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Translated by: E. W. Matti

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A R D E N N E S

(16 Dec 44 - 25 Jan 45)

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All documents, combat reports, war diaries, and so forth being missing, I have had to write down the following account from memory. Consequently, I cannot guarantee the accuracy of the statements regarding strengths, dates, and events described. Having been wounded on 19 Dec, I gathered the data for the period 19 - 25 Dec from the reports of my staff officers.

I. Previous History

During the invasion fighting, the 352 Inf Div was greatly weakened and, as a result of this, it was shifted to the Flensburg--Sleswick area to be reorganized. In October I assumed the command of this division as 352 V G D. The reorganization was carried out during that month and, around 15 Nov, the Division was transferred to the "Eifel" in the district around Bitburg. Here, it had some time left for training and for completing its equipment. At the end of November, it took charge of the West Wall sector of Vianden-Echternach (excl). On 16 Dec, 48 hours before the time of attack, the Division was moved into the assembly area between Roth and Wallendorf.

A. At this time it consisted of:

- 914 Inf Rgt, under Cmdr Lt Col von Criegern (killed)
- 915 Inf Rgt, " Cmdr Lt Col Drave (wounded on 16 Dec)
- 916 Inf Rgt, " Cmdr Lt Col v. Luecken

Schmidt, / Erich / (BG, VG Dir Cmdr) "Report on the Employment of the 352 VG Div in the Ardennes Offensive 16 Dec 44-25 Jan 45" (Engl. transl. typewritten photocopy, 7 pp / 1946 /

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352 Art Rgt, " Cmdr Col. Sandmann
352 Engr Bn " Cmdr Major Marquardt

Superior Command: LXXXV Corps.

B. As to the exact situation of the command posts and units, see inclosures 1-3.

C. The task was: Break through the enemy main line of resistance south of Vianden and carry on the attack past Ettelbrueck to the Attert sector (Bettborn-Bissen). Here the Division was to be used for the flank protection of the LXXXV Corps, inside of the framework of the attacking army.

D. The division was drawn up and fitted out according to T/O (for V.G.D.). The reserves came from the Navy and Luftwaffe.

EM's: Age 23-30 years; training too short; had not seen action; no ground-fighting or other combat experience; full T/O strength.

NCO's: Parent unit:-Navy; mostly no front experience; 75% T/O strength.

Officers: Varying in their amount of front experience and training; full T/O strength.

Infantry: 914 and 915 Rgts displayed good fighting spirit; (members from the Navy only); training too short, and no front experience.

Artillery: Training too short; not accurate in aiming and not reliable in target plotting.

Assault guns: Training too short; tactically and technically ('Hetzers') not accurate; some of the EM's never having been in action.

Signal & Communication units: Up to the required standard.

Engr Bn: Up to requirements.

Equipment: In most cases almost complete. Short 35% of radio sets for fire direction posts 30% (approx.) of assault guns (according to T/O). 25% (approx.) of submachine guns (assault weapons).

E. Estimate of the situation: As the enemy field positions in front of our lines were insufficiently manned, our attack was sure to be successful, if only the heavy weapons and artillery could be ferried over the Our and Sauer rivers in due time and the enemy artillery observation on the height northwest of Wallendorf were eliminated in the process. We expected violent enemy counterattacks on the third day of attack from the West and from the area of Luxemburg.

II. Battles: (see inclosures 1-3).

A. The Division had the task of crossing the Our south of Bettel in a surprise attack on 16 Dec at 0530 hours, forcing the crossing of the Sauer river near Ettelbrueck and, -as soon as Bettborn

and Bissen in the Attert sector were reached, and was then to be absorbed into the flank covering position of the LXXXV Corps.

Orders were therefore correspondingly issued as follows :

1. 915 and 916 Rgts launch the attack as the leading elements. Division reserve:-914 Regiment.
2. Objective for the first day:-Conquer dominant heights west of the Our, and break through to the Sauer near Ettelbrueck.
3. The artillery, ranged within the Corps formation, had to support the first crossing, keeping discovered enemy positions under fire.
4. Engr Bn had the task of building an emergency bridge south of Bettel (Gentingen).

B. Period 16 - 18 Dec 44: (Encl. 1)

The first crossing of the Our river was a surprise to the enemy and developed according to plan. Moving round enemy pockets of resistance, the 915 Inf Rgt thrust forward to a place west of Bastendorf, where it had to stay till 19 Dec,--due to lack of heavy weapons and growing shortage of ammunition.

Attacking the northeast slope of the height northwest of Wallendorf, the 916 Inf Rgt was held up by enemy pockets of resistance. Not until 1000 hours on 18 Dec did the Regiment manage to take this height after its heavy weapons have been brought to bear.

On 17 Dec, early in the morning, 914 Rgt was moved up and told to force a way through to 915 Regiment. However, it did not succeed in so doing until 18 Dec, since no heavy weapons were available

and it was constantly threatened by flank attack. After heavy weapons were brought into play, it managed to occupy Fouhren, which place has already been stormed by elements of the 5th Parachute Division.

In the evening of 17 Dec, the emergency bridge south of Bettel (Gentingen) was finally ready.

Period 19 - 22 Dec 44:

Following the fall of Bastendorf, the 914 Inf Rgt established contact with 915 Inf Rgt in the evening of 19 Dec. Artillery was brought up to the Bastendorf area to carry on the attack across the Our river. The Division took Ettelbrueck on 21 December. Demolished bridges, blown up by the enemy, were the cause of this delay.

On 22 Dec, the attack was carried on with the Attert Sector (Bettborn-Bissen) as the objective. An enemy counterattack in a strength of about one American division with armored support compelled us to abandon this plan.

The 916 and 914 Inf Rgts were withdrawn to the bridgehead position of Ettelbrueck. The 915 Inf Rgt was deeply echeloned far in advance and, now surrounded by the enemy, was ordered to force its way back. It reported to the Division on about 26 Dec, having lost all its heavy weapons.

Period 23 and 24 Dec 44:

On 23 Dec, the bridgehead was engaged in defensive combat. According to instructions, the 352 Reinforcement (Ersatz) Bn occupied, toward the evening, the security sector of Diekirch-Wallendorf as its left neighbor had failed to advance any further.

On 24 Dec the bridgehead garrison was withdrawn to the Sauer to build a

more effective defense front.

Questions :

Q. 1. Changes in orders given or recd w/reasons therefore

A. 1. No.

Q. 2. Time, place, reasons for commitment of reserves.

A. 2. 914 Inf Rgt (Div reserve) had to be committed already during the night of 16/17 Dec (see encl sketch).

Q. 3. Changes in flank units and/or higher Hq.

A. 3. As our left neighbor (276 Inf Div) was unable to advance, our own division had to face a constant threat to its flank which increased gradually during the progress of the offensive.

Q. 4. Special Tactics or Technique of infantry, tanks, S Pr, artillery, etc.

A. 4. The infantry was ordered to turn the enemy's strong points in order to push forward and gain more ground.

Q. 5. Road nets used; types and performance of communications

A. 5. Usual signal equipment.

Q. 6. Functioning of supply and reinforcement agencies.

A. 6. All right up to 24 Dec then subject to enemy air activity.

Q. 7. German air support

A. 7. None

Q. 8. Personal eye witness account of conferences attended, engagements observed, etc.

A. 8. Nothing particular to report.

III. Estimate:

A. The terrain where the attack was launched was deeply intersected and very difficult to survey. The Our and Sauer rivers were running high, thus delaying the bridge construction. As mentioned before, all these difficulties had a very bad effect on our attack and prevented its rapid development.

B. Critical moments: 16 and 17 Dec 44 - During these days the infantry was involved in a battle without having the support of heavy weapons and with the artillery far behind the front lines. The delayed construction of the bridge embarrassed considerably the supply of ammunition and material.

On 22 Dec the enemy launched a counterattack on the advancing divisions in a strength of approximately one American division, reinforced by 60 to 70 tanks.

20 - 25 Dec 44: We had to expect enemy attacks on our deep, unprotected flank of about 20 kilometers. There were no reserves available to face these attacks.

(Q) What was the contribution of your unit to the success or failure of the campaign?

C. I am not able to answer this.

signed SCHMIDT

Maj Gen

