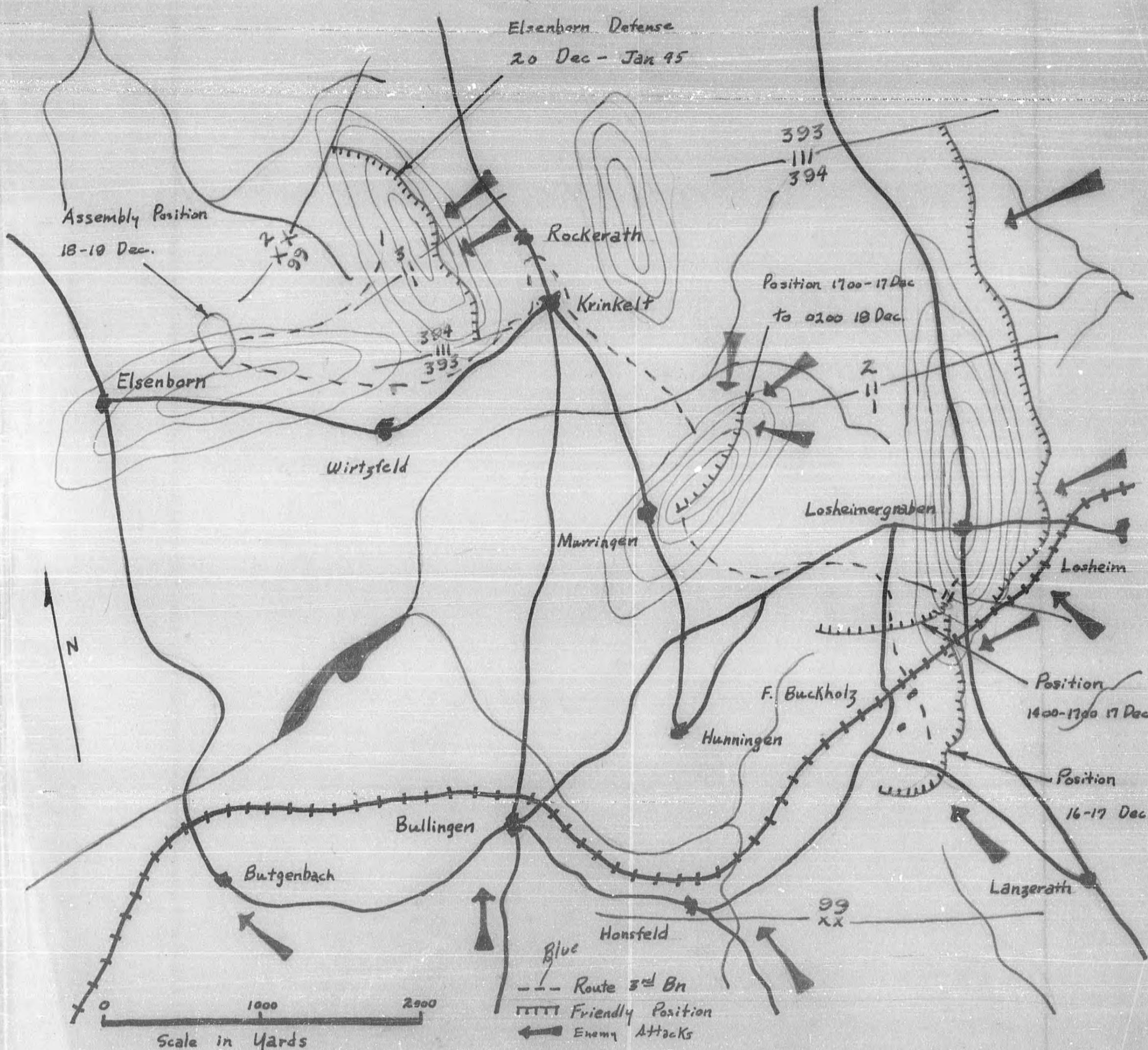
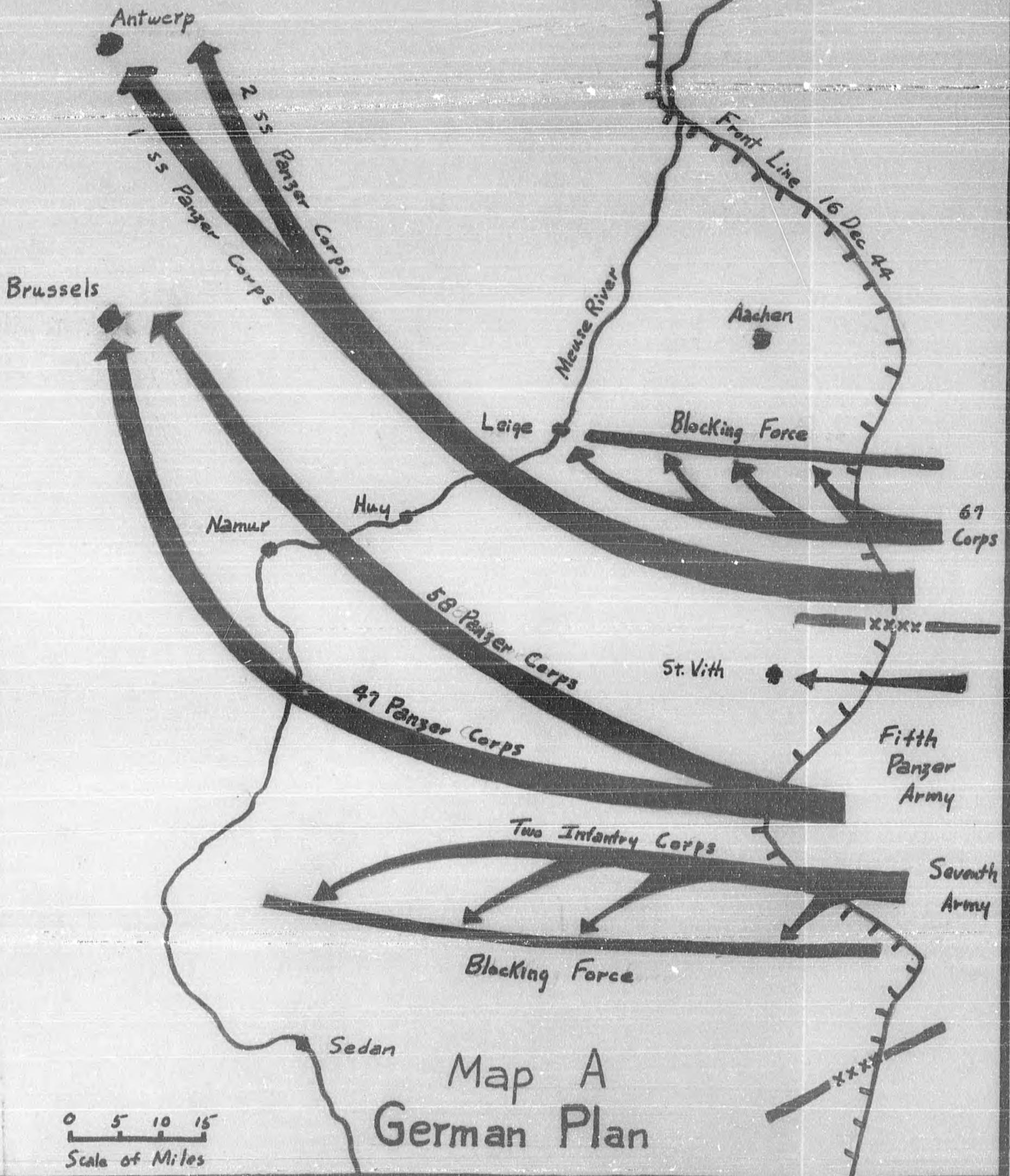


Map C Defense 16 Dec - 1 Jan 45





stop an enemy attack short of the defenders main battle positions.

15. Tanks must be available to an infantry battalion in the defense for anti-tank protection and for aiding in aggressive counter-attacks.

16. Retrograde movements are extremely difficult as is acknowledged by all military leaders but training in such was lacking and the men and mission suffered accordingly.

2. A unit, whenever in contact with the enemy, should have prepared positions with complete employment of automatic weapons to strengthen the defense.

3. An open flank position should always be on good defensive terrain.

4. All likely enemy avenues of approach must be covered by AT weapons and by mines.

5. Over-consideration for the comfort of troops should never cause extreme weakening of positions.

6. A platoon should never be given a mission when greatly removed from the company and when the commander on the spot clearly outlines the fallacy of such a maneuver.

7. The flow of supplies from rear to front must be continuous and all supply personnel must be thoroughly indoctrined with their great responsibility. Instant replacement of poor supply personnel must be accomplished.

8. Higher headquarters should keep the lower units informed of the situation at all times.

9. Defense of the reverse slope should be used when beneficial.

10. Troops cannot operate under sub-zero weather conditions with normal winter clothing, and cold weather equipment such as shoe packs will prevent many casualties.

11. Men must be fed hot meals at every opportunity. Constant use of emergency rations weakens men and destroys morale.

12. Discipline of all combat troops must be stressed at all times.

13. Battalion Ammunitions and Pioneer platoon personnel should not be used for ammunition supply from regimental train bivouacs.

14. Artillery in preponderance when properly used can normally

north and south caused withdrawals under the most adverse conditions but these were successfully carried out causing enemy delays and making the battalion available for a successful defensive stand at Elsenborn.

At no time during the operations from 16 December 1944 to 1 January 1945 were there tanks or tank destroyers available to the 394th Infantry or the 3rd Battalion, which caused a severe handicap. The 57mm AT guns were no match for the German tanks as the projectile did not have the required penetrating ability and mobility was lacking completely. The $1\frac{1}{2}$ ton 6x6 prime mover vehicle of the 57mm AT gun was of little or no value off roads and the gun crews could not man-handle the weapon in heavy snows and forests. Tanks or tank destroyers should be either an integral part of the infantry regiment or attachments on the basis of one platoon of tanks per infantry battalion should be made available. The bazooka in the operations of this battalion proved better than the 57mm AT gun but its capability is limited due to the relatively short range.

The total of 959 casualties of killed ~~in action~~^{or}, and wounded in action between 16 December 1944 and 31 December 1944 by the 394th Regiment, of which the 3rd Battalion had a proportionate share, ^{was} ~~were~~ costly, but the action aided a great deal in stemming the German attack and preventing him from turning the southern flank in the vital Butgenback-Elisenborn area, thus denying him both valuable time and good road networks for further advances.

LESSONS

Valuable lessons learned in this series of operations are:

1. The infantry battalion should not be given more than one mission as only one can be properly conducted.

attack destroyed all telephone lines and radios were not more than 40% effective. A complete state of flux existed from about 1900 hours 16 December until the regiment was assembled at Elsenborn.

The battalion at Elsenborn was in good defensive positions with a near normal frontage and successfully stopped the enemy attacks of late December. Good fields of fire were available in this position on the forward slope but the long gentle reverse slope would probably have proven equally as good and would have prevented the enemy from laying observed mortar and artillery on our troops causing a high percentage of shrapnel casualties. Many casualties were caused by trench foot and other frost bites due to the inability of the men on the MIR to leave the protection of the foxholes. For the enemy to attack a reverse slope position in this area would have necessitated crossing a clean, snow-covered, smooth skyline and advance over terrain ideal for final protective fires. Strong out-posts on the forward slope would have been successful in delaying the Germans and perhaps prevented him from even reaching the crest.

Supply from the period 16-20 December was poor, as a complete lack of aggressiveness by the S-4 section required the battalion to dispatch an officer to find the service trains and bring forward rations on the fourth day. It was necessary for the battalion to use valuable Ammunition and Pioneer platoon personnel to bring forward ammunition as the Battalion S-4 had been instructed by regiment that he was not to handle ammunition.

To sum up the entire operation, it must be stated that the German attack was strong, aggressive, and designed to hit a known weak sector. The battalion, although not with a clear mission and all companies not available for the defense, did successfully stop an estimated two battalion enemy attack for twenty-four hours from 0900 16 December 1944 to about the same hour 17 December. Enemy envelopment threats from

prepared defense in the F. Buckholz area, the battalion could have better delayed the enemy but the entire battalion position was not available. The excellent work done by Company L in stopping the initial German attack along the rail-line enabled the battalion to hurriedly take up a hasty make-shift defense and prevented the enemy from separating it from the other units of the regiment.

The battalion commander displayed intelligent initiative in withdrawing and defending astride the F. Buckholz-Losheimergraben road but such positions were weakened by the heavy enemy pressure on the 1st Battalion at Losheimergraben and caused the 3rd Battalion to withdraw to Murringen in order to escape being cut off by the enemy penetration of the ^{1st} former battalion. The withdrawal along the Losheimergraben-Murringen highway was well executed with all available troops hastily taking up new positions on the high ground east of Murringen. Defense at this position was dependent upon the 1st and 2nd Battalions successfully withdrawing to the same high ground but extreme enemy pressure and advances prevented this, thus a successful withdrawal by the 3rd Battalion through Krinkelt to Elsenborn in complete darkness under adverse conditions was necessary. Here, as in the previous withdrawal, the enemy and friendly situations were completely unknown and communication was nearly non-existent.

Many well trained company officers and non-commissioned officers were casualties during the first two days of the German attacks but the well fought battles of the battalion in faulty situations and against fierce enemy attacks attest to the efficiency of the remaining leaders. Time and again it was necessary for these leaders to take action on their own initiative as all echelons of the division were severely hit and communication was at times non-existent. Command channels were at times very ineffective because the enemy artillery had early in the

The 394th Infantry in attempting to carry out the aggressive defense in the Losheimergraben area, although not being in direct command of the 3rd Battalion, required it to protect the regimental southern flank. To adequately protect this open flank, the battalion should have had only that mission and by all application of accepted defense doctrines should have carried out several changes. The battalion as located at F. Buckholz was, although the division reserve, in a front line position on the flank with no friendly troops to the south for a distance of 8 to 10 thousand yards. None of the companies were in prepared defensive positions and final protective mortar and artillery fires were not planned. This in conjunction with one rifle company and one machine gun platoon leaving the battalion on 12 December and being attached to the 393rd Infantry until 23 December caused further weakening of an already precarious position.

The companies of the battalion were poorly placed with Company L being the only one in a semi-ready position to meet an attack. This company covered the railroad route of approach but the Lanzerath road which was an equally good or better route was not adequately covered. Anti-guns were not in position to cover this road and mines and other road block methods were not employed. Company K, although ready to take a position south of F. Buckholz, did not have prepared positions and thus its defensive power was greatly weakened. Had this company had good positions about 800 yards south of F. Buckholz along the Franken river, it could have defended initially but no doubt would have had the right flank turned and could not in such a position have long delayed an aggressive force. Company M machine guns and mortars were not properly employed as both were in the battalion reserve position and could not perform their mission of increasing the defensive strength of the rifle companies and the battalion. With an all-around

high with one reinforced platoon being completely lost. The battalion commanders original objections to sending out this patrol were now backed with facts.

About 1700 hours, 28 December, the enemy again attacked but the weight of the blow fell on the 1st Battalion to our right with a glancing blow on our right company. After a very sharp two hour fight with self-propelled guns, artillery, and small arms, the enemy was forced to withdraw and had not penetrated more than 25 yards at any place. This was the last of the enemy attempts to penetrate the 394th Infantry sector.

The majority of the casualties incurred during the next few days was due to the enemy having observed artillery fire on our positions and by the sub-zero weather which caused numerous frost bite evacuations. The rate of attrition caused by these two factors often exceeded the replacement rate.

On 30 December, Volksgrenadier units were identified to our front and the Germans had assumed a defensive role.

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

A study of this series of operations indicates that the battalion was initially assigned two missions, of being the divisions reserve and holding an open division and regimental flank, and could not clearly be committed to carry out either one to the fullest extent. All initial troop dispositions in the Ardennes area were necessarily over extended because of two main reasons. First - the Allied attack to the north required a great many troops with the total Allied divisions available being relatively few for the frontage and; secondly, because of the U.S. Army's belief that the Germans would not attack through the Ardennes and thus our troops in that area were thinly spread.

The division commander desired aggressive patrolling and some prisoners of war to gain information about the enemy to our front as intelligence about the Germans was completely lacking. In compliance with this the regimental commander ordered the 3rd Battalion to send out a strong patrol to penetrate the enemy held woods and continue to the road running north from Rockerath in German held territory. From previous reconnaissance patrols, it was confirmed that the enemy outposts were along the edge of the woods with their main line of resistance of well prepared automatic weapons positions protected by riflemen in about three hundred yards. A reconnaissance patrol had been allowed to enter the woods previously and the Germans had then closed in and cut their escape but two men had succeeded in returning to our lines and gave this valuable information. With this knowledge very careful plans were made for the patrol and artillery support was made available. About 0700 hours 27 December, one rifle platoon with a section of light machine guns attached from Company I under the command of Lt. Comfort moved forward and successfully penetrated the woods. Excellent radio contact with the patrol by SCR 300 was maintained and at 0930 hours after hard going through very deep snows the patrol reported a sharp fire fight at the main enemy position and captured several prisoners. For about forty-five minutes contact was lost but at 1045 hours the patrol leader reported he had reached the road and was returning but about fifteen minutes later another report was received saying they were in a very heavy fire fight and appeared to be surrounded. Heavy small arms fire to our front was heard but no further reports from the patrol were heard and none of the personnel returned. From all indications, the enemy had gained enough time due to the deep penetration to bring up strong reserves and completely overwhelm the platoon. The information gained from this patrol was negative and the cost was very

About 1200 hours, Company K rejoined and the battalion defense consisted of Company K on the left with the left flank about 500 yards from a neck of woods protruding from the enemy positions and on an open and barren forward slope well within small arms range of enemy outposts. Company L was on the left flank also on a forward open slope but 1500 yards from the enemy held woods to our front. The 81mm mortars of Company M supported the front line rifle companies from one position and one machine gun platoon was with each rifle company. The battalion reserve consisted of the few remaining personnel of the Ammunition and Pioneer platoon and the anti-tank platoon in position on the reverse slope of Hill 592.

During the night of 19-20 December, elements of the 395th Infantry and the 2nd Division withdrew from Krinkelt through our lines and dawn of 20 December again found the battalion in a front line position but this time in a good natural defensive position with long fields of fire and with more than adequate artillery support. All obtainable ammunition, anti-tank mines, and automatic weapons were in position and prepared for the next enemy attack. About 2000 hours, 20 December the enemy launched a tank and infantry attack but tremendous fires from the 99th and 2nd Division Artillery battalions lasting forty-five minutes completely routed the attack. None of the enemy infantry or tanks were able to reach our positions and the screaming of the wounded Germans could be heard the remaining hours of darkness.

The period 21-27 December found both forces performing continuous reconnaissance patrolling with frequent vicious artillery duels taking place. Company I and the 1st Platoon of Company M returned to 3rd Battalion control 23 December and immediately took over Company L's position with the latter becoming the battalion reserve and taking up positions on the next terrain feature to the rear at about 800 yards distance. (21)

(21) A-5

the last possible moment thus having to abandon many weapons after limited destruction. Movement of the 57mm anti-tank guns over snowy fields by the inadequate 6x6 truck prime mover was impossible and thus the weapons were captured by enemy troops.

Elements of the 2nd Division, 393rd Infantry, and 395th Infantry were still successfully holding near Krinkelt and north with units of the 1st Division hastily moved up from the rest area near Aubel, Belgium to counterattack and defend in the Butgenbach area, ^{thus} preventing ^{ed} the enemy from driving north to trap the 2nd and 99th Divisions. (19)

Reorganization of the U.S. lines was urgently needed and under the command of Major General Robertson of the 2nd Division, the 2nd and 99th Divisions hastily gathered all available units and prepared to organize positions on the Elsenborn Heights about 4,000 yards east of the vital road junction town of Elsenborn. (20)

Early in the morning of 19 December the 3rd Battalion minus Companies I and K, and the 1st Platoon of Company M assembled on the eastern side of Elsenborn and began to reorganize, distribute the automatic weapons left, distribute supplies, and replace leaders that had been lost. With the first meal in three days, the morale of all personnel went up and everybody was again anxious to stop the enemy. ^{IP} About 1000 hours the regimental defense order was received and we find the battalions in the following locations. The 3rd Battalion was in the north half of the regiment sector on Hill 592 just east of the Dras river. The 1st Battalion was in the southern half of the regimental sector on Hill 607 due east of Elsenborn, and the 2nd Battalion in reserve in the center of the sector and 1000 yards to the rear of the MLR. The 39th Infantry was in position north of the 3rd Battalion and the 324th Engineer Combat Battalion south of the 1st Battalion. (See Map C)

(19) A-3 (20) A-3

progress against stiff resistance but this drive coupled with the enemy thrust from the Butgenbach-Bullingen area in the south threatened the encirclement of the 394th Infantry and accordingly a withdrawal NW from Murringen by the regiment commencing at 0245 hours 18 December 1944 was in effect, ~~and this~~ in darkness with visibility limited to a few feet. Enemy location and penetrations were unknown and in the withdrawal from Murringen to Krinkelt enemy and friendly columns crossed and intermingled with each other and friend or foe was unrecognizable. The battalion motors upon entering Krinkelt ran into enemy armor and through the vehicle drivers acting on their initiative escaped around the town through difficult snow-covered fenced fields, ~~was accomplished~~. Convoy control at this point was impossible. Due to the numerous intermingling of friendly and enemy forces from Murringen to Krinkelt, no pitched battles were fought and with few exceptions the withdrawal was successfully accomplished on the action of excellent squad, platoon and company leadership. When a line running generally east and west through Krinkelt and Wirtzfeld was reached, protection for the disorganized 394th Infantry was afforded by elements of the 2nd Division and 393rd Infantry Regiment ^{which} were holding the enemy. Continued movement to the northwest found the remnants of the 394th Infantry at the eastern side of Elsenborn by 0700 hours 19 December 1944 to receive their first meal in three days and be out of light artillery range.

The action of the past three days had accounted for many men and officers and upon arrival at Elsenborn the only equipment available was rifles and a few light machine guns ~~and two 81mm mortars.~~ Supply discipline had been relatively good but ~~as~~ nearly all movement during the withdrawal was through near-mountainous terrain and knee-deep snow, ~~and against~~ coupled with fierce enemy attacks ^{which} had cost dearly in supplies. Machine gunners and anti-tank crews had remained at their weapons firing until

better terrain of Murringen. (See Map C)

Rations had not been received for two days and it was urgently hoped to obtain them upon arrival in Murringen, but about 1300 hours, 17 December, the regimental kitchens had withdrawn from that town to an unknown location to the northwest to avoid the German forces moving up from the south in the vicinity of Butgenbach. An officer was dispatched to locate the kitchens and return with rations, and finally caught up with them at Krinkelt but enemy armor was entering the town from the north and enemy shelling was heavy and continuous. Further movement of the service train was necessary and after an all night movement on heavily congested roads, it finally stopped at Camp Elsenborn, far to the north and west. Complete lack of aggressiveness of the battalion S-4 had thus caused the 3rd Battalion to operate without Class I and III supplies of any type for two days and nights. Only through the capable work of members of the A & P platoons was ammunition brought forward as the Battalion S-4's of the regiment did not in any way handle ammunition and thus the A & P platoon did much unnecessary long distance supply hauls and could not properly perform other tasks urgently needed. ^{The} A & P ^{platoon} constructed road blocks ^{which} would have impeded the enemy advance greatly as their movement was confined a great deal to roads easily blocked.

Desperate work was accomplished by the battalion in preparing positions at Murringen but at about 0200 hours 18 December 1944, the enemy had outflanked it on the north and south because the 2nd Battalion had been unable to conduct an organized and orderly withdrawal due to the heavy enemy pressure and difficult terrain. Two companies of the 1st Battalion had only 15 or 20 personnel each left as a result of the heavy fighting at Losheimergraben and were subsequently unable to organize a defense at Murringen. To the north of the 394th Infantry at Rokerath and Krinkelt heavy fighting was taking place with the Germans making

morning found all remaining companies intact and further digging in and improving positions. With daylight, the enemy again attacked the 1st Battalion at Losheimergraben after a heavy shelling, bombing, and strafing. The attack was again repulsed and the right and southern flank of the regiment was intact. About 1500 hours, another attack was launched on both the 1st and 3rd battalions and further defense was highly improbable and the regiment was notified of such. About 1600 hours, all battalion motors were sent to Murringen via Losheimergraben-Bullingen highway as a movement NE from Honsfeld by the Germans would have trapped all vehicles in the 1st and 3rd battalion area. (18) (See Map B)

At 1630 hours, a message was received for the 3rd Battalion to withdraw to the high-ground east of Murringen and prepare positions there. About 10 minutes later an order was received attaching Company K to the 1st Battalion and in accordance that company went into positions along the Losheimergraben-Butgenbach road about 400 yards NW of Losheimergraben. The 3rd Battalion now consisted of Battalion Headquarters Company, Company L, and Company M (minus 1st M 6 platoon).

As the battalion units were withdrawing from positions and advance elements beginning preparation of positions east of Murringen, it was learned that the Germans had captured Hunningen, the Regimental C.P. location, and appeared to be moving north to the main highway. This information revealed that Murringen would have to be defended from the south and west which was to be the ^{task of the} 1st Battalion 394th task upon withdrawal from the Losheimergraben area. The 2nd Battalion, on the north, was being heavily assaulted and penetrated and was of necessity going to withdraw to the west and take up defensive positions on the north of the 3rd Battalion, thus, completing the first retrograde movement of all battalions of the regiment and forming a new line on the more open and

(18) A-4

As outlined above, the battalion was now minus Company I and 1st Platoon machine guns, Company M, but the objection was overruled and the 1st Platoon, Company K under Lt. Rose, executive officer of Company K, was dispatched to carry out the assigned mission. About 1800 hours, the platoon, by runner, reported it was in position and not in contact with enemy elements.

All troops continued to improve positions in the new area and prepare for enemy attacks. AT mines were requested but never received and it was later learned the Regimental MSR was cut in the vicinity of Butgenback by German tanks swinging up from the south. All situation information was scarce and that received was very hazy and rapidly changing.

About 2000 hours, 16 December 1944, radio contact with the 1st Platoon, Company K was gained and ^{they} reported enemy armor could be heard moving but not as yet observed. The enemy armor soon appeared on the Lanzerath-Honsfeld road and Lt. Rose informed the Battalion C.O. that the enemy was attacking at 2030 hours and requested additional help. (To reinforce this platoon further was considered inadvisable because what we believed a battalion could not long hold a few hours earlier could not now be held by a platoon or company, thus the Battalion C.O. again requested permission to withdraw the platoon from F. Buckholz, but this request too, was refused.) Continued enemy armor movements were reported and many tanks had gone around the platoon and were bumper to bumper heading for Honsfeld. By 2200 hours, the 1st Platoon had reported about fifty-five tanks with infantry aboard had passed through their position and that they were being overrun. At 2230, the last message from this platoon was received saying many casualties had been suffered and they were surrounded.

The balance of the night the battalion was not attacked but enemy armor was heard to be moving NW along the Lanzerath-Honsfeld road and

in time unless heavy reinforcements were dispatched, which was unlikely because even the 99th Division reserve, the 3rd Battalion, 394th was engaged fully. (17) (See Map C)

In accordance with the developing threats, the Battalion C.O. 3rd Battalion, requested to withdraw to the north and NE to form a new shorter line and to develop the defense of the 1st Battalion right flank, thus, insuring better defense for the entire regimental sector. Such action was taken on the initiative of the 3rd Battalion C.O. with Company L swinging around to change direction from SE to SW and to gain and maintain contact with the southern flank of the 1st Battalion and anchor the company right flank on the road leading from F. Buckholz to the Losheimergraben-Bullingen arterial highway. This would place Company L about 500 yards NE of the railroad line and facing southwest. Company K was to pull back to position in line with Company L and northwest of the F. Buckholz-Losheimergraben-Bullingen highway. Company M was to provide MG and mortar support though fires of the latter weapons were greatly handicapped by lack of OP's and the heavily wooded area. (See Map C)

The withdrawal was progressing according to plan and all troops were digging in at the new positions by 1500 hours which afforded one and one-half hours of daylight for final preparation. Successful accomplishment of the plan was interrupted by an order from C.O. 394th Infantry about 1600 hours to send one platoon of Company K to occupy and defend the area in the vicinity of F. Buckholz. Objection to such a move was made on the grounds that such a small force could not defend the area, to occupy such a position would be of no particular advantage, and would only result in the loss of a badly needed platoon and weaken the right flank positions of the regiment.

(17) A-4

and by a sequence of strong probing action, and culminating in the attack on Company K had attempted to "bounce-off" and find a route of approach south and southwest of the 3rd Battalion. That he would later succeed in such tactics had to be recognized because to the south of this battalion for 8-10,000 yards, there were no U.S. troops and any of the many roads and trails could be used as routes of approach.

Action of the 1st Battalion to the north would necessarily play a tremendous influence on 3rd Battalion actions, thus, let's briefly summarize the battle progress on that part of the sector. Company's A & B formed a defensive line running about 300 yards east and south-east of Losheimergraben and protruded with exposed flanks. Between the south flank of the 1st Battalion and the north flank of Company L, there had been a large gap in our lines and to attempt to form a line covering the easy approaches in this area, the regimental commander had placed the 394th Infantry I&R platoon. Following the heavy artillery barrage and at about 0700 hours the enemy attacked Company's A & B at Losheimergraben very heavily with the objective of seizing the commanding terrain and the vital highway crossroads leading west. Initial assaults with tanks and infantry were repelled but the outposts of Company's A & B and the I&R platoon were cut off and further word was not heard from them after the initial enemy attacks. In taking this position, the enemy had succeeded in driving between the 1st Battalion and 3rd Battalion, thus, leaving the latter in a precarious position with enemy attacks developing both north and south and threatening to completely surround the battalion. The ability of the 1st Battalion to hold Losheimergraben and prevent enemy armor from moving rapidly west to join with enemy armor approaching from the SE and converging on Butgenbach was questionable and appeared to be limited

again, the enemy suffered heavy casualties but in this action the A&P platoon leader was killed.

Early and hasty interrogation of several PW's that were captured by Company L revealed the enemy strength was one battalion of the 12th S S Panzer Division. The PW's also volunteered the information that they had been told there were no U.S. troops in this area which probably explained the route march column formation and lack of security in the initial attack. At this time, it was also determined the PW's were part of a larger force and the von Rundstedt all-out attack order was taken from one of them. What an hour before appeared to be a local attack was now determined or believed to be a large scale offense.

No further action occurred for about one hour when suddenly a very heavy large calibre mortar barrage fell on the Battalion C.P. at F. Buckholz and caused several casualties and destroyed the battalion switchboard and telephone communication with regiment, but telephone by emergency means was still available to all companies.

Shortly after the heavy attack on Company L, Company K in its entirety went into position on the commanding terrain about 400 yards south of the battalion C.P. and blocked the road leading from German held territory to Honsfeld which was to the NW of the 3rd Battalion and on the alternate route to Butgenbach and Vervier. About 1100 hours, Company K was heavily attacked by an estimated two companies of enemy troops and though Germans came within 100 yards of the positions they failed to penetrate and after about three-quarters of an hour withdrew. Casualties to Company K in this fight were negligible and though the enemy did not receive heavy casualties, he failed in his attack.

The initial attack on the 3rd Battalion came from the southeast

A&P platoon was dispatched to a high piece of terrain that overlooked the railroad and extended the right flank of Company L. As enemy elements approached, they did not change formation and did not have security forward. When within about 200 yards and in line with several stationary railroad box cars, all available fires were brought to bear on the enemy and so placed as to confine him to the high railroad embankment. Short intervals in depth separated the enemy elements and an estimated two companies were within 400 yards of the lead elements. As Company L opened frontal fire and fire from the enemy right flank, the A&P platoon also commenced from the enemy's left flank and formed a devastating boxed fire with supporting Company M 81mm mortars firing down the column.

From all indications, the enemy was taken by complete surprise and suffered an undetermined but heavy number of casualties. About one-half a company was trapped in the box car area taking protection in the cars and bazooka and 57mm AT gun firing at close range scored several direct hits. As the enemy attempted to escape from the cars, riflemen and machine gunmen killed them. A high power line relay tower about 300 yards from the main line sheltered Germans with automatic weapons and though the enemies position there was restrained and covered by fires of all types, they were able to cause several casualties among our troops.

Once the enemy troops were stopped, they withdrew but at the expense of about 30 prisoners of war and numerous casualties. Little or no activity to the front was observed and such [?]intimated reorganization for further attack. This later proved to be correct, and in attempting to find out our flank positions, the enemy sent a patrol down the rail line in a wide sweeping move to the southwest and were caught in a large bowl-like ravine by the Ammunitions and Pioneer platoon. Here

prepared to move on short notice to any portion of the division area. On 12 December 1944, the C.O. 394th Infantry relayed an order of the Division C.G. to send one rifle company reinforced to the 395th Infantry which was north of the 394th Infantry to reinforce them as they were attacking strongly held positions in the Seigfreid line and making slow progress. In compliance with this directive, Company I with the first machine gun platoon of Company M was detached and attached to the 395th Infantry as regimental reserve. Actions of this company were many and varied during the following two weeks. Thus we find the 3rd Battalion, 394th Infantry minus one rifle company and ^{one} machine gun platoon holding an open division flank and also assuming the role of division reserve. (15) (16)

THE GERMAN ATTACK

At 0530 hours 16 December 1944, the Germans commenced a two hour barrage along the entire regimental front with mortars, artillery and multi-barrelled rocket projectors which concentrated mainly on the Losheimergraben area in the 1st Battalion area initially, then moved south to fall on elements of the 3rd Battalion.

About 0930 hours, unidentified troops appeared at about 1000 yards on the railroad line which Company L was astride. Early morning mists prevented definite recognition of the approaching elements but Company L outposts a short while later definitely established the fact that they were enemy and so relayed the information. From the description, it was determined the enemy was in a closed route march column formation and to achieve maximum casualty effect the Company L outposts were withdrawn and the main positions fully alerted and instructed to hold all fires. Upon receiving this information, the Battalion Headquarters

(15) A-5 (16) Personal Knowledge

to the denseness of the forests and extended distances between platoons and companies.

The vital crossroads of Losheimergraben defended by the 3rd Battalion afforded a good main highway leading from Germany to Butgenbach, Verveir and Leige. This crossroad was the hub of the only supply route in the area and all supplies for the regiment had to move through this point. This high ground dominated all other terrain to the front and was the key terrain feature of the regiment sector.

On 9 December 1944, the 1st Battalion, 394th relieved the 3rd Battalion, 394th and thus the latter went into a flanking position and by virtue of being in a reserve position and having small hutments in the area, the troops could sleep under cover, repair clothing, and thoroughly clean and refit all weapons. (14) (See Map B)

The battalion was to protect the right flank of the division and the regiment and to prepare for further action. To accomplish this, Co. L with one section of heavy machine guns had positions astride a main railroad entering from Germany about 300 yds SE of F. Buckholz Station and had contact with the Regimental I&R platoon which extended the right flank of the 1st Battalion. Co. K with one section heavy machine guns had the equivalent of a platoon in defensive position on high ground 500 yds S & SW of F. Buckholz and connected with Co. L and maintained the balance of the Co. K in a centrally located battalion reserve area. Co. I was in the battalion reserve area about 400 yds NE with the balance of Co. M in reserve. The Battalion C.P. was located in the center of the arc formed by Co's L & K in a large building near F. Buckholz railroad station. The entire battalion position was lightly held and all troops were not dug-in, nor were defensive positions assigned to all companies as the battalion was to be

(14) A-4, p. 3

THE REGIMENTAL SITUATION

On 14 November 1944 after a hasty trip from England, the 394th Infantry relieved the 60th Infantry Regiment of the 9th Division and took over a defensive position on the border between Belgium and Germany in the vicinity of Bullingen, Belgium and facing the Seigfreid Line. The 2nd Battalion, 394th Infantry went into position on the northern sector on the international border at Weisentein and covered an extended front through very heavily wooded, rough, hilly, and broken terrain. South of the 2nd Battalion, the 3rd Battalion took over position protecting a crossroad on the vital Vervier-Leige highway from the 2nd Battalion, 60th Infantry and like the 2nd Battalion was spread thinly through heavy woods and rough terrain. On the southern flank of the 394th Infantry and also the southern flank of the 99th Division in a so-called reserve area entered the 1st Battalion, 394th Infantry with the mission of protecting the open flank and forming a limited reserve. To the south some 8-10,000 yds. was the 14th Cavalry Group with the only contact being by motorized patrols two times per day. No other forces were in this area and enemy patrols could operate without hinderance. The mission of the regiment was to defend and perform aggressive patrolling and in the First patrol action, the 3rd Battalion, S-2 and C.O. Co L were killed while performing patrol action against German units in the Seigfreid Line. (13)

The terrain in this area was, as pointed out above, very rugged and followed a dominating heavily wooded ridge line running SW-NE with deep approaches running into our positions and areas that could be covered only by combat groups and self contained small units. Supporting flank- ing and final protective fires from Machine Guns could cover only a portion of the front and out-posting was difficult even in daylight due

(13) Personal Knowledge

Command was well informed about our positions and our tactics and could consequently develop an intelligent attack accordingly.

To turn the tide on the Western Front, the Germans scraped the bottom of the manpower barrel and recalled divisions from other fronts. The final German order of battle was as follows: To the north on an East-West line running north of Monschau and Vervier to form a blocking force to keep open the penetration on the south was the 67 Corps composed mainly of infantry divisions and strong anti-tank elements, all a part of the Sixth Panzer Army. The spearhead of this army was to be led by the 1st and 2nd S.S. Panzer Corps which were to cross the Meuse River between Liege and Huy, Belgium and then drive northwest to Antwerp. The crossing of the Meuse was to be aided by a special hand-picked English-speaking paratroop brigade under Skorzeny which was to seize bridgeheads and disrupt the Allied communication lines. South of the Sixth Panzer Army we find the Fifth Panzer Army with the boundary between armies running along an east-west line just north of St. Vith, Belgium. To spearhead this drive, we find the 58th Panzer Corps and 47th Panzer Corps which were to cross the Meuse in the vicinity of Dinant and Namur, Belgium, then head northwest to Brussels and protect the left flank of the spearheads of the Sixth Panzer Army to the north. Protection for the southern flank of the penetration was to be accomplished with two infantry corps of the Seventh Army. (12) (See Map A)

The plan had the enormous task of not only reaching Antwerp and denying that port to the Allies, but also of destroying all Allied troops north of the Aachen area which were attacking and threatening to reach the Cologne plains and then the Ruhr Industrial Area, the greatest such area in Western Europe and the German war industrial potential without which they could not carry on a large scale war.

(12) A-1, p. 14,30,31,32

not on map B

vital Elsenborn vicinity and road network. To the south of this division with an 8-10,000 yard gap was the 14th Cavalry Group holding a difficult nine mile sector and further south was the 106th Infantry Division, newly arrived from the U.S., and in line since 12 December holding the vital and difficult Schnee Eifel. Going further south we find the 28th Infantry Division, C.C.A. of the 9th Armored Division and the 4th Infantry Division holding an extended front of about 40 miles. (11) (See Map B)

The entire allied front in this sector was quiet but patrols of both Germans and Americans were able to move readily between the necessary and numerous gaps in the opposing lines and during this time the Germans thoroughly reconnoitered the entire area and caused Field Marshall Model to say, "The enemy does not have a continuous line of resistance. He carries on defensive battle from strong points about four to five kilometers in depth. In the most forward line, relatively strong security elements are placed in well-developed positions. These security elements yield systematically in the case of strong attacks and retreat to the strong points behind them. The strong points are organized chessboard fashion, with flanking effect, well adapted to terrain sectors, localities, wood patches, and crossroads. At the strong points which are defended, even when surrounded, well camouflaged and dug in tanks and tank destroyers and heavy weapons, especially anti-tank and mortars form the backbone. Stronger reserves are in positions several kilometers behind the zone of strong points, at centrally located points, such as villages or forest patches near main highways. They are fully motorized, and are committed in combat groups of two to three infantry companies with eight to ten tanks. They go into action about six hours after the attack starts". From this we can see that the German High

(11) A-2, A-9

of three armored divisions, eleven infantry divisions, and three cavalry groups. In the southern portion of the 1st Army area was the Ardennes sector with some eighty miles of "quiet" front covered by four infantry divisions and one cavalry group of the 8th U.S. Corps; north of this was the 5th U.S. Corps of four infantry divisions and part of two armored divisions and a cavalry group with the mission of capturing the Roer River dams; and on the extreme northern flank of the 1st U.S. Army was the 7th Corps along the Roer River with four infantry divisions, an armored division, part of second armored division, and a cavalry group. North of the 1st U.S. Army was the U.S. Ninth Army with two corps and six divisions sitting on the Roer River waiting for the capture of the dams south, to launch an attack across the river towards the Rhine. Most of the Roer river line was lightly held by infantry and north of the 5th Corps, four armored divisions and two infantry divisions were out of contact with the enemy and resting, re-equipping and preparing for further offensive actions in this area. (10)

Along most of the First and Ninth Army fronts, the divisions marked time and held, but ^{on} 13 December 1944, the 5th Corps launched an offensive through the hills and dense woods of the northern Ardennes in the vicinity of Monschau heading for the town of Schmidt and the vital Roer River dams in that area. Slow steady progress was made through the bad terrain and a ^{persistent} enemy ^{force} that was determined to hold the dams. Shifting slightly to the south, we find the following conditions: The 99th Divisions holding a twenty mile front through dense woods and rough terrain from Monschau south to Losheimergraben with the 2nd Division attacking along a corridor through the northern sector of the 99th Division. Elements of the latter division were also engaged in this attack while the balance of the division was in a defensive position protecting the

(10) A-1, p. 74,75,76,77 A-8

elements for a successful offensive action was gained -- surprise and deception, with a powerful German Army poised and hidden in the heavily wooded areas of the Ardennes forests with 3000 airplanes ready to support the attack. (7)

THE GENERAL SITUATION

After the race across France, Belgium and the Lowlands, the Allied troops approached the German frontier and were halted by the lack of gasoline and other supplies and required time to regroup and prepare for an all-out offensive against Germany. With supplies again meeting demand, the Allies took the offensive in November and by consistent hard fighting against stiff resistance and inclement weather had pulled up to the German West Wall on many portions of the front and in early December were fighting for the Roer river dams just north of the Ardennes forest. (8)

Late in November the entire Allied strength was sixty-three divisions with some badly depleted due to the Hurtgen Forest attack. These sixty-three divisions were stretched along a 600 odd-mile front from the Swiss border to the North Sea holding some portions of the front lightly while attacks were launched on other parts. Economy of force had to be seriously enacted with such a condition existing. Opposing the Allied forces was an estimated and identified seventy divisions with a number of others in the area. The Ardennes area was selected as one of the portions of the front to be lightly held by the Allies as it was rugged terrain with poor roads and thus, not assumed to be an area of a likely German attack. In this sector, many of the new U.S. divisions first went into line to receive their battle indoctrination. (9)

The U.S. First Army was composed of three corps containing a total

(7) A-1, p. 30-48 (8)(9) A-1, Chap 2

Eastern front, Italian front and Norwegian garrison sacrificing badly needed troops to support this all-out ill-conceived venture. (5)

Surprise was to be of vital importance in the German plan and much of the success depended upon this element. Great and painstaking precautions coupled with deceptive devices and plans were to be taken to maintain secrecy to the last hour with commanders on all levels being kept uninformed until the latest time consistent with necessary planning, re-equipping and movement requirements. In conformance with the generally well acknowledged fact that the Allies would attempt to gain and maintain a penetration and exploitation in the Aachen area and continue to the Rhine River, the German code word "Watch on the Rhine" was invented and behind this veil the Sixth Panzer Army and the Seventh Army was spotted on the Cologne plains by the Allies in November. To the Allies, as the Germans wanted, this appeared to be a defensive-counterattack scheme to prevent us from reaching the Rhine. (6)

Strict secrecy regulations were in effect with attacking divisions moving into their last assembly position one day prior to the attack, all movement during day-light was forbidden, no reconnaissance over attack areas was to be made, a fake army group was established north of Cologne, travel was limited, fake radio messages were sent, all unreliable elements were weeded out of attacking divisions, airforce units were held deep in Germany to be moved up at the last moment, and fake clues were to be planted to mislead us. All these measures plus the Allied frame of mind that the Germans were unable to mount a large scale offensive and that the German rate of attrition was greater than the capacity for replacement caused a "safe-from-attack" thought and further enabled the German High Command to gain the necessary supplies, troops, and opportune area for an all-out attack. Thus, one of the greatest

(5) A-1, p. 12 (6) A-1, p. 16,17,18.

cutting off and isolating from 20 to 30 Allied divisions and probably change the outcome of the war on the Western Front. It was to a bold and direct plan with great deception and to be launched during a season unfavorable for Allied air superiority to greatly influence the battle.

(3) (See Map A)

After further research, it was decided by the German High Command to carry out the attack with two Panzer armies with infantry divisions in coordination with strong anti-tank and anti-aircraft units to form blocking forces north and south of the main penetrations spearheads. German airforce units, which had been closely supervised and conserved, were to venture forth in an all-out support and to gain and maintain localized air superiority. Following powerful artillery preparations, strong armored spearheads were to smash through the Allied lines and race for the Meuse river and gain bridgeheads there the first day, then strike for Liege and Antwerp. This was all to be accomplished against strict time schedules and was designed to effect fast penetration thrusts after the Allied Armies had been broken and demoralized. Armored units of the first wave were to move forward with the single mission of gaining Meuse River bridgeheads and were not to waver from this mission as mop-up operations of isolated units were to be accomplished by infantry units on the heels of the armored elements. (4)

Thirty-two German divisions were to be used in the battle with an order of battle of twelve Panzer divisions, twenty Volksgrenadier divisions, twelve artillery corps, fourteen army artillery battalions, seven rocket brigades and thirteen anti-tank battalions. To gather such a striking force together after five hard years of warfare was a great drain on the German Army and presented great problems of troop economy with the

(3) A-1, p. 9,10,11,12,13 (4) A-1, p. 11. A-6

role in the entire plan and maintained an active participation during all phases. To aid in the halting of General Patton's racing armies in August 1944, a plan was attempted to strike from the south in the vicinity of Metz to cut the American lines of communication and drive north to the Belgium border and thus gain valuable time in preparing for the defense of the Fatherland, but available troops caused this to be cancelled and gathered for the later and larger offensive. This new and larger offensive was to be well-planned, supervised and to make use of deception to the greatest degree. (2)

Where to attack? With the limited number of divisions available to the German commanders, it was evident that action on the Eastern front would merely dent the Russian manpower reservoir and would not be decisive. Looking to the west, conditions for an attack were more favorable -- the American and British Armies had invaded and liberated France with a minimum number of divisions due to air, mechanized and motorized superiority. In addition, the Allied Armies in the Western Front were forced to bring in all supplies through a few battered and inefficient seaports plus the Normandy beachheads coupled with a long overland supply route maintained by costly and slow truck transport. The German High Command believed the main Allied effort would be made in the north in the vicinity of Aachen with the Cologne plains and Ruhr Industrial Area as the objectives. With the known limited number of Allied divisions available, it was evident that portions of the Allied front would be necessarily lightly held in line with economy of forces to support offensive action on other parts of the front. German intelligence knew the Ardennes forest in Belgium and Luxumberg were lightly held and a drive through such an area with a concentrated effort on a narrow front would allow the German divisions to break through and head towards Antwerp, thus

(2) A-1, p. 3,4,5,6,7.- A-7

THE OPERATIONS OF THE 3RD BATTALION, 394TH INFANTRY
(99TH INFANTRY DIVISION) IN THE GERMAN ARDENNES
COUNTER-OFFENSIVE, 16 DECEMBER - 1 JANUARY 1945
(Personal Experience of a Battalion Executive Officer)

INTRODUCTION

"Soldiers of the West Front. Your great hour has struck. Strong attacking armies are advancing today against the Anglo-Americans. I don't need to say more to you. You all feel it, everything is at stake. You bear in yourselves a holy duty to give everything and to achieve the superhuman for "Our Fatherland and our Fuhrer" - von Rundstedt. (1)

This order taken from a German soldier about 1000 hours 16 Dec 1944 in the vicinity of Losheimergraben, Belgium by a member of Co. L, 394th Infantry, gave the first indication of the vastness and intent of the German counter-offensive in the Ardennes area in December 1944 and dictated the role that the 3rd Battalion, 394th Infantry would play in attempting to aid in the defense of the central sector of the Anglo-American front. In order to thoroughly understand the sequence of the operations of this Battalion, it is necessary to review the situation on the Western Front in the fall and early winter of 1944.

Contrary to the opinion of the masses, the German attack in the Ardennes sector was not a spur of the moment action but was apparently conceived subsequent to July 1944 after the Allies had successfully invaded and expanded the toehold on the European continent on the Normandy beaches. Most authorities are of the opinion that the actual planning stage of the attack began when the American Armies were racing across France and approaching the German frontier. Whether von Rundstedt, Model or Keitel conceived the tactical plan and launched the counter-offensive is open for discussion, but apparently Hitler played a major

(1) Captured enemy document, A-10

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*Location of documents
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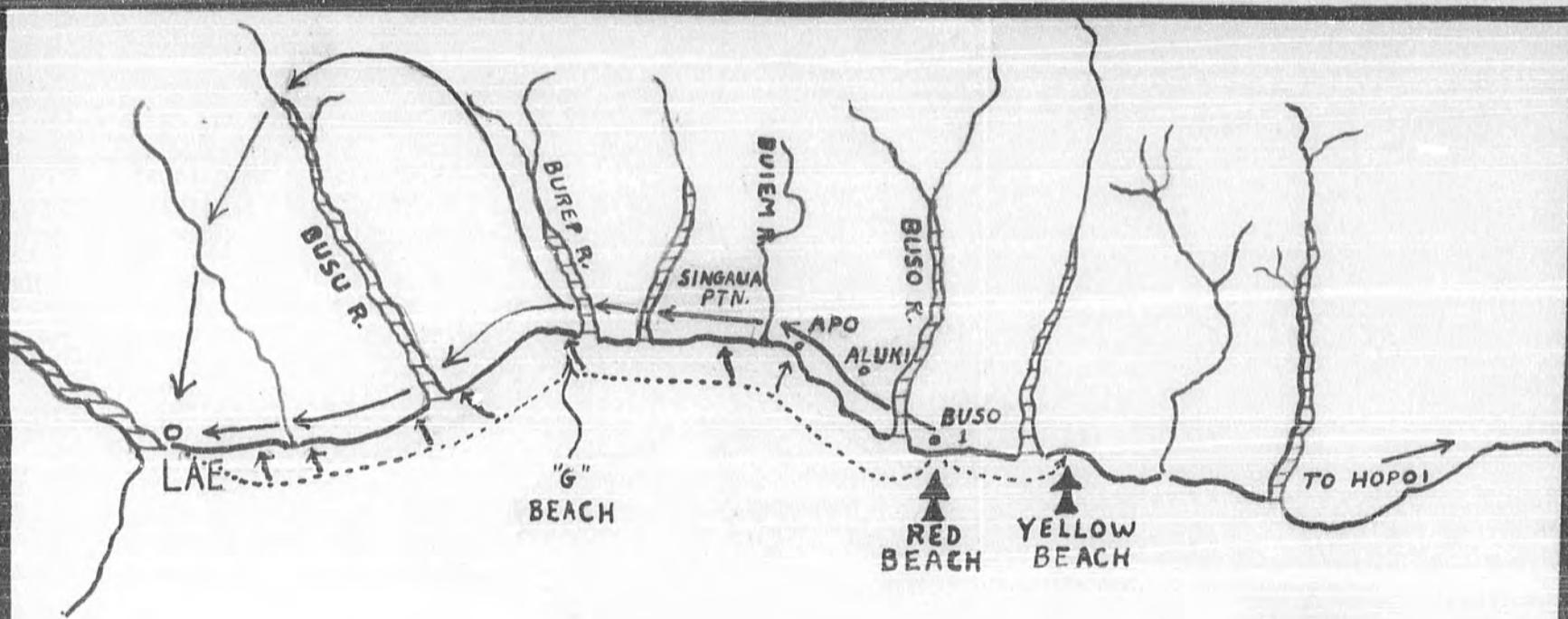
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ACADEMIC DEPARTMENT
THE INFANTRY SCHOOL
Fort Benning, Georgia

ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS COURSE
1947 - 1948

THE OPERATIONS OF THE 3RD BATTALION, 394TH INFANTRY
(99TH INFANTRY DIVISION) IN THE GERMAN ARDENNES
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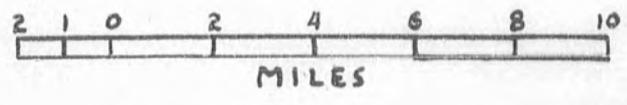
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Major George A. Clayton, Infantry
ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS CLASS NO I

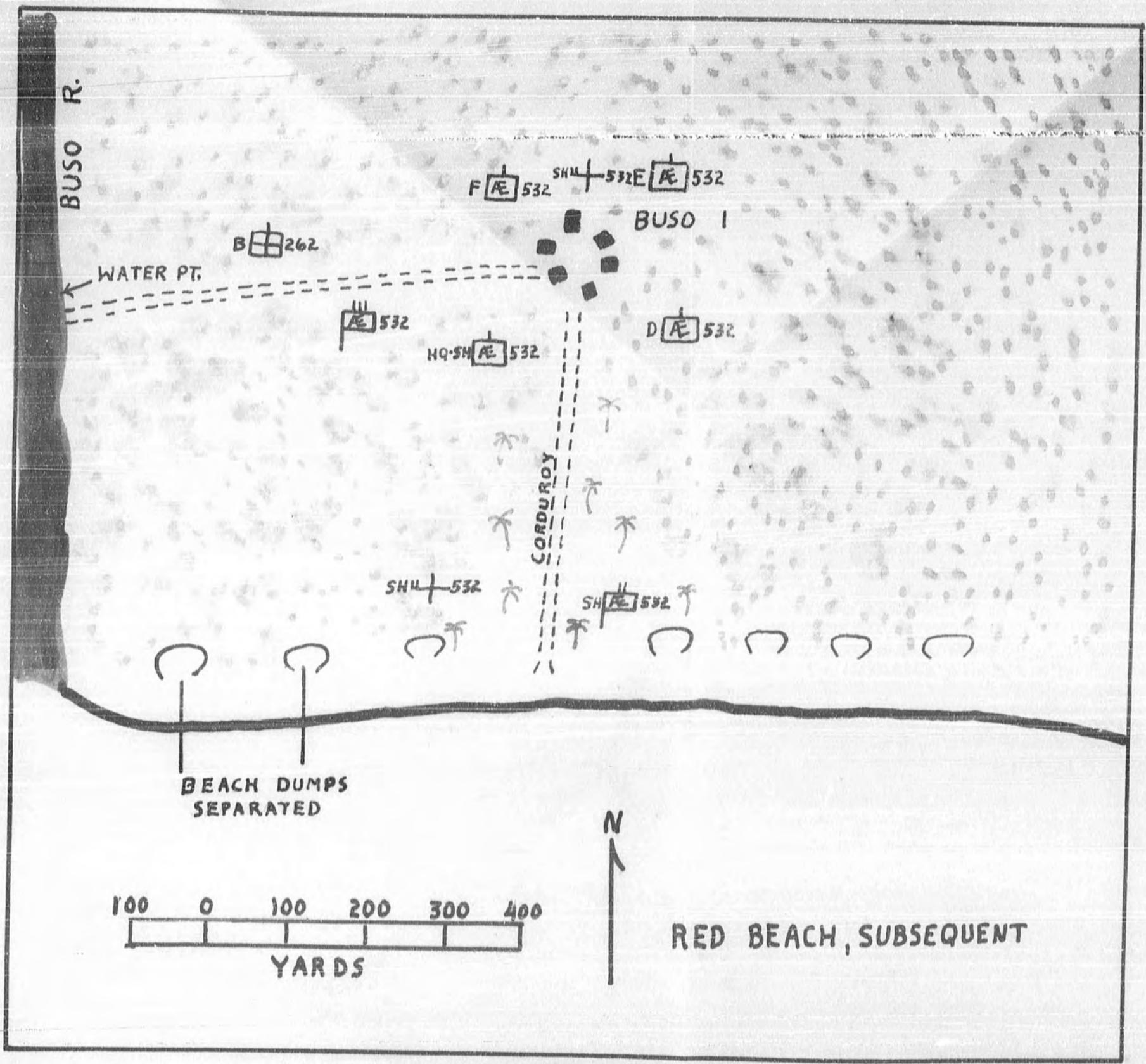


MAP 6

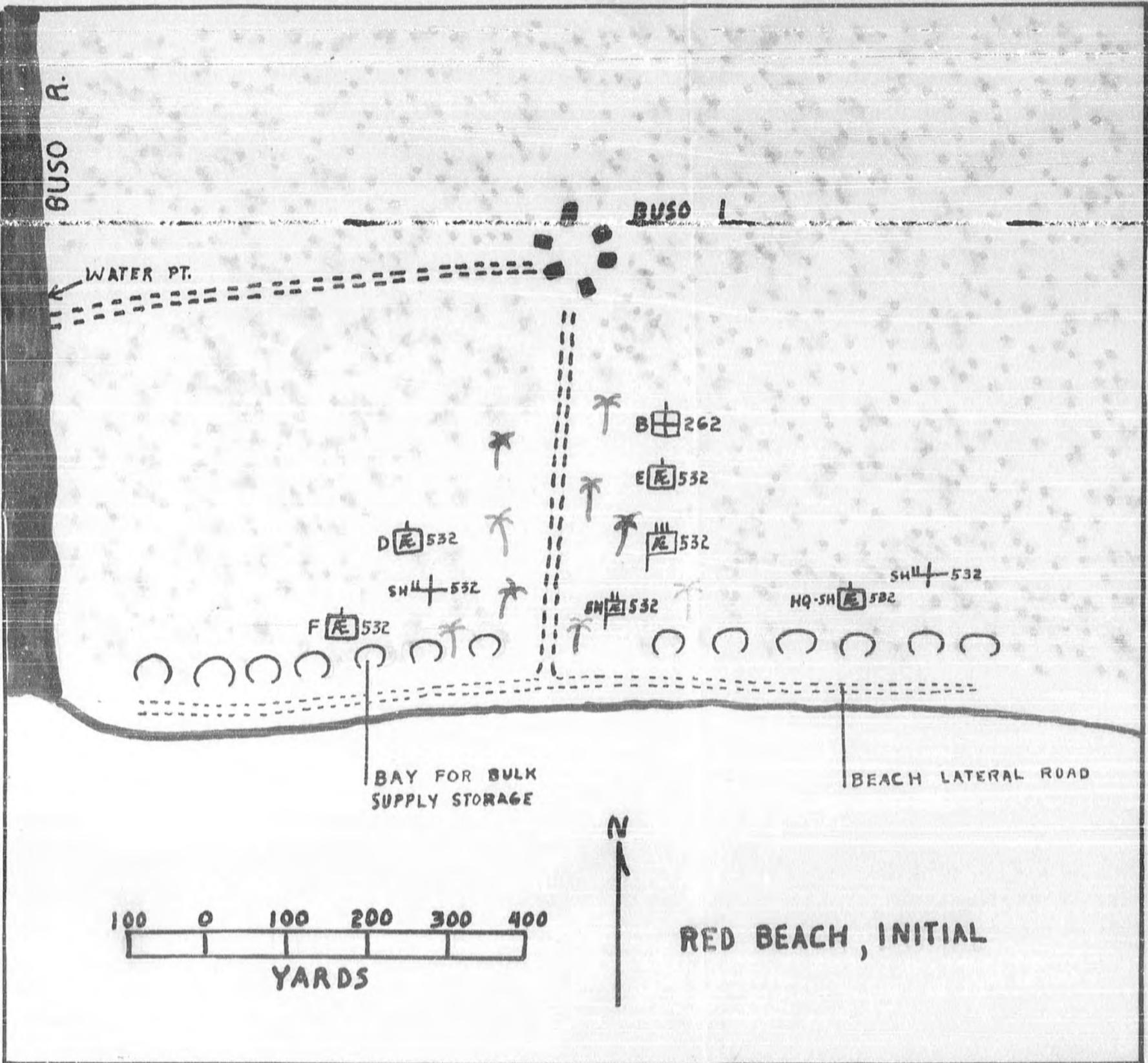
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 532 EBSR BOAT LANE AND BEACHING PTS. - - - ↗ ↘



RED BEACH TO LAE



MAP



MAP

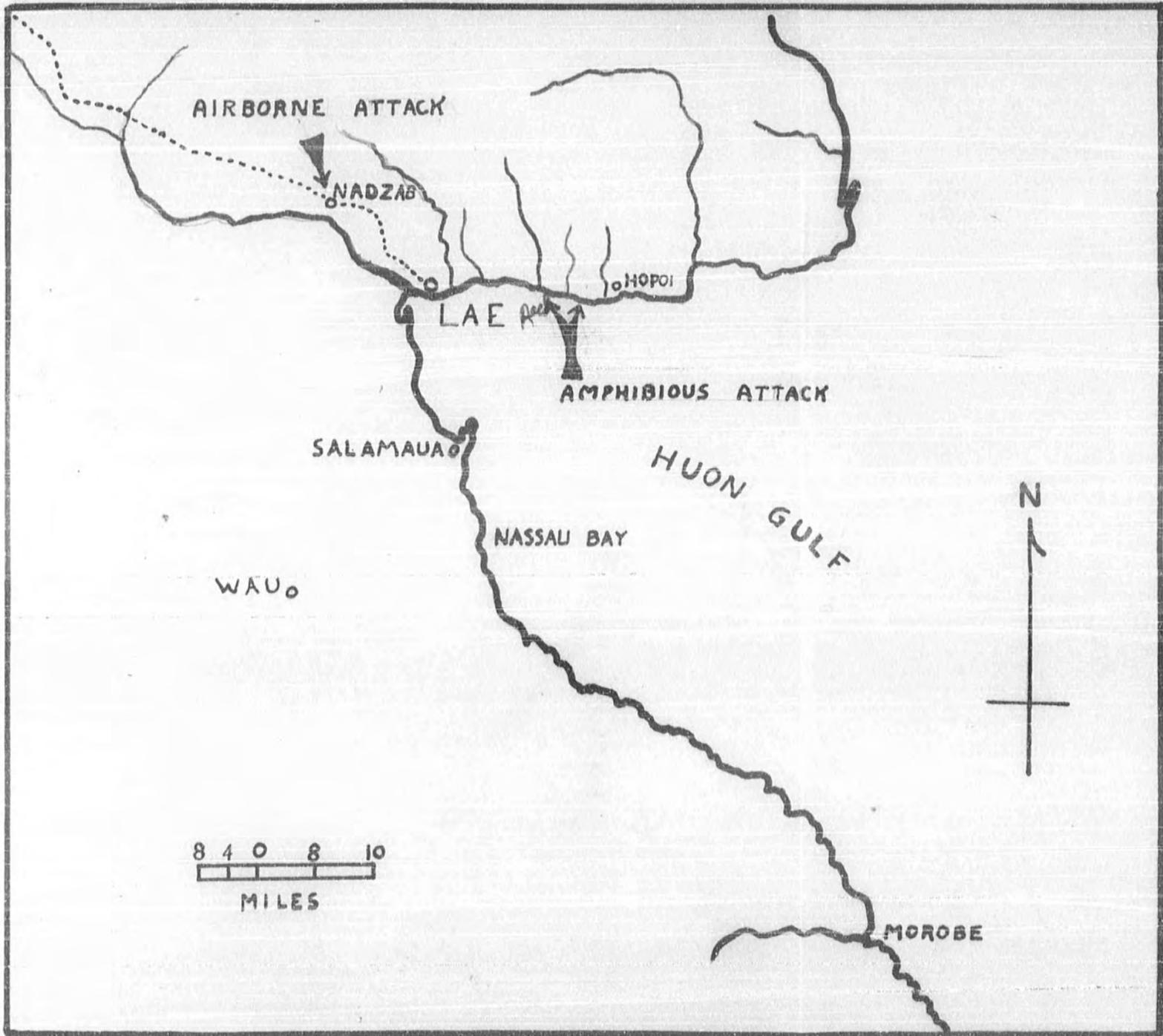
RED BEACH, INITIAL

LANDING DIAGRAM-RED BEACH

| WAVE | TIME | COMPOSITION | CRAFT | TRG. |
|--|-------|-------------------|----------------------------|---------------|
| | | | | |
| 1 | H | □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ | 2 APD | 20 BRIG |
| 2 | H+10 | ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ | 4 LCI | 20 BRIG |
| 3 | H+15 | ○ ○ ○ ○ | 4 LCI | 20 BRIG |
| 4 | H+30 | □ □ △ □ □ □ □ | 3 LCT 1 LCM 3 LCV(P) | ARTY AA |
| 5 | H+35 | ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ | 7 LCI | 26 BRIG |
| 6 | H+50 | □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ | 8 LCV(P) | 532 |
| 7 | H+55 | □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ | 8 LCV(P) | 532 |
| 8 | H+60 | △ △ □ □ □ □ △ △ | 4 LCT 4 LCM | 532 |
| 9 | H+75 | □ △ △ △ △ △ □ | 5 LCM 2 LCV(P) | 532 |
| 10 | H+85 | □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ | 8 LCV(P) | 532 |
| 11 | H+92 | □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ | 8 LCV(P) | 532 |
| 12 | H+105 | △ △ △ △ △ △ | 6 LST | 26 BRIG |
| 13 | H+110 | □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ | 7 LCT | BULK SUPS. |
| <p>NOTE. ELEMENTS 532 EBSR LAND IN WAVES 1 AND 4.</p> | | | | |

LEGEND

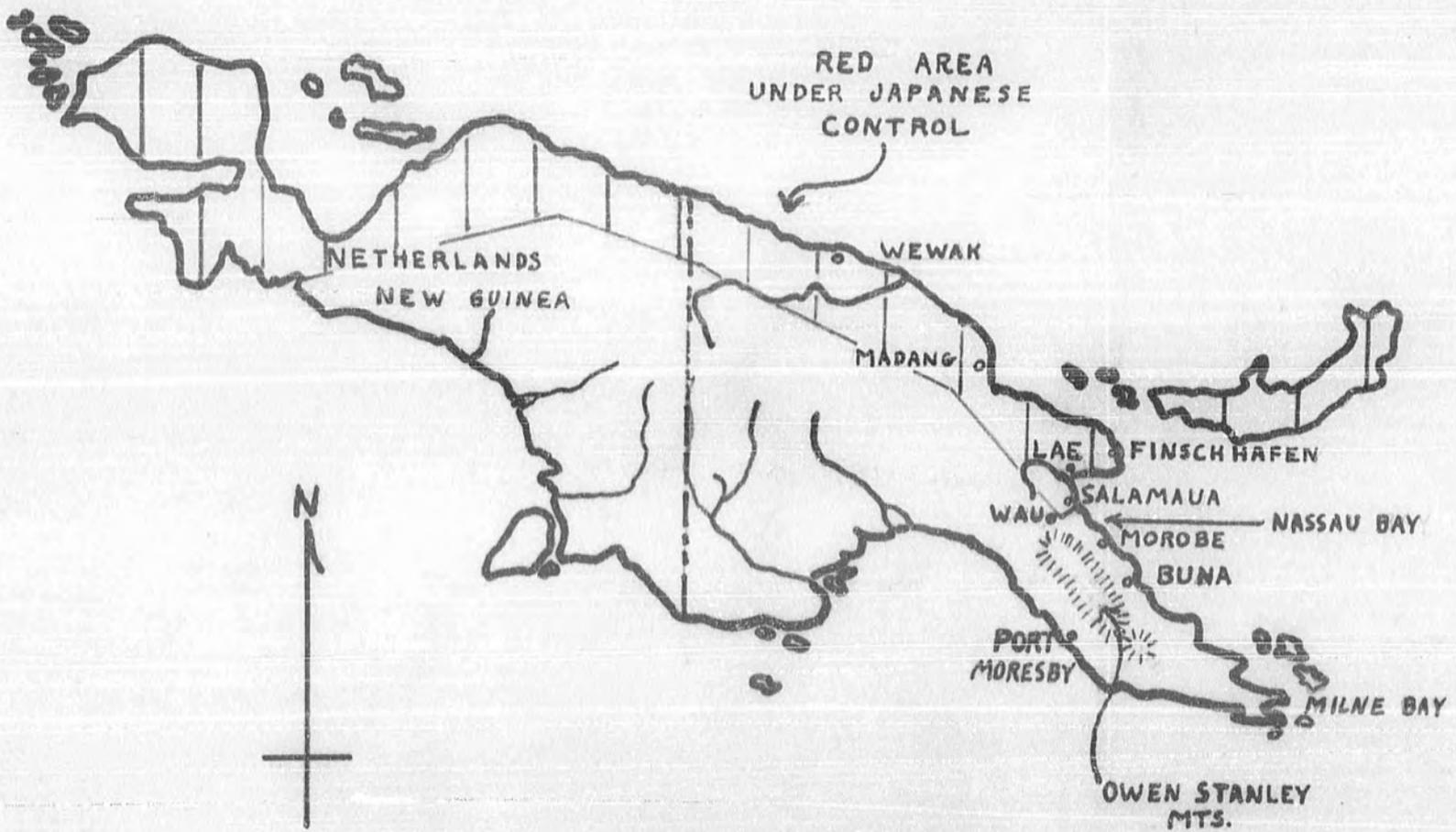
LCV (P) □ LCM △
 LCI ○ LCT □ LST △



NEW GUINEA



RED AREA
UNDER JAPANESE
CONTROL



7. Until dumps are constructed, roads developed, and cargo handling details and equipment are ready, the general discharge of cargo from LSTs should not be undertaken. Little but confusion and overall loss of time results from the clogging of beaches.

8. Ammunition and gasoline ⁱⁿ dumps must be widely separated.

9. Adequate bivouac areas for troops engaged in shore party operations must be provided for in beach development plans.

10. Infantry units engaged in coastal operations should be provided with a boat detachment or unit where an adequate road net does not exist.

11. The battle is fought at the end of the supply line.

12. LCMs and LCV(P)s are seaworthy and can travel safely in ordinary weather over distances up to 75 miles between sunset and dawn.

7 13. Where an ~~an~~ unsheltered boat anchorage is not available, damage to craft during storms must be expected and planned for.

14. Boat and shore personnel must be trained to a high point of physical condition, versatility and discipline. They are required to work long hours without rest under all varieties of weather, light, and terrain.

15. Mechanical aids in unloading bulk supplies from landing ships and craft should be employed to the maximum to replace human labor.

16. All officers and non-commissioned officers in the boat units should be trained in navigation.

use of a good engineer unit for stevedore work is illogical. However, the situation was accepted by the men and they put all their energy into doing an efficient job.

This summary would not be complete without mentioning the good relationship manifested between the 9th Australian Division and the 532d EBSR. There was the closest kind of cooperation between these two units which in turn was founded on a mutual respect for each other's abilities. By the end of the operation, the Australians were referring to the 532d EBSR as the 9th Division Navy.

LESSONS

Lessons brought out in this operation included the following:

1. The planning phase of any amphibious operation must include a rehearsal. Defects in plans can be found and remedied prior to the actual landing.
2. Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment operations cannot be governed by hard and fast SOPs. Sometimes, because of enemy action, weather, or unforeseen hydrographical beach conditions all plans must be abandoned and new ones thought up and executed on the spot.
3. Every member of an Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment must be trained with the idea that the job must be done regardless of method or procedure. Flexibility is the keynote in shore party operations.
4. Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment responsibilities must be clearly delineated and agreed upon.
5. ^{also elements} Shore party troops and equipment must land early in the assault and initiate beach reconnaissance.
6. Shore-based boat maintenance is required on the far shore. A small detachment consisting of mechanics, hull maintenance men and welders, together with appropriate equipment should go ashore on D-day. This detachment could keep many critical and valuable craft running that would otherwise be taken out of service.

The beach development plan, as jointly prepared, was faulty in one outstanding respect. Areas assigned for installations and bivouacs were too near the beach. This resulted in undue concentration of personnel and it is something short of miraculous that more were not killed during the aerial attacks on RED BEACH.

LSTs transporting large numbers of vehicles were beached prior to the construction of a beach exit road. As a result, vehicles were parked bumper to bumper on the beach for a considerable period of time. Had the enemy chosen this time to bomb the beach, he would have found a remunerative target. Landing schedules should have provided for the LSTs to beach on call from the shore.

Initial beach dumps were developed with little thought for proper dispersal of ammunition and gasoline. Had these items been properly separated, initial losses by enemy bombing would have been cut in half.

It had not been fully anticipated that some boats might be damaged so badly that the maintenance detachment could not effect repairs. As it was, boats were in rather short supply by the day of the storm when the 6 LCMs were tossed high and dry on the beach. All told, during the 12 days, it required a total of 21 LCMs and 21 LCV(P)s to maintain 10 of each in operable condition.

A great deal of credit is due the officers and men of the boat detachment for the skillful manner in which they conducted missions to the forward areas. Most of the time they were landing within a few hundred yards of the enemy, often under fire, on beaches that had not been previously reconnoitered, and doing this in the middle of the night. At no time did they fail in an assigned mission.

Likewise, the personnel of the Shore Battalion deserve credit. To them fell the task of developing a functioning beachhead in what was practically a swamp from the start. Frequent rains soon turned the area into a quagmire. Naval resupply echelons arrived and somehow were always unloaded with a minimum of delay. It was hard, back-breaking work. The

Australian advance was rapid and by nightfall of 15 September they were ready for the assault on LAE itself. During the advance, resupply boat missions went forward each night from RED BEACH to the front line infantry. (84)

On 16 September, following a heavy bomber strike, both the 7th and 9th Divisions entered LAE (85), and thus the last serious threat to SE NEW GUINEA was removed. (86)

Back at RED BEACH, the men of the 532d EBSR Group were conscious of the fact that they had successfully completed their first real mission as a unit and that their efforts had contributed much to the success of the 9th Australian Division. However, with the news of the capture of LAE, came orders to commence the shuttling of the contents of the RED BEACH dumps to LAE. (87)

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

An appraisal of this operation reveals that the boats of the 532d EBSR were the factors which enabled the 9th Australian Division to make an advance of 14 miles over difficult jungle terrain in 12 days. This remains despite the fact that it was not clearly anticipated prior to the operation that the boats would be employed in the manner in which they were. In planning this operation, the Australians had conceived of resupply overland. But they had not considered the elements nor the speed with which they would advance. As a result, the forward troops advanced much faster than the engineers could build a road. By contrast, the sea offered a ready-made highway, with an unlimited number of lanes over which boats could travel and keep up with the advancing infantry. The supply system eventually adopted functioned well and was flexible enough to meet sudden changes in the situation. The ability to supply fighting troops separated by miles of jungle from their supply dumps was the outstanding achievement of the campaign.

(84) Personal knowledge; (85) J, p. 55; (86) H, p. 177; (87) Personal knowledge.

The additional troops placed in the bridgehead by this operation enabled the 24th Brigade to rout the enemy and begin a swift advance toward LAE.

(79)

In the meantime, the 7th Australian Division had been air-transported to NADZAB, which had been seized by Parachute Troops on 5 September. This force was advancing toward LAE from the west, meeting only spasmodic resistance. SALAMAUA had fallen to the Allied Forces on 11 September.

(80)

Back at RED BEACH, the Shore Battalion labored day and night unloading naval resupply echelons, maintaining roads in the beachhead, and loading 532d craft for supply of the forward troops. Rains had turned the area into a sea of mud and all available personnel and equipment were utilized on engineer tasks. Supplies were moved to available firm ground and all roads were being corduroyed. (81)

The arrival of 11 LCMs and 11 LCV(P)s from MOROBE on the night of 12 September put the boat detachment back to full strength again. Lack of shore-based maintenance facilities and the storm had reduced the number of operable craft to just a few LCV(P)s. If the replacements had not arrived, adequate resupply of the forward infantry could not have been maintained. As it was, the above craft arrived about midnight and within an hour (82), 4 LCMs, and 3 LCV(P)s had been loaded and dispatched forward.

(83)

By 13 September the division was able to anticipate daily requirements of the forward troops. As a result, missions to the front line infantry were set up on a regularly scheduled basis with a certain number of craft set aside daily for this purpose. In addition, numerous ferrying tasks were performed behind the front lines. These consisted mainly of moving artillery and division troops up close to the forward brigades and in supplying them by boat from RED BEACH. Through 14 and 15 September the

(79) Personal knowledge; substance of statement by Lt. Col. Hugh Norman, CO 2/28 Aust Inf Bn on 18 Sept 1943; (80) J, p. 37 and 54; (81) Eye-witness; (82) Eye-witness; (83) S.

maintenance. In view of the directive to maintain 10 LCMs and LCV(P)s in operating condition, regimental headquarters at MOROBE was requested by radio to send 10 more LCMs and 10 more LCV(P)s to RED BEACH. (77)

On the night of 11 September, an urgent request from 9th Division Headquarters was received for 3 LCV(P)s to haul critically needed supplies to the 24th Brigade. Despite the stormy conditions, the mission was organized and Lieutenants Clift and McPherson volunteered to lead it. Upon arriving at the west bank of the BUSU, these officers found that the remaining two battalions of the 24th Brigade had not yet crossed the river because of its being in flood. At the request of the 24th Brigade, Lieutenant McPherson, with 2 LCV(P)s, volunteered to remain there during the day and ferry troops around the north of the river to the west bank. Lieutenant Clift loaded his boat with Australian wounded and returned to RED BEACH. (78)

The 2 LCV(P)s under Lieutenant McPherson began ferrying troops around the mouth of the river just before dawn. At daylight, they came under enemy observation and were subjected to mortar fire and air-bursts. This fire was directed upon these boats all day, but the ferrying operation proceeded. In late afternoon, Lieutenant McPherson discovered that his boat was low on fuel, so he sent it back to RED BEACH and boarded the other craft. With only one LCV(P), the ferrying went on throughout the night, although the enemy kept the mouth of the river and the adjacent beaches under mortar fire almost continuously. Sometime during the early morning of 13 September, a mortar burst blasted off the boat's rudder. McPherson rigged an emergency hand tiller, and sitting on the stern of the craft, steered the boat himself. He continued this operation throughout the day of 13 September and ceased that night only when just enough fuel remained in the craft to get back to RED BEACH. Lieutenant McPherson, his crew, and the boat, had ferried troops and equipment for over 40 hours. (77) Eye-witness; (78) Personal knowledge

enroute to "G" BEACH on the night of 8/9 September proceeded past the beach. They were stopped finally just short of the BUSU RIVER by the Australians firing a machine gun burst across their bows. A total of three boat missions were performed that night without incident. (74)

On 9 September, the leading battalion of both the 24th and 26th Brigades had reached the east bank of the BUSU RIVER. Here it was that the enemy elected to make a stand. He was aided by a heavy rain which had fallen the previous night and swollen the river into a torrent. At its mouth, the river was about 700 yards wide and divided by sand bars into several channels, of which the main one was nearest the west bank. Upstream, it was narrow, but swift and deep, and the 26th Brigade could not effect a crossing without a bridge. Along the coast, the commander of the leading battalion of the 24th Brigade elected to cross the river by wading and swimming. This was accomplished in spite of heavy enemy resistance from the west bank of the river. By dark, the battalion had secured a small bridgehead and was engaged in a fierce fight with the enemy. On the morning of 10 September, this battalion had a bridgehead 650 yards wide and 200 yards deep. Little gain was made on that day because of a swamp and enemy resistance. (75)

The boats meanwhile had continued to make 2 runs per night to the forward beaches, including a new beach on the recently acquired west bank of the BUSU. One of these missions, consisting of 6 LCV(P)s and 4 LCMs, were subjected to a few air-burst shells, but incurred no damage. (76)

11 September brought a severe rain and windstorm, and it was deemed that seas were too rough for the boats to operate. In fact, some craft, including 6 LCMs in the anchorage, were tossed up on shore by the heavy seas where they were subjected to a terrific pounding from the surf. Most of these craft were damaged beyond the capabilities of the available (74) S; (75) J, p. 41; (76) S.

In the meantime, it had developed that if the Australian advance was to continue rapidly, the forward infantry would have to be supplied by boat. (70) On the night of 6 Sept a convoy of 5 LCMs and 6 LCV(P)s delivered rations, ammunition, and trucks to APO and SINGAUA. At SINGAUA the boats were guided into the beach by flashlight on shore. During the unloading, the mission leader was informed that they were within 300 yards of the Japanese. However, all craft were quickly unloaded and returned to RED BEACH without incident. (71)

On the night of 7 Sept 6 LCV(P)s and 6 LCMs loaded with supplies made 2 round trips to a new beach called "G" BEACH just west of the BUREP RIVER. On the second trip, the cargo included two pieces of artillery ("25 pounders"). This mission did not arrive at "G" BEACH until after daylight. However, in full view of the enemy and well within artillery, mortar, and machine gun range, the craft were unloaded and retracted without being fired upon. (72)

It is appropriate to inform the reader that although these forward boat missions might seem to be rather simple, actually they were extremely hazardous. These boats were running through coral-infested waters and landing on tiny pin-point stretches of beach in total darkness. Precise navigation from old and unreliable charts was required, and there was always the danger of missing the beach and landing behind the enemy front lines. To assist navigators in finding the right beach, an amphibian scout detachment with the leading infantry battalion would erect a hooded blue light in the center of the beach. Upon seeing the blue light, the mission navigator would exchange the prescribed Allied ship-to-shore recognition signals with the scouts. When satisfied, the navigator would proceed into the beach. After beaching, he would signal the loaded boats in to the beach one at a time. (73)

Despite the above precautions, a mission of 6 LCV(P)s and 5 LCMs (70) Personal knowledge; (71) (72) S; (73) Personal knowledge.

navigator, and a party of amphibian scouts were dispatched in 1 LCV(P) to conduct the reconnaissance. Enroute to SINGAUA, the party stopped at APO FISHING VILLAGE where they learned that the front line had not reached SINGAUA and were advised not to attempt to reconnoiter west of the BUIEM RIVER. A hasty survey was made of a beach just east of the BUIEM and the party returned to APO, arriving there at about 2100. At this point an officer of the 26th Brigade asked Lt. Clift to take a message to RED BEACH that the 26th Brigade was low on rations and requested 1 LCM load be dispatched to APO FISHING VILLAGE as soon as possible. Lt. Clift agreed to do this and, leaving the amphibian scouts to set up range lights for the LCM, returned to RED BEACH. (67)

Upon arrival at RED BEACH, Lt. Clift reported to Col. Brockett and informed him of the 26th Brigade's request. A conference was held with the Division AA & QMG (Assistant Adjutant and Quartermaster-General) and it was decided to dispatch 1 LCM and 2 LCV(P)s with rations and ammunition to APO. Lt. Clift led this mission back to APO where the craft was unloaded and sent back to RED BEACH. Lt. Clift proceeded in his LCV(P) to SINGAUA where he beached the craft and contacted the infantry. Here he learned that the infantry was engaging the enemy at that point and was again advised not to conduct a beach survey at that particular time. Accordingly, Lt. Clift returned to RED BEACH but with the knowledge that landing craft could beach at SINGAUA. This took place at dawn of 6 Sept. (68)

The arrival of the 24th Brigade at RED BEACH enabled the 9th Division to advance on LAE on a two-brigade front. The 24th Brigade was to move along the coast, while the 26th Brigade was to move about 5 miles inland and the drive towards LAE. Positioning of the 2 Brigades took place at the BUREP RIVER and from here they commenced a two-pronged drive toward the fast-flowing BUSU RIVER. (69)

(67) (68) S; (69) J, p. 40.

Group had been picked out and orders issued for all units to complete the movement by nightfall. At 1530 the Japanese again struck RED BEACH with the most severe bombing and strafing attack of the campaign.

Miraculously, however, damage and casualties were relatively light. A moderate amount of supplies, equipment, and vehicles were destroyed.

(63) The 532d casualties amounted to 4 killed and 37 wounded. (64)

Four Japanese planes were shot down, one by a 532d gunner with a .30 cal machine gun mounted on an LCV(P) which was enroute to YELLOW BEACH.

Following the attack, all units moved to new areas and Shore Battalion personnel quickly effected repairs to damaged beach installations.

(See Map 5)

This was the last serious attack the enemy launched against RED BEACH, although his night harassing tactics continued throughout the duration of the operation. These nightly raids caused but little damage and succeeded only in keeping personnel awake.

The night following the movement of units into their new areas was a hectic one. Shortly after dark, rifle fire broke out within the beachhead area and continued throughout the night. All personnel believed that the Japanese had infiltrated inside the perimeter. However, at dawn no enemy were found, but one soldier in Co "F" had been killed. (65)

SUPPORT OF THE AUSTRALIAN ADVANCE

On the afternoon of D-day plus 1 division headquarters notified the CO of the 532d Group that overland supply of the forward troops was going to be extremely difficult if not impossible. Therefore, supply of the forward troops by boat was contemplated and the 532d should conduct reconnaissance in the vicinity of SINGAUA PLANTATION for possible landing sites. (66) (See Map 6) Accordingly, Lt. Clift, who was a qualified

(63) Eye-witness; (64) X; (65) Personal knowledge; (66) Personal knowledge.

hit and was set afire. At the time of the attack the regimental communications officer was aboard the vessel salvaging parts to repair the SCR-188. He was not injured, but obtained the parts and effected the necessary repairs later in the day. (56)

During the afternoon, plans were made for the arrival of Landing Group Three, comprised principally of the 24th Aust Inf Brigade. (57) This echelon was scheduled to arrive at RED BEACH at 0015 6 September in 18 LCIs and 6 LSTs. (58)

Range lights were erected at 2400 and the first wave of 6 LCIs beached about 0030. This was followed by 2 more waves of LCIs at about 15-minute intervals. Personnel from these craft were met by guides who were to lead them off the beach. The 6 LCTs beached about 0130. (59) These craft carried personnel, vehicles, and 84 tons of bulk supplies each. (60) Shore Battalion personnel augmented the Australian unloading details but discharging was hampered by the fact that the operation was being conducted under blackout. Then too, there was a stoppage of work while a single Japanese aircraft dropped four bombs in the beachhead, none of which caused any damage. However, all ships were unloaded and retracted prior to daylight. (61) Total personnel debarked was 3,300 and total bulk supplies placed in dumps was 504 tons. (62)

The morning of D-day plus 2 (6 Sept) found the beachhead so congested with troops, Australian and American, that General Wooten issued orders to spread out. All 532d Group units were concentrated in the center and eastern portion of the beach. (See Map 4) All solid ground in the vicinity of BUSO No. 1 was occupied by Australian troops. It was impossible for the 532d Group to disperse until the Australians did and they did not commence moving until about noon. This was just subsequent to another bombing and strafing of the beach. New areas for the 532d

(56) Eye-witness; (57) Personal knowledge; (58) Y; (59) Eye-witness; (60) Y; (61) Eye-witness; (62) Y.

approaching SINGAUA PLANTATION and as yet definite contact with the enemy had not been effected. Australian engineers had bridged the BUSO RIVER and had hacked a road through the jungle and kunai grass from BUSO No. 1 to ALUKI. (52) This road had been planned as the main supply route to the forward troops. (53)

At RED BEACH, the Shore Battalion continued its efforts to improve the beach installations. The unloading of Landing Group Two during the previous night had left the beach cluttered with miscellaneous supplies. Vehicular traffic over the road to BUSO No. 1 had rendered it almost impassable. Lack of maintenance on the beach roadway had resulted in the wire-mesh matting becoming a hindrance rather than a help to traffic. Accordingly, details were assigned to place all supplies in dumps and to proceed with the continuous task of segregation and checking contents of sumps. "E" Company went back to work on the road and "F" Company removed the beach roadway completely. (54)

A reconnaissance detail from the Boat Detachment surveyed an unsheltered indentation in the coastline west of RED BEACH and recommended to the group commander that it be utilized as an anchorage. This recommendation was approved and the detachment moved in. A wire line was laid from the main switchboard to the detachment CP. This eliminated the necessity for a constant radio watch. The only boat missions for the day were a few trips for the shifting of personnel and the hauling of rations to YELLOW BEACH. (55)

At 1315, the enemy again bombed and strafed RED BEACH, but caused little damage and but few casualties. The principal loss to the Group from this attack occurred in the Boat Detachment, which lost one LCS damaged beyond repair, 1 crewman killed and 4 wounded. The maintenance and salvage boat also was damaged and several of the crew were slightly wounded. One of the damaged LCIs was again the victim of a direct bomb (52) J, p. 33; (53) Personal knowledge; (54) Eye-witness; (55) Personal knowledge.

quickly repaired, but the destruction of the 2 dumps brought to light an unhealthy situation. This was the fact that in many places ammunition and gasoline dumps were side by side in close proximity. Orders were then issued to correct this. Work was instituted at once and by dark gasoline and ammunition dumps were separated by at least 100 yards. The CO of the 532d Group further ordered that all personnel would construct slit trenches in their bivouac areas prior to nightfall. (47) A final summary of the damage caused by this attack showed that besides the ammunition and gasoline dumps, over 1,600 rations and 84 tons of miscellaneous supplies were destroyed. 532d Group losses were 1 killed and 12 wounded and 5 vehicles damaged beyond repair. In addition, the SCR-188 and a switchboard were severely damaged. (48)

The SCR-188 was the RED BEACH link in the 2d ESB command net, but an SCR-193 had been brought to RED BEACH for just such a contingency, and contact with Regimental Headquarters at MOROBE was quickly reestablished. The loss of the switchboard did not affect the wire net in the beachhead as a spare switchboard was quickly substituted. (49)

Landing Group Two, consisting of additional miscellaneous 9th Division troops, was scheduled to arrive at 0130 on 5 September in 6 LSTs. (50) However, on the afternoon of 4 September, this convoy had been attacked by enemy aircraft and 2 LSTs were damaged so severely as to be unable to continue to RED BEACH. The remaining 4 LSTs were about one hour late in arriving at RED BEACH, but all were unloaded and retracted before daylight. Enemy aircraft were over the beachhead constantly during the night. A few bombs were dropped, but no damage was caused. Casualties sustained on D-day were evacuated on the LSTs. (51)

CONSOLIDATION OF THE BEACH

The morning of 5 September found advance elements of the 9th Division

(47) Eye-witness; (48) T; (49) Eye-witness; (50) W; (51) Personal knowledge.

element. Suspicious areas were fired on by the four .50 cal guns of the LCSs and by means of the radio the advancing infantry were kept advised as to what lay ahead of them. One LCS was in support of the infantry at YELLOW BEACH and one supported the infantry moving west of RED BEACH. This procedure greatly facilitated the initial movement from the beachhead.

The remainder of the boat detachment assembled off the flanks of RED BEACH and awaited orders.

The amphibious scouts, after the landing of the boat control section, had conducted extensive reconnaissance in the hope of locating a sheltered anchorage for the boat detachment. No such anchorage could be found and the fact was reported to the 532d Group CO. The order was then issued that the boats would anchor for the night off the west flank of RED BEACH.

(45)

Shortly after 1330, the Naval Task Force assembled and departed; that is, all except the 2 damaged LCIs which were left on the beach in the precise position they were in at 0700 that morning. The Shore Battalion was engaged in general beachhead improvement and in preparation for the arrival of Landing Group Two. At about 1400 word was received at the ^{beach} beach that all D-day objectives had been taken with little opposition. (46)

Units were just beginning to get themselves sorted out when the enemy air force made another appearance at 1530 and gave the beachhead a severe bombing and strafing. This and subsequent aerial attacks were always received without any warning other than the commencement of firing by the Australian 40-mm AA guns. There was no radar warning at RED BEACH. Despite the fact that personnel had little opportunity to disperse and take cover, surprisingly few casualties were sustained. However, an ammunition dump and a gasoline dump were destroyed, and the completed road to BUSO No. 1 was cratered in several places. The road damage was (45) Personal knowledge; (46) Eye-witness.

early afternoon that the beach was reasonable free of vehicle congestion.

(42)

The last wave of the assault echelon consisted of 7 LCTs, each loaded with 120 tons of bulk supplies. Although scheduled to beach at 0820, because of the congestion described above, they were not beached until about 1030. Australian unloading parties under the general supervision of Shore Battalion officers were responsible for unloading these craft. Due to lack of proper organization, the unloading soon bogged down. Shore Battalion personnel were promptly thrown in to augment the unloading details and the craft were finally completely discharged and able to retract at 1330.

With all ships and craft of the Landing Group One completely unloaded, the Shore Battalion turned its attention to completing construction of the beach exit road, general improvement of the dumps and the beach, and preparation for the landing that night of Landing Group Two. (43)

In the meantime, the Regimental Medical Detachment and the attached medical company had landed in the 9th, 10th, and 11th waves; established 2 aid stations and a hospital; and began handling casualties immediately. Most of the casualties treated were from the 2 LCIs which were bombed during the landing, and numbered about 75 in all. (44)

The Boat Battalion, after accomplishing its initial mission of landing the 532d EBSR Group, reassembled its craft (less the detachment of 2 LCSs, 10 LCMs, and 10 LCV(P)s to remain at the far shore) at about 0930 and proceeded back to MOROHE. Of the detachment remaining, the 2 LCSs initially were supporting the coastal movement of the assault infantry. Each had an Australian officer aboard with radio communications with the infantry ashore. The LCSs moved parallel to and as close to the shore as possible and kept station about 100 yards ahead of the leading infantry (42) (43) Eye-witness; (44) X.

laying the two-way wire-mesh lateral beach road. "E" Co, plus the engineer platoon of Co "D", began the construction of a beach exit road from near the center of the beach to BUSO No. 1.

Reconnaissance brought out the fact that practically all the terrain immediately behind the beach was swampy. This had been anticipated and accordingly "D" and "F" Cos cleared bays for the dumping of supplies just behind the beach and under the outer fringe of the jungle.

All tasks proceeded smoothly except the construction of the beach exit road, which was considerably slower than had been anticipated. This was due primarily to the use of the road by Australian artillery and AA units which had landed in the 4th wave. This route had to be utilized because it was the only one that offered egress from the beach proper. (39)

The 6 LSTs beached at about 0815. (40) These ships were loaded with vehicles, artillery, AA (40-mm), Australian Engineer equipment, and a total of 504 tons of bulk supplies, and about 2,400 Australian personnel. (41) Passengers of the vessels were responsible for unloading the bulk supplies and placing them in the dumps. This was done by the "manhandling" method and the task was completed by 1030. However, the vehicles which had landed from the LSTs were having difficulty getting off the beach because of poor condition of the one beach exit road, which by now was a quagmire. As a result, the beach at this time was badly congested. Personnel of Co "E" were forced to cease their efforts to construct a road and to assist vehicles over the track to BUSO No. 1 where the Australian Engineer responsibility began. The division engineer, when made aware of the situation, furnished "E" Co with bridging materials which were quickly laid down on the mud and afforded some footing for the vehicles. Traffic began to move, but slowly, and it was not until (39) Eye-witness; (40) N; LST-Landing Ship Tank; (41) W.

were good and to proceed with the landing. The 2d wave beached at 0643.

(35) At about 0650 and just as the 3d wave was about to beach, the convoy was attacked by 6 Japanese aircraft. Direct bomb hits were scored on 2 LCIs (Landing Craft, Infantry) of the 3d wave, causing considerable casualties and rendering the craft inoperable, although they were able to beach.

The initial wave of Australian infantrymen encountered little opposition and quickly advanced inland. (36)

The 532d EBSR Group landed in waves 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11 approximately on schedule. In addition to personnel, the following major items of regimental equipment were landed: (37)

| | |
|--------------------|-------------------------|
| 12 Jeeps | 1 Quickway Crane |
| 16 3/4-ton trucks | 1 Air Compressor |
| 6 2-1/2-ton trucks | 1 1/4-ton trailer |
| 1 grader | 11 1-ton trailers |
| 7 TD-9 Bulldozers | 1 250-gal water trailer |
| 1 D-7 Bulldozer | |

The Boat Control Section headed by Lt. Dibble landed in wave 4 with SCR-300s and initiated control of 532d EBSR craft and directed the landing of the LSTs and LCTs. The Shore Battalion Headquarters also landed in wave 4 and set up a command post near the center of the beach. Regimental Headquarters Detachment landed in a free boat between the 5th and 6th waves and set up a command post inland from the Shore Battalion CP about 100 yards. (38) (See Map 4)

The Shore Battalion commenced working immediately upon landing. Headquarters Company set up weapons and established a water point. Co "D", less its Engineer Platoon, organized the eastern (right) half of the beach. "F" Co organized western (left) half of the beach and began (35) Q; (36) Eye-witness; (37) N; V; (38) Eye-witness.

two aid stations on the beach. The medical company was to establish a collecting station, a clearing station, and a portable surgical hospital in the left half of RED BEACH and was to be responsible for the evacuation of casualties to ships and crafts returning to the near shore. To accomplish the tasks as assigned the 532d EBSR Group was to be made up of the following units with strengths as indicated:

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Headquarters Detachment 532d EBSR | 11 |
| Regimental Communications Detachment | 20 |
| Boat Battalion | 380 |
| Shore Battalion | 700 |
| Co "B" 262d Medical Battalion and 532d EBSR Med Det | 170 |
| Amphibian Scouts, 2d ESB | <u>15</u> |
| Total | 1,296 |

Lt Col E. D. Brockett, the regimental executive officer was to be in command of the 532d EBSR Group. (32)

THE ASSAULT ON RED BEACH

The 532d EBSR Boat Convoy of over 60 various craft made the 57-mile trip across HUON GULF without incident and effected a rendezvous with the Naval Task Force at 0350 on D-day approximately 7 miles off RED BEACH. At 0619 the destroyers commenced a bombardment of the landing beaches which lifted at 0629. (33) At 0632 the first wave landed on RED BEACH.

(34) (See Map 3)

The Amphibian Scouts, dressed in Australian Army uniforms, to make them inconspicuous, landed in the first wave, marked the center and flanks of the beach, and conducted a hasty hydrographic survey. At 0640 the scouts radioed to the 2d and 3d waves that beaching conditions (32) N; (33) Personal knowledge; (34) F, p. 1-18.

SHORE PARTY PLAN

The plan of the 532d EBSR Group was to move from MOROBE to RED BEACH in its organic landing craft supplemented by Navy LCTs. A rendezvous would be effected with the Naval Task Force off RED BEACH at about H-hour minus 3 hours. (39) At H-hour, amphibious scouts would land with the 1st waves on both beaches and mark the centers and flanks of the beaches.

The Shore Battalion was to land by waves beginning at H-hour plus 30 minutes and perform the following tasks:

1. Set up beach defenses (ground, AA, and seaward) in coordination with 9th Division defenses.

2. Prepare beach dump areas.

3. Construct a two-way lateral road on the beach.

4. Construct exit roads from the beach inland.

5. Supervise and control cargo unloading.

6. Establish water points.

7. Camouflage dumps.

8. Continuous development and improvement of beachhead. (30)

The Boat Battalion after effecting the landing was to detach 2 control boats, 2 LCSs, 10 LCMs, and 10/LCV(P)s, to remain at the far shore for such duty as would be required. (31) Initial tasks during the landing included the support of the 20th Brigade by the 3 LCSs, and the landing of 9th Division Headquarters from the Destroyer "Conynham." In addition, the Boat Battalion was to provide a Boat Control Section for control of all craft at RED BEACH and provide a maintenance and salvage boat equipped to perform 2d echelon maintenance and to salvage breached and damaged boats.

The medical detachment was to land in the 9th wave and establish (29) Personal knowledge; (30) N; (31) O.

THE DIVISION PLAN

General Wooten elected to land on both beaches simultaneously at H-hour. Landing operations were to be carried out in four phases.

Phase 1 was the landing at H-hour on D-day of Landing Group 1, which was made up of part of 9th Aust Div Hq, Division Troops, assault elements of the 20th and 26th Aust Inf Brigade, and the 532d EBSR intact.

Phase 2 was the landing on the night of D-day of Landing Group 2, comprising additional troops of 9th Aust Div Hq, Division Troops, and the 20th and 26th Brigade.

Phase 3 was the landing on the night of D-day, plus 1 day of Landing Group 3, made up of the 24th Aust Inf Brigade and additional division troops.

Phase 4 was the landing of the remaining troops of the division at such time as the situation would permit. (25)

The 20th Brigade was designated to make the initial assault on both beaches, with 2 battalions on RED BEACH and 1 battalion on YELLOW BEACH. At RED BEACH, 1 battalion was to commence a rapid advance toward LAE, while the other battalion was to remain in division reserve and protect the beachhead. The third battalion of the 20th Brigade landing on YELLOW BEACH had the task of seizing HOPOI and protecting the right flank of the division. The 20th Brigade was to be initially supported along the coast by three LCSs of the 532d EBSR. (26)

The 26th Brigade was to land intact on RED BEACH behind the 20th Brigade and take up the advance toward LAE. (27)

Logistical plans of the division called for the D-day landing group to land with 10 days supply.

The 532d EBSR Group was to be under command of the 9th Division upon landing and would render tactical and logistical support as directed. (28)

(25) O; (26) O; LCS-Landing Craft Support; (27) J, p.22; (28) Personal knowledge.

The rehearsal was conducted in mid-August with all units of the landing force present except one shore company (Co D) which was engaged in beach operations for the force that had landed at NASSAU BAY on 30 June. This rehearsal was staged on beaches similar to those at the objective.

During the rehearsal, the vehicles of the division became badly congested on the beach. This condition caused the division commander, Major General George F. Wooten, to order further reductions in the number of vehicles to be taken to the far shore during the early stages of the operation. This was the only significant change in plans brought about by the rehearsal. (20)

As has been previously stated, the landing was to actually take place east of LAE. Because of known defenses at LAE proper, it had been decided to land at RED BEACH 14 miles east of LAE and at YELLOW BEACH 3 miles east of RED BEACH. RED BEACH was 1,100 yards long, while YELLOW BEACH was about 1,000 yards in length. (21)

It was further decided to develop RED BEACH for logistical support of the entire division and all supplies were to be placed in dumps in that area until LAE was captured. (22)

4 September 1943 was designated as as D-day (23) and 0630 scheduled for H-hour. General Wooten had at first desired to land the first wave at 0430 under cover of darkness. However, the Navy pointed out that inasmuch as the coast line in the objective area was virtually all the same and contained no distinguishing features, it would be extremely difficult to accurately locate the landing beaches at night. It was therefore agreed that H-hour would be 0630, which was 18 minutes after sunrise. (24)

(20) Eye-witness; (21) N; (22) O; (23) Personal knowledge. (24) F, p. 1-18.

amphibious landing on beaches east of LAE and an airborne assault at NADEAB. (15) The 9th Australian Division with the 532d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment as shore party was designated to execute the amphibious portion of the operation, and the US 503d Parachute Infantry Regiment and the 7th Australian Infantry Division were designated to execute the airborne assault. (16) The US Seventh Amphibious Fleet was assigned the task of transporting and putting the troops ashore at LAE, and in addition was to prevent the enemy from bringing in reinforcements by sea. (17) Air support was to be furnished by the US Fifth Air Force. The operations were scheduled for mid-September 1943. (18)

Plans for the amphibious operation called for the 9th Division to assemble at MILNE BAY, participate in amphibious training with the Navy in that area, and subsequently to embark from that point for the operation. The 532d EBSR was to assemble at MOROBE and move to the objective in its organic landing craft supplemented by Navy LCTs. (19)

PREPARATION FOR THE LANDING

Detailed planning for the landing got underway at 9th Division Headquarters at MILNE BAY about the 1st of August. The 532d EBSR was represented at planning headquarters by the regimental executive officer who was to command the shore party during the operation, the S-3, the communications officer and the surgeon. It should be stated here that personnel of the division and the 532d EBSR were not strangers to each other, having undergone amphibious training together in Australia during June and July of 1943. As a consequence, no time was lost in getting acquainted and misunderstandings were few.

Two plans were worked out simultaneously, one for a rehearsal and one, of course, for the actual operation.

(15) H, p. 176; (16) G, p. 47; (17) H, p. 176; (18) Personal knowledge; (19) Personal knowledge; LCT-Landing Craft Tank.

aircraft and to areas which could have a subsequent value as operating bases and springboards for further advances. (9)

The initial phase of the general offensive in NEW GUINEA included a landing at NASSAU BAY, which was carried out on 30 June 1943. (10) The force that landed there commenced a drive toward SALAMAUA. At the same time an Australian force was attacking toward SALAMAUA from WAU. (See Map 1)

The Japanese at this period controlled the NEW GUINEA coast from SALAMAUA to the northwestern tip of DUTCH NEW GUINEA, and the MARKHAM and RAMU valleys in BRITISH NEW GUINEA. Their principal operating bases in BRITISH NEW GUINEA were SALAMAUA, LAE, FINSCHHAFEN, MADANG, and WEWAK.

In May 1943, the Australian Army was assigned the tasks of taking the SALAMAUA, LAE, FINSCHHAFEN and MADANG areas. (11)

GENERAL PLAN

The first objective, as determined by the Allied High Command, was to capture the LAE area including NADZAB, an airfield, 15 miles west of LAE. (See Map 2) NADZAB was important because the terrain there was suitable for airfield construction. LAE was required as a port for the supply of the proposed airfields at NADZAB. (12) In addition, the fighting at SALAMAUA was holding the enemy's attention and he was pushing troops and supplies through LAE to that area. (13) It was believed that the seizure of LAE and NADZAB would eventuate in the entrapment and subsequent destruction of a large Japanese force. For this reason, a key element in the plan was that SALAMAUA should not fall to the Allies until the LAE operation had begun. (14)

Plans for the operation as formulated in July 1943 called for an

(9) H, p. 176; D, p. 21; (10) H, p. 176; (11) J, p. 4; (12) J, p. 4; (13) C, p. 38; (14) J, p. 5.

A communication platoon in headquarters company was equipped with the necessary radio and wire equipment to provide all communication within the beachhead, including a wire and radio net to all beach installations plus long range radios for communications with the near shore.

Normal attachments to the regiment from brigade troops for operations, was one boat maintenance company and one amphibian medical company. The organization thus constituted was termed a shore party, and had a total strength of about 2,000 personnel. (5)

GENERAL SITUATION

In August and September of 1942, the Japanese drive in NEW GUINEA was halted. Enemy forces attempting to capture PORT MORESBY were stopped in the OWEN STANLEY MOUNTAINS. (See Map 1) Their attempt to seize MILNE BAY by amphibious tactics was a failure as was their effort to capture WAU in January 1943. An allied counteroffensive in the OWEN STANLEYS drove the enemy back to the north coast of NEW GUINEA and his forces were destroyed in the BUNA area. (6) He suffered another serious setback in the BISMARCK SEA battle when allied airmen intercepted a large naval convoy and destroyed 11 ships and 3,000 of an estimated 5,500 ground troops. (7)

By April 1943, American and Australian troops had moved 75 miles up the coast northwest of BUNA and were in the vicinity of MOROBE. (8)

Plans of the high command in the Southwest Pacific called for the establishment of a series of air and sea bases along the north coast of NEW GUINEA for the support of the Allied offensive. This would necessitate either the capture of enemy bases or ^{locating} of strategically ~~located~~ areas in which suitable bases could be constructed. The selection of these objectives was limited to those areas within operating range of our
(5) Personal knowledge; (6) J, p. 3; (7) G, p. 46; (8) H, p. 176.

THE OPERATIONS OF THE 532D ENGINEER BOAT AND SHORE REGIMENT
(2D ENGINEER SPECIAL BRIGADE) IN SUPPORT OF THE 9TH
AUSTRALIAN INFANTRY DIVISION IN THE AMPHIBIOUS ATTACK
ON LAE, NEW GUINEA, 4 SEPTEMBER - 16 SEPTEMBER 1943
(NEW GUINEA CAMPAIGN)
(Personal Experience of a Regimental S-3)

INTRODUCTION

This monograph deals with the operations of the 532d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment (2d Engineer Special Brigade) in support of the 9th Australian Infantry Division in the amphibious attack on LAE, NEW GUINEA, in September of 1943.

For the purpose of orienting the reader, a brief description of the organization of the Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment as it was constituted in 1943 is in order.

An engineer boat and shore regiment, organic to an engineer special brigade, was made up of a regimental headquarters and headquarters company, a medical detachment, a shore battalion and a boat battalion.

The boat battalion was made up of a headquarters and headquarters company and three lettered boat companies, A, B, and C. (1) Each boat company was composed of 11 officers and 280 enlisted men and normally operated about 50 landing craft, principally LCV(P)s, and LCMs. (2)

The shore battalion was made up of a headquarters and headquarters company and three lettered shore companies, D, E, and F. (3) Each shore company consisted of a headquarters platoon, an engineer platoon, and a supply and utility platoon, and had a strength of 6 officers and 160 enlisted men. (4) The shore battalion was equipped with a considerable amount of engineer equipment including bulldozers, cranes, demolition sets, and pioneer tools. Principal weapons of the battalion included six 37-mm guns and six .50 cal machine guns on pedestal mounts.

(1) Personal knowledge; (2) M, p. 6; LCV(P)-Landing Craft Vehicle and Personnel; LCM-Landing Craft Mechanized; (3) Personal knowledge; (4) M, p. 28.

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