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MILITARY MONOGRAPH

TITLE: 2ND ARMORED DIVISION

IN

OPERATION GRENADE

SCOPE: Organization of the Division for combat; conduct of the attack with particular emphasis on the Principles of the Employment of Amored Units as exemplified in the Operation.

41-5

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THE 2ND ARMORED IN "OPERATION GRENADE"

INTRODUCTION

This article will briefly touch upon the attack of The Ninth U.S. Army and the Army Corps in the Cologne Plain Break-through and then discuss more fully the attack of the 2nd Armored Division which spearheaded the break-through operations of the XIX Corps.

The Cologne Plain Break-through operations of Ninth Army was titled "Operation Grenade". (Map 1) It should be pointed out that Ninth Army was under the operational control of the Commander-in-Chief, 21st Army Group during Grenade.

MISSION OF NINTH ARMY

The mission of Ninth Army was to attack northeast from the Julich Linnich base to destroy the enemy in zone and to seize the west bank of the Rhine River between Neuss (inclusive) and Mors (exclusive).

12th Army Group will attack on its ~~left~~^{right} to protect the right flank of Ninth U.S. Army as far east as Harff.

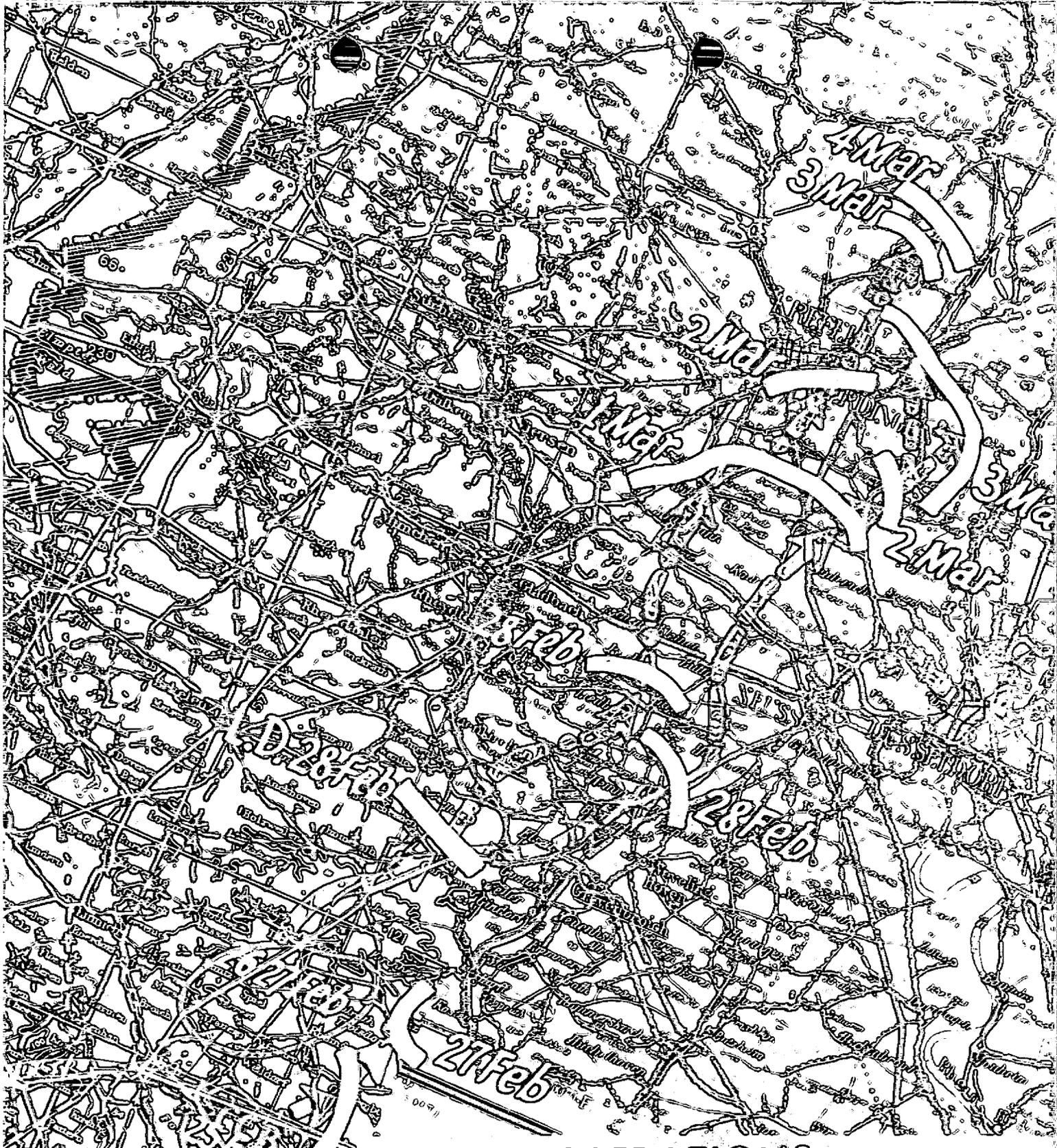
MISSION OF XIX CORPS

The XIX Corps had the mission of securing a bridgehead east of the Roer River north and south of Julich and continuing the attack east and northeast along the axis Juchen, Holzheim, Krefeld.

The XIII and XVI Corps were to attack across the Roer River in conjunction with the XIX Corps destroying enemy forces to their front.

MISSION OF XIX CORPS UNITS

The 29th Infantry Division had the mission of making the main



OPERATIONS

2nd Armored Division
Jan. 14 to Mar. 4, 1945



Limit of advance each day shown in red

assault crossing of the Roer River in the Julich area then continuing the attack to secure the high ground east and northeast of Julich.

30th Division was to make an assault crossing of the Roer River south of Julich then attack northeast to secure Steinstrass on the main Julich - Cologne Highway.

The 83rd Infantry Division, initially in Corps reserve, vicinity of Alsdorf, prepared to exploit the bridgehead.

The 2nd Armored Division, initially in Corps reserve, vicinity of Aachen, prepared to exploit the bridgehead.

ORGANIZATION OF THE 2ND ARMORED DIVISION FOR COMBAT

The 2nd Armored Division was organized for operation "Grenade" as follows:

Combat Command "A"

Brigadier General John H. Collier, Commanding
Headquarters, CC "A"

66th Armored Regiment (- 1st Battalion)

2nd Battalion 41st Armored Infantry Regiment

#Elements 379th Infantry Regiment

14th Armored Field Artillery Battalion

Company A, 17th Armored Engineer Battalion

Company A, 702nd Tank Destroyer Battalion (SP)

Company A, 48th Armored Medical Battalion

Detachment Maintenance Battalion, 2nd Armored Division

2nd Platoon Battery C, 195th Anti-Aircraft, Automatic

Weapons Battalion

1st Platoon, Company A 739th Tank Battalion (M)

(Special Mine Exploder)

(# Attached temporarily 2-3 March 1945)

Combat Command "B"

Colonel Sidney R. Hinds, Commanding

Headquarters, CC "B"

67th Armored Regiment (- 3rd Battalion)

1st Battalion 41st Armored Infantry Regiment

*331st Infantry Regiment with 908th Field Artillery Battalion
attached

78th Armored Field Artillery Battalion

92nd Armored Field Artillery Battalion

Company D, 17th Armored Engineer Battalion

Company C, 702nd Tank Destroyer Battalion (SP)

Detachment, Maintenance Battalion, 2nd Armored Division

1 Platoon Battery "B", 195 Anti-Aircraft Automatic Weapons
Battalion (SP)

1 Platoon Company A, 739th Tank Battalion (M)

**Elements 379th Infantry Regiment

(* 331st Infantry Regiment (- 3rd Battalion) reverted to
83rd Division control 1 March 1945)

3rd Battalion, 331st Infantry Regiment reverted to 83rd
Division control 2 March 1945

(** Attached temporarily 2-4 March 1945)

Combat Command "R"

Lt. Colonel Russell W. Jenna, Commanding

41st Armored Infantry Battalions (- 1st and 2nd Battalions)

1st Battalion 66th Armored Regiment

3rd Battalion 67th Armored Regiment

Company C, 17th Armored Engineer Battalion

Company B, 702nd Tank Destroyer Battalion

Detachment Company C, 48th Armored Medical Battalion

Detachment, Maintenance Battalion 2nd Armored Division

Division Artillery

Colonel Carl I. Hutton, Commanding

Headquarters, Division Artillery

65th Armored Field Artillery Battalion (direct support

Combat Command "A")

696th Armored Field Artillery Battalion (general support)

258th Field Artillery Group (general support)

258th Field Artillery Battalion (155MM Self-Propelled)

666th Field Artillery Battalion (155 Howitzer)

959th Field Artillery Battalion (4.5" Gun)

Division Control

Headquarters and Headquarters Company 2nd Armored Division

142nd Armored Signal Company

195th Anti-Aircraft Automatic Weapons Battalion (-)

702nd Tank Destroyer Battalion (less Companies A, B and C)

82nd Armored Reconnaissance Battalion

17th Armored Engineer Battalion (less Companies A, C and D)

with attached elements 739th Tank Battalion

Division Trains

Colonel Louis C. Friedersdorff, Commanding

Headquarters and Headquarters Company Division Trains
Maintenance Battalion 2nd Armored Division (- detach-
ments)
48th Armored Medical Battalion (-)
Supply Battalion 2nd Armored Division
Battery "A" 195th Anti-Aircraft Automatic Weapons
Battalion

ENEMY SITUATION

Enemy Forces opposite the XIX Corps Zone were estimated to be elements of the 59th Infantry Division and 363rd Volksgrenadier Division. In addition, it was believed that the enemy had a static defense division occupying position along the Erft River, that they had either or both the 9th and 11th Panzer Divisions located in the Cologne area.

ATTACK OF 2ND ARMORED DIVISION

The 2nd Armored Division was assembled in the vicinity of Gulpen, Holland; prior to operation "Grenade". The division Artillery in firing positions since 9 February joined in the terrific preparations barrage which initiated the crossing of the Roer River by the 29th and 30th Infantry Divisions in the vicinity of Julich. During the first three days of operation "Grenade" the Division Artillery fired 25,435 rounds of 105mm ammunition in close support missions for the assault Infantry Divisions.

Combat Command "B" began its movement to positions east of the Roer River at 250930 February 1945. Upon arrival at Julich Combat Command "B" came under the operational control of the 30th Infantry Division and moved

to Lich and Steinstrass to relieve elements of the 117th Infantry and protect the right flank of the 30th Infantry Division. During the period 25-27 February 1945 road blocks were established. Elements of Combat Command "B" received intense anti-tank fire and Company C, 702nd Tank Destroyer Battalion, repelled an enemy threat.

At 271010A February 1945 Combat Command "B" was relieved in the Lich-Steinstrass area by the 113th Cavalry Group and assembled in the vicinity of Kercherten in Preparation for the Division attack on 28 February.

Combat Command "A" moved from Aachen to a new assembly area in the Merch area, completing the march about noon on 27 February.

Combat Command "R" moved from the area Aachen-Vaals to an assembly area immediately south of Julich, completing this move at 271830 February.

Both Combat Commands of the 2nd Armored Division passed through front line elements of the 29th and 30th Infantry Divisions and jumped off in a full scale attack at 0700 on 28 February, attacking northeast. The line of departure followed the east-west road from Otzenrath to Garzweiler. Both Combat Commands attacked with the joint mission of securing the Division initial objective, securing crossings of the Nord Canal and continuing the attack to the Rhine River. The Nord Canal is a drainage ditch about 20 feet wide, running from Nursen to the Rhine River at Neuss. The enemy offered stubborn resistance throughout the area defending the edges of town, railroad embankments and road blocks with emplaced anti-tank guns, supported by dug-in infantry.

Combat Command "A" employing two Task Forces launched its attack toward Juchen. Stubborn resistance was met at underpasses and crossings of the Munchen-Gladbach-Grevenbroich Railroad and from the town of

Juchen. Following an artillery serenade the Infantry supported by medium tanks attacked and secured the town by 1200A. Both Task Forces continued the attack securing the towns of Kilzenberg, Herberath, Rath and Stessen. By 2000A Task Force A had secured Glehn and Task Force B occupied Schlich. These positions were consolidated in preparation for a new attack on 1 March to seize crossings of the Nord Canal.

Combat Command "B" with the 331st Infantry 83rd Division attached; attacked on the right of the Division Zone along the axis Elfgen-Hammerden-Grefrath. Combat Command "B" had the additional mission of blocking the town of Grevenbroich. Combat Command "B" using two Task Forces pressed its attack against considerable resistance from anti-tank guns and dug-in Infantry. By 1500 28 February Combat Command "B" had cleared Elfgen, Elsen and Orken. Vierwiden was seized and secured during the hours of darkness by 1st Battalion 67th Armored Regiment. The 2nd Battalion 67th Armored Regiment secured the village of Damm and was in a position to attack Luttinglehn. 1st Battalion 331st Infantry Regiment, attached to Combat Command "B" was moved from Garzweiler and secured Hemmerden.

Combat Command "R" moved from Julich to Juchen establishing road blocks on the left of the Division Zone and maintained contact with the 29th Infantry Division.

On 1 March orders were issued directing the 2nd Armored Division to continue the attack throughout the hours of darkness.

Combat Command "A" on the left of the Division Zone attacked at 0700 1 March and pushed forward rapidly employing two Task Forces. By noon both Task Forces had secured crossings intact over the Nord Canal.

Osterath was secured by Task Force "A" during the hours of darkness. Task Force "B" on the left secured the important communications center of Schiefbahn. Task Force "B" continued its attack securing the towns of Willich and Moosheide after dark. Combat Command "A" consolidated its positions in preparation for further attacks early on 2 March.

Combat Command "B" was relieved of its mission to seize the city of Neuss and assigned a new mission to seize approaches to the Adolph Hitler Bridge at Uerdingen and if possible capture the bridge intact and establish a bridgehead east of the Rhine River. Combat Command "B" attacked with the 67th Armored Regiment (-) in the assault. This force jumped-off at 0150A 1 March and advanced three miles during the hours of darkness, securing Grefrath at 0700. This force continued its attack securing Buttgen at 1000A and pushed on to the north clearing out the south side of the Nord Canal. The retreating enemy had blown the bridges in the vicinity of Hinterfeld and Stackerseite. At 1400 a dismounted attack was launched by Companies "A" and "B" 41st Armored Infantry Battalion to secure a bridgehead north of the canal to cover bridging operations by Company D, 17th Armored Engineer Battalion. This force continued its attack to the North upon completion of the bridge and secured the town of Bovert. The 331st Infantry Regiment (less the 3rd Battalion) reverted to control of the 83rd Infantry Division at 1200A. The 3rd Battalion 331st Infantry Regiment secured the right flank of Command Command "B" during the advance.

Combat Command "R" continued its mission of screening the left flank of Combat Command "A" and maintaining contact with 29th Infantry Division. Combat Command "R" received its first serious counter-attack

during the hours of darkness at Schiefbahn. Combat Command "A" had seized this important cross-roads town earlier in the day and about 1800A it was occupied by two Task Forces from Combat Command "R". Both forces were heavily engaged for several hours by an enemy force of seven tanks and two hundred Infantrymen later identified as a battle group from the 130th Panzer-Lehr Division which had been defending Munchen-Gladbach.

Division Artillery, 2nd Armored Division gave continuous support to attacking echelons maintaining firing positions within one to three thousand yards of leading elements. About 2400A 1 March the 258th Field Artillery Battalion brought the city of Dusseldorf east of the Rhine River, under fire. The 379th Infantry Regiment (95th Infantry Division) was assigned to the 2nd Armored Division and assembling at this time to relieve Combat Command "R" in the Division Zone.

The Division continued its attacks throughout the early hours of 2 March. Infantry elements of Combat Command "A" advanced dismounted astride the Osterath-Krefeld road capturing large number of sleeping enemy soldiers in their positions. Enemy resistance stiffened at daylight and tank elements were moved forward to support the Infantry. The towns of Kutterheide and Fischeln were cleared by Tank Infantry Teams prior to noon. Combat Command "B" continued its attack north toward Krefeld-Oppum against increasing resistance from dug-in enemy infantry. The 2nd Battalion 379th Infantry Regiment was alerted for movement to Schiefbahn.

Combat Command "B" continued its operation throughout the hours of darkness by seizing Bovert. This town was secured by 0345A 2 March.

Combat Command "B" attacked with two Task Forces about 0700 2 March. The 67th Armored Regiment (-) sent the 2nd Battalion straight north to seize Bosinghoven and Ossum. The 1st Battalion 67th Armored Regiment advanced northeast in the direction of Lank-Latum. Both of these areas were secured by 1800A. The 3rd Battalion 379th Infantry Regiment cleared the Meerbusch woods and then moved to an assembly area in the vicinity of Strump. Task Force Hawkins (3rd Battalion 67th Armored Regiment and Company "H" 41st Armored Infantry) assembled in the vicinity of Bosinghoven under the control of Combat Command "B".

Combat Command "R" continued heavily engaged with an enemy force driving to the east from Munchen-Gladbach. Through the skillful adjustment of artillery and tenacious resistance of the defenders the enemy force was driven to the northwest at daylight. Combat Command "B" was relieved in Schiefbahn by elements of the 379th Infantry Regiment.

Combat Command "A" continued its attack to the northeast early on 3 March. This Force employing the 2nd Battalion 379th Infantry Regiment launched an attack at 0315A to cut the main highway between Krefeld and Uerdingen. This mission was accomplished after meeting stubborn resistance in and around the marshalling yards east of Krefeld. Task Force "B" attacked from the vicinity of Fischeln with the mission of clearing the enemy from the Viertelsheide area. This attack continued along the axis Krefeld-Bockum-Rott and occupied Krefeld-Verberg. Task Force "A" occupied and secured the town of Vennikel prior to darkness. Combat Command "R" was attached to Combat Command "A" at 0800 3 March and assembled at Fischeln, there launching an attack on Kaldenhausen, on the main highway north of Uerdingen. This Force met little resistance

until it approached the objective where it received heavy fire from the built-up area of Kaldenhausen. After a fierce battle continuing for four hours orders were received to suspend this attack and assemble in a large woods to the southwest.

Throughout 3-4 March Combat Command "B" was heavily engaged clearing the western approaches to the Adolph Hitler Bridge at Uerdingen in an effort to seize the bridge and establish a bridgehead on the east bank within the Mundelheim Bend. There were two approaches to this massive bridge (1) the main approach which extended for a distance of half a mile over a dirt-fill surrounded on both sides by factories, railroad yards and the built-up area of Uerdingen (2) a more direct approach over a semi-circular ramp joining the western end of the bridge. The enemy had excellent observation of the western approaches from high ground along the east shore of the Rhine River. The 3rd Battalion 67th Armored Regiment spearheaded the attack launched at 0200A 3 March. This attack met fierce resistance from artillery, anti-tank guns and parachute infantry occupying houses, apartment buildings and factories. By early afternoon this attack had reached the Uerdingen cellulose factory about six hundred yards from the bridge. The 3rd Battalion was subject to such heavy fire from its left flank that it was necessary to commit the 3rd Battalion 379th Infantry Regiment to clear the marshalling yards and continue the attack parallel to the Krefeld-Uerdingen Autobahn. Enemy units employed in the defense of the bridge included the 23rd Parachute Regiment which was brought from Arnheim, Holland, on 2 March. At 1500A Combat Command "B" launched another attack with Companies "A" and "H", 41st Armored Infantry, to secure the approach to the bridge covered by

a smoke screen laid by Division Artillery to cover Combat Command "B" movements. After extremely hard fighting the Armored Infantry occupied the south slope of the elevated ramp but the enemy continued to occupy the north slope. About 1900A Armored Infantry units sent patrols onto the bridge to neutralize demolitions and secure the bridge intact while the 3rd Battalion 379th Infantry Regiment continued its attack along the Autobahn.

Shortly after the return of the first patrol a terrific explosion was heard from the direction of the far end of the bridge and pieces of masonry showered down upon the west bank. After the western approach was completely cleared of the enemy two more patrols were sent across the span to determine the extent of damage caused by the explosion. Each of these patrols was stopped by burning tar on the roadway at a point above the eastern shore line. At 0700A 4 March the enemy blew the center and east spans sheering the roadway which sank to the river bottom.

The 2nd Armored Division ended its offensive operations in "Operation Grenade" on 4 March. Action in the Division was limited to mopping-up in the vicinity of Uerdingen, Kaldenhausen and Viertelsheide. This area was completely cleared by 1500A although artillery and anti-tank fire was received from the east bank of the Rhine River.

Results of the five (5) day assault by the 2nd Armored Division in operation "Grenade" were as follows:

1. Approximately 2500 prisoners captured. Estimated 900 enemy killed.
2. Vast amounts of enemy material captured or destroyed, including 37 tanks, 225 guns of all caliber, 135

miscellaneous vehicles and 1116 assorted weapons.

3. Approximately 150 German towns and villages seized or occupied the largest being Uerdingen, with a population of approximately 60,000. More than 140 square miles of German agricultural land and industrial area cleared of the enemy.
4. Assisted materially in preparation of the Ninth Army Rhine River assault by crushing all resistance west of the river.

CONCLUSIONS

Merely outlining past military operations serves no useful purpose to students of military history unless certain conclusion and lessons are concluded from these operations. Some of the more important techniques and principles of the employment of military forces in general and more specifically Tank Infantry Teams are indicated as follows:

1. The element of surprise may be gained by launching the attack in an unusual direction. This principle was well demonstrated in the attack of the 2nd Armored Division. During the expansion of the bridgehead by Infantry elements of XIX Corps the direction of attack was to the east and northeast toward the Rhine River. In the break-through phase the Armor launched the attack directly to the north catching enemy reinforcements in mid-maneuver and severing the escape routes between such heavily defended towns as Munchen-Gladbach, Krefeld and the Rhine River. As a result of this action Munchen-Gladbach fell to one (1)

Infantry Regiment in less than one day.

2. The importance of aggressiveness can not be over-emphasized. Once the attack is launched the enemy must be pressed to the limit of endurance of men and machines. Opportunities to maintain and service vehicles, as well as, rest for the men can be secured by rotating Battalions from attacking echelons to the reserve. Aggressiveness should be well organized and coordinated.
3. The use of attached Infantry to mop-up by-passed centers of resistance permits greater freedom action of the Armor and maintains the momentum of the attack. During operation "Grenade" elements of the 83rd and 95th Infantry Divisions were attached to the 2nd Armored Division for flank security and occupation of important communications centers.

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