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drive was apparent. Beginning of the morning of 16 December with an hour long artillery preparation the enemy had attacked between Monschau-Echternach with approximately two panzer armies plus infantry support with the aim of seizing supply dumps in Liege, Verviers and Eupen and of capturing road nets which would permit the taking of Liege and perhaps of Antwerp itself (1st Div, G-2 Report, Dec 44). The enemy had chosen ground which was lightly held and had attacked in bad weather when it was believed that the Allied air force would be unable to operate. To prevent the moving of American reserves to the attacked area a force of approximately 700 parachutists were ordered to seize the road between Eupen and Malmedy, while picked troops of the 150th Panzer Brigade, speaking English, dressed in American uniforms and driving American vehicles, were to drive behind the lines to destroy installations and to create confusion (1st Div Report, G-2, Dec 44).

The 6th SS Panzer Army made the drive to the north, while the 5th Panzer Army hit in the south, with the 7th Army still to the south of it. It appeared that the panzer armies were to advance, eight panzer divisions abreast, in "a vast turning movement, four SS divisions on the axis, Malmedy-Liege, and four on the axis, Marche to Namur" (1st Div G-2 Report, Dec 44).

Four routes, according to later captured documents, were to be used by the 6th SS Army. Routes A and B, running through the Monschau area, were to be used by the 246th, the 277th and the 326th Volksgrenadier Divisions, which were to pave the way for panzer attacks in the north. Routes C and D were to carry the 6th SS Army and the 1st SS Division west along the Malmedy-Stavelot line to reach the Meuse River west of Liege, while the 12th SS Division would go along

the Losheim-Bullingen-Butgenbach-Weismes-Malmedy-Spa axis to hit Liege from the north(1st Div G-2 Report, Dec 44).

On the night of 16-17 December nearly 700 parachutists led by Lt. Col. Freiherr Von der Heydte, veteran of paratroop landings in Crete and reputed to be the officer who demanded the British surrender at El Alamein in 1942, dropped along the Eupen-Malmedy road. Hampered by delays, lack of time for training of personnel, heavy winds, improper equipment and the failure to land heavy weapons, the parachutists failed to land in force and were unable to perform their mission. The German forces which were supposed to arrive at 1730 on the following day failed to keep their appointment, so the paratroop units were directed to infiltrate back to their lines as best they could. It was to deal with this group that the 18th CT was sent into the area east of Eupen(Statement on reason for failure, V Corps G-2 Report, Lt. Col Von der Heydte's statement, Dec 44).

In the south the breakthrough went well for the Germans, with the 1st SS Division making considerable headway, but the 12th SS Division was held east of Bullingen. The II Panzer Corps (2d and 9th/^{SS}Panzer Divisions) had not tried to breakthrough at Monschau, possibly because of the failure of the Volksgrenadier units to get through that area(1st Div G-2 Report, Dec 44). On the 17 December the enemy attacked in some force near Monschau, but was stopped by artillery. Bullingen was occupied and patrols were sent towards Butgenbach, but they failed to take advantage of the fact that the 26th Infantry had not moved up(1st Div G-2 Report, Dec 44).

The action of the 1st Division on 18 December was still one of establishing positions, of patrolling newly occupied

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areas and of performing small missions to protect installations or to deal with small groups of the enemy.

During the morning of 18 December the 18th Infantry ordered a task force to move at 0735 eastward to the vicinity of V 8116 to search for paratroopers (For action of the 18th during this period consult the overlay submitted with the 38th Cav Rcn Squadron). Company L moved south while a reinforced platoon of the 16th Infantry moved north to meet this force. By 0840 they had reached the 20 grid line but had encountered no enemy forces. ~~xxxxxxInfantryxxxxxx~~

The 26th Infantry began to extend its lines about 1000 on the 18th. Company E was spread out along a thin line to the west of the ^{South} north-side road out of Butgenbach. During the day the Germans began to probe with infantry and tanks to feel out the position. One of their reconnaissance cars was knocked out by the American forces (1st Div After Action Report, Dec 44).

The 1st and 3d Battalions of the 16th Infantry closed in their new area at 0030 on the 18th. By 0120 the 2d Bn reported a similar action. Between 0130 and 0450 the 30th Infantry Division passed through the 16th Infantry positions to a new area. At 0840 a report from the 16th on its disposition of forces indicated that the 1st and 3d Battalions were in the line--the 3d Battalion coming into the area along the stream north of Weywertz and the 1st extending around Busbach. One company was left in Robertville to cover the bridge at that point (1st Div After Action Rpt Dec 44). Patrols from the 16th were able to report that the following towns were

clear of the enemy at 1515--Weywertz, Butgenbach, Weismes, Road, Champagne, Bruyeres, Walk, Langfaye and Xhoffaix.

During the afternoon Task Force Davisson, consisting of Headquarters, Medical Detachment and the Reconnaissance Company of the 634th TDBattalion(SP), one company of light tanks of the 745th Tank Battalion and one platoon of the 1st Reconnaissance Troop, was organized and ordered to secure the town of Weismes. Company B, 1st Engineer Combat Bn and one platoon of the 703d TD Bn were later put in support of this group. By 1700 the Task Force had entered Weismes and had begun the evacuation of the 47th Evacuation Hospital and Co D, 99th Medical Battalion(Collecting Company). Attempts by small forces of the enemy to enter the town during the night were unsuccessful(1st Div After Action Report, Dec 44 and 1st Engr C Bn, Dec 44).

In mid-afternoon of the 18th elements of Company L, 26th Infantry, contacted units of the 9th and 23d Infantry of the 2d Division which were holding positions 200 yards north of Berg on the left of the 26th Infantry's position^{N3}. ~~XXXXXXXX~~ The 26th also caught some paratroops. However, the tracking of paratroopers continued to be the special task of the 18th Infantry which reported the finding of eight of these troops at 1945. Patrols were also sent to coordinates 8416-~~8417~~ 8417, but without success(1st Div After Action Rpt Dec 44).

At 1400 the 26th Infantry was detached from the 99th Division by V Corps and re-attached to the 1st Division. The Corps Letter of Instructions issued at 2200 indicated that if the situation permitted on the following day

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the 1st Division (less 18th Infantry) would attack in the direction of Faymonville (1st Div After Action Rpt Dec 44).

By the night of 18 December there was evidence of continuous enemy attacks to reach the road net of the Butgenbach area from the east. Pressure was applied on Krinkelt and Rochebrath and the troops were pushed eastward from Bullingen. A 26th Infantry patrol which went to the latter town reported at 2310 their presence of about 1000 enemy infantry, together with 100 American prisoners. Because of uncertainty as to the enemy's movement along the front during the day, the 18th Infantry had been told in the morning to have its 1st Battalion ready to send eastward to reinforce the 47th Infantry. At 1400 it was alerted to move to the Weismes area and at night it was told to be prepared to move against attacks along the front which might develop (1st Division After Action Report, Dec 44).

The important action of the day was the sending into positions of artillery to support the 1st Division units against enemy attacks. In addition to the regular Division Artillery (5th, 7th, 32d and 33d FA Bns) the 406th FA Group (941 FA Bn--4.5 inch guns; 955th FA Bn--155 hows; and one battery of the 272d FA Bn--8 inch guns) were in direct support of the Division. The 33d FA Bn had come in on the 17th, while ^{on Dec 18} the 32d closed in a position near 7830 at 1815; the 7th FA Bn closed in the vicinity of Soubrodt at 1806 and the 5th FA Bn closed in the same vicinity at 0800. The 703d TD Bn was attached to the Division at 1300. Between 171400-181400 Division Artillery and supporting units fired 26 missions (1st Div After Action Rpt and 1st Div Arty).

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At 0225 on the morning of 19 December Company E of the 26th Infantry was confronted at 943016 by twenty truckloads of infantry and approximately 12 tanks. A total of seven tanks came up almost to the company positions when they were brought under fire by bazookas, 57 MM AT guns and AT grenades. The 2d Battalion also called for artillery and the 5th and 33d FA Bns fired on the attacking forces. Three tanks got through this artillery screen and ran up and down the road leading into Dom Butgenbach. Five or six men were hit by tank fire in the town before artillery fire drove the tanks back. Two of the tanks were believed to be disabled; patrols later reported 100 enemy dead near the line of departure (Interview with 2d Bn, 26th Inf; 26th Rgtl History). Soon afterwards Company A of the 26th moved to the high ground 1000 yards south of Butgenbach to tie in with Company B which was sent to the main road leading to the 2d Battalion position (26th Rgtl History).

The Germans tried another attack on the 2d Battalion's position at 1010 when two tanks and a company of infantry advanced from the south. The tanks ran through the American infantry positions, but artillery stopped the infantry advance. One tank was halted by direct AT fire before the AT gun itself was destroyed; the other tank withdrew under fire. The enemy retaliated with artillery and mortar barrages on the positions of the 26th throughout the afternoon (26th Rgtl History).

While the attack was in progress around Butgenbach GCA of the 5th Armored Division was relieving the 18th CT of its defensive role around Eupen. The 18th was ordered to carry out a screening movement of the wooded area south of Eupen to eliminate parachutists in that region and then to join the 1st Division in



the south. The relief was arranged at 1300 and the 18th proceeded as ordered, capturing 12 parachutists, destroying considerable German equipment and rescuing 23 American prisoners (18th Rgtl Hist).

Task Force Davison, which had evacuated American units from Weismes on 18 December, became apprehensive as to its own position the following morning. At 1100 the 1st Division was told that the enemy was building up his forces outside the town. At 1000 contact had been made with two armored cars and five infantry at 852026 while enemy tanks were reported at the hill outside the town and a Mark V or VI was said to be coming into the town itself. The Task Force indicated that it was not strong enough to deal with a strong infantry attack or a small tank attack. The 16th Infantry replied that the Task Force should sit tight since aid was on the way from the 2d Battalion. By 1345 the 2d Battalion had moved up its AT guns and M-10's. Company E was preparing to move within 15 minutes and was to be followed by the 3d Battalion within an hour. By 1725 the 3d Battalion was engaging the enemy to the east of Weismes, while Co G was fighting in the western and Co E in the eastern portion of town. The 2d Battalion took over the responsibility for the defense of the town that evening (1st Div After Action Report; 1st Engr C Bn).

The 16th Infantry units carried on small actions at Bellaire during the evening of 19 December. I Company established its flank at that town, while F and K built up their positions south of the road from Weismes to Butgenbach.

During the period 181400-191400 the artillery of the Division had fired 102 missions of which 16 were on tanks

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and 10 on personnel. Preparations were made for artillery firing on Moderscheid, Honsfeld and Bullingen for the following morning (1st Div After Action Rpt; Div Arty Rpt).

The 26th Infantry again bore the brunt of the German attack against the Division on the 20 December. About 0330 a force estimated to consist of 20 tanks and a battalion of infantry, thought to be the 2d Battalion, 25th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, plus elements of the special parachute regiment attached to the 150th Panzer Brigade and elements of the 3d Battalion, 12th SS Tank Regiment, attacked from Bullingen on the east-west road.

The tanks hit a roadblock of mines, which had been laid on the night of 18 December, and turned off the road to the ^{South} ~~left~~, coming cross-country to the north-south road running into Dom Butgenbach. The enemy fired into F Co, knocking out 3 bazooka teams and a machine gun section belonging to Company H (Interview with 2d Bn, 26th Inf). Requests were made for additional artillery from Division. In addition to fire by the 33d FA Battalion, which was already being put down, the guns of the 5th and 955th FA Bns plus one battery of the 413th AAA Bn were brought into action. By 1415 the attack had been stopped (1st Div After Action Report; Interview with 2d Bn, 26th Inf).

Another attack began about 0600, once again on the front of Companies E and F at approximately 945018 west of the road. Tanks came through the positions of E and F, but the infantry remained in their positions and called for artillery fire. A platoon of Company G was committed to plug the gap between the two company positions. The 5th, 33d and 955th FA Bns opened fire

on the tanks, while the 2d Infantry Division Artillery sent 300 rounds into Bullingen between 0600-0700. About 0800 the 26th sent elements of Company G around Co F and prepared to commit part of Company C. However, the artillery barrage was sufficient to stop the attack; claims were made of eight tanks destroyed (1st Div After Action Report; Div Arty Rpt; Interview; 26th Rgtl Hist).

A captured German document from the 3d Bn, 12th SS Tank Regiment, testified to the effectiveness of American resistance to the attack. *discussed above.* According to the report the attacking force had started from Bullingen at 2310 the previous evening. In the darkness the tank point lost its way and had to be brought back to the proper road. When the units moved near Dom Butgenbach they were heavily attacked by AT, artillery and mortar fire. This attack failed before the point could be committed. The company was then withdrawn and regrouped. About 0500 the attack was renewed with the 9th Company (Jagdpanthers) as the point. It had penetrated the foremost AT defenses when the Commanding Officer and his tank were hit. He took his burning tank to the rear and went forward again with the 11th Company command tank. In the meantime the 9th Company had penetrated extremely heavy fire to the high ground west of Dom Butgenbach where three out of eight tanks were put out of action. The 11th Company, brought up in the meantime, received heavy fire from the right flank and the command tank suffered a direct hit. Other tanks were destroyed by artillery and AT fire. Since the 9th Company could make no further advance the commanding officer discontinued the attack and withdrew to Bullingen (Captured document, 1st Div G-2 Report).

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The 16th Infantry spent the day strengthening its positions to the east of Weismes. At 0857 it reported that it was consolidating the 3d Battalion's positions and that its 1st Battalion lines were extended to Bruyeres. While the attack on Dom Butgenbach was in progress, another push was launched south of Weismes. Elements of the 3d Battalion, 8th Regiment, 3d Parachute Division, were ordered to attack Oberweywertz from the south. The 11th and 12th companies worked their way northward along the railroad tracks to the edge of their objective, circled the town to the east and then were scattered by American artillery fire. The 10th Company, which was hit by artillery fire, never showed up (1st Div G-2 Rpt).

At 0948 a patrol of the 634th TD Reconnaissance Company, which had moved through the positions of the 3d platoon, 1st Reconnaissance Troop, near Weismes, was pinned down by machine gun fire. Two light tanks of the 745th Tank Battalion were sent through to destroy the machine gun nests, but returned with a Mark V tank in pursuit. A fight developed with the 3d platoon of the 1st Reconnaissance Troop in which the latter had an M-8 knocked out. The tank withdrew, however, apparently with a disabled turret (1st Div After Action Report).

Anxiety over the movement of enemy forces along the railroad near Weismes about noon was discounted by the 16th Infantry. It left Company C in position and sent Company A in to take the place of Company K. An enemy attack which developed at 1625 was stopped within an hour. The 16th reported that it had AT guns to stop the attacks and indicated that it had contacted the 1st Battalion, 120th Infantry, 30th Division near Chivremont (1st Division After Action Report).

The 18th Infantry spent the day on the mission of bottling up paratroopers in the woods east of Eupen. At 1003 it reported a paratroop force of about 75 surrounded by Co K on the north, Co L from the southwest and a blocking position of the 3d Bn on the east. By early afternoon it reported the woods swept and the regiment on its objective. At 1335 its 1st Battalion was attached to the 26th Infantry to take over sectors held by Companies "A" and "B" of the latter regiment. ~~of~~ company was alerted to be ready to move on call in case of emergency. At 1800 the units of the 18th closed in new positions--the 1st Battalion at 861095, the 3d at Ovifat and the 2d in Division Reserve. A platoon of the 3d Battalion was sent about midnight to guard the dam at 845073.

In addition to its heavy and effective fire in the morning Division Artillery fired a one hour harassing program during the afternoon of the 20th on Ligneuville and Eibertingen. The 5th and 32d FA Bns took part in this firing. Between 191600-201600 Division Artillery and attached and supporting units fired 169 missions. They had succeeded in breaking up a heavy attack, destroying at least seven tanks (Div Arty Report; 1st Div After Action Rpt).

The Germans made their heaviest attack against 1st Division positions on the 21 December in an effort to break the 2d Battalion's position at Butgenbach. If the 1st SS Panzer Division was to get through to the west it was imperative that this position be taken. Prisoners of war later said that the 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th Companies of the 25th Panzer Grenadier Regiment were sent to take Dom Butgenbach. At 0730 machine gun and tank fire opened up on the 2d Battalion's positions southeast of the town. Artillery succeeded,

however, in driving the tanks away. At 0300 the Germans encountered with terrific fire from artillery, mortars and nebelwerfers which knocked out all of the 2d Battalion's telephonic communications. However, they were able to radio for more artillery at 0420. The enemy tried to break through again at 0500 but was pushed back (1st Div After Action Report; 26th Rgtl Hist; Interview).

The enemy effort which came nearest to overrunning the 2d Battalion began at 0715 when the Germans threw approximately 12 tanks and a battalion of infantry (reinforced) against the 2d Battalion, 26th (1st Div G-2 says 10-15 tanks; 2d Bn people in interview said 12). The outposts saw them coming and called for artillery and 57 MM fire. Despite heavy fire five tanks broke through near the hedgerow at 925018. Two tanks drove up and down south of the hedgerow, firing into foxholes, searching in particular for automatic weapons. They succeeded in knocking out all of them: 6 BAR's, 2 30 caliber machine guns plus 2 57 MM AT guns and 6 bazookas (26th Inf Report at 1423; Interview with 26th Inf people indicated that they lost all their automatic weapons in the hedgerow: a section of light machine guns, a section of heavy machine guns 2 BAR's and 2 AT guns).

The 2d Battalion now directed artillery ~~fire~~ and bazooka fire on the tanks, knocking out one tank with a bazooka. In the latter case the bazooka man's assistant was wounded, so he loaded and fired by himself. During the fight another tank came through the gap in the 500 yard long hedgerow. The tank commander got out of his tank, stepped up to a foxhole and took an American prisoner there. Another tank now came up and the two ran around

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behind Companies E and G. Pistol shots were heard at one point and it was assumed that the ^{tank} commanders were shooting American wounded (Interview).

At about 0900 five tanks hit eight of Co E's men on the right and eliminated about 24 men from Company G. Three tanks drove through towards the E Co CP in ^a ~~the center of the~~ house in Dom Butgenbach. When the tanks broke through, the CP personnel rallied to form a new line of resistance. A bazooka team from Co G tried unsuccessfully to get in firing position from a nearby barn. After a time, an American tank, located north of Dom Butgenbach, destroyed ^{one of} ~~on~~ the tanks in front of the CP. Another German tank, which was firing directly into the CP, was knocked out at 1600. The remaining tank took cover behind the two ~~disabled tanks~~ disabled tanks and blew two holes in the CP, hitting about 9 men. Fortunately no infantry was able to get through to aid the tank and shortly after 1600 a 90 MM gun near the CP fired three shots at the tank and drove it away (Interview).

With the subsiding of the attack about 1600 the 2d Battalion began to ^{re}organize its forces. Co E was found to have lost 3 KIA, 12 ^{MIA} ~~WIA~~ and 15 ^{WIA} MIA, having lost the weapons platoon leader, four squad leaders and three assistant squad leaders. Co G, which started the attack with 68 riflemen and a machine gun section of 9, lost 13 KIA, 12 MIA and 10 WIA, including one platoon leader and four squad leaders. The 26th had also lost 2 tanks and three tank destroyers (Interview).

In the fight to stop the tank attack use had

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had been made of nearly everything which could shoot. Four 90 MM guns had been attached for the action. Mortars were used to a great extent, one section firing 750 rounds before its position was caved in by tank fire. Reinforcing the fires of the regiment's 33d FA Bn were the guns of the 5th, 7th, 32d of Division Artillery. Shortly after the attack began four battalions of 2d Division Artillery were brought in to supplement the 1st Division fire, while at 1000 ten medium guns of the 99th Division Artillery was put at the disposal of the 1st Division. Almost continuous missions were fired between 0900-2400 in the Bullingen area by the 955th FA Bn. In the course of the day the 955th fired 555 rounds in one interdiction and harassing mission and a total of 2054 rounds for the day for its largest 24 hour expenditure of the war. Approximately 10,000 rounds were fired by the Division and supporting artillery to stop the German drive (Div Arty Rpt; 955th Div Arty Rpt ; 1st Div After Action Rpt). Two hundred ninety-~~one~~^{one} missions were fired: three on enemy guns, 44 on enemy personnel, 18 on vehicles, 48 on tanks, 17 on counterattacks, 56 interdictions, 2 on observation posts, 85 harassing and ¹⁸ miscellaneous.

After the attack of 21 December the 26th was told that it could have the support of the 4.2 inch mortars of a 2d Division Chemical Battalion. To prepare against further attacks a hasty minefield of 1050 mines was laid by the 1st Engineer C Battalion in front of the positions of Cos E and F (1st Engr C Bn Report, Dec 44).

~~The final attempt of the enemy to break through the
 2d Battalion positions on 22 December.~~

The Butgenbach positions were again assailed, this time in attacks against the 1st and 3d Battalions, 26th Infantry, on 22 December. About 0700 reports were received at Division to the effect that German tanks and infantry had been observed near Company K. Artillery fire was laid on positions at 904012 at 0730. Between 0830-0900, after light pressure on the 2d Battalion positions, German tanks and infantry began to infiltrate through A and K companies of the 26th Infantry, south of Butgenbach [the 26th Rgtl History says A Co was hit at 0630 with 6 tanks and several hundred infantry. Apparently the 1st Div After Action Report statement is based on the Journal. Should be checked with message for time. Report may be using 0830 as time message was received]. At 0900 reports were sent to Division saying that elements of the enemy were probably in the town of Butgenbach. By 0940 it was reported that "an undetermined number of panzer-grenadiers" from the 26th Regiment of the 12th SS Division had forced their way through a gap between A and K Companies from three points west of Dom Butgenbach, splitting the two companies and forcing back the elements of A Co with the exception of one platoon on the right side of the line. A gap of some 800 yards was left between the companies (26th Rgtl History; G-2 Report).

Immediate arrangements were made to cope with German advance. Task Force Davison was alerted and told to cover the area to Ovifat, protecting the southwest, maintaining contact with the 120th Infantry and covering the dam. The 1st Battalion of the 18th Infantry was to move to Weywertz and to attack southeast to restore A and K Co positions. The 26th Infantry also ~~exhibited~~ pulled in Company B, which was to move from Butgenbach down to the Co A sector. Co B swung out of the Battalion line and, moving south from town, went through the one platoon of Co A which was still ~~holding~~ in place to drive the enemy back.

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Enemy pressure decreased under AT and artillery fire but at 1400 a mixed column of infantry and tanks was reported moving towards Butgenbach once more. Co B swung down to meet them but as late as 1615 has been unable to get the road junction near Co A's former position. Artillery fire again was placed on the enemy forces and the attack again subsided. By the close of the day the gap between ^A~~B~~ and K Companies~~es~~ had been reduced to 200 yards. Enemy losses in this attack were estimated to be as great as those of the day before. Estimates ranging as high as 44 tanks and 1200 infantry casualties were made for the two day attack on the 26th Infantry front (26th Rgtl History, Div Arty, 1st Div After Action Report).

A summary of the day's fighting may be had in a statement of artillery fire during the day, because the repulse of the German attack, like that of the day before, was due largely to the fire of division guns. At 0600 the 33d and 955th FA Bns had opened fire on enemy tanks on roads leading into Butgenbach at 922018 and 919013. At 0730 other tanks were fired on near 904012 and 907006. The 33d FA Bn also reported tanks at 0930 near 910031, 930007, 908028 and 947017. These were brought under fire by all battalions. At 0950 infantry infiltration at 913034 was fired on. All roads and draws south of Butgenbach were almost ~~xxxxxxx~~ constantly under fire with the result that more than 20 tanks were estimated to have been ~~destroyed~~. At 1305 the 32d and 955th fired on a troop assembly area near 095025. The 32d FA Bn called for fire on the same area at the same time. At 1340 the 5th, 7th and Btry B, 200th FA Bn, fired on troop movements ~~xxxxx~~ at Schoppen. Twenty minutes later the 955th fired on the same area. The 5th FA Bn adjusted fire on 11 tanks near 904017 at 1520. By 1530 the 2d Infantry Division had placed three TOT(s fired by four battalions on Bullingen. Bullingen was again hit by the 955th at 1715. In the period between 211600-221600 Division Artillery and attached and supporting units had fired 334 missions (Div Arty Reports, 1st Div After Action Report Dec 44).

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The 16th Infantry spent the 22d improving its defensive positions.

In accordance with plans of the previous day, the 1st Bn, 18th Infantry, relieved the 1st Bn, 26th Infantry, on 23 December and the 2d Bn, 18th, regrouped and organized the entire sector southwest of Butgenbach. Command of the sector now passed to the 18th Infantry by agreement between the 26th and 18th Infantry Regiments (18th Rgtl History Dec 44). By 0945 the position between Companies A and K of the 26th Infantry had been restored. ~~Enemy troops were reported to the south of the Division at 856011-863012 and 880029-885031. At 1358~~ ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ Allied strafing of Butgenbach at 1538 was reported; an investigation indicated that the plane was an A-20 and that it had dropped eight bombs, four of which landed at 916046.

Artillery shoots were arranged towns such as Moderscheid, Schoppen, Faymonville, Steinbach and Bullingen during the day. At 1105 fire was placed on 300 infantry and some enemy tanks moving eastward at 885008. A large enemy column moving eastward was heavily interdicted at 960017 by the 5th FA Bn. Between 221600-231600 Division Artillery fired 45 missions (Div Arty and 1st Div Rpt).

Between the 24-28 December the Germans subsided into purely defensive action along the 1st Division front. Movements of armor eastward indicated that armor was being withdrawn for repairs or being replaced by purely infantry units. ^{however} The enemy/continued to build up artillery concentrations southeast of Bullingen. Supply movements were heavy along the roads, but American aircraft drove most of the vehicles off the main roads during this period. The 1st Division continued aggressive patrolling, frequently being able to make penetrations of 1000 yards without opposition. Prisoner of war reports during this period indicated that the 3d Parachute Division held the western flank of the Division front and that the 12th Infantry Division was moving into the line (1st Div G-2 Dec 44).

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The Germans made a final effort during the month of December to break the 1st Division front. ~~On 28 December~~ Before dawn of the morning of 28 December heavy enemy fire was placed on the entire 1st Division ~~sector~~ against ~~the 2d Division~~ and movement was noted against the 2d Division as well. Shortly before dawn the 3d Battalion, 27th Volksgrenadier Regiment, 12th Division, attacked the left flank of the 1st Division. The 1st Battalion, 48th Regiment, was ^{supported} to attack ~~it~~ in an effort to secure the high ground of Wirtzfeld, while elements of the 246th Volksgrenadier Division ^{were} ~~was~~ to push through Elsenborn from the east. The 3d Battalion, 27th Regiment, was taken under intense artillery fire and soon forced back. Elements of the 9th Company and some engineers from the 12th Engineer Battalion got through the draw northwest of Bullingen, but were unable to exploit the situation. Attacks of the other elements were beaten off by the Division artillery which fired 313 missions during the day (1st Div G-2 Report).

On 29 December V Corps issued a letter of instructions which indicated that Corps units would continue to hold its defensive positions and would be prepared to resume the offensive on army order. Aggressive patrolling was to be carried on and the enemy was to be constantly interdicted and harassed by artillery. After pointing out that V Corps was holding the key sector on the northern flank of the breakthrough, the Corps letter gave praise ~~to~~ for "the splendid efforts of the men and officers that have stabilized our present lines and inflicted heavy losses on the enemy..." (1st Div After Action Dec 44). The remainder of the month was spent in carrying out the defensive mission laid down in the ~~the~~ Corps' instructions.

During the period 16-24 December the 1st Division had suffered the following casualties:

KIA	WIA	MIA	SICK	TOTAL
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<u>KIA</u>		<u>WIA</u>		<u>MIA</u>		<u>SICK</u>		<u>TOTAL</u>	
Offs	EM	Offs	EM	Offs	EM	Offs	Em	Offs	EM
3	37	10	303	2	139	10	469	25	948

In the 26th Infantry, which was the hardest hit regiment during the period 16-24 December, the casualties ^{for the period} were 13 officers and 487 enlisted men (1st Div G-1 Report, Dec 44).

In two respects the Division broke its record for activity against the enemy. Between 20-31 December the 1st Engineer Combat Battalion laid 24, 519 AT mines along the Division's front. This was believed to be the largest minefield laid by any United States Division. Of this amount 7574 were laid in the 16th Infantry sector by Co A; 6007 in front of the 18th Infantry sector by Company B and 10938 in front of the 26th Infantry's sector by Company C. Attention has already been called to the record firing by artillery units during the height of the attack against Dom Butgenbach. A breakdown of the total number of ~~rounds~~ ^{missions} fired during the attack by Division Artillery plus the 955th FA Bn gives an excellent idea of the part played by this branch in stopping the German drive. The missions, classified as to types, were as follows: interdictions 316; guns 32; harassing 361; command and observation posts 9; vehicles 137; tanks 214; machine guns 6; personnel 244; registrations 26; miscellaneous 129; total 1580. Division Artillery in summing up its work of the month pointed out that not only did artillery fire seal off several small enemy penetrations and prevent many infantry attacks from leaving the line of departure, but that it also knocked out 23 tanks as contrasted to 16 destroyed by other means (Div Arty Report; 1st Div After Action Report Dec 44).

The 1st Division, mindful of its past history, ~~commented~~ in commenting on the breakthrough of 1944 compared it to the German offensive at Kasserine Pass in 1943. It declared ~~that~~ in its G-2 summary of the action:

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"It is impossible to overlook a startling parallel between this enemy operation (and the Division's reaction to it) and the enemy's attempted breakthrough at Kasserine Pass in late February, 1943. At Kasserine, the Division, in the Ousseltia Valley, was threatened by a major breakthrough to the south in the vicinity of Faid Pass. Here, the breakthrough south of Monschau caught the Division in a rest area ^{to} in the north. In both cases the enemy was spurred on by the hope of capturing supplies: Tebessa in Africa, and the Verviers-US Liege-Eupen area in this drive. In both cases the 26th Infantry was detached from Division control and sent out to hold the flank of the German spearhead, attached to II Corps in Africa and V Corps here. In both cases the Division turned back the threat, inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy: on the 21st Panzer Division in Africa, and on three divisions (the 12th SS Panzer, 3d Parachute and 12th Volksgrenadier) here. And finally, in the case of Africa, the Tunisian campaign was over three months later" (1st Div G-2 Report Dec 44).

The 1st Division also carefully considered its part in ~~the~~ stopping the breakthrough and concluded by saying that undoubtedly the enemy considered the roadnet through Butgenbach of primary importance. On the positive side the 1st Division ground two regiments of a "top-drawer Panzer Division" down to ^{his} framework. Negatively it prevented the enemy from coming to the aid of the 1st SS Panzer Division which was caught "in a vise in the Stavelot-La Gleize area by the 30th Infantry Division". Finally ~~;~~ the enemy was forced to change his plan of getting to First Army dumps in the Verviers area, with the result that the II Panzer Corps was committed to the south instead of being able to follow up successes of the I Panzer Corps. The 1st Division's position also restricted the overloaded road net ~~by~~ supplying the point of the thrust. "Altogether", the 1st Division G-2 concludes, "the northern flank of the German penetration was not a matter of heart-warming satisfaction to the German High Command" (1st Div G-2).

THE FIRST

BREAKTHROUGH (31 DEC 1944)

62-187 (1)

Summary of action: M/Sgt F. C. Pogue
Overlays: S/Sgt J. M. Topete

Sources:

1st Division After Action Report, December 1944
1st Division G-1 Report, Dec 1944
1st Division G-2 Report, Dec 1944
16th Regiment History, Dec 1944
18th Regiment History, Dec 1944
26th Regiment History, Dec 1944
Division Artillery Report, Dec 1944
Reports, 5th, 7th, 32d, 33d and 955th FA Bns, Dec 1944
1st Engineer Combat Battalion, Dec 1944
Reports of other units of 1st Division, Dec 1944
Captured German documents, attached 1st Division G-2 Report
Statement of Lt. Col Von der Heydte, V Corps G-2 Report, Dec 44.
Commendation of Capt Kennedy
Interview: 2d Bn, 26th Infantry by M/Sgt Pogue and S/Sgt Topete.

Overlays:

Copies of overlays from 1st Div After Action Reports for 18, 19, 20, 21, and 28 December together with material taken from above sources.
Overlays attached to interview of 2d Battalion, ~~xxxxxxxxxxx~~ 26th Inf, 1st Division.

Note: Since the journals and supporting documents of the 1st Division for the December action are in Paris it has been necessary to use the 1st Division After Action Report as the main source for this summary. Therefore, the value of this summary lies in the compiling and arrangement of material for ready use rather than in historical accuracy. There are several points of conflict as to time and actions which must be checked with messages and supporting documents in the journals. As it now stands this account may serve as a guide to one writing the final history, but it can not substitute for the basic sources.

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(3) The plan was simple enough once the necessary force had been assembled. Detailed intelligence reports and estimates kept track of the American situation in the avenue of the proposed attack (See Annex 2), and it was plain that the one impodderable in the German planning was the mobility of the American forces which could be made available to block the drive. "Operation GRIEF" had the mission of equalizing this factor. Roughly 700 parachutists dropped behind our lines would seize the important road junctions between EUPEN and MALMEDY and block the American troops which could be counted on to be pulled from the north, where the main strength of the Allied Armies had been committed in the drive on the Rhine. In conjunction with the parachutists, special troops in American uniforms and equipped with American transportation and Sherman tanks would spearhead the German panzers to spread confusion behind the American lines and disrupt the organization of resistance. (These men planned to race toward the American rear, shouting "The Germans are 500 yards back!", to stall Sherman tanks at critical points in the American road net and, in general, carry on dozens of similar *divertissements*). With the American ability to organize and strike back thus tied down, the panzers could get under way and move west. The preponderance of the weight was committed in the north with the Sixth SS Panzer Army; to the south was the Fifth Panzer Army, and below that was the Seventh Army with the mission of holding the southern flank and, eventually, the rear of the drive west and north. The two panzer armies were to advance, with eight panzer divisions in line, on a vast, simple turning movement: four SS divisions on the axis MALMEDY-LIEGE, and four army divisions on the axis MARCHE-NAMUR.

(4) Four routes were allotted to the sixth SS Army: "A" and "B" ran eastward through the MONSCHAU area and were for the use of the 277th, 246th and 326th Volksgrenadier Divisions breaking a way for the panzers on the northern flank. Routes "C" and "D" (and presumably other routes to the south) were to carry the Sixth Panzer Army, (with the 1st SS Division heading west along the MALMEDY-STAVELOT line to reach the Meuse west of LIEGE, and the 12th SS Division to get on the LOSHEIM-BULLINGEN-BUTGENBACH-WEISMES-MALMEDY-SPA axis to hit LIEGE from the north.

(5) Things went wrong, at least in the northern sector, from the start. On the night of 16-17 December, nearly 700 parachutists were dropped in the general area of the MALMEDY-EUPEN woods. They were, as established from PWs taken by the 18th US Infantry later, members of a special unit led by Col. Von der HEYDTE, and had been culled from various parachute divisions on a "Volunteer" basis. Col. von der HEYDTE himself was a veteran of the CRETE landing and a former holder of a \$16,000 Carnegie Fellowship for the study of international law in VIENNA. In spite of this distinguished leadership, however, the plan went awry. None of the paratroopers had been told of his mission, other than that further instructions would be given him once he landed. The NCOs only knew that they were to hold certain road junctions; beyond that they knew nothing. A cross wind and bad briefing of the J-52 pilots scattered the units and their weapons and equipment over an area far wider than planned. Much of the equipment was lost during the fall and more was broken; the radios were knocked out and reorganization was sketchy. With no secondary mission, those paratroopers who managed to reassemble hid out in the woods, harassing isolated vehicles and taking a few prisoners. They were entirely unable to block the arrival of reinforcing troops (See Annex 3).

(6) Meanwhile, to the south the 1st SS Panzer Division was going well, but the 12th SS had stalled east of BULLINGEN; the II Panzer Corps (wd and 9th SS Panzer Divisions) for some reason had not even tried to force a passage through

the MONSCHAU area, possibly because of the failure of the Volksgrenadiers to break the crust. Still farther to the south, however, the Fifth Panzer Army was doing very well, having completed its breakthrough on schedule. This success of mere Wehrmacht troops was probably a matter of some chagrin to the Superior SS men.

b. BUTGENBACH Ridge (16 December - 31 December)

(1) On 16 December, the 1st Infantry Division was in a rest area north of EUPEN. When it became apparent that the breakthrough was of major proportions, the Division was put on an alert; at 0300, 17 December, the 26th US CT was sent down to camp ELSENBORN, on the northern flank of the breakthrough, to contain the enemy's drive and prevent it from spreading north. The Division, less the 18th US Infantry and elements of the 16th US Infantry, unmolested by von der HEYDTE's parachutists, was in position 24 hours later. From that time to the end of the period of the enemy's frantic efforts to break through on to his BULLINGEN-BUTGENBACH-WESMES route of approach to the dumps of SPA and VERVIERS were blocked by the Division.

(2) It is impossible to overlook a startling parallel between this enemy operation (and the Division's reaction to it) and the enemy's attempted breakthrough at KASSERINE PASS in late February, 1943. At KASSERINE, the Division, in the Ousseltia Valley, was threatened by a major breakthrough to the south in the vicinity of FAID PASS. Here, the breakthrough south of MONSCHAU caught the Division in a rest area to the north. In both cases the enemy was spurred on by the hope of capturing supplies: TEBESSA in Africa, and the VERVIERS-LIEGE-EUPEN area in this drive. In both cases the 26th US Infantry was detached from Division control and sent out to hold the flank of the German spearhead, attached to II Corps in Africa and V Corps here. In both cases the Division turned back the threat, inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy: on the 21st Panzer Division in Africa, and on three divisions (the 12th SS Panzer, 3d Parachute and 12th Volksgrenadier) here. And finally, in the case of Africa, the Tunisian campaign was over three months later.

(3) The enemy attack in the north, around MONSCHAU and BULLINGEN, was slow in starting. On 17 December the enemy attacked MONSCHAU in some force, but was turned back by artillery fire; subsequent attacks, which did not seem to be pressed to the full extent of the enemy's potential, were likewise repulsed. Meanwhile the Germans occupied BULLINGEN and pushed patrols toward BUTGENBACH, failing to take advantage of the fact that our defenses had not yet completely congealed in the area: the first elements of the 26th US Infantry only reached Camp ELSENBORN to the north at 0700 hours, 17 December. Consequently, something of a race developed between the 26th US Infantry and the 12th SS Panzer Division for the occupation of BUTGENBACH, the next town on the projected northern route of the enemy. Before dark on 17 December the 2d Battalion, 26th US Infantry had taken over the town and was defending the high ground to the southeast against any thrust from BULLINGEN. The 16th US Infantry was on its way down from its bivouac area in the vicinity of VERVIERS to take up positions north of WEISMES; the 18th US Infantry remained just south of EUPEN on an anti-parachute mission.

(4) During 18 December the enemy continued his attacks to reach his assigned road net from the east, putting heavy pressure on KRINKELT and ROCHERATH, and finally occupying these towns after the 2d and 99th US Infantry Divisions had been ordered to withdraw by V Corps. Preparatory to a full-scale offensive, the

enemy probed our positions constantly during 19 December. The attacks grew in violence as the enemy tested our defenses from all sides with up to ten tanks and approximately a battalion and a half of infantry. During the day of 19 December no prisoners were taken who could identify the attacking units, but it is probable that they were elements of the 12th SS Panzer Division which was falling far behind in its failure to get on its route of approach according to the German over-all plan. With every day he delayed the enemy's opportunity of breaking the line and getting control of the EISENBORN and MALMEDY roads lessened; during the day of 19 December the 18th US Infantry was moving south to take up a position in the line after sweeping the woods south of EUPEN for parachutists. During the hunt "K" Company ran into a sizeable force from the von der HEYDTE group dug in in the woods, but a large part of the group took off the east and southeast during the night. Members of von der HEYDTE's ill-starred crew, in fact, kept showing up all over the area and turning themselves in to anti-aircraft units, supply installations and artillery positions; the whole venture was officially pronounced a fiasco when the colonel himself, trying to beat his way back to the German lines, called for an ambulance in the vicinity of MONSCHAU a few days later and asked to be evacuated. Although well aware of the failure of his mission, he asked the interrogator to notify him should the German radio announce that he had been awarded the Swords to the Knights Cross.

(5) At 0225, 19 December, the first thrust at our positions southeast of BUTGENBACH was launched when 20 truck-loads of enemy infantry and several tanks hit "E" Company, 26th US Infantry; supporting artillery was called in and the attack faded out within an hour. Patrols from "E" Company later counted over 100 enemy dead in front of their positions. Later, at 1010, two tanks and about a company of infantry were observed moving in on the 2d Battalion positions from the south. The tanks managed to work their way up to our road-block where one of them was destroyed by 90mm fire; the other tank withdrew, but not before a bazooka team had damaged one of our 90mms. The supporting infantry was disposed of handily by artillery fire. At the same time another attack in about the same strength thrust eastward from BULLINGEN; it, too, was dispersed with one tank destroyed. Other tanks, working their way toward WEISMES from the east and west, were turned back by intense artillery and mortar fire. Before dark two more forces, both of company size and supported by tanks, tried again to find a soft spot on the southern and eastern edges of WEISMES, with a complete lack of success. Altogether, the day was totally unproductive from the enemy's point of view: not only did he fail to sound a hollow spot in our defenses, but his attempts to do so were very expensive in both infantry and armor.

(6) Nevertheless, with the 1st SS Panzer Division in serious straits to the west on account of the 12th SS Panzer's failure to clean up the north flank, and probably because it was clear to the most inflated SS ego that the formidable "Hitler Jugend" had figuratively not made a nickel since the campaign started, the enemy continued resolute in his decision to force a passage to the north and west. He attacked on 20 December in greater strength but with no greater success. At 0615 the 2d Battalion, 26th US Infantry, reported contact with a heavy force of tanks and about a battalion of infantry. The attacking force was probably the 2d Battalion, 25th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, reinforced by additional infantry (possibly elements of the special parachute regiment attached to the 150th Panzer Brigade, part of (Operation GREIF)) and supported by the 3d Battalion, 12th SS Tank Regiment. Although first contact with our forces was made just before daybreak, previously, as an extremely interesting captured document indicates (See Annex 4), the attack had suffered high casual-

ties and had been confused by our intense artillery, mortar and small-arms fire. In spite of this initial disadvantage, however, the attack was driven home hard and a slight penetration was made. By 0815, however, the attack had been completely repulsed, eight tanks had been knocked out and were seen burning (the number knocked out and not seen must have been considerably higher, according to the same captured report), and all Division positions had been restored.

(7) While this attack was under way, another attack, possibly coordinated with the 12th SS, but more probably not, was coming in against our positions south of WEISMES. The unit engaged in this thankless task was identified as the 8th Regiment, 3d Parachute Division, old acquaintances from NORMANDY, LANGERWEHE and JUNGERSDORF. The parachutists had had, in fact, much the same history as the Division during the month. Relieved from the line in the DUREN area on 15 December, they were sent back to a rest area near MUNSTEREIFEL to hold the northern flank of the German breakthrough. On 20 December the 3d Battalion, 8th Regiment, was ordered to attack our positions in OBERWEYWERTZ from the south. According to the captain commanding the 11th Company, who was taken prisoner during the fighting, the 11th and 12th Companies worked their way northward along the railroad track to the edge of the objective. There the captain was told by a civilian that the area was lightly held by American troops. The captain was not sure of the civilian's integrity and circled the town to the east, intending to take it by the main road. Our troops opened fire on him before he could group his forces for the assault and the two companies scattered. The captain said that a great many of his men had been killed; the 10th Company, which was to support the attack, never showed up after suffering heavy casualties from our artillery fire.

(8) Although these and subsequent smaller attacks throughout the day of 20 December were unpromising, from the enemy's point of view, the build-up in front of the Division positions continued, and it was plain that it presaged far more than continued local pressure.

(9) On 21 December another assault was launched. Into it the enemy put everything he had at his command, as well he had to, for by this time his need to break through to the north and come to the rescue of the beleaguered 1st SS Panzer Division to the west was imperative. At 0130 the enemy opened up with machine gun and tank fire on the 2d Battalion, 26th US Infantry, positions southeast of BUTGENBACH; artillery was brought down and the attack was disposed of as another feint. At 0300, however, the enemy laid down an intense, concentrated artillery, nebelwerfer and mortar barrage. The battalion positions were blanketed, communications were reduced to radio and no contact at all was possible with the forward elements of the battalion, but when the inevitable follow-up thrust developed, our infantry was ready for it. Ten to fifteen tanks and approximately a battalion of infantry drove forward on the battalion positions. Artillery defensive fires were laid down (during the day the artillery fired nearly 10,000 rounds) and succeeded in putting a serious crimp in the assembly of the reserve and following troops. In spite of this disruption of his rear elements, however, the enemy drove his attack hard and a slight penetration was made. Five tanks which hit between "E" and "F" Companies, 26th US Infantry, got through our lines, but our infantry held fast and cleaned out the enemy infantry following. The tanks which got through, although working on borrowed time, succeeded in pinning down the 2d Battalion CP with direct fire at a range of 75 yards and overrunning the "E" Company CP. Anti-tank guns near the battalion CP destroyed four of the tanks; the fifth got away. By 1140 hours the full force of the enemy assault be-

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gan to abate and the situation in the "E" and "F" Companies' area was being restored. The enemy, though operating under considerably reduced power after his rough handling, continued to try to force his way through our positions during the day. Late in the morning, a couple of tanks, spearheading the attack of approximately a company of infantry (again, probably the 12th SS) broke through the lines of the 1st Battalion, 26th US Infantry, but again were isolated. At 1430 hours another attack led by tanks hit "F" Company, but was so punished by our artillery that the enemy was not able to come to grips with our infantry.

(10) After the full weight of the fighting was over it was possible, through the interrogation of the one prisoner captured (See Annex 5), to reconstruct the enemy's attack. This man said that the 9th Company, 25th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, had led the attack with the mission of taking BUTGENBACH with strong tank support; following in line were the 10th, 12th and 11th Companies. Leading the attack, the 9th Company suffered extremely severe casualties from our machine gun and small arms fire and withdrew, but the following companies pressed on with, in the end, no greater success and at an equal cost.

(11) Although the 25th Panzer Grenadier Regiment was pretty well eliminated as a potential in the fighting of 21 December, the enemy continued to place the highest priority on cracking our defenses to allow him to roll up the BUTGENBACH road. On 22 December the 26th Panzer Grenadier Regiment was committed to succeed where the 25th had failed. For a while this new outfit, again with heavy tank support, almost succeeded. Tanks started north against the Division positions shortly after dawn, attacking from three points west of DOM BUTGENBACH; enemy infantry following the tanks managed to push our lines back. At 0940 hours an undetermined number of panzer grenadiers had forced through our lines, splitting "A" and "K" Companies, 26th US Infantry. Elements of the 18th US Infantry were committed to hold further penetrations, "B" Company, 26th US Infantry, advanced to restore the ground and "A" Company attacked due east to close the gap. Later, around 1600 hours, elements of the 18th US Infantry moved in and helped in retaking the ground. One tank was still behind our lines after the fighting was over, but managed to escape after dark.

(12) This second attack, which was equal in intensity to that of the 25th Regiment the day before, was, in the end, equally disastrous to the enemy. Beyond his failure to reach the promised land of his northern road net, he lost well over twenty tanks and his casualties, although uncounted, ran into crippling figures. Patrols sent out on 23 December reported enemy dead as common as grass, with corresponding amounts of abandoned equipment. For the two days fighting it was estimated that the enemy lost more than 44 tanks -- more than 44 since that number was actually seen and counted. The 26th US Infantry estimated that it had inflicted over 1,200 casualties on the enemy.

(13) With the collapse of his plan to force his way north, the enemy subsided into the defense, bringing up infantry units to hold the line while he withdrew the 12th SS Division for repairs. Movement in front of the Division was heavy but undetermined in purpose; the most significant report of 23 December was that horse-drawn equipment was observed moving across the Division sector indicating the arrival of purely infantry units. Small attacks came in against the 16th and 26th US Infantries, but they were obviously intended as holding efforts rather than serious attempts at penetration. Two more enemy tanks were knocked out in the vicinity of BULLINGEN.

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(14) From 23 December to the end of the period the enemy continued to bring in infantry elements to replace his armor and to build up an artillery concentration, both field and anti-aircraft, southeast of BULLINGEN. Movement on the limited road net in front of the Division line continued heavy, and was taken under punishing artillery fire, but rather than indicating a new formation for an attack, it proved to be traffic supplying to deeper penetrations of the enemy salient, driven off the main roads by our air attacks. The Division prisoner count dropped to practically nothing; those who were taken were usually lost and snared on our minefields. Division patrols moving to the front were often able to penetrate 1,000 yards before contact, and from their reports it was evident that the enemy was digging in and preparing to defend. On 26 December, prisoners and documents indicated that the 3d Parachute Division still held the western flank of the Division's front; to the east it was believed that the 12th Infantry Division had moved into line.

(15) On 28 December, this belief was confirmed: shortly before dawn the 3d Battalion, 27th Volksgrenadier Regiment (12th Division, attacked the left flank of the Division positions after an intense artillery and nebelwerfer barrage. The plan was ambitious. The 1st Battalion, 48th Regiment, was to make a simultaneous attack to secure the high ground west of WIRTZFELD, and elements of the 246th Volksgrenadier Division, previously identified in front of the unit on the left of the Division, were to push through to ELSNBORN from the east. In spite of these elaborate plans the attack was a complete fiasco. The 3d Battalion, 27th Regiment, was taken under intense artillery fire during its approach march and a high percentage of the Volksgrenadiers reversed their field and moved rapidly to the rear. Some elements of the 9th Company and a handful of engineers from the 12th Engineer Battalion succeeded in infiltrating up the draw northwest of BULLINGEN; they remained ineffective during the day and were combed out by strong combat patrols before dark. The attacks of the 1st Battalion, 48th Regiment, and the elements of the 246th Division were equally discouraged, and the net result of the day's work was the capture of three men from the 53d Nebelwerfer Regiment which had supported the attack, thus giving a source for much of the nebelwerfer fire which had been falling on Division positions during previous days.

(16) The failure of his last ambitious attack apparently convinced the enemy of the futility of trying to force his way through our defenses, for enemy activity to the end of the period, as reported by patrols, consisted only of busy digging and moderate counter-patrolling. The enemy continued to lay artillery fire on our forward positions and extended his efforts to interdiction of roads in the rear areas.

(17) To what extent the stand of the 1st Division southeast of BUTGENBACH put a spoke in the wheel of the enemy's plan is an open question. Certainly the enemy, from the high priority he placed on getting through the northwest and his successive all-out attacks, considered it of primary importance. The stand, moreover, was disastrous to the enemy in a negative way. On the positive side he had two regiments of one of his top-drawer SS Panzer divisions ground down to a framework and lost up to 60 tanks in addition. On the negative side, however, he was unable to come to the rescue of the 1st SS Panzer Division caught in a vise in the STAVELOT-LA GLEIZE area by the 30th Infantry Division. And, possibly, most important of all, he was forced to rearrange his high-level plan completely,

abandoning the idea of getting at the First Army dumps in the VERVIERS area. As a result, II SS Panzer Corps, which was to follow up the successes of the I Panzer Corps, was committed to the south instead. With the 1st Division jutting out into the salient, the overloaded road net supplying the point of the thrust was further restricted in the radius of artillery fire. Altogether, the northern flank of the German penetration was not a matter of heart-warming satisfaction to the German High Command.

(18) If the enemy had failed to gain his ground, certainly he had tried hard enough with every means at his command. Treachery and deception played an integral part in his plan. The tactics of the 150th Panzer Brigade (the power behind (Operation GREIF)) were never fully successful due to greatly increased security measures taken by the Division. Although no established penetrations of Germans in American uniforms took place in the Division zone, an idea of the effectiveness of control can be had from the case of a strange officer from higher headquarters who got lost on his way to one of the regimental CPs and ended up on a road leading through one of the front-line company positions. Within an hour of the first alarm, the officer had been arrested four times and checked for identity. Treachery had an equally important part in the enemy operation. A number of American prisoners taken by the 1st SS Panzer Division southwest of MALMEDY on 17 December were disarmed and shot by their captors; more than 25 civilians were murdered in STAVELOT by the same unit. On 26 December a three-man enemy patrol entered the lines on the 16th US Infantry with the indication that it wanted to surrender. It was discovered, however, that one of the enemy was carrying a machine-pistol behind his back. The patrol was eliminated.

(19) Enemy artillery during the period was consistently strong, although it reached the intensity of the HAMICH Woods only on the few occasions before an attack. At the end of the period a considerable artillery build-up was still reported southeast of BULLINGEN.

(20) During the operation the GAF put in an appearance in greater strength than the Division has encountered since the European campaign started. Enemy air attacks were frequent but not very productive; the highest number of enemy planes reported over the Division area at one time was 30. The enemy air situation was further confused by the appearance of American P-47s which committed hostile acts and were believed to be enemy-operated; it was later learned that the planes were American and that the fault lay with the pilots' briefing.

/s/ ROBERT F. EVANS,
Lt. Col., G.S.C.,
A.C. of S., G-2.

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Authority: CG
1st US Inf Div
26 Dec 1944
Initials:RFE

CAPTURED INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE, 12TH SS DIVISION

12 SS Pz Div "HITLER JUGEND"
G-2 Section

26 December 1944

Intelligence Report Page 1.
closed 14. 12. 44, 1200

1. Enemy Strength and Organization.

In the first line of our own frontal sector the 99th US Inf Div has been identified. The Division covers the MONSCHAU-OR-MONT sector (along the road-bend 2 kilometers west of LOLLERATH) with 3 Regiments along a front of 30 kilometers.

At MONSCHAU the newly-arrived 78th US Inf Div is in position. This unit succeeded in penetrating the German defense lines with the intentions of reaching the ERFT reservoir. The 99th and 78th US Infantry Divisions belong to the V Corps of the 1st US Army. South of the 99th US Inf Div sector the 108th independent Cavalry Regiment is probably committed. It may be assumed that the operational reserves in the rear of the 99 US Infantry Division consist of the 2d US Inf Div plus the 4th and 102d independent Cavalry Regiments. Furthermore those units, now in rest areas, which have been relieved in the ROER sector, including the 1st US Inf Div, may be considered as operational reserves.

In this sector may be committed units of Division size from the reserve of the 9th Army now attacking the JULICH area.

2. Enemy Operations.

In the sector of the 99th US Inf Div the enemy is in a defensive position. His defensive line in the sector HOFEN-HOLLERATH consists of strongpoints only, due to the wooded terrain, while in the area HOLLERATH-UDIENBRETH and to the south a system of strong entrenchments has been identified. Due to the recent digging activities in the area HOFEN-HOLLERATH it may be concluded that his defense line will be strongly fortified. It may even be assumed that the enemy will commit his units south of MONSCHAU into the attack in the direction of the ERFT reservoir. (99th US Infantry Division)

German prisoners of war are being used to dig entrenchments. A large number of dogs have been observed at many places. Apparently troops occupy all villages near the front. The American soldier is very careless in guarding his billets. In many instances the guards desert their posts at night.

Enemy artillery build-ups are apparent in three main areas:
In the area KRINKELT-NUNNINGEN (5 to 6 battalions).
South of MONSCHAU (approx 4 battalions).
At NANDERSFELD (approx 4 battalions).
So far only harassing fire has been employed.

3. Evaluation of Enemy Units.

99th US Infantry Division activated 1942; in Europe since end of October; first combat experience middle of November... The 78th US Infantry Division

is also a newly-activated infantry division without combat experience. These units in reserve areas which will probably be committed from their rest areas have suffered heavy losses during the battle in the sector west of the ROER. In spite of the fact that they are old and battle-experienced divisions it appears that the replacements are not of the desired caliber, since it has been learned that one of the divisions used members of a penal company as replacements.

4. Enemy Capabilities.

In view of his intentions in the area east of AACHEN, and the heavy losses sustained there, the enemy has occupied the EIFEL front only very weakly.

In order to secure this sector against German surprise attacks the relieved units from the ROER sector have been placed in rest areas in the forward sector. These units are only capable of offering strong resistance against an energetic attack if the enemy succeeded in bringing to the south in a short time the operational reserves held in readiness for the ROER attack.

As learned from experience it is assumed that the enemy will not quickly recover from his unexpected reverses.

As far as terrain is concerned, the attackers as well as the defenders must cope with the heavy clay on the area HOHEN VENN and also the many rivers and rivulets which mostly flow from north to south. A good road net is available for troop movements in a north-south direction.

5. Enemy Airforce Employment.

In the area of Belgium and northern France, enemy can employ from 1700 to 1800 fighters and fighter-bombers. Besides, he has at his disposal units stationed in Holland and northeast France.

6. Partisan Activities.

At all times one must consider the employment of a Belgian-French Militia or members belonging to units of the "Armee Blanche". In this connection your attention is brought to the instructions about interrogation of civilians, which has been sent to the F.P.A. (lower unit interrogators).

For the 12 SS Pz Div. "HITLER JUGEND"
First General Staff Officer

Signed/ Illegible

s/ Robert F. Evans,
t/ ROBERT F. EVANS,
Lt. Col., G.S.C.,
A.C. of S., G-2.

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HEADQUARTERS 1st U.S. INFANTRY DIVISION
APO 1, U. S. Army

19 December 1944

CAPTURED LETTER ("WE MARCH")

The following letter was written by an eager SS man to his sister Ruth:

Eifel 16 Dec. 44
S^{at}urday

Dear Ruth:

My daily letter will be very short today--short and sweet. I write during one of the great hours before an attack--full of unrest, full of expectation for what the next days will bring. Everyone who has been here the last two days and nights (especially nights), who has witnessed hour after hour the assembly of our crack divisions, who has heard the constant rattling of Panzers, knows that something is up and we are looking forward to a clear order to reduce the tension. We are still in the dark as to "where" and "how" but that cannot be helped!

Some believe in big wonders, but that may be shortsighted! It is enough to know we attack, and will throw the enemy from our homeland. That is a holy task! I do not want to talk or write much now--but wait and see what the hours ahead will bring!

Overhead is the terrific noise of V1, of artillery--the voice of war. So long now--wish me luck and think of me...

The following postscript was hurriedly scribbled on the back of the sealed envelope:

"18 December 1944... Ruth! Ruth! Ruth! WE MARCH!!!"

s/ Robert F. Evans.
t/ ROBERT F. EVANS,
Lt. Col., G.S.C.,
A.C. of S., G-2.

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HEADQUARTERS 1st U.S. INFANTRY DIVISION
APO 1, U. S. Army

24 December 1944

CAPTURED COMBAT REPORT, 3d BATTALION, 12TH SS TANK REGIMENT

During the night of 19-20 December the 26th US Infantry received a heavy armored and infantry attack on its left flank. The attack, which started at about 2300 hours, continued in varying degrees of intensity throughout the night and until about 0800 hours. An hour later a second attack, at the time believed to be a continuation of the first, came in on the right flank of the 26th US Infantry. After the attacks had subsided, the 26th US Infantry estimated that it had knocked out six tanks.

During the morning of 24 December, a courier who was apparently lost ran across a minefield laid by the 16th US Infantry in a tracked motorcycle and blew up. The courier was carrying the document below. The report deals with the attack on the left flank of the 26th US Infantry, and it is evident that considerably more than the estimated six tanks were knocked out by our fire. The infantry mentioned is believed to be the 2d Battalion, 25th Panzer Grenadier Regiment; the parachutists were probably from the special (z.b.v.) parachute regiment attached to the 150th Panzer Brigade. The later attack on the right flank of the 26th US Infantry was launched by elements of the 3d Parachute Division.

3d. Battalion, 12th SS Pz Regt.

Bn. CP, 23 December 1944

COMBAT REPORT FOR PERIOD
FROM 18TH TO 23d DEC 1944

After the night attack on KRINKELT during the night of 18-19 December the battalion was ordered back to its starting position on orders from regiment. The battalion, less 11th Company, reached the highway in the wooded area vicinity point 639 and 672 at 2400 hours. 11th Company, which, together with 5th Company, had remained at the north eastern edge of KRINKELT for security, was also pulled back into the wooded area later during the night.

Losses in the night attack: 1 Mark IV belonging to 10th Company became a casualty when it hit a mine.
1 Mark IV belonging to 11th Company was damaged by a Sherman tank during the night fighting in the town (damage to tracks).
1 Officer of 11th Company was slightly injured by shrapnel.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: 1 Sherman put out of action by 11th Company; 10 prisoners taken. After replenishing its gas and ammunition supply, the battalion was to assemble at 0500 hours and start its advance on BUTGENBACH via LOSHEIMERGRABEN - BULLINGEN. Because of difficulties in connection with refueling and the clogged highways, the battalion's point reached the road near (left out of original) at 1200 hours.

The Battalion Commanding Officer, together with his Liaison Officer, went ahead to BULLINGEN in order to reconnoiter terrain and situation and establish contact with elements committed there. After being briefed by Captain URABEL of 3d Battalion, 26th SS Panzer Grenadier Regiment, the battalion was oriented as follows by the commanding officer of the advance elements of the 12th SS Panzer Division, Major (Wehrmacht, not SS) MEIER:

"I reached BULLINGEN which had already been taken for one or two days. (The exact date slipped my mind, it can, however, be established by further inquiry). I was then stopped by my division in spite of my suggestion to penetrate to BUTGENBACH without delay, lest the enemy gain time to bring up reserves and establish a strong line of defense".

Major MEIER further explained that the enemy had strengthened himself continually during the preceding day, that he had dug in, and thus established a defense line in the vicinity north of BULLINGEN, DOM. BUTGENBACH, to the edge of the woods southwest DOM. BUTGENBACH.

The liaison officer was left behind at BULLINGEN in order to establish further contacts. The Commanding Officer, together with his just arrived adjutant, returned to LOSHEIMERGRABEN in order to acquaint the Regimental Commanding Officer with the situation.

After the report concerning the situation at BULLINGEN had been given to the Regimental Commanding Officer in the Division Commanding General's presence, the latter gave instructions concerning further plans.

The alerted battalion took the following positions:

10th Company with Engineer Platoon.
9th Company
11th Company
Parts of Headquarters Company

As the infantry reached its first objective west of BULLINGEN only at 2300 hours, the battalion started its attack at 2310 hours. In the darkness, the tank point, instead of advancing in a westernly direction, advanced towards the southwest; yet it was possible to halt it and direct it to the correct road. In the meantime, the liaison officer had found out that the infantry was still on both sides of the road about 800 meters west of the road junction at the western entrance into BULLINGEN. Slowed down by the pace of the infantry, the attached paratroopers and mine detector squads, the point made halting progress only.

After the security lines of the infantry, paratroopers, and engineers already committed in that area, had been passed by about 220 yards, heavy anti-tank fire from the left, from the direction of DOM. BUTGENBACH, as well as exceedingly heavy artillery and mortar fire was encountered. The infantry suffered most serious losses as a result of this fire and the accompanying heavy rifle and enemy machine gun fire. The attack failed before the point could be fully committed, as several vehicles were in bad shape because of artillery and mortar hits.

The company was withdrawn by the Commanding Officer, and the battalion was regrouped.

At about 0500 hours, the battalion, on both sides of the highway, renewed its attack with the 9th company (JAGDPANTHER Tanks) as point. It penetrated the foremost anti-tank defenses, but the commanding officer and his tank were hit.

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The commanding officer took his burning command tank to the rear and took the command tank of 11th Company, which he led during the attack. In the meantime, 9th Company, in spite of extremely heavy anti-tank fire, had penetrated to the high ground west of DOM. BUTGENBHCH, and was engaged by superior enemy forces, which put three of eight tanks out of action. 9th Company, engaged in that vicinity, was exposed to extremely heavy artillery and mortar shelling.

The 11th Company, which had been brought up in the meantime, received heavy anti-tank fire from the right flank, and the command tank with the battalion commanding officer, received a direct hit and started to burn. Other tanks were damaged by artillery and anti-tank fire.

As 9th Company was unable to advance further, and the point was pinned down, the commanding officer decided to discontinue the attack. There was no further hope of success, and friendly artillery was unable to diminish the enemy's artillery fire.

The battalion was then taken back into its starting positions. Refueling, repairs, and receipt of ammunition could not be accomplished in BULLINGEN as originally planned. For that reason (the enemy's artillery having zeroed in on the town), the battalion was taken 2 kilometers to the rear to the vicinity of TIEPENBACH. (50mm anti-tank destroyed).

Since very few elements of the battalion were left (3 JAGDPANTHER and 10 Mark IVs), they were consolidated under Captain WEWERS in order to take part in another attack on 21 December. During that action, the battalion's liaison officer, Lieutenant FRITSCH, was killed by a direct anti-tank hit on his tank. Detailed reports about that action will have to follow, as Captain WEWERS has probably been killed and the situation will have to be cleared up through further inquiry.

The same is true of the attack of SCHOPPEN on 22 December 1944.

(Illegible signature)

s/ Robert F. Evans,
t/ ROBERT F. EVANS,
Lt. Col., G.S.C.,
A.C of S., G-2.

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22 December 1944

INTERROGATION REPORT, 26TH PANZER GRENADIER REGIMENT
(211800 hours Dec to 221800 hours Dec 1944)

26th Regiment, 12th SS Division.....7
25th Regiment, 12th SS Division.....2
Engineer Battalion, 3d para Div.....2

TOTAL 11

1. Some history of the arrival of the 26th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, 12th SS Panzer Division, was obtained from prisoners who passed through the Division cage. The regiment was originally stationed along with the rest of the division near COLOGNE, where its chief mission, as a part of the Sixth Panzer Army, was to sit like a raven overlooking the plans of the Allied operation staffs. On 12 (DEC) September, General Spp DIETRICH, commanding the Sixth Panzer Army, appeared and told the men they were to embark on the crucial blow; the regiment mounted its organic armored personnel carriers and moved to the area of the breakthrough by the route of ALRATH (2274) - ROMERSKIRCHEN - KOENIGSDORF - ALTENRATH - METTERNICH - MORENHOVEN - ALTENNAHR - HONIGEN - ADENAU (4298) - HONERATH - KRAHWINKEL (0393) - BULLINGEN. There the 3d battalion of the Regiment, of which the prisoners were members, rested, fed up on American rations (it was the first hot meal since leaving the COLOGNE area), and gassed up on American gas. Many of the men were issued American field jackets, long-handled underwear and American cigarettes.

2. The trip down took six days, and the battalion arrived in BULLINGEN on 18 December. There was no serious difficulty with gasoline supply on the way south, although at several points the convoy had to pull up and wait for supplies to arrive from the rear. The supplies, however, always did arrive within a reasonable time; the PWs were sure that the gasoline always came from the rear and not from the front.

3. During one of these waits between ADENAU and HONERATH one prisoner got off the carrier and roamed around the neighborhood. During his roamings he came upon the sites of three V-1 launching platforms, all in full operation. These he pointed at 422941, 444949 and 457962. The area is in the NUERBURG RING, a former cross-country automobile race course.

4. The PWs reported that the roads down were jammed with vehicles, but that a fairly efficient traffic control system had been set up. Several times they were stopped to allow high priority convoys through. One of these convoys was an approximate battalion of men dressed in American field jackets and fatigues, riding in American 6x6 and jeeps. The PW's battalion commander explained that these were special troops who would operate behind the American lines; they could be identified by bandages on their heads and a yellow rectangular patch on the left shoulder. This encounter took place on the other side of BULLINGEN.

5. On the night of 22 December the battalion was alerted and rode up to the SCHOPPEN area to assemble for an attack. At SCHOPPEN they left their vehicles and marched toward BUTGENBACH, the objective of the attack. Halfway along the road they stopped to join up with a force of 25 tanks -- 15 from the tank regiment of the 12th SS Division and 10 Wehrmacht tanks. The Wehrmacht tanks were late owing to gasoline difficulties. As many men as possible mounted on the tanks, the rest walked alongside, and the attack took off at 0300 hours. The first accident occurred when the force ran into a lone Sherman cruising the area; one German tank was knocked out and the whole column was ignominiously machine gunned. Later a second tank was lost to artillery fire. Still later the battalion ran into the 26th US Infantry.

6. The PWs said that the 1st and 2d Battalions of the 26th Regiment followed the 3d Battalion out of BULLINGEN to SCHOPPEN and were to exploit any breakthrough. The mission of the 2d Battalion, in fact, was to occupy BUTGENBACH after it had been taken.

7. The PWs were told in an original briefing that the 12th SS and the 1st SS were to make the initial attack. The 9th SS was to exploit the breakthrough of the 12th SS and the 2d SS was to follow the 1st SS. The only indication that this plan had been followed was the fact the PWs saw one anti-craft battalion of 9th SS in SCHOPPEN, a town that seems to be as busy as rabbit-warren with SS troops.

8. Other information: The tank regiment of 12th SS is believed by the PWs to be with the 9th SS Division to the rear (i.e., to the south). Of 125 men in the 10th Company, 3d Battalion, 20 were veterans of the fighting in NORMANDY. One of the PWs was 16 years old. Division commander of 12th SS is General GRAS; of the 26th Regiment, Colonel KRAUSE; of the 11th Company, Lieutenant LATTE.

s/ Robert F. Evans,
t/ ROBERT F. EVANS,
Lt. Col., G.S.C.,
A.C. of S., G-2.

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EXTRACT OF HISTORY OF 16TH INFANTRY DECEMBER

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17 December 1944.

The regiment was alerted for immediate movement as a result of a large enemy breakthrough. All passes and leaves were cancelled, and preparations made for movement.

18 December 1944.

Regiment, plus attachments, moved from rest area vicinity Verviers and Herve to positions vicinity of Robertville, Belgium, with the mission of defending to the southwest. Contact patrols gained contact with adjacent units, and the battalions prepared and occupied defensive positions.

19 December 1944.

Defensive positions improved.

20 December 1944.

The 3rd Bn repulsed enemy attacks, and counterattacked to gain limited objectives, preparing new defensive positions.

2nd Bn seized and occupied the town of Weismes, and repelled enemy attempts at infiltration.

The 1st Bn occupied new reserve positions southeast and southwest of Bruveres, with Co. A relieving Co. K.

21 December 1944.

2nd Bn extended lines to include more high ground, without incident. The 3rd Bn repelled enemy attempts to infiltrate their positions, and extensive mine fields were laid in front of all positions.

22 December 1944.

Additional mines laid, and defensive positions improved.

23 December 1944.

Co. F was moved to occupy high ground, and all battalions laid additional mines and barbed wire. Enemy attempts to infiltrate were repulsed by the 3rd Bn.

24 December 1944.

Additional mines and wire were laid, and the 2nd Bn repelled an attack of infantry supported by tanks.

25 December 1944.

Co. K, from reserve, relieved Co. L. 2nd Bn resisted enemy attempt to take an outpost, and repelled an attack of approximately 40 infantry. Additional mines laid.

26 December 1944.

2nd Bn repulsed enemy forces attempting to infiltrate. Enemy outpost positions were attacked, and additional wire and mines laid.

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27 December 1944.

Additional wire and mines laid, and enemy patrols were engaged in the vicinity of Paymonville.

28 December 1944.

Contact was maintained with the enemy by patrol, and additional mines were laid.

29 December 1944.

Extensive patrolling conducted, and contact maintained with enemy. Heavy harrassing fire maintained by us throughout the period.

30 December 1944.

Defensive positions were improved and several enemy outposts were destroyed.

31 December 1944.

Co. L relieved Co. I, and Co. I moved to reserve position in the vicinity of Weywertz. 600 additional mines were laid. Enemy activity was light.

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EXTRACT OF HISTORY OF THE 18TH INFANTRY - DECEMBER 1944

The reorganizational period ended abruptly on December 17th after a 24 hour period of alert, occasioned by Von Rundstedt's startling thrust through our lines southeast of Malmedy. At 1330 hours of the 16th the entire Division was placed on a six-hour alert after word had been received that the VIII Corps could not hold a strong enemy infantry-tank attack and that the V Corps was being hard pressed on its right flank. In conjunction with their strong ground attack, the Germans had also dropped paratroopers at a number of points in the vicinity of Eupen, Malmedy, Monschau and the large wooded stretches in that general area. At 1530 hours on the 17th the 18th Combat Team commenced to move by trucks to the vicinity of Eupen to take up a defensive position around the eastern perimeter of the town. Acting under the direct orders of the V Corps Commander, our mission was to organize and coordinate the defenses of the important road center and block the roads leading to Monschau and Malmedy. In addition, an estimated force of 500 enemy paratroopers was reported to be at various points in the heavy woods that extended for several miles south of Eupen; and it fell to our lot to comb these woods and destroy the enemy there.

At 2400 hours of the 17th, orders were received to discharge a task force to the vicinity of V - 8116, a portion of the woods where the paratroopers were reported to have cut the Eupen - Malmedy road with harassing automatic fire. The plan called for our "L" Company reinforced to move south to the hostile area at 0730 on the following morning. At the same time a reinforced platoon of the 16th Infantry was to move north to the same area, and the two groups were to converge on the enemy. The operation went off as planned the next day, and "L" Company accomplished its mission with a minimum amount of contact with the enemy. Either the paratroop force had been overestimated as to numbers or had shifted its center of operations. Only a few small groups of the enemy were encountered and the majority fled into the woods on our approach. Four were taken prisoner and they proved to be from a Battle Group Von Heidtz. Before nightfall "K" Company was moved to the south to take up a blocking mission along with "L" Company in the woods astride the road.

In the meantime, V Corps Headquarters had become concerned about an enemy build-up east of Monschau and alerted us to have our 1st Battalion prepared to move to the east to reinforce the 47th Combat Team in that section. The situation was changing rapidly, however, and at 1400 hours the regiment was alerted to move to the Weismes area where the enemy was threatening with a display of tanks. By nightfall of the 18th the Regimental Commander had received so many warning orders owing to the uncertainty as to the enemy's next move in his offensive, that we were prepared for any task the next day might bring.

At 0800 hours on December 19th the situation clarified considerably when CCA of the 3rd Amored Division was ordered to effect an immediate relief of the 18th Combat Team in its defensive role around Eupen. Our regiment was ordered to conduct a large-scale sweep of the entire wooded area south of Eupen and then to rejoin the 1st Division, committed farther to the south. The relief was completed at 1300 and the regiment jumped off immediately on its mission. Spasmodic resistance was encountered but all battalions reached their objectives without any difficulty by nightfall. Twelve prisoners of war were seized and considerable enemy equipment discovered and destroyed in the woods. "K" Company held up to contain what was reported to be a formidable force in one portion of the woods; but when the next morning rolled around, the enemy had fled, leaving behind 23 American Soldiers to be rescued by our men.

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At 0720 hours on the 20th the regiment was alerted to move to an assembly area in the vicinity of Sourbrodt, there to be employed as Division Reserve until further order. Shortly afterwards the Regimental Commander was ordered to dispatch the 2nd Battalion to the sector of the 26th Combat Team, under whose control they would operate. The regiment completed its move to Sourbrodt by 1635 hours; and the 2nd Battalion, owing to very heavy pressure throughout the 26th Infantry sector, was committed on a broad frontage, reinforcing both the 1st and 2nd Battalions of our sister regiment. That evening "I" Company moved to a dam south of Sourbrodt, to guard it against sabotage.

On the morning of December 22nd word was received that some of the positions of the 26th Combat Team had been overrun by enemy tanks and infantry south of the town of Butgenbach. At 0955 our 1st Battalion was alerted to move to that vicinity by trucks and counter-attack in a southeasterly direction to restore the position. After several changes in plans the situation for the 26th Infantry appeared more favorable; and the 1st Battalion moved to Butgenbach that afternoon to effect a relief of the 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry, rather than counter-attack. This was completed by 1000 hours on the next morning; the 2nd Battalion was regrouped and organized the entire sector southwest of Butgenbach; and the 18th Combat Team now assumed control of the entire area south of the town.

The Regimental Command Post moved to Nidrum, a small village north of Butgenbach on the evening of December 22nd. The next day the 3rd Battalion moved to take up a reserve position in the northern outskirts of Nidrum, while the two front line battalions patrolled actively to the south and made contact with scattered enemy groups guarding the northern approaches to the Butgenbacher Heck, a vast wooded area running parallel to the new Division front. The supply trains of the Combat Teams moved to Camp Elsenborn, north of Nidrum. The 3rd Battalion Commander reconnoitered the various defensive zones of the Division sector with a view of counterattacking or reinforcing any part of the sector on Division order.

The tactical plan of employment of the 1st Division called for our holding the newly organized line for an indefinite period of time. Immediate steps were taken to prepare as strong defensive position as possible. For several nights running, engineers, riflemen, anti-tank men, and pioneers toiled ceaselessly to sow mine fields, erect road blocks, prepare dummy-gun positions, and string barbed wire. At the same time our reconnaissance and combat patrols were very active carrying the fight to the enemy's lines. These actions were small but bitter. In reality, the Butgenbach sector, because of the reluctance of the enemy to offer active combat, became a deadly training ground for our high percentage of new men. Individuals acquitted themselves splendidly, and a new team spirit was seen developing.

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EXTRACTS FROM REGIMENTAL HISTORY, 26th INFANTRY, 1st DIVISION

16 December 1944 - At 1145 hours the combat team (less tanks and tank destroyers) was placed on a six hour alert. All leaves, furloughs and passes were cancelled, but those already on leave were not to be recalled. At 2115 hours the unit was placed under a one hour alert. An enemy attack between the 5th and 8th Corps had developed into a twelve division drive. Five minutes later the Regimental S-6 and S-3 were ordered to report to V Corps Headquarters.

17 December 1944 - Shortly after midnight, billeting parties reported to the Cp. The 3rd Battalion was alerted to move at 0230 hours, with the 2nd following, and the 1st Battalion closing out of the Aubel area last.

The 3d Battalion moved out on the exact moment, and about 0400 hours the battalion column was halted temporarily when word came through that paratroopers were dropping behind our lines. Reports had come through that the 12th SS Division had taken BULLINGEN early that morning. From then on, the convoy travelled without lights and arrived at CAMP ELSENBORN at about 0700 hours. About 1400 hours the battalion moved to the town of BUTGENBACH and then secured positions northwest of BULLINGEN. The 2nd Battalion meanwhile had reached the BUTGENBACH area and had also jumped off north of the town. "E" Company secured the town, and "G" Company took high ground overlooking the town, with "F" Company on "G" Company's right. By 1830 hours both 2nd and 3rd Battalions were reported in on their objectives.

18 December 1944 - The 26th Infantry was at this time under 99th Infantry Division control, and the mission given the unit at 0030 hours was to hold the town and occupy the hill mass west and southwest of the town astride the east-west road. The 3rd Battalion moved several hundred yards north of BULLINGEN and secured positions without resistance. About 1240 hours a scout car was observed on the road leading into the 2nd Battalion positions, and this was destroyed by anti-tank fire. The survivor in the German reconnaissance car proved from the Adolph Hitler Division, and it was from questioning this prisoner that the information was drawn that the enemy believed our sector lightly held. Towards evening, "K" Company reported armored vehicles about 1500 yards to their right front, near BULLINGEN. The 33rd Field Artillery laid in artillery on the town and fires were reported started in the town.

19 December 1944 - Sharp probing attacks were made in the 2nd and 3rd Battalion sectors throughout the day. At 0225 hours, twenty truckloads of German infantry and some tanks detrucked at 943016, in front of the Company "E" positions. The 2d Battalion called in the coordinates to Delta and both the 33rd Field Artillery and Dandy fired at the enemy attacking force. The intense artillery fire knocked out three tanks and scattered the German infantry. At 0325 hours, the attack was dispersed. In the early morning, Company "A" moved to high ground 1000 yards south of BUTGENBACH, to tie in with Company "B" which was next to the main road leading to the 2nd Battalion.

At 1010 hours two tanks and one company of enemy infantry were spotted south of the 2nd Battalion positions. One tank was halted by A-T gun-fire and the A-T gun in turn was taken under enemy rocket-gun fire which destroyed the gun. From noon on, the three battalion positions were under heavy artillery and mortar fire.

Towards the evening, 3rd Battalion laid in some mortar fire upon enemy patrols that tried to probe "K" Company positions, and scattered these before any small-arms fire developed.

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20 December 1944 - Machine-gun and tank fire to "E" Company's front about 0130 hours alerted the 2nd Battalion. The 33rd Field Artillery tunned loose a barrage in front of the company positions and by 0145 hours all was quiet. It was to prove the lull before the main attempt.

At 0330 hours about twenty tanks and a battalion of infantry hit the 2nd Battalion positions, placing greatest pressure on Company "E" and Company "F". Maximum artillery fire was called for by Lt. Col. Daniel and the 33rd Field Artillery tied in the efforts of all of its batteries as well as the batteries of the 955th Field Artillery and the 15th Field Artillery Battalions. The enemy artillery and mortar barrage upon the 2nd Battalion position proved intense as the enemy tank and infantry drove into the 2nd Battalion. Tanks succeeded in overrunning the lines between Companies "E" and "F", but the infantry remained in their places, trusting to the tank destroyers and anti-tank guns behind them to dispose of this threat to their rear. The enemy infantry seeking to follow through was unable to penetrate the lines that held under the most intense pressure ever experienced by the companies. The mist and smoke of the early morning made the fighting a matter of close range firing. Anti-tank guns waited until the tanks were within point-blank range before letting go their rounds, and the enemy rocket-gun teams following the tanks were able to subject the anti-tank crews to rocket-gun fire. The reserve force of the 2nd Battalion, a platoon of "G" Company, was quickly committed, and a company of the 1st Battalion requested. "C" Company was pulled out of the 1st Battalion line and swung over into the 2nd Battalion sector. Two platoons were committed to back up "F" Company and two platoon were placed in Battalion reserve.

Five enemy tanks had pulled up to 100 yards of the Battalion CP, and were placing the CP under heavy, direct fire. Lt. Cpl. Daniel stood firm, and still issued his order: Hold fast. Anti-tank guns were shifted about and fired upon the enemy tanks. Two were knocked out, and the other three withdrew some distance. A lull occurred about 0530 hours, and radio communication was established between the battalion and regiment. Mines and tank destroyers were requested by the 2nd Battalion commander, three (#) more A-T guns were sent up at 1000 hours. An engineer platoon was also requested to help lay about 1000 anti-tank mines in front of the battalion positions, but these did not arrive until late in the afternoon. Heavy enemy fire still pounded the 2nd Battalion positions after the enemy tank and infantry withdrew. The withdrawals were only temporary, and throughout the morning and late afternoon the enemy launched three separate attacks, aimed at splitting "E" and "F" Companies. All of these efforts were frustrated, in large part due to the artillery's tremendously effective fire. Following a heavy attack launched by six (6) tanks and two companies of infantry which pressed closer to the battalion CP once more before it was beaten off, the enemy stopped his attacks for the night.

21 December 1944 - At 0400 hours, following another heavy artillery barrage, the enemy tanks and infantry attacked the 2nd Battalion positions once more in an effort to force the main road running through BUTGENBACH. Six German tanks were destroyed by the artillery fire which fell close to the forward positions, and the flames of these lit the area of fighting. Enemy tanks succeeded in penetrating the lines this time though "G" Company's position. When anti-tank fire was placed upon these, the German tanks took refuge behind some buildings near the Battalion CP, and fired upon the battalion rocket-gun teams that tried to get within range. In an effort to drive the enemy tanks out, mortar fire was called down upon the battalion positions, when these tanks left the shelter of the buildings, the anti-tank crews fired on them. It was slow work, for the tanks moved from building to building, and then systematically had to be mortared out. By 1600 hours,

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all enemy tanks, later discovered to be five in number, had been destroyed. Meanwhile, the infantry again held their positions and endured wave after wave of attacks by enemy infantry who persisted in moving through our terrific artillery barrage and came to close grips with our infantry. Our infantry fought the hostile tanks and infantry with hand-grenades, rocket-guns, BAR's and rifle grenades. Machine-guns were in almost constant operation, and the crews of tanks, tank destroyers and anti-tank guns remained at their posts until they had either destroyed the enemy or had been destroyed. By evening, the issue had been decided, and whatever enemy tank and infantry forces remained were forced to withdraw. Shortly afterwards the enemy again resumed his heavy artillery and mortar shelling of the DOM BUTGENBACH ridge which the 2nd Battalion had held fast.

22 December 1944 - The enemy had not finished in his efforts to break through. This time, he chose to attack the 1st and 3rd Battalion sectors. "A" Company was attacked at 0630 hours, with six enemy tanks and several hundred infantry hitting the left platoon of the company. Again the enemy tanks were able to penetrate the line, but the infantry was stopped by courageous stand put up by the overrun infantry and the platoon on the right side of the company line. In a daring move, Company "B" was swung out of the battalilon line, and working south, from the town, it worked through the one platoon of Company "A" that had held its position and then swung east to drive the enemy back. By 1430 hours the situation had stabilized. The enemy tanks had been forced back and two of them destroyed by artillery as they tried to reach their own lines.

"K" Company also was placed under pressure by several tanks and one company of infantry, but the hostile thrust was turned back. An anti-tank gun knocked out a Mark V tank that tried to swing its machine-guns on the troops as soon as it broke through the line.

Towards evening, our artillery caught a long enemy column on the road to SCHOPPEN and pounded it. Save for some enemy shelling, no further attacks were made.

The enemy attempts had been costly: from thirty (30) to thirty-five (35) German tanks had been destroyed, and some 1200 casualties inflicted upon the German infantry.

23 December 1944 - Early morning the 2nd Battalion outposts spotted a large enemy column going east out of BULLINGEN, and Delta fired a mission on this enemy group which succeeded in scattering it. Outside of some desultory mortar fire landing in the 1st Battalion area, all was quiet during the day. Towards evening, two enemy tanks to the front of "I" Company were taken under our tank and mortar fire, and one of the enemy tanks was destroyed. The enemy crew abandoned the second tank, which was hit and set afire. 2nd Battalion patrols established that 30 tanks had been knocked out in their area alone.

Orders were issued by higher headquarters that all personnel in the forward areas were to wear gas masks at all times.

In a re-arranging of defenses, the 2nd Battalion remained in place, with the 1st and 3rd Battalions securing high ground closer to the 2nd Battalion positions.

On this day, the task of mining the areas in front of the regimental positions was begun. It was to continue throughout the remainder of the month.

24 December 1944 - 2nd Battalion patrols probing the enemy positions in the vicinity of BULLINGEN were turned back by heavy small-arms and machine-gun fire. 3d Battalion patrols throughout the night intercepted and clashed with enemy patrols close to their lines and turned the hostile patrols away with losses.

"C" Company patrols reported that many machine-guns and machine-pistols had been left by the Germans as they had retreated after their attempts to force the 2nd Battalion position.

The 99th U. S. Infantry had reported that enemy paratroopers had been dropped in their sector, but none were reported in the 26th Infantry sector, though the unit was alerted against this enemy activity.

TOWARDS EVENING, Delta fired a mission at BULLINGEN, when enemy vehicular traffic was reported in town by 2nd Battalion outposts. The rest of the night proved without incident. Mines were laid by an engineer detail, with the general plan to work the mine field so that it joined with the one the 18th Infantry laid.

25 December 1944 - About 0300 hours, "C" Company reported a tank moving to their front, and artillery was laid down in that area. The sound of the enemy motor ceased soon after the volleys registered in the area. About 0800 hours, two enemy trucks came within range of the 2nd Battalion positions. Both were knocked out by mortars. Another two enemy trucks going west out of BULLINGEN were blown up by our mines.

Engineer details working at the same task of laying mines discovered a 20 foot gap in the mine field in front of "C" Company area. It had evidently been lifted by enemy. The gap was closed, and a security guard established so that enemy patrols would be unable to approach the mine-fields or attempt clearing them.

26 December 1944 - "B" Company area shelled at 0100 hours, and gun flashes of the enemy batteries spotted and relayed to Delta. Later in the morning, several trucks carrying lumber for enemy troops were taken under 3rd Battalion mortar fire and destroyed.

Mines again laid in front of regimental positions, and battalion defenses strengthened.

27 December 1944 - TWO ENEMY TANKS TO the 2nd Battalion front were knocked out by artillery fire early in the morning. Enemy vehicular traffic being reported in town, the northeast and southwest road out of BULLINGEN was placed under friendly artillery fire.

Planes had been spotted in the regimental area, and several instances of bombing and strafing had been reported. At 1900 hours from higher headquarters came the order not to fire at P-47's as no enemy pilots were believed operating this type of plane.

The work of laying mines neared completion.

28 December 1944 - At first daylight, artillery fire was laid on enemy trucks and personnel spotted at 918013. 2nd Battalion patrols located enemy mortar positions at 043006. Mortar fire on both enemy targets was placed with good results.

The 2nd and 3rd Battalion positions were both subjected to enemy attacks. Starting at 1700 hours, the enemy first threw approximately 300 rounds of artillery and mortar, and then attacked. The alerted companies threw off the hostile forces, inflicting heavy losses. After "L" Company had been under some pressure, it pushed and reached a point south of the railroad. The Germans offered some resistance but fell back.

29 December 1944 - After a night without incident, at 0600 hours "I" Company outposts reported enemy vehicles on the BULLINGEN road. Delta fired a mission on this enemy traffic. The rest of the day proved quiet. Mine laying details continued with the work of strengthening the regimental defenses.

30 December 1944 - At 0800 hours a truckload of German infantry was spotted at 932007, and two volleys of artillery wiped out about 95% of them. Enemy mortars that had been firing at the 2nd Battalion positions were also placed under artillery fire that silenced these.

31 December 1944 - The usual activities prevailed on this last day of the year. Enemy patrols reported, no contact.

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GAINS AND LOSSES AND DAILY STRENGTH FOR THE PERIOD FROM 16 DECEMBER THROUGH 31
DECEMBER 1944.

DATE	STRENGTH		GAINS		LOSSES	
	OFF	EM	OFF	EM	OFF	EM
16	141	2582	7	18	2	15
17	142	2586	1	12		6
18	142	2562		9		33
19	144	2544	2	9		27
20	142	2477		2	2	69
21	139	2386		7	3	98
22	135	2673		376	4	89
23	145	2730	11	113	1	56
24	159	2822	15	187	1	95
25	159	2795		6		33
26	156	2882		145	3	58
27	157	2867	1	34	2	49
28	157	2816	1	9	1	60
29	157	2789		12		39
30	156	2788		28	1	29
31	156	2888		128		28

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HEADQUARTERS
703RD TANK DESTROYER BATTALION
APO 230

18 January 1945

TANK DESTROYER OPERATIONS

Shortly after the German breakthrough into Belgium on 16 Dec 44, this TD Bn (90mm SP) found itself involved in movement and attachment from its normal Corps and Division to two others and then back to its normal status again. The cavalcade of events, actions and method of employment are told in the following narrative. Emphasis is placed on the type of employment for it is customary in infantry divisions to attack TD Companies and Platoons to infantry regiments and battalions respectively, and likewise in armored divisions to combat commands and task forces respectively. However, as this operations summary will demonstrate, the field manual method did bring out several fundamental principles of TD doctrine.

The Germans had finally committed their Sixth Panzer Army - not to keep us from crossing the Roer River, which many believed would be their primary probability of commitment - but to make a major effort through the dense Hifel Forest into the Ardennes with the Meuse River as their first major objective.

The 1st SS and 12th SS Panzer Divisions spearheaded the attack, the 1st SS on the left, the 12th SS on the right. Both Divisions were initially successful, but the 12th SS was slowed down considerably shortly after their initial penetration, and was stopped long enough for V Corps to set up hasty defenses along a general line Monschau, Hofen, Wirtzfeld, Butgenbach, with the 26th Infantry Regiment of the 1st Infantry Division occupying the high ground about 1000 meters northwest of Bullingen.

The 1st SS Panzer Division, being more successful, had penetrated further to the west in the direction of Malmedy, Stavelot, Stoumont, thus putting V Corps in the position of an anchor for any attempts on the part of the Allies to contain the penetration on its north flank. Its position was doubly important because it was directly astride the main routes of the 12th SS Panzer Division into Malmedy, Eupen, Verviers and points north and west.

It was further known that each of the two spearheading divisions had another panzer division backing them up - the 2nd SS behind the 1st, and the 9th SS behind the 12th - thus making it imperative that the sector be strongly fortified by all available AT defenses.

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Consequently the 1st US Infantry Division, attached to V Corps, had at its disposal not only its organic AT guns and its normal attachment of one TD Battalion, but also 11 90mm AA guns from the 134th AA Bn, plus the 703rd TD Bn in order to give it the necessary AT defenses in depth to insure as far as possible an adequate defense of its sector against probable strong armored pressure.

Upon the arrival of this battalion at 0730 hours, 18 Dec 44, the companies assembled in the vicinity of Sourbrodt, Ovifal, Robertsville with the battalion CP at Sourbrodt. The Battalion Commander having reported to Division Headquarters, returned and oriented the Staff and Company Commanders on the general situation, and informed them of the first mission of the battalion.

The 26th Infantry Regiment was already on the line, the 16th Infantry Regiment had just arrived, and was assembled in the vicinity of Robertsville, Outremarche, Bruckberg, while the 18th Infantry Regiment was assembled a few miles to the northwest. On our left flank the 2nd US Infantry Division was consolidating defensive positions; the 26th Infantry Regiment held the high ground between Butgenbach and Bullingen; from Butgenbach to Weismes and Malmédy the situation was extremely fluid, and neither side held any ground along that line.

The 16th Infantry Regiment was setting up hasty defensive positions in their present assembly area, and was making plans to move up abreast of the 26th Infantry Regiment to secure the main highway between Butgenbach and Weismes - a most important route needed for the proposed advance of the 12th SS Panzer Division.

The 1st US Infantry Division, in addition to its own 57mm guns, had its normal TD battalion, the 634th (SP 3-inch) attached and integrated, TD Platoons to Infantry Battalions. The mission of the 703rd TD Bn was, operating under battalion control, to initiate immediate reconnaissance of routes and gun position areas on the Division left flank and be prepared to repel any armored thrusts that might get through friendly troops on our left. This mission was given because our left flank was not yet fully stabilized, and up to that time, enemy pressure was strongest from that direction.

Reconnaissance Company was given the mission of reconnoitering for routes and position areas along the road from Weywertz to Kaltenherberger, and late in the afternoon returned, taking an officer from each TD Company to the positions netted by the search to familiarize themselves in case of future operations in that area.

In the meantime, shortly afternoon, a task force was hastily organized from whatever units were available at the moment to proceed to Weismes and protect the evacuation of a field hospital located there. The second platoon of "A" Company joined this task force, and moved out at 1400 hours. The task force under command of Lt Col DAVIDSON of the 634th TD Bn consisted of Bn Hq, Recon Co, plus one TD section of the 634th TD Bn, several light tanks and 6 Assault Guns of

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the 745th Tank Battalion; "B" Company minus a platoon from the 1st Engr Bn, and our second platoon of "A" Company.

It was found at Weismes that the hospital had already been evacuated, and the task force remained in that area to secure the town. It appeared that they arrived at a most opportune time, for the following morning, 19 Dec, two German tanks approached the town from the East, and two from the West to find what defenses, if any we had there. One tank, coming from the East, succeeded in entering the lower part of the town, but was driven out shortly thereafter. At 1715 hours several tanks, with an estimated company of infantry, tried to approach the town from the southwest, vicinity of Chivre Mont, but with no success.

The second platoon of "A" Co, in road block positions facing south and southwest, fired three rounds at one of the tanks in the morning attack, but saw no action in the afternoon attack. The tank upon which they fired withdrew apparently undamaged.

During the 24 hours from 18 to 19 Dec, the 16th Infantry Regiment had completed preparations to move out, the situation on the division left flank became more stabilized, and at 1100 hours the Division Commander issued orders for the 26th Infantry Regiment to hold their present positions and expand their right flank to the railroad running between Weismes and Butgenbach, and the 16th Infantry Regiment to attack and secure the high ground along the highway between Weismes and the railroad. The 703rd TD Bn was relieved of its original mission and ordered to provide protection of the Division zone, from the south, coordinating with Commanding Officers of the 16th and 26th Infantry Regiments. In other words, this battalion was responsible for preventing any armored breakthroughs in the entire Division zone, deepening and strengthening the weak spots, and maintaining a mobile reserve ready to move to any threatened sector.

The Battalion Commander, after contacting the Regimental Commanders, ordered "A" Company (minus 2nd Platoon) to assemble vicinity of Weywertz in direct support of the 16th Infantry, and "C" Company to assemble vicinity of Butgenbach in direct support of the 26th Infantry. The second Platoon of "A" Company remained at Weismes, and "B" Company remained in reserve at their original assembly area. At 1500 hours "C" Company moved out, while "A" Company moved the following morning.

The attack of the 16th Infantry proved to be merely a movement into new positions, as no resistance was encountered, and by nightfall they were well dug in. The 26th Infantry meanwhile, had further consolidated their defenses woutheast of Butgenbach, and occupied the high ground between the railroad and their original positions.

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During the day, in addition to the two small attacks on Weismes, three other probing attacks took place along the Division front. At 0315 hours, two tanks with infantry attacked the 26th Infantry positions from the south, toward RJ (K-930022); at 1045 hours several tanks with an estimated company of infantry attacked from the same direction in conjunction with an attack of similar strength from the east (Bullingen); at 1950 hours several tanks with a company of infantry attacked north from Faymonville against the 16th Infantry, which by that time was sitting on its objective. All attacks were successfully repulsed.

By 20 Dec indications were that strong build-ups of armor and infantry were taking place in Bullingen and Faymonville, and by the nature of the probing attacks made up to that time it was evident that our continued defense of the enemy's main routes to the northwest offered a serious obstacle toward his efforts to deligitimate the cities of Eupen, Verviers, and Liege. A strong attack, therefore, was expected somewhere along the Corps front at one or more points, and the routes we were blocking were important enough to warrant our making an assumption that our sector might be hit strongly. The 12th SS Commander must have been thoroughly chagrined at the comparative success of his Panzers as against the 1st SS Division, and no doubt would do all possible to push the attack forward for the protection of the north flank of the penetration, and, incidentally, to save his own face.

No attacks of importance took place during the day however, and he continued his probing attacks along our front. At 0615 hours a company of tanks and two companies of infantry attacked the 26th Infantry positions from the direction of Bullingen and made a slight penetration, but by 0815 hours 8 tanks had been destroyed and all positions restored. At 0730 hours an attack was launched with infantry only up the railroad between the two Regiments, with the mission, (obtained from a PW later), to seize Obermertz and proceed west into Weismes. At 1020 hours a tank plus a platoon of infantry attacked from the south toward RJ (K-869040). Both of these attacks were repulsed with heavy casualties to the enemy, and the sector was comparatively quiet the remainder of the day.

During 20 Dec, the battalion lost its reserve company, Company "B", which was detached and moved at 0800 hours to the 82nd Airborne Division which was engaged further west in a critical sector, building up a defensive line to contain the breakthrough. The loss of "B" Company upset the plan of having an entire TD Company in mobile reserve. A "string" was tied to the 3rd Platoon of "A" Co., which was designated as battalion reserve and ordered to reconnoiter routes to position areas throughout the Division sector.

The infantry anti-tank dispositions were studied and after a conference with the Regimental Commanders, the following designations were made effective:

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The second platoon of "A" Company remained at Weismes: because of the probing attacks in the center of the Division sector, the first platoon of "A" Company moved to the vicinity of RJ (K-869040) and took up positions ready to fight in place, or move to either flank of the 16th Infantry; the third platoon remained in Weywertz as battalion reserve. The first platoon of "C" Company moved to Dom Butgenbach, one section on the hill just north of the town, field of fire east and northeast, one section just east of the town, field of fire east and southeast; the second platoon moved further forward also, one section taking up positions in the vicinity of (K-9203), field of fire south and southwest, the other section moving to (K-910035), covering the two roads approaching Butgenbach from the southwest; the third platoon remained in mobile reserve at Butgenbach, prepared to move to any threatened area.

During these two days that the enemy was probing our defenses and we were consolidating our own positions, the eleven 90mm AA guns were utilized for defense in depth, and were set up in the vicinity of Sourbrodt, Ovifal, and Robertsville, covering tank approaches from the east, south, and southwest. In addition, preliminary work in constructing minefield barriers was started in front of our infantry positions along tank approaches. The Second Battalion of the 18th Infantry Regiment, which had been occupied in the north mopping up German paratroops, had, meanwhile, moved into Butgenbach, and the remainder of the Regiment was expected shortly to take over part of the Division sector.

On the morning of 21 Dec, the Germans made their largest attack up to that time, finally deviating from their small probes in a determined effort to drive the 26th Infantry from their commanding positions. They first dripped an intense artillery barrage into the Butgenbach area at 0400 hours, but it was 0900 hours before the major effort took place. A battalion of infantry supported by several tanks attacked from the south and southeast, with the mission of taking Butgenbach. The leading company was stopped dead, but the following units pressed on. The infantry was finally pushed back, but five tanks succeeded in penetrating into the Division area. Three of these were shortly destroyed, but two got into the village of Dom Butgenbach, considerably annoying members of a battalion CP located in one of the buildings.

When the attack took place, the third platoon of "C" Company was alerted, and as its intensity developed, it was ordered to proceed to the vicinity of Dom Butgenbach to knock out, or drive out, the intruders. After moving hurriedly to the outskirts of Dom Butgenbach, the platoon leader stopped his platoon, obtained the situation, made his plans, and went into action. One section moved into town to try and find positions from which to place fire on the two loose tanks, leaving the other section to cover its advance. Before any positions could be reached, however, one of the tanks decided to break for the woods south of the town and return to safer

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haunts, but although his intentions were good, unfortunately for him he didn't quite make it. The section that was waiting on the outskirts of the town knocked him out with a round through the rear, while he was a few hundred yards short of his goal. The second tank decided it would have a better chance of escape after dark, and it too made a break for the woods as soon as darkness fell. The waiting section fired several rounds, but could not observe the results, and it was not known until the following day that it also had been knocked out from the rear.

At the time this action took place it would seem that the first platoon, which was much closer to the town when the two tanks got in, would logically be the one to go after them. However, they were in such a position that, had they moved into town from the east or northeast, they would have had no cover, and would have been under direct observation. It was, therefore, thought best to move destroyers in from the west where they could have access to the buildings from concealed routes.

During this period the only further changes in our lines consisted of the movement of a company of the 18th Infantry into positions on the high ground vicinity of Konigsbach to strengthen the right flank of the 26th Infantry.

At the end of the day, when the action had quieted down, the third platoon was ordered to return to Butgenbach the first thing in the morning, because there were now too many destroyers on the left flank of the Regiment, and a redistribution was necessary for protection against possible attack in other sectors. When the morning of 22 Dec came, the justification of the order was aptly proven, for at 0500 hours a battalion of infantry supported by several tanks made a strong attack toward Butgenbach from the southwest. The section of the second platoon located at (K-910035) knocked out the lead tank, and the others withdrew, but the infantry continued and successfully penetrated toward the TD position. During this infiltration a half-track filled with infantry attempted to flank the destroyer on the right, and was completely demolished by several rounds of HE from the TD. When it became evident that the destroyers would be overrun if they remained, the section leader ordered a withdrawal to another position about 200 yards to the rear.

One of the destroyers would not start and was abandoned. However, rather than destroy it immediately the section leader backed the other destroyer out of immediate danger, but took up a position whereby, if necessary, he could fire a round into the other vehicle and render it useless to the enemy.

Before the enemy had an opportunity to consolidate their gains, our own infantry counterattacked, and late in the day succeeded in restoring the lines. During the counterattack the destroyer which had backed off to keep from being overrun participated by firing several rounds of HE into a house directly beside the abandoned destroyer, and driving a group of enemy infantry from the building. The destroyer was later recovered intact.

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While this section was taking place the third platoon and remaining section of the second platoon moved from their positions of the previous night to the vicinity of Butgenbach, and set up road blocks covering approaches to the town.

This ended the enemy's attempts to eliminate our stranglehold on his route of advance and until the battalion minus "C" Company, moved on 25 December 1944 to join the 82nd Airborne Division it was not engaged further.

Throughout this attachment to the 1st Infantry Division the major part of the action fell on one company. However, the entire situation proved conclusively that the fundamentals of many Tank Destroyer Doctrines are well founded.

With the employment of an additional TD Battalion, plus (11) eleven 90mm AA Guns, a defense in depth was accomplished which would surely hold against an extremely strong armored thrust. In addition, the advantages of a highly mobile reserve were brought out in the ability of the reserve units to take favorable positions in depth, and move quickly to threatened areas.

This employment also resulted in bringing to the fore a few lessons which no one can afford to disregard. Even though we escaped without mishap, it might easily have caused considerable difficulty. First, reserves must be husbanded carefully, and as soon as they have completed a mission they must be prepared to return to a reserve role immediately, or additional reserves must be available to take their place. Secondly, but so important in this war of mobility, is the matter of vehicle maintenance. Vehicles have to be ready to move at any time, day or night, and constant attention must be given them to insure that they are in condition to roll.

Finally, the usefulness of self-propelled TD's was again emphasized. Exploiting their mobility to the utmost SP's can effectively assist in stopping a tank attack. When the 12th SS Pz Div finally was relieved by a Volkgrenadier Div to permit the Panzers to slideslip further into the bulge, 23 knocked out tanks could be counted in one infantry battalion's sector -- many probably knocked out by artillery, at least eight and perhaps more destroyed by the M10's of the 634th TD Bn, and the three accounted for by the 90mm SP's after they had broken through the forward defenses.

W. E. SHOWALTER
Commanding

SWETT

S-2

(1 Incl: Overlay of AT Defenses)

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GL-182
8

UNITS OF 1st US INFANTRY DIVISION

Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st US Infantry Division
(Danger) Code name.

Military Police Platoon, 1st US Infantry Division.

16th Infantry DAGWOOD
18th Infantry DECOY
26th. Infantry DEXTROSE

Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 1st US Infantry Div. Artillery
(Determine) Code name.

5th Field Artillery Battalion DANDY
7th Field Artillery Battalion DELIGHT
32nd Field Artillery Battalion DIPPER
33rd FIELD Artillery Battalion DELTA
1st Engineer Combat Battalion DISGUISE
1st Medical Battalion DIXIE
701st Ordnance Light Maintenance Company DAMAGE
1st Quartermaster Company DESSERT
1st Reconnaissance Troop DANGER RCN
1st Signal Company DANGER SIG

ATTACHED UNITS

103d Anti-aircraft Automatic Weapons Battalion.
745th Tank Battalion VILLAIN
634th Tank Destroyer Battalion (Self-propelled)
703rd Tank Destroyer Battalion (Self-propelled)
639th Anti-aircraft Artillery (90mm) Battalion
(Temporarily attached to Combat Team 26)
3d Plat Co "C", 801st Tank Destroyer Battalion
(Temporarily attached to Combat Team 26)

MAYFAIR 103
JAUNT
VIADUCT Temp. attachment
MAYFAIR

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1st Division

REPLACEMENTS FOR THE MONTH OF DECEMBER 1944

<u>DATE</u>	<u>CASUALS</u>		<u>NEW PERSONNEL</u>		<u>TOTAL</u>	
	<u>Off</u>	<u>EM</u>	<u>Off</u>	<u>EM</u>	<u>Off</u>	<u>EM</u>
December 16	0	41	0	1		42
" 18	1	4	0	11	1	15
" 21	7	148	0	0	7	148
" 22	1	13	0	506	1	519
" 23	0	0	16	221	16	221
" 24	1	66	28	225	29	291
" 26	0	63	0	328	0	391
" 28	0	9	0	11	0	20
" 29	3	97	0	6	3	103
" 30	0	0	0	56	0	56
" 31	0	23	0	148	0	171

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1st Division

GL-1828

CASUALTIES FOR THE MONTH OF DECEMBER

1944

<u>DATE</u> Dec.	<u>Off</u>	<u>KIA</u>		<u>WIA</u>		<u>MIA</u>		<u>SICK</u>		<u>TOTAL</u>	
		<u>EM</u>	<u>Off</u>	<u>EM</u>	<u>Off</u>	<u>EM</u>	<u>Off</u>	<u>EM</u>	<u>Off</u>	<u>EM</u>	<u>EM</u>
16	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	28	1	28
17	0	0	1	2	0	3	0	2	14	3	19
18	0	0	0	13	0	2	0	1	45	1	60
19	0	3	2	22	0	4	0	0	43	2	72
20	0	4	1	43	0	10	0	1	53	2	110
21	0	13	3	80	1	37	1	1	75	5	205
22	2	12	3	54	1	39	3	3	77	9	182
23	1	3	0	57	0	26	0	0	74	1	160
24	0	2	0	32	0	18	1	1	60	1	112
25	1	1	0	14	0	3	0	0	41	1	59
26	0	1	0	9	0	0	1	1	55	1	65
27	0	0	1	12	0	0	1	1	58	2	70
28	0	6	2	35	0	2	3	3	62	5	105
29	0	2	0	11	0	5	1	1	59	1	77
30	0	3	1	13	0	3	1	1	45	2	64
31	0	4	0	15	0	1	0	0	39	0	59

PRISONER'S CAPTURED FOR THE MONTH OF

DECEMBER 1944

<u>DATE</u>	<u>OFFICERS</u>	<u>EM</u>	<u>MISC</u>	<u>MEDICAL</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
December 19	0	2	1	1	4
" 20	1	46	0	3	50
" 21	0	12	0	7	19
" 22	0	11	0	2	13
" 23	0	2	0	0	2
" 24	0	1	0	0	1
" 26	0	2	0	0	2
" 27	0	0	0	1	1
" 28	0	4	0	0	4
" - 29	0	1	0	0	1

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ACTION OF CAPTAIN JOHN J. KENNEDY

GL-7828
10 January 1945

CERTIFICATE:

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

On 17 December 1944 at BULLINGEN, Belgium, Capt. John J. Kennedy, Inf. (TD), O-388294, Company Commander, Company B, 612th TD Bn, distinguished himself by gallantry in action by the following act of heroism.

Capt. Kennedy as CO of Co. B, 612th TD Bn reported to me at approximately 0200 hours, 17 Dec 44, after an hour blackout march from his former position on the BUTGENBACH-BULLINGEN road. His Co. was given the mission of direct support defending the Divisions south (99th) exposed flank. Approximately one hour after Capt. Kennedy had emplaced his Co, he received word at his Company command post in the town of HUNNINGEN that enemy tanks and infantry were attacking the area in the positions of his guns. Radio communications with his platoon ceased. Capt. Kennedy then attempted to go to his gun positions. This was impossible because the enemy had occupied the area.

Upon seeing it was useless to try further to reach his surrounded position, Capt. Kennedy set about in assisting in repelling the enemy in anyway possible. The road leading through BULLINGEN was filled with many friendly troops who had become separated from their units. Capt. Kennedy seized this opportunity and personally gathered these men together and formed them into a defensive position in the vicinity of the town. After organizing this line he contacted Division Headquarters and was ordered to keep the defensive line as long as possible and to report his activities. He then continued to strengthen his defensive positions by coordinating Co D, 741st Tank Bn into his defensive plan along with the remaining four guns of his company.

Due to the pressure being brought by the enemy forces he successfully withdrew and established his lines in the vicinity of DOM BUTGENBACH. This position he held until relieved by a Battalion of the 26th Infantry.

Capt. Kennedy by his display of outstanding individual initiative, in successfully organizing and establishing a defensive line under hazardous circumstances, and by firing intensive small arms and artillery was on a superior force of the enemy, showed that he is an outstanding officer. As a result of this act Capt. Kennedy's Co. knocked out (3) three Mark IV enemy tanks, approximately (30) thirty enemy killed and (20) twenty wounded.

It is believed that such a performance should not go un-noticed.

/s/ John McCallum
/t/ JOHN McCALLUM
Captain, F. A.

(Recommended for Silver Star)

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GL-182

(10)

GERMAN COUNTER OFFENSIVE 16 Dec.

703d TD Bn. 18-Dec to 25 Dec 44

Submitted by: Fred I. Hadsel, 1st Lt 2d Info and HistServ, VII Corps, 1st US Army.

The attached report is submitted in this manner since it will not necessary^{il} go in through regular channels. The battalion was split up and operated by companies or platoons with the V Corps, and in particular with the 1st Infantry Division,. The action of C company in the vicinity of Butgenbach (9103) 21 December, is of particular note.

pdfelement