

Staff Department  
THE INFANTRY SCHOOL  
Fort Benning, Georgia

ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS COURSE  
1949-1950

THE OPERATIONS OF THE 30TH INFANTRY DIVISION IN  
THE BREAKTHROUGH, ST. LO SECTOR (OPERATION "COBRA")  
25 JULY - 1 AUGUST 1944.  
(NORTHERN FRANCE CAMPAIGN)

Type of operation described: DIVISION IN THE ATTACK  
DURING COMBINED AIR GROUND OPERATION

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ORIENTATION

INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the combat operations of the 30th U.S. Infantry Division, First U.S. Army, in the battle, (Operations "Cobra") commonly known as the St. Lo Breakthrough and subsequent operations up to include 1 August 1944.

In order to brief the readers it will be necessary to examine events that lead up to the period of 25 July 1944.

Allied forces landed in northern FRANCE on the 6th of June 1944 under (operations plan "Overlord"). The decision to launch the invasion at this time in face of unpredictable weather conditions and high seas was largely the contributing factor in the Allied Forces attaining a degree of tactical surprise and the breaching of the vaunted Atlantic Wall.

(1)

The main objectives of (Operation "Overlord") were first to establish adequate beachheads and secondly to exploit all successes gained in order that the final objectives might be attained, that of destroying German field forces in western EUROPE. (2)

From the time of the initial assault waves, the Germans strove desperately to contain the Allied beachheads and to prevent the Allies from getting a firm foothold on French soil. The German high commands failure to determine whether

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(1) A-1, p. 19  
(2) A-2, p. 1

the initial assaults were merely a large scale diversionary raid or an invasion permitted the Allied forces to gain much needed time and to develop their initial successes. (3)

The organized defenses which the Allied armies had to break were largely determined by the Germans experience gained at the time of the DIEPPE raid in 1942. The DIEPPE raid firmly convinced the German high command that any attempt at invasion could and should be destroyed on the beach areas, thus the Germans adopting this concept, failed to apply the basic principle of depth to their organized defensive make up along the northern coast of FRANCE. The Germans methodically developed all their key ports, on the northern coast of FRANCE into heavy frontal defenses manned with large and medium coastal guns, flak batteries. In the gaps between the heavily fortified ports, the areas were systematically prepared into a line of concrete defensive positions designed for all around defense. (4)

D-Day in EUROPE closed with the Allied forces having breached the whole of Neptune front in five different assault areas. The seaborne assault on the British-Canadian sectors were carried out according to plans. Despite very rough seas and heavy stiff enemy resistance. (See Map A)

The beachheads established were as follows: Sword beach west of the town of ORUSTREHAM, June beach in the region of COURSELLES-SUR-MER, Gold beach near ASNELLES-SUR-MER. In the First U.S. Army sector the Americans established Omaha beach near ST. LAURENT-SUR-MER and Utah beach in the VIRE ESTUARY area. (5)

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(3) A-1, p. 21, 24

(4) A-1, p. 21

(5) A-1, p. 23

Immediately following the successful landing operations and the gaining of a substantial foothold on French soil, there followed six weeks of gruelling struggle to secure a lodgement area of sufficient depth to permit a rapid build up of the Allied forces.

The Germans during this period fought tenaciously to contain our beachheads. Consequently, our operations began to fall somewhat behind planned schedules. The Allies immediate need to expand the shallow beachheads inland so our forces could maneuver and retain the initiative gained became a first priority to the Allied plan. The Allied plan of operation called for the immediate extension of our lodgement areas on all sectors. (6)

In the CAEN sector it was determined of prime importance to capture the city of CAEN and establish bridgeheads across the ORNE, ODON RIVERS. (7)

The German high command's decision to prevent the capture of CAEN and the eastward extension of the Allies lodgement area in this area created a favorable turn in the Allied strategy and the hard slugging match, that was to continue throughout the remaining part of June and early July. The Germans by virtue of committing all their available armor and a considerable amount of their infantry, artillery in the defense of CAEN, permitted the Allies to build up their potential striking force in the western sector. This decision by the Germans eliminated the possibility of the German forces to drive a wedge to the sea between the British, Canadian and American Forces. (8)

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(6) A-1, p. 27

(7) A-1, p. 27

(8) A-1, p. 30

The fall of CARENTAN on the 12th of June 1944, marked the successful and effective link up of the two American beachheads, OMAHA and UTAH. The evacuation of ST. SAUVEUR-LE-VICOMTE on the 16th of June by the German forces and the fall of MONTEBOURG on the 19th of June opened the way for the American forces to advance on the key port of CHERBOURG. (9) On the 26th of June the all important city and port of CHERBOURG surrendered, thus permitting the First U.S. Army to begin reorganizing and regrouping its forces for a concentrated push to the south. (10)

The 3d of July saw the reorganization of the First U.S. Army complete and with three Corps, XIX, VII, and VIII attacking abreast initiated a series of limited objectives attacks designed to establish a general front line along the LESSAY-PIERIES-ST. LO ROAD.

#### FIRST U. S. ARMY PLAN (OPERATION "COBRA")

Early in July, the First U.S. Army staff devised a plan later to be known as (Operation "Cobra"). This plan was conceived and designed to pierce the enemy's defensive make up with great power on a very narrow front. The plan was based on the assumption that by the middle of July, progress could and would be made to bring the troops of First U.S. Army up to the general line LESSAY-PIERIES-ST. LO ROAD. (11)

Developing of the enemy's main positions continued throughout the latter part of June and early July.

First U.S. Army plan called for the main effort to be made by VII U.S. Corps, commanded by General J. Lawton Collins who is now Chief of Staff. The general line up of the Corps

(9) A-1, p. 30-31

(10) A-1, p. 32

(11) A-4, p. 96

in First U.S. Army at this period were from left to right or east to west, V, XIX, VII, and VIII. The division composition of each Corps mentioned above were: (12)

V U.S. Corps -- 2d Infantry Division  
5th Infantry Division

XIX U.S. Corps -- 29th Infantry Division  
35th Infantry Division

VII U.S. Corps -- 1st Infantry Division  
9th Infantry Division  
4th Infantry Division  
30th Infantry Division  
2d Armored Division  
3d Armored Division

VIII U.S. Corps -- 8th Infantry Division  
79th Infantry Division  
83d Infantry Division  
90th Infantry Division  
4th Armored Division

The VIII, XIX, and V U.S. Corps were to exert strong pressure against the German forces opposing each respective Corps initially while the lethal attacks of the VII Corps was to puncture the crust of the enemy's organized defenses. This mission assigned to VII U.S. Corps was: (13)

1. "To penetrate the enemy's defense between MARIGNY and ST. GILLES, FRANCE."
2. "To seize and hold open the line COUTANCES-MARIGNY and cut off the enemy forces facing VIII Corps."
3. "To assist VIII Corps in destroying all German forces."
4. "To prevent the enemy forces from the south and east from interfering with the overall operation and to block the enemy along the line CERISSY-TESSY-ST. LO."

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(12) A-4, Section IV E

(13) A-2, p. 14

VII U. S. CORPS PLAN (OPERATION "COBRA")

The VII U.S. Corps Field Order prescribed an initial attack with three infantry divisions attacking abreast the 9th, 4th, and 30th Infantry Divisions in that order from west to east. (14)

The 30th Infantry Division was to be used principally in securing the crossings of the VIRE RIVER as far south as TESSY-SUR-VIRE as well as protecting the left, east flank of the penetration area. (15)

The 9th and 4th Infantry Divisions were specifically enjoined to clear routes within their prescribed zones of action as soon as their initial objectives were seized and to allow for the rapid movement of the 1st Infantry Division, motorized, and the 2d and 3d Armored Divisions. (16)

The plan called for the left, east mobile column composed of the 2d Armored Division with the 22d R.C.T. (motorized) attached to move through the 30th Infantry Division. This force was to move rapidly and seize initially the line LE MESNIL-HERMAN ST. SAMSON DE-BON-FOSSE-HILL 183 and cover the movement of the 1st Infantry Division motorized and 3d Armored Division moving through the gaps created at MARIGNY and ST. GILLES. (17)

The 3d Armored Division, less Combat Command B, with one battalion of the 1st Infantry Division attached was to drive through the gap cleared by the 4th Infantry Division and move rapidly to the south securing the southern most exits of COUTANCES also cover the south flanks of the 1st Infantry

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(14) A-4, p. 98

(15) A-4, p. 98

(16) A-4, p. 98

(17) A-4, p. 98

Division between HYENVILLE and CERISSY-LA-SALLE. (18)

The 1st Infantry Division, motorized, less one battalion combat team and with Combat Command B of the 3d Armored Division was to drive through the gaps cleared by the troops of the 9th Infantry Division and block the enemy in front of VIII U.S. Corps in the general area COUTANCES-FONTENAY. (19)

#### AREA OF OPERATION AND TERRAIN

The geographical area of NORMANDY, FRANCE selected for the final thrust and inevitable breakthrough presented many problems. The area bordered by LE MESNIL VIGOT on the northeast, CERENCES on the southwest, and PONTFARCY on the southeast was to be the area for the breakthrough. The BOCAGE country is hilly, wooded and extensively segmented by numerous streams of sufficient size to constitute formidable obstacles. The principal rivers in this area are the VIRE RIVER in the east, the SIENNE RIVER in the south and the TAUTE RIVER in the west. These rivers are all controlling terrain features because of their many tributaries, width, steep banks, and depth. The many tributaries originating from these streams create definite corridors favorable for defensive warfare. (See Map B)

The high hill masses running generally east and west from MARIGNY presented a serious obstacle for rapid movement of our forces. (See Map B)

The principal road nets in this area linked the towns of ST. LO, PERIERS, LESSAY, COUTANCES, AVARRANCHES, GRANVILLE,

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(18) A-4, p. 98

(19) A-4, p. 98

VILLIDIEU and VIRE. Although the roads were narrow, the extensive system favored our proposed plan of Infantry-Armored attacks. (20)

The key terrain features were:

1. The town of VIRE - Important road center.
2. The VIRE RIVER
3. The high hill mass - East-West MARIGNY
4. COUTANCES - Key communications center
5. The SIENNE RIVER
6. The TAUTE RIVER
7. AVARANCHES - Key to BRITTANY PENINSULA
8. GRANVILLE - Key coastal center
9. DOMFRONT - Key rail and road center

#### ENEMY SITUATION

"Costly in men and materiel as the hedgerow fighting had been for the Allies, it was equally as expensive for the German field forces in northern FRANCE." "First U.S. Army estimated that the Germans by the latter part of July had lost approximately 160,000 men, close to 400 tanks of all types, and approximately 2,500 vehicles to the Allied invasion forces and French resistance groups." (21)

The German replacement system was strained, reinforcements were slow in arriving and when they did, they were generally committed in piecemeal fashion. The enemy continued to fight with determination, defending with great tenacity and skill, constantly regrouping to maintain an unbroken front.

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(20) A-2, p. 14

(21) A-3, p. 34

On the First U.S. Army front there remained only one uncommitted German division, the 2d S.S. Panzer Division. This division was retained for immediate counterattack, otherwise their defenses remained linear throughout. It was known the Germans had numerous divisions scattered throughout southern FRANCE, but the fact that Allied air superiority prevailed, the Germans made no attempts to risk moving these divisions from the south, north. The German high command, continued to hold his 15th Army in the SIENNE area. It was here he was strong in armor, infantry and feared a new thrust would take place against the PAS-DE-CALAIS area which housed the highly publicized V - 1 sites. (22)

#### ENEMY COMPOSITION

Opposite the V U.S. Corps were elements of the German 3d Parachute Division. Opposite the XIX Corps were elements of the German 352d, 275th Infantry Divisions. In the VII U.S. Corps zone there were elements of the German 5th Parachute Division, 17th S.S. Division, 2d S.S. Panzer Division.

Opposite VIII U.S. Corps were the remaining elements of the 243d German Infantry Division, 91st German Infantry Division, and elements of the 77th German Infantry Division.

(23) (See Map C)

#### AIR PLAN (OPERATION COBRA)

The air plan as devised by a meeting of the joint air and ground force commanders called for the use of all available air power. The air plan called for an aerial bombing

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(22) A-3, p. 34

(23) A-4, p. 91, 92

saturating a designated area along the established front lines of VII U.S. Corps. The drop zone selected was to be south of the ST. LO-PIERRE ROAD and area 7,000 yards long by 2,500 yards wide. (See Map C) (Drop Zone, Operation Cobra)

The plan called for approximately twenty minutes to a half hour of bombing by 15 groups of fighter aircraft, approximately 350 to 400 in numbers, using fragmentation bombs and 500 pound G.P.'s. The bombing strip assigned to the fighter aircraft was the innermost strip of the Drop Zone nearest to friendly troops.

One hour or more of bombing by approximately 1500 medium and heavy bombers was to immediately follow the fighter aircraft in successive waves. The medium and heavy bombers were assigned the center and rear most strip of the designated drop zone.

Following the saturation bombing there was to be air reconnaissance and column cover available for our ground forces to use "on call" missions.

In preparation before the aerial bombing, the artillery was to fire counter flak fire, lifting their fires just prior to bombings by our aircraft. (24)

#### NARRATION

##### THE BREAKOUT (COBRA)

The target date for (Operation "Cobra") was originally set for the 18th of July but was postponed on account of inclement weather. The operation was finally ordered for the 24th of July, but again unfavorable weather intervened and

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(24) Personal knowledge as member G-3 Air Section, Third U.S. Army working with First U.S. Army during this period.

the operation was delayed until the 25th. It was on the 24th of July that our troops were bombed by friendly aircraft, causing much disorganization and the heaviest casualty figure on a time basis, the 30th Division had experienced to date. The bombing attacks on the 24th can be attributed to a late decision to postpone the attack and faulty communications prevailing during this period. The false start of the 24th had a number of results, some favorable and some unfavorable. The bombings by the Air Corps revealed the probability of error that could result from the use of strategic Air Force in an operation of this kind. The abortive bombings also relayed to the German forces our intentions, thus eliminating the element of surprise. The Germans failing to realize the true meaning of our premature attacks remained in position but did open up with their artillery in response to our attacks, thus they revealed many of their key gun positions opposing the troops of the VII U.S. Corps.(25)

The 120th Regiment of the 30th Division, as a result of the bombings on the 24th lost 14 men killed and 65 wounded.  
(26)

With new instructions issued for the 25th of July, the infantry was to attack at 1100 hours. Previous instructions for the division artillery remained the same, that to cover no-mans land from which the front line troops were to withdraw just prior to the start of bombing by our Air Force.

It was with some skepticism that the troops of the 30th Division abandoned land which they had fought so valiently for. Caution was taken to keep the enemy from taking up posi-

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(25) A-2, p. 18; A-3, p. 36

(26) A-6, p. 33

tions within the area our troops were to withdraw from.

The 30th Infantry Division plan of attack called for an assault by two regiments abreast, the 120th on the right along the axis of the main highway to ST. GILLES, the 119th on the left with HEBECREVON their first objective. Two battalions of the 117th were attached, one battalion each to the attacking regiments. The 117th Regiment was to be in Division reserve initially, prepared to pass through on the left of the Division sector and to mop up the remaining Germans by-passed in the area of the curve in the VIRE RIVER, opposite ST. LO. (27)

With "H-Hour" set for 1100 hours on 25 July 1944, on that morning the troops of the 30th Division again completed the withdrawal of their forward elements to the safety line, and once again our Air Force, appearing in overwhelming strength, bombed our positions and disorganized our troops. Heavy concentrations hit the area of the 120th Regiment at 0955 hours and again at 1012 hours. A particularly heavy bombardment was received in the vicinity of the 120th Regimental Command Post, and the 2d Battalion. (28)

The 30th suffered in the bombings 662 casualties: 64 killed, 374 wounded, 60 missing, and 164 cases of combat fatigue, thus bringing the total of the 24th and 25th of July to 814. The bombings on the 25th caused the 30th Division as many casualties as the most severe day of combat, 2d Battalion bore the brunt of the days bombing attacks. (29) Despite the high casualties, loss of equipment and lowered morale, the regiment was rapid in reorganizing. Spearheading

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(27) A-3, p. 35, 36

(28) A-6, p. 33

(29) A-6, p. 33

to the south the 120th Regiment jumped off at 1130 hours with the 2d Battalion leading the way as previously planned. It can be pointed out at this time that in my opinion never in history have men attacked a determined enemy under more adverse conditions, than did the men of the 2d Battalion. Despite the fact that this battalion suffered 175 casualties within a very short period of time, the battle seasoned troops overcame unexpected stiff resistance to make the initial penetration. (30)

The 119th Regiment passed its line of departure at 1114 hours, only 14 minutes later than the scheduled H-Hour.

The 120th Regiment advancing toward its first objective ran into enemy tanks almost immediately. It was during this period that the cramped positions of the two regiments created a critical period in the attack. The regimental plan of the 120th called for the deployment of the support battalion when a hold-up resulted. Elements of the 119th Regiment, through necessity, were intermingling and using the line of departure that the 1st Battalion Commander of the 120th Regiment had planned on using. (31)

It was during this period that efficient use was made of the military police in separating the mixed up troops, thus eliminating the confusion and confused state of affairs that existed.

The battalions of the 120th continued to advance except for the 2d Battalion, which was still held up late in the day. The medium tanks attached to the 2d Battalion, having drawn deadly anti-tank fire were stopped cold.

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(30) A-3, p. 37, 38

(31) A-3, p. 38

A plan was conceived to have our tanks attack boldly by maneuvers to the flanks, cross-country, avoiding mines and covering enemy fire with counterfire. This plan was approved by the regimental commander immediately and the plan became a success in the withdrawal of the German tanks, thus permitting the 2d Battalion to advance. The American tank immediately went to work for the 1st Battalion, giving them excellent support. Before the day was over the Infantry-Tank cooperation had reached a new high in perfection. (32) By nightfall the 3d Battalion was as far south as LA ROGUE. The regimental right flank was guarded by the I & R Platoon and extended to the TERRETTE RIVER.

The 119th Regiment attacking in a column of battalions ran into a terrain problem from the start. With their front lines along the steep banked gully of a stream flowing eastward into the VIRE RIVER, north of the road center of HEBECREVON the regiment immediately made contact with the enemy main line of resistance. (33)

The 3d Battalion of the 119th Regiment, leading the attack was soon to find itself in a bitter struggle for this key terrain. In a regimental maneuver the 2d Battalion was ordered to move around the right flank of the 3d Battalion. The 1st Battalion, attacking in a column of companies, around the left flank of the 3d Battalion proved successful, flushing the enemy from his main line positions, because of the immediate threat to his flanks.

During the day of the 25th, attempts by the 119th Regiment to deploy its attached tanks successfully met with fail-

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(32) A-3, p. 38

(33) A-3, p. 39

ure, because of the terrain and severe volume of anti-tank fire by German tanks and anti-tank guns. By late afternoon of the 25th, the progress of the two leading regiments, the 119th and 120th had shown little gains. (See Map D)

HEBECREVON being a vital part of the Corps plan of passing the 2d Armored Division through necessitated the 30th Division to give immediate attention to the opening up of this key town, the 119th Regiment up to this time had been unsuccessful in taking its first objective.

The 1st Battalion, 119th Regiment, was ordered to take HEBECREVON "at once and at all costs". (34)

Dusk giving away to darkness necessitated a night attack. By 0100 hours the infantry tank team of the 119th Regiment was successful in entering HEBECREVON, and by dawn of the 26th of July all three battalions had entered the town. On the 26th, at approximately 0900 hours, tanks of the 2d Armored Division began passing through the troops of the 120th Regiment. This signified to the troops of the 30th Infantry that the breakout was achieved.

The 117th Regiment, less 3d Battalion, took up positions on the left of the 119th and joined in attacking to the south alongside the troops of the 2d Armored Division.

During the entire day, 26 July, the combat actions of the infantry and armor closely resembled that of pursuit rather than assault. In the latter part of the action of the 26th, the 117th Infantry Regiment was ordered to swing to the east of the bend of the VIRE RIVER, opposite ST. LO, thus continuing the attack in this area. (35) (See Map D)

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(34) A-3, p. 40, 41

(35) A-3, p. 41; A-5, p. 28

On 27 July, the 30th Division ordered the 120th Regiment to continue the attacks to the south, following closely the route of the 2d Armored Division, to a point below ST. GILLES. From ST. GILLES to move to the southeast in order to reach the VIRE RIVER below ST. LO and seize control of the bridges located at ST. SUZANNE-SUR-VIRE and at PONT DE VIRE. During all of 27 July the fastest progress of the entire operation was accomplished. What had closely resembled an organized withdrawal on the 26th, now bore the semblance of a rout. The 120th Regiment was successful in making a deep thrust south and crossed the VIRE RIVER at CONDE-SUR-VIRE, while the 119th held crossings further to the north along the VIRE. The 117th Regiment remainder in place, mopping up the river bend opposite ST. LO. (36) (See Map D)

Unknown to the 30th Division at this time, was a threat developing on the east flank. The 2d S.S. Panzer Division, with orders to cross the VIRE RIVER and attack to the north, crossed the VIRE RIVER approximately 0400 hours the morning of the 28th.

First contact with the 2d S.S. Panzer Division was made by the 2d Battalion, 120th Infantry, at 0700 hours, 28 July. By early afternoon the 117th Infantry Regiment on the left of the 120th also engaged elements of the 2d S.S. Panzer Division north of LE MESNIL-OPAC. (37) (See Map D)

It was during this period that our prior knowledge of the movement of the German 2d Panzer Division paid dividends. The 30th Division's rapid deployment to meet this threat, stemming from the south and east, gave our regiments the element of

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(36) A-3, p. 43

(37) A-3, p. 43

surprise. Immediately after the initial contacts the Germans settled down to fighting a defensive role, thus never attempting to regain the initiative.

From the 29th of July through the 30th of July, the 30th Division strove to break the defensive lines of the 2d S.S. Panzer Division which held the stream line south of MOYEN-LE MESNIL-OPAC-TROISGOTS. (38) (See Map D)

The 119th Infantry Regiment rejoined in battle on the 29th and passing through the 120th Regiment fought its way to within a mile of TROISGOTS. (39) This was the only successful operation of the day.

The 117th Regiment found itself pinned down and contained by the enemy near LE MESNIL-OPAC.

July 30 saw some of the bitterest fighting the 30th Infantry Division had ever encountered. The division attempted a coordinated attack employing all three regiments abreast, but the attack could be measured in gains of a few hundred yards with high casualties occurring. (40) These attacks encountered the stiffest German resistance, and the 30th Division was literally stopped in their tracks.

On 31 July only limited gains were attained. The 117th Regiment made small gains, up to 300 yards, while troops of the 120th Regiment were likewise held to scant gains. The 119th Regiment, finally cracking the Germans, entered the town of TROISGOTS. By this time the 35th Infantry Division, moving to the south along the east bank of the VIRE RIVER, presented a serious threat to the German 2d S.S. Panzer Division supply routes, and during the night of 31 July, its

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(38) A-3, p. 44

(39) A-3, p. 44

(40) A-3, p. 44; A-5, p. 28

battle scarred troops withdrew to the south and east. (41)

During this period a change of Corps culminated in the XIX Corps moving west of the VIRE RIVER, assuming control of the 30th Infantry Division. This change of command, however, did not change the plans of the 30th Division, or their course of action. On the morning of 1 August, the 120th Regiment launched a coordinated attack on the town of TESSY-SUR-VIRE. By 0730 hours our infantry had entered the town, only to be encountered by fire from all directions. The remaining part of the day saw the town hotly contested for. The division was successful in getting assistance from Combat Command A, 2d Armored Division, and shortly thereafter captured the town.

The 117th Regiment's drive to the high ground west of TESSY-SUR-VIRE, cutting the road to the south and west, culminated the days operations.

On 2 August, the division passed out of direct contact with the enemy for the first time in 49 days, and concentrated on catching a well deserved rest on the banks of the VIRE RIVER near CONDE, there to enjoy U.S.O. shows, baths, and Red Cross facilities. (42)

### ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

#### 1. SUPPLY AND EVACUATION

The supply problems during Operation Cobra were limited, and at no time presented anything that could not be remedied within a 24 hour period. The loss of critical material such as radios that occurred on 25 July, when our Air Force bombed

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(41) A-3, p. 45

(42) A-3, p. 47

the Division were rapidly replaced.

Evacuation during Operation Cobra presented a serious problem during the initial phases of the operation. The casualties on the 25th were of all type, mortally wounded, battle fatigue and those less seriously wounded. The loss of ambulances in the bombing attacks and the high rate of casualties over taxed the evacuation facilities and created a problem that could only be corrected by assistance from higher and adjacent units.

## 2. SATURATION BOMBING (STRATEGIC AIR FORCE)

In no other operation to date has the use of Strategic Air power in support of a ground attack been utilized to the extent developed in Operation "Cobra". A comparison of saturation bombing with that of an elaborate pre-arranged artillery fire plan can be made. Neutralization of an enemys original defensive make up is the ultimate we can expect. The accuracy of bombing is the determining factor in all bombings. The blast and shock effect gained through the use of 500 pound bombs or larger will normally cut communications, kill, stun gun crews, and damage materiel. The nature of the objective, its depth and concentration of forces within will normally be the determining factor whether strategic air power will be used and not the ability of our artillery to reach the target.

Excellent results was obtained by the use of strategic air power in operation Cobra regardless of the inaccuracies of some of the heavy and medium bombers that took a high casualty toll among our ground forces.

The inaccurate bombings of the medium and heavy bombers

may be attributed to many factors. The fact alone that heavy bombers use an extended formation in flight and bombing overlaps a wide area on the ground may have contributed to the over extension of the safety zone. The fact that the heavy bombers release these bombs on the command of one man may have increased the chance of error in this operation. The drift of smoke and dust undoubtedly confused the identification of the drop zone.

The display of fluorescent colored pannels by ground troops to mark forward position must be confined to forward elements only. The misuse of cerise pannel by rear area troops undoubtedly helped confuse the exact location of our forward element. The use of colored smoke to mark front line elements has not proved practicable nor is it a method considered favorably by ground force, since it tends to disclose position to hostile artillery fire. The use of colored smoke to mark targets by artillery for air bombardment proved to be successful and is accepted as the best means.

### 3. THE ENEMY

The recuperative powers of a stubborn enemy are many and all attacks of ground troops following an operation such as COBRA must be rapidly carried out. The distances to the enemys main position must not be excessive to permit a complete recovery from the shock effect of saturation bombing.

### 4. TANK INFANTRY COORDINATION

The most effective organization for attacks proved to be the combination of Infantry, and tanks blitz tactics in com-

partment type terrain proved generally unsuccessful without the supporting Infantry being available there to take out anti-guns and to permit maneuver.

The small size organization of a squad with a section of tanks worked well in fighting in towns.

## 5. ATTACK FRONTAGES

a. Infantry Division such as the 30th employed in the initial assault of operation Cobra often found this frontage to be limited, therefore channelizing their movement to the objective. This factor favored the German defensive fight but their defenses being linear and not in depth permitted eventual breaking of their main line. Column of battalions proved to be the most successful formation in channelized sectors with a narrow frontage.

### CRITICISMS

1. Failure to have air-ground communications that could have informed our air craft of any inaccurate bombing.

2. Failure to have a more positive means of identifying friendly troops areas.

3. Failure of rear area unit to realize that a display of pannel would or could confuse the front line identification and create a serious hazard up front.

4. Failure to use combat formation that afforded flexibility in the attack, especially to counterattack when threatened by a superior force on a flank.

## LESSONS

1. Surprise is essential factor to any successful operation.
2. Flexibility of plans is of prime importance regardless of the size of unit involved.
3. It is essential that Infantry be imbued with a bold, aggressive attitude.
4. The average infantry unit places too much reliance upon the supporting artillery to blast the enemy from positions opposing his advance. The infantry has not been impressed of his own potency and the effect of well aimed, properly distributed rifle, machine gun fire. It is important that Infantry action must be energetically carried forward to gain ground and reduce casualties.
5. Infantry tank team requires close coordination and a knowledge by all who command or use this combination. Blitz action by tanks proved generally unsuccessful against well prepared organized positions, but the tank infantry team in small groups can be used to advantage in towns or open terrain that afford maneuvering and fire.
6. Infantry or any assaulting force must close with the enemy before time permits them to recuperate from the initial shock of saturation bombing or artillery preparation.
7. Dug in infantry in a defensive position can survive a concentrated air attack.
8. The identification of ground to air must be improved upon and the details known to all before launching a coordinated infantry-air ground attack.
9. The effective use of military police to units can be

and must be effeciently utilized to seperate units of two dif-  
ferent organizations that are mixed together in a congested  
area.