

General Subjects Section
ACADEMIC DEPARTMENT
THE INFANTRY SCHOOL
Fort Benning, Georgia

ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS COURSE
1948 - 1949

THE ALLIED COUNTERATTACK
26 DECEMBER 1944 - 27 JANUARY 1945
(ARDENNES CAMPAIGN - EUROPEAN THEATER)

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE</u>
Index	1
Bibliography	2
Introduction	5
German Counteroffensive	6
Relief of Bastogne	9
Counterattack - First Phase	10
Counterattack - Second Phase	16
Counterattack - Third Phase	20
Analysis and Criticism	21
Lessons	26
Map A - Allied Situation 15 December 1944	
Map B - Ardennes Battle, Situation 22 December 1944	
Map C - Ardennes Battle, Situation 26 December 1944	
Map D - Ardennes Battle, Situation 1 - 8 January 1945	
Map E - Ardennes Battle, Situation 16 - 27 January 1945	

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THE ALLIED COUNTERATTACK
26 DECEMBER 1944 - 27 JANUARY 1945
(ARDENNES CAMPAIGN - EUROPEAN THEATER)

INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operation of the Allied Forces in counterattacking and reducing the Ardennes salient during the period 26 December 1944 - 27 January 1945.

For purposes of orientation it will be necessary to give a brief picture of events prior to this action.

In early December 1944, the Allied Armies were poised on the threshold of Germany. From the mouth of the Rhine in the north to the Swiss border in the south the Germans had retreated to the concrete fortresses and pillboxes of the Siegfried Line. The U. S. First and Ninth Armies had penetrated the Siegfried Line near Aachen only to be stopped on the west bank of the Roer river. (1) (See Map A)

Throughout the late fall months, along the entire front, the battle had been one of infantry slugging. In addition to combat losses the infantry suffered an abnormal percentage of casualties due to exposure. This caused shortages not only in unit strength but in the number of divisions required to perform all the necessary tasks. Every effort was made to relieve the shortage of infantry replacements. Service units were pared to the minimum; eligible men in the Services of Supply were replaced by limited-service men or WACs; the Air Forces transferred ten thousand men to the ground force. In some cases, infantry divisions were sent from the United States without waiting for the necessary shipping space for their trucks, artillery, and other heavy equipment. These

(1) A-3, p. 329.

units were either used to replace tired units in the line or were assigned sectors and supported by such corps or army artillery as could be made available. (2)

The Allied plan determined to retain the offensive in order to prevent the Germans from building up their defenses. These plans were to exert the maximum effort in Aachen sector and to sustain the successful operations in the Saar - Wissembourg sectors with the balance of available forces. As a result of these decisions, it was necessary to disperse units thinly over long stretches of front. One such sector between Monschau and Treir was held by not more than four divisions. This calculated risk was taken by Allied Headquarters based upon the fact that this area contained no large depots or important objectives, and because of the relatively difficult terrain. An attack through the Ardennes was deemed possible but not probable; further, it was felt that the Germans would not attempt to stage a large scale winter offensive through the mountains with which the Allied Forces could not cope. (3)

GERMAN COUNTEROFFENSIVE - GENERAL SITUATION

Reference needed map B

During early December 1944 the German High Command secretly assembled three armies, totaling some 14 infantry and 10 panzer and panzer grenadier divisions in the Eifel. On 16 December, these three armies, supplemented by a panzer brigade operating with American equipment and by parties of paratroopers dropped throughout the battle area, particularly in the Malmedy area where about one battalion was dropped, launched an all-out offensive against the thinly-held First U. S. Army front between Monschau and Echternach. (4) The (2) A-3, p. 333; (3) A-2, p. 75; (4) A-2, p. 76.

general plan of the enemy was to strike through to the Meuse, then to Brussels and Antwerp, the Allies' principal port. It was preceded by a heavy schedule of coordinated artillery fire on front-line installations at 0530 hours. After two and one-half hours of this, long range fire was concentrated on key rear installations. Four main thrusts were made by panzer spearheads followed by infantry divisions. The northern spearhead (initially planned as the main effort) was checked and deflected by the stand of the V Corps at Malmedy and Mohschau. The secondary thrust directed in the direction of Namur, was delayed and divided by the left flank of the VIII Corps. The northern portion of this column, which was reenforced to become the main effort, was held by the commitment of the XVIII Airborne Corps at Werbomont and stopped in the Marche - Hotton area by the swift movement of the VII Corps. The column to the south of these, continuing as the secondary effort, was stopped at Bastogne by the center of the VIII Corps. The diversionary attack toward Luxembourg, against the right flank of the VIII Corps, was stopped during its initial phase.

(5)

Allied Headquarters acted promptly and decisively to counter this blow from the Wehrmacht. The 10th Armored Division from the south and the 7th Armored Division from the north were both moved to the flanks of the attack. (6)

All available reserves in the 12th Army Group were used to bolster the flanks of the penetration, and the XXX British Corps of the 21st Army Group was given the job of

(5) A-1, p. 105, p. 127; (6) A-2, p. 75.

holding the line of the Meuse and protecting the vital Liege area. Because the penetration had disrupted wire communications between General Bradley's 12th Army Group Headquarters in the city of Luxembourg and the First U. S. Army Headquarters, ^{where?} General Eisenhower, on 19 December, ordered the U. S. First and Ninth Armies under the temporary operational control of 21st Army Group, effective 1330 hours 20 December. The 101st and 82d Airborne Divisions were brought up from theater reserve in the vicinity of Reims and placed under command of the 12th Army Group on 18 December. These two divisions constituted the last of Theater Reserve. The 11th Armored Division had just arrived from England and was directed to assemble rapidly in the vicinity of Reims and to be prepared to meet a head-on attack across the Meuse. (7) On 22 December, Third U. S. Army attacked the south flank of the salient with the III Corps, in a meeting engagement which contacted the enemy approximately fifteen miles north of Arlon. (8)

Meanwhile the 101st Airborne Division, Combat Command R of the 9th Armored Division, Combat Command B of the 10th Armored, and remnants of overrun units, were completely encircled at Bastogne on 22 December. (9) (See Map B)

First U. S. Army on the north continued to run its east to west defenses ahead of the enemy. VII Corps, which had been initially set up as a mobile reserve, was committed to a defensive position along the Marche - Hottot line on 21 December. (10)

The situation in the western portion of the salient

(7) A-10, p. 195; (8) A-6, p. 22; (9) A-34, p. 174; (10) A-1, p. 114.

remained fluid. British XXX Corps was assembled in reserve between Liege and Brussels on 19 December. (11)

Except for local successes by the IX Tactical Air Command on 17 and 18 December, Allied Air Forces were grounded during the period 16 - 22 December by adverse weather conditions. (12)

RELIEF OF BASTOGNE

On 23 December, the XII Corps joined in the Third U. S. Army attack. (13) XX Corps had been assigned the mission of defending the former Third U. S. Army front as far south as Saarlautern, while Seventh U. S. Army extended its left boundary approximately twenty-five miles to take over some of Third Army's former zone. (14)

Third Army's attack, after making substantial gains on 22 December, impeded only by local counterattacks, met fanatical resistance on succeeding days. Progress was slow, but on the late afternoon of 26 December contact was established with the defenders at Bastogne. (15)

During the period 22 - 26 December, 21st Army Group on the north succeeded in containing the enemy along the Hotton - Marche - Ciney line. Contact was established with the British 29th Armored Brigade between Ciney and Dinant. VII Corps units successfully attacked the 2d Panzer Division on 25 December in the vicinity of Celles - Ciney. It is significant that 13 enemy self-propelled guns, completely out of gasoline, were captured near Celles. On 26 December the "Bulge", as it was known, was contained and the enemy stopped approximately 5 miles from the Meuse. (16) (See Map C)

(11) A-12, p. 220; (12) A-7, p. 156; (13) A-34, p. 196;
(14) A-34, p. 174; (15) A -37, p. 205; (16) A-1, p. 120.

On 23 December, the weather cleared and stayed clear until 26 December. The entire Allied Air Force concentrated its efforts on reducing the Ardennes salient. Heavy bombers of the Strategic Air Forces attacked marshalling yards east of the Rhine and communication centers such as St. Vith. The light and medium bombers of the Tactical Air Forces destroyed bridges, dumps, headquarters, and other targets within the battle area. The fighter-bombers ranged over the entire area, attacking the Luftwaffe, who themselves seemed to be making an all-out effort to regain air superiority. A coordinated attack on all German Air Force airfields on 24 December decreased the power and intensity of the German Air Force efforts. (17)

COUNTERATTACK - FIRST PHASE

On 27 and 28 December, Third U. S. Army repelled repeated counterattacks in the Bastogne area. Gains of 3000 - 4000 yards were made in the III and XII Corps areas. The enemy had given up his probing to the north and was moving units from the north, and from reserve, in an attempt to capture that important road center. The 11th Armored Division and the 87th Infantry Division were released by SHAEF to 12th U. S. Army Group and placed in the VIII Corps sector on the left flank of Third Army. VIII Corps could accomplish little because of the ice and snow hindering movements on roads. (18) The Neufchateau - Bastogne road was cleared by Combat Command A of 9th Armored Division. Two surgical teams and three days' medical supplies were flown into Bastogne by glider on 26 December.

On 27 December, the front line positions on the north

(17) A-2, p. 77, A-7, p. 156; (18) A-3, p. 361; (19) A-34, p. 182.

flank of the salient were maintained by active defense and aggressive patrolling. An enemy attack near Elsenborn was repulsed by artillery fire.

First U. S. Army issued a letter of instructions on 27 December announcing an intention to hold on the left and center, and to attack from the right. In substance it stated:

XVIII Airborne and V Corps were to defend in their sector.

VII Corps was to defend the line Marche - Hotton, extend east of Hotton to link with the XVIII Airborne Corps and prevent infiltration between Marche and Dinant. It was to be prepared to attack in the direction Marche - Houffalize on Army order.

5th Armored Division to remain in assembly area vicinity of Eupen and be prepared to attack on Army order.

The 51st British Highland Division was to remain in assembly areas south of Liege, prepared to counterattack.

On 28 December, operations in First U. S. Army consisted of readjustments to improve dispositions in accordance with the letter of instructions issued the previous day. Enemy activity consisted mainly of attempts at infiltration, which were quickly mopped up.

First U. S. Army amended its letter of instructions of the previous day to change the Army boundary so as to permit the XXX British Corps to assume responsibility for the line west of Marche. It further provided that the First U. S. Army would hold defensively while regrouping its forces.

(20)

On 29 December, Third U. S. Army made small gains in the

(20) A-1, p. 124.

III and XII Corps zones against rear-guard action, utilizing the high ground between the Sure and Wiltz rivers. The infantry were approaching the key communications center of Wiltz, which the enemy stubbornly refused to surrender, inasmuch as it was vital to him in the counter-offensive which he hoped to resume. The corridor into Bastogne was strengthened and widened. (21)

On the north side of the salient, the situation remained generally unchanged on 29 December. The enemy shifted 1 SS Panzer Division south to Bastogne, where it was identified the following day. It was soon to be followed by other divisions of the Sixth Panzer Army. XXX British Corps commenced the relief of U. S. VII Corps. Enemy was reported out of contact in the Rochefort area.

On 30 December, enemy pressure lessened considerably on the First Army front and activity was confined to patrolling. XXX British Corps assumed responsibility for the line from Marche (exclusive) to Namur. On 31 December, there was little activity on the north flank of the salient except for extensive patrolling. 82d Airborne Division of the XVIII Airborne Corps reported no enemy contact 1000 yards forward along the entire division front. (22)

Handling of dead at cemeteries was hindered by the receipt of Germans completely clothed in American uniforms and wearing U. S. dog tags. Also on this date, a salvage repair unit in Third Army began to manufacture snow camouflage suits from mattress covers. (23)

On 29 December, the 87th Infantry Division and the 11th Armored Division of the VIII Corps closed in southwest of

(21) A-6, p. 20; (22) A-1, p. 126; (23) A-34, p. 186.

of Bastogne and prepared to attack in the direction of Houffalize in the morning. The next morning, when the attack jumped off, it ran into the flank of a two-division enemy attack on Bastogne from the west. The meeting engagement, although a surprise to both sides, was fortunate for the U. S. forces, for had the enemy attack not been checked, it would have breached and possibly closed the Bastogne corridor. On 30 December, the enemy launched a two division attack against the III Corps and another against the northeast sector of the Bastogne perimeter. After bitter fighting all day, there was no substantial change in the front. On 31 December, seventeen attacks were hurled at Third U. S. Army front. The Luftwaffe made 64 raids against Third U. S. Army installations.

Third Army reported slight gains except in the XII Corps zone, where an advance of approximately two and one-half miles were gained in a surprise attack along the road to St. Vith. (24)

During the fighting through the deep gorges, dense woods and bare ridges of the Ardennes, the troops suffered extremely from the zero and sub-zero temperatures. Wounded men, if not recovered and evacuated at once, would freeze to death in a matter of minutes. Aid men used sleighs and mounted litters on skis to assist in getting casualties to an aid station. Demolition charges had to be used to enable men to pierce the frozen ground to dig foxholes. The situation was further aggravated by the fact that a large percentage of the replacements received by Third Army immediately prior to the Bulge, were clerks, artillerymen, and

(24) A-37, p. 207.

other individuals hurriedly gleaned from rear echelon units early in December, and pressed into service as infantrymen. The 26th Division, for example, received 4000 of these replacements just a few days prior to moving from Metz to a meeting engagement north of Arlon. Many of these replacements never lived to realize their handicap and many others quickly succumbed to exhaustion, then frostbite or trenchfoot, before they fired their first shot at the enemy.

Vehicular travel was slow and unreliable. The snow was not generally deep, but soon became a glittering sheet of ice on the roads. Tanks, in particular, would get out of control on even slight grades, and skate ponderously until they crashed to the side of the road, usually tearing up all telephone wires along that edge. Cross country traffic was seldom feasible because of the ruggedness of the terrain. Linemen had to dig and tear up miles of wire through the crusted snow to find a break.

No camouflage clothing suitable for the dazzling white landscape was available, but the men soon improvised; generally they used some housewife's sheets or pillow cases. The shoepacs then issued were unsuitable and disliked by everyone. The combat boot and overshoe combination was the most popular and practical type of footgear, but overshoes were still in somewhat short supply.

During the period 26 - 31 December, the weather intermittently permitted the Tactical Air Force to support the infantry. The Air - Artillery - Infantry team was used against front line targets and targets of opportunity with excellent results. (25)

(25) Personal knowledge.

At midnight, on the night of 31 December, all guns in Third Army fired rapid fire on German positions for twenty minutes. (26) The next morning the Luftwaffe, in a long planned-for mass attack, came out with the largest concentration of planes since D-Day. Over 800 sorties were flown against Allied airfields in Holland, Belgium, and France, inflicting considerable damage to planes on the ground. But in the process, the enemy lost over 300 planes. (27)

On 1 January 1945, the enemy directed several probing attacks against the eastern section of the Bastogne perimeter. III Corps made slight gains, but XX and XII Corps situations showed no change. (28)

On 1 January, a letter of instructions was issued at Headquarters First Army. It indicated that XXX British Corps had completed the relief of the VII Corps west of Marche, and would complete the relief from Hotton southwest by daylight on 3 January. It directed the VII Corps to launch an attack in the area between the Ourthe and Lienne rivers on 3 January, with the mission of recapturing Houffalize and gaining contact with Third Army. The VII Corps would be composed of the 2d and 3rd Armored Divisions, the 83rd and 84th Infantry Divisions, the 75th Infantry Divisions until its units were passed through by the attack, and a screening force of the 82d Airborne Division in front of the VII Corps, as agreed upon between Corps commanders. The XVIII Airborne Corps and V Corps were to defend and patrol strongly at D-Day H-Hour. The XVIII Airborne Corps had the additional mission of protecting the left flank of VII Corps and of moving its

(26) A-37, p. 211; (27) A-3, p. 363; (28) A-34, p. 204.

flank units to conform with VII Corps flank as it advanced. (29) (See Map D)

On 1 and 2 January 1945, there was little activity in First Army zone except preparations for the attack. Losses of personnel, artillery, liaison planes, and tanks were replaced, and all units brought up to strength. A full scale air support program was planned for the jump-off on 3 January. (30)

VIII Corps, on the Third Army front, crossed the Marche - Bastogne highway on 2 January. III and XII Corps fronts moved little or not at all in the face of determined enemy resistance. Enemy units from the First and Seventh Army fronts were identified in the Third Army zone. (31)

On both Army fronts, the artillery, with the new proximity fuse, was of major importance in breaking up enemy attacks, in reducing his resistance, and in continually impeding movement and destroying his equipment by long range interdiction fire. The nature of the terrain, especially when covered with snow, made cross-country movement generally impossible and canalized his movement to the few roads available. Critical points on these roads were kept under continuous interdiction.

COUNTERATTACK - SECOND PHASE

The First U. S. Army jumped off at 0830 hours on 3 January on a twenty-five mile front against the north side of the enemy salient. Because of the overcast and cloudy weather, air support was not possible. It immediately encountered well dug-in defenses protected by road mines and

(29) A-1, p. 126; (30) A-1, p. 127; (31) A-34, p. 206.

road blocks. The roads were slippery with mud and ice, and at the end of the first day all units had moved forward 2000 - 3000 yards.

In the V Corps zone, patrols demonstrated as far forward as 1200 yards, then withdrew to their original positions before the end of the day.

On 4 January, progress of the attack by First Army was much the same as on the first day. Progress was again measured in yards.

On 5 January, the weather cleared up and Tactical Air Force supported the First Army attack. The slippery roads hindered the movement of armor, and small gains were made by foot elements.

During the period 6 - 10 January, the weather closed in again and additional snowstorms impeded even the progress of foot troops. The XVIII Airborne Corps shifted its attack eastward along the ridges, and outflanked the Germans defending across the cross compartments. Operations were further hindered, not only by extensive mine fields, but by uncharted mines which the American troops had hastily used during their withdrawal, and of which no reports had been made. Ice and snow temporarily neutralized many of these mines; advance elements many times passed over them without incident, only to have the mines later set off by heavy traffic wearing off the ice in conjunction with the midday thaws. The constant danger from mines further delayed advances due to the necessity of careful sweeping and removal.

By 9 January, First Army's front had advanced to the general line Stavelot - south one mile beyond Salmchateau (excluding Vielsalm), thence west along a line just north of Samree and Laroche. The enemy resisted along his north flank

but fought only slight delaying actions while withdrawing armor from the western portion of the salient. Such minor enemy counterattacks as did occur were not supported by artillery. The British XXX Corps advanced by 9 January, against the light resistance, about 5 - 6 miles and maintained contact with First U. S. Army on its left. (32)

The enemy, meanwhile, had been concentrating his armor, artillery, and infantry on the southern flank against the Third Army. On 3 January, the Germans threw the full weight of these units in a final attempt against the wedge in his left flank. The mainstay of the Americans in repulsing these attacks was the Artillery, which fired over 400,000 rounds during the period 1 - 8 January. Much of this fire was concentrated at critical points on the Bastogne - Houffalize road and other roads upon which the enemy was dependent for supply.

About 7 January, the enemy began movement of his tanks and Panzer units out of the salient. German attacks consisted solely of infantry and artillery. On the morning of 9 January, the VIII and III Corps jumped off in attacks against Houffalize and St. Vith. The attack was supported by over 1000 Artillery pieces of 105-mm or larger. The III Corps made gains of about 1500 yards, and the VIII Corps succeeded in reaching the woods west of Noville. (33)

During the concentrated attacks on the Third Army front 2 - 5 January, the enemy introduced his new rocket artillery, the nebelwerfer. This delivered 30 - 40 rockets simultaneously on our troops with powerful concussion effect. (34)

The First Army, by 10 January, had attained its in-

(32) A-1, p. 130; (33) A-34, p. 213; (34) Personal knowledge.

intermediate objectives. Orders were issued for the second phase of the attack on Houffalize and further assigned the task of eliminating the enemy salient between the Elsenborn Ridge and Vielsalm to the XVIII Airborne and V Corps.

On 11 and 12 January, activities on the First Army front consisted mainly of regrouping for the attack on 13 January.

The First Army attack jumped off and proceeded against light resistance on the west. By 15 January, patrols of the First Army entered Houffalize and found that the enemy had withdrawn. The enemy still resisted near Bovigny and farther east. (35)

On the Third Army front, the VIII Corps succeeded in reaching St. Hubert and cutting the St. Hubert - Houffalize highway by 11 January. On 12 January, the 90th Infantry Division was moved from the XX Corps area near Saarlautern, and in a surprise attack through the 26th Infantry Division on the III Corps front, succeeded in trapping the bulk of the 5 Para and 9 Volksgrenadier Divisions in a pocket on the southeast Bastogne perimeter. A Signal Corps Deception Unit was utilized to keep up the 90th Division's normal radio traffic in the Saarlautern area, and assisted in achieving surprise. On 13 January, a fighter pilot reported a large column of enemy vehicles halted in Houffalize to the VIII Corps Artillery which, by fire adjusted by the fighter pilot, succeeded in destroying the column. On 16 January, contact between First and Third U. S. Armies had been firmly established, and the salient was now only a bulge. The Germans frantically tried to save what was left of their Panzer

(35) A-1, p. 140.

units and to pull back the crack divisions, which he had committed in the Ardennes, to the security of the Siegfried line. PWs captured during the last few days complained bitterly about the lack of food. (See Map E)

COUNTERATTACK - THIRD PHASE

Now that the Allied Forces had again joined, the task of mopping-up the remaining bulge was relatively easy. The bulk of the larger units were being pulled back by Hitler, leaving small miscellaneous detachments to fight a rear guard action.

First U. S. Army returned to operational control of Twelfth U. S. Army Group at midnight 17/18 January.

First U. S. Army consolidated its gains and made slight gains on the 18 - 19 January, except in the Ondenval defile where strong enemy counterattacks pushed back our lines, in the V Corps sector, as much as one mile. (36)

Third Army resumed its offensive on the axis Bastogne - St. Vith, with the XII Corps jumping off on 18 January across the Sure river, and the VIII and III Corps on 21 January. By 22 January the VIII Corps had been pinched out and progress was limited only by the icy, wrecked roads and small arms fire. By 24 January, the Clerf river had been reached. (37)

The enemy was now clogging the roads in a frantic effort to save as many of his vehicles as possible. On 21 January, the weather cleared and the Air Force came out en masse to hammer at the retreating columns. Between St. Vith and Diekirch the vehicle concentrations were particularly heavy, and on the 22 January, the Air Force had its best day

(36) A-1, p. 143; (37) A-6, p. 31.

since the invasion. On this day, the IX and XIX Tactical Air Command (U. S.) and the Second Tactical Air Force (British) destroyed more than a thousand vehicles, fifty-plus tanks and almost four hundred railway cars. (38)

On the right flank of First Army, the VII Corps was pinched out on 22 January, and in the next four days both Armies pushed forward so that by 27 January the west bank of the Our river had been cleared, St. Vith had been retaken, and our troops occupied the line from which they had been driven on 16 December.

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

The international and political pressures exerted on the Supreme Allied Commander during the Ardennes campaign, and the personalities of the two principal commanders involved - Field Marshal Montgomery and General Patton - cannot be disregarded entirely in a criticism of this campaign, for they certainly affected its conduct. Inasmuch as this monograph covers only the period previously stated, only the results of these factors will be considered.

Inter-Allied cooperation reached a new low in this campaign. It is believed that the Supreme Commander, harassed by a staff ready with a chorus of "I told you so's", after the Germans had struck, and by the United States War Department seeking a goat on which to place the responsibility for the surprise achieved by the Germans, was badgered into dividing command over the Ardennes salient.

The crucial point in repulsing an attack is that instant when the attack loses its momentum - when the enemy is disorganized, and before he can collect himself and dig in.

(38) A-1, p. 145.

General Patton justifies his piecemeal attack, first with a three-division Corps on 22 January, and with a second Corps on 23 January, by the fact that he achieved surprise. There is no doubt that the Germans did not believe it possible for an Army to hold a front and make an attack on a ninety-degree angle within the short time it took Third Army to accomplish it. The enemy continued his attack to the north, and even when he bogged down because of his failure to capture the large gasoline stores he had anticipated, still he did not begin to mass against the attack from the south with the necessary force. When he finally began to realize the danger in the south and to make his last effort to reduce the Bastogne wedge during the first week in January, it was too late. Continual decimation of his forces and lack of supplies due to the air attacks combined with continual artillery pounding, had paralyzed the bulk of his armor, and soon began to break the morale of his once fanatical troops.

It is quite reasonable to assume that the attack from the south was for the purpose of relieving the pressure at the vital Bastogne road center. By the same token, why was there not a similar attack made to hold the vital road center at St. Vith? Further, when the 2d Panzer Division, out of gas was hit by the 2d Armored Division at Ciney - Celles on 25 December, and the enemy attack lost its impetus during the next few days along the north flank of the salient, why was there not an immediate counterattack from the north?

On page 220 of the book "21 Army Group, Normandy to the Baltic" by Field Marshal, the "Viscount Montgomery of Alamein", Marshal Montgomery explains that, on 19 December when General

Eisenhower instructed him to take operational control of the First and Ninth U. S. Armies, - "The question arose of the possibility of employing British divisions south and east of the Meuse; this was a very difficult matter, because their administrative axes would run directly across the maintenance routes of both First and Ninth United States Armies, and it would therefore be extremely difficult to avoid congestion."

The British XXX Corps began its concentration in the Liege - Brussels area on 19 December.

Speaking, evidently, about 25 December, Marshal Montgomery writes, on page 222 of the aforementioned book - "It had not yet, however, been possible to form a reserve American corps available for offensive operations in First Army, and I now decided to commit British troops south and east of the Meuse in order to relieve the VII United States Corps for the purpose. My plan was to employ XXX Corps on the right flank of the First United States Army, taking over the sector Givet - Hotton. These reliefs were to be completed by 2 January so that VII United States Corps could thrust towards Houffalize on 3 January."

On 27 January, an order was issued directing the action described above. The XXX British Corps commenced the relief on 29 December and finished finally, on the night of 2 - 3 January - five days to effect relief on a front which was generally out of contact with the enemy!

The meticulous plan of regrouping, resting and re-outfitting an attacking force, together with a full scale air support program, is certainly to be admired. But during this period the enemy was able to organize his northern flank with a skeleton crew, and to shift the bulk of his forces to

attack the already battered Third Army.

The failure of the northern attack to materialize until 3 January permitted the enemy to resist with well prepared positions manned by relatively small forces, and to extricate the bulk of his forces with relatively small losses, considering the "neck" through which he had to withdraw.

The problems and difficulties encountered with replacements during this campaign is one which we can expect in all warfare. The policy of fighting a Division then withdrawing it to a rest area for the purpose of receiving and training replacements is basically sound. Perhaps the present conception of feeding replacements to a reserve regiment will prevent the reoccurrence of committing a division with 4000 green replacements - practically all the riflemen of its front line units. When the replacement program is considered, first with the idea of economy of force, and second in that the replacement on the battlefield has been a minimum of four to six months in processing and training from the time of his induction, it can readily be seen that the problem is one of the greatest magnitude and possibly one which can never be completely solved. The necessity to commit all available reserve forces and to create fighting units from service forces can arise in any war. Perhaps greater emphasis placed on the fact that every man in the armed forces must be prepared to assume the role of an infantryman, will help better to prepare a man to assume that role when and if it becomes necessary.

Losses of fighting troops from causes other than direct enemy action is still a major problem in spite of recent medical advancements. The physical endurance of the front

line soldier is one of the greatest factors affecting the results of combat under adverse weather conditions. In this operation, the fact that we had no suitable cold-weather footgear available, and that most of the men levied from other branches as infantry replacements had insufficient training, caused a great number of casualties as a direct result of exposure to the weather.

The principle of organization of key terrain is well illustrated by this campaign. The results of this action, and of the German drive through this area into Belgium and France in 1940, tend to prove that the key terrain in the Ardennes sector is not the Meuse river but the Ardennes mountains themselves. Desultory delaying activities by the French covering force in the Ardennes, and an attempt to organize the Meuse as a main line of resistance, delayed the German armies but little in their westward advance in 1940. Organization of the defense at Monschau and Bastogne withstood the fiercest attacks the Germans could muster from their most fanatical forces. Again, once the enemy had gained a foothold in the Ardennes, he was able to defend his northern flank against vastly superior forces while he concentrated his efforts on the south.

Of all the principal arms which could be brought to bear on the enemy - air, infantry, and armor were seriously handicapped by weather and terrain, while artillery retained the highest relative efficiency. For example, the enemy attacks at Elsenborn were stopped almost exclusively by artillery fire. At Bastogne, both on the defense and offense during the first half of the month of January, artillery fire was of major importance in breaking the enemy's will and power.

In an overall concept, air power when it could be employed, was probably one of the greatest factors affecting the destruction of the German armies. The use of the Strategic Air Forces to isolate the battlefield and of the Tactical Air Forces to support the ground forces, and the effect of such tactics is illustrated by the enemy's activities and successes when weather prohibited the employment of our air power. When we were favored by clear weather, the Allied Air Forces activities prevented the Germans from adequately supporting their forces in the Bulge, and prohibited his daylight movements in the combat area.

The necessity of maintaining accurate and complete records of mine fields was well illustrated by the difficulty the First U. S. Army experienced due to our own mines which had been hastily and indiscriminately placed during our withdrawal. The fact that these mines were sometimes inoperative due to freezing indicates that necessary action must be taken to redesign such equipment to enable it to operate under such conditions.

LESSONS

1. Unity of command must be preserved if maximum coordination of efforts is to be achieved.
2. Piecemeal attacks are justified if surprise is thereby achieved.
3. Knowledge and application of the principles of defense are a necessary part of the training and utilization of combat forces.
4. Replacements must be fed into combat divisions in smaller, more frequent parcels, to prevent divisions being committed with the bulk of their line elements composed of green troops.

5. The value of artillery increases when weather and terrain combine to hinder the maximum efficiency of other combat forces.
6. Long range, accurate weather forecasting is necessary in a complete situation estimate.
7. Large scale infiltration tactics must be anticipated in modern combat.
8. We must anticipate that the enemy will take advantage of our national habits and we must take such action as may be necessary to prevent his catching us off guard, particularly during holiday periods.
9. Counterattack plans and forces must be ready to strike an enemy penetration the moment it is contained.
10. Every effort must be made to increase the combat effectiveness of our Infantry, Armor, and Air Forces during adverse weather and terrain conditions.
11. The suppression of nationalistic tendencies by individual members of Allied staffs is a prerequisite to successful Allied operations.
12. Political interferences and pressures must be anticipated by all top-ranking combat force leaders.