1) as part of the III Corps of US First Army. It will attempt to assess the contribution of the 7th Armored Division in carrying out its part of this assigned mission.



Figure 1. Major General Robert W. Hasbrouck, CG, 7th Armored Division, checks maps while Colonel Joseph F. Haskell, CO Combat Command B, talks over the radio to advanced units.

The industrial RUHR area embraced approximately 6000 square miles of thickly populated area. It contained most of the heavy industry of Germany. The plan for the encirclement of this industrial heart of GERMANY was conceived prior to the landings of Allied troops in NORMANDY. It was included within the master plan for the invasion of EUROPE as a projection of operation "OVERLORD."¹

On 25 March 1945, Letter of Instruction No. 18, Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Forces, placed this general plan in effect. The Allied armies were

directed to attack east from their bridgeheads across the RHINE River. Five days later armored columns of the US First Army rolled through the HESSIAN Hills to capture PADERBORN and contacted armor of the US Ninth Army at LIPPSTADT. The largest Allied double envelopment in modern history had been completed. Within its grasp it had trapped practically the whole of German Army Group B and two corps of German Army Group H.

In order to establish a premise from which to build the study of the activities and accomplishments of the 7th Armored Division, certain considerations must first be investigated. These considerations will be as follows:

1. Allied Situation, 24 March to 2 April 1945.

Emphasis will be placed on the activities of the First US Army and the III Corps of the First US Army of which the 7th Armored Division was a part.

2. Enemy Situation, 24 March to 2 April 1945. The enemy situation as was particularly related to the activities of German Army Group B which opposed US First Army along the RHINE and which eventually found itself ensnared in the RUHR pocket.

Allied Situation, 24 March to 2 April 1945

(See figure 2.)

The plan for the encirclement of the RUHR area was conceived early in the war. The strategic importance of the

RUHR area was of such magnitude that the Allied High Command anticipated that the destruction of the remaining German forces, cut off from this source of supply, would be relatively easy.²

The original plan contemplated a power crossing of the RHINE River north of the RUHR, coupled with a secondary effort through the FRANKFORT corridor in the south. The two thrusts were to join in the vicinity of KASSEL.³

In actual practice the seizure of the REMAGEN crossing over the RHINE presented a more northerly point of debouchment for the southern force than had been planned. This opportunity was quickly seized by General Omar Bradley, Commanding General, Twelfth Army Group. The resulting build up of American forces in the REMAGEN bridgehead became a thorn in the side of the German High Command. In order to contain the forces at REMAGEN, German units were moved from the north and badly needed reserves were committed with resulting weakening of the German RHINE defenses.⁴

The main effort from the Allied line was to occur in the north. General Montgomery's Twenty First Army Group was to attack with the British Second and US Ninth Armies to force crossings of the RHINE within their sectors.

On 24 March, Lt General Sir Dempsey Miles' British Second Army, supported by a vertical envelopment of the key terrain in the vicinity of WESEL by the XVIII Airborne Corps,

successfully breached the RHINE defenses and firmly secured a bridgehead. On the same day, the US Ninth Army stormed across the RHINE in the RHEINBERG area to provide in 48 hours an Anglo-American salient east of the Rhine 25 miles wide and 10 miles deep. In another two days, the British Second Army had pushed out the XVIII Airborne Corps to HALTERN, and the penetration through which the northern pincer of the envelopment was to storm had been realized.⁵

On the night 29 March, the 2d Armored Division crashed out of HALTERN and DUISSEN with two combat commands abreast.⁶ On 1 April, at 1530 hours, less than three days and more than 60 miles later, the 2d Armored Division had made contact with the southern pincer at LIPPSTADT.

To the south, the REMAGEN bridgehead had been straining forward. Twelfth Army Group ordered the US First and Third Armies to seize a bridgehead east of the RHINE River extending from the RHINE north along the SIEG River to SIEGEN and thence south and southwest through the line GIESSEN to HANAU.

First Army was directed by Twelfth Army Group as follows:

1. Attack vigorously from the REMAGEN bridgehead to seize the line GIESSEN-SIEGEN, SIEG River to its junction with the RHINE, and to clear the enemy within its zone.

2. Be prepared to assist the advance of the US Third Army by flanking action from LIMBERG on the FRANKFORT-WEISBADEN area.

3. Be prepared to continue the advance on KASSEL area.⁷

US First Army attacked from the REMAGEN bridgehead on 25 March with three corps abreast. The VII Corps on the north, V Corps on the south and III Corps in the center. Fifteenth Army Group relieved First Army of its mission of defending the west bank of the RHINE within its sector.

The First Army struck to the south initially in order to broaden its base of operations. This maneuver and the surprising assaults across the RHINE on the Third and Seventh US Army fronts caught the Germans off balance. By 26 March, the German forces were compelled to withdraw across the SIEG River. On the same day, resistance collapsed on the south flank of the bridgehead.⁸

By 29 March, the proposed bridgehead line had been reached by First Army against weakening and disorganized enemy defenses. Stiffer resistance on the north flank of First Army, in the VII Corps sector, indicated that a stronger and more stubborn enemy existed on the left flank than in the center or to the right. Third Army had progressed so rapidly that any consideration by First Army to prepare to assist Third Army by a flanking attack to the south was no longer necessary. The

successes of the Twenty First Army Group in the north indicated the possibility of encircling the great bulk of enemy forces contained in the region east of COLOGNE and DUSSELDORF.

In view of these facts and this opportunity, the previously planned continuation of the offensive toward KASSEL was altered. US First Army ordered its corps to drive almost directly north from their present positions on the SIEGEN-GIESSEN line. Corps boundaries were altered to achieve this turning movement. On 29 March, the drive to the north and juncture with US Ninth Army was begun.⁹

The 3d Armored Division, under the control of VII Corps, attacked on 25 March to seize crossings over the DILL River between DILLMIBERG and HERBORN. By 27 March, the 3d Armored Division had seized crossings in that area and was fully exploiting its successes. On 1 April, the Spearhead Division had crashed through the defenses of PADERBORN making contact with the 2d Armored Division at LIPPSTADT to the west.

The encirclement was now complete. The composition of forces within the US First Army, at this time, was, as follows:¹⁰

III Corps

28th Infantry Division
99th Infantry Division
7th Armored Division
14th Cavalry Group

V Corps

2d Infantry Division
69th Infantry Division
9th Armored Division
102d Cavalry Group

VII Corps

8th Infantry Division
9th Infantry Division
78th Infantry Division
104th Infantry Division
3d Armored Division
4th Cavalry Group

It is of importance to know that on the day the RUHR was encircled, III Corps was in Army reserve. III Corps had been pinched out between the VII Corps and V Corps upon - approaching the natural barrier of the EDER SEE and the EDER River. This pinching out was not accomplished, however, before the 7th Armored Division had seized the great EDER SEE Dam intact and crossings over the EDER River. The dam was seized on 30 March, from which time until 2 April the 7th Armored Division and III Corps rested and regrouped in that area.¹¹ There is little doubt that because of this circumstance III Corps was destined to be committed against the pocket.

The Supreme Allied Commander's plan was now realized. The great industrial center, the RUHR, had been cut from the German will to resist. Within its area a great segment of the German Army lay awaiting its fate. It contained the remainder of German Army Group B that had so recently led the German

assault in the ARDENNES offensive, and two corps of German Army Group H that had been swept into the pocket by the northern arm of the encirclement.

The completion of the RUHR encirclement demanded further considerations from the Supreme Allied Commander. General Eisenhower's conception of the reduction was as an overall constriction followed by a containing action to economize force for the continuation of the drive to the ELBE River and juncture with the Russian Armies to the east. He states:

The densely built up RUHR area offered many advantages to the defender. It was my intention should the enemy continue to resist to content myself with compressing him into a small area where only a few divisions would be needed to contain him.¹²

General Eisenhower further comments:

I have no intention of conducting a bitter house to house struggle for the destruction of the RUHR garrison. It is a thickly populated region with no indigenous sources of supply. Hunger alone certainly will bring about eventual capitulation and spare the Allies great numbers of casualties.¹³

It was the decision of the Supreme Commander to accomplish the first phase of compression of the pocket by squeezing it from the north and south against the RUHR River and from the east against the RHINE. The RUHR River itself provided an excellent boundary between the First and Ninth Armies. To further assist in the coordination of the operation Ninth Army joined First Army under Twelfth Army Group control.

The Ninth Army was to attack south from positions along the northern prong of the enveloping arm with two corps. The XVI Corps was to attack south from its positions along the RHEIN-HERNE Canal and the XIX Corps striking southwest from the HAMM-LIPPSTADT area to the RUHR. It was further directed that the XVI Corps was to be prepared to accept complete responsibility for the reduction of the pocket within Ninth Army sector when the forces had advanced sufficiently to make command and control feasible for one corps.¹⁴

Along the southern prong of the encirclement, the First Army prepared to attack into the pocket with two corps. III Corps was ordered to prepare for movement from its present location against the eastern wall of the pocket driving to the west and northwest. XVIII Airborne Corps joined the First Army on 2 April with orders to press up from the southern edge of the pocket to the RUHR.

On 2 April, final preparations were made for an all out attack against the pocket.

Enemy Situation, 24 March to 2 April

To adequately describe the German situation at the time of the Allied encirclement of the RUHR, it is necessary to retrace the activities of the German Army to the ARDENNES offensive.

The ARDENNES offensive was the last great German offensive of the Western Front. Planes, guns, tanks and men were pooled for one final effort to throw back the Allied armies. The outcome of the offensive was disastrous. The morale of the Germany Army suffered immeasurably. They had been told of the absolute necessity of victory. In their failure, the pleas and the exhortations toward the final great effort became the unmistakable proofs of defeat. The troops felt, too, that they had been betrayed. None of the many promises of air support, of tanks, and of an uninterrupted flow of supplies had been fulfilled.¹⁵ The German Army had been numerically and physically weakened; yet, after the ARDENNES campaign and its resulting drain on German manpower and equipment, four SS Panzer Divisions, a FUEHRER Grenadier Brigade, a Fuehrer Begleit Brigade, and approximately half of the Volks Artillery Corps and Rocket Projector Brigades were transferred to the Eastern Front from German Army Group B alone. The remaining Panzer units in this army were withdrawn from the line and placed in reserve.¹⁶

In the defense of the west bank of the RHINE River and WEST WALL a concept of the capabilities of the German field forces was completely overshadowed by the dogged determination

of the Supreme Commander, Adolph Hitler, to defend where they stood regardless of where that might be.

To request withdrawal was to request relief and investigation. Withdrawal without orders, and all knew that none was forthcoming, was prohibited by penalty of death. As early as January, 1945, General Model, the Army Group B commander requested permission to prepare positions on the east bank of the RHINE River. These requests were flatly refused as being conceived in defeatism. Later, after the loss of a portion of the WEST WALL and at the beginning of the Allied offensive in the ROER, this same request was refused. As late as 6 March, when the front west of the RHINE River had been breached in several places, an order to withdraw to the east bank of the river was denied. General Major Carl Wagener, Chief of Staff, German Army Group B, commented:

Through this blind and obstinate refusal of the Supreme Command to consider the suggestion now considered so necessary, or to make up its mind to give this long overdue order, A GP B arrived on the other side of the river in a beaten state, and the enemy even beat them to the east bank at REMAGEN. In consequence of the crass and blind obstinacy of the Supreme Command and its insistence on fighting it out on the western bank of the river at least a fourth of our men, half of our tanks and motor vehicles, a third of our artillery, four fifths of our signal equipment not to mention several of our large food dumps, fell into the hands of the enemy. When the remnants eventually reached the other side they found that no adequate preparations for defense had been made. And if the enemy had not delayed, as he did, for a full three weeks before continuing his attack across the stream, there would have been no RHINE front to build up in A Gp B's sector.¹⁷

The REMAGEN bridgehead was a gaping hole in the last German defensive position of the war. Army Group B, soon destined to be caught up in the RUHR pocket, defended along a 100 mile front, extending from DUISBURG to KOBLENZ. At REMAGEN, the reserves constituted two divisional remnants or Kampfgruppen with a combined infantry strength of 600 men. Fifty German tanks faced the Allied bridgehead, and, in the remainder of Army Group B sector, fifteen tanks were in reserve.¹⁸

On the night 23 March, the Allied forces south of Army Group B, facing Army Group G attacked. A penetration of that front was feared. The 11th Panzer Division, one of the two reserve elements opposing the REMAGEN salient, was ordered to the south and was lost to Army Group B, thereby further weakening the defense of the sector. On the same night, the British successfully crossed the RHINE in the sector of Army Group H to the north.

On 24 March, the intensity of the Allied activity increased on the REMAGEN front. Contact was lost in the south of the sector and the commitment of reserves failed to close the gap. Army Group B saw the approaching critical development on its wings and requested further instructions from the High Command. It received the reply to continue to

defend the RHINE. Contrary to orders the southern wing of Army Group B began a withdrawal to the north toward the SIEG River. All along the southern front of the Army Group deeper penetrations were reported, but no new mission was forthcoming from the higher command.

On the afternoon of 27 March, it was reported that Allied troops had reached HERBORN in the southern sector. On 28 March, the Supreme Commander again refused Army Group's request to withdraw from its RHINE defenses. Upon its own initiative, Army Group B attempted to concentrate forces in the south in order to close the gap created by US First Army, and made plans to pull its northern flank south across the RUHR River

On 29 March, the following estimate of the situation was sent to the Supreme Commander:

The mission of the Army Group up to the present was to prevent an enemy advance across the RHINE and from the REIAGEN bridgehead. The mission included the protection of the RUHR area. This mission could not be carried out in the REIAGEN area where the enemy has succeeded since 23 March in breaking through far to the east and in destroying the southern wing of Army Group. Simultaneously the enemy has succeeded in crossing the RHINE along the fronts of both adjacent army groups with which contact has been lost. Therefore the RHINE defense of the Western Front can be considered as broken down. The continuation of the defense of the river DUISBURG-BONN, which has not yet been attacked, is absurd, as such a defense could not even pin down enemy forces. The situation demands a new mission for A Gp B.¹⁹

The estimate further stated that a thrust to the south from SIEGEN was no longer advisable as it would be a thrust into empty space with no objective. The estimate concluded that it was the intention of the Army Group to attack to the east from WINTERBERG in order to cut off the Allied columns of the US First Army that had broken through to the north, and to contact German forces in the KASSEL area.

Army Group was ordered to attack on 30 March, but its mission to defend the RHINE and to guard the RUHR remained unchanged.

The attack was launched in the form of a meeting engagement without sufficient preparation. After taking MEDEBACK, the attack bogged down against stiffening resistance. On 31 March, the artillery arrived, but it was ineffective. The piecemeal arrival and commitment of German forces failed to counterbalance the reinforcement of the Allied positions.

On the northern flank, the penetration of the Army Group H was proceeding rapidly. On 1 and 2 April, two corps of that group reported in to Army Group B for further orders. They had been completely severed from their command. This new force was placed under a single commander and was designated Gruppe Von Luettwitz.²⁰

The encirclement was now complete. The development of the overall situation overtook all preparations for the relief

of the situation from the outside. The condition of the Army Group and the apparition of the main German front retreating more and more to the east made any attempt to break out an impossibility.

The RUHR was well suited for defense. It held mountains of the medium height. In consideration of pulling the north flank south of the RUHR River the area was naturally protected on three sides by the RUHR, RHINE, and SIEG Rivers. According to the terrain the main threat to the "fortress" was, therefore, expected from the east.

An immediate survey of existing stores was made in the area. Although the supply situation appeared to be one of growing simplicity as the Germans fell back along the RUHR to their great arsenal of supply, such was actually not the case.

While the RUHR area furnished a vast amount of war material, little if any assembly of components into finished material was carried out in the RUHR area itself. Complete decentralization of German industry dictated that the completed parts be sent outside of the RUHR for assembly. This fact accounted for the difficulty of the German forces to supply themselves from the area in which they were trapped. It was estimated that there was sufficient ammunition on hand to sustain combat for two or three weeks if there were no major engagements.²¹

On 2 April, the reverses at SIEGEN, WINTERBERG, and BRIION were evidence that the Allies would not be content with a defensive encirclement of the Army Group.

The defense of the area was made more difficult by an order from the Supreme Commander to hold north of the RUHR River at all costs. Gruppe Von Luettwitz was shifted to the east along the northern sector.

On 4 April, strong Allied attacks succeeded in making a penetration south of WINTERBERG. The 8th US Armored Division, previously reported moving east, had turned around and had contracted Gruppe Von Luettwitz.

On 5 April, the US 99th Infantry Division was identified northwest of SIEG, and the 7th Armored Division observed in the vicinity of WINTERBERG.

In recapitulation, it is of interest to inspect the trapped German forces a little more closely. General Major Carl Von Wagoner makes the following estimate of the strength of German Army Group B prior to the breakout of the REMAGEN bridgehead. On being asked to estimate the divisional strength of Army Group B on the 22 March, he states:

On paper, Army Group could tally over 22 so called divisional Kampfgruppen, and the figure of 40,000 estimated for 15 April 1945 would equal about four full strength infantry divisions. The average strength of infantry battalions in men and weapons would give the infantry a strength of two to three

full divisions. The artillery at the disposal of Army Group would correspond to that of ten divisional artillery regiments; the antitank strength, that of one normal division; the engineer strength, that of seven engineer battalions. Ammunition supplies at the most were sufficient for five divisions in continuous hard fighting; fuel supplies were adequate for from one to two divisions. If, considering these diverse weaknesses, one should still insist on appraising our strength, in divisions then I would say that the Army Group, in terms of arms and equipment had no more than three to four full strength infantry divisions at its disposal. It had considerable artillery strength; but it lacked a body of experienced leaders, it lacked the state of training and the fighting spirit of the old German divisions, and it lacked the cohesiveness of regular divisional organization.²²

He continues with the following general comments:

...The state of training of the troops was in no way adequate. The young replacement, who did arrive in ever increasing numbers, had the best will in the world, but in most cases no more than four weeks training. They could not shoot straight. They did not know how to look after their weapons....There had not been enough practise in the cooperation of all arms....older reservists and fathers, who had, until then been deferred...were now sent into the Army..., but their lack of enthusiasm and proper training were more of a hindrance than a help. Also, their level of physical fitness was not up to standard...The most critical deficiency was the lack of experienced junior officers and NCOs.

Supplies of equipment were pitifully inadequate, for there were shortages of even basic essentials. Considering Germany's situation at the time, it is understandable that there should have been shortages of such items as tanks, heavy weapons, mortars, and antitank guns. However the fact that there were not enough rifles or steel helmets or hand grenades or machine gun ammunition belts or spades or boots, even for the front line troops meant that it was scarcely possible to regard them as soldiers at all. The headquarters of XIII Corps was activated in January, 1945, with only three vehicles and two radio stations; the Volks Artillery Corps had to go into battle lacking radio-telephone equipment, that vital link between observation and fire control....All units except infantry were almost without hand weapons. On 15 April it contained 300,000 men of whom 40,000 were armed.²³

Summary

Success of the magnitude enjoyed by the Allied Armies, following their assault to the east from the RHINE, was the culminating reward for the years of Allied war effort.

On 25 March 1945, the power of the Allied Armies had pressed into the heart of Germany from their bridgeheads across the RHINE.

In eight days, a deviation of the original plan had successfully capitalized on the situation, and had completely surrounded the battered German Army Group B. (See figure 3.)

Army Group B found itself literally pinned down to the mission from which it had sought so desperately to be relieved. The mission of defending the RHINE and the RUHR area. The prize which it still held was the industrial RUHR; but, its value to the German military might diminished as the main German forces had been pushed steadily to the east.

At best Army Group hoped to exist as a threat to the flanks of the Allied penetrations on its north and south. To realize this threat the encircled German commander waited impatiently for the period of inactivity that had followed every Allied advance. The period prudently utilized to consolidate and reorganize.

There was hardly a pause in the struggle against the pocket.

At first US First Army was content to consolidate its gains to the east and to push into the pocket with the majority of its forces.

III Corps, of which 7th Armored Division was a part, was held in Army reserve in the vicinity of the EDER SEE.

As the situation clarified, it became increasingly apparent that the Germans were attempting to construct a new defensive line to the east. It was concluded that further inactivity in that direction on the part of Army would jeopardize the success of future Army plans.

US First Army decided to attack into the pocket and to the east simultaneously.

This decision by US First Army committed III Corps, and XVIII Airborne Corps against the RUHR; and VII, and V Corps to the east on 5 April.

The following chapters will be devoted to the story of the 7th Armored Division of III Corps.

A chapter will briefly describe the activities of the 7th Armored Division since its activation. A build up to the attack into the pocket, on 5 April, will be discussed in another chapter with emphasis upon plans and orders pertinent to the initial attack of the Division.

The narrative of the reduction itself will be accomplished by relating the activities and exploits of the three combat commands

of the Division as they participated in the attack. The activities of Combat Command A, during the period in which it was detached from the Division, will not be covered.

For purposes of the study the attack was broken down into four distinct phases. The four phases will constitute chapters of the study, and will comprise, the following:

1. Cracking the Shell, 5 April - 8 April 1945.
2. On to the SALWY, 9 April - 11 April 1945.
3. The drive on BECKUM and HOVEL, 12 April - 13 April 1945.
4. Mopping up HEMER and MENDEN, 14 April - 16 April 1945.

The final chapter, or conclusions can be no more than a recapitulation of the high and low spots of the campaign. They can be compared only generally to the studied conclusions of a true research project for they are based on information removed from those factors of observation and decision which somehow never leave the battlefield.

A study is presented for analysis, but it is beyond the scope of the fragments which have been exposed to do more than to render a sketch and to allow the reader the liberty of filling in the shadows to the extent of his own imagination and personal experience.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER 1

¹Report by The Supreme Commander to the Combined Chief of Staff on the Operations in Europe of the Allied Expeditionary Force, 6 June 1944 to 8 May 1945, a report prepared by General of the Army Dwight D. Eisenhower (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1946), p. 7.

²Ibid, p. 7.

³Ibid, p. 7.

⁴Ibid, p. 96.

⁵Conquer-The Story of Ninth Army (Washington: The Infantry Journal Press, 1947), p. 262.

⁶After Action Report, 2d Armored Division, 30 March 1945, pp. 11, 12.

⁷Report of Operations, First US Army, 23 February 1945 to 8 May 1945, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1946) p. 41.

⁸The Battles of Army Group "B" on the RHEIN up to its Dissolution, 22 March 1945 to 17 April 1945, a report by the Chief of Staff of Army Group "B", General Major Carl Wagener, pp. 21, 24.

⁹Op. Cit. Report by the Supreme Commander, p. 48.

¹⁰Ibid, p. 52.

¹¹After Action Report, 7th Armored Division, 5 April to 16 April 1945, p. 4.

¹²Op. Cit. Report by The Supreme Commander, p. 105.

¹³Crusade in Europe, General of the Armies Dwight D. Eisenhower, p. 398.

¹⁴Report of Operations, Twelfth Army Group (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1946) p.

¹⁵XLVII Panzer Corps, File 850.38, Document Section, TAS, by General Panzer Von Luettwitz, p. dated 21 March 1945.

¹⁶Op. Cit. Battles of Army Group B, p. 62.

¹⁷Ibid, Annox, p. xxxvi.

¹⁸Ibid, p. 3.

¹⁹Ibid, p. 52

²⁰Ibid, p. 73.

²¹Ibid, p. 80.

²²Ibid, Annox, p. xvi.

²³Ibid, Annox, pp. x, xi, xii, xiii.

CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUND OF 7TH ARMORED DIVISION

In The United States

The 7th Armored Division was activated 1 March 1942, at Camp Polk, Louisiana, under the Command of Brigadier General Lindsay McDonald Silvester. At Camp Polk it went through training under the II Armored Corps, and in September and November, 1942 took part in the Texas-Louisiana maneuvers under the Third Army. It annexed the name "Lucky" at Camp Polk and was referred to as "the Lucky 7th" when it moved to California in March 1943 for desert training. Here it stayed in and around Camp Coxcomb for five months learning to become a fighting outfit.

In August 1943 the Division moved east to Fort Benning, Georgia, for further training prior to moving overseas. The Division remained at Fort Benning until mid-April, 1944, when it staged at Camp Miles Standish, Massachusetts. A week there and the 7th went to Camp Shanks, New York, where it stayed until June 6, D-Day in Europe. On that day, the men of the Division boarded the Queen Mary in New York Harbor and sailed for England. In the British Isles debarkation was at Greenock, Scotland, on 13 June 1944. Then came Tidworth Barracks, Wiltshire, England, where final preparations were made for entering combat. On 7 August the Division moved to the ports of Southampton and Portsmouth to board LCT's and Liberty ships to cross the English

Channel. The first shiploads of 7th Armored Division men and equipment put foot on French soil 10 August 1944.

On The European Continent

The 7th Armored Division, after landing in France 10-14 August, spearheaded the attack of the XX Corps, United States Third Army across France; it covered over 600 miles in pursuit of the enemy in 21 days. It fought Major engagements at CHARTRES and MEUN. CHATEAU-THIERRY was taken and REIMS encircled. On the 31st day of August, a crossing was secured across the MEUSE River, and VERDUN was entered without serious opposition.

On 5 September, strong reconnaissance forces were sent speeding to the east. On 6 September these units reached the MOSELLE River north of METZ and contacted the enemy in the vicinity of GRAVELOTTE. Here they met fierce resistance in the form of artillery and antitank gun fire. The Division was committed to accomplish the task assigned by the XX Corps-- the crossing of the MOSELLE River. After an unsuccessful attempt to establish a bridgehead across the MOSELLE north of METZ and failing to break through the outer perimeter defenses of the city, the Division, in conjunction with the 5th Infantry Division, forced a bridgehead across the MOSELLE to the south and east of METZ. Operating with the 5th Infantry Division, the 7th Armored Division fought to extend the MOSELLE bridge-

head in a costly inch-by-inch movement that carried it to the SEILLE River in the vicinity of LONGUEVILLE. On 24-25 September, the 7th Armored Division was relieved by the 5th Infantry Division and moved north for operations near ST. ANTHONIS, HOLLAND. At this time, command of the Division passed from the XX Corps, United States Third Army, to the XIX Corps, United States First Army.

The Division was given the mission of clearing enemy resistance from the area west of the MEUSE River in the PEEL Swamp region. The attack opened towards VORTUM and OVERLOON on 30 September. VORTUM was taken by 2 October, but after six days of bitter fighting to capture OVERLOON the Division was relieved by the British 11th Armored Division. The 7th then moved south to defend the line DEURNE-ASTEN-WEERT where, on 8 October, it came under the control of the British Second Army. The Belgian First Brigade was attached to assist the Division which was then in position covering a 30 to 50 mile front on the right flank of the British Second Army.

From 8 October to 26 October there was little activity along the Division's front other than contact with small enemy patrols. However, on 27 October a surprise enemy counterattack across the canals LA DE URNE and DU NORD took MEIJEL with strong forces of tanks and infantry supported by artillery. In spite

of hard defensive fighting and counterattacks by the entire Division the enemy bridgehead was extended and LIESEL was captured.

At midnight of 31 October, Maj. Gen. LINDSAY McDONALD SILVESTER was relieved as Commanding General of the 7th Armored Division, and on 1 November he left the division that he had commanded since its activation on 1 March 1942. The Command of the Division was assumed by Brig. Gen. ROBERT W. HASBROUCK who had commanded Combat Command B since 25 September 1944.¹

On 7 November the Division, while consolidating its positions in the vicinity of CANAL DU NORD, was relieved by the 15th Scottish and the British 51st Highland Divisions. At this time it returned to the southern part of the province of LIMBURG, HOLLAND, under control of the XIII Corps, United States Ninth Army.

At the end of November, the 7th Armored Division, after nearly a month of rest, training, and maintenance, was located astride the Holland-German border in the general vicinity of HEERLEN, HOLLAND to GEILENKIRCHEN, GERMANY, in preparation to participate in the United States Ninth Army's drive into Germany.

During the first half of December, the Division moved east of the WURM River where extensive plans were formulated for the seizure of BRACHELEN, GERMANY; however execution of these plans were not possible during this period as all operations beyond the ROER River were dependent upon

the seizure or destruction of the ROER River dam, south of DUREN. In German hands, this dam could be used to flood the entire ROER River valley and cut off or destroy any Allied Forces therein.

On 16 December, the entire Division was alerted to move into the VIII Corps area of the United States First Army in the vicinity of ST. VITH, BEHO, and RECHT. The Division's stand at ST. VITH, BELGIUM, from 17 to 25 December, despite continued attacks of increasing ferocity in the midst of confusion, defeat, and uncertainty, throw the German timetable sufficiently off schedule to allow American forces to regroup, hold, and then counterattack. "The stand at ST. VITH has been recognized by both German and Allied commanders as a turning point in the battle of the Bulge."²

As the New Year opened, the Division was in an assembly area in the vicinity of AYWAILLE as XVIII Corps (Airborne) reserve. The Division had not emerged unscathed from the "Battle of the Bulge." In spite of reinforcements, the effective combat strength was down to 70% and effective medium tank strength was 56% of normal. The Division absorbed reinforcements, rehabilitated personnel, and carried on maintenance of vehicles and equipment.

On 20 January 1945 an attack was launched against ST. VITH from the north. The towns of DEIDENBERG, BORN, and HUNNINGEN were taken successively in the course of

the drive, and ST. VITH was re-entered on 23 January. With this important road center secured, operations were continued to the south and east of ST. VITH until relieved on 28 January. The Division moved into an assembly area in the vicinity of EUPEN, BELGIUM, and on 29 January was attached to the V Corps.

During the month of February 1945, the 7th Armored Division was billeted in the vicinity of EUPEN, BELGIUM, as reserve of the V Corps, United States First Army. The Division as a whole was never committed during this period, although some of its' battalions saw action under attachment to the 78th and 99th Infantry Divisions during operations to seize the approaches to the vital SCHWAMMENAUER DAM at the headwaters of the ROER River. Training and maintenance were carried on throughout the month.

During the month of March 1945, the 7th Armored Division took part in two major breakthroughs. Operating as part of the III Corps on the 8th and 9th of March, the Division pushed east from the ROER River to establish a defensive position along the west bank of the RHINE River from BONN to REMAGEN. (See figure 4.) The second major breakthrough came when the 7th, still under III Corps control, took part in an armored offensive intended to break the thin crust ringing the REMAGEN bridgehead, overrun the rich farm land to the east and north. In four days (26-30 March), the Division captured over 11,800 prisoners, a greater total than all previous months put together. It overran the northern half of the ancient principality of NASSAU: then crossing the LAHN River and



Figure 4. Elements of the 38th Armored Infantry Battalion in Germany.

turning north, penetrated deep into HESSE, almost to the borders of WESTPHALIA. (See figure 5.) The 7th came to a temporary standstill on the last day of the month after having crossed the EDER River and capturing intact the vital EDER SEE DAM.

The first three days of April found the 7th Armored Division, under III Corps, United States First Army, centered about the town of FRANKENAU, GERMANY, guarding the EDER SEE DAM and the bridges over the EDER River. At 1700 on 2 April Combat Command A was attached to the VII Corps for employment in the

vicinity of MEDEBACH. The Division less Combat Command A moved on 4 April to a new assembly area in the vicinity of HALLENBURG-SACHSENBERG-FURSTENBERG in preparation for the attack of the III Corps to the northwest to clear the area bounded by the LENNE River on the south and the RUHR River on the north.



Figure 5. 7th Armored Division's Drive through Germany.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER 2

¹The Defense of St. Vith, Belgium 17-23 December 1944,
A Historical Example of Armor in the Defense prepared by Research
and Evaluation Division, The Armored School.

²After-Action Report, 7th Armored Division, September
1944 through March 1945.

CHAPTER 3

PRELUDE TO THE COMMITMENT OF THE 7TH ARMORED DIVISION. (2 April - 5 April 1945)

The 7th Armored Division, vanguard of III Corps, First US Army, had ground to a halt in the German province of NUR-HESSE. The 7th Armored Division had traveled 148 miles in less than five days.¹ (Figure 6.)

In front of the Division lay the EDER SEE and the EDER River. The great EDER SEE Dam, backing up the largest man-made body of water in Germany, with all its hydroelectric power plants, had been captured intact by the 7th Armored Division on 30 March.

On the same day, elements of the Division had seized bridges across the EDER River and were holding bridgeheads on the east bank.

To the rear and flanks, the remainder of III Corps, the 28th and 99th Infantry Divisions, mopping up pockets of enemy resistance, had closed up to the 7th Armored Division.

III Corps halted to rest and reorganize. The 7th Armored Division had been ordered to maintain defensive positions and to enforce civilian control in the area.

On the left, VII Corps swept past III Corps, continuing in the wake of its 3d Armored Division.

The pocket had been closed on 1 April 1945.

On the right, V Corps slipped around III Corps and the EDER SEE and moved abreast of VII Corps in order to provide breadth to the all important east wall of the pocket.

There was little doubt that the breathing spell of the 7th Armored Division and III Corps would be brief. There was not a man in the Corps that was not aware of the menacing pocket of German forces to the west. It was expected that the enemy was fully capable of attempting a breakout from the area. The question in the minds of everyone was where, in what strength, and when?

First US Army intelligence reported that the two most likely breakout areas were located in the LIPPSTADT-PADERBORN and the MEDEBACK-WINTERBERG sections of the line.²

In view of this possibility, US First Army placed Combat Command A of the 7th Armored Division on a three hour alert on 31 March, for attachment to VII Corps in the general area, MEDEBACK-HALLENGER.³

It was clear to First US Army that major adjustments in the disposition and control of its forces were necessary.

VII Corps was over extended. It held a line along the entire southern and eastern wall of the pocket. The line extended from the RHINE River to the point of contact with Ninth US Army at LIPPSTADT.

First US Army ordered the newly attached XVIII Airborne Corps to assume control of the Army left boundary from the RHINE, at the mouth of the SIEG River, along the SIEG River to SIEGEN, and thence to the vicinity of LAASPHE.

XVIII Airborne Corps accomplished this on 2 April by assuming control of the 78th and 8th Infantry Divisions of VII Corps, in place. The new corps boundary ran generally northwest from SCHAMMEDIER to the junction of the HUNDEM and ZENNE Rivers, thence along the ZENNE to the RUHR River.⁴

Also, on 2 April, coincident to the shifting of control of the Army left flank, prisoner of war information, not only confirmed that the Germans would attempt a breakout from the pocket, but that the MEDEBACK area was to be the location of their attempt.⁵

The reaction was immediate. Combat Command A, 7th Armored Division, was attached to VII Corps and in turn attached to the 104th Infantry Division. Combat Command A moved out to join the 104th Infantry Division in the MEDEBACK area and Combat Command B was placed on two-hour alert for attachment to VII Corps.

XVIII Airborne Corps and VII Corps continued the First US Army encroachment on the enemy pocket.

By 3 April it became increasingly clear to First US Army that no strong coordinated attempt had been made by the

enemy to break out of the encirclement in the First Army sector. His attempts had been isolated and localized.

Of more growing concern to the future employment of the Army was the conviction that the enemy was attempting to establish a defensive line to the northeast and east beyond PADERBORN, WARBURG, and KASSEL. He had reacted very strongly against light pressure in that area.

It was necessary in view of these latest developments that First US Army move to the east and northeast before the enemy could create a strong defensive line in this sector. Therefore, it was planned to move in that direction as well as to press the pocket against the RHINE River.⁶

On 3 April, a Letter of Instructions was issued by First US Army which announced that the Army would attack without delay with the XVIII Airborne Corps and III Corps to reduce the RUHR pocket and would simultaneously prepare to attack to the east with VII Corps and V Corps.

The orders to the Corps were as follows: (Figure 7)

1. XVIII Airborne Corps was to continue operations against the pocket north as far as the RUHR River and to be prepared to release the 8th and 78th Divisions to Army control, as soon as the operation had been completed.

2. III Corps was to attack in its new zone of action without delay, relieving elements of VII Corps as rapidly as possible. III Corps was to clear the zone between the LAINE River and RUHR River, coordinating the attack with the XVIII Airborne Corps.

3. VII and V Corps were to prepare to attack to the east on Army order.⁷

Generally, it stated that III Corps would relieve VII Corps, assuming its mission and sector.

Combat Command A, 7th Armored Division, rejoined the III Corps when the 9th Infantry Division to which it was attached was transferred by Army order from VII Corps to III Corps.

The 7th Armored Division less Combat Command A was ready.

On 3 April the Division was relieved of its mission of securing the EDER SEE Dam and its bridgeheads over the EDER River by the 14th Cavalry Group.⁸ That night the awaited operations instructions were issued.

The 7th Armored Division was ordered to move on 4 April from its present position to an assembly area to the west in the vicinity of HALLENBERG, SACHENBERG, FURSTENBERG, MEDEBACK region. The Division was ordered to prepare to operate from this area into the south of the pocket.

The Division closed in an assembly area in the vicinity of MEDEBACK and prepared for the coming attack.

Prior to the movement of the Division to the new area, the 998th Engineer Treadway Bridge Company had been attached, and the 300th Engineer (Combat) Battalion had been placed in direct support of the 7th Armored Division.⁹

In further anticipation of the drive to come, two platoons of Company A, 87th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, and Battery D, 395th Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion were attached to Division Trains.

Combat Command B was reenforced by the attachment of the 3d Battalion, 395th Infantry Regiment, 99th Infantry Division.¹⁰

Field Order No. 19 was issued by the Division on the night 4 March.¹¹

III Corps was to attack to the northeast on 5 April to clear the LANE River on the south and the RUHR River on the north, clearing all enemy from its zone.

The 9th Infantry Division, with Combat Command A, 7th Armored Division, still attached, was assigned the right or north flank. The 99th Infantry Division was assigned the left or southern sector. The 7th Armored Division was assigned the center sector between the two infantry divisions.

The initial attack by the 7th Armored Division was divided into several phases.

The first phase was the assault with the infantry of Combat Command B, plus the 3d Battalion of the 395th Infantry Regiment, attached to Combat Command B, to seize and secure the area in the vicinity of WINKHAUSEN.

Upon the securing of this primary objective, Combat Command R was ordered to advance along the right of the Division sector and Combat Command B the left, pushing through to the Division objective, the area north of the SALWEY River.

The ultimate objective of the offensive action was to liquidate the large pocket of Germans in this area by driving through to contact units of Ninth US Army in the PADERBORN area.

Contact was established with enemy forces by the leading elements of the Division at 0645 on 5 April in the vicinity of the little mountain town of OBERKIRCKEN. 12

Summary

2 April found the 7th Armored Division reacting to the intelligence that the enemy would attempt a breakout of the RUHR pocket in the MEDEBACK area.

Combat Command A was attached to VII Corps and in turn attached to the 104th Infantry Division. Combat Command R was placed on two hour alert for attachment to VII Corps.

Also, on 2 April, XVIII Airborne Corps assumed control of the 78th and 8th Infantry Divisions of VII Corps, along the southwestern fringe of the pocket, in order to enable VII Corps to shorten its tremendously over extended zone of responsibility.

By 3 April, First US Army decided that it must not only contain, and reduce the RUHR pocket; but, that it must also prepare to move to the east before time permitted the enemy to construct a new defensive line in that area. The decision was made to attack into the pocket with III and XVIII Corps and to move to the east with V and VII Corps.

The 7th Armored Division moved to the MEDEBACK area on 4 April and prepared to attack into the pocket to the west.

Field Order No. 19 was issued the night of 4 April. 7th Armored Division less Combat Command A with the 3d Battalion, 395th Infantry Regiment, 99th Infantry Division attached, was ordered to attack within its zone to the area north of the SALWEY River.

The 7th Armored Division attacked on 5 April at 0645 in the vicinity of OBERKIRCHEN.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER 3

¹After Action Report, 7th Armored Division, 30 March, p. 23.

²After Action Report, 7th Armored Division, 5 April to 16 April 1945, p. 12.

³Ibid, p. 12.

⁴Report of Operations, First US Army, 23 February to 8 May 1945, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1946), p. 52.

⁵Op Cit, After Action Report 7th Armored Division, 5 April
to -, p. 12.

⁶Op Cit, Report of Operations, First US Army, p. 52.

⁷Ibid, p. 54.

⁸Op.Cit, After Action Report, 7th Armored Division, 5 Apr
to -, p. 9.

⁹Ibid, p. 9.

¹⁰Ibid, pp. 21, 22.

¹¹Ibid, p. 22.

¹²Ibid, p. 22.

CHAPTER 4

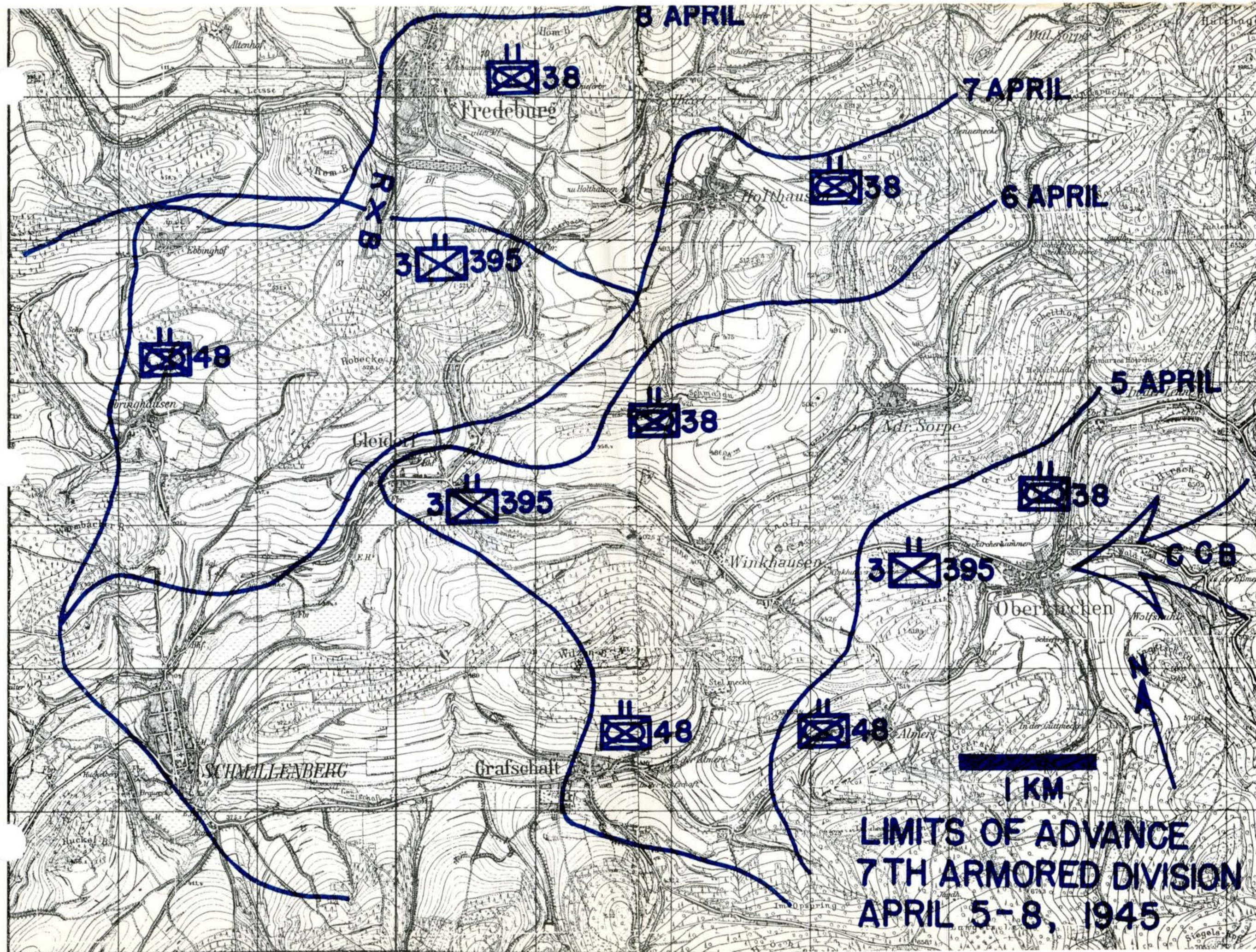
CRACKING THE SHELL (5-8 April) (See Figure 8)

Of the twelve days which elapsed between the commitment of the Seventh until the RUHR operation was considered accomplished, the first four fall into a class together. In contrast to the later sallies of the task forces, this phase was characterized by the slow forward push of a solid front line. The hard crust presented by the Kraut at the edge of the Pocket forced a methodical clearance of the hills and vales between his village fortresses. It was a question of boring through Jerry's shell before a knock-out punch could be delivered to his heart.

German Situation on April 5th

Before considering the tactical operations which, for the Seventh Armored Division, got under way on the morning of the fifth, let us give thought to the predicament of the opposition. The situation of German ARMY GROUP B on this date is partially described in the following conclusion to a detailed estimate of the situation sent to its higher headquarters, OB WEST:

1. The enemy, under constant reinforcement, is in concentrated attack on the RUHR Pocket.
2. Fighting power of the troops and supply basis of Army Group allows continuation of battle for two more weeks.



3. Should a certain relief of Army Group not be possible inside the next two weeks, it would mean the loss of Army Group B. A breakout would no longer be possible after the consumption of the last supplies (especially gasoline and ammunition).

4. Army Group is not in a position to judge whether the general situation demands the sacrificing of its troops for the protection of the Ruhr area, which is, besides, cut off from the Reich. From its own estimate of the situation, Army Group B renews its urgent requests for an order which would allow for breaking out of the pocket immediately and for complete abandonment of the Rhine and Ruhr area. The carrying through of this task is considered in several groups and in various directions.¹

The urgent requests referred to in paragraph 4 above were rejected by Field-Marshal KESSELRING, commanding general of O B WEST.²

The disposition of the German forces under Army Group B within the Pocket on 5 April 1945 was as follows: (See figure 9, Army Group B Situation, 5 April 1945.)

a. Army Group B, commanded by Field-Marshal Walter MODEL, consisted of three major subordinate commands:

1. GROUP LUETTWITZ on the north.
2. FIFTH PANZER ARMY, commanded by Colonel Gen Josef HARPE, along the Rhine and southern fronts.
3. FIFTEENTH ARMY, commanded by General Gustav von ZANGEN, on the eastern front.

b. There were a total of seven corps within the pocket; two under each of the major commands, and one (the LXXXI Infantry Corps, Headquarters only) under Army Group B control en route from the Rhine front to the eastern front.

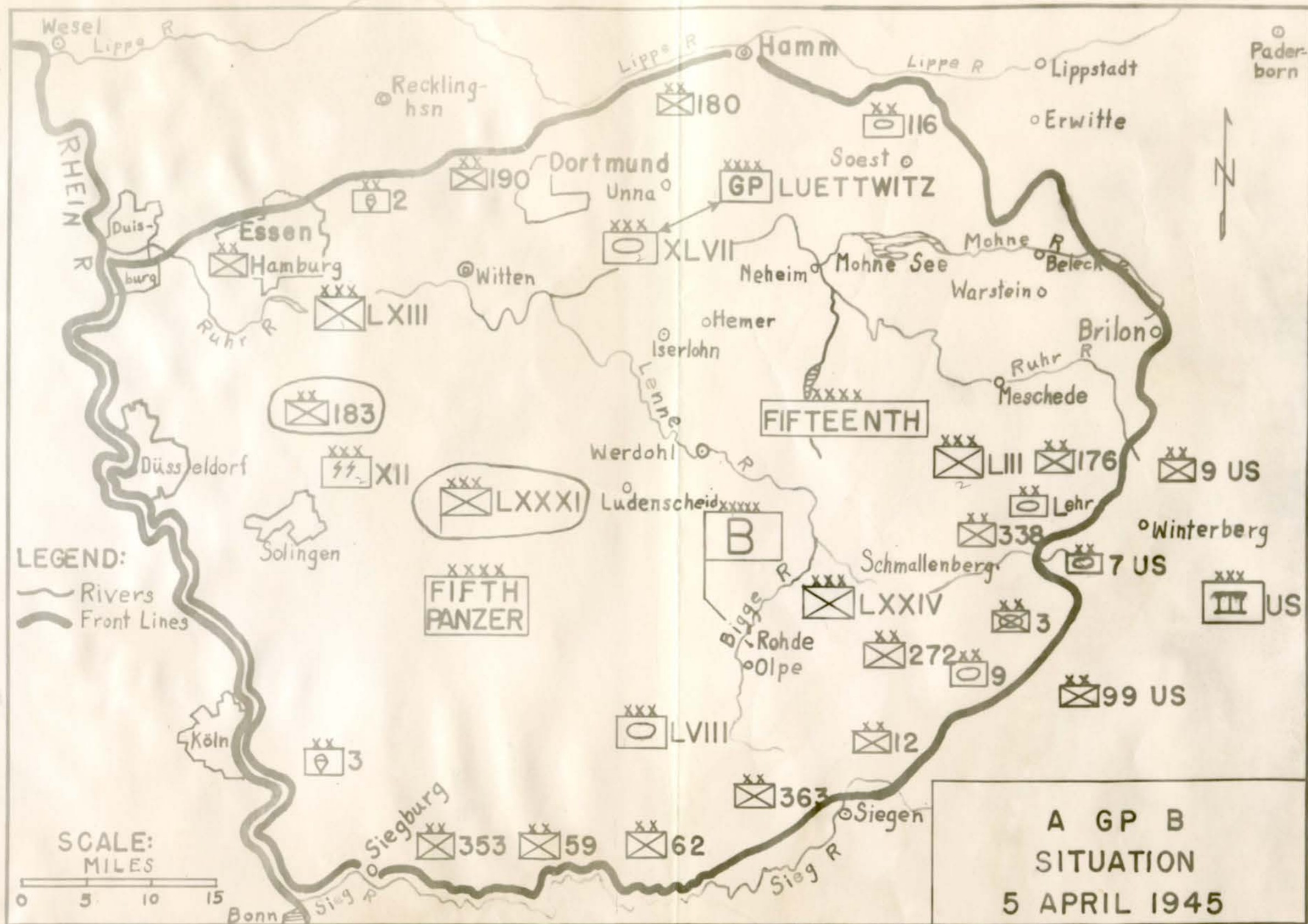


Fig. 9

c. There were 18 understrength divisions within the pocket. Because these divisions contained only the remnants of their units which had been able to escape across the Rhine, the German command commonly referred to them as "Kampfgruppen" (battle groups). They were disposed as follows:

1. GROUP LUETTWITZ had five "kampfgruppen" scattered along the northern front.

2. FIFTH PANZER ARMY had six "kampfgruppen"; one on the Rhine front, one in reserve, and four along its southern front.

3. FIFTEENTH ARMY had seven "kampfgruppen" on the eastern front. This front extended generally from the town of SIEGEN northeast through WINTERBERG to the town of BRIION.

d. Facing the US 7th Armored Division and the US III Corps on the Eastern Front was the LIII Infantry Corps of the German Fifteenth Army. This corps was commanded by Lt Gen Fritz BAYERLEIN, an expert in panzer warfare. This corps consisted of the following divisional "kampfgruppen":

1. The PANZER LEHR (130th), commanded by a Colonel HAUSER. This had been a "crack" panzer division which had been in combat since the Normandy Invasion. On this date it consisted of about 20 tanks and about 10 tank destroyers.³ Lt Gen BAYERLEIN had commanded this division in combat from "D"-Day until 7 February 1945.⁴

2. The 3d PANZER GRENADIER, commanded by Maj Gen Walter DENKERT.

3. The 176th INFANTRY, commanded by Colonel Christian LANDAU.

4. The 338th INFANTRY, commanded by Colonel Wolf EWERT.

The Shell Proves Tough - April 5

For the first day's offensive, CCB (see figure 10) planned a strictly infantry show. Following an artillery preparation, the assault forces moved across the OBERKIRCHEN line of departure at 0630 with their primary objective the town of SCHMALLEMBERG - some eight kilometers to the southwest. Attacking astride the road to WINKELUSEN, the 3rd Battalion of the 395th Infantry met stubborn **resistance** and a profusion of local counterattacks from the very start. At the end of the day's fighting it found itself less than a mile along the way and under a heavy, well zeroed in volume of artillery and mortar fire which forced the men to dig in deep. The 48th Armored Infantry Battalion, meanwhile, heading southwest out of OBERKIRCHEN, found the enemy equally tenacious and apparently abundantly supplied with automatic weapons, direct firing assault guns, and ammunition. Nevertheless, it managed to bull its way through little AIMERT and another mile beyond to positions overlooking GRAFSCHAFT. Company B, in a flanking movement, was able to occupy the high ground half a mile south of town until an enveloping, artillery supported German counterattack rendered the position

untenable. About the middle of the afternoon the 38th Armored Infantry Battalion lent its weight to the Combat Command and immediately dug itself in around OBERKIRCHEN. From this spot that night it beat off a counterattack from the northwest with due credit to the supporting artillery for its help.

Thus, with operations for the first day of the drive halted somewhat short of expectations, plans were carefully worked out for a heavy, coordinated assault on the morrow. The scheme envisaged the capture of objectives 4 (the hill 1500 yards northeast of SCHMALLENBERG) and 5 (GRAFSCHAFT) by Companies B and A respectively of the 48th following an artillery time on target (TOT) on objective 5 at 0550. The 3rd Battalion of the 395th in the center would secure objective 9 (WINKHAUSEN), and the 38th was to seize objective 8 (NIEDERSORPE). Although elements of the 31st Tank Battalion and some tank destroyers were attached to the assault elements, the bulk of the 31st, together with the tanks of CC R, was held in readiness a few kilometers to the rear. The support of three battalions of artillery was available to back this effort to the hilt. Certainly the preponderance of power lay with the aggressor, but the defender had the terrain - plus the ability to convert it to his best advantage.

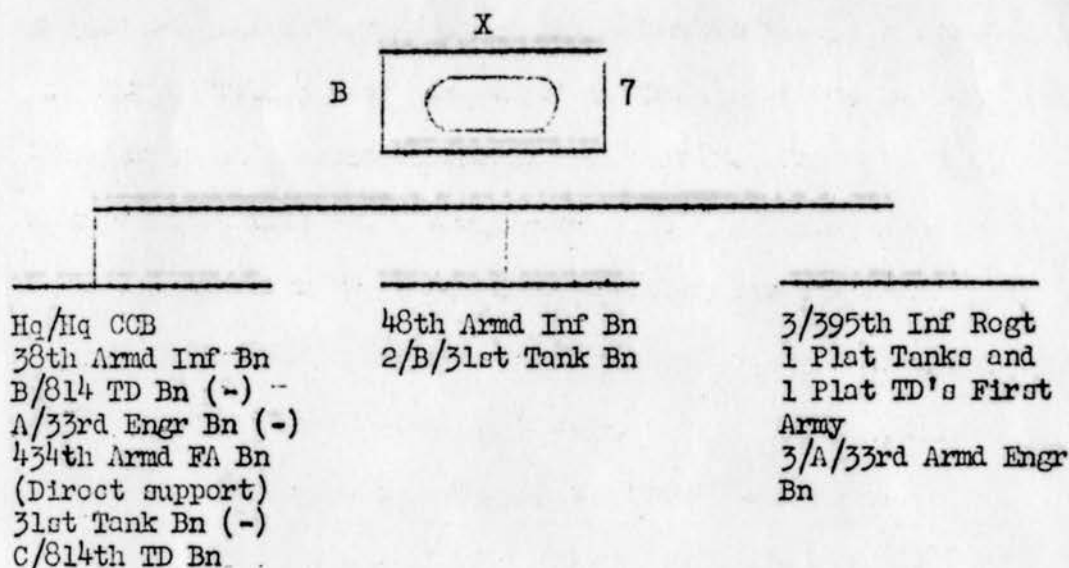


Figure 10. Combat Command B, Organization for Combat as of 5 April.

CCB Also Proves Tough - April 6

Beginning at 0550 the 400th, 434th, and 440th Armored Field Artillery Battalions laid down an intensive ten minute preparation (with special attention to NIEDERSORPE), the culmination of a night's work of concentrations on enemy held towns all along the front. At 0600 the attack of the 38th got under way resulting, within three hours, in the seizure of NIEDERSORPE. (See Figure 11.) This anchored the north flank of the Command. By early afternoon the village of HOLTHAUSEN was reached but in the face of a heavy tank-infantry counter-attack (with at least two of the king-sized Tigers on the welcoming committee) a temporary retirement seemed advisable.⁵



Figure 11. Troops of Company B, 38th AIB Moving
Away From Newly Captured NEIDERSORPE.

So, moving about a kilometer south, a more favorable location overlooking GLEIDORF was occupied.

In spite of a determined effort by the Kraut to keep WINKHAUSEN, the 395th finally shoved him out after a ten hour operation and immediately pushed on toward GLEIDORF. In the meantime the 48th (on the left) had moved into GRAFSCHAFT against light opposition, the result of a terrific artillery TOT. However, in the effort to secure the hill northwest of town the troops ran into a strong counterattack and were forced to pull back slightly.

With the 38th occupying the strategic high ground over GLEIDORF, the doughboys from the 395th pushed through; by early evening the city was theirs and the position was being consolidated for the night. As darkness wore on, though, strong hostile tank and infantry groups from the north thrust again and again

into the outskirts - making it appear doubtful just who did hold the place. It was not until after daylight that this question, and Jerry, was entirely removed.

Although two full days and nights of intensive fighting had pushed the bridgehead only a few kilometers westward, it must be remembered that this was a stubborn and tenacious enemy - one with his back to the wall and no place to seek retreat; one determined to sell every inch dearly. These were well equipped first line troops whose greatest desire was to thrust the hated invader from the Fatherland.

The Shell Begins to Crack - April 7

This day saw the "liberation" of SCHMALLEMBERG and the hard shell of the RUHR "egg" showed its first sign of a crack. Although attached tanks and tank destroyers had done yeoman service in reducing the Nazi strongholds and in protecting the flanks, this was still primarily a task for the infantry. For this, the third day, plans called for Company A of the 48th to pass through Company B on objective 4 and seize SCHMALLEMBERG in conjunction with Company L of the 395th Regiment. At the same time, Company C of the 48th was to pass south of GRAFSCHAFT and hit SCHMALLEMBERG from the south. Each of the assaulting battalions had a company of tanks from the 31st Tank Battalion to assist it. Then, to add to the fury of the attack, dive bombers were made available to the Combat Command.

Finally, at eleven o'clock, all hell suddenly broke loose on the defenders of SCHMALLENBERG. The howitzers of the 434th marked the target with smoke and the Air Force gave it the full treatment. Following this, a short but devastating artillery preparation kept things hot while the 48th prepared to take off under the protection of a smoke screen. (See figure 12.)



Figure 12. Artillery Preparation on
SCHMALLENBERG.

By 1600 the tank-infantry teams had smashed their way house by house through what was left of the city - coincidentally bagging some 350 Krauts who evidently considered discretion the better

part of valor. That evening, as the 87th Reconnaissance Battalion moved in to consolidate the town, the doughboys climbed on up the hill mass to the northwest. The success of this attack is, in itself, a fitting tribute to the effectiveness of the tank-infantry-artillery-air team.

Even as CCB was closing in on its objective, Combat Command R became operational. (See figure 13.) Assuming control of the 38th Armored Infantry Battalion and Troop A of the Reconnaissance Battalion, Reserve Command took over the responsibility of the Division right flank,

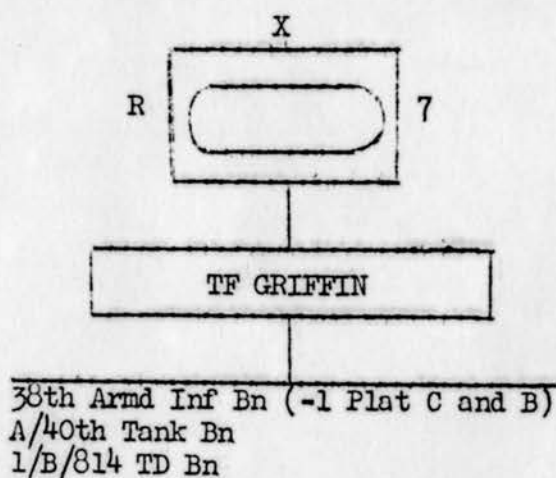


Figure 13. Combat Command R, Organization
For Combat as of April 7.

By now the little cluster of buildings known as HOLTHAUSEN, which had been lost the previous day, was energetically held by the enemy and presented a definite thorn in the side of the Division. Colonel Francis P. Tompkins, CCR commander, lost no time in directing

his reinforced 38th Armored Infantry Battalion to eliminate this stronghold of Nazidom. The attack developed at 1230 as directed and companies converged on the town from the northeast and south-east. Even though under accurate artillery and mortar shelling and in the face of small arms fire from a dug-in enemy, Companies C and B joined and together mopped up and outposted the objective by nightfall. Company A subsequently moved through and continued the attack to the northwest toward HUXEL while the Reconnaissance Troop established protective barriers to the northeast and gained contact with the 9th Division on the north. Though the opposition remained strong as ever, one thing was becoming clear; once this hard outer shell was finally punctured, the going should become progressively easier.

The Shell Shatters - April 8

Now that Combat Commands were attacking abreast, it might be better for the sake of clarity to consider their actions separately even though at this stage the activities of each facilitated the advance of the other. First, turn to the happenings of CCA during this period. Up until April 6th CCA was attached to the 9th Infantry Division, assisting it to clear up a troublesome area some miles to the north. The trapped Wehrmacht was expected to try to make a break for it there near MEDEBACH and this Combat Command was helping to preclude the possibility. On the morning of the 7th,

the threat having subsided, CCA was relieved in its zone. Leaving a tank company and a tank destroyer company attached to the 47th Infantry Regiment, it proceeded to the WINTERBERG area where it remained throughout the day of the 8th in Division reserve to be employed only on order of the III Corps commander. Not until the 9th did it move west to the vicinity of GLEIDORF prepared to operate in the Seventh's zone under the orders of General Hasbrouck.

CCB's plans for the 8th called for the seizure of the small but well defended villages of OBRINGHAUSEN and EBBINGHOF. The 87th Reconnaissance Battalion was to protect the left flank on this change of direction from west to northwest. The Combat Command main effort was to be made by the 48th while the 3rd Battalion of the 395th seized the high ground overlooking not only CCB's objective but FRIEDBURG as well - the objective of CCR.⁷ During the night Corps artillery put a series of TOTs over WERPE and WORMBACH while the 434th applied the same treatment to OBRINGHAUSEN. At 0545 the 395th crossed the line of departure and began to climb up the wooded hill mass to the north; some six hours later it was firmly planted on the strategic commanding terrain. That was the sign to dump a heavy five minute concentration on OBRINGHAUSEN following which the irruption of Company B of the 48th permitted the dazed defenders time to put up only meagre resistance. Within fifteen minutes this objective was reported in friendly hands.

With this the 48th was placed in Combat Command reserve for a well deserved 24 hour rest and the 23rd Armored Infantry Battalion was attached to CCB. At 1400 Colonel Joseph F. Haskell, commander of CCB, organized his unit into three task forces named for their leaders: Beaty, Erlenbusch, and Rhea. (See Figure 14.) The time had arrived to show the Germans what a "blitzkrieg" could be like. Just before dark Task Force Beaty moved through the 395th, attacked and captured EBBINGHOF, and continued on to consolidate the commanding ground to the west. That evening the troops of the 395th who had shared the brunt of the previous four day's incursion with the Combat Command were detached and the Task Forces of CCB poised ready and eager to start rolling westward.

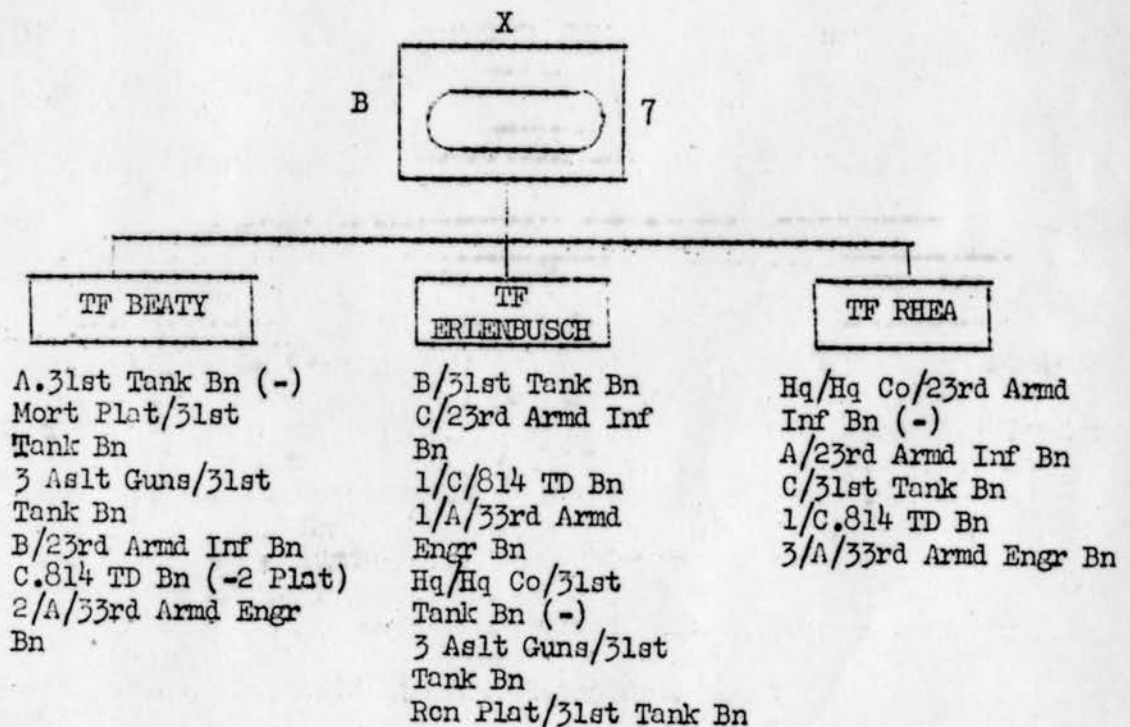


Figure 14. Combat Command B, Organization for Combat, Night of April 8.

Turning to the activities of Reserve Command on this clear, . frosty eighth day of April we see that it had a somewhat tougher nut to crack than its sister on the south. This was FREDEBURG - a stronghold of diehards situated at the hub of an important road net. It was first necessary to eliminate the remaining defenders of a little group of buildings called HUXEL and take over the hill between it and FREDEBURG to the west. This was accomplished by Company A of the 38th at 0145 on the morning of the 8th. Some six hours later, a two pronged offensive was in progress. While Companies A and C of the 38th advanced along the wooded ridge overlooking the objective, Company B with Company A of the 40th Tank Battalion moved along the valley floor on the HOLTHAUSEN - FREDEBURG road. The attack progressed slowly throughout the morning. Although no prepared positions were encountered, the enemy contested every foot of ground with a heavy volume of small arms and machine gun fire to which was added a generous sample of what artillery, mortars, and self-propelled guns could offer. Nevertheless, by shortly after eleven o'clock the ridge had been combed clean and those companies, now only a few hundred yards from the objective, were preparing for the final assault.

Unfortunately, just about this time the tank-inantry team moving along the road bumped into a difficult situation: a group of Krauts defending a road block, well armed and emplaced, supported

by artillery, and possessed with a definitely hostile and determined attitude. This delayed the advance four hours and permitted the FRIEDBURG garrison time to consolidate the position even more securely. As a result, the entry of CCR into the city was not exactly a triumphal parade. Bitter house-to-house fighting developed and by nightfall only a few sections of the objective were in friendly hands. Around nine o'clock a request was sent back for authority to consolidate in place and let the exhausted men rest. But Colonel Tompkins replied that he intended to pass an armored task force through the town at first light and that the area should be entirely cleared if possible. Otherwise, the minimum requirement was that a designated route be cleared to permit safe passage of the task force.⁸ The required path was secured. That day over a hundred prisoners were gathered in Reserve Command's bag.

Thus concluded the first phase of the Seventh Armored Division's part in the reduction of the RUHR Pocket. In four days it had smashed its way through seven kilometers of the most difficult sort of terrain against a resolute adversary; one who used every village as a fortress; every hill as a barrier. An opponent apparently well endowed not only in materiel but in the ability to use it effectively. The bridgehead called for in the original mission was now a reality; the division was prepared to continue the attack with speed and violence.

The German Point of View

Before embarking on the next phase of operations, a pause is in order to consider the foregoing activities from the point of view of the enemy: During the period 5-8 April 1945 ARMY GROUP B was quite successful in withstanding the attacks of the US forces assigned the mission of annihilating this pocket. The Army Group was successfully fulfilling its mission of defending the Ruhr, and was at the same time engaging some 15 enemy American divisions, thus preventing these divisions from strengthening Allied attacks against the main German line along the WESER River.

On 5 April the US 99th Infantry Division was identified in the area northeast of the town of SIEGEN, and the US 7th Armored Division was located in the vicinity of the town of WINTERBERG. It was on this date that Army Group B divined that the Allies definitely intended to annihilate the German forces within the pocket.⁹ On the eastern front the LIII Infantry Corps fell back from WINTERBERG under the attacks of the US 9th Infantry Division reinforced by CCA of the 7th Armored Division.

During the next two days, 6-7 April, FIFTEENTH ARMY conducted a successful delaying action along the eastern front. It was on one of these two days that another of the German emergency measures was taken in an attempt to strengthen its defenses.

According to Maj Gen WAGNER, Chief of Staff, Army Group B, it was on 6 April that the LXXXI Infantry Corps headquarters

relieved the LIII Infantry Corps headquarters on the eastern front.¹⁰ Lt Gen BAYERLEIN, commanding the LIII Infantry Corps, states that it was on 7 April, while at his headquarters at HANGSLEBEN that he received orders to report to GROUP LUETTWITZ at HENGSEN on the northern front.¹¹ There is a third, more conflicting, statement of Gen d Pz LUETTWITZ that the LIII Infantry Corps was not assigned to his headquarters until 10 April.¹² In any event, the transfer did take place and the LIII Infantry Corps assumed control of the 116th Panzer, 180th Infantry and 190th Infantry Divisions formerly assigned to LUETTWITZ's XLVII Panzer Corps. And so it was in this manner that the LXXXI Infantry Corps, commanded by Gen der Inf KOCHLING, assumed control of the divisions of the LIII Infantry Corps already committed on the Eastern Front.

By 8 April the general situation of Army Group B had begun to deteriorate. Telephone communications with its higher headquarters, OB WEST, had been severed. All fronts, except the RHINE, were under attack, and the situation remained fluid. Commitment of the few reserves became even more difficult with the frequent change in direction of the US attacks. In addition the reopening of the US offensive across the WESER River on 7 April drowned the last hopes of Army Group B for a relief by the newly formed German TWELFTH ARMY which was supposed to come to its relief.¹³

On the northern front GROUP LUETTWITZ had lost the towns of SOEST and HAMM on 6 April. Two days later it reported being under violent attack, and requested permission to withdraw behind the RUHR River. This request was denied by Army Group B which had explicit orders that every position was to be held at all costs.¹⁴

On the southern front FIFTH PANZER ARMY had been forced to abandon its prepared positions along the SIEG River on 7 April.¹⁵

Meanwhile on the eastern front the FIFTEENTH ARMY had been forced back to a line extending from the town of HILCHENBACK, northeast through SCHMALLEMBERG, to a point east of MESCHADE, and had urgently requested reinforcements.¹⁶

NOTES FOR CHAPTER 4

¹Maj. Gen. Karl von Wagner, "Battles of A Gp B on the Rhein (22 Mar - 17 Apr 1945)" par 90.

²Ibid; passim.

³Lt. Gen. Fritz Bayerlein, A Crack Panzer Division and what Allied Airpower did to it between D-Day and V-Day, (APO 696, U.S. Army, Air PW Interrogation Detachment, Military Intelligence Service, 1945), par 131.

⁴Ibid, par 102.

⁵After Action Report, Combat Command B, Seventh Armored Division, April 1945, p 13.

⁶After Action Report, Combat Command R, Seventh Armored Division, April 1945.

⁷After Action Report, Combat Command B, Seventh Armored Division, April 1945, p 14.

⁸After Action Report, Combat Command R, Seventh Armored Division, April 1945.

⁹Op cit, Wagner.

¹⁰Ibid; passim.

¹¹Op Cit, Bayerlein.

¹²Statement of General (px) von Luettwitz.

¹³Op cit, Wagner.

¹⁴Ibid; passim.

¹⁵Ibid; passim.

¹⁶Ibid; passim.

CHAPTER 5

ON TO THE SALWEY - APRIL 9-11 (See Figure 15)

Beginning the ninth of April, the enemy's pattern of defense seemed to disintegrate somewhat. Individual strong points held out as stubbornly as ever but rather than the defense by organized units as before, every German with a uniform was thrown into the line as an infantryman. This at least added a little mystery to the show - making it impossible to predict the resistance either in strength or location. Truly it can be said the enemy was wherever and whenever he was found. Against this hit or miss opposition the Division was able to drive in one day from the FRIEDBURG - WORMBACH area to the MAILAR - KOBLENRODE line, cleaving some fifty square kilometers from the ever diminishing Pocket.

The Task Forces Start to Roll - April 9

Although CCA had by now again become a full fledged member of the Division, the assault was carried by CCR on the north flank and CCB on the south as before. Inasmuch as the road to MAILAR seemed to be in more obstinate hands than the southern route, first consider the activities of CCR's combat elements: Task Forces Brown and Griffin. (See Figure 16.)

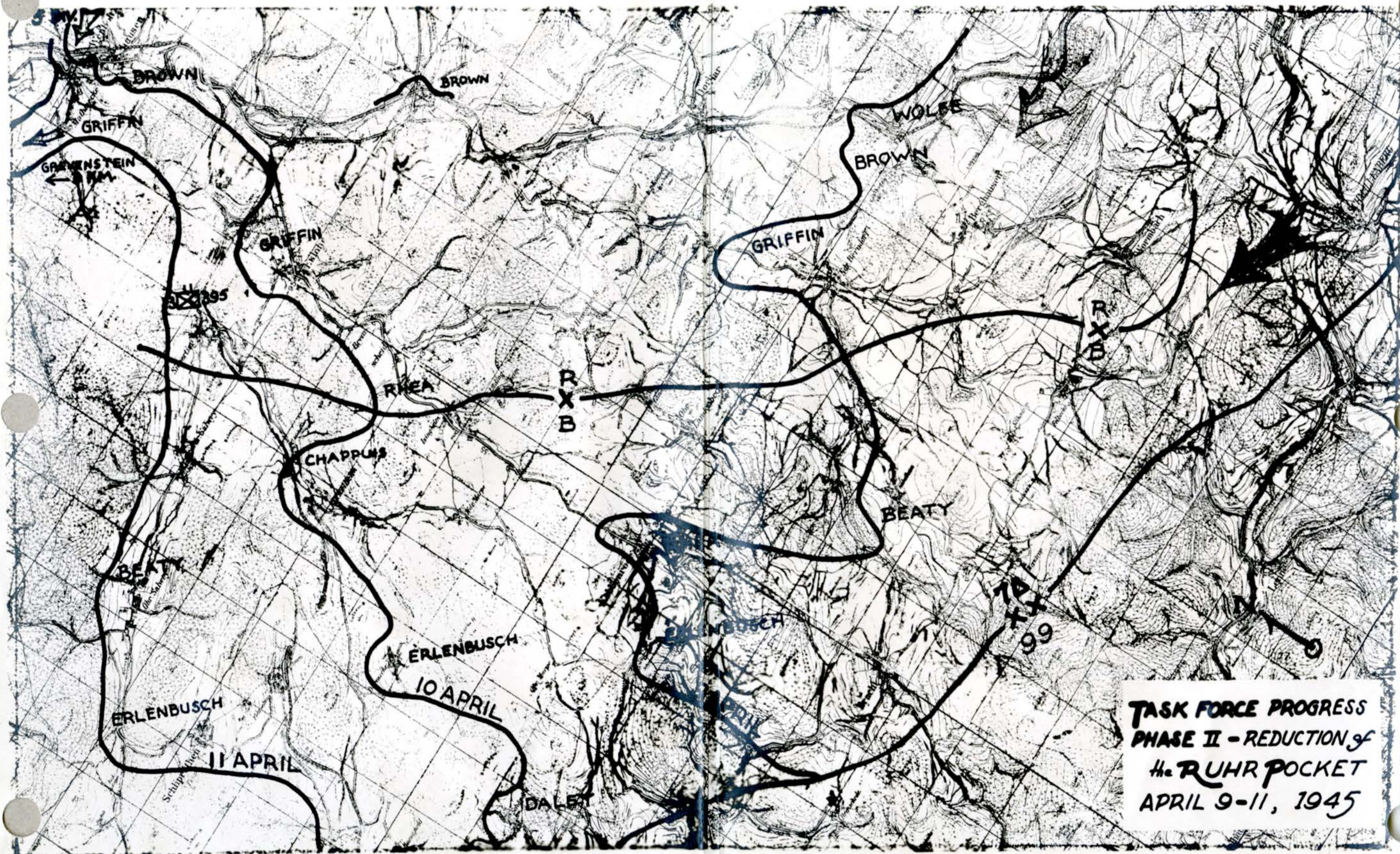


Fig 15

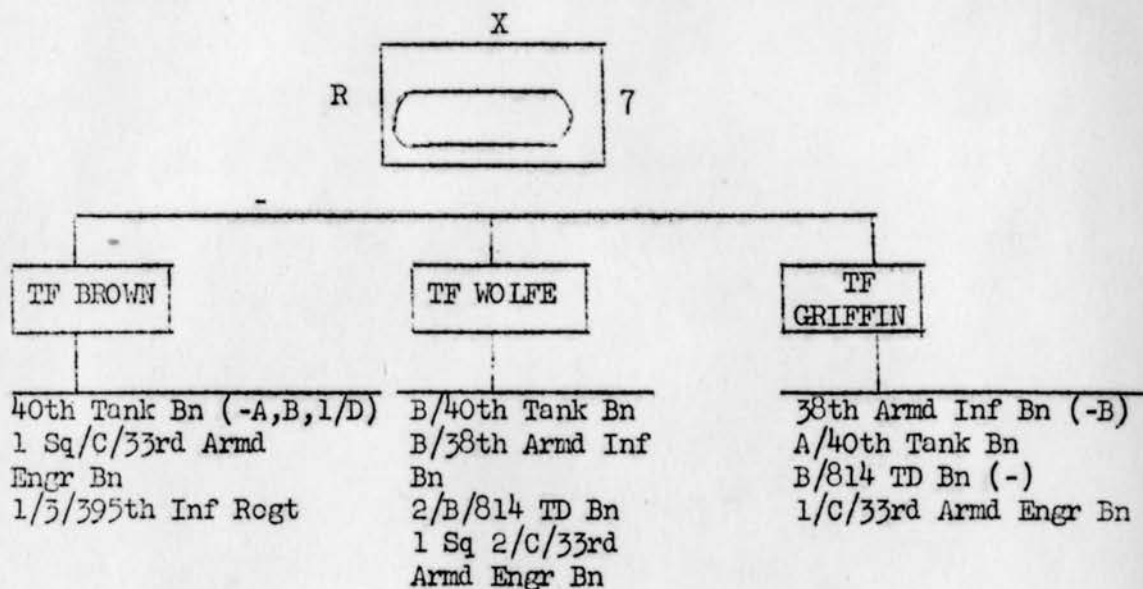


Figure 16. Combat Command R, Organization
For Combat - April 9.

With the doughboys mounted on the tanks, Task Force Wolfe (a subdivision of Task Force Brown) moved out of FREDEBURG at first light enroute to HEIMINGHAUSEN, four kilometers away.¹ In the first two hours five undefended road blocks were encountered consisting of felled trees, rubble, destroyed vehicles, and mines. To add to the impediments of the trip, the Krauts filled the valley with a concentrated smoke screen which reduced visibility and speed to nearly zero. Through the afternoon as the advance continued active resistance was added to passive. Small arms fire was encountered, then the weight of automatic weapons and mortars was added, until finally nightfall found the troops confronting the tank-infantry defended stronghold of MAILAR.

In the interim, Task Force Griffin had bumped into much the same situation a few thousand yards to the south. Road blocks and increasingly strong opposition restricted movement. By the time BERGHAUSEN had been reached impossible road conditions bogged the column down completely.² Fortunately, that part of Company C of the 33rd Armored Engineer Battalion supporting the Task Force accomplished a quick repair job on the road and the drive continued. Darkness found another four kilometers clear and the troops occupying positions on the south side of MENKHAUSEN.

During the day Task Force Brown had been in reserve. However, with the pressure strong on Task Force Wolfe from MAILAR Brown picked up Company I of the 395th Infantry Regiment and as evening approached moved to the heights south of MAILAR.³ CCR had collected over seven hundred prisoners during this day's advance.

The advances of the 99th Division on the south flank may have compromised the enemy's defenses in CCB's zone. At any rate the defense of this sector apparently didn't seem too profitable for little attempt was made to hold back the tide of the Combat Command.

At first light of April 9, the three Task Forces moved out. The result of a coordinated attack by two of these, Beatty

and Erlonbusch, wrested control of BERGHAUSEN from hostile hands.⁴ The 434th had placed a TOT on the southern approaches to this town, lifting on call to one on the objective itself with smoke being placed at the same time on the eastern and western approaches. The tank destroyers of Erlonbusch led out at 0530 and moved through WORMBACH to positions in defilade where they could cover the wooded area before BERGHAUSEN. The remainder of the Task Force crossed the WORMBACH line of departure at 0630 while Boaty moved in simultaneously on the right. Before ten o'clock BERGHAUSEN had fallen.

In the meantime Task Force Rhea had occupied FELBECKE without much argument and continued to the north and west to add a string of smaller villages to its list. Most of these localities were inclined to give up the ghost rather easily but the big one at the end of the line required a little extra persuasion. KOBBERODE tried to put up a fight but darkness found Rhea with the situation well in hand - including the town, over two hundred prisoners, and a large quantity of materiel.

While this advance was progressing, the remainder of CCB was doing equally well. After capturing BERGHAUSEN, Task Forces Boaty and Erlonbusch took different routes. The former set out on the OBER BERNDORF - KUKELHEIM axis and spend the night on the objective without being molested. The latter swung around to the south through SEIKENTROP and BRACHT, pushed rapidly through LECKMARTH, and finally paused at SCHWARTMECKE.⁵ In this case the terrain proved more of an obstacle than the Wehrmacht.

So ended the ninth of April - a day which saw the victorious stream of the 7th Armored turn into a raging torrent. The dam had been breached and the waters were pouring through in increasing volume and speed. The Kraut was everywhere disorganized and bewildered; his efforts piecemeal, his units scattered, his supply routes overrun, and his intelligence estimate of the enemy situation at an irreducible minimum. And the 7th was not alone in its successes; the collective efforts of all the divisions on the circumference were hourly drawing the noose tighter; the RUHR was doomed.

CCA Joins the Race - April 10

For the first time in the RUHR operations all three Combat Commands of the Seventh were in operation simultaneously. During the preceding night CCB gave the Reserve Command back the 23rd Infantry Battalion and withdrew its own 48th from reserve. Here also Task Force Chappuis entered the scene. The enemy, showing little inclination to call the war lost, continued the defense in the only manner left to him: that of isolated positions in depth along all the roads. Unfortunately for the Aggressor, the support of tanks, self-propelled guns, and an increasing quantity of antiaircraft guns seemed to be available to the Germans in abundance.

The Division's main effort - a determined thrust to the northwest - was made by CCR. Although the attack was scheduled

to get under way at 0530 and the men were organized and ready to move at that time, such an impenetrable barrier of fog blanketed the whole area it was impractical to move the tanks. The infantry was therefore directed to dismount and gain contact on foot while the vehicles followed as best they could. While Task Force Wolfe continued along the main road through DORLAR, following the LEISSE River, Task Force Brown moved along a kilometer or so to the west, tracing a parallel path on the road through GRIMMINGHAUSEN. Both teams encountered only scattered resistance with a few passive road blocks.

Several thousand yards and some seven hours after the morning jump-off, their routes converged at a little valley village called FRIELINGHAUSEN. Here, although a quantity of small arms fire emanated from the town which was further protected by several road blocks and some mines, the Task Forces barged in, consolidated command under Lt Col Brown and continued the onslaught to the north. BREMKE, a mile beyond, proved to be the next obstacle, but after a TOT by Corps artillery closely followed by a tank-infantry assault, the resistance folded quickly - netting fifteen prisoners. Leaving a small armored security detachment in BREMKE, the Task Force pushed ahead rapidly brushing aside sporadic small arms fire which came from houses along the road, and seized and outposted the important highway bridge over the WENNE River. From there, in accordance with orders

from combat command, a patrol moved the intervening two kilometers and made physical contact with the Fifth Infantry Division at WEINOLTHAUSEN.

Progress in the other task force of CCR - Griffin - was of a similar nature. Advancing along the road through HENGSECK on the left of the Command, it encountered only slight opposition until it reached the hamlet of BREMSCHIED in the valley of the ESSEL.⁶ The 3rd Battalion of the 395th supported Griffin's attack by clearing the woods to the northwest of the objective. Then, behind a terrific concentration of marching fire, the troops rushed the town and overcame the stunned defenders in short order. Besides a number of prisoners, the haul included one 88-mm gun in good condition and several vehicles. Thereupon proceeding without delay to the larger settlement of ESLOHE, the same marching fire technique was applied and with equal success. With the bridge across the ESSEL secure, Task Force Griffin was ready to write finis on a fruitful day.

So much for the Division's main effort. But the other combat commands were not exactly idle either. CCB delayed in the SCHWARTMECKE - KOBBERODE area till noon of the tenth before pushing two task forces ahead. (See figure 17.) Erlenbusch had no difficulty securing OBER MARPE and the hills a mile to the northwest before four o'clock. Then, just before dusk, the march

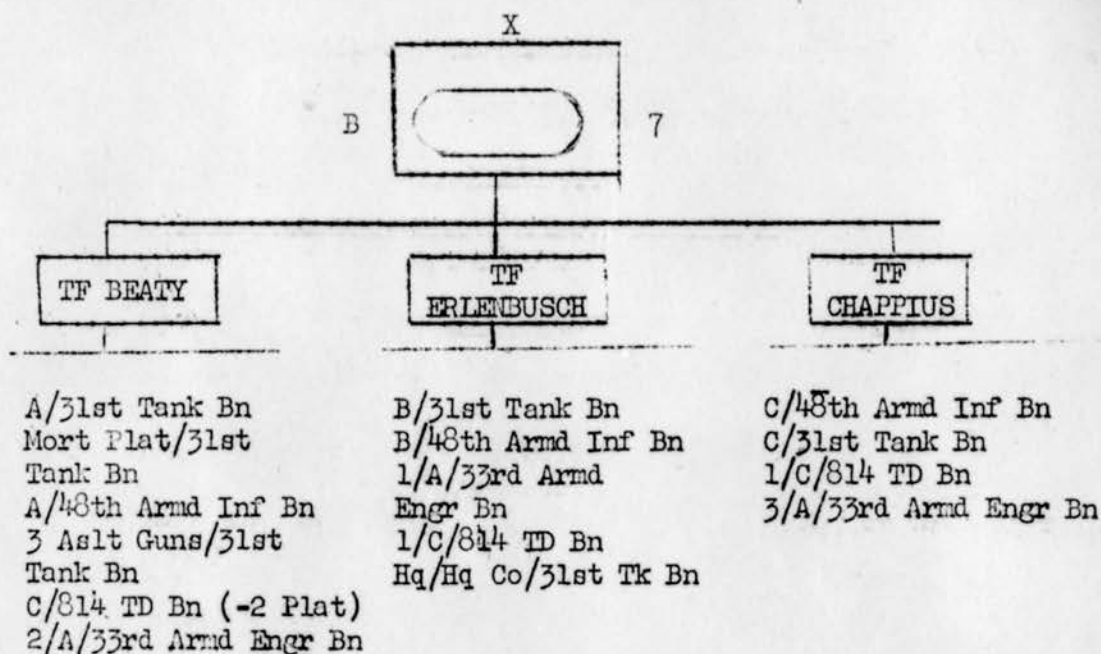


Figure 17. Combat Command B, Organization
for Combat - April 10

continued to DORMECKE and the crossroads five hundred yards further. With no casualties at all, nearly a hundred prisoners had been added to the toll in less than seven hours. Task Force Chappuis, pursuing a parallel route to the east, passed through BROCKHEIM without incident, but enroute to NIEDER MARPE the way was contested by foot troops amply supported by tanks and artillery. Only after destroying four Mark IV tanks and an 88-mm gun and taking many prisoners could the objective be reported clear. By then it was dark so with the outposting of KUKELHEIM a little to the north, the troops stopped for the day.

Combat Command A (see figure 18) had but a small part in the operations of the tenth of April. Moving from KOBBERODE late in the

afternoon Task Force Rhea traveled three kilometers to seize ISINGHEIM.⁷ Shortly thereafter it continued on to contact Task Force Griffin of Reserve Command at BREMSCHIED a thousand yards beyond.

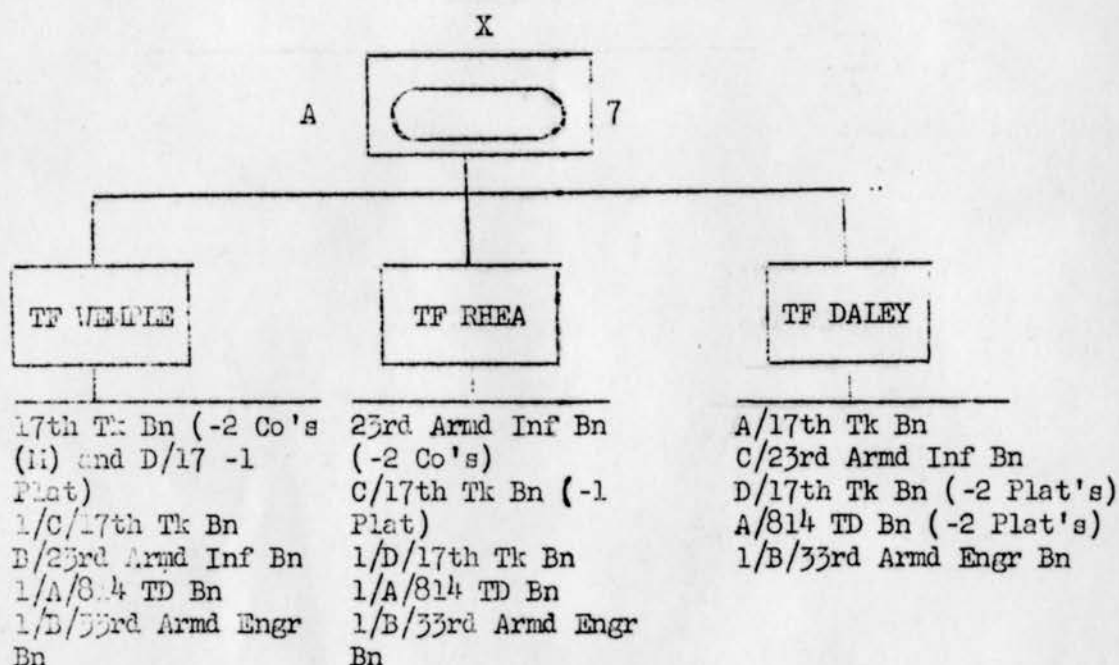


Figure 18. Combat Command A, Organization for Combat - April 10.

Task Force Daley on the extreme left of the division zone pushed through OBER VALBERT and on into SCHONDELT.

It was certainly clear by now that organized resistance in the Division's zone no longer existed. The isolated resistance groups and strong points still blanketed the area in no particular pattern. Some were heavily armed and well supported; others had only a few riflemen. Some could be counted on for a last ditch defense; others readily gave up after a few token

shots. No one could predict either the location of any particular strong point or the frame of mind of its occupants. Attacks, therefore, had to be planned with the assumption of the worst together with a hope for the best.

The Commands Assemble - April 11

By now, air was able to report considerable confusion in the enemy rear areas. With the integrity of units gone and communications a shambles, unattached troops spent their time aimlessly milling about. And this condition was hardly on accident; the speed of the 7th's advance had left the Germans no alternative. Indeed, with the momentum of the attack gaining daily, the complete reduction of the Pocket appeared to be close at hand.

Reserve Command on the right pushed Task Force Brown into WEINHOLTHAUSEN where it spent the day regrouping into two sub-forces, Wolfe and Sweet, and reconnoitering the routes to the north and northwest. The 3rd Battalion of the 395th meanwhile headed for the town of SIEPERTING which it found to be in unfriendly hands - judging from the fire of tanks and automatic weapons which poured out of it.⁸ However, several nicely placed artillery concentrations appeared to discourage the defenders, forty of whom gave up the cause as lost.

After SIEPERTING Task Force Griffin drove along the road to MATTHECKE against only slight opposition. But its attack on

GREVENSTEIN another five kilometers to the north was held up some length of time by accurate 20-mm fire. Direct attack by a platoon of tanks solved this problem and the force was able to enter and outpost the objective without further trouble. As he withdrew, the Kraut developed the habit of leaving small mine-fields throughout the area. Luckily, though, the local inhabitants - interested more in their own safety - informed the invaders of the mine locations, restricting the damage to the delay occasioned by their removal. With the Combat Command CP in MATHECKE and 461 prisoners in the daily bag, Reserve Command was poised for the drive that would bring an end to this whole operation.

Task Force Chappuis of CCB struck out for the northwest and gained NIEDER SALWEY by ten o'clock on the morning of the eleventh. At this point, the men of Task Force Beatty pushed through and turned westward toward OBER SALWEY. This little cluster of buildings hugging the stream in the SALWEY River valley turned out to be another hotbed of dihardts. It was decided to administer a full dose of the treatment reserved for such places. So the air came in first followed closely by an offering from the 454th Field Artillery which was, in turn, followed by a tank-infantry-tank destroyer assault which pacified the defenders in short order.

Next the village of SCHLIPRUTHEN looked like trouble also so as Task Forces Beatty and Erlendbusch converged from the east and

west respectively, a similar cure was delivered. The planned attack proved unnecessary, however, for at 1700 the burgomeister came forward and surrendered his town.⁹ As Boaty returned to OBER SALWEY, CCB settled down for the night in the SALWEY River valley. After sharing an important portion of the Division's load during the past seven day's attack, it was B's turn to take its place as Division reserve.

In preparation for future operations Combat Command A moved to an assembly area around ESLOHE during the day of the eleventh, closing there shortly after four in the afternoon. It absorbed the 489th Armored Field Artillery Battalion and Company K of the 395th Infantry Regiment and prepared to take over the division right flank for the next phase of operations.¹⁰

So ended the second phase of the 7th Armored Division's part in the reduction of the RUHR Pocket. Just a week after the OBERKIRCHEN jump-off the Division found itself confronting a battered, staggering adversary who was ripe for the knockout punch. What had passed for the German main line of resistance had been shattered the first three days. Subsequently, his reserves, communications, and supply lines had been overrun and mangled. The Kraut must have been well aware by now that the cause was long lost. Yet something in his training and background gave him the will to fight to the bitter end. That "je ne sais quoi" made the service troops, grounded tankers, and airmen take up arms and fight alongside the remnants of the

battle groups. And since this attitude seemed prevalent throughout the area, it would be necessary to fight them until no portion of the Pocket remained unoccupied. Thus the 7th prepared to continue the attack for the enemy capability to delay, harass, counter-attack, and inflict casualties - through greatly diminished - was not to be denied.

Summary of German Operations, April 9-11

Due in a large measure to the loss of unit integrity and the subsequent breakdown of communications, there is disappointingly little record of German small unit, front line activities. Apparently only the scantiest of information ever got back to higher headquarters. The general situation during this period however, was somewhat as follows: On April 9 the "Ruhrfestung" (Fortress of the Ruhr) was still maintaining a nearly continuous front. The eastern portion of GROUP LUETTWITZ'S northern front had by now been forced back behind the RUHR River. In addition, this Group suffered two penetrations by the United States 75th and 79th Infantry Divisions further to the west. The RHINE front, not having been attacked by the new US FIFTEENTH ARMY, remained unchanged. On the southern front the FIFTH PANZER ARMY had reestablished a continuous line after falling back from the SIEG River. On the eastern front of the Pocket the German FIFTEENTH ARMY was under continuous attack by the US III Corps. (See figure 19, Situation of Army Group B, 9 April 1945.)



Fig. 19

During the period of April 9 - 11, the American forces kept unrelenting pressure on all fronts except the RHINE. More space was traded for time by Army Group B. Time was demanded by its higher headquarters and, in the opinion of Major General Wagner, this time might have been put to good advantage had Hitler been willing to abandon north Germany and establish a new single front running from east to west.¹¹

NOTES FOR CHAPTER 5

¹After Action Report, 40th Tank Battalion, Seventh Armored Division, April 1945.

²After Action Report, Combat Command R, Seventh Armored Division, April 1945, p 16.

³Ibid; passim.

⁴After Action Report, Combat Command B, Seventh Armored Division, April 1945, p 14.

⁵After Action Report, 31st Tank Battalion, Seventh Armored Division, April 1945, p 11.

⁶Op cit, Combat Command R, p 17.

⁷After Action Report, Combat Command A, Seventh Armored Division, April 1945.

⁸Op cit, Combat Command R, p 17.

⁹Op cit, Combat Command B, p 15.

¹⁰Op cit, Combat Command A, passim.

¹¹Major Gen. Karl von Wagner, Battles of A Gp B on the Rhein (22 Mar - 17 Apr 1945); passim.

CHAPTER 6

THE DRIVE ON BECKUM AND HOVEL

By 11 April the 7th Armored Division had penetrated the crust of the enemy resistance at SCHMALLENBURG and GLEIDORF, and was ready to enter the next phase of its participation in the reduction of the RUHR pocket. Combat Command R was located at WENTHOLTHAUSEN, Combat Command A at ESLOHE, Combat Command B with one task force at OBER SALWEY and another at NIEDER SALWEY.

On the afternoon of 11 April operation instructions were received. The III Corps would continue the attack west and northwest to destroy or capture the enemy forces in its zone; 5th Infantry Division on the north; 7th Armored Division in the center; 99th Infantry Division on the south. The 7th Armored Division was to attack on Division order to seize the first objective--the area south of LAKE SORPE STAUBECKEN--combat commands A and R were to advance abreast on the north (right) and south (left) respectively. Combat Command B was to be in division reserve.¹

Enemy Operations 12-13 April²

The two days, 12-13 April, brought the crisis of Army Group B's defense of the RUHR. First, on the morning of 12 April the United States 13th Armored Division broke through FIFTH PANZER ARMY'S south front, near the town of BURSHEID northeast of COLOGNE. Secondly, the United States 8th Infantry Division made a deep penetration in the southern portion of the German FIFTEENTH ARMY'S sector to the town of LUDENSCHIED. (See figure 20, Situation Army Group B, 12 April 1945.) Thirdly, most

of the staff of the LXXXI Corps was captured by the 7th Armored Division, when the northern portion of this Army's eastern front crumbled before the onslaught of the United States III Corps. The following day, 13 April, the remainder of the LXXXI Infantry Corps staff, including its commander Gen der In Kochling, was captured by the 7th Armored Division. This crisis lead to one of the most perplexing problems with which the United States Army had to contend.

It was on 13 April that Field-Marshal Model finally realized that the situation was hopeless. Determined to spare his troops the shame of unconditional surrender and yet spare their lives, he decided to "dissolve his forces by order." The following is an explanation of this momentous decision and its details, as related by Major General Wagner, Chief of Staff, Army Group B:

On or about 13 April 1945, ARMY GROUP B, after having considered various possibilities, came to a solution which had no precedent in the modern history of war; its invention might perhaps be attributed to the procedure adopted by the Russians after many pocket battles in the East during the war. ARMY GROUP was to dissolve by order, and, as far as possible, in an orderly manner. The morning of 17 April 1945 was chosen as the deadline--the day on which rations and ammunition would be exhausted and on which it would no longer be possible to continue the battles. ARMY GROUP now gave the order to cease resistance on 17 April 1945. All young and older age groups were (effective at once) to be dismissed from the service and returned to their homes. By the morning of 17 April 1945, all officers, regular soldiers, and intermediate age groups--according to voluntary choice--to be classed into three groups:

a. Non-combatant troops or such without arms and ammunition, who, under their competent commanding officer, would allow themselves to be over-run by the enemy and surrender to him.

b. Groups of volunteers, who, under the command of a senior officer, either in uniform or civilian clothes and without weapons, would try to make their own way home.

c. Groups of volunteers, who under the command of an officer, in uniform and armed, would attempt to break through to one of our own fronts outside the pocket.

No order, or even a request, was issued to go "underground." The command by an officer was greatly emphasized in every case.

The armies were immediately issued appropriate orders, the significance of which was understood by them, and which were translated into action. The separations began immediately and after a few days were--in the case of soldiers who did not belong to the regular army--also extended to the intermediate age groups. In this way, ARMY GROUP believed to have spared the troops the humiliation of unconditional surrender. The term "unconditional" made questionable even the application of the rights of the Geneva Convention. By this order, the individual had been relieved of the responsibility of acting on his own accord, while the principle of voluntary enlistment for the activation of the groups took the individuality of every soldier and unit into account. Finally, further bloodshed and senseless self-sacrifice were being prevented. It was even possible that, in this manner, some of the troops might avoid being captured and might succeed in reaching their homes and taking up their civilian occupations sooner than if they were surrendered unconditionally to the enemy.³

The fact that this plan was initiated and functioning from this date on is substantiated by the following narration of the 7th Armored Division's actions, the mass surrenders, and the evident loss of the will to fight on the part of the Germans.

The Attacks of Combat Command A on 12-13 April

(See Figure 21)

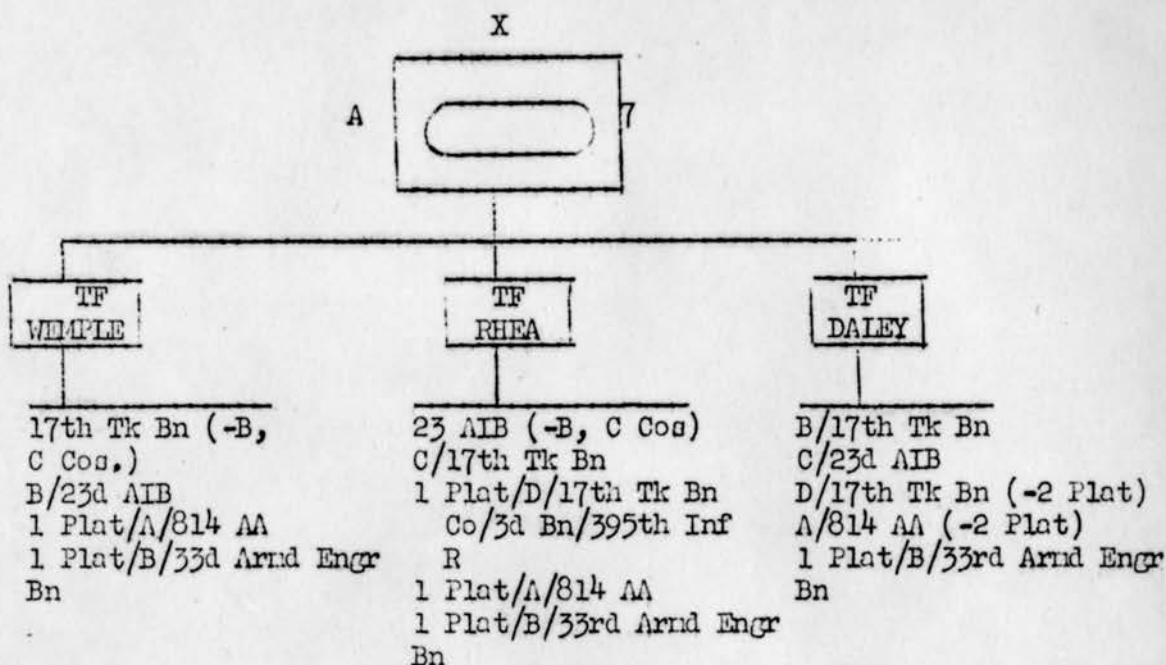
During this phase of the operations Combat Command A was organized into Task Forces. (See figure 22, Task Force For CCA, 12-13 April.)

The attack jumped off as scheduled on the morning of 12 April. At 0720 the Division moved through elements of the 2nd Infantry Regiment, 5th Infantry Division, to the immediate north and then attacked west towards their first objective. By the end of the day Combat Command A was fighting in the town of BALVE and Combat Command R had pushed forward through AFFELN, BLINTROP, KUNTROP, and NEUENRADE. This advance was made against light to moderate resistance.

Combat Command A was given a specific route of attack, which attack was to be made with task forces in column; TF RHEA with one company of 395th Infantry Regiment leading, followed by the 489th Armored Field Artillery Battalion; TF WEMPLE and TF DAILEY. The infantry was to ride on tanks and each task force was to shorten its column by taking only essential vehicles. TF RHEA attacked and captured SELSHEDE and in rapid succession against light resistance seized RECKLINGHAUSEN, SIEDFELD, AMECKE, BRUCKHAUSEN, KASBERG, MEILEN, EIBERZLOH, MELSCHIED, and HOVEL.⁴

Task Force Wemple was ordered to attack west and north along the axis LANGENHOLTHAUSEN-BALVE-VOIKLINGHAUSEN with Task Force Daloy in support. Task Force Wemple turned west at KASBERG, attacked and seized LANGENHOLTHAUSEN. While continuing to attack BALVE, Task Force Wemple ran into increasingly difficult terrain.





Task Force Chappius (48th Armd Inf Bn) was attached to Combat Command A at 0830, 13 April. This Task Force was normally in Combat Command B.

Figure 22. Task Force Organizational
for CCA, 12-13 April.

But, by the end of the day tanks and infantry had entered BALVE.

At 2055, the Command Post Combat Command A opened at LANGENHOLTHAUSEN.

On the 13th of April, Combat Command A had the 3d Battalion of 395th Infantry Regiment and Task Force Chappius (48th Armored Infantry Battalion) attached to it from Combat Command B.

Task Force Womple attacked north at first light but soon found themselves canalized with a stream on one side, steep cliffs on the other and a very effective road block consisting of a blown underpass barring their way.²

While the tanks were held up by this road block the infantry continued on foot and seized VOLKINGHAUSEN. In the middle of the afternoon the road block was reduced and the tanks pushed north

from VOLKINGHAUSEN. However, they were again canalized by the terrain and an obstacle. Any attempts to move the tanks forward resulted in their being pinned down by enemy fire. For the remainder of the day they were reduced to minor local gains.

Task Force Rhea attacked from HOVEL to the southwest with the mission of capturing BECKUM. BECKUM was captured about 1330 against moderate resistance which included tanks and 2 self-propelled guns in addition to machine guns and rifle fire. Immediately one platoon of tanks continued west to help Task Force Womple reduce the road block which was holding up its advance.

Task Force Chappius, Task Force Daley and the 3d Battalion, 395th Infantry Regiment, launched an attack to the northwest at 1200.

TF CHAPPIUS jumped off from HOVEL, contacted elements of the 10th Infantry and cleared the woods to their east by 1330 and pushed on to capture EISEBORN by the end of the day after meeting considerable opposition just west of EISEBORN. TF DAILEY attacked from BALVE northwest over difficult terrain and supported the attack of the 3d Bn., 395th Infantry Regiment on DELLINGHOFFEN and the landing strip about 1000 yards west of the town. The CP CCA was moved from LANGEN-HOLTHAUSEN to BALVE at 1400 and thence to BECKUM at 1630.⁶

Combat Command B remained in Division reserve and followed Combat Command A.

The Attacks of Combat Command R on 12-13 April

Combat Command R was organized on 12 April 1945 into Task Forces as follows: (See figure 23, Task Force Organization for CCR, 12-13 April.)

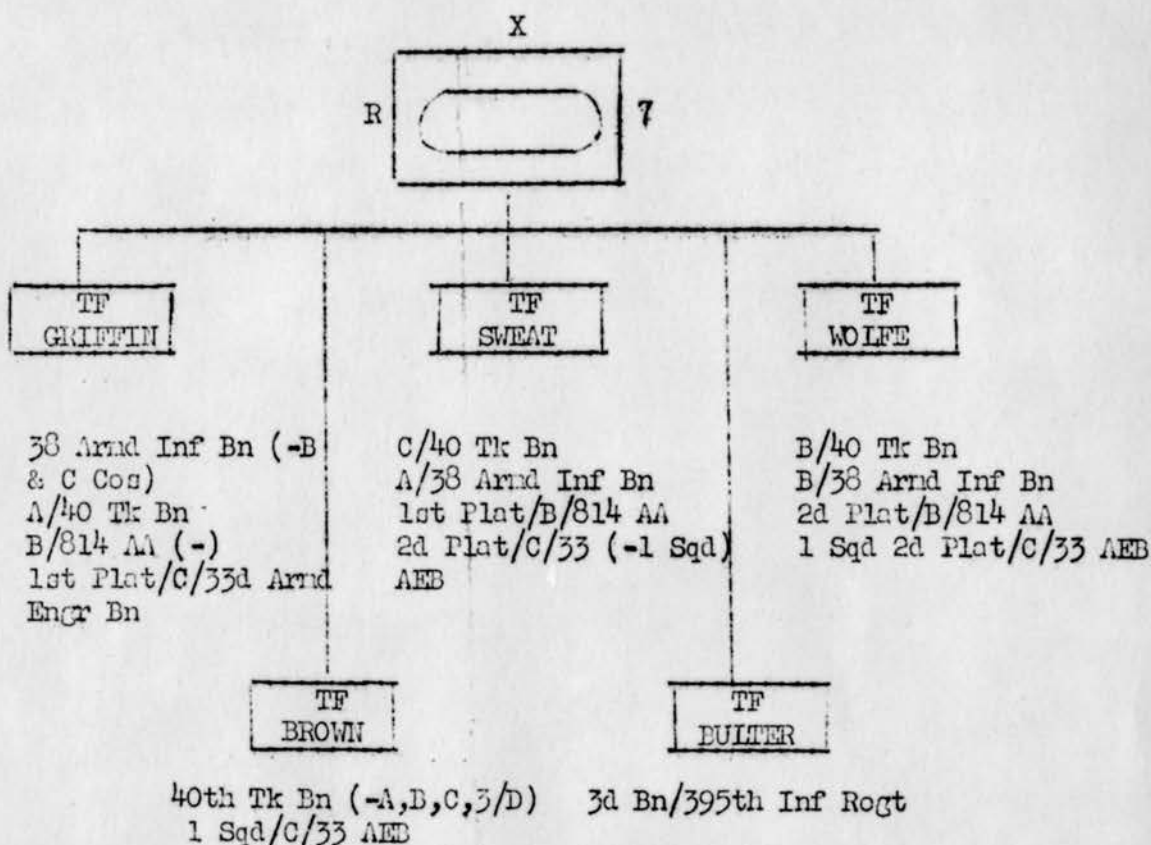


Figure 23. Task Force Organization for CCR, 12-13 April.

Concurrently with the jump off of Combat Command A on the 12th of April, Combat Command R initially moved out in one Column: Task Force Griffin, Battery B, 400th Armored Field Artillery Battalion; Task Force Butler with 400th Armored Field Artillery Battalion (-B); Task Force Wolfe with 440th Armored Field Artillery Battalion; Task Force Brown. The attack progressed rapidly at first against light resistance. However, about 1000 yards west of LINNEPE, Task Force Griffin was absolutely blocked by impassable roads and experienced considerable difficulty in extricating itself. The combat command commander then ordered Task Force Wolfe

to bypass Task Force Griffin in the vicinity of LINNEPE, and move south, then west to ENDORF. Initially Task Force Wolfe encountered some resistance in this bypass route but it was overcome and the attack progressed encouragingly.

Enemy armor was encountered for the first time at SIOCKUM and again later between ALLENDORF and AFFELN. Task Force Wolfe was able to break loose and move rapidly through AFFELN, KUNTRUP, to NEUENRADE, shooting as it went. This particular action was characterized by its success gained by the surprise and shock of the fast moving, often firing, tank columns.

During the current day's operation CCR had seized 16 towns and villages, destroyed 5 tiger tanks, 20 motor transports, 5 artillery pieces, 2 personnel carriers, and an unrecorded number of horse drawn vehicles and captured 8 officers and 2822 enlisted men.

While Combat Command A was making the main effort on 13 April, Combat Command R remained in defensive positions in the vicinity of NEUENRADE, KUNTRUP and GARBECK; cleared roads in their area; and repulsed a counterattack from the high ground north of WERDOHL. Task Force Wolfe was directed to send a reconnaissance in force southwest to the vicinity of WERDOHL. This reconnaissance met stiff resistance that eventually amounted to a counterattack launched from the high ground north of WERDOHL in which the enemy forces used medium artillery, mortars, small arms fire, and at least two heavy tanks. The counterattack was contained by heavy concentrations of artillery fire while Task Force Wolfe withdrew to its former defensive positions in the vicinity of NEUENRADE.

Summary of Actions 12-13 April

During this phase of the operations on 12-13 April the leading elements of the Division had advanced 12 to 13 miles deeper into the enemy held territory of the pocket and had captured over 10,000 prisoners. This advance had been made over exceedingly difficult terrain in some cases and against light to moderate resistance by the enemy.

With the capture and clearing of the BECKUM-HOVEL area the division forces were now in a position of retaining the initiative and pushing on to capture the HEMER-MENDEN area which later turned out to be the final phase of action for the Division in its participation in the reduction of the RUHR pocket.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER 6

¹After-Action Report, 7th Armored Division, 5-16 April 1945, p 39.

²The Readers' attention is invited to the fact that this information was obtained from data after this operation and was not available to American troop commanders at this time.

³Major General Von Wagner, The Battles of Army Group B on the Rhein, 22 March-17 April 1945.

⁴After-Action Report, Combat Command A, 7th Armored Division, April 1945, p 7.

⁵After-Action Report, 7th Armored Division, 5-16 April 1945, p 45.

⁶After-Action Report, Combat Command A, 7th Armored Division, April 1945, p 7.

⁷After-Action Report, 7th Armored Division, April 1945, p 43.

CHAPTER 7

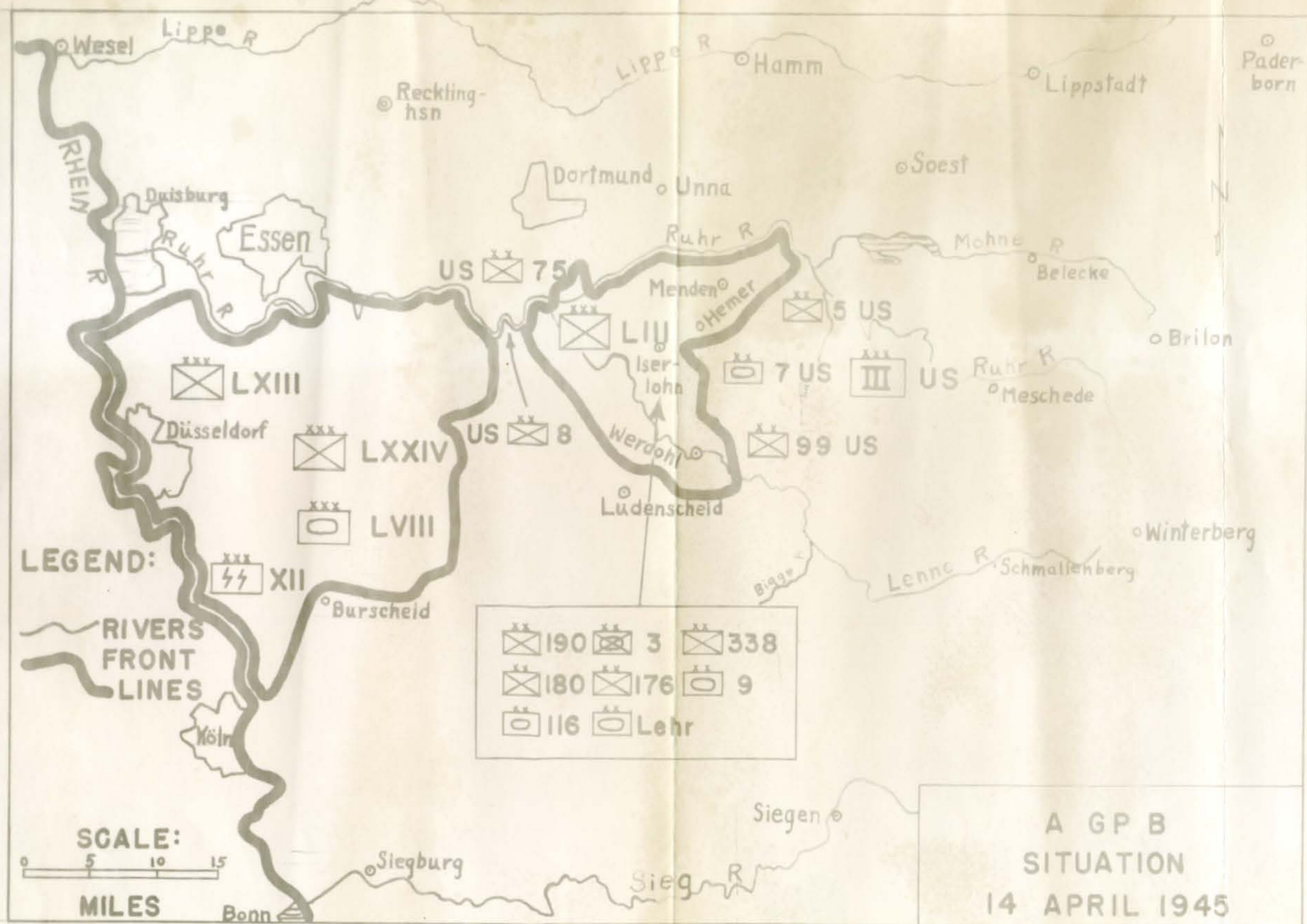
MOPPING UP HEMER AND MENDEN

The Division, after having been so successful in its drive against BECKUM and HOVEL during the 12th and 13th, exploited its success by continuing the attack toward HEMER and MENDEN before the enemy had an opportunity to regain his balance and prepare his defenses. This phase of the operation will be revealed in this chapter as being the final phase in the Division's participation in the reduction of the pocket.

On 13 April combat elements of the division were located as follows: Combat Command A command post located at BECKUM with Task Force Wemple just north of VOLLENHOESEN, Task Force Rhea at BECKUM, Task Force Chappius at EISEBORN, and Task Force Daley attacking DEILLINGHOFEN. Combat Command R was in defensive positions in the vicinity of NEUENRADE, KUNITROP and GARBECK. Combat Command B was in division reserve in the vicinity of KASBERG.

Enemy Operations 14-16 April¹

During the period 14-16 April the RUHR pocket was cut in to and the eastern portion suffered the last death throes of its annihilation. The United States 8th Infantry Division of the XVIII Airborne Corps continued its northwesterly penetration on 14 April, and late in the day made contact with the United States 75th Infantry Division driving down from the north. (See Figure 24, Situation Map, Army Group B, 14 April 1945.



Thus two pockets of resistance were created. Within the eastern pocket, which the 7th Armored Division was attacking, there remained the LIII Infantry Corps and remnants of the LXXXI Infantry Corps.

The final spasms of the German chain of command would be amusing were they not so tragic. According to Major General Wagner an order from the German Supreme Command (Hitler), received on 14 April, to breakout, was scarcely read much less passed on. However, this apparently was not ignored, but instead was passed on to the LIII Infantry Corps.

Lieutenant General Bayerlein reports that during the night of 13-14 April he received an order from Field Marshal Model to try a breakout to the west with everything he had. This order, Bayerlein claimed, he did not even acknowledge, let alone answer, least of all obey.²

And so it was that on 15 April 1945, Lieutenant General Bayerlein made the decision to accept unconditional surrender. Whether or not he received the decision of Army Group B to "dissolve by order" is not known. His account of this last climatic day follows:

15 April 45. General Bayerlein early in the morning drove to his old division, the Pz Iohr, and said goodbye to old friends. He instructed the commander, an Oberst von Hauser, to surrender the division at first opportunity. He had no communications, even by radio, since the 14th. The pocket was growing smaller every hour. He returned to his CP at RAFFLINGSEN. That night he sent an envoy under a flag of truce to the US 7th Armored Division near MENDEN, and as a result, firing stopped at 3 AM.³

The 16th of April 1945 saw the actual surrender of the German forces remaining in the eastern pocket. Lieutenant General Bayerlein's account of the forces and equipment turned over. (See figures 25 and 26.)

16 April 45. At least 12,000 men, about 20 tanks, 4 or 5 batteries of artillery, and four generals were among the assets turned over at General Bayerlein's formal surrender.

The PANZER LEHR Division had surrendered the day before with between 2,000 and 3,000 personnel, 8 to 10 tanks and TDs, 50 armored cars, one battery of field artillery, 200 trucks, and a quantity of small arms.⁴

The final details leading to the ultimate unconditional surrender of the Germans LXXXI Infantry Corps on 16 April 1945 are shown in the following paragraphs relating the actions of the 7th Armored Division during this phase.

Battle of Hemer

(See Figure 27.)

Combat Command A, with the same Task Force organization as used in the previous phase, resumed the previous day's attack to the north and west at 0615 on 14 April. Task Force Wemple with the assistance rendered by two platoons from Task Force Rhea, had reduced the road block which was holding it up and continued the attack to capture the villages of HUNSTADT, HONNETHAL and BROCKHAUSEN by 1100 with little or no opposition encountered. The next important objective was the town of HEMER. Task Force Wemple moved up and gained control of the woods on the high ground southwest of HEMER while Task Force Daloy had moved south of the



Figure 25. Assembly of PWs at BUREN
BRUCK, 16 April 1945.

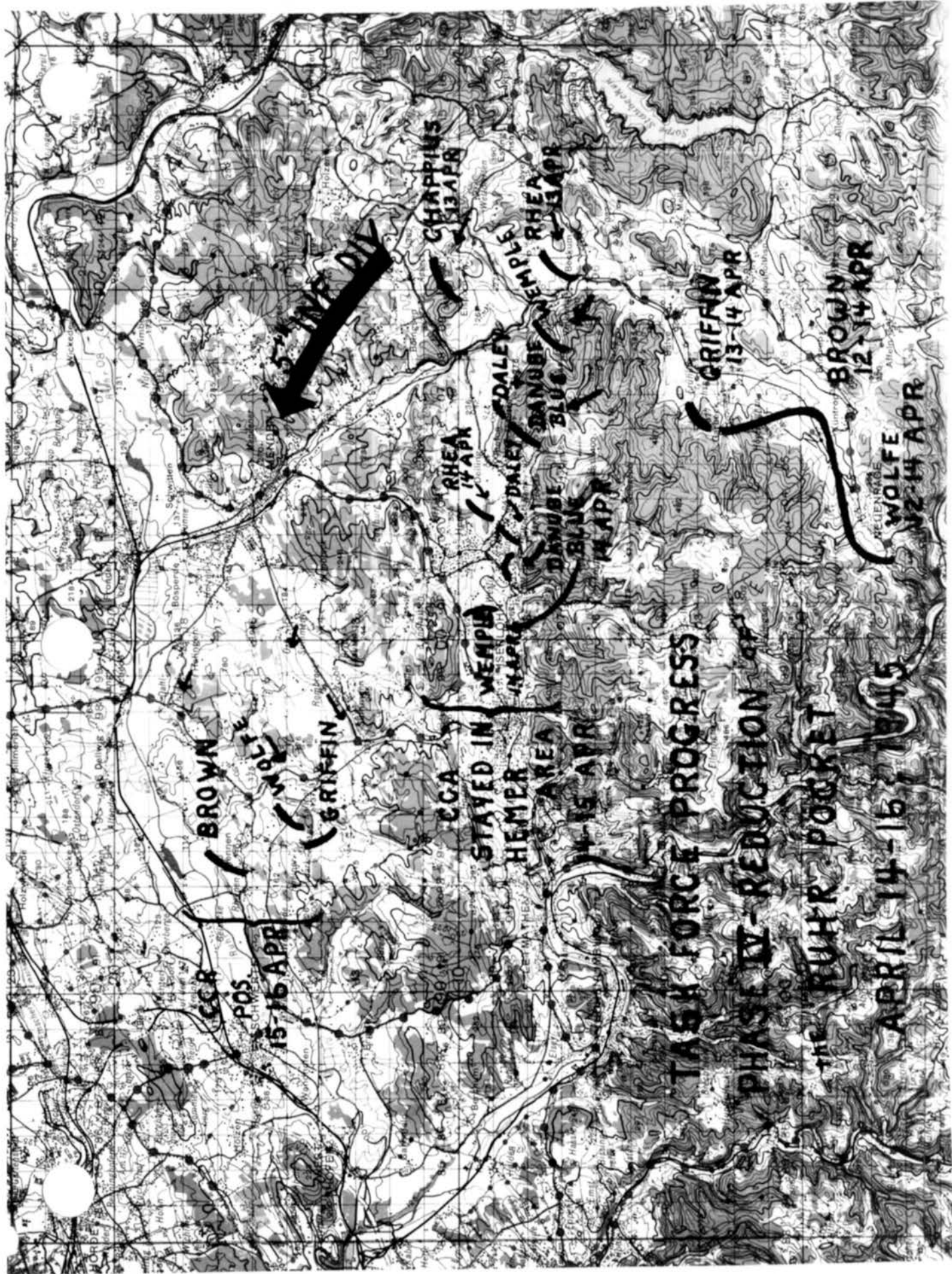
town. Task Force Danube (3d Battalion, 395th Infantry Regiment) had attacked, seized and secured SUNDWIG receiving only moderate artillery and AT fire from the town at 1250.

Operations against the town itself were temporarily suspended at 1200 while the commanding officer of Task Force Daley, Major Thomas Daley, executive officer, 17th Tank Battalion, was taken behind enemy lines in an attempt to negotiate a peaceful entry of our troops into HEMER. The Germans wished to declare the town an open city because of the presence of slightly over 23,000 allied prisoners in a prison camp just outside of the town. However, the German general's terms in which he proposed to withdraw his troops to commanding ground one kilometer outside the city, were unsatisfactory and at 2030 the attack was resumed.⁵



Figure 26. Assembly of GERMAN Armored Equipment at ISERLOHN, 16 April 1945.

More details on the negotiations made at HEMER relative to its being declared an "open city" were revealed in a letter from Colonel W.S. Triplet, who commanded Combat Command A at the time. Colonel Triplet states that Major Daloy was directed to contact the German commander and tell him how to march his men out. A cease fire order was given and was meticulously obeyed by both sides. It was an amusing picture to see the German and American tanks cautiously poking their noses around corners at each other. A German delegation arrived at command post Combat Command A at



BECKUM about 1600 to meet General Hasbrouck and urge the proposal of declaring HEMER an "open city" and allowing them to retire. The terms were not satisfactory and the Germans were told to return Major Daloy and the war would start again.

Colonel Triplet's letter further reveals that the peaceful interlude evidently had had considerable effect on the German garrison because, while there was no mass surrender, there was no resistance, and individuals and small units surrendered as fast as our men got within surrendering distance.

While the negotiations for the declaring HEMER an open city were being discussed, Task Force Rhea by 1400 had seized the landing field intact and to their surprise found that the AA guns emplaced on it were not manned. Task Force Rhea's position was consolidated with Task Force Daloy and Task Force Wemple. Tanks and TDs were deployed so that they could fire into the town.

At 2030, the negotiations having been called off, Task Force Danube attacked and secured HEMER under the protection of Task Forces Rhea, Wemple, and Daloy. Due to the fact that most of the prisoner guards had disposed of their weapons and the prisoners were becoming more riotous, it was necessary for Task Force Wemple to send 2 platoons of infantry and one platoon of tanks to keep them in the cage. The majority of the prisoners were Russian but, there were about 100 Americans among them.

To Monden and the End

On 14 April, while Combat Command A was attacking HEMER, Combat Command B remained in division reserve with Task Force Chappius returning at 1300 from attachment to Combat Command A. Combat Command R remained in defensive positions in KUNTROP, NEUENRADE, and GARBECK until relieved of this responsibility by the 395th Infantry Regiment of the 99th Infantry Division at 0900.

The Division continued the attack to the west on 15 April with Combat Command R leading. Combat Command A remained in the HEMER area and Task Force Wemple was relieved of responsibility of the allied Prisoner of War camp at HEMER at 1015 by the 395th Infantry Regiment.

Combat Command R attacked from HEMER along two routes. Task Force Brown moved north at 0730, 15 April, with orders to pass through elements of the 5th Infantry Division at MENDEN, then to attack west along the northern route seizing and holding the high ground northeast of the LENNE RIVER.

At 0900, Task Force Brown launched its attack from MENDEN with Task Force ~~Sweet~~ leading. Advancing along the axis HALINGEN-HENNEN, he ran into major opposition while trying to move from GRULAND to HENNEN. Here the enemy had taken full advantage of natural defensive features and the road was under

direct fire from well camouflaged 20-mm flak guns and 88-mm AA-AT guns. It was impossible to push forward. Every movement of our infantry brought down enemy artillery fire in spite of our counterbattery and direct tank fire on gun positions. Immediately Task Force Wolfe, which had been following in column, was ordered to proceed via HOLINGEN-BERTLINGHOH-KALTHOF to envelop the enemy flank.

This task force moved rapidly, overrunning resistance in the form of AT and flak gun fire and went into position in the area west of KALTHOF.⁶

Task Force Wolfe was ordered to take KALTHOF in an effort to relieve the pressure on Task Force Sweat. After the artillery had softened the town up a bit, Task Force Wolfe, with infantry of Company B, 38th Armored Infantry Battalion, mounted on tanks of Company B, 40th Tank Battalion, moved rapidly into the town, shooting as it went. The town surrendered without serious resistance.

Task Force Wolfe quickly reorganized and again with infantry on tanks attacked the road junction simultaneously with Task Force Sweat. Both forces were held up for the evening and formed a tank-infantry strongpoint in the area. In this action, numerous guns of all calibers and 2 mark VI tanks were destroyed and about 260 prisoners were taken.

Task Force Griffin was assigned the southern route out of MENDEN, launching its attack along the axis MENDEN-SUMMERN

at 0956. The Task Force was halted by heavy opposition in the form of artillery and direct fire from AA weapons raking the column. The envelopment made by Task Force Wolfe on KALTTHOF not only helped Task Force Sweat to advance but also, aided Task Force Griffin. SUMMERN was cleared by 2000 and Task Force Griffin moved on through KALTTHOF to seize and secure REFFLINGSEN.

At first light on 16 April, Combat Command R continued the attack with Task Force Brown and Griffin abreast. The attack was promptly halted at 0630 after the leading elements were confronted by a captain; G-2 of the 116th Panzer Division, who indicated that he desired to negotiate for the surrender of enemy troops. Although he stated he represented the Commanding General, 116th Panzer Division, he was told to return to his organization and return with someone who had sufficient authority to negotiate a surrender. With this information having been relayed to him, Major General Robert W. Hasbrouck, Commanding General of the 7th Armored Division, immediately sent Colonel John L. Ryan Jr., his chief of staff, to handle the negotiations. Colonel Ryan first met General Von Waldenberg who stated he had been empowered to speak for Major General Fritz Bayerlein, Commanding General of the LIII German Corps. Colonel Ryan did not accept Von Waldenberg's stated authority to negotiate the surrender and was conducted back to the headquarters of the LIII Corps where the negotiations were made with General Bayerlein. At that time the LIII Corps consisted of the 116th Panzer Division, 180th Infantry Division, 190th Infantry

Division, and the remnants of the 9th Panzer Division.

Colonel Ryan, as the representative of General Hasbrouck, laid down the surrender terms: all troops would be assembled in the designated areas; all arms would be stacked; no material would be destroyed; armed guards would be placed over material until relieved by American troops. Fifteen minutes were given the Germans to make a decision and at the end of that time they felt the need of further persuasion, Colonel Ryan pointed out that planes were available to the Seventh and no time would be lost in calling them in to bomb the area. In less than 3 minutes the Germans announced their decision: the surrender terms were accepted.⁷

The remainder of the day was spent in the collection and evacuation of the prisoners. By the end of the day Combat Command R had occupied all of the objective along the LENNE River establishing road blocks where necessary.

At 1200, 17 April, the 7th Armored Division was relieved of responsibility of the sector including acceptance and evacuation of prisoners.

Summary of the Actions During This Phase

During this phase of the operation, the 7th Armored Division had continually attacked north and west to capture the town of HEMER and assist in the mopping up of the enemy forces in the town of MENDEN as well as pushing on to take objectives along the LENNE River. This action completed the participation of the 7th Armored Division in the reduction of the RUHR pocket. During its participation in the reduction of the RUHR pocket from 5 April to 17 April, the division had advanced approximately 30 miles over terrain in many cases extremely difficult against determined enemy resistance

and had captured approximately 40,000 prisoners as well as a corresponding large number of enemy vehicles and equipment.

The successful participation of the division in this operation can best be summarized in the following extract from the Order of the Day, dated 19 April 1945, published by Major General Robert W. Hasbrouck to the officers and men of the 7th Armored Division:

The---mission was to chop up the pocket you helped to create. Despite mountainous terrain which greatly favored the enemy, you drove to the heart of his defenses. That part of the pocket you were to reduce ceased to exist at 0845 on 16 April---good hunting.⁸

NOTES FOR CHAPTER 7

¹The reader's attention is invited to the fact that this information was obtained from data after this operation and was not available to American troop commanders at this time.

²Bayerlein: "Intelligence Summary", Air Prisoner of War Interrogation Detachment, Military Intelligence Service, APO 696, US Army, 29 May 1945.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵After-Action Report, 7th Armored Division, 5-16 April 1945, p 47.

⁶Ibid., p 52.

⁷Ibid., p 55.

⁸Ibid., p 59.

CHAPTER 8

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

At 0630, 16 April 1945, enemy resistance in the 7th Armored Division's area of the RUHR pocket ceased to exist. At 1200, 17 April, the division was relieved of responsibility of its sector. During the period 5 April to 16 April the Division had advanced approximately 30 miles through a mountainous area which gave every advantage to the defender. Forty thousand prisoners were captured along with a corresponding large number of enemy vehicles and equipment.

To properly evaluate this action it must be kept in mind that the major part of the enemy trapped in the RUHR pocket had little more than the tradition of the German army to hold him together. Since the failure of the ARDENNES attack, the organization, supply, and equipment of the enemy troops trapped in the RUHR pocket had been deteriorating. Allied crossings over the RHINE River had further lowered their morale, and the closing of the pincers around the RUHR industrial area had all but made their position hopeless.

The RUHR with all its industry could not support the enemy divisions trapped within the pocket. Constant bombing, decentralization of the industries, and the lack of essential supplies such as fuel and food made it impossible for the enemy to long survive. It is notable they were able to hold out as long as they did.

To offset this, however, the enemy had the terrain much in his favor. The eastern sector of the RUHR pocket through which the 7th Armored Division attacked is predominantly mountainous. Deep-cut, narrow valleys with unfordable streams running through them canalized the movement of our troops. A single antitank gun or a road block covered by the fire of a few rifles was able to hold our columns up for hours at a time when properly placed in these narrow defiles. The division seldom had sufficient space to properly utilize its mobility in bypassing or out-flanking enemy resistance.

On 30 March 1945, the 7th Armored Division captured the EDER SEE Dam and crossings over the EDER River. Combat Command A was detached on 2 April while the division was still in this area. On 3 April orders were received by the division to attack into the RUHR pocket. The division moved into an assembly area on 4 April in preparation to launch the attack the following morning.

The first phase of the 7th Armored Division's part in the reduction of the RUHR pocket took the four days from 5 to 8 April. A well planned and coordinated attack by all elements of the division minus Combat Command A was necessary to capture the town of SCHMALLENBURG and its surrounding villages. This was primarily an infantry show supported by artillery, armor, and the air corps. It was necessary to reduce the SCHMALLENBURG area to gain an entrant into the heart of the RUHR pocket. It was believed, and later proved

to be the case, that the enemy had his best troops manning this outer shell of the pocket and that once this shell was pierced he would have little left for further organized defense.

The picture began to change as the division entered the second phase of this reduction. During the period 9 to 11 April enemy resistance progressively became weaker. While he was still able to offer strong resistance in spots his will to fight tenaciously to the last was ebbing. The enemy was carrying on a not too well organized delaying action. He was becoming disorganized and bewildered; his efforts were piecemeal; his units were becoming scattered; and his supply routes were overrun. Air reports of confusion in the enemy rear areas were well substantiated. The 7th Armored Division with its every increasing pressure and momentum was in an exploitation phase. The tank was now out in front in all its glory.

The period of 12 to 13 April made up the third phase of this reduction action. The exploitation was successful in confusing and disorganizing the enemy and breaking up his communications. While pockets of resistance still existed they were isolated and short-lived; more of a harassing nature than anything else. The terrain was becoming more of an obstacle to the division's advance than was the enemy. Tanks were leading with infantry riding on them so as not to retard the momentum of the attack. Speed and violence was the order of the day. Direction of attack

by task force columns was changed with little prior warning and apparently little confusion. Large groups of the enemy were being bypassed and either mopped up or gathered up by the infantry which followed.

The fourth and final phase of this action covered the period 14 to 16 April. This was a continuation of the exploitation and was marked by longer gains and more freedom of maneuver. Isolated pockets of the enemy were still harassing our columns but his will for a determined fight was gone. The resistance was comparatively easy to overcome. With little reorganization our columns were able to continue the advance. On the morning of 16 April, the enemy submitted to the terms of unconditional surrender.

Following the 7th Armored Division through its part in the reduction of the RUHR pocket, we find an exemplification of the primary role of this team--the offensive. In its attack on the well organized area of SCHMALLENGERG-FREDEBURG, the infantry was pushed to the fore supported by armor, artillery, and engineers. As resistance became less and speed became the essence of success the tanks took the lead supported by the other units of this team. The air corps supported at all times when available and when the visibility permitted.

Lessons

1. Formation of Task Forces for Self-sufficiency and Flexibility. The division commander had tank, infantry, artillery, engineer, reconnaissance, medical, ordnance, and signal units which he could assign to combat commands in a manner he saw fit to best meet the situation at hand. The combat commander in turn had those units with which to form task forces to meet situations which he had to overcome. For the attack on SCHMALLENBURG, the assault task forces were heavy in infantry as it is best suited to reduce such an organized position. As enemy resistance began to weaken in this area and it became apparent that a breakthrough would be possible, task forces heavy in armor with sufficient infantry to reduce pockets of resistance unassailable by tanks were formed. The artillery was over present, and engineers were attached in proportion to the need for them to facilitate the advance of the assaulting columns. Thus from day to day or from one action to the next, the commander could combine the arms within his teams to best meet the specific situation at hand.

2. Relentless Pressure on the Weakening Enemy. Once the enemy started to weaken, the 7th Armored Division kept a relentless pressure on his retreating and delaying forces. Had the 7th Armored Division stopped to lick its wounds after reducing the SCHMALLENBURG-FREDEBURG area, which apparently the enemy had expected to hold as his main line of resistance, in all probability the

enemy would have had time to re-assemble and reorganize sufficient forces with which to form another such position further to the west. Instead, the pressure put on the enemy gave him no time to reorganize and tended to create more confusion in his ranks.

3. Maintaining the Momentum of the Attack. When the 7th Armored Division found itself through the enemy's hard shell of resistance and into his rear area where only isolated spots of resistance were met, it pushed on relentlessly to its ultimate objective taking every advantage possible of the enemy's utter confusion. Every effort was made to keep the columns rolling deeper into the heart of his territory. Again, had there been an appreciable pause for supplies, maintenance, or rest, the enemy would have been given the time to gather his broken units together, reorganize, and form for the defense.

4. Bypassing When Possible. In order to maintain its forward movement the 7th Armored Division bypassed pockets of enemy resistance when the terrain allowed the maneuver. These pockets were contained by a small part of the division or turned over to infantry units coming up from the rear. Had it been the policy (or order) of the division to clean up every bit of resistance not before moving onto the next, the enemy would have gained the vital time needed and have been able to prolong the struggle with a resultant greater cost in lives and equipment to the division.

5. The Infantry Follow-up. A vital part in the exploitation by an armored division is that of the infantry which follows. It would have been impossible for the 7th Armored Division to retain its movement forward if it had had to secure its routes of supply, process the prisoners taken in its sector, and reduce or even contain the many pockets of the enemy who still had the will to resist. These jobs fall on the infantry and, though not so glorious, are as vital to the success of the operation as is the leading column of armor.

6. Maneuvering to Overcome Resistance. A basic principle of all tactics is to hold an enemy in position with one element and strike him in a weak spot with another. The soundness of this principle was brought out many times during this operation by elements of the 7th Armored Division. There are several instances of task forces being sent to the flanks or rear of a strong enemy position which was holding up another task force. Comparatively speedy, and relatively easy success was met with this maneuver each time.

7. Changing Direction of Attack. As this operation progressed into the rear areas of the enemy instances are given where task forces and combat commands completely changed their direction of attack. From the 7th Armored Division's point of view it is believed this was done on the basis of reports that enemy units were forming, which if not immediately dispersed might become major obstacles to the following infantry. The effectiveness of such a

maneuver, caused primarily by the element of surprise, was brought out later in reports by captured enemy officers. This is not a strictly accepted maneuver but from its apparent effectiveness is well worth consideration.

8. Use of Combat Command Reserve. It is sufficient to call the reader's attention to the activities of Combat Command Reserve during this operation. It could well have been named Combat Command C as it was as much an assault combat command as was A and B.

9. Rotation of Combat Commands. During this operation the division commander used two combat commands in the assault to punch their way forward while the third was in reserve resting and performing maintenance. He could have had Combat Commands A and B habitually as the assault units rotating their battalions for rehabilitation with those of Combat Command Reserve which would habitually have been the reserve unit. Instead, however, he rotated entire combat commands. This method worked very well.

10. The Advantage of Training. The 7th Armored Division had been through a good deal before it entered this operation and apparently had profited by its experiences. The reader's attention is called to the sudden changes of direction executed with relative ease; the launching of coordinated attacks with little time to prepare; and the team-work between task forces and between assault

units and supporting artillery. Consider the communications system necessary to accomplish the above; the standing operating procedures which must have been in effect; and the knowledge the commanders must have had of each other and of the units they commanded. These and many others are the advantages of training; of training together as a combined arms team.

Conclusion

With the above summary and lessons in mind let us look at the vital factors which must be considered in judging this operation:

1. The enemy was doomed to defeat before the operation began.
2. The terrain was mountainous which gave the advantage to the defense.
3. The 7th Armored Division was well supplied, well trained and equipped, and high in morale.

It must be in the light of these factors that the lessons learned from this operation be applied.

Techniques based on tactical conditions in which we had both air superiority and supremacy, in which we were fighting an enemy cognizant of his ultimate defeat, and in which our forces had unquestioned preponderance in men and materiel may cause serious reverses when an enemy with equal or superior forces is met. Success based on such past conditions may not win future battles.

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APPENDIX I

A TACTICAL STUDY OF THAT PORTION OF THE RUHR AREA TRAVERSED BY THE 7th ARMORED DIVISION, APRIL 5 - 16

1. PURPOSE AND LIMITING CONSIDERATIONS

Oftentimes in combat the terrain proves a more difficult adversary than the enemy. In any event it is a factor which has considerable direct bearing on military operations. In order to better appreciate the area traversed by the Seventh Armored Division during its drive into the RUHR Pocket, it is important to consider its topography and tactical effect in some detail. The division swept a strip averaging five or six miles wide and approximately thirty-five miles in length - including several changes of direction. In general, the scope of this study lies between 7 degrees 40' and 8 degrees 40' E Longitude and between 5' and 30' of the 51st degree N Latitude. It includes that portion of south-east WESTFALEN between the RUHR River and its tributaries, the LEMME and the WENNE. (See Figure 28).

2. GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA

a. Climatic and weather conditions. Being open to the mild westerly winds, Germany has a milder climate than would be expected from its latitude. For April the mean temperature is 49 degrees F. The monthly average precipitation is two inches from thirteen days of rain. Springtime fogs are not infrequent..

b. Topography.

(1) Relief and drainage systems.

Although the entire area is quite hilly and interlaced with waterways, there is little fixed pattern in the ridge system. The tributaries of the WENNE and LENNE Rivers are the result of a series of small north-east to south-west ridges which characterize the eastern part of the zone. The tributaries of the RUHR River itself - namely the LENNE, HONNE, ROHR, and WENNE - divide the western part of the zone into larger, longer northwest to southeast ridges. The very complexity of the drainage system invites the formation of numerous unrelated hill masses. Both the average altitude and the height of the hilltops above the valleys diminish in a westerly direction. The relatively steep and rugged hills in the OBERKIRCHEN area mount to nearly 2500 feet in places; those near MENDEN rise only some 900 feet and with more gentle inclines.

(2) Vegetation.

Aside from the river valleys, the area is amply forested. All of Germany lies within the northern forest zone of phytogeography and is pre-eminently a wooded nation. Twenty-six percent of the country abounds in forest in contrast, for example, to three percent of Great Britain. Deciduous growths, composed mainly of beech and oak, blanket the lower slopes while the coniferous pine is abundant at higher elevations.

(3) Surface materials.

The soil of this area consists for the most part of heavy clays based on slate quartzite and sandstone. Barring heavy or continuous rains, this type of soil presents no great problem to armored movement.

(4) Cultural features

A generally excellent road net covers this section of WESTFALEN. The two best highways parallel the LENNE and WENNE Rivers and are intersected by two transverse roads running through ESLOHE and BECKUM respectively. A myriad of lesser roads link all inhabited places and the great majority of these are suitable for armored traffic. They do, however, generally follow the stream valleys - leaving many of the hill masses inaccessible to vehicular traffic.

The principal towns in the zone of the Seventh Armored Division's advance are: SCHMALLENBERG, FREDEBURG, NEUENRADE, ISEBACH, and MENDEN. None of these have a population as great as five thousand inhabitants although all are located on rail lines and at relatively important communication centers.

3. MILITARY ASPECTS OF THE AREA

a. Critical terrain features. The most critical terrain features of the area are the RUHR, LENNE, and WENNE Rivers but since the division did not reach the first of these and passed between the others, they had no effect on operations. The long, roadless ridge running westward from WENHOLTHAUSEN provided a natural barrier to the division's advance and could have become

quite a critical terrain feature had not a by-pass been available to the east. As far as the first phase of the attack was concerned, the towns of SCHMALLENBERG and FREDEBURG were critical features to the extent they guarded the entrances to the LENNE and WENNE River valleys respectively. Their reduction was essential to further advance in the division zone.

b. Observation and fields of fire. Both observation and fields of fire are extremely limited in this hilly, wooded terrain. With progress mainly confined to tortuous roads visibility was generally restricted to less than a thousand yards. Hill to hill observation was excellent except as hampered by the woods but this was of little value to the tanker confined to the valley floor.

c. Obstacles. The principle obstacle in the division sector is the hill mass type terrain together with the heavy forestation thereon. Movement was definitely restricted and canalized. With vehicular travel forced into the valleys, each town became an obstacle which was easily fortified and defended. No serious water barriers exist in this area.

d. Concealment and cover. Due to the profusion of hill masses and the abundant woodland both cover and concealment are readily available. Perhaps less endowed along this line is a strip averaging two or three kilometers wide running slightly northeast from NEUENRADE towards the junction of the WENNE and RUHR Rivers.. Another strip of open and fairly gentle terrain follows the HONNE River north from NEUENRADE to BECKUM, thence west to ISERLOHN.

c. Avenues of approach. Advancing from the vicinity of OBBERKIRCHEN to the ISERIJHN-MENDEN area, the avenues of approach must be considered in several stages. The WEINNE River valley offers the best route as far as the GREVENSTEIN area. Turning west, the open, rolling ground presents a good avenue in spite of the cross compartments. Beyond the SORPE STAUBECKEN, the valleys of the HOMME and BORKE Rivers lead directly to MENDEN and the lowlands of the RUHR basin beyond.

4. TACTICAL EFFECT OF THE TERRAIN.

The area in which the Seventh Armored Division operated during the Reduction of the RUHR is by no means the ideal for armored warfare. In only a very few places was there an opportunity for deployed formations and even these were on a small scale. Hill masses which kept the attacker in column on the road much of the time certainly favored the defender. An advance in such terrain against the German Army of three years previous would have been a great deal slower and more difficult.



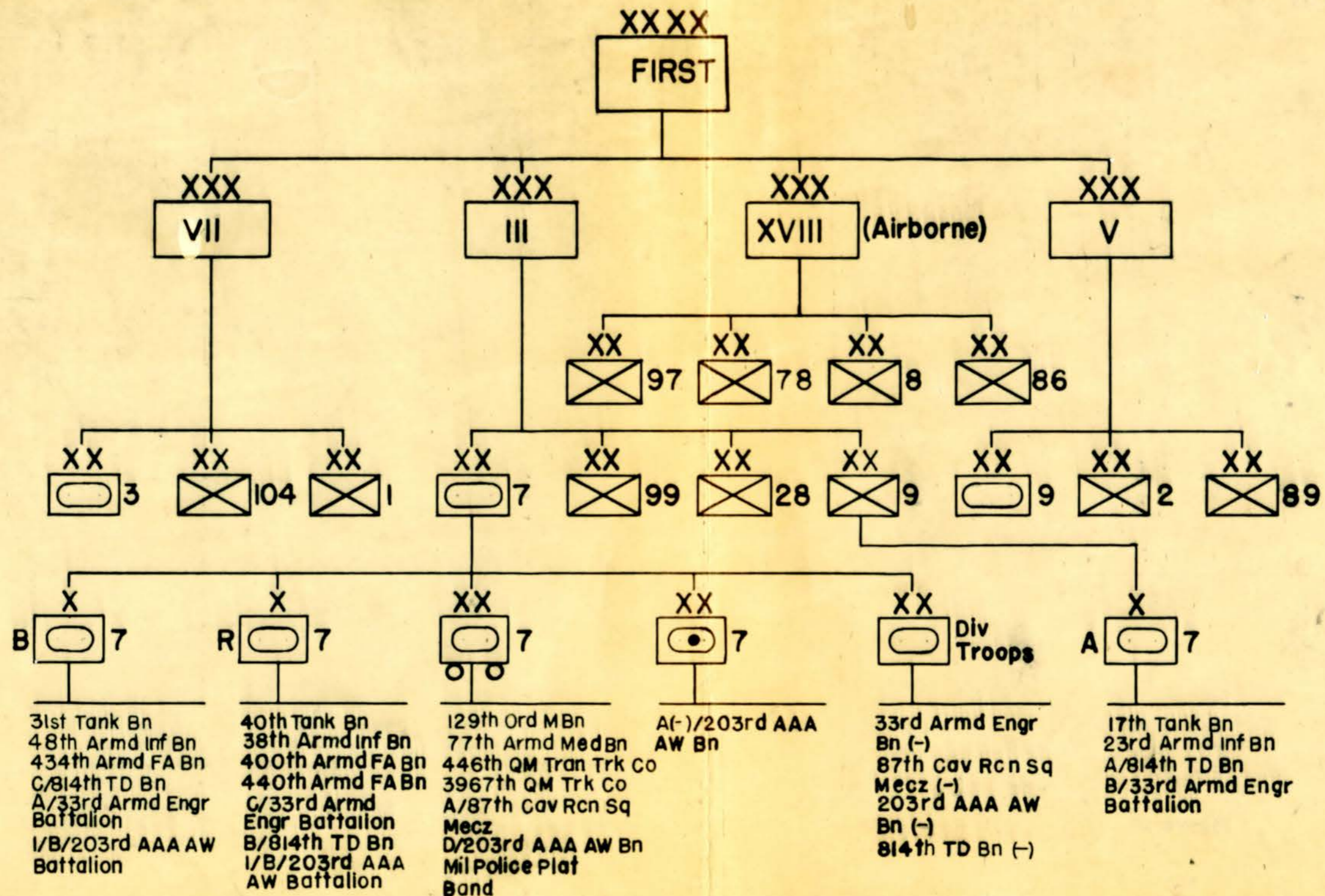
DRAINAGE SYSTEM
of the area traversed by the
7th ARMORED DIVISION in the
REDUCTION of the RUHR POCKET
APRIL 5-16 1945

APPENDIX I

FIG 28

ORDER OF BATTLE FIRST US ARMY

4 APRIL 1945



APPENDIX II

Figure 29

APPENDIX III

PERSONALITIES

Major General Robert Hasbrouck, O-8588, (Retired), Commanding General, 7th Armored Division, was born in the state of New York on 2 February 1896. He was appointed to the United States Military Academy from New York and was a cadet at the Military Academy from 15 June 1914 to 29 August 1917. He graduated as a Second Lieutenant of the Coast Artillery Corps. By the end of World War I he had reached the rank of Captain.

On 1 July 1920 Captain Hasbrouck transferred into the Field Artillery and the next year graduated from the Battery Officer's Course at the Field Artillery School. In 1934 he graduated from the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Three years later, in 1937, he graduated from the Army War College.

Previous to assuming command of the 7th Armored Division General Hasbrouck commanded Combat Command B of that division. On 1 November 1944 he took command of the 7th Armored Division and was promoted to the rank of Major General on 6 February 1945.

General Hasbrouck retired from the United States Army on 3 September 1947. Through his army career he was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal, the Silver Star, the Legion of Merit, and the Bronze Star Medal.

Colonel William Samuel Triplet, O-15815, commander of Combat Command A, was born in the state of Missouri on 21 September 1899. From 12 June 1917 to 13 May 1919 he was onlisted in the United States

Army. He was appointed to the United States Military Academy from Missouri and was a cadet at the Military Academy from 6 July 1920 to 11 June 1924. On 12 June 1924 he became a Second Lieutenant of Infantry.

Colonel Triplet graduated from the Army Tank School in 1930. In 1933 he graduated from the Company Officer's Course, The Infantry School. He completed his formal education graduating from the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas in 1939.

On 6 February 1941 he was promoted to the rank of Major and became a full Colonel on 29 December 1942.

Colonel Triplet was awarded the Silver Star, the Legion of Merit, the Bronze Star Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster and the Purple Heart with two Oak Leaf Clusters.

Colonel Joseph Farrell Haskell, O-18197, (Retired), commander of Combat Command B, was born in the state of Nebraska on 1 July 1908. He was appointed to the United States Military Academy from New York and was a cadet at the Military Academy from 1 July 1926 to 11 June 1930. He was graduated as a Second Lieutenant of Infantry.

On 12 June 1932 he transferred to the Cavalry. He became a graduate of the regular course at The Cavalry School in 1938 and a year later graduated from the Advanced Equitation Course there. Colonel Haskell graduated from the Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas in 1941.

On 1 February 1942 he was promoted to the rank of Major and to full Colonel on 25 November 1945.

Colonel Haskell was retired from the United States Army on 30 November 1946. His decorations include the Silver Star, the Legion of Merit and the Bronze Star Medal.

Colonel Francis Parker Tompkins, O-11210, (Retired), commander of Combat Command Reserve, was born in the state of Kansas on 6 October 1896. He was appointed to the United States Military Academy from Arizona and was a cadet at the Military Academy from 15 June 1915 to 11 June 1918. He graduated as a Second Lieutenant of Cavalry.

In 1928 he graduated from The Cavalry School's Troop Officer's Course and completed the Advanced Equitation Course there in 1929. In 1937 he graduated from the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Two years later Colonel Tompkins graduated from the Chemical Warfare School. In 1940 he culminated his formal education graduating from the Army War College.

On 1 July 1942 he was promoted to the rank of full Colonel. He retired from the United States Army on 31 July 1947 as a Colonel of Cavalry.

Colonel Tompkins was awarded the Silver Star, the Legion of Merit with one Oak Leaf Cluster and the Bronze Star Medal.

Corporal Thomas J. Kelly, Brooklyn, New York, a medical aid man in Company C, 48th Armored Infantry Battalion, on 5 April 1945 near Alenort, Germany was awarded the Medal of Honor. He was the only member of the 7th Armored Division to receive this decoration during the period 5 - 16 April 1945. His citation reads as follows:

Kelly, Thomas J. (Cpl.) Alenort, Germany; 7th Armd. Div.; 5 April 45. A medical-aid man, he made 10 separate trips through a murderous enemy fire to bring critically wounded men out of a battlefield death trap. During each of his trips he dragged a wounded man and guided a total of 7 others less seriously wounded to safety.



Figure 30. William Samuel Triplet
Colonel



Figure 31. Major General Robert W. Hasbrouck working over a map during operations in the Ruhr Pocket

U. S. ARMY PHOTOGRAPH

APPENDIX IV

7th Armored Division Unit Commanders (5 - 16 April 1945)

Division Commander	Maj Gen Robert W. Hasbrouck
Combat Command A	Colonel William S. Triplet
Combat Command B	Colonel Joseph F. Haskell
Combat Command R	Colonel F. P. Tompkins
Division Artillery	Colonel O. W. Martin
Division Trains	Colonel Andrew Adams
17th Tank Bn	Lt Col John P. Wemple
31st Tank Bn	Lt Col Robert C. Erlonbusch
40th Tank Bn	Lt Col John C. Brown
23d Armored Infantry Bn	Lt Col Robert L. Rhea
38th Armored Infantry Bn	Lt Col Marcus Griggin
48th Armored Infantry Bn	Lt Col Richard D. Chappius
87th Cavalry Ren Sq (Mocz)	Lt Col Vincent L. Boylan
33d Armored Engineer Bn	Lt Col Clyde A. Koltner
147th Armored Signal Co	Lt Col Emerson M. McDermott
434th Armored Field Arty Bn	Lt Col James G. Dubuisson
440th Armored Field Arty Bn	Lt Col Norman E. Hart
489th Armored Field Arty Bn	Lt Col James W. Milner
129th Ord Maintenance Bn	Lt Col George E. Hughes
77th Armored Medical Bn	Lt Col John E. Bolard

APPENDIX IV

7th Armored Division

STATISTICS

Chronology

Activated	1 Mar 42
Arrived ETO	13 Jun 44
Arrived Continent (D/65)	10 Aug 44
Entered Combat:	
First Elements	13 Aug 44
Entire Division	14 Aug 44
Days in Combat	172

Campaigns

Northern France
Ardennes
Rhineland
Central Europe

Casualties (Tentative)

Killed	887
Wounded	4,474
Missing	1,050
Captured	39
Battle Casualties	6,150
Non-Battle Casualties	<u>4,352</u>
Total Casualties	10,502

Individual Awards

DSC	4
Legion of Merit	16
Silver Star	582
Soldiers Medal	6
Bronze Star	2,907
Air Medal	95

Percent of T/O Strength 98.4

PWs Taken 113,041

C O M P O S I T I O N

ORGANIC UNITS

Headquarters Company	Combat Command A
Reserve Command	Combat Command B

17th Tank Bn	23d Armored Infantry Bn	87th Cavalry Rcn Sq (Mecz)
31st Tank Bn	38th Armored Infantry Bn	33d Armored Engineer Bn
40th Tank Bn	58th Armored Infantry Bn	147th Armored Signal Co

7th Armored Division Artillery

434th Armored Field Artillery Battalion
440th Armored Field Artillery Battalion
489th Armored Field Artillery Battalion

7th Armored Division Trains

129th Ordnance Maintenance Battalion	Military Police Platoon
77th Armored Medical Battalion	Band

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