

**“THE STREET WAS ONE PLACE WE COULD NOT GO”:
THE AMERICAN ARMY AND URBAN COMBAT IN WORLD
WAR II EUROPE**

A Dissertation

by

JONATHAN ANDREW BEALL

Submitted to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Chair of Committee,	Joseph G. Dawson, III
Committee Members,	James Bradford
	Roger Reese
	David Vaught
	James Burk
Head of Department,	David Vaught

May 2014

Major Subject: History

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ABSTRACT

Much has been written about the nature of the United States Army in World War II and the topic of military effectiveness. This dissertation examines how the United States responded to a combat environment, specifically, fighting in built-up areas, that it had not planned to fight within before World War II. By following three infantry divisions, the 1st, 3rd, and 5th Infantry Divisions through their combat in World War II, this dissertation investigates how the Army of the United States fought within the urban setting to see whether the American Army improved and became more effective as the war continued.

It argues that the 1st, 3rd, and 5th Infantry Divisions learned and became more proficient at urban combat over time. This dissertation asserts that as these divisions embraced combined-arms operations in general, that is, mastered the coordination of infantry weapons, armor, and artillery into battle, so they applied those lessons to the urban environment. Whereas the American military had neither doctrine nor tradition of urban combat before World War II, combat units learned to develop methods of fighting within towns and cities. Further, the United States Army processed and incorporated these battlefield lessons into military doctrine at a slower rate. The infantry divisions' combat experience had a greater impact on army doctrine than the doctrine had on the divisions' warfighting practices.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated in loving memory to my grandfather, Alphonso Aguirre (1913-2010). He had always wanted to be an Aggie.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

One does not undertake a project such as this without getting help along the way. First, I am greatly indebted to my doctoral advisor, Dr. Joseph G. Dawson, for his patience and direction as this dissertation slowly took shape and especially as it competed with my teaching responsibilities. I would also like to thank my committee, Dr. James Bradford, Dr. James Burk, Dr. Roger Reese, and Dr. David Vaught, for their insightful comments, guidance, and support that helped to sharpen this dissertation.

Fellow scholars such as Mr. Daniel Champagne, Mr. Jeff Danby, and Dr. John McManus generously gave me unpublished sources that I could not obtain through Interlibrary Loan. Colonel Lou DiMarco, U.S. Army (retired), helped me to frame this dissertation in its early days and then he graciously took time from his schedule to meet with me during my visit to Fort Leavenworth's Combined Arms Research Library to discuss World War II and urban combat. At the same time, the archivists at the National Archives at College Park, Maryland, Fort Benning's Donovan Research Library, Fort Knox's Armor School Research Library, Fort Leavenworth's Combined Arms Research Library, and the First Division Museum's McCormick Research Center all offered incredible help in helping me find what I needed to write this dissertation.

Alec Wahlman helped me understand some of these concepts, donated some of his research, and encouraged me through this process as he finished his dissertation. I am thankful and grateful for James Pruitt's and Lee Daub's friendship. James Pruitt's companionship on our several research trips to Washington, D.C. made those trips pass

more pleasantly. Lee Daub answered my random questions at random times on World War II equipment, armor, and aircraft. Mark and Lexi Day allowed me to stay at their place for a week in 2009 and Erin Pounders opened her place to me in 2011. Her parents, Ken and Penny Pounders, have opened their home to me on several Thanksgivings. All have taught me the meaning of generosity and hospitality.

I want to extend my gratitude to the U.S. Army Heritage Education Center at the Military History Institute for its General and Mrs. Matthew B. Ridgway Research Grant that helped me to do extended research at their facility in Carlisle, Pennsylvania in 2009. I am thankful to Dr. Richard J. Sommers and Mr. David Keough for their help during those weeks. I also received timely financial assistance from the History Department grants as well as a matching grant from the Glasscock Center for Humanities Research.

Lastly, I wish to thank my parents, Dick and Deanna Beall, for all their assistance and help. Their emotional, spiritual, and financial help has been invaluable. It is not too much to say that were it not for their encouragement, support, and prayers, I would not have finished this dissertation.

And, finally, *solī deo gloria*.

NOMENCLATURE

CARL	Combined Arms Research Library, Fort Leavenworth, KS
DRL	Donovan Research Library, Fort Benning, GA
MRC	McCormick Research Center, First Division Museum, Wheaton, IL
RG 407, Entry 427, NA	Record Group 407 (Records of the Adjutant General's Office, U.S. Army), Entry 427 (U.S. Army Operations Reports, World War II), National Archives, College Park, MD
RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA	"European Theater of Operations Combat Interviews, 1944-1945," Record Group 407, Entry 427-A, National Archives, College Park, MD
USAMHI	United States Army Military History Institute, Carlisle, PA

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: WORLD WAR II, CITIES, AND AMERICAN MILITARY EFFECTIVENESS

Upon landing in North Africa on 8 November 1942, the 1st Infantry Division's 18th Infantry Regiment had orders to take the town of St. Cloud in Algeria. A small French colonial town of approximately four thousand people, St. Cloud had a small garrison including French Foreign Legionnaires and French artillery. The approaches to the town offered very little cover, exposing the Americans to French artillery and machine gun fire. The 18th Infantry attacked this small town in the opening hours of America's war against the German Third Reich. Men of the 18th Infantry tried to infiltrate into and capture St. Cloud but the regiment struggled to take the town without any armor, air, or artillery support. The 1st Infantry Division bypassed the town as the 18th continued to wrestle within it. The French surrender of Oran ended the fighting in St. Cloud as well. Lack of support, the infantrymen's hesitation to fight, and the well-prepared positions of the defenders conspired to prevent the 18th Infantry Regiment from seizing it until French forces surrendered Oran.¹

One year later, in December 1943, and after fighting through northern Africa and Sicily, the 18th Infantry was in England training for the invasion of France. Because the "memories of Saint Cloud, Algeria linger in our heads," the regiment began developing techniques and procedures for fighting in towns and villages. Using a bombed-out British neighborhood, riflemen from the 18th Infantry Regiment consciously prepared themselves for combat in the built-up areas of France and Germany. By the end of the

month, the regiment was satisfied that “a definite operating procedure is gradually evolving.”² But this training included only infantrymen and not the regimental Cannon or Antitank Companies nor the attached armor.

Two years after the invasion of North Africa, on 20 November 1944, the 18th Infantry was enduring a nightmarish experience in the Hürtgen Forest. Fighting through this heavily wooded area included taking towns. Along with a platoon of tanks, two companies from the 18th seized the small town of Heistern, Germany house by house. After the riflemen and tanks took the town, five battalions of American artillery blasted apart a German counterattack. Taking Heistern helped prepare the infantry, tanks, and artillery to take the small city of Langerwehe days later.³ These three short vignettes help show that fighting in World War II included the urban environment unlike ever before in American military history. For the Allies to defeat the vaunted German *Wehrmacht* meant grappling with it through Europe’s villages, towns, and cities. For an American army with little prewar urban combat doctrine, that meant learning “on the go” to master that environment effectively as soon as possible.

In one sense, World War II was not unique because armies have fought for cities since people first built them. The history of the city is linked with the history of war. Cities emerged from a combination of agricultural surplus, religious reasons, trade with other cities, as well as fulfilling defensive needs.⁴ Walls around even the earliest cities indicate that people took the threat of attack seriously and the “sight of an approaching army ranked almost on a par with such natural disasters as famine, pestilence, flood, or earthquake.”⁵ This was in part because conquering cities has historically brought out the

worst in attacking armies with wholesale slaughter, rape, pillage, and enslavement. Yet organized combat inside a city has remained a rare phenomenon.⁶ Nineteenth-century military thinkers such as Antoine de Jomini and Carl von Clausewitz had much to say about how to execute a siege but nothing on combat within that locale. There is an effusion of thought on siege warfare but there is a shortage of theoretical writings “about military operations within or against the city . . . Thus there is no foundation from which to build.”⁷

But in another sense, World War II remains unique from past wars. Not only was the scale of violence and destruction exponentially greater, but the ends for which each side fought also differed: the Allies asserted that they fought to restore a balance of power in Europe by achieving the unconditional surrender of Germany, not merely by conquering land. Because of this strategic objective, the Allies cared less about conquering and looting cities than defeating the German enemy wherever it was. As mentioned, cities often reduced soldiers to their most depraved level but this was generally not the case in World War II because towns and cities were tactical and operational means to achieve strategic ends; they were never ends in themselves. Seeing the urban setting as a hurdle to overcome affected how and why American infantry divisions fought for them. For his part, commander of Allied forces in Europe, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, kept Americans away from the most important cities on the Western Front—Paris and Berlin. The Germans withdrew from Paris and the Soviets took Berlin. Like Paris, German forces also retreated from major cities such as Naples, Rome, and Luxembourg City. This perspective is important as the Americans in

particular fought their way through France and Germany. As the 10th Infantry Regiment prepared its late-autumn 1944 campaign along with its parent 5th Infantry Division in Patton's Third Army against the strategically fortified city of Metz, the city itself "loomed as merely another objective."⁸ In this sense, fighting for urban centers only had value insofar as they helped achieve the Allies' strategic goal of defeating and annihilating the Wehrmacht.

What is more, the road-bound nature of motorized World War II armies made urban combat more common than before. The Americans and Germans were often restricted to the roads because of their heavy reliance on motorized transportation and armor, thus giving hundreds of smaller towns and cities immediate tactical and operational importance to the extent that they lay along the axes of advance and retreat. For example, the Americans and British wanted St. Lô and Caen respectively because both cities lay on key road networks in Normandy that would permit Allied forces to pour into the French countryside. The Allies' need for a deep-water port to sustain the drive into France gave Cherbourg, Brest, and Marseilles high value. General George Patton took Metz after great difficulty because he did not want to bypass a major city containing so many German forces. Bringing lessons learned from the Eastern Front to the Roer River Valley, the Germans "transform[ed] every village into a menacing fortress. . . . The villages and towns were so numerous that they readily formed in turn a great network of mutually supporting fortifications" against the advancing Allies in the autumn of 1944.⁹ In addition to the psychological effect of capturing a major Nazi symbol of German culture and history, one key reason for taking the city of Aachen was

capturing its road network.¹⁰ The Allies considered any bridge over the Rhine River to be a target.

Because of these realities, the Second World War provided hundreds of instances of urban battles, ranging from company-level fights for villages and towns to entire armies grappling within large cities such as Stalingrad and Berlin. While the United States never fought for a city as strategically valuable as Berlin, American forces experienced heavy urban fighting within Brest and Metz, France as well as Aachen and Nuremberg, Germany.¹¹ The high number of instances of urban combat in World War II presents an opportunity to study how the American military responded to such a distinctive combat environment.

The United States had limited experience in urban operations between 1775 and 1941. The most prominent nineteenth-century examples were street fights in Monterrey, Mexico, in 1846 and Fredericksburg, Virginia, in 1862. In 1914, American soldiers and marines invaded Veracruz, Mexico, under President Woodrow Wilson's direction. But these limited experiences never sparked serious study of the nature of urban combat in the army before 1941, in part because the army lacked institutional memory and regarded fighting inside a city as the rare exception more than the expected norm. Therefore, the American soldiers who liberated hundreds of European towns and cities had neither mature doctrine nor a tradition to guide them. Faced with this unexpected reality, military leaders stateside and the soldiers fighting overseas had to adapt and learn on their own. During World War II, the U.S. Army did just that as it fought the Germans. The first doctrine on the topic came in January 1944 with *Field Manual 31-*

50: Attack on a Fortified Position and Combat in Towns (FM 31-50). This manual emphasized the tactics, techniques, and procedures for combat within a city.¹² Soldiers' stateside training also became more realistic by 1943 to include taking a village and those preparing for Operation Overlord received training for urban combat, but this training receives little more than cursory mention by historians.¹³ By 1943, the army had already encountered urban combat in North Africa, Sicily, and Italy.

The U.S. military generally has performed well at conventional tactics and in environments that it anticipates fighting in. This dissertation examines how the World War II American military responded to the demands of operational and tactical situations for which it had little preparation in a conflict that witnessed urban combat as it never had in the past. It argues that although the Americans had not planned for the demands of urban combat brought on by the war, the Army of the United States, as a wartime military organization, gradually learned and adapted over the course of a war.

Objectives

The primary objective is to argue that learning took place within the U.S. Army based on experiences in urban combat. Learning and adaptation become evident by closely tracking how three American infantry divisions in World War II fought within this specific combat environment. Military adaptation and learning is not a new topic but this study uses urban combat as way to highlight that learning, adaptation, and flexibility by examining how three sample divisions fought numerous urban battles in World War II.

This study does not assume that wartime adaptation and improvement necessarily occurs; failures can occur at the tactical, operational, strategic, and political levels of warfighting. For example, Mark Grotelueschen shows that American high command in World War I never fully appreciated the tactical and operational changes wrought by trench warfare. As General John Pershing retained his faith in the individual rifleman and “open warfare,” the soldiers fighting in the AEF’s divisions slowly adapted to the rigors of combat in the Western Front in 1917 and 1918 by incorporating other weapons systems as well.¹⁴ Writing about World War II, Allan Millett contends that the Americans never mastered the art of close air support and problems plagued the tank-infantry relationship.¹⁵ By failing to adapt to larger strategic and political changes caused by the war that they started, the Germans consequently failed to convert their smashing battlefield successes into political victories.¹⁶ John Nagl argues that the U.S. Army failed to improve during the Vietnam War because army leaders failed to see the conflict’s unconventional nature and never considered fighting it any way other than conventional set-piece battles. The army’s organizational culture, Nagl contends, did not possess a “learning mindset” to allow it to adapt and adjust to the unique demands of counterinsurgency operations.¹⁷ Indeed, this dissertation also shows errors and mistakes made by veteran units in 1940s urban combat.

Contending that the Army of the United States did learn to fight effectively in the urban environment, this dissertation examines the organizational mechanisms that facilitated or hindered learning. It evaluates how the three divisions’ infantry regiments—alongside divisional units such as artillery battalions, engineer battalions,

and reconnaissance units as well as with attached tank and tank destroyer battalions—engaged in urban operations. It also considers the direction of the learning: that learning and attempts to improve came from both the top-down as well as from the bottom-up. Along those lines, this dissertation reveals that while the U.S. Army learned institutionally during the war, the experiential lessons that the infantry divisions gleaned from their own combat had a greater significance to those units than institutional learning. There was also a gap between the more quickly learning combat units and the more slowly developing formal institutional learning. That is to say, in many ways, battle experiences taught combat units more than did institutionalized doctrine and that the army's collective combat experiences had more influence on doctrine than doctrine influenced the individual divisions' warfighting.

This study uses urban combat as a lens to gauge and explore wartime adaptation and flexibility in the American army ground forces within World War II Europe. It defines urban areas broadly and looks at the whole spectrum of small villages to large cities. Each selected division conducted at least one major urban operation, but not before engaging in other smaller ones. This project contends that the sample divisions found challenges to the urban combat environment but their reactions over time and space reveal patterns and trends toward increased proficiency. These improvements in urban operations also occurred as the Americans honed their combined-arms capabilities. Historian Jonathan House defines combined-arms warfare as coordinating the different combat arms together “to maximize the survival and combat effectiveness of others,” thus affecting unit organization as well as tactics, techniques, and practices in

battle.¹⁸ As the Americans enhanced their combined-arms effectiveness against the Germans in general, so they applied those skills specifically within the urban environment.

While this project uses urban combat as a way to understand how a military learns, it is worth noting that most scholars studying military learning focus on peacetime.¹⁹ In contrast to peacetime learning, historian John Nagl asserts that “successful adaptations of military doctrine in the course of a war are interesting cases of organizational adaptation under extreme pressure.”²⁰ A note on terminology is important here. The terms “flexibility,” “adaptation,” and “effectiveness” are not new to military historians. Indeed, each concept has received its own recent treatment by various scholars.²¹ Meir Finkel’s *On Flexibility* examines how militaries dealing with technological and doctrinal surprise by successfully or unsuccessfully changing their organizational structures to meet that surprise. Williamson Murray’s essays on the topic in *Military Adaptation in War* look at very nearly the same phenomenon: militaries faced with unexpected wartime conditions at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels and deciding how best to meet those challenges. Finkel determines the nature of organizational flexibility and establishes what characteristics facilitate wartime flexibility but Murray only “suggest[s] how military organizations and their leaders might think more coherently about adaptations at the various levels of war both before and during combat.”²² Murray makes the excellent point that “not only does technological change occur in peacetime but the very nature of conflict, *where the enemy*

gets a vote, inevitably increases the demand for change and adaptation.”²³ This point on the enemy’s adaptation only highlights the complexity of war as a social activity.

Unlike the previous two, Roger Reese does not attempt to expound upon military effectiveness per se as to study it within the specific Soviet context of World War II. His opening chapter on military effectiveness is a reminder that while most students of warfare understand military effectiveness within the cold rationality of organizational science, it is fundamentally a social activity by various human agents who act within a cultural context.²⁴ Indeed, he lists “morale, motivation, unit integrity, and discipline” as the “bedrocks of military effectiveness” before introducing measurable factors such as technology, doctrine, command structure, or training.²⁵ Elsewhere, Allan Millett, Williamson Murray, and Kenneth Watman use more tangible markers to define military effectiveness and describe the political, strategic, operational, and tactical layers to military effectiveness. At the operational level, one element is flexibility and whether a military can “move rapidly in both the intellectual and physical sense either in anticipated or unanticipated directions.”²⁶ One way to assess operational effectiveness is to study a military’s ability to be flexible and adapt to unanticipated environments, such as towns and cities.

Scholars studying militaries in the 1920s and 1930s often tend to focus on technological changes, such as the effect that the tank or airplane had on combat. They have paid less attention to how soldiers have engaged their enemies within different environments. This dissertation fills a gap by documenting how the Americans repeatedly interacted within a specific environment. In light of its long history, urban

warfare has its own dynamic and does not exclusively rely on any certain technology. Indeed, historian Roger Spiller contends that urban operations are even more peculiar than any other operation precisely because they are set in a non-natural, man-made environment.²⁷ Yet, as the U.S. Army pondered over the issues of air, armor, and amphibious warfare during the interwar period, it never considered that urban operations would become more common. Indeed, the only urban combat doctrine before the war was a four-page section entitled “Combat in Woods and Towns” in the 1939 *Field Service Regulations*.²⁸ America was not alone in ignoring the implications of mechanized and armored warfare in urban areas; no other army in World War II had thought that combat in cities would become more prevalent largely because combat in urban areas heretofore had been relatively rare. As mentioned, the leaders of the Army of the United States had not developed doctrine for military operations in urban terrain that it could do for strategic bombing or armored warfare. This army had to learn how to engage its German enemy in villages, towns, and cities as it advanced through North Africa, Sicily, Italy, France, and Germany.

Ultimately, this dissertation uses urban combat to test prevailing interpretations of the Army of the United States and its World War II capabilities to see if, when, and how, learning and organizational improvement took place in wartime in order to reach conclusions about the effectiveness of the American army in World War II. This dissertation asserts that the United States Army initially ignored the possibility of the urban environment as a potential battlefield. But during World War II, American combat units learned from their battlefield experiences how to handle the challenge of

military operations in urban terrain, and adapted by developing the ability to fight effectively inside Europe's villages, towns, and cities. This dissertation argues that the United States Army flexibly and effectively adapted to the unexpected urban environment and reveals how that adaptation developed.

Historiography

American Combat Effectiveness

One debate that has continued since 1945 is the effectiveness of the American army. One prevailing interpretation is critical of American soldiers. Martin van Creveld's *Fighting Power* argues that the *Wehrmacht* was a superior organization to the Army of the United States in World War II.²⁹ Specifically, he asserts that its command structure, view of war, replacement system, and discipline were superior to the American system. For instance, the Germans stressed the operational arts to all levels of officers and noncommissioned officers and encouraged independent thinking and initiative across the ranks. In contrast, the U.S. Army, he contends, had a top-down management system that told a subordinate how to accomplish his mission. Van Creveld's argument certainly demonstrates that the American military from 1941 to 1942 would have fared poorly against the Germans but does little to explain how his argument worked through later World War II battlefields.³⁰

Van Creveld's argument attacks the organizational structure of the American army while others criticize the Allies' combat effectiveness. In his work condemning the Allies' strategy, John Ellis's *Brute Force* argues that the Allied victory was inevitable because they had more airplanes, tanks, and bullets. The Allies used this

material superiority and brute force to slog their way to victory.³¹ Ellis portrays American soldiers as timid, overly-dependent on artillery, too rigid in tactical thinking, and often failing to exploit any gains made.³² Max Hastings's *Overlord* continues this school of thought when he asserts that the American soldier had inferior equipment, poor doctrine (especially in terms of tank-infantry cooperation), and were ineffective soldiers. Hastings portrays the majority of the Army of the United States as inexperienced and not as well armed when it reached Normandy's shores in June 1944 to fight a better trained, better led, and better equipped German *Wehrmacht*.³³

In his assessment of American military effectiveness, Allan Millett echoes some of these sentiments.³⁴ While Millett praises American military effectiveness in the areas of politics, strategy, and operations and recognizes that "infantry-artillery integration had reached highly proficient levels" by April 1945, he also indicates that this close relationship had consequences.³⁵ Most importantly, this infantry-artillery closeness led to a reluctance to close with the enemy and retarded tank-infantry teamwork. American soldiers were *less effective* at assaulting fortified positions "because such attacks required precisely timed fire and maneuver" for which they were ill-trained. This reliance on firepower, he writes, is evident in both the Pacific and Europe.³⁶ Close air support struggled because of interservice miscommunication and the U.S. Air Force's unwillingness to undertake such missions; American armor also struggled because the equipment was not as good as German tanks or anti-tank weapons.³⁷

Not everyone agrees with van Creveld's, Ellis's, and Hastings's views of the American army. One example is Williamson Murray's and Allan Millett's *A War to Be*

Won, which includes strategic and operational learning.³⁸ In contrast to Ellis, Murray and Millett contend that Allied victory was not inevitable, victory had to be fought for, and material superiority alone was *not* as decisive as other scholars have argued.³⁹ They are critical of some Allied generals, such as Omar Bradley and Mark Clark, and identify the operational deficiencies inherent in American, British, and Soviet doctrine but they also observe maturation from seeing battle for battle's sake to using battle toward a strategic end. Murray and Millett contend that the Allies largely overcame this shortcoming as the war progressed.⁴⁰

More focused monographs on the American military in World War II, by authors such as Michael Doubler and Peter Mansoor, generally assert that American soldiers adapted through the war and outfought their German opponent.⁴¹ In *Closing with the Enemy*, Michael Doubler delineates how the Army of the United States improved as it engaged the German army in different environments, including battle within forests, across rivers, against fortifications, and inside cities.⁴² In his chapter on urban combat, for example, Doubler discusses the fight for the port city of Brest, France, by the 2nd Infantry Division and then the action in Aachen, Germany, by the 1st Infantry Division to argue that the Americans improved over the course of the war. Because he does not focus on one division and because he cannot show change or continuity within that single division, he does not document what the "Big Red One" may have gleaned from the 2nd's experience in Brest when entering Aachen one month later. Further, Doubler's study does not fully demonstrate whether learning took place from the bottom-up or the

top-down. He also does not reveal what level of organization most quickly learned: the regiment, the division, the corps, army, or army group.

Just as van Creveld was critical of the American military organizational structure, so Peter Mansoor also examines how American infantry divisions, the most basic autonomous military organization in the army, engaged the Germans in North Africa, Italy, France, and Germany in *The GI Offensive in Europe*.⁴³ Opposite of van Creveld, Ellis, and Hastings, Mansoor concludes that the “Army of the United States accomplished its mission in western Europe because it evolved over time into a more combat-effective force than Germany could sustain on the battlefield.”⁴⁴ Divisions gained experience after their first taste of battle, officers took initiative, and the army improved in the field during the course of the war. Mansoor censures American generals’ deficiencies in the operational arts, as other scholars do, but this did not prevent the army from improving enough to defeat the Germans. A major reason for this success, he contends, was because American divisions “were on the whole better trained for their missions, were kept up at a higher state of readiness due to superior personnel and logistical systems and were more cohesive than their enemy counterparts” while also sustaining themselves better than the Germans could.⁴⁵ He emphasizes more the organizational realm than the personnel. With this focus on the division, he does not include many small-unit actions nor how American soldiers improved at ground combat.

This dissertation uses urban combat to test these opposing interpretations. Studying urban combat in World War II shows the different ways in which American divisions, and by extension the U.S. Army, learned during wartime. While the American

army had many deficiencies in the early part of the war and the Germans remained highly proficient throughout World War II, how did adaptation occur in the American Army to allow it to defeat the Germans in the context of urban operations? Following three infantry divisions allow a comparative analysis of when, where, and how different American units improved in urban operations over the course of the war. While artillery was certainly used against *Wehrmacht*-held French and German cities, it could not take and hold a city. Tactically, the infantry did most of the fighting in a city and these divisions engaged the Germans at close-quarters in many instances. Given the organic structure of the U.S. infantry division with its various infantry, engineer, reconnaissance, armor, and artillery units, did American officers improve their use of combined-arms teams (that is, infantry-artillery-tank-tank destroyer integration) to achieve the objective of taking a town or a city? Further, looking at a division allows one to also evaluate subordinate units. The entire division was not always used to take every contested village, town, or city. For example, the 1st Infantry Division used only two reinforced infantry battalions to take Aachen, the most famous instance of American urban combat in World War II Europe. This study therefore includes not just divisional leadership but also regimental, battalion, and company officers as well as the frontline soldiers. As such, it disputes the van Creveld's, Hastings's, and Ellis's findings regarding the Army of the United States in World War II by showing a definite learning curve within these three infantry divisions as well as within the army as a whole.

But Doubler and Monsoor also have their methodological blind spots. Doubler does not show intellectual connection between Brest and Aachen because these battles

involved two different combat organizations. That is, Doubler does not examine whether the 2nd Infantry Division's battle inside Brest may have influenced the 1st Infantry Division's fight for Aachen. Furthermore, whereas Doubler has a brief essay on the fighting in the Mediterranean Theater of Operations, combat in this theater had a more significant impact on the European Theater of Operations than he allows. This dissertation follows specific units over space and time to analyze patterns and change. Mansoor focuses at the strategic and operational levels; as such, he rarely dips to the regimental level but many towns were taken by companies and battalions. This dissertation reaches below the division to see how noncommissioned, junior, and field officers and the various subordinate units handled urban challenges at the operational and tactical levels. By following three infantry divisions through France and Germany this project takes Doubler's and Mansoor's works further and into more detail.

Urban Warfare

Few works are written with a broad historic scope on urban combat and urban operations. The few exceptions include G. J. Ashworth's *War and the City*, Roger Spiller's *Sharp Corners*, and Louis DiMarco's essay, "Attacking the Heart and Guts: Urban Operations Through the Ages."⁴⁶ As DiMarco's title indicates, these three works offer a macrohistory of urban operations. Michael DeWar's *War in the Streets* briefly narrates urban combat in World War II, concluding only that urban combat "pervaded every theatre throughout World War II," including Burma, but he concentrates on Canadians and Britons.⁴⁷

This is not to say there is little work on urban operations. On the contrary, there is a mountain of work but most historical literature on urban operations in the twentieth century is usually an attempt to create a usable past for the U.S. military and is often episodic or selective. For example, the U.S. Army Human Engineering Laboratory analyzed twenty-two instances, or episodes, of urban combat between 1941 and 1987 in order to “provide a series of findings on MOUT [military operations on urban terrain] which reflect the dominant factors influencing” victory and defeat.⁴⁸ Although designed for two different audiences, the edited works *City Fights* and *Block by Block* are organized by major urban battles: a chapter each on Aachen, Berlin, Stalingrad, Seoul, Hue and so on.⁴⁹ Many research organizations have published reports on different facets of urban combat by selectively using past examples.⁵⁰ Likewise, the Army Command and General Staff College has many theses and monographs that selectively use past urban battles to argue one point or another.⁵¹

No one has studied urban combat within one major war. The primary objective of this dissertation uses urban operations as a way of investigating military effectiveness as well as wartime adaptability and organizational flexibility within one military: the American Army. Its purpose is not to be a transnational comparative study but to focus exclusively on the Americans. Thus this project, evaluating U.S. forces’ urban operations in World War II Europe, also fills a gap in the literature of urban combat by analyzing urban operations within one conflict. This work defines urban areas broadly and incorporates small villages with large cities to explain how the American soldier responded to the full spectrum of this environment.

As will be shown, the methodology followed is similar to such works as Jeter Isely and Peter Crowl's *The U.S. Marines and Amphibious War* and Mark Grotelueschen's *The AEF Way of War* by studying selected organizations' wartime responses to the stresses and strains of combat.⁵² Grotelueschen argues that the American Expeditionary Force learned to fight the Germans "from the bottom up."⁵³ This dissertation concludes similarly for American forces World War II Europe while identifying what top-down institutional learning also occurred. This project is also similar to Tami Davis Biddle's *Rhetoric and Reality in Air Warfare*, which investigates the evolution in British and American views and execution of strategic bombing. Biddle studies how World War I affected interwar thought, which affected World War II strategic bombing as well as how the experience of World War II forced modifications in both countries.⁵⁴ Likewise, this dissertation shows how the interwar debates and changes affected the ways in which the Americans could respond to urban combat but focuses on how the experience of the Second World War also forced fundamental changes.

Van Creveld, Ellis, and Hastings overstate their arguments and Doubler and Mansoor leave methodological gaps. The Americans struggled early on, including in villages and towns of North Africa and Sicily. The reason for many of these struggles was because, at the operational and tactical levels, the American military was only just beginning to understand the nature of modern combined arms warfare when it entered World War II in December 1941. The 1st, 3rd, and 5th Infantry Divisions reveal that as the Americans began to embrace a combined-arms mentality in general, learning to bind

its infantry, artillery, tanks, tank destroyers, engineers, and airpower together as a team, so they applied that mindset to towns and cities specifically, thereby improving their urban operations capabilities. Indeed, the Americans came to realize that combined-arms fighting was the best way to capture European towns and cities.

Further, by the time that the U.S. Army grappled with the problems and challenges of urban combat, soldiers in combat units had already made this realization and, in many cases, had developed their own approaches on the basis of their own experiences. The Army of the United States identified doctrinal weaknesses and worked to correct them by issuing new doctrine that embraced cooperation amongst the combat arms. At the same time, the army and army group commanders permitted combat soldiers to share their own successes and failures with others, indicating that learning also came from the bottom-up. Throughout the war, the combat units adapted and learned more quickly than new doctrine that came from the army. The way these divisions responded to urban operations points to the thesis that the Army of the United States capably learned and improved its combat effectiveness, thereby permitting the Army of the United States, along with its allies, to outfight the German *Wehrmacht*.

Procedure

As indicated earlier, the methodology of this project is to follow three selected infantry divisions—the 1st, 3rd, and 5th Infantry Divisions—and explore how they responded to urban operations over space and time.

These World War II divisions each fought in at least one major city but also advanced through France and Germany along three different axes through many smaller

towns, villages, and small cities. The infantry regiments will receive the most attention but this study incorporates the impact of divisional units such as artillery and engineers as well as attached tank and tank destroyer battalions, especially as the Americans learned to incorporate and integrate all its weapons systems into effective, cohesive action.

The 1st Infantry Division included the 16th, 18th, and 26th Infantry Regiments. It entered combat in North Africa in November 1942. When it landed in North Africa, to seize the port city of Oran, Algeria, the 18th attacked and failed to take the small town of St. Cloud on 8 November 1942. During the campaign for Sicily, the division later engaged in operations for the city of Troina by focusing on the hills around the city itself as it pursued the withdrawing German Army in 1943. When the Big Red One landed in Normandy on 6 June 1944 with the First U.S. Army, it was already a veteran unit fighting under Major General Clarence Huebner's capable leadership. In October 1944, the division surrounded, attacked, and took the city of Aachen, Germany, the division's major urban operation. In early 1945, the 16th and 18th Infantry Regiments took the city of Bonn with speed in order to capture the bridges over the Rhine River. A study of the 1st Infantry Division will include the few instances of urban combat in North Africa and Sicily to understand how these cases, along with training in England prior to the Normandy landings, shaped and prepared the division for French and German urban areas.

Second is the 3rd Infantry Division and its 7th, 15th, and 30th Infantry Regiments. It, too, engaged in limited urban operations in North Africa. Like the Big

Red One, the 3rd also participated in the Sicily Campaign as well as the fighting in Italy. The 3rd Infantry Division fought its way through southern Italy and participated in the Anzio landings. While surviving at that beachhead, the 3rd Infantry Division saw major fighting in and around the city of Cisterna di Littoria, a focal point for German counter-attacks. After helping to take Rome, the 3rd participated in Operation Dragoon and landed in southern France. The 3rd fought through southern France to the Vosges Mountains into Germany. As it advanced into Germany, the division took Nuremberg in April.

The last division is the 5th Infantry Division, which included the 2nd, 10th, and 11th Infantry Regiments. Importantly, it did not engage in any combat until it landed in Normandy on 9 July 1944. Its first taste of urban combat was Vidouville and then Angers, France, as part of General George Patton's Third U.S. Army in central France. During the division's involvement in the Lorraine Campaign, it played a key role in taking the city of Metz, France, as well as its surrounding fortresses between September and November 1944. Within Germany, it helped to take the city of Frankfurt in late March 1945, ultimately ending the war in Czechoslovakia. Unlike the 1st and 3rd Divisions, the 5th Infantry Division had no practical experience with urban combat prior to landing in France in July 1944.

Chapter Two studies the state of infantry doctrine and training during the interwar years of 1919 to 1941. It documents the lack of thought concerning urban operations amidst the debates and changes in other organizational and doctrinal areas that affected how the army responded to town fighting during World War II. Chapter

Three covers the fighting in North Africa and Sicily from November 1942 to July 1943 during which the 1st and 3rd Divisions received their baptisms of fire and experienced their first taste of urban combat. After the capture of Sicily, the 1st Infantry Division left for England to prepare for the cross-Channel assault while the 3rd Infantry Division participated in the invasion of Italy, the focus of Chapter Four. On the Italian peninsula, the 3rd Infantry Division began to hone its combined-arms fighting skills and saw its first stiff urban fight at the town of Cisterna in May 1944. Chapter Five takes a step from these particular infantry divisions and looks at how the Army of the United States attempted to learn and process lessons during World War II. It reveals learning from the top-down with modifications and revisions in doctrine as well as from the bottom-up through various military periodicals disseminated through the army designed to improve how the Americans fought. Chapters Six and Seven examine the fighting on the European Continent from the invasion of Normandy in June 1944 to the Battle of the Bulge that next December. Chapter Eight covers the fighting from the Battle of the Bulge to V-E Day in May 1945. These three chapters include all three infantry divisions fighting a resilient German *Wehrmacht* through urbanized France and Germany. Chapter Nine concludes by analyzing the postwar dialogue on urban combat in the professional journals as well as analyzing the 1952 version of *FM 31-50* to see how much of the army's experience with urban combat in World War II planners considered after the war and applied in formal doctrine. This latter part—applying its World War II experience in a newly revised manual—will be seen as the culmination of formal learning and adaptation for the U.S. Army for combat in urban areas.

I argue that, despite having no prewar preparation, American G.I.s and their leaders in World War II learned to effectively fight in the urban environment while simultaneously fighting their German enemy. Most fundamentally, this learning occurred as American soldiers discovered “on the go” that they had to combine all the combat arms to maximize their fighting power within Europe’s villages, towns, and cities. Furthermore, America’s combat units improved their urban combat capabilities as they adopted a combined-arms mentality and also influenced both American infantry doctrine and institutional top-down learning.

Endnotes

- ¹ The fight at St. Cloud will be developed in more detail in chapter 2.
- ² Captain Edward W. McGregor, “Record of Events for the Period December 1 to 28, 1943,” 29 December 1943, 1 in “18th Infantry Historical Report, December 1943,” File 301-INF(18)-0.3, Box 5254, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ³ The town fighting in the Hürtgen Forest will be covered more closely in chapter 6.
- ⁴ David H. Kaplan, James O. Wheeler, and Steven R. Holloway, *Urban Geography* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2004), 26-30.
- ⁵ Roger Spiller, *Sharp Corners: Urban Operations at Century’s End* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College Press, 2001), 38.
- ⁶ For some examples, see Spiller, *Sharp Corners*, 38-45.
- ⁷ S. L. A. Marshall, *Notes on Urban Warfare* (Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD, U.S. Army Materiel Systems Analysis Agency, 1973), 3. Marshall contends that this ‘curious void in the literature of warfare’ has continued through most of the twentieth century. Marshall, *Notes on Urban Warfare*, 3.
- ⁸ Public Relations, 10th Infantry Regiment, *History of the Tenth Infantry Regiment, United States Army* (Birmingham, AL: Military Service Company, 1946), 73.

- ⁹ Russell F. Weigley, *Eisenhower's Lieutenants: The Campaign of France and Germany, 1944-1945* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981), 422.
- ¹⁰ James Scott Wheeler, *The Big Red One: America's Legendary 1st Infantry Division from World War I to Desert Storm* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2007), 342.
- ¹¹ For some of the preliminary action around Metz—at Arnaville—see Charles Brown MacDonald and Sydney T. Mathews, *Three Battles: Arnaville, Altuzzo, and Schmidt* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1952).
- ¹² U.S. War Department, *Field Manual 31-50: Attack on a Fortified Position and Combat in Towns* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1944).
- ¹³ Lee Kennett, *G.I.: The American Soldier in World War II* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1987), 51; Wheeler, *The Big Red One*, 264. For a one-sentence description of urban combat training, which began in 1943 when the Army Ground Forces improved its stateside training, see Robert R. Palmer, Bell I. Wiley, and William R. Keast, *The Procurement and Training of Ground Combat Troops* (Washington: Historical Division, Department of the Army, 1948), 449.
- ¹⁴ Mark Ethan Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War: The American Army and Combat in World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 30-1, 347.
- ¹⁵ Allan R. Millett, "The United States Armed Forces in the Second World War," in *Military Effectiveness*, vol. 3, *The Second World War*, ed. Allan R. Millett and Williamson Murray (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990), 66, 69.
- ¹⁶ Williamson Murray, *Military Adaptation in War: With Fear of Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 119-152.
- ¹⁷ John A. Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 198-204. A similar argument is developed in Andrew Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).
- ¹⁸ This definition pulls together Jonathan House's three definitions of "combined arms." See Jonathan M. House, *Combined Arms Warfare in the Twentieth Century* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001), 4-5. Quote is on page 4.
- ¹⁹ Most attention on this matter is focused on militaries' peacetime learning and innovations. See the essays in John Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife:*

Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 3-11 and Kimberly Marten Zisk, *Engaging the Enemy: Organization Theory and Soviet Military Innovation, 1955-1991* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 11-30.

²⁰ Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*, 9.

²¹ On wartime flexibility, see Meir Finkel, *On Flexibility: Recovery From Technological and Doctrinal Surprise on the Battlefield* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011). For wartime adaptation, see Williamson Murray, *Military Adaptation in War: With Fear of Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). For an example of wartime military effectiveness, see Roger R. Reese, *Why Stalin's Soldiers Fought: The Red Army's Military Effectiveness in World War II* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2011).

²² Murray, *Military Adaptation in War*, 6.

²³ Murray, *Military Adaptation in War*, 36. Italics added.

²⁴ See especially his article, Roger Reese, "Lessons of the Winter War: A Study in the Military Effectiveness of the Red Army, 1939-1940," *Journal of Military History* 72, 3 (July 2008): 825-52, which is also chapter 2 in his book.

²⁵ Reese, "Lessons of the Winter War," 831.

²⁶ Allan R. Millett, Williamson Murray, Kenneth H. Watman, "The Effectiveness of Military Organizations," *International Security* 11 (Summer, 1986): 53. See also Allan Millett and Williamson Murray, eds., *Military Effectiveness*, 3 vols. (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1988-1990).

²⁷ Spiller, *Sharp Corners*, 5.

²⁸ U.S. War Department, *Field Manual 100-5: Tentative Field Service Regulations, Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1939), 218-222.

²⁹ Martin van Creveld, *Fighting Power: German and U.S. Army Performance, 1939-1945* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1982).

³⁰ This critical view of the army's prewar organizational structure is also reflected in David Johnson's *Fast Tanks and Heavy Bombers*. Johnson contends that prevailing interests—such as the service chiefs who feared change, service disagreements, and a general lack of foresight—in the army prevented it from being a learning institution and adequately preparing itself for World War II. Unlike van Creveld, however,

Johnson takes his analysis into the war itself to demonstrate how the war forced adaptations of inadequate doctrine. David E. Johnson, *Fast Tanks and Heavy Bombers: Innovation in the U.S. Army, 1917-1945* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998).

³¹ John Ellis, *Brute Force: Allied Strategy and Tactics in the Second World War* (New York: Viking, 1990), xvii-xviii.

³² *Ibid.*, 384-8, 429-33.

³³ Max Hastings, *Overlord: D-Day and the Battle for Normandy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984).

³⁴ Allan Millett, "The United States Armed Forces in World War II," in *Military Effectiveness*, vol. 3, *The Second World War*, ed. Allan R. Millett and Williamson Murray (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990), 45-89.

³⁵ Millett, "The United States Armed Forces in World War II," 78.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 78-9.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 79-80. This general view is also seen in Richard Overy, *Why the Allies Won* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1996), 226-7.

³⁸ Williamson Murray and Allan R. Millett, *A War to Be Won: Fighting the Second World War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000).

³⁹ *Ibid.*, viii-x.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 409-10, 443-5, 483.

⁴¹ Doubler's and Mansoor's arguments are more systematic and more thoroughly documented versions of those posited by Stephen Ambrose. See for instance, Stephen Ambrose, *Citizen Soldiers: The U.S. Army from the Normandy Beaches to the Bulge to the Surrender of Germany June 7, 1944-May 7, 1945* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997).

⁴² Michael D. Doubler, *Closing with the Enemy: How GIs Fought the War in Europe, 1944-1945* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1994).

⁴³ Peter R. Mansoor, *The GI Offensive in Europe: The Triumph of American Infantry Divisions, 1941-1945* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1999).

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

- ⁴⁵ Ibid., 214-5. Very similar to this argument and portrayal of the American military is Richard Sterling Rush's *Hell in Hürtgen Forest: The Ordeal and Triumph of an American Infantry Regiment* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001).
- ⁴⁶ G. J. Ashworth, *War and the City* (London: Routledge, 1991); Roger J. Spiller, *Sharp Corners*, 37-75; Louis A. DiMarco, "Attacking the Heart and Guts: Urban Operations Through the Ages," in William G. Roberston, ed., *Block by Block: The Challenges of Urban Operations* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College Press, 2003), 1-25.
- ⁴⁷ Colonel Michael Dewar, *War in the Streets: The Story of Urban Combat from Calais to Khafji* (Newton Abbot, Devon: David & Charles, 1992), 48.
- ⁴⁸ R. D. McLaurin, Paul A. Jureidini, and David S. McDonald, *Modern Experience in City Combat* (Aberdeen Proving Grounds, MD: U.S. Army Human Engineering Laboratory, 1987), 10, Technical Memorandum 5-87. This study looks at the conditions for victory and defeat in the battles for Aachen, Arnhem, Seoul, Jerusalem, Beirut, and Quang Tri City, Vietnam.
- ⁴⁹ John Antal and Bradley Gericke, eds., *City Fights: Selected Histories of Urban Combat From World War II to Vietnam* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2003); William G. Roberston, ed., *Block by Block: the Challenges of Urban Operations* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College Press, 2003). Louis DiMarco's recent monograph is little different: Louis A. DiMarco, *Concrete Hell: Urban Warfare from Stalingrad to Iraq* (Osprey Publishing: Oxford, 2012).
- ⁵⁰ Such examples include: McLaurin, et al., *Modern Experience in City Combat*; Lilita I. Dzirkals, Konrad Kellen, and Horst Mendershausen, *Military Operations in Built-Up Areas: Essays on Some Past, Present, and Future Aspects* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1976), W. S. Payne and J. G. Taylor, *Fighting in Cities Overseas* (Arlington, VA: Institute for Defense Analyses, Science and Technology Division, 1970).
- ⁵¹ Such examples include: Major Paul S. Burton, "Urban Operations, Untrained on Terrain," (M.M.A.S. thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1998); Major William T. James, Jr., "From Siege to Surgical: The Evolution of Urban Combat from World War II to the Present and Its Effects on Current Doctrine" (M.M.A.S. thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1986); Major Robert E. Everson, *Standing at the Gates of the City: Operational Level Actions and Urban Warfare* (Fort Leavenworth: School of Advanced Military Studies, United States Army Command and General Staff College, Second Term AY 1994-1995).

⁵² Jeter A. Isely and Philip A. Crowl, *The U.S. Marines and Amphibious War: Its Theory, and Its Practice in the Pacific* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951).

⁵³ Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War*, 58, 347.

⁵⁴ Tami Davis Biddle, *Rhetoric and Reality in Air Warfare: The Evolution of British and American Ideas About Strategic Bombing, 1914-1945* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

CHAPTER II

“AUGMENTED BUT UNDER-FUNDED”:

INTERWAR DOCTRINE AND TRAINING

By most accounts, the period after World War I was a time of intense intellectual activity as military leaders speculated how they might fight the next war. Indeed, as historians Williamson Murray and Allan Millett put it: the 1920s and 1930s were a time of peace but military leaders “engaged . . . in intellectual and technical jockeying” for doctrinal and technological advantages before finally going to war.¹ Most of this jockeying centered on the place of armor and air power; the potential of amphibious warfare and airborne doctrine; and how all of these changes affected military organization. Few expended intellectual energy on the possibility of urban combat in future combat.

With a few exceptions during the interwar period, United States Army officers largely ignored the possibility of fighting any enemies within an urban environment. Further, while the army established some doctrinal basics that it could use when entering the many small towns and villages through Europe in World War II, it was not, in practice, prepared to do so by 1941. This chapter investigates prewar infantry doctrine as well as summarizing the state of the army’s training before World War II, with an emphasis of the training done by the 1st, 3rd, and 5th Infantry Divisions before their overseas deployments. Doctrine established the army’s intellectual starting points. However, an examination of army training reveals the limited extent to which the army had internalized that starting point.

In short, for all the discussion within the service during the 1920s and 1930s, the army did not appear concerned about urban combat. This inattention was common in both American and European armies. Journalist and military analyst S. L. A. Marshall describes “a curious void in the literature of warfare” when it comes to urban operations. Through the history of military thought to 1939, few addressed urban operations: not Frederick the Great, Karl von Clausewitz, Antoine Henri Jomini, nor modern thinkers such as Ferdinand Foch, J. F. C. Fuller, or B. H. Liddell Hart. Marshall notes one exception: an 1806 work by Prussian General Gerhard von Scharnhorst entitled *The Military Field Pocket Book* that remarked on attacking and defending towns. In his work, Scharnhorst instructs how to fortify and defend villages and towns including any houses, castles, and churches.² Apart from Scharnhorst, Marshall observes, “there is no foundation from which to build” a body of thought on urban warfare.³ With few exceptions, this historic negligence has carried through the twentieth and into the twenty-first century.⁴

The same pattern occurs through America’s military past. In the 1800s, Dennis Hart Mahan, an influential early American military thinker, was the main engineering and military science professor at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. Mahan used history to teach military science and taught cadets the most current trends in permanent and field fortifications, concentrating more on building fortifications for defensive purposes and less on siegecraft.⁵ Although West Point emphasized military and civil engineering, and therefore permanent and field fortifications, fighting in cities was nowhere in the curriculum. Mahan’s thoughts on besieging permanent works were along

conventional lines and he, too, was silent on urban combat.⁶ West Point cadets learned a great deal about military engineering and fortifications, some on siege warfare, but nothing on fighting in cities. This intellectual foundation logically followed the nineteenth-century U.S. Army's primary missions of policing the frontier and manning coastal defences. Indeed, during the nineteenth century, American soldiers engaged in major urban combat in only two instances at the Battles of Monterey in 1846 and Fredericksburg in 1862.⁷ As the army struggled to become a modern army in the early twentieth century and tackled other, more fundamental changes, it continued to ignore urban operations.

Neglecting the urban environment continued through the interwar period of the 1920s and 1930s. None of the major professional military publications, including *Infantry Journal*, *Field Artillery Journal*, *Military Engineer*, *Cavalry Journal*, *Military Review*, and the Infantry School's *Mailing List*, have discussions of urban operations. When America entered the war in 1941, there was no substantive body of thought directing the army or its subordinate units how to handle combat in cities. Further, there was neither training within mock cities nor any preparation for fighting within villages, towns, or large cities. While the 1939 and 1941 editions of the *Field Service Regulations* addressed the urban environment (for no more than two short pages in each edition), a real treatment of this sort of fighting went completely ignored.⁸ The army did not rectify the situation until it published *Field Manual 31-50: Attack on a Fortified Position and Combat in Towns*, in January 1944. As we shall see later, there was a dialogue on combat in other environments but there was nothing on combat in towns and

cities. Whereas European and American armies in the mid-1900s did not perceive combat in towns and cities to be a topic worth planning for or considering, it is because the comparatively few historical experiences did not render it a topic worth planning for or considering.

While the American and European oversight is reasonable in the scope of several centuries of warfare, World War II revealed that the urban environment was worthy of special planning and consideration. As policy analyst Alice Hills notes, “the urban environment is distinctive” because of the spatial closeness within cities, the challenges that arise from fighting in and amongst a civilian population as well as the “magnifying effect” that a city can have on an operation’s “complexity, rate, scale, and the range of military roles.”⁹ These characteristics make the urban setting different from any other combat environment. Former General Don A. Starry describes the city as a living organism in which there are “interrelated systems in the organic infrastructure,” thus greatly influencing how belligerents conduct offensive and defensive operations within them.¹⁰ This interconnectedness means one thing affects another in the urban environment. For instance, as an attacking army cuts a city’s power grid, so it must also find a way to run hospitals and supply clean water. Indeed, S. L. A. Marshall argues that an attacking army should gain control of a city’s water and electrical systems even before taking its airstrip, so important is a city’s infrastructure.¹¹

Further, the presence of noncombatant civilians, along with their dangerously tenuous status and place, is almost exclusive to urban combat. Another exclusive characteristic is the nature of the battlespace. As with the jungle, desert, or forest

environments, an army fights within and through the urban environment, not around it. Unlike those other environments, the urban battlespace is three-dimensional. Belligerents can use several floors or the roof of a building as well as subway tunnels and sewers to their advantage. Historian Gregory John Ashworth observes elements common to fighting within cities when he argues that urban operations require smaller operational units, close-range weaponry, include the presence of civilians and noncombatants, are biased toward the defensive, and are manpower intensive.¹²

Although American military leaders overlooked the urban environment during the interwar decades of the 1920s and 1930s, the U.S. Army considered many other facets of military science that affected how it fought World War II. These decades were charged with intense discussion about military theory and organization as well as how World War I had altered the nature of warfare. This next section discusses the main doctrinal and organizational elements and what effects it had on the army in European urban combat. The doctrinal and organizational changes made during this period directly affected how the U.S. Army fought within towns and cities in World War II.

Military theorists also debated the place and use of air power. The Americans eventually concluded that they should emphasize strategic bombing over tactical air support or even escort fighters.¹³ Arguably, the decision to rely on heavy, four-engine bombers helped advancing American infantry and armored divisions by bombing French and German towns and cities days before they encountered those urban locales. As tactical air support improved in World War II, one of its missions became the

preliminary attack of military targets inside towns and cities in World War II by fighter-bombers with machine guns, rockets, and bombs.¹⁴

Another doctrinal and organizational discussion was the place of armor in the army. In the pages of *Cavalry Journal*, officers such as Major Bradley Cheynoweth had argued for the increased use of tanks at the expense of horse cavalry.¹⁵ On the other hand, Colonel George Grunert observed in 1933 that “Horse cavalry can be organized and trained more quickly than can mechanized cavalry.” Further, Grunert reported, “I am unable to visualize wholly mechanized or motorized armies on any future battlefields.”¹⁶ Another major debate for armor was whether to perceive it as an infantry-support weapon or as a fundamental replacement to cavalry and its traditional missions of reconnaissance, screening, and shock action. In the end, the army decided that tanks served best as infantry support while tank destroyers targeted enemy tanks.¹⁷ The successful use of tanks as a rapidly moving, mobile weapon remained to be seen on the field of battle. World War II revealed that one consequence of making these armies motorized and mechanized gave road networks special significance and the towns and cities on those networks operational value.

Pulling from their World War I experience, American officers disputed various aspects of military organization. One issue was the question of how to configure the right number of support weapons within infantry regiments as military leaders realized that they could not rely wholly upon the rifleman. Within the infantry regiment, leaders deliberated how to best integrate new weapons such as automatic rifles, machine guns, and mortars. To bolster regimental firepower, planners coupled artillery batteries with

an infantry regiment to enhance infantry-artillery cooperation, thus creating a combined-arms unit organic to the division: the regimental combat team (RCT).¹⁸ The United States had a long way to go in achieving effective combined-arms fighting abilities, but its infantry-artillery cooperation was superb by December 1941.¹⁹

Military planners also reevaluated the best size, shape, and composition for an infantry division. The choice here was a square division (one composed of four infantry regiments) or a triangular division (one composed of three infantry regiments). The fundamental issue was whether the U.S. Army preferred firepower and staying power with the square division or the mobility of the smaller triangular division.

The above issues—armor, air power, regimental and divisional organization—dealt with force structure and organization. Americans also attended to combat in specific environments. How an army engages its enemy in a jungle, for instance, is different than how it would do so in a desert or even a city. Not all environments, however, were ignored. The field manuals discussed jungle and desert warfare. In a 1937 Army Extension Course, special operations included raids, small wars and expeditions, river crossings, defense against river crossings, beach defense, mountain warfare, jungle combat, and winter combat.²⁰ A similar 1937 Command and General Staff School document likewise characterized special operations as being night operations, attack of river lines, defense against river crossings, and mountain warfare.²¹ What is instructive is that these documents cover how to fight in these environments but did not consider the urban environment. The Infantry School's publication, *Mailing List*,

published articles on combat in different environments, but its first discussion of the urban environment, however, did not appear until 1944.²²

Amidst this intense internal examination during the interwar period, the army also had to determine how it would fight. Inasmuch as there remained disagreement through the 1930s about the specifics of infantry doctrine there was consensus about its essence: maintaining a strong offensive spirit. This preference toward the offense in American infantry doctrine surely affected urban operations despite the absence of any specific urban doctrine.

The place to begin is the first post-World War I doctrinal manual, the 1923 *Field Service Regulations (FSR)*, and compare it with the 1939 and 1941 versions, or the last two manuals before World War II. One attitude prevalent in all three manuals is an offensive spirit in combat. The 1923 *FSR* states that “the ultimate objective of all military operations is the destruction of the enemy’s armed forces by battle. Decisive defeat in battle breaks the enemy’s will to war and forces him to sue for peace.” The manual takes the promise of offensive action further when it states that “decisive results are obtained only by the offensive. Only through offensive action can a commander exercise his initiative and impose his will on the enemy.”²³

The 1923 manual put into practice observations gleaned from World War I. One of its chief lessons was the integration of more weapons than just the rifle and bayonet. Before World War I, American military leaders accepted the centuries-old assumption that the infantryman and his rifle were the centerpiece of doctrine. The Great War forced Americans to understand that the modern battlefield now called for a combined-

arms approach to waging war.²⁴ For example, the tank appeared ready to provide necessary infantry support but not to necessarily effect breakthroughs themselves. The *FSR* stipulated that “the tank constitutes an armored infantry element possessing protective properties that enable it to close with entrenched defensive groups protected against the effects of ordinary infantry fire. Its essential mission is to assist in the progression of the infantry by overcoming or neutralizing resistances or breaking down obstacles that check the infantry advance.”²⁵

Doctrinally, however, the 1923 *Field Service Regulations* extolled the idea of maneuver, especially through the “holding attack.” The holding attack worked like this: a secondary force would fix the enemy into their position, hopefully forcing them to commit their reserves. In the meantime, the main attack would either envelop, or turn, the enemy’s flank or assault their front. Doctrine preferred turning the enemy’s flank because it “enable[d] a superior force to bring into play all its means of action.”²⁶ In the attack of a fortified position, which is the closest the 1923 regulations come to discussing urban combat, doctrine extolled planning, thorough reconnaissance, and firepower through tanks and artillery. During the actual assault, “resistances are as far as practicable either outflanked or reduced by envelopment.”²⁷

When Colonel George C. Marshall arrived at Fort Benning’s Infantry School in 1927 as the assistant commandant, he took charge of the school’s curriculum and training. Under Marshall’s direction, the holding attack remained doctrine. While at the Infantry School from 1927 to 1932, Marshall emphasized the chaos and confusion of battle, striving to prepare the army’s junior officers to anticipate and prepare for battle’s

chaotic madness. In field exercises, it was not rare for the future Chief of Staff to suddenly redirect a maneuver and upset students' carefully prepared battle plans; introduce a surprise enemy force during an exercise; elevate subordinate officers to command positions without warning; or dispense outdated, poor, or no maps during exercises.²⁸ At Fort Benning, he taught one tactic: the holding attack. According to historian Geoffrey Perret, the holding attack was consistent with Marshall's belief in tactical simplicity and flexibility because it "could be taught in less than five minutes [and it] didn't matter what the terrain was like, what the weather was like, or what size force was involved—it was always the same."²⁹ As biographer Forrest C. Pogue counts, as many as one hundred and fifty World War II generals studied at Marshall's Infantry School as junior officers while another fifty were instructors with Marshall's emphasis on the holding attack.³⁰

Marshall also attempted to influence a wider audience with the publication of *Infantry in Battle*. This work provided peacetime officers with a book replete with case studies of the chaos of war. Marshall wanted to correct the American service schools' false assumption "that organizations are well-trained and at full strength, that subordinates are competent, that supply arrangements function, that communications work, that orders are carried out."³¹ In this work, Marshall stressed the pandemonium and confusion of battle as well as the complexities of leadership under fire. Because, *Infantry in Battle* points out, each engagement is infinitely varied, officers "who seek to fight by rote, who memorize an assortment of standard solutions with the idea of applying the most appropriate when confronted by actual combat, walk with disaster."

As such, the book states, noncommissioned officers and officers alike must “familiarize themselves with the art of clear, logical thinking.”³²

As these questions on force structure and organization reached resolution and as technology changed, so there was a new need for an improved doctrinal manual. The army re-evaluated its *Field Service Regulations*, to modernize and revise it in 1939 but it would remain the tentative manual until fully revised and accepted in 1941. As with its 1923 predecessor, the 1939 revisions possessed an offensive spirit, recognized the importance of combined arms, and saw the tank as an infantry support weapon. Like its 1923 predecessor, it pushed the “holding attack” as the ideal.

Unlike the 1923 regulations, there was instruction in 1939 regarding the concept of “combined arms.” These instructions emphasized the infantry-artillery relationship over the place of tanks and engineers and did not include other elements, such as close air support.³³ Also unlike the 1923 manual, the 1939 manual did discuss combat in woods and towns under the rubric “Special Operations.”³⁴ Officers refined the succinct 1939 discussion in the 1941 edition.³⁵ However brief the instruction, it constituted the army’s only interwar instruction on urban combat. Whereas there is no discernible dialogue among officers anywhere in the pages of the professional military journals between the world wars, the army nominally mentioned the urban environment in its doctrinal manuals just before World War II.

In these grouped urban and wooded environments, the manual stated, the defender had the advantage and could make combat very difficult for the attacker. When the attacker could not bypass or cut off a town, then the attacker should attack on one

side, fight his way through, and capture the exits on the far side.³⁶ Within this discussion of combat in towns, the manual stressed the infantry and artillery, giving very little room for armor's participation. Also neglected were all the major aspects of tactics of how to move and fight within a city, town, or village. It was to be, basically, an infantry and artillery fight.

On the eve of America's entry into World War II, the army published the 1941 *Field Service Regulations*. As with the previous two editions, this manual stressed the importance of offensive action: "Through offensive action a commander exercises his initiative, preserves his freedom of action, and imposes his will on the enemy."³⁷ Whereas the 1941 manual reminded its readers of the importance of valid objectives, it, too, relied upon the "holding attack" as the prime method of achieving its objectives. The main force, as was discussed in 1923, was to either envelop its objective or to penetrate straight through the enemy's position toward the objective. But taking the 1939 tentative manual further, the 1941 version devoted more attention to combat in towns.³⁸ It highlighted the importance of *sealing off a town by a flank attack* whenever practical. If a flanking maneuver was not practical, then a frontal attack must seize hold of the near side of the town and a methodical advance through the town must seal off the exits on the far side. The *FSR* offered no tactical instruction on how to methodically advance through an urban location but it recognized that "the outcome depends largely upon the initiative and aggressive leadership of subordinate commanders."³⁹

The 1941 *FSR* correctly foresaw that "the action within the town necessarily is decentralized to subordinate infantry leaders since lack of observation of the action

precludes satisfactory centralized control.”⁴⁰ It also accurately predicted that aerial and artillery bombardment were important tools to reduce a town’s defenses.⁴¹ However, it discouraged using mechanized troops as inadequate for urban combat because “their use for such combat will probably result in excessive casualties, both in personnel and vehicles” later proved inaccurate on the field of battle.⁴² Soldiers would learn through the war how to use armor to their advantage in the urban environment.

In sum, junior and field officers in the late-1930s and early-1940s had only limited ideas on how to handle towns or villages. They did not have tactics specific to that task, thus forcing them to modify tactics from other tasks. How to operate against enemies in a large city, though, with its interconnected infrastructure, prepared enemy defenses, and larger civilian population was a different matter. By virtue of untested doctrine, Americans thought they knew to bypass urban areas—villages, towns, and cities—whenever possible. The army also thought that when forced to take a town or city it was best to use maneuver and flank the city in an envelopment attack. If that first option was not possible, then a traditional frontal attack should first gain a foothold followed by a methodical advance that would push through to capture the exits on the far side of the locale. The envelopment and frontal attack are consistent with both the offensive spirit and tactical options of all three *Field Service Regulations*. Importantly, American doctrine specifically discouraged an effective combined-arms approach that included air, artillery, infantry, and the critical support of armor. Further, this doctrine proffered little direction on how to advance through a town or city. Important elements were left out but there was some instruction given. During the war, the 1st, 3rd, and 5th

Infantry Divisions would learn to move against villages and towns like they would against a fixed, fortified position: using a mixture of fire and maneuver and a combined-arms approach of infantry, artillery, and armor.

While *FM 100-5* in 1939 and 1941 gave scant help in how to deal specifically with villages and towns, other places in the manual offered direction, albeit after some tailoring. The 1941 edition of *FM 100-5*, gave instruction on how to engage a fortified locality, which “may comprise a single, strongly organized position” or a “series of strongly organized positions disposed in great depth and breadth in such manner as to be mutually supporting.”⁴³ By seeing a town or a village as a “fortified locality” then American officers had a way to perceive and fight against these places.

This view of a “fortified locality” fits more closely a description of the German Siegfried Line, or Western Wall, but a hastily defended town or village fits if one stretches the definition. Indeed, cities such as Sauerlautern, where the city incorporated portions of the Siegfried Line, literally became a fortified locality. Assaulting a fortified locality involved special planning and breakthroughs, which the Americans would not have to do when moving through French villages in late-1944 or German hamlets in early 1945. However, similar to what these U.S. infantry divisions would discover at the Siegfried Line, attacking Europe’s villages and towns also involved reconnaissance, attacking during hours of darkness, preparatory aerial and artillery bombardments, and bringing in tanks.⁴⁴ Related to how the infantry could handle a town, the manual also stipulated that “whenever possible, fortified localities are reduced by siege or by an attack from the rear following an enveloping maneuver to accomplish their complete

isolation.”⁴⁵ Despite giving little assistance in how to take a city, town, or village, an officer could modify American infantry doctrine from other tactical situations, in this case, planning to assault and breakthrough fortified localities, to use in the urban environment.

Alongside doctrine that offered limited assistance for conducting urban operations, it is worth examining what sort of training the army emphasized and then examine what the 1st, 3rd, and 5th Infantry Divisions were doing before entry into World War II.

As a point of context, the limited budgets of the Great Depression and the New Deal restricted army training in the 1930s. For instance, when estimating Fiscal Year 1934, the army submitted a budget of \$319 million as the minimum “which would provide a coordinated and well balanced military program.”⁴⁶ Congress gave it \$270 million but after Franklin Roosevelt took office, his administration threatened to slash the Fiscal Year 1934 budget to \$196 million. These deep cuts led to friction between Chief of Staff Douglas MacArthur and President Roosevelt; they compromised at \$225 million.⁴⁷ Consequently, the different combat arms endured “severe cuts in ammunition allowances for training”; one infantry unit even rationed its toilet paper to three sheets per man.⁴⁸ Indeed, those training to drive the new light tanks could rarely drive them for want of fuel.⁴⁹ One enlisted man in the 5th Infantry Division remembered throwing beer cans loaded with sand (makeshift hand grenades) at quarter-ton trucks carrying the sign, “I AM A TANK.”⁵⁰ Even if street-fighting training had been a priority, building a mock town would almost certainly have been out of the question for financial reasons.

The other aspect was the army's involvement in organizing and directing the Civilian Conservation Corps. Politicians intended for the CCC to hire young, unmarried men to work in national parks and on other beautification or conservation projects. The army was the only federal agency with the manpower and ability to organize the tens of thousands of young men who came through the program. Army leadership saw the CCC as an unnecessary distraction and worked hard to extricate itself from CCC leadership at the earliest possible moment.⁵¹ For instance, the 1st Infantry Division's 18th Infantry Regiment loaned 20 officers and 132 enlisted men to the CCC.⁵² It was not without its positive consequences: Brigadier General George C. Marshall described his assignment to the CCC as "the most instructive service I have ever had and the most interesting."⁵³

The army had to make do with what it had during the 1930s. However, as historian Russell Weigley describes it, the army in 1940 was one of "cavalry horses, artillery horses, and infantry pack mules."⁵⁴ Indeed, as the war embroiled the world in 1940, a lieutenant in the 3rd Infantry Division remembered that in America "peacetime training was slightly augmented, but the Armed Forces still suffered from under-funding and inattention."⁵⁵ When not struggling for money or competing for training time, the army performed a series of peacetime maneuvers to test its organizational and tactical changes in the field, namely the new triangular division, as well as the state of the army's combined-arms' abilities.⁵⁶ In the fall of 1941, two large-scale, army-level maneuvers in Louisiana and North Carolina were "a critical testing ground" for the newly organized units as well as new weapons and equipment, thereby giving many Regular and National Guard soldiers their first chance to field test them.⁵⁷ These two

peacetime maneuvers were indeed massive, involving a total of 740,000 officers and enlisted men, twenty-seven National Guard and Regular Army divisions, three armies, and nine air force groups.⁵⁸ The opposing army commanders received strategic objectives but the means of accomplishing those goals were left up to army commanders. Earlier maneuvers held in 1940 had been, in the words of historian Christopher Gabel, “playacting” but the 1941 maneuvers had been “serious business.”⁵⁹ Chief of Staff George C. Marshall intended these maneuvers to be the “Combat College for troop leading” for both the army and the National Guard.⁶⁰

Meeting days before the attack on Pearl Harbor, army planners and civilian leaders gleaned several lessons from these maneuvers. One of the key deficiencies was small-unit fighting capability. Indeed, during the Louisiana Maneuvers, biographer Stephen Ambrose reports that a young Lieutenant Colonel Dwight D. Eisenhower “was distressed to discover that company and platoon leadership was inadequate.” Colonel Eisenhower, who was chief of staff of one of the competing armies, spent time moving from unit to unit directing, leading, exhorting, and pushing units to do their job. Soldiers’ “neglect of proper camouflage, their poor traffic-handling abilities” frustrated the future general.⁶¹ Part of this problem stemmed from soldiers who did not take the peacetime maneuvers seriously and, therefore, failed to use cover, maneuvered in the open, or stood up to watch air attacks.⁶²

Leaders realized that they needed to return to the basics. That is, they needed to redress deficiencies from the platoon to the regimental level. The army devised a plan to offer remedial training in increasingly larger units. Ultimately, the planners expected an

infantry battalion to coordinate a series of different assaults under battlefield conditions with artillery support. This training benefitted small infantry-artillery forces, but did not include the other combat arms, namely tank, tank destroyer, and air units, thus limiting combined-arms training and experience.⁶³ Between maneuvers, General George S. Patton pointed out these combined-arms limitations and deficiencies when he complained to his 2d Armored Division that “We still fail to use every weapon every time . . . Each time we fight with only one weapon when we could use several weapons, we are not winning a battle; we are making fools of ourselves.”⁶⁴

Inasmuch as these maneuvers revealed many problems in the combat readiness of the army just before the United States entered the war December 1941, they also gave commanders much needed experience in leading, supplying, and commanding large units. However, it would take the pressures of combat for these units to iron out the organizational, doctrinal, and cooperative problems in order to defeat the German Army. While the Louisiana and Carolina maneuvers were important and gives important context for what the army was doing before it entered World War II, we lastly turn to what the 1st, 3rd, and 5th Infantry Divisions were doing before entering combat.

Between 1940 and 1941, the 1st Infantry Division went through the maneuvers that the rest of the army experienced as well engaged in a relatively high degree of amphibious training. In 1940, the 1st Division participated in corps-level maneuvers in Louisiana. These maneuvers were designed to further test the new triangular infantry divisions as well as to test the holding attack on which the *Field Service Regulations* and doctrine relied from 1923 to 1939.⁶⁵ In 1941, with the peacetime draft in force, many

divisions lost valuable and experienced officers and noncommissioned officers to be cadres for the newly forming divisions. The 1st Division did not experience these losses. Instead, its strength increased in mid-1940 as it absorbed 5,500 conscripts.⁶⁶ In December 1940, as Hitler's power was near its height in Europe, two infantry battalions of the 1st Division reported to Maryland to help learn, test, and develop amphibious warfare doctrine. These early tests involved rowboats in the ship-to-shore movement and oftentimes could not even land an entire 904-man battalion.⁶⁷ These experiments were the starting point upon which the army would build upon through the war for its many amphibious operations in both Europe and the Pacific. By August 1941, however, the entire division partook of amphibious exercises with improved equipment, including motorized launches, and more sophisticated doctrine.⁶⁸

In November 1941, the 1st Division participated in the army-level war games in North Carolina. By February 1942, two months after the United States entered World War II, the 1st Division reported to Florida for jungle training exercises and later moved to Fort Benning, Georgia. While there, training stressed "air-ground liaison and close artillery support."⁶⁹ Next, in August 1942, the division left for Great Britain. Originally this move was to initiate the Allied buildup for the eventual invasion of the Continent but the plan changed to prepare for the Anglo-American invasion of North Africa with Operation TORCH. Overseas, the division's infantry regiments rotated through the Combined Operations Training Center in Scotland in September 1942. The training in Scotland emphasized amphibious warfare training. Each regimental combat team, that is, an infantry regiment with its attached artillery, engineer, and armor units, practiced

disembarking and landings.⁷⁰ The final exercise, according to one veteran, incorporated a night beach landing and movement up a “steep hillside.”⁷¹ On 26 October 1942, the division left Great Britain and set sail for the port of Oran, Algeria.

The 3rd Infantry Division, whose home base was in the Pacific Northwest, had similar prewar experiences to those of the 1st. In August 1939, the War Department assigned the division to the Amphibious Corps Pacific Fleet with the Navy and Marine Corps to work out amphibious warfare doctrine as well as the specifics of landing operations.⁷² With five large-scale wartime amphibious landings, the 3rd became quite adept at amphibious operations but after this early training, “the feeling of many junior officers and noncoms . . . was that once a soldier had learned to clamber down a cargo net while carrying full kit, he was a trained artist in amphibious warfare.”⁷³

When the 3rd Division was not making practice landings, it also conducted division-level training at Camp Ord near Monterey, California. In that training, the 3rd focused on soldiers’ fundamentals, maneuvers, and physical conditioning. Sherman Pratt, an enlisted man at the time, remembered that Camp Ord was also where they turned in their bolt-action M-1903 Springfield rifles for new semi-automatic M-1 Garand rifles.⁷⁴ As Pratt recalled the days prior to America’s entry into World War II, basic training, field maneuvers, and physical conditioning governed much of the soldiers’ lives in the 3rd. Aside from the amphibious warfare training received in Washington state and California, Pratt does not record a sense of urgency within the army. Even into 1942, the division continued to train for an uncertain future. As Pratt recalled, “the ‘Summer of

'42' at Camp Ord passed somewhat routinely. . . . Training continued. Soldiers passed their evenings at the nearest post theatre, the gym, or the PX snack bar."⁷⁵

This field and amphibious training on the West Coast made many believe that they were destined for the Pacific and because army leadership had distributed "a great deal of material in the way of maps and literature on the Pacific theater and Japanese army."⁷⁶ However, this belief changed when the 3rd Division deployed to Camp Pickett, Virginia, in September 1942. The locals warmly received the soldiers, Pratt recalled. Although the soldiers replaced unserviceable equipment, they engaged in "no training programs of any significance."⁷⁷ In late October, the 3rd Infantry Division left with its attached units to join the 1st Infantry Division in the invasion of North Africa.

Unlike the 1st and 3rd Infantry Divisions, the 5th did not see combat until July 1944 when it landed on Normandy after the initial invasion. Life for the average 5th Infantry Division soldier was the usual routine in barracks, which contained "chicken s--t inspections [sic], close order drill and monotonous classes and field marches."⁷⁸ The 5th Division, however, did participate in two large-scale maneuvers. On 20 May 1941, the division marched from its station in Fort Custer, Michigan to army maneuvers in Tennessee. During one of these exercises in Tennessee, General George Patton's 2nd Armored Division broke through the 5th's lines at night and captured its headquarters.⁷⁹ Some of the more important critiques related to a "failure to carry out principles and methods laid down in the field manuals and training literature."⁸⁰ Further, historian Benjamin Franklin Cooling asserts, "nearly every critique following a particular problem pointed to inadequate reconnaissance, weak and nonaggressive leadership, and the fact

that the troops were roadbound.”⁸¹ After these maneuvers, the 5th returned to Michigan where it prepared for the Louisiana Maneuvers in September. Heinz Werle, a conscript in the 5th, remembered that his fellow soldiers “halfheartedly went through the motion of simulated warfare and did everything possible to confound the higher command. Feigned illnesses and injuries ran rife.”⁸²

After these maneuvers in Tennessee and Louisiana, despite having reasons to continue training, the 5th Infantry Division deployed overseas to Iceland, the first elements arriving in September 1941, before the United States entered the war. Soldiers of the 5th replaced British soldiers who then transferred to a more active front. Iceland, according to the divisional history, was an “ordeal”; serving there was an “arduous task.”⁸³ Soldiers recalled that because the Icelanders were culturally German, they received their American occupiers coolly.⁸⁴ Duties primarily included guarding military installations, manning observation posts, unloading ships, watching for German submarines, and cleaning up the flotsam and jetsam from submarine attacks during the Battle of the Atlantic. It was inglorious and boring for most soldiers. Veteran Michael Bilder remembered being detailed for an “elite” ski outfit within the 5th Infantry Division, but little came of this.⁸⁵ Ultimately, because of their garrison responsibilities, training on Iceland was limited.⁸⁶ The division began to deploy in mid-1943 for England and Ireland to prepare for the invasion of France.

When the U.S. Army went to war in 1941, its doctrine pushed an aggressive offensive approach to combat. This approach pushed maneuver with the holding attack and encouraged combined-arms battle, although military leaders typically defined

“combined arms” to denote infantry-artillery cooperation. Inasmuch as the 1939 and 1941 *Field Service Regulations* paid scant attention to urban operations, the army offered little instruction as to how the army should move against a town or a city. However, by seeing these places as fortified places, the U.S. Army had an intellectual basis from which to operate. An intellectual starting point only goes so far; the army had much to learn and many practical adjustments to make after they engaged in real battle with the Germans.

In many ways, the U.S. Army clearly had to grow and develop before it could effectively engage the German Army in combat. As soldiers’ memoirs indicate, most enlisted personnel did not take their prewar training seriously. The lessons learned from the major field maneuvers did not incorporate anything relating to urban operations doctrine. The army was more concerned with instilling a more aggressive attitude in its junior officers than how to take a city. Because of these more fundamental concerns, the army did not go in with a well-defined, well-integrated, or well-understood policy toward the urban environment. The army would have to learn when it went to war. As this study will show, it would learn effectively enough.

Endnotes

¹ Williamson Murray and Allan Millett, eds., *Military Innovation in the Interwar Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 5.

² J. D. Scharnhorst, *Military Field Pocket Book*, trans. Captain Haverfield and Lieutenant Hofmann (London: Vogel and Schulze, 1811, reprint, East Sussex, England: Naval & Military Press, 2004), 283-93.

- ³ S. L. A. Marshall, *Notes on Urban Warfare* (Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD: U.S. Army Materiel Systems Analysis Agency, 1973), 3, 49.
- ⁴ Alice Hills, *Future War in Cities: Rethinking a Liberal Dilemma* (London: Frank Cass, 2004), 243-244, 246. Notable exceptions are G. J. Ashworth, *War and the City* (London: Routledge, 1991) and Roger J. Spiller, *Sharp Corners: Urban Operations at Century's End* (Fort Leavenworth: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College Press, 2001).
- ⁵ For a fuller exploration of Mahan's influence on West Point curriculum as well as how the U.S. Military Academy perceived and taught military science and military engineering, see Thomas Everett Griess, "Dennis Hart Mahan: West Point Professor and Advocate of Military Professionalism, 1830-1871" (Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University, 1969), 209-86.
- ⁶ D. H. Mahan, *A Complete Treatise on Field Fortification, with the General Outlines of the Principles Regulating the Arrangement, the Attack, and the Defense of Permanent Works* (New York: Wiley and Long, 1836; reprint, Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishers, 1968), 224-40. Henry Wager Halleck, a student of Mahan, likewise dwelled on assaulting fortified positions and entrenchments but not cities. See Henry Wager Halleck, *Elements of Military Art and Science; or, Course of Instruction in Strategy, Fortification, Tactics of Battles, &c.; Embracing the Duties of Staff, Infantry, Cavalry, Artillery, and Engineers. Adapted to the Use of Volunteers and Militia* (New York: D. Appleton, 1846; reprint, Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishers, 1971), 364-74.
- ⁷ See Jonathan A. Beall, "The United States Army and Urban Combat in the Nineteenth Century" *War in History* 16 (April 2009): 157-188 for a comparative analysis of these two actions.
- ⁸ U.S. War Department, *Field Manual 100-5: Tentative Field Service Regulations, Operations* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1939), 218-20; U.S. War Department, *Field Manual 100-5: Field Service Regulations, Operations* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1941), 209-10.
- ⁹ Hills, *Future War in Cities*, 13.
- ¹⁰ Don A. Starry, "Foreword," in William G. Robertson and Lawrence A. Yates, eds., *Block by Block: The Challenges of Urban Operations* (Fort Leavenworth: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College Press, 2003), x.
- ¹¹ Marshall, *Notes on Urban Warfare*, 18.

- ¹² Ashworth, *War and the City*, 117-121.
- ¹³ On this topic, see Tami Davis Biddle, *Rhetoric and Reality in Air Warfare: The Evolution of British and American Ideas About Strategic Bombing, 1914-1945* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); David E. Johnson, *Fast Tanks and Heavy Bombers: Innovation in the U.S. Army, 1917-1945* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998); Williamson Murray, "Strategic Bombing: The British, American, and German Experiences," in Murray and Millett, eds., *Military Innovation in the Interwar Period*, 96-143; Richard Muller, "Close Air Support: The German, British, and American Experiences, 1918-1921," in Murray and Millett, eds., *Military Innovation in the Interwar Period*, 144-190.
- ¹⁴ To give one isolated example, fighter-bombers strafed and bombed the towns east of Arnville on the Moselle River on 12 October 1944 during the 5th Infantry Division's operations against the city of Metz. 5th Infantry Division G-3 Journal, 12 October 1944, entries timed 1408, 1415, 1416, and 1427, Box 5933, Record Group 407 (Records of the Adjutant General's Office, U.S. Army), Entry 427 (U.S. Army Operations Reports, World War II), National Archives, College Park, Maryland.
- ¹⁵ See, for example: Major Bradford G. Chynoweth, "Cavalry Tanks," *Cavalry Journal* 30 (July 1921): 247-251. Chynoweth did argue that the tank "is likely to enhance the value of the horseman as it has strengthened the infantryman on foot" (p. 248).
- ¹⁶ Colonel George Grunert, "Cavalry in Future War," *Cavalry Journal* 42 (May-June 1933): 10.
- ¹⁷ For this debate see Johnson, *Fast Tanks and Heavy Bombers*.
- ¹⁸ Kenneth Finlayson, *An Uncertain Trumpet: The Evolution of U.S. Army Infantry Doctrine, 1919-1941* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), 78-79, 127.
- ¹⁹ Allan R. Millett, "The United States Armed Forces in the Second World War," in Allan R. Millett and Williamson Murray, eds., *Military Effectiveness*, 3 vols., *The Second World War* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990): 3:69.
- ²⁰ *Infantry in Special Operations*, Army Extension Courses Special Text, no. 13 (Fort Benning, GA: Army Field Printing Plant, 1937), 1.
- ²¹ *Special Operations (Tentative)* (Fort Leavenworth: Command and General Staff School Press, 1937), table of contents.
- ²² On jungle warfare, see: "Infantry in Jungle Combat," *Mailing List* 12 (July 1936): 253-266. On desert warfare, see: "Desert Warfare," *Mailing List* 13 (January 1937):

65-100. On defense in wooded environments, see "Defense in Woods," *Mailing List* 18 (1942): 51. See also the fictional series in *Cavalry Journal* on jungle warfare: Ingram Cary, "Jungle Warfare," *Cavalry Journal* 43, #183 (May-June 1934): 33-43; Ingram Cary, "Jungle Warfare," *Cavalry Journal* 43, #184 (July-Aug 1934): 37-46; Ingram Cary, "Jungle Warfare," *Cavalry Journal* 43, #185 (Sept-Oct. 1935): 45-55. For the *Mailing List*'s lone piece on urban combat: "Principles of Town and Village Fighting," *Mailing List* 28 (July 1944): 171-88.

- ²³ U.S. War Department, *Field Service Regulations, United States Army, 1923* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1924), 77. The later versions, which also advocated the offensive as the general principles of combat, are little different: U.S. War Department, *Field Manual 100-5* (1939), 27-29; U.S. War Department, *Field Manual 100-5* (1941), 22-23.
- ²⁴ Finlayson, *An Uncertain Trumpet*, 79.
- ²⁵ U.S. War Department, *Field Service Regulations* (1923), 13.
- ²⁶ U.S. War Department, *Field Service Regulations* (1923), 88.
- ²⁷ U.S. War Department, *Field Service Regulations* (1923), 94-96.
- ²⁸ Forrest C. Pogue, *George C. Marshall*, 3 vols., *Education of a General, 1880-1939* (New York: Viking Press, 1963), 1:249-253; Geoffrey Perret, *There's a War to Be Won: The United States Army in World War II* (New York: Random House, 1991), 13-14.
- ²⁹ Perret, *There's a War to Be Won*, 14-15.
- ³⁰ According to Pogue, future top generals such as Omar Bradley and Walter Bedell Smith as well as division and corps commanders such as J. Lawton Collins, Terry de la Mesa Allen, Clarence Huebner, Matthew Ridgway, and Charles T. Lanham all studied as junior officers in Marshall's Infantry School. Pogue, *Education of a General*, 249.
- ³¹ George C. Marshall, introduction to *Infantry in Battle* (Washington, D.C.: Infantry Journal Incorporated, 1939), i.
- ³² *Infantry in Battle*, 14.
- ³³ U.S. War Department, *Field Manual 100-5* (1939), 137-144.

- ³⁴ Special operations in 1939 included night combat, river crossings, combat in woods and towns, mountain warfare, and guerrilla warfare. U.S. War Department, *Field Manual 100-5* (1939), vi.
- ³⁵ U.S. War Department, *Field Manual 100-5* (1939), 218-220.
- ³⁶ U.S. War Department, *Field Manual 100-5* (1939), 219.
- ³⁷ U.S. War Department, *Field Manual 100-5* (1941), 22. Russell F. Weigely takes this credo further to show its pervasiveness in the American military mindset. Russell F. Weigley, *Eisenhower's Lieutenants: The Campaign of France and Germany, 1944-1945* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981), 2-7.
- ³⁸ *Field Manual 100-5* (1941), 209-210. The discussion of combat in towns is separated from tactical instructions on combat in woods.
- ³⁹ *Field Manual 100-5* (1941), 209.
- ⁴⁰ *Field Manual 100-5* (1941), 209.
- ⁴¹ *Field Manual 100-5* (1941), 210.
- ⁴² *Field Manual 100-5* (1941), 210.
- ⁴³ *Field Manual 100-5* (1941), 182.
- ⁴⁴ *Field Manual 100-5* (1941), 183, 185-187.
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- ⁴⁸ Edward M. Coffman, *The Regulars: The American Army, 1898-1941* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 233-4.
- ⁴⁹ Coffman, *The Regulars*, 310.
- ⁵⁰ Heinz L. Werle, "My Memories of World War II," Heinz L. Werle Papers, U.S. Army Military Heritage Institute, Carlisle, PA, 4-5.

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- ⁵² James Scott Wheeler, *The Big Red One: America's Legendary 1st Infantry Division from World War I to Desert Storm* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2007), 125.
- ⁵³ Marshall, quoted in Coffman, *The Regulars*, 243.
- ⁵⁴ Weigley, *Eisenhower's Lieutenants*, 1.
- ⁵⁵ Cited in John McManus, *American Courage, American Carnage: 7th Infantry Chronicles* (New York: Tom Doherty Associates, 2009), 295.
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- ⁵⁸ Gabel, *GHQ Maneuvers*, 192.
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- ⁶⁰ George C. Marshall, *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, 4 vols., "We Cannot Delay," July 1, 1939-December 6, 1941 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 2:99.
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- ⁶² Gabel, *GHQ Maneuvers*, 172.
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- ⁶⁴ Martin Blumenson, ed., *The Patton Papers, 1940-1945* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974), 43.
- ⁶⁵ Mary K. Barbier, "The 1940 Louisiana Maneuvers," *Southern Studies* 5 (Fall & Winter 1994): 71.
- ⁶⁶ Wheeler, *Big Red One*, 132.
- ⁶⁷ Steven E. Clay, *Blood and Sacrifice: The History of the 16th Infantry Regiment from the Civil War through the Gulf War* (Wheaton, IL: Cantigny First Division

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⁷⁹ Michael C. Bilder, *A Foot Soldier for Patton: The Story of a "Red Diamond" Infantryman with the U.S. Third Army* (Philadelphia: Casemate, 2008), 25-26.

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⁸¹ Cooling, "The Tennessee Maneuvers," 278.

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CHAPTER III

“THAT TOWN IS FULL OF TROOPS”:

TOWN FIGHTING IN OPERATIONS TORCH AND HUSKY

The 1st and 3rd Infantry Divisions first saw combat with the invasions of North Africa and Sicily in 1942 and 1943. These two campaigns taught the American military that it had much to learn about modern warfare as well as fighting its German enemy. Actually fighting the Germans would force the U. S. Army to become more proficient and effective at combined-arms warfare as well as urban combat than when it entered war in 1941.

Northern Africa and Sicily are not heavily urbanized places. Indeed, most of the heavy fighting in North Africa took place in the Tunisian desert. Nevertheless, Allied military leaders deemed the port cities of Oran, Algiers and Casablanca, Morocco as vital to their campaign in North Africa. Taking the hill-city of Troina in northeastern Sicily was critical to cracking the German defenses around Mt. Etna. Further, the landings in North Africa and capturing Sicily taught both infantry divisions that advancing would necessarily require moving through many villages and towns in this war of maneuver. There was simply no escaping the reality that modern armies were roadbound with their myriad of tanks, jeeps, trucks, tank destroyers, and self-propelled artillery. Allied strategic goals placed a higher priority on the destruction of the German *Wehrmacht* than on capturing any urban center of gravity. But Allied soldiers needed to

take towns and cities if they wanted to defeat the German military, especially as Germany defended those urban centers.

The role that cities played in World War II fighting showed itself after the British and Americans invaded a more urbanized France in 1944, although officers could read how Russian cities were affecting combat in the Eastern Front.¹ The question facing the Allies remained only to what degree the enemy would defend these urban centers. By the time the Allies landed divisions in France in June and August, 1944, they would have a much better grasp of how to deal with enemy-occupied villages, towns, and cities partly because the fighting in North Africa and Sicily furnished these divisions a starting point from which to act.

Fighting for North Africa's and Sicily's towns taught the Americans that urban combat hinged on two elements. The first element would be the Americans' own ability to master combined-arms warfare, that is, their ability bring all the various weapons into organized coordination against the enemy by coordinating their infantry, armor, artillery, and air forces together. Fighting in the field also helped to teach the Americans the importance of mastering combined-arms warfare. The second element would be how determined the enemy might be to defend these urban locations. North Africa and Sicily would show that when the enemy chose to fight and defend a city, it could make it painful and costly for the Americans, especially as the Americans struggled to coordinate all their weapons into one concerted effort against the Axis defenders. The 3rd Infantry Division drew upon experiences gained in Sicily later on the Italian

mainland while the 1st would later use these lessons when it invaded northern France in June 1944.

Operation TORCH

1st Infantry Division

The United States finally entered the land war against the European Axis powers on 8 November 1942 with the amphibious landings into North Africa. This campaign provoked controversy in its own right. Key strategic disagreements strained the Anglo-American alliance because the Americans, headed by Chief of Staff George C. Marshall, strenuously endorsed an invasion of Europe at its earliest date. In contrast, the British, led by Prime Minister Winston Churchill, pushed a peripheral strategy emphasizing operations in the Mediterranean Sea, Italy, and the Balkans. To appease the American public and his Soviet allies, President Franklin D. Roosevelt believed that it was better for America to enter the fight in North Africa sooner rather than wait for the cross-Channel invasion later.²

Allied military leaders planned a three-pronged assault on North Africa. A major question on everyone's minds from commanding general to the privates on the ground was whether French forces would fight. The location of the landing beaches were in French-controlled North Africa and the subservient status of the Vichy government made it unclear how the French military in North Africa would respond to an Anglo-American invasion. As such, the British and American invaders hoped for the best—that the French would not fight the Allies and might even join their ranks—but planned for

the worst—a protracted resistance from the French and their colonial troops against the British and the Americans.³

Both the 1st and 3rd Infantry Divisions benefitted from prior amphibious training to prepare for this invasion. Targeting Casablanca, Morocco, the Western Task Force was under the command of General George S. Patton and included the 3rd Infantry Division. The Center Task Force came under General Terry de la Mesa Allen's command, who led his own 1st Division, against the port city of Oran, Algeria. The Eastern Task Force, involving American and British components, looked to the city of Algiers. Although all three task forces engaged the enemy in a city, their experiences were quite different, highlighted by contrasting the 1st's 18th Infantry Regiment in St. Cloud and the 3rd's 7th Infantry Regiment in Fedala.

The Center Task Force took the port city of Oran, which in 1942 had a population of 200,000. In terms of its urban geography, the most farms, villages, and small towns were made of brick.⁴ General Allen planned a double envelopment of Oran. Battalion landing teams from the 16th and 18th Infantry Regiments landed northeast of Oran at the small fishing village of Arzew while the 26th Regimental Combat Team (26 RCT) landed west of Oran at the beaches outside Les Andalouses. Elements of the 18th Infantry, reinforced with the 1st Ranger Battalion, received orders to take the village of Arzew. Figure 3.1 below shows the seizure of Oran.⁵

French defenses, under the Oran Division, included 100 airplanes, coastal guns manned by 4,000 troops as well as 10,000 infantrymen that could be augmented by an additional 12,000 men within five days of an invasion.⁶ The military leadership was a

Figure 3.1: Seizure of Oran



mix of anti-Vichy and anti-British officers.⁷ The unanswered question of French resistance concerned Allied commanders.

Early on Sunday, 8 December, combat units of the 1st Infantry Division boarded amphibious craft to invade North Africa. Toward the west, the 26th RCT landed near Les Andalouses. In these landings, smaller villages were immediate targets. Third Battalion, 26th Infantry (3/26) moved to the east while Second Battalion, 26th Infantry (2/26), without G Company nor its anti-tank platoon, set out to capture Ain-el-Turk.⁸ This move was to protect the regiment's western flank.⁹ At the same time, G Company and its anti-tank platoon captured El Ancor, a small town populated by 2,000 individuals. Before landing, G Company's commanding officer, Captain V. L. Ruwet, remembered that they had no idea whether there would be opposition to the landings nor to El Ancor's capture. Further, Ruwet planned his operation without the anti-tank platoon commanding officer because he was on a different ship. The plan called for 2nd Platoon to move on the town from the east. Second Platoon would signal little to no opposition by firing a red flare; a white flare meant stiff resistance. At that point, Ruwet and 1st Platoon would attack from the north. The simple plan called for maneuver and reinforcements from different axes of advance but no armor, artillery, nor even the anti-tank platoon supplemented the attack. The landing occurred without incident and 2nd Platoon sent up a red flare by 0400. By 0430, Ruwet was in El Ancor talking to the mayor and chief of police. G Company set up a roadblock and the anti-tank platoon reinforced them by 0800. Despite the lack of thorough preparation, the small mission went remarkably well.

Ruwet was relieved to see the anti-tank platoon because at 0830 three French armored cars weakly tested the roadblock. This engagement constituted the bulk of the action that day for G Company. Ruwet commented that he wished that his planning had been smoother. He could make no personal reconnaissance and depended solely upon aerial photographs. Further, the anti-tank platoon's 37-mm gun crews only knew where G Company was because the beachmaster informed them after landing. This situation, Ruwet believed, "only proves the necessity for detailed planning at an early stage."¹⁰ From generals to privates, Americans expressed relief that the French did not oppose the TORCH landings. By 10 November, the 26th Infantry and the attached 33rd Field Artillery Battalion were in place to assault Oran from the west.¹¹

As 16th Infantry landed to the left of the 18th in the Golfe d'Arzew, both regiments advanced toward Oran from the east. The 16th Infantry had the task of securing the division's left, or southern, flank. Like the 26th Infantry, the 16th targeted smaller villages and towns. The regiment's First Battalion (1/16) took Damesme, St. Leu, and Port aux Poules without incident or resistance. The regiment confronted strong resistance as it approached La Macta.¹² In La Macta, the 2nd Algerian Infantry Regiment ambushed the first Americans from 1/16 who entered the town. Because A, C, and D Companies were posted elsewhere, B Company and the regimental headquarters, with the aid of Battery A, 7th Field Artillery and naval guns from the HMS *Farndale*, took La Macta.¹³ By the evening, La Macta was in American hands. By 10 November, these forces left La Macta and its nearby towns for the assault on Oran.

The 26th and 16th Infantry Regiments experienced a small taste of urban combat with these minor fights in El Ancor and La Macta. However, it was the 18th Infantry's attempts to take the town of St. Cloud that the 1st Infantry Division engaged in its first sustained urban combat. The 18th Infantry landed to the right of the 16th Infantry in the Golfe d'Arzew. By 0120, Ranger elements were ashore and had taken most of Arzew already. By 0430, over 1,000 men from the 18th Infantry were already ashore.¹⁴ The regiment had begun its movement inland by the early morning hours of 8 December with little resistance from French forces. The calm did not last long as 1/18 advanced toward St. Cloud.

A town of approximately 4,000 people, St. Cloud lay on the 1st Division's route to Oran.¹⁵ Its defenders included the 16th Tunisian Infantry Regiment, a battalion of the French Foreign Legion, and paramilitary fascists of the Service d'Ordre Légionnaire. Aside from these riflemen, there were troops with machine guns and mortars as well as 37-mm antitank guns and 75-mm and 155-mm artillery from the 68th African Artillery Regiment.¹⁶ According to American military intelligence, the defenders were "second- or third-class military troops."¹⁷

The Americans may have rated the defenders low but the town's architecture of stout stone buildings with brick and concrete walls augmented their ability to defend the town.¹⁸ The division postwar history records that the streets were at right angles to each other thus "offer[ing] unbeatable cover for a small arms fight."¹⁹ A low wall that encircled the town cemetery to the south was also ideal for defense.²⁰ St. Cloud, according to one veteran of the battle, "rested in a shallow shaped piece [sic] of terrain

completely surrounded by vineyards.” Because it was November, the recently planted grapevines were “stubby root sparcely [sic] planted and affording neither cover nor concealment.” The defenders enjoyed the advantages of “at least a thousand yards of clear field of fire in all directions, good cover for themselves, a small amount of artillery support and the capability of inflicting severe losses on an attacking infantry unit.”²¹ Clearly, St. Cloud’s defenders had no intention to surrender, their first shots answered whether the French would contest the invasion.

The 18th Infantry marched westward with C Company leading the regiment’s advance. Three miles outside Renan, five French armored cars approached C Company but the Americans promptly destroyed four of them. One escaped and returned to St. Cloud to make that small garrison aware of the approaching Americans.²² A few miles from St. Cloud, C Company lengthened its lines as it moved from route column to an approach formation and A Company deployed to C Company’s left.²³ The Americans did not expect resistance but remained wary and alert. Around noon, C Company moved into St. Cloud but took artillery as well as heavy rifle and machine gun fire from the French. A Company tried to skirt to the south of town but heavy fire from the cemetery stopped the company cold.²⁴ A few Americans penetrated into the town during this first advance but at a disorienting cost: both A and C Company commanders, as well as two more A Company officers, were killed or wounded during this early action.²⁵ In the meantime, B Company had to regroup itself after French artillery rounds had landed in its midst. Platoon leader Lieutenant Edward McGregor watched mortified as “literally dozens of our men began running to the rear discarding their packs, gas masks,

impedimenta. It was almost a rout.” It was not until late afternoon that the company “got some semblance of organization” and recovered itself.²⁶

B Company was not the only company to struggle with its green soldiers, unfamiliar with war. One officer remembered that “non-battle experienced troops tend to converge on whatever is firing on them, and in this situation [regimental commander Colonel Frank] Greer soon found all three of his battalions pinned down by effective fire from the town.”²⁷ As the gunfire from the cemetery and within the town stalled these two companies, 1/18 withdrew in order to coordinate a new attack. After regrouping, B Company rejoined the battalion and posted itself within the cemetery along the town’s southern side. So far, it had been purely an infantry fight with little artillery and no tank support to aid the Americans.

By late afternoon of 8 November, Colonel Greer directed his Second and Third Battalions to help with the assault. The Third Battalion went into position by dusk north of and to the east of St. Cloud but did not participate much in the fight.²⁸ Second Battalion moved quickly to the scene of the fighting and deployed south of St. Cloud near First Battalion’s A Company. As elements of 2/18 moved into position, men from A Company cautioned that “that town is full of troops. Our company is all shot up. . . . You better watch out. These snipers will get you.”²⁹ One forward observer for the attached 32nd Field Artillery Battalion remembered how he struggled to help his battery register its guns on St. Cloud in these combat conditions. Upon asking if artillery would shell the French positions, someone informed him that, in order to avoid civilian casualties, no artillery would fire on St. Cloud.³⁰

At approximately 1600 hours, the Second Battalion as well as A and B Companies assaulted St. Cloud for one last attempt at the town, “using neither mortars nor artillery preparation so as to spare the civilians, if we could.”³¹ B Company’s McGregor ordered his men to follow him over the low cemetery wall and push into the town. When he jumped the wall and ran forward, he noted that “it seemed awful quiet for so many men running.” Indeed, only three men followed him; the other 40 remained hunkered behind the safety of the wall. The lieutenant angrily returned to his old position, reiterated his plan again to his squad leaders, and threatened that “any son of a gun that doesn’t go, I’m going to shoot him in the back!” With that, McGregor’s men entered the town itself. As B Company pushed forward, the men moved carefully within the streets but a burst of machine gunfire killed the company commander.³²

This final attack rendered the First Battalion completely disorganized. McGregor remembered that most units rarely used their radio. The regiment’s operations officer mounted a bicycle in order to transmit information and intelligence; other officers relied on runners.³³ Command and control disintegrated within this Algerian town. By the evening, soldiers from A and B Companies were isolated within St. Cloud but the battalion had lost all three company commanders killed alongside thirteen men killed and thirty-six wounded. St. Cloud remained in French hands. Upon reflection, McGregor was thankful he faced French soldiers during that first battle, for “if they had been Germans out there, we’d have been in bad trouble.”³⁴ The night passed without either side trying to drive the other out of the town, although many trigger-happy

Americans shot at anything that moved, including those who gave the correct challenge to the password.³⁵

On the morning of 9 November, the 1st Division was determined to take this stubborn town in order to advance toward its objectives of Oran and its port. Daybreak found the 18th Infantry strung out to the east and south of St. Cloud with various elements in and out of the town. So jumbled was the First Battalion by the morning of 9 November that Lieutenant McGregor received orders to lead a patrol to locate the men of the battalion, “never mind finding the enemy.”³⁶ It is not clear what Colonel Greer and his battalion commanders planned or discussed during the previous night. Targeting French artillery positions at 0636, the 32nd Field Artillery fired a few rounds into St. Cloud.³⁷ The 18th then renewed the assault reinforced by K/16. Two platoons of K Company assaulted with the rest of the 18th and encountered “enemy rifle fire which pinned the two assault platoons to the ground.” Third Platoon attempted to help by entering the fray but “further enemy fire, including small arms, automatic weapons and mortar fire, prevented the company from making further advancement.” Some soldiers managed to enter buildings within the town and used hand grenades to flush out or kill snipers in the various rooms.³⁸ Altogether the company failed to move as an organized force into the town.

The 18th Infantry fared little better. The assault companies renewed the attack but only small groups of infantrymen penetrated into the town.³⁹ C Company reached the village square. Lieutenant Clement van Wagoner, a platoon leader in C Company, related his platoon’s role in that early fighting on the 9th. Wagoner recalled that his

platoon discreetly avoided an enemy machine gun post as they darted toward the town's post office, which doubled as a French observation point. This position allowed the French to "control the main four corners of the town." A corporal fired rifle grenades into the post office, thus inducing the French defenders to surrender. To stop a nearby enemy machine gun nest, Wagoner "lined the prisoners up shoulder to shoulder to use them as a shield so my platoon could move up." This method worked until the French fired on their own men to stop the Americans. During this time, one soldier attempted to silence single-handedly the French machine gun position but received a gunshot wound to the stomach, applied his own sulfa powder, and received help to the rear. Wagoner's platoon was still "gathering up prisoners when we received word to cease firing and leave town."⁴⁰

The regiment's Cannon Company, consisting of self-propelled 105-mm howitzers as well as half-tracks with 75-mm guns, drove its half-tracks into the town, engaging a French 75-mm artillery battalion. The men fought their way out when they realized they could not drive their half-tracks out of the town, losing one in the process. The company commander confessed, "we didn't know what we were looking for, really. Luckily, we got out. And, maybe, with more experience, we could have kept going on past them and caused real trouble to their rear."⁴¹

By 0930, the regiment acknowledged that "progress in St. Cloud slow."⁴² By 1100, the regiment succeeded only in sustaining more casualties. The town firmly remained in French hands and Colonel Greer ordered the units to withdraw from the town again. For Greer, the fight became a matter of will.⁴³ This time Greer decided to

do what he had heretofore not done—use his attached artillery to shell St. Cloud before the next infantry assault. Early on, the division approved the plan, telling the regiment to “concentrate [their artillery] and push through.”⁴⁴ Greer’s plan had First Battalion renew the attack after a 30-minute artillery bombardment at 1400. This idea, as recorded by an embedded journalist, meant “a creeping barrage through that town, starting at this end and working right over it!”⁴⁵ Second and Third Battalions were to re-assemble, bypass St. Cloud, and continue the advance on Oran. First Battalion would capture St. Cloud and then march toward Oran.⁴⁶ With this new plan, the regiment regained its focus on the division’s objective, joined the 16th Infantry westward, and kept an infantry battalion and a supporting battery of artillery to contain the French forces if not defeated by the Americans.

According to Lieutenant Colonel Stanhope Mason, 1st Infantry Division G-3, Greer had been “clamoring for a full scale Division artillery concentration on the town” since the previous evening.⁴⁷ In contrast, the division staff opposed the idea because it would surely kill many civilians. Mason noted that here General Allen faced a dilemma that only he, as commanding general, could resolve.⁴⁸ As the division G-3 journal indicates, by 1140 hours, the division had approved of an idea to shell St. Cloud. As 1400 approached, Allen decided that shelling the town was too risky. Allen ordered Greer to keep one battalion in St. Cloud and have his other two battalions break contact and join the advance on Oran, rejecting the regimental commander’s plan for an artillery bombardment preceding an all-out assault. The commanding general would not allow the artillery to shell St. Cloud for several reasons.⁴⁹ Allen admitted that the first was “if

we bombard the town and then fail to take it by attack, it would be disastrous.” Second, they could just as easily bypass St. Cloud.⁵⁰ Third, Allen was convinced that shelling a town like that complicate the Allies’ diplomatic attempts to woo the French.⁵¹ Last was the civilian issue. Allen said to Guy Ramsey, an embedded British correspondent, “‘I just couldn’t do it, Ramsey,’ he said to me. ‘Just couldn’t. There were civilians in that god-damned place. I couldn’t blast them all to hell.’” Ramsey reported that Allen himself went to his artillerists to order them to stand down and not shell the town.⁵² Determined to take Oran quickly, Allen spurred his division on by telling them that “nothing in Hell must delay or stop” this attack.⁵³

With that, the Second and Third Battalions of the 18th Infantry began to disengage from the fight and move to the west to help take Oran. The First Battalion remained to contain the defenders in place and perhaps capture the town. Having withdrawn at 1100 hours and the preparatory bombardment at 1400 cancelled, there was no further fighting in St. Cloud that day. On the 10th, as the balance of the 1st Division took Oran, 1/18 continued its attack on the town. K Company of the 16th Infantry, C Company of the 1st Ranger Battalion and A Battery, 32nd Field Artillery Battalion all reinforced the battalion. These units renewed the assault on the third day in St. Cloud by 0815. This reinforced infantry battalion made significant progress and captured 75 percent of the town. By 1400 hours, Oran had surrendered and word had gotten to St. Cloud’s French defenders to surrender.⁵⁴ In the early afternoon of 10 November, after three days of urban combat, the 1st Infantry Division had taken its first town without major loss of life.

One unofficial regimental historian, Frank Parr, put it best when he observed that St. Cloud was where the regiment made “the first full-scale platoon and company assaults launched” and that the French Army credited itself for “put[ting] up a determined and gallant defense, finally surrendering only upon orders of higher command.”⁵⁵ General Allen stated that the French defenders “fought viciously, and used their combined fire power with telling effect. All three battalions had been sucked into a converging attack, maneuverability had been lost,” and the French had repulsed the Americans.⁵⁶ The regiment also revealed how inexperienced it was and how reluctant many of the soldiers were to close with the enemy. McGregor pointed out that, “after the battle, I found the Battalion was completely disorganized.”⁵⁷ Communications depended on runners because officers had not used their radios properly, thus hindering officers’ command and control.⁵⁸ As the war lengthened and military planners assigned new operations, the division would have to make its soldiers more aggressive while maintaining organization within towns and cities defended like St. Cloud. Leadership changes followed this fight. The commanding officers of the First and Second Battalions were relieved.⁵⁹ Indeed, no accounts describe what Major Richard Parker, commander of 1/18, did, nor where he was during this fight. Men of the Big Red One had fought hard but they would have to improve their effectiveness at future urban encounters, especially by utilizing armor and artillery.

The 1st Infantry Division also learned what happened when an enemy chose to defend a village, town, or city: it could make the Americans pay dearly. St. Cloud might have held up the division from its objective of Oran longer had Allen not decided that it

was far wiser to simply bypass the town, and move towards Oran. This operational decision to go around St. Cloud is why the action there remains a relatively insignificant battle. Investing more resources into taking St. Cloud likely would have shown how well-defended urban areas tend to draw in personnel and material. Allen's choice prevented that line of events and, no doubt, saved many noncombatants' lives. All the same, as mentioned by Parr, the Americans only took the town when French high command ordered its men to surrender. By 10 November, the 1st Infantry Division began to understand the difficulties in capturing a defended locale. While the 3rd Division's experience was different, they, too, suffered from similar organizational weaknesses.

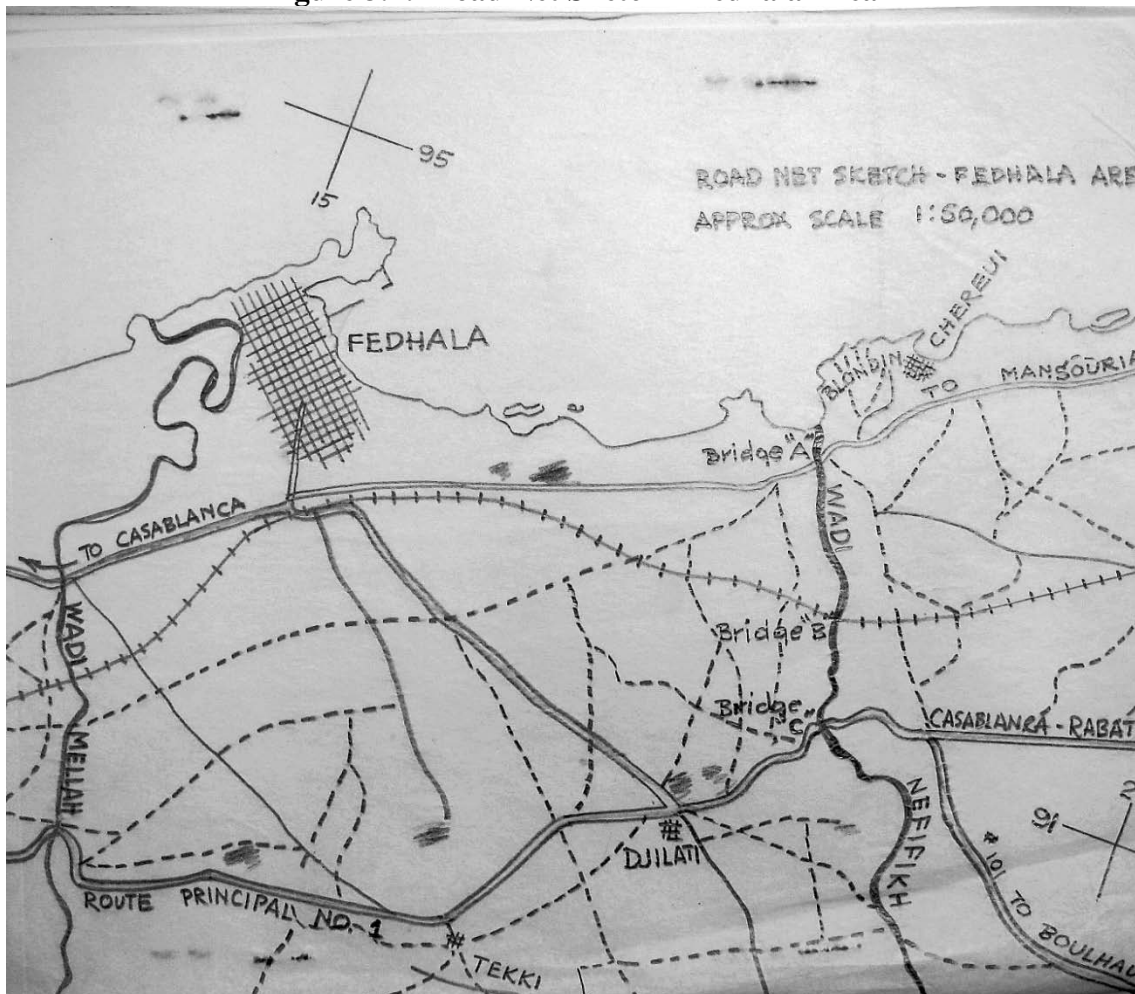
3rd Infantry Division

General Patton landed with the Western Task Force and received the mission of taking Casablanca, a city so fortified where a direct frontal assault was not an option.⁶⁰ Patton assigned the 3rd Infantry Division to capture Casablanca and its port while other units landed further north and south to secure air fields and land armor. The division landed northeast of Casablanca, targeting the small fishing city of Fedala as a temporary base of operations. It fell to the 3rd's 7th Infantry Regiment to accomplish that mission. Fedala was home to approximately 2,500 Europeans and 13,000 Arab Moroccans. A few coastal guns defended the city at Batterie du Pont Blondin. North of Fedala was Cape Fedala that, according to the division's postwar history, "provid[ed] some protection for the harbor and serv[ed] as a base for one of the two jetties which enclose the harbor."⁶¹ Figure 3.2 shows the Fedala region.⁶² According to the divisional history,

the land between Fedala and Casablanca was “gently rolling, largely cultivated, and ideal for motor and mechanized operations, since there is a good network of roads and trails.” Similar to Oran, military intelligence could not discern if the French planned to resist.⁶³ Military intelligence had learned that Fedala housed approximately a battalion and a half of infantry, a few antiaircraft batteries and a coastal battery at Cape Fedala as well as two companies of Moroccan cavalry. Intelligence also estimated three or four infantry battalions in Casablanca along with four companies of cavalry (including one mechanized company) and four battalions of field artillery.⁶⁴

First Battalion, 7th Infantry advanced into Fedala. Unlike St. Cloud with the 18th Infantry Regiment, there was an entire plan for taking the city. L Company was to land west of Fedala to secure road crossings over the Wadi Mellah while the 3rd Reconnaissance Troop followed nearby to take enemy positions in western Fedala. First Battalion landed further east. A Company was to move into the city and capture a German officer contingent that intelligence believed was in the Miramar Hotel and then assist C Company in taking the town’s and Cape Fedala’s artillery batteries. B Company received instructions to take the city’s market place and protect the battalion’s rear. Similar to St. Cloud, these plans did not include tanks; it was to be an all-infantry fight. All three companies received orders to avoid the Kasbah, or the Arab sector of Fedala. Because Western Task Force intended that Fedala to be a temporary base of operations, 1/7 had to capture the city without destroying the city’s public utilities. The battalion received instructions to avoid an urban firefight. The men would land under the cover of darkness. Orders dictated that no one was to fire on the enemy; instead, they were to

Figure 3.2: Road Net Sketch—Fedhala Area



“take advantage of the darkness and the enemy fire to work around his flanks, and to move toward their objectives.”⁶⁵

This first wartime landing, however, was difficult. There were complications getting the naval vessels in line, forcing leaders to postpone H-hour by a few hours. After they launched, the landing vessels lost their way; some landed on the wrong beaches while others overturned in the surf or upon hitting hidden sandbars.⁶⁶ L

Company's and Third Reconnaissance Troop's western landings failed to materialize due to rough seas. The 7th's regimental history records that during these landings, some men were injured and others drowned.⁶⁷

A Company moved first into the city but met Senegalese soldiers armed with 60-mm pack mortars and machine guns. When Lieutenant William Tolbert asked these soldiers to surrender, they promptly dropped their weapons.⁶⁸ A Company continued into Fedala, passing armed, albeit cooperative, Senegalese along the way. At the intersection of Moulay Youssef and Moulay Ismael, this mixed group rendered ineffective several machine guns, a 20-mm cannon, and 60-mm pack mortars that the defenders could not use because too many Senegalese were among the Americans.⁶⁹ A Company secured the Miramar Hotel by 0730 but the German Armistice Commission was gone; C Company captured them as they tried to escape.⁷⁰ As A Company finished its job at the Miramar Hotel, the Navy began to shell the Miramar. The company pushed forward but it took nearly an hour before the Navy stopped the friendly fire. A Company pushed forward to a casino and nearby park where they remained in a series of trenches to take cover from the friendly naval shelling.⁷¹

Around 1100 hours, the company moved toward Cape Fedala, to attack a coastal artillery battery shelling the American landing beaches. A Company's Captain Albert Brown noted that portions of his company maneuvered towards the Cape "under cover of buildings," trying to expose themselves as little as possible to enemy fire.⁷² At that point, Colonel William H. Wilbur approached with a platoon of light tanks from the 756th Tank Battalion. Wilbur had just returned from Casablanca on a diplomatic

mission to encourage the French to surrender. He had observed the threat posed by the French artillery to the landing beaches and the 7th's slowness in taking them. As a platoon of light tanks from the 756th Tank Battalion came near, he commandeered them to speed up the attack on the guns on Cape Fedala.⁷³ Despite the lack of armor in any early operational plans, the 7th Infantry had tanks on hand to assist in their fight because of Wilbur's foresight and initiative. Despite the presence of armor, the tanks and infantry did not work in close concert. Lieutenant John Rutledge wrote that the infantry advanced along the waterfront toward the Cape while his tank platoon moved to the infantry's left, toward the Wadi Mellah to the west of the city, advancing fully independent of the infantry and exposed to any enemy anti-tank weapons.⁷⁴

The Americans employed 60-mm mortars, tanks, and infantrymen to focus on the fire control station and its surrounding barbed wire. The regimental history recorded that "automatic riflemen protected men with wire cutters who made holes in the barbed wire for the riflemen to dash through . . . As the enemy fired from the upstairs windows of the fire control station, Company 'A' closed in from all sides in the final assault."⁷⁵ The tanks also pushed through the barbed wire, except one that tipped over in a ditch. Rutledge recalled that he and Wilbur maneuvered his tanks through the streets of Fedala but only saw action after they observed French pillboxes firing on American infantry. Inasmuch as Rutledge indicates little real infantry-armor cooperation, the tanks' fire materially aided the attack.⁷⁶ This early infantry-armor assault claimed five French killed, twenty-two prisoners, and captured three coastal artillery pieces. Later that day,

elements of A and C Companies took the surrender of French guns on the very tip of Cape Fedala.⁷⁷

The friendly naval shelling that disrupted A Company's formation at the Miramar Hotel also disrupted C Company as it moved through the southern part of the city toward a racetrack and an anti-aircraft battery. The company advanced through Fedala's streets to neutralize the battery. As they approached the objective, the company's executive officer and acting commander, 1st Lieutenant Virgil Smith, posted machine guns and mortars to fire on the French. Smith recorded that "the men seemed very anxious to get a crack at the enemy."⁷⁸ During the fight, a false surrender resulted in one lieutenant and sergeant wounded by the French. As Smith gave the signal for his machine guns and mortars to fire, the French surrendered for real, thus ending the fight for the anti-aircraft battery.

In contrast to later battles in Europe, Fedala was a small action. Two infantry companies and a platoon of tanks captured the city with relative ease and minimal loss. By the afternoon, it was firmly within American hands. One more small action on 10 November also revealed the stress on infantry in the Americans' doctrine.

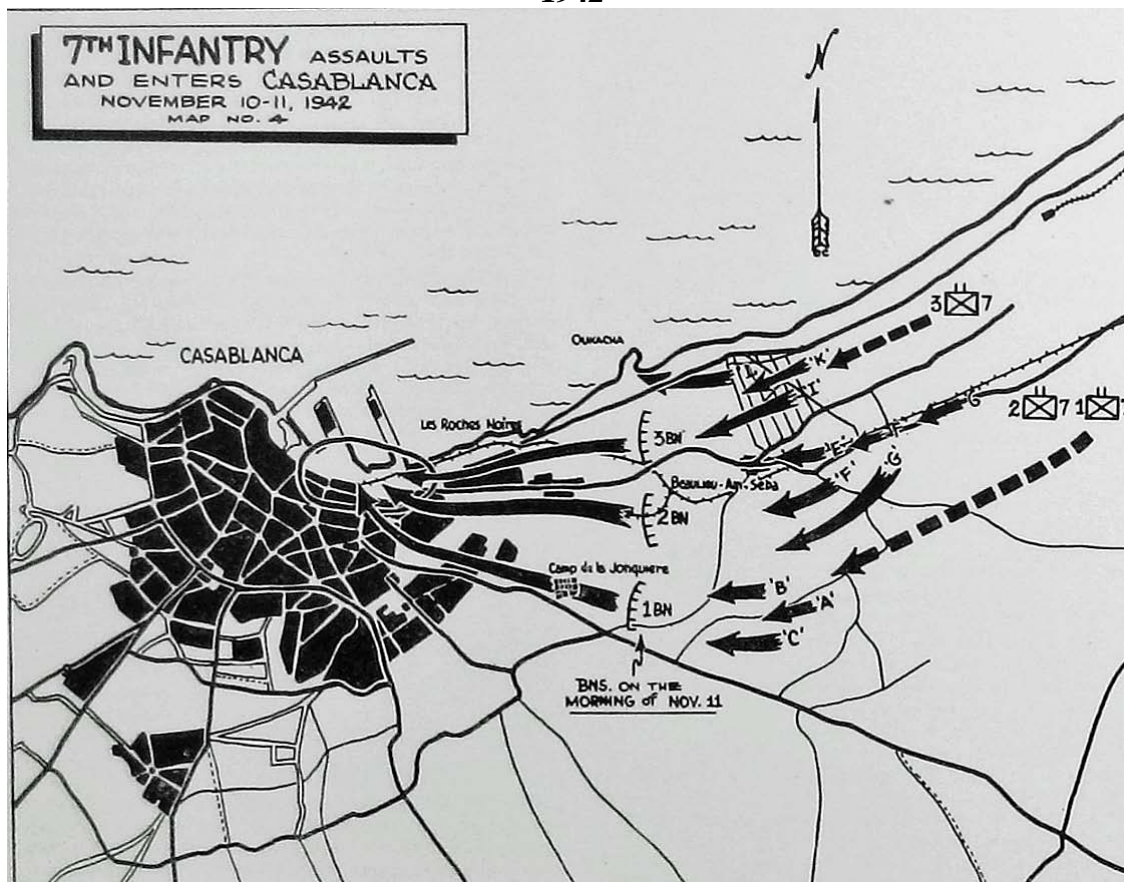
By 9 November, the men were quite tired from their march from the landing beaches. According to Captain L. J. Hruska, "loads which should have been carried by six men had to be carried by five and in some cases by four men."⁷⁹ Late on 10 November, the men of 2/7 were moving toward Casablanca without its self-propelled artillery or armor.⁸⁰ Hruska noted that they proceeded with a little daylight remaining, the advanced guard reported enemy activity to their front: the French had constructed a

roadblock “of overturned ore cars, defended by riflemen with automatic weapons” at Beaulieu-ain-Saba, at the outskirts of Casablanca.⁸¹ H Company’s Captain Gilbert St. Clair recalled that his company brought up the rear of the tired column. When the men “reached Ain Sebah, and it was still at least one hour before daylight; we were in the midst of houses, walled gardens, factories, and toward the front as well as on all sides, a few yards away, complete darkness.”⁸² Figure 3.3 shows regimental movements on 10 and 11 November 1942.⁸³

Artillery also began to fall on the Americans’ position on apparently prearranged lines giving that the impression to Company F’s Captain Curtis Tigar that “we had made contact with an enemy in well prepared positions, with ample artillery support.”⁸⁴ It became evident to Second Battalion commander Lieutenant Colonel Rafael L. Salzman that “the enemy had posted patrols and snipers in buildings and behind walls in advance of their [main line of resistance],” thus bringing fire from all directions.⁸⁵ The battalion remained stalled until morning came a few hours later but they did not wait to prepare an attack. Salzman ordered the battalion’s other companies to move to E’s left and south to flank the French position. As morning dawned, E Company riflemen were able to silence some of the artillery that had been firing on their position.⁸⁶ Early in this small action, the company commanders of E and F Companies were wounded and killed, respectively.

With morning’s light, the battalion launched a holding attack: E Company pinned the French to their position as the rest of the battalion attacked from E’s left but there was confusion within the company. The death of F Company’s commanding officer

Figure 3.3: 7th Infantry Assaults and Enters Casablanca, 10-11 November 1942



caused confusion and the lack of adequate communications did not help because the attacking units did not move in concert with one another due to confusion among the officers and malfunctioning radios.⁸⁷ Indeed, G Company reported that the company commander momentarily lost three-fourths of his company because he did not receive word of the leftward envelopment under the direction of the battalion commander.⁸⁸ Nevertheless, Salzmann's holding attack was sufficient to silence the roadblock in Beaulieu-Ain-Saba. One regimental history described that "small groups of American assault troops made their way forward as best they could. These men, primarily from F

and G Companies, were carrying out Salzman's [sic] flanking order. They covered one another and advanced in small bursts, killing enemy riflemen and machine gunners or forcing them to flee."⁸⁹

As 2/7 assaulted its suburb of Casablanca, Beaulieu-ain-Saba, so First Battalion assaulted Camp de la Jonquiere. The battalion's focus was on a barracks in Jonquiere, not the town itself. The attack did not include tanks only because they had not enough fuel. Despite the use of the supporting arms, the attack bogged down; by morning of 11 November, the battalion had not taken the barracks. On the evening of 10-11 November, the assistant division commander, Brigadier General William W. Eagles, ordered the 7th to continue the assault into Casablanca. The 15th Infantry and 67th Armored Infantry Regiments were to come alongside and join the 7th into Casablanca. The regiment's cannon company was to offer "general support" but the 756th Tank Battalion would "be initially in reserve, prepared to attack in the left of the Regimental zone." Artillery gunfire and dive bombers were to precede the infantry attack at 0700. What marked these plans was the low-level of infantry-tank cooperation for this attack into Casablanca. Before the attack could begin, the French in Casablanca surrendered the city.⁹⁰

After taking their objectives, the 1st and 3rd Infantry Divisions settled down for an uncertain future. Fate had different roles for them. The 1st moved rapidly eastward to fight the Germans in Tunisia's hilly terrain, gaining combat experience at Longstop Hill, Kasserine Pass, and El Guettar. The 3rd remained in Casablanca and endured what they called the "North African Interlude." After the collapse of the vaunted German

Afrika Korps in early 1943, the Allies turned their attention toward the Mediterranean island of Sicily.

Operation HUSKY

The decision to invade Sicily in July 1943 was much less controversial than that to invade North Africa in November 1942. Despite the concern of American military leaders that it would lead to an invasion of Italy, something they wanted to avoid, American and British leaders understood that it was necessary to gain control of the Mediterranean's shipping lanes while also diverting German forces from the Eastern Front before launching a legitimate Second Front in 1944.⁹¹ In mid-July, a second Anglo-American invasion force planned and executed another amphibious landing in Sicily.

Topographically and geographically, Sicily was more urban than North Africa. As the 3rd Infantry Division's new commanding general, Lucian K. Truscott, observed:

“The country seems to be predominantly agricultural, but at least 95% of the population lives in the towns and villages. These towns nearly all date from medieval days, houses are usually of stone, close packed beside narrow streets, and filled with unwashed women, children, and men living and playing in the filth of the barnyards which are the streets . . . Most of the towns and villages are built upon hill tops accessible by steep rocky roads.”⁹²

Both infantry divisions formed part of the Seventh U.S. Army and received pre-landing training in North Africa at the Fifth Army Invasion Training Center. The 30th Infantry's postwar history lists the training as including “night attacks, infiltration,

demolitions, destruction of armored vehicles and obstacles, air-ground communications, support fire and smoke, and supply.” The center included realistic exercises such as attacks on pillboxes, attacking enemy tanks, street fighting, and assaulting enemy defenses.⁹³ These divisions received street fighting training but there is little description of what it included. Don Whitehead, correspondent for the Associated Press, recorded that the center “schooled the troops in street fighting and house-to-house fighting in a little shantytown build for the purpose.”⁹⁴ The 30th Infantry held exercises that included “Dummy houses [that] were constructed to provide training in street fighting, and the activities of teams were timed so closely that soldiers advanced through the covering fire of their own supporting elements in perfect confidence.”⁹⁵

The center also taught teams of twelve soldiers to assault isolated buildings. Doctrine here harkened to Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall’s holding attack whereby support and flanking forces kept a strong fire on the building or house, allowing the entry and assault teams to approach as well as gun down anyone who tried to escape. The entry team of two riflemen forced entry into the building through a window or door and the assault team of three men assaulted immediately afterwards.⁹⁶ The army was improving its training methods and showed that it understood that combat would encompass a wider array of environments. Indeed, as it planned the next campaign, the 3rd Division created a special “street fighting unit,” but its postwar history did not specify details of that unit.⁹⁷

An important element of learning how to conduct street fighting included how much these three infantry divisions combined its combat arms, that is, its organic

infantry, artillery, reconnaissance, and engineers with attached tanks, tank destroyers, and any supporting airpower, to capture Europe's towns and cities. According to the description from the Invasion Training Center, there were few infantry-tank-artillery exercises. Inasmuch as the 1st Infantry Division landed on its beaches with the light tanks of the 70th Tank Battalion, it is uncertain whether they trained together before landing in Sicily. The 3rd Infantry Division had little to no training with armor.

Therefore, combined-arms warfare was not high on these divisions' list of priorities. In fact, the 3rd Infantry Division landed on Sicily without any armor support whatsoever. Their records show that tanks were not used by the 3rd until quite late in the campaign. Nor is there any indication that division leaders asked for armor but never received it. Truscott's memoir, for example, devotes more pages relating how he convinced his naval counterpart to load transport mules aboard his naval vessel than any struggle to get a tank battalion to accompany his division.⁹⁸ A close look at the 7th Infantry's training shows that, quite possibly, no one considered the need for armor-infantry-artillery cooperation within this division. By the last week of May 1943, the regiment endured close-order drill, rigorous physical conditioning, exercises in assaulting pillboxes, and several night attack problems. None of these involved tanks.⁹⁹ The rigorous physical conditioning likely included what the men dubbed the "Truscott Trot": covering five miles an hour for the first hour, four miles an hour for the next two hours, and three and one-half miles an hour until they had marched 30 miles.¹⁰⁰ Inasmuch as the army was beginning to provide its men with more realistic training, it still had room for improvement.

On 10 July 1943, Patton's Seventh U.S. Army landed the 3rd, 1st, and 45th Infantry Divisions on the southern side of Sicily. Figure 3.4 shows the Allies' invasion of Sicily.¹⁰¹ 3rd Division units disembarked astride the small port city of Licata on the Seventh Army's left flank. The 1st came ashore in the middle, just east of the small port at Gela, and the 45th landed near Scoglitti further to the east. Patton commanded the American contingent but British Field Marshal Sir Harold Alexander commanded the combined Anglo-American invasion. It would soon become clear that Alexander only intended to use the Americans to guard the British left flank while Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery's Eighth Army made the principal drive up the island's eastern side to capture Messina. This decision affected Patton's command and leadership during the campaign.

1st Infantry Division

The Big Red One captured many towns along its line of advance through Sicily. However, it encountered little resistance inside most of them as German units continually withdrew toward Messina in the island's northeastern corner and the Italian Army simply collapsed and surrendered. There was no action similar to St. Cloud and there was no combat in these towns of the sort they would face on mainland Europe from 1944 to 1945. However, the division could not have known that and had to plan as if they would fight for each town. Consequently, it is worthwhile to examine how the 1st Infantry Division maneuvered within this environment, assuming that unsure reality. Its largest urban operation to date would be the division's costliest engagement in the Sicily campaign: the battle for Troina from 31 July to 6 August. That battle showed

Figure 3.4: The Final Landing Plan



important shifts in attitudes since the small fight for St. Cloud the previous November.

The 1st Division landed east of Gela on 10 July and spent the first three days fending off intense Axis armored counterattacks. Once the division secured the beachhead, it moved northward into the hilly terrain that marks most of Sicily. By 13 July, a wartime history reported, the Italians and Germans “were in general retreat, and from that time on Italian troops fought indifferently and deserted in large numbers when the opportunity was present. However, Germans fought desperate rear-guard actions with definite orders to hold to the last man.”¹⁰²

By 16 July, the town of Barrafranca became a target for the 26th Infantry. Important in capturing Barrafranca was the presence of supporting American tanks.

Unlike the 3rd Infantry Division, elements of the 1st had tanks alongside them throughout much of this campaign. The Germans took a Barrafranca that was geographically built for fortification and added to it by guarding the approaches.¹⁰³ The topography was such that the 26th Infantry used its rifle battalions and the light tanks of the 70th Tank Battalion to take the hills and maneuver the Germans out of Barrafranca. Late on 15 July, the 26th Infantry encountered stiff armored resistance for these hilltop positions around the town as German tanks nearly overran American infantry positions.¹⁰⁴ During the fighting on 16 July, withdrawing American positions drew the Germans into a pursuit and allowed the American artillery to pound the German advance while “tanks were used with reckless abandon as they plunged down the hills and attempted a major breakthrough.”¹⁰⁵

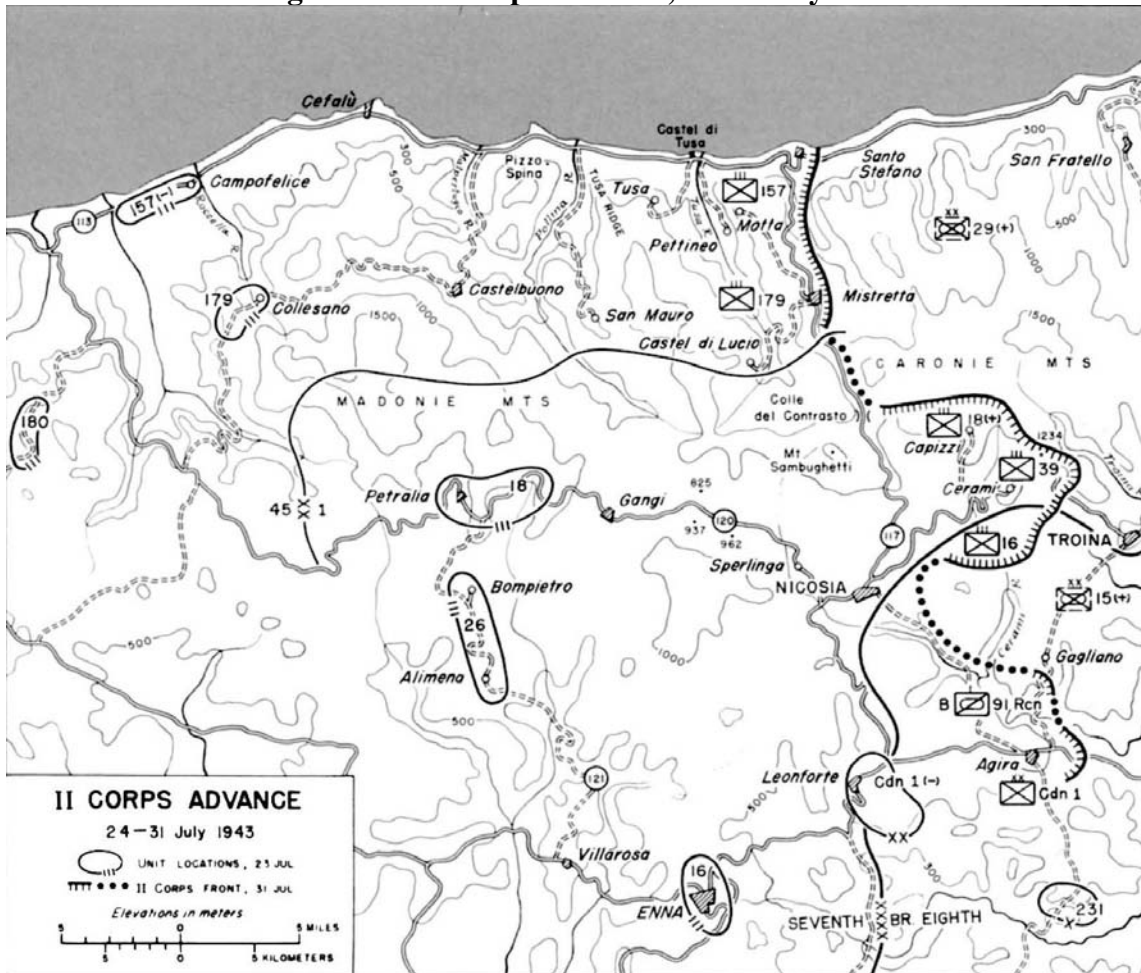
The battalions reorganized themselves on the afternoon of the 16th and pushed toward Barrafranca but the Germans had withdrawn. The 70th Tank Battalion entered Barrafranca in the early evening while the 26th redirected its efforts to the west.¹⁰⁶ Inasmuch as there was no urban combat proper in this small battle, it helped the 1st Division push towards Caltanissetta, a more important divisional goal. Further, this action against Barrafranca showed infantry working alongside armor, helping realize armor’s necessity in these fights.

These tanks remained with the 26th Infantry as the infantry pushed toward Alimena and Bompietro days later. On 19 July, the regiment targeted Alimena, making the city early on Wednesday, 21 July. Second and Third Battalions took the hills adjacent to the town; 2/26 then moved on the town itself. When the battalion noticed

German armor, it called for the 70th Tank Battalion but advanced without them when the German tanks withdrew. Tanks were more instrumental as First and Third Battalions occupied adjacent hills. The division's operational diary recorded that by 0524 hours, 2/26 "was in the outskirts of Alimena and receiving small arms and mortar fire."¹⁰⁷ By 0830, the regiment had been fighting for approximately five hours in Alimena and a considerable amount of sniping remained in the town by 1530.¹⁰⁸ The 26th Infantry daily report stated that 2/26 handled this sniper opposition by proceeding "street by street, almost house by house, to eliminate the points of opposition . . . it was a slow process." Tanks eventually entered Alimena to help clean out the snipers as the regiment shifted its focus to Bompietro.¹⁰⁹ Most prisoners were Italians as the Germans withdrew the day before on the 20th.¹¹⁰ Figure 3.5 shows the area of Sicily in which this fighting occurred.¹¹¹

The Germans had blown the bridges across rivers toward Bompietro, stalling the American advance. Nevertheless, on 21 to 22 July, soldiers from the 26th Infantry closely worked with tanks in a battle that also included air support and the division's artillery. Men from 1/26 and tanks from the 70th Tank Battalion moved north toward Bompietro. Armor moved ahead of the infantry toward Bompietro until German anti-tank fire stalled the advance. By 0800, the battalion commander reported that "we are having one hell of a fight around Bompietro and need all support we can get."¹¹² By 0900, the infantry called for a bombing mission on Bompietro but higher commands initially denied their requests because "Gen Bradley says there will be no bombing of cities."¹¹³ Bombers dropped ordnance by 0940, tragically including some

Figure 3.5: II Corps Advance, 24-31 July 1943



that fell on American soldiers and tanks.¹¹⁴ The 70th Tank Battalion suffered another friendly-fire incident from American bombers at 1300.¹¹⁵ These accidents, along with the heavy German resistance, stalled the advance until 1800 when infantry, tank, and artillery officers conceived a new plan. At 1800, division and corps artillery laid an intense barrage on and around Bompietro. The tanks and infantry followed the barrage with the tanks moving into the town and the infantry to the high ground north of the town. The 26th Infantry's Third Battalion accompanied the tanks into Bompietro to

clear the town of snipers.¹¹⁶ When the new attack began, the 26th Infantry took its objectives and the tanks successfully moved into the town. The 70th Tank Battalion recorded that it faced “very heavy resistance was . . . in the town during the attack.”¹¹⁷ As 3/26 cleared Bompietro of snipers, the 18th Infantry moved north to take Petralia. The push for Bompietro began at 0100 hours and the Americans occupied it by 1900 that evening.

The fighting during the last week of July revealed how the enemy’s defense influenced urban operations. Contextually, after the 26th Infantry took Bompietro and Alimena, the 18th Infantry and 70th Tank Battalion occupied Petralia. The division then turned toward the east as the 45th Infantry Division, and later the 3rd Infantry Division, drove eastward along the northern coastal highway near the 1st Division’s left flank. Following the 16th Infantry for the last week of July 1943 showed a quickly moving American force pursuing an equally quickly withdrawing German defense to Messina in the northeast corner of the island as they evacuated from the island.

On Friday, 23 July, combat patrols from the 16th entered Villadora after receiving word from civilians of a German presence there. The regiment recorded that the patrol reached the outskirts by mid-afternoon, captured nine Germans, and “engaged in a fire fight with other enemy in the town. At dusk the patrol returned after clearing the town of enemy.”¹¹⁸ By nightfall, the patrol occupied Villadora. In the last days of July, the regiment spearheaded the move east on Highway 120. Most of the fighting on 24 and 25 July focused on the hills around Sperlinga but it was bitter as the Germans reluctantly lost their grip on those terrain features and German artillery took a heavy toll

on the Americans. As the 1st Division moved eastward, fighting from hill to hill, Germans in Sperlinga and Nicosia were in danger of being trapped and withdrew. The division fought throughout 27 July but elements of the 16th Infantry entered both towns on the morning of 28 July with no opposition. The Germans, known for their fearsome rear guard fighting, were gone.¹¹⁹ When the 9th Infantry Division's 39th Infantry Regiment walked into Cerami unopposed on 31 July, the new divisional target became Troina.

The fight for the hilltop town of Troina became the 1st Infantry Division's most important and costliest victory during the Sicily Campaign. The Americans targeted Troina as a key point in the German "Etna Line," a defensive line anchored on Mt. Etna, the island's most prominent terrain feature. The Etna Line was significant to the Germans as part of their staged withdrawal plans to Italy; Mason recorded that Troina was vital to that Etna position, because it "sat astride the main roads to Messina."¹²⁰

Regardless of its strategic location, the division initially expected the main fight would come further east at Randazzo and that Troina would not require much effort. At a regimental meeting on 1 August, 26th Infantry officers learned that the Germans in Troina were "a delaying force—a force that is not too large. They have a small [amount] of [artillery]—few 81 mm's."¹²¹ The mistaken belief that a few demoralized German soldiers garrisoned Troina and that it would fall easily emanated from divisional and corps intelligence officers, not the 26th Infantry.¹²² Indeed, the 70th Tank Battalion received orders to detach from the 1st Division, thus removing any armor support during this battle.¹²³ Instead, the Germans fortified themselves on the hills north, south, and

west of Troina. The enemy used the town to observe the Americans' movements as well as for communication and supply.¹²⁴ According to one division staff officer, the general withdrawal "had welded [the Germans] into a compact defense perimeter; they had an excellent field of fire on any approaching soldiers; they had the added advantage of protective stone buildings in the town."¹²⁵ As a hilltop city, Troina had a commanding view of the immediate area. The Germans may have marched away from Sperlinga and Nicosia but they refused to surrender Troina without a fight.

What became a costly and bitter battle focused primarily on the hills around and the approaches to the town.¹²⁶ Given Troina's dominating elevation and *Wehrmacht* defenses, the Germans successfully prevented the 16th, 18th, and 26th Infantry Regiments along with the attached 39th Infantry Regiment and North African Goums from coming near the town for a week.¹²⁷ A World War II infantry division like the Big Red One included four artillery battalions, each with four batteries, that worked alongside the division's infantry regiments. By the end of the battle, according to one staff officer, seventeen batteries eventually supported the infantry attacks on Troina and its surrounding heights. Moreover, waves of American bombers bombed Troina from the air throughout this battle. In North Africa, General Allen had refused to bomb French citizens during the attacks on St. Cloud the previous November, but now he unleashed American artillery and air power on Troina, regardless of the noncombatants in the town. The Americans were learning to put prewar ethical concerns aside to accomplish their urban objectives with fewer casualties among their soldiers.

If St. Cloud developed into a grudge match for the 18th Infantry commander Colonel Greer, then Troina certainly became one for General Allen. Operations for Troina began in earnest on 31 July. Fighting for the surrounding hills raged until 5 August between German and American infantry and artillery. On the evening of 5-6 August, the Germans, having their positions threatened from the encroaching American units, withdrew from Troina. A patrol from the 16th Infantry entered Troina unopposed on the morning of 6 August to see a destroyed town. Although it was never the objective of the artillerists to destroy the town itself, they nearly did so.¹²⁸ Combat reporter Don Whitehead accompanied an American patrol into Troina and saw firsthand what the Sicilians endured for seven long days as the Germans would not permit them to leave once the battle opened. One room in the city's cathedral contained "the stench of human excrement and hundreds of sweating bodies[, which] was sickening."¹²⁹ One battalion commander was quoted as saying: "I never wanted to capture a town more than this in my life. But now . . . ' [sic] He made a helpless gesture."¹³⁰ No doubt, the condition of towns like Troina and civilians' miseries would become the norm throughout World War II. For its part, the exhausted 1st Infantry Division had fought for nearly five weeks straight. The 9th Infantry Division took its place as the Big Red One enjoyed a long-deserved rest a few days later.

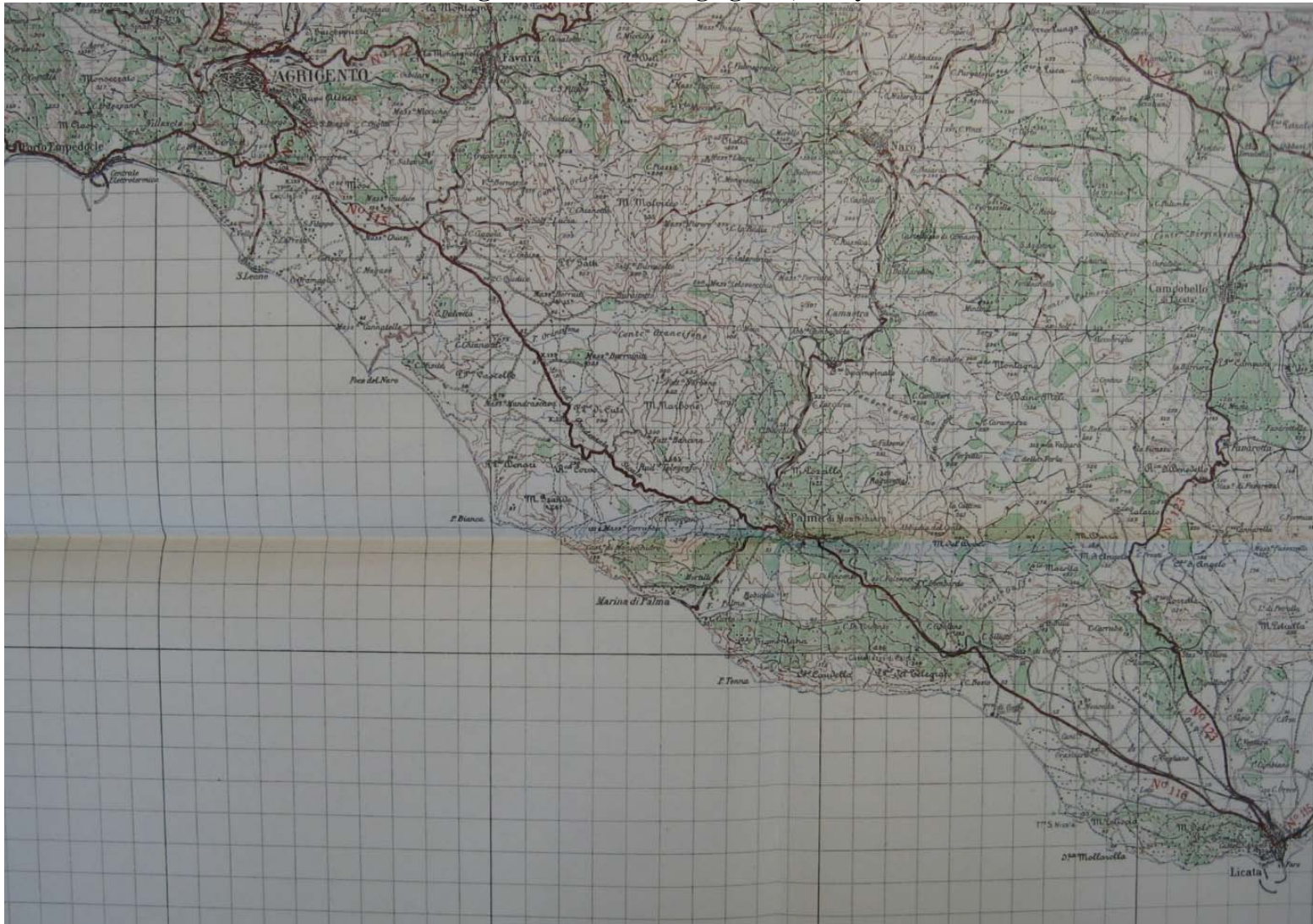
3rd Infantry Division

The 3rd Infantry Division landing at Licata went more smoothly than the 1st Division's at Gela, namely because the 3rd Division did not face the strong counterattacks that the Big Red One endured. The 7th Infantry Regiment landed west of

Licata, the 15th Infantry disembarked with the 3rd Ranger Battalion astride the small port city, and the 30th Infantry landed to the east. Elements of the 15th Infantry along with the Rangers captured Licata with relative ease by 1130.¹³¹ Because there was no Axis counterthrust, the division moved quickly from the beachhead “under the influence of the personalities of two hell-for-leather personalities, one the ex-cavalryman [division commanding general Lucian] Truscott, the other the ex-tanker [Seventh Army commanding general George] Patton.”¹³² Figure 3.6 shows the Licata-Agrigento region of Sicily, where the division fought for the first several days.¹³³

In the early hours of D+1, 11 July, the 7th Infantry moved west to capture Palma di Montechiaro. These early days of the invasion also witnessed probably the heaviest resistance from Italian soldiers. According to Third Battalions’ commander, Lieutenant Colonel John Heintges, Palma “sat up on a hill and looked right down our lines.”¹³⁴ Heintges remembered that the Italians had good positions east and south of Palma but used deception to kill soldiers of the 7th Infantry. One defensive position would “surrender,” allowing Axis machine guns to fire on Americans who went to take the surrender. Heintges recalled having “a hell of a lot of casualties because of these ruses that they pulled on us.”¹³⁵ The mayor of Palma di Montechiaro approached the 7th Infantry and surrendered the town to Colonel Heintges; at that point, Heintges recalled seeing white flags appearing in the town’s houses. Heintges accepted the surrender, sending young Lieutenant Frank Petrozell and a sergeant to arrange the surrender terms in the town itself. As the two men entered the town, the white flags disappeared and Heintges heard “a lot of machine gun fire and some explosions that sounded possibly

Figure 3.6: Licata-Agrigento, Sicily



like hand grenades or bazooka type sounds.”¹³⁶ The Italians had ambushed Petrozell and his sergeant. Angry and feeling responsible for the likely death of his two men, Heintges grabbed ten or twelve soldiers, leading the patrol into the town from a different direction.¹³⁷ The patrol hunted down the ambushers, unintentionally killing a few civilians who happened to be in the same area as the Italian soldiers firing on the Americans.¹³⁸ The patrol found the sergeant and the mayor dead in the street but the lieutenant escaped unhurt. The mayor had tried to surrender the town but the Italian soldiers in the town did not agree with his initiative.

By now, 3/7 entered the town, engaged the Italians in street fighting, and pushed them out of Palma. Approximately two hours later, the Americans forced the last of the Italians out of the town.¹³⁹ Palma di Montechiaro was in American hands by 1100 but Heintges positioned his battalion in prepared defensive positions to the west and south of Palma.¹⁴⁰ Heintges described the enemy as fanatical Italian fascists, men dedicated to Italian dictator Benito Mussolini and to repulsing the American invasion.¹⁴¹ Aside from these fanatical soldiers, that the Italians also reinforced the Palma garrison and showed a rare Italian fighting spirit to deny the town from American occupation.¹⁴²

In many ways, and on several levels, the campaign in Sicily revealed the stresses and strains typical in coalition warfare. In this case, the British ground commander, Field Marshal Alexander, relegated the Americans to merely support the glacially advancing British Eighth Army, commanded by Field Marshal Montgomery, along the eastern coast of the island. Patton, ever the aggressive army commander, found a way around this support role when he received permission from Alexander to perform a

“reconnaissance in force” against Agrigento, approximately twenty miles west of Palma di Montechiaro. As one historian put it: “Like a pushy salesman who only needs a slightly opened door to force his way inside, Patton seized on Alexander’s ‘reconnaissance in force’ order as an excuse to bag all of western Sicily.”¹⁴³ Taking Agrigento, a hilltop city of 34,000 people, would also give Patton the port at Porto Empedocle as well as an important road junction, which would be critical in capturing western Sicily, thus permitting him to set his sights on the all-important city of Palermo on the northern coast.¹⁴⁴ After taking Palermo, Patton could drive eastward to Messina along the northern coastal highway.

The 3rd Division’s 7th Infantry Regiment received permission on 14 July to capture Agrigento. One division staff officer remembered that General Truscott gave Colonel Harry B. Sherman “a company of tanks, tank destroyers, and other supporting troops” but the record does not indicate that any armored units accompanied the 7th Infantry to Agrigento.¹⁴⁵ From a previous reconnaissance of Agrigento, the 7th Infantry knew it was unwise to attack the city frontally.¹⁴⁶ Two battalions fell upon Agrigento from two different directions: 2/7 captured the town of Favara and moved from the northeast while 1/7 approached from the southeast. On 15 to 16 July, the regiment advanced slowly against stubborn Italian infantry and heavy artillery. The Americans, however, enjoyed their plentiful artillery support as well as naval guns firing from offshore. For example, an Italian attempt to reinforce the Agrigento garrison resulted in 148 American guns destroying the convoy. First Battalion moved on Agrigento by evening of the 16th. The regimental history recorded that the battalion stormed the city

despite stubborn Italian resistance and soon engaged in “vigorous street fighting wherever the advances of its troops were challenged.”¹⁴⁷ And those men faced resistance: when an 81-mm mortar crew called back for more ammunition, the driver of a jeep carrying the ammunition went missing. An aidman left his place of “comparative safety . . . and drove the ammunition vehicle up the street to the mortar position in the midst of heavy sniper fire.”¹⁴⁸ Ultimately, nearly 3,000 Italian soldiers surrendered that night and Agrigento was declared in American hands by 0030 on the morning of 17 July. Seven days into the invasion and elements of the 7th Infantry had already fought two small urban fights.

The regiment got what little rest it could that night. The next morning, it began a northward movement to take the city of Palermo. For the next five days, the division marched over one hundred miles toward Palermo in a military feat of arms (and feet) comparable to General Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson’s Confederate “Foot Cavalry” of the American Civil War. The “Truscott Trot” finally came to use. The regiments advanced on foot over tough mountainous terrain and captured several towns along the way, overcoming stout German and crumbling Italian resistance along the way. Thirst and heat became as much the enemy as the Axis. The 15th Infantry had a small clash for Serradifalco and the 30th a brisk fight for San Stefano di Quisquina, both occurring without any armor support. While the 1st Infantry Division employed tanks outside Barrafranca, the 3rd maintained its distinct infantry nature.

Devoid of Germans, division patrols entered Palermo ahead of General Patton’s prized 2nd Armored Division on 22 July. For the next week, the division policed the

city, leaving it by 31 July. The division relieved the 45th Infantry Division along the northern coastal highway and became the left flank of the Seventh Army's II Corps. As the division fought and moved along this road, the Germans fell back toward Messina where they were evacuating from the island. The Germans planted thousands of anti-personnel mines in their wake. The 1st and 3rd Infantry Divisions discovered together that German soldiers were as good at rear-guard, delaying actions as they were at offensive operations. During this time, fighting occurred around towns such as San Fratello, Sant Agata, and Brolo but rarely for those towns. However, when 3/15 entered San Fratello on 8 August, there was "house-to-house fighting, [as the Americans] fought through the town to contact elements of Co. L, 30th Infantry."¹⁴⁹ For the most part, the Germans found the mountainous terrain more to their advantage for defense so these Sicilian towns were not defended so heavily. During this eastward movement to Messina, the 3rd Infantry Division effected two "end-runs," whereby 2/30 made amphibious landings behind German lines to cut off their retreat. These end-runs were never as effective as division command hoped and, in the second one attempted, almost led to the destruction of the entire battalion. However, during these end-runs in early August, the division finally began to attach tanks to its infantry units.¹⁵⁰

As this fighting attested, the closer the Americans came to Messina, the harder the Germans fought to give themselves a chance to leave Sicily. The 7th Infantry experienced one last small urban battle as they reached Spadafora on 15 August. First Battalion marched along Highway 113, the northern coastal road, and C Company had nearly entered Spadafora when they fell under observed German artillery fire. This

shelling devastated the company and killed the company commander as he directed his men to cover from the enemy fire. As darkness approached, the company waited and then entered the town at night. An advance guard apprehensively filed into the town. Upon entering, a German tank and four machine guns opened fire, obliterating one man. The others jumped inside nearby buildings for cover. This strongly defended German roadblock was “supported thus by automatic weapons, tank, mortar and artillery fire [that] exacted heavy casualties on the company.” As C Company became engaged in a seemingly one-sided fight within the town, A and B Companies took positions on higher ground south of Spadafora, and attempted to envelop the Germans from the south. This envelopment sufficiently encouraged the Germans to withdraw from the town altogether. By 0035 of 16 August, Spadafora was in American hands. Despite this unexpectedly violent, albeit brief, fire fight, the battalion moved eastward, capturing Rometta Station by 0430 and stayed there for the night.¹⁵¹ In assessing the last weeks of fighting, a regimental report commended 1/7 for “determination and aggressiveness in advancing at night against stubborn enemy resistance” in Spadafora as well as for successfully “confront[ing] the problems of movement through a defended urban area.”¹⁵²

The 7th Infantry took the honor of winning the Patton-Montgomery “race” to Messina. During the early hours of 17 August, the regiment marched into an empty Messina, thus signaling the end of the six-week long Sicily campaign. All that remained now was for the Allies to make the next move: either build up for the invasion of the Continent or pursue the Axis into Italy. Until then, the 1st and 3rd Infantry Divisions rested, rehabilitated, and trained for the next operation.

Conclusion

The 16th Infantry's history effectively summed up the Sicilian campaign as "strictly an infantry war." "Up and down mountains," the history continues, "across ravines, rivers, and draws, over terrain which could be negotiated only on foot, the infantry had borne out the brunt of the burden."¹⁵³ According to another 16th Infantry account: "the fighting was sporadic, but bitter, and consisted mostly of skirmishes for road centers."¹⁵⁴ As a pattern, this early urban fighting in North Africa and Sicily turned out to be largely infantry-based and without the aid of armor, tank destroyers, or close air support. It also involved small-unit actions, being primarily rifle companies and battalions. Troina was the only urban operation that involved an entire division.

St. Cloud reflected this dependence on infantry; the only combat support available was artillery. However, General Allen decided not to let divisional artillery loose upon the town. While his reasons were both noble and pragmatic, he had few qualms unleashing artillery and airpower on Troina. Nevertheless, the 18th Infantry used no armor, neither tank destroyers nor tanks, in St. Cloud.

This same pattern emerged as well for the 7th Infantry in Fedala. Armor had a role in the capture of Fedala mostly because it happened to appear. However, pre-landing plans and orders did not include armor. Tanks made an appearance because Colonel William Wilbur, who had no connection to the 7th Infantry but seeing their need for armored help, gathered a platoon of light tanks for the attack into Fedala. As Lieutenant Rutledge of the 756th Tank Battalion indicated, he maneuvered his tank platoon through Fedala without the aid or cooperation of any infantrymen.¹⁵⁵ Rutledge

was fortunate not to have faced a more effective enemy who understood the vulnerabilities of armor in a city. The Americans would learn that infantry and armor must work in close concert in an urban environment; tanks and tank destroyers remained easy targets to any number of anti-tank weapons, rockets, or mines if not protected by infantry. Early in the war, the infantry had a tendency to use tanks like they might a crew-served weapon such as the bazooka or towed anti-tank gun, but, as Fedala showed, not always in close support. Sometimes tanks and tank destroyers were not included in operations orders.¹⁵⁶ Just because the Americans had armor available did not mean that they used them well or effectively. Facing more defended cities, American soldiers grew to understand and appreciate the role of armor in the urban environment.

As the fighting around Barrafranca attested, the 1st Infantry Division saw the value of armored support in Sicily. Records indicate that tanks accompanied the 1st more frequently in Sicily than they did the 3rd. Still, it fell mostly upon the infantry rather than upon armor to take these towns. The probable reason for this difference is because men of the 1st Infantry Division worked with tanks during the fighting in Tunisia whereas the men of the 3rd garrisoned Casablanca and, therefore, could not observe firsthand the need for tank-infantry cooperation. Later combat up the Italian boot forced the 3rd Division to change its views regarding armor.

Both North Africa and Sicily also showed the influence defenders have on urban combat. There was not as much fighting in Sicily as there might have been because the Germans, in part, kept breaking contact and the Italians preferred to surrender. For example, the 1st Division's G-2 operations report recorded that when Italian soldiers

retreated before the attacking American Rangers in Butera, they fled toward Mazzarino. Their fear “panicked the garrison at Mazzarino and the garrison there withdrew to Piazza-Armerina [sic], leaving Mazzarino undefended. As a result, the 26th Infantry occupied Mazzarino without incident.”¹⁵⁷ The Italians did not have their heart in these battles and responded accordingly, thus facilitating in the Americans taking these hilltop cities and towns with deceptive ease. In stark contrast, the spirited defense of St. Cloud and Troina showed how difficult it could be to capture a town, even if intelligence rated the defenders as less than effective.

Lastly, both campaigns showed how important villages, towns, and cities figured in Allied strategy. Inasmuch as General Eisenhower preferred to destroy the German Army, he needed to capture urban locations, because many of these locations were “road centers.”¹⁵⁸ While he could later afford to bypass places like Paris (despite its political and moral influence on the Free French forces), capturing Casablanca and Oran meant seizing Fedala and St. Cloud. Oran, Casablanca, and Algiers in Operation TORCH as well as Licata, Gela, and Scoglitti in Operation HUSKY were important preliminary targets for Allied strategy because these were ports. These ports were vital for the Allies to supply their armed forces and sustain their offensive drives against the Germans. The failure of the Allies to secure a significant port in the invasion of Europe in mid-1944 directly affected the Allied drive through the Continent. As the Allies drove inland after securing the beachheads, towns and cities continued to remain significant. Breaking the Etna Line meant taking Troina first. There simply was no other way. There was no combat in Troina but its German defense and strategic location necessitated its capture,

requiring a reinforced infantry division as well as massed artillery and aerial bombardment to capture it after a week of intense combat. Consequently, the Allies should have anticipated capturing many more villages, towns, and cities, and should have been more concerned about Axis troops defending those places.

To this end, the town fighting in Operations TORCH and HUSKY served as a warning for the fighting to come. Germans did not resist every town, especially through mid- to late-1944 as the Allies drove the Germans from France to Germany. As St. Cloud and Troina showed when the enemy decided to defend an urban locale, the Americans should have realized that the Axis could make urban operations and urban combat costly and painful. It was to the Americans' advantage to learn both how to do just that as well as how best to combine their arms to maximize that effort.

Endnotes

¹ See, for example, Alfred Vagts, "Stalingrad: City Into Fortress," *Infantry Journal* LII, #1 (January 1943): 44-5; Lieutenant General V. I. Chuykov, "Street Fighting Tactics," *Infantry Journal* LII, #6 (December 1943): 60-3.

² George F. Howe, *Northwest Africa: Seizing the Initiative in the West* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1957), 13-15. See also, Douglas Porch, *The Path to Victory: The Mediterranean Theater in World War II* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2004).

³ Howe, *Northwest Africa*, 22-5.

⁴ Howe, *Northwest Africa*, 47.

⁵ Howe, *Northwest Africa*, Map IV.

⁶ Howe, *Northwest Africa*, 193.

- ⁷ James Scott Wheeler, *The Big Red One: America's Legendary 1st Infantry Division from World War I to Desert Storm* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2007), 144.
- ⁸ A brief word about World War II military organization: An infantry division usually contained three infantry regiments and each regiment had three battalions. Each battalion was composed of four companies: three rifle companies and one heavy weapons company. First Battalion included Companies A, B, C, and D (D Company was the heavy weapons company); Second Battalion had Companies E, F, G, and H (H Company being the heavy weapons company); Third Battalion consisted of Companies I, K, L, and M (M was the heavy weapons company).
- ⁹ Wheeler, *Big Red One*, 145.
- ¹⁰ The account is based on Captain V. L. Ruwet, "Report of Operations of Company 'G,' 26th Infantry at Oran, Algeria Covering Period November 8 to November 10, 1942," n.d., DRL.
- ¹¹ Wheeler, *Big Red One*, 146.
- ¹² "Reports After Action Against the Enemy," 21 November 1942, 1, File 301-INF(16)-0.3, Box 5232, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹³ Howe, *Northwest Africa*, 208-9; Steven E. Clay, *Blood and Sacrifice: The History of the 16th Infantry Regiment from the Civil War Through the Gulf War* (Wheaton, IL: Cantigny First Division Foundation, 2001), 156.
- ¹⁴ Robert W. Baumer, *American Iliad: The 18th Infantry Regiment in World War II* (Bedford, PA: Aberjona Press, 2004), 25-6.
- ¹⁵ Howe, *Northwest Africa*, 208 estimates 3,500 civilians; Allen N. Towne asserts 4,000 in Allen N. Towne, *Doctor Danger Forward: A World War II Memoir of a Combat Medical Aidman, First Infantry Division* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Co., 2000), 20.
- ¹⁶ Howe, *Northwest Africa*, 208; Rick Atkinson *An Army at Dawn: The War in North Africa, 1942-1943* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 2002), 125; Wheeler, *The Big Red One*, 147.
- ¹⁷ Intelligence report quoted in Atkinson, *Army at Dawn*, 125.
- ¹⁸ Howe, *Northwest Africa*, 208; Wheeler, *Big Red One*, 147.

- ¹⁹ H. R. Knickerbocker, et al, ed., *Danger Forward: The Story of the First Division in World War II* (Atlanta: A. Love Enterprises, 1947; reprint, Nashville, TN: Battery Press, 2002), 27.
- ²⁰ Baumer, *American Iliad*, 28.
- ²¹ Stanhope B. Mason, "Reminiscences and Anecdotes of World War II," 1988 (Stanhope Mason Papers, MRC), 28.
- ²² Baumer, *American Iliad*, 29. Baumer suggests that St. Cloud was hastily defended. Another source indicated that the town's defense was "strongly organized." Whatever the nature of the defense, it stalled the division's advance and became quite a thorn in General Allen's side for a short while. Captain Alfred E. Koenig, "Aggressive, Hard-Hitting Leadership Is the One Major Factor in Overcoming the Loss of the Element of Surprise in Battle" (Fort Benning, GA: Advanced Infantry Officers Course, 1949-1950), 17.
- ²³ Captain Edward W. McGregor, "Battle Record of the 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry," 12 May 1944 (Stanhope Mason Papers, MRC), 1.
- ²⁴ McGregor, "Battle Record of the 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry," 1; Baumer, *American Iliad*, 29.
- ²⁵ Baumer, *American Iliad*, 29-30.
- ²⁶ Malcolm Marshall, ed., *Proud Americans: Men of the 32nd Field Artillery Battalion in Action, World War II, As Part of the 18th Regimental Combat Team, 1st U. S. Infantry Division* (New London: self-published, 1994), 28.
- ²⁷ Mason, "Reminiscences and Anecdotes of World War II," 29.
- ²⁸ 1st Lieutenant J. P. Gurka, "Battle History of 3rd Battalion, 18th Infantry," 12 May 1944 (Stanhope Mason Papers, MRC), 1.
- ²⁹ Quoted in Baumer, *American Iliad*, 34.
- ³⁰ Marshall, *Proud Americans*, 25-6.
- ³¹ Marshall, *Proud Americans*, 28. Lieutenant Edward McGregor recalled the assault occurred at 1600 in Marshall, *Proud Americans*, 28. Elsewhere he said it began at 1630 hours in McGregor, "Battle Record of the 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry," 1, Stanhope Mason Papers. Frank Parr claimed it was at 1530 hours in Frank S. Parr,

“Regimental War Time History,” 1951 (Stanhope Mason Papers, MRC), 10.
Regardless of time, it was late afternoon or early evening.

- ³² Marshall, *Proud Americans*, 28-9.
- ³³ Marshall, *Proud Americans*, 29; Baumer, *American Iliad*, 35.
- ³⁴ Marshall, *Proud Americans*, 29.
- ³⁵ Marshall, *Proud Americans*, 29.
- ³⁶ Marshall, *Proud Americans*, 29.
- ³⁷ 32nd Field Artillery Battalion Battle Report, 23 November 1942, 1, File 301-FA(32)-0, Box 5212, RG 407, Entry 427, NA; Frank Greer, “Battle of Oran, Combat Team 18,” 19 November 1942, 3, File 301-INF(18)-0.3, Box 5253, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ³⁸ “History, Company K,” n.d., 1, File 301-INF(16)9-0.1, Box 5249, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ³⁹ Greer, “Battle of Oran, Combat Team 18,” 3, RG 407, Entry 427, NA; McGregor, “Battle Record of the 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry,” 2, Stanhope Mason Papers.
- ⁴⁰ Clement van Wagoner quoted in Baumer, *American Iliad*, 38-9.
- ⁴¹ Marshall, *Proud Americans*, 35-6.
- ⁴² S-1 Journal, 9 November 1942, entry 57, p. 3 in Greer, “Battle of Oran, Combat Team 18.”
- ⁴³ Historian Rick Atkinson puts it best when he writes that “St. Cloud had become a grudge fight” in Greer’s mind. Atkinson, *Army at Dawn*, 126.
- ⁴⁴ G-3 Journal, 9 November 1942, entry 17, File 301-3.2, Box 5114, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁴⁵ David Rame, *Road to Tunis* (New York, MacMillan Co., 1944), 28.
- ⁴⁶ Greer, “Battle of Oran, Combat Team 18,” 3.
- ⁴⁷ Mason, “Reminiscences and Anecdotes of World War II,” 29. The chief of staff of every American division, whether armored, infantry, or airborne, had specialized

assistants who handled specific managerial roles. The G-1 officer controlled personnel records as well as casualty figures; G-2 handled intelligence gathering and records; G-3 oversaw the division's combat operations as well as training when not in combat; G-4 supervised the division's supply. A regiment and battalion had the same officers but they were known as the S-1, S-2, S-3, or S-4 officers.

⁴⁸ Mason, "Reminiscences and Anecdotes of World War II," 29.

⁴⁹ Atkinson, *Army at Dawn*, 127.

⁵⁰ Quoted in Terry de la Mesa Allen, "Combat Operations of the 1st Infantry Division During World War II," n.d. (United States Military Academy Library, Special Collections & Archives Division, West Point, New York), 6.

⁵¹ Knickerbocker, et al; ed., *Danger Forward*, 46.

⁵² Guy Ramsey, *One Continent Redeemed* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran, & Co, 1943), 55. David Rame records that Allen's rejection of Colonel Greer's plan was largely to save the civilians: Rame, *Road to Tunis*, 31.

⁵³ G-3 Diary, 9 November 1942, p. 4, File 301-3.0, Box 5110, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.

⁵⁴ Greer, "Battle of Oran, Combat Team 18," 4.

⁵⁵ Parr, "Regimental War Time History," 10.

⁵⁶ Allen, "Combat Operations of the 1st Infantry Division During World War II," 5-6.

⁵⁷ Marshall, *Proud Americans*, 29.

⁵⁸ Baumer, *American Iliad*, 35; Marshall, *Proud Americans*, 29.

⁵⁹ Marshall, *Proud Americans*, 29.

⁶⁰ Howe, *Northwest Africa*, 40.

⁶¹ Donald G. Taggart, *History of the Third Infantry Division in World War II* (Washington, D.C.: Infantry Journal Press, 1947; reprint, Nashville, TN: Battery Press, 1997), 14.

⁶² Map located in "Reports of Actions of Units of Third Infantry Division in the Casablanca Operations," File 303-0.3, Box 5389, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.

- ⁶³ Taggart, *History of the Third Infantry Division*, 14.
- ⁶⁴ Taggart, *History of the Third Infantry Division*, 14.
- ⁶⁵ Field Orders #1, 26 October 1942, "Reports of Actions of Units of Third Infantry Division in the Casablanca Operations," 1-3, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁶⁶ Taggart, *History of the Third Infantry Division*, 15.
- ⁶⁷ Nathan William White, *From Fedala to Berchtesgaden: A History of the Seventh United States Infantry in World War II* (n.p., 1947), 5.
- ⁶⁸ 1st Lieutenant William E. Tolbert, "The History of the Battle of Fedala, French Morocco," n.d., 1 in "Reports of Actions of Units of Third Infantry Division in the Casablanca Operations," RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁶⁹ 2nd Lieutenant Edward W. Staible, "The History of the Battle of Fedala, French Morocco," n.d., 1 in "Reports of Actions of Units of Third Infantry Division in the Casablanca Operations," RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁷⁰ "Western Task Force: The Attack on Fedala," (War Department, CMH, 2-3.7 WE, n.d.), 29.
- ⁷¹ 2nd Lieutenant James G. Nielson, "The History of the Battle of Fedala, French Morocco," n.d., 1 in "Reports of Actions of Units of Third Infantry Division in the Casablanca Operations," RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁷² Captain Albert Brown, "Report of Action Observed by Captain ALBERT BROWN, at Fedala, French Morocco, 8 November 1942," 17 January 1943, 1 in "Reports of Actions of Units of Third Infantry Division in the Casablanca Operations," RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁷³ Brigadier General W. H. Wilbur, "Statement of Brigadier General W. H. Wilbur, U. S. Army, Covering the Events of November 8," 28 January 1943, 5 in "Reports of Actions of Units of Third Infantry Division in the Casablanca Operations," RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁷⁴ John M. Rutledge, "'A' Company, 756th Tank Battalion (L)," 9 January 1943, 1 in "Reports of Actions of Units of Third Infantry Division in the Casablanca Operations," RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁷⁵ White, *From Fedala to Berchtesgaden*, 7.

- ⁷⁶ Rutledge, “‘A’ Company, 756th Tank Battalion (L),” 9 January 1943, 2.
- ⁷⁷ White, *From Fedala to Berchtesgaden*, 7-8.
- ⁷⁸ 1st Lieutenant Virgil W. Smith, Jr., “Action Observed by Lieutenant V. W. Smith Jr. at Fedala, French Morocco, 8 November 1942,” 10 January 1943, 1 in “Reports of Actions of Units of Third Infantry Division in the Casablanca Operations,” RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁷⁹ Captain L. J. Hruska, “History of Company ‘E’ 7th Infantry—Fedala Casablanca Operations, 9 to 11 November 1942,” n.d., 1-2, “7th Infantry Reports of Action, November 1942,” File 303-INF1(7)-0.3.0, Box 5609, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁸⁰ Lieutenant Colonel R. L. Salzmman, “History, Second Battalion Seventh Infantry—Fedala-Casablanca Operations, November 9, 10, 11, 1942,” n.d., 2, “7th Infantry Reports of Action on Casablanca, November 1942,” File 303-INF1(7)-0.3.0, Box 5610, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁸¹ Hruska, “History of Company ‘E’ 7th Infantry,” 2.
- ⁸² Captain Gilbert C. St. Clair, “History, Company ‘H’ Seventh Infantry—Fedala-Casablanca Operations, 9 to 11 November, 1942,” n.d., 2, “7th Infantry Reports of Action, November 1942.”
- ⁸³ Map in White, *From Fedala to Berchtesgaden*, 16.
- ⁸⁴ Captain Curtis C. Tigard, “History, Company F Seventh Infantry—Fedala-Casablanca Operations, 9 to 11 November 1942,” n.d., 2, “7th Infantry Reports of Action, November 1942.”
- ⁸⁵ Salzmman, “History, Second Battalion Seventh Infantry,” 2.
- ⁸⁶ Hruska, “History of Company ‘E’ 7th Infantry,” 2.
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- ⁸⁸ Captain James B. Cruzen, “History, Company ‘G’ Seventh Infantry-Fedala-Casablanca Operations, 9 to 11 November 1942,” n.d., 2, “7th Infantry Reports of Action, November 1942.”
- ⁸⁹ John C. McManus, *American Courage, American Carnage: The 7th Infantry Regiment’s Combat Experience, 1812 Through World War II* (New York: Tom Doherty Associates, 2009), 316.

- ⁹⁰ Colonel Robert C. Macon, "Report of Observations By Colonel Robt. C. Macon During the Advance on Casablanca, French Morocco, 9-11 November 1942," n.d., 5 in "Detailed and Intimate Record of Operations of R.L.G.-7 at Casablanca, 9, 10, and 11 November 1942," 12 March 1943, File 303-INF(7)-0.3.0, Box 5610, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁹¹ Charles B. MacDonald, *The Mighty Endeavor: American Armed Forces in the European Theater in World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), 130-1.
- ⁹² Lucian K. Truscott, Jr., *Command Missions: A Personal Story* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1954, reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1979), 227.
- ⁹³ Rupert Prohme, *History of the 30th Infantry in World War II* (Washington, D.C.: Infantry Journal Press, 1947), 37; "3rd Infantry Division, Training for Invasion, February 1943," n.d., File 303-3.13, Box 5520, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁹⁴ John B. Romeister, ed., *Combat Reporter: Don Whitehead's World War II Diary and Memoir* (New York: Fordham University, 2006), 158.
- ⁹⁵ Prohme, *History of the 30th Infantry*, 37.
- ⁹⁶ "Drill for Clearing of Isolated Building," n.d. in "3rd Infantry Division, Training for Invasion, February 1943."
- ⁹⁷ Taggart, *History of the Third Infantry Division*, 46.
- ⁹⁸ Truscott, *Command Missions*, 202-4.
- ⁹⁹ "Training Memorandum, no. 47: Training for Period 24 May-29 May 1943 Incl.," 23 May 1943, "Training Memos, 1943," File 303-INF(7)-3.13, Box 5618, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁰⁰ Taggart, *History of the Third Infantry Division*, 42.
- ¹⁰¹ Map is Map II in Albert N. Garland and Howard McGraw Smyth, *Sicily and the Surrender of Italy* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1965).
- ¹⁰² "Combat Team 26 Unit Report," 11 August 1943, 1 in "26 Infantry Report of Operations, 10 July-31 August 43," File 301-INF(26)-0.3, Box 5266, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.

- ¹⁰³ Garland and Smyth, *Sicily and the Surrender of Italy*, 231-2.
- ¹⁰⁴ Garland and Smyth, *Sicily and the Surrender of Italy*, 232; Sergeant Lawrence P. Manley, "History of the 26th Infantry Regiment," n.d. (Sgt. Manley Mss., 26th Infantry History, MRC, FDM), 65-6.
- ¹⁰⁵ Manley, "History of the 26th Infantry Regiment," 65.
- ¹⁰⁶ Tanks entered Barrafranca at 1730 hours. Entry 62, 1730 hours, "G-3 Journal and File, 1-21 July 1943," File 301-3.2, Box 5120, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁰⁷ "G-3 Diary, 21 July 1943," File 301-3.0, Box 5110, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁰⁸ "G-3 Diary, 21 July 1943," File 301-3.0, Box 5110, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁰⁹ 26th Infantry S-3 Report, 20-21 July 1943 in "26 Infantry Report of Operations, 10 July-31 August 1943," File 301-INF(26)-0.3, Box 5266, RG 407, Entry 427, NA; Knickerbocker, *Danger Forward*, 117-118.
- ¹¹⁰ Entry 29, 1222 hours, 21 July 1943, "G-3 Journal and File, 1-21 July 1943," File 301-3.2, Box 5120, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹¹¹ Garland and Smyth, *Sicily and the Surrender of Italy*, 312.
- ¹¹² 0807, 22 July 1943, S-1 Journal in "26 Infantry Report of Operations, 10 July-31 August 1943."
- ¹¹³ 0914, 22 July 1943, S-1 Journal in "26 Infantry Report of Operations, 10 July-31 August 1943."
- ¹¹⁴ 0942, 22 July 1943, S-1 Journal in "26 Infantry Report of Operations, 10 July-31 August 1943"; Manley, "History of the 26th Infantry Regiment," 69.
- ¹¹⁵ "Unit Journal/After-Action Report, 70th Tank Battalion, July 1943," 1 September 1943, 5, File ARBN-70-0.3, Box 13394, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹¹⁶ The general sketch of the plan is in "Unit Journal/After-Action Report, 70th Tank Battalion, July 1943," 5; 1658 and 1712, 22 July 1943, S-1 Journal in 26 Infantry Report of Operations, 10 July-31 August 1943; Manley, "History of the 26th Infantry Regiment," 69-70.
- ¹¹⁷ "Unit Journal/After-Action Report, 70th Tank Battalion, July 1943," 5.

- ¹¹⁸ “Reports After Action Against the Enemy,” 18 August 1943, 8, File 301-INF(16)-0.3, Box 5232, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹¹⁹ This account is drawn from Wheeler, *Big Red One*, 246-9; John Baumgartner, *16th Infantry Regiment, 1861-1946* (Bamberg, Germany: n.p., 1945, reprint, Du Quoin, Ill: Cricket Press, 1995), 51-3.
- ¹²⁰ Mason, “Reminiscences and Anecdotes of World War II,” 181.
- ¹²¹ 1400, 1 August 1943, S-1 Journal in 26 Infantry Report of Operations, 10 July-31 August 1943.
- ¹²² See Rick Atkinson, *Day of Battle: The War in Sicily and Italy, 1943-1944* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 2007), 153.
- ¹²³ “History of 70th Tank Battalion, 1940-1945,” n.d., 9, File ARBN-70-0.1, Box 13394, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹²⁴ Knickerbocker, et al., *Danger Forward*, 133.
- ¹²⁵ Mason, “Reminiscences and Anecdotes of World War II,” 181.
- ¹²⁶ See the accounts in Garland and Smyth, *Sicily and the Surrender of Italy*, 324-347; Atkinson, *Day of Battle*, 152-9; Wheeler, *Big Red One*, 249-55; Carlo D’Este, *Bitter Victory: The Battle for Sicily, 1943* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1988), 457-76.
- ¹²⁷ The Goums were indigenous French North Africans who specialized in hilltop and mountain warfare. They rendered valuable service to the Allies through Sicily and Italy.
- ¹²⁸ Brigadier General Clift Andrus, the commander of the 1st Infantry Division artillery, asserted that it was not their objective to destroy the town because there were still civilians. Clift Andrus, “Troina Addenda,” *Field Artillery Journal* 34:3 (March 1944), 164.
- ¹²⁹ Romeister, ed., *Combat Reporter*, 191.
- ¹³⁰ Charles P. Horner quoted in D’Este, *Bitter Victory*, 468.
- ¹³¹ Taggart, *History of the Third Infantry Division*, 55.
- ¹³² Taggart, *History of the Third Infantry Division*, 55.

- ¹³³ “Sheet 271, Agrigento” Maps, File 303-3.7, Box 5508, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹³⁴ Interview of Lieutenant General John A. Heintges, USA, retired by Major Jack A. Pellicci, 1974, Senior Officers Oral History Project (John A. Heintges Papers, United States Army Military History Institute, Carlisle, PA), 169. Hereinafter cited as USAMHI.
- ¹³⁵ Heintges Interview, 170, Heintges Papers, USAMHI.
- ¹³⁶ Heintges Interview, 171, Heintges Papers, USAMHI.
- ¹³⁷ Heintges stated that these men came from his L Company while the regimental history indicated they came from a tank destroyer unit. However, there is no indication that the 3rd Infantry Division had any armor support until late in the Sicilian campaign. Heintges Interview, 172, Heintges Papers, USAMHI; White, *From Fedala to Berchtesgaden*, 17.
- ¹³⁸ Heintges Interview, 174, Heintges Papers, USAMHI. In his interview, Heintges describes how his patrol hunted down a sniper in a two-story building by using a bazooka round which killed him, several other soldiers as well as the civilians with him in that room. Heintges Interview, 172-4, Heintges Papers, USAMHI. The official history writes that Heintges put demolitions in the lower story; the explosion also served as a means of signaling an American attack. Garland and Smyth, *Sicily and the Surrender of Italy*, 194.
- ¹³⁹ Garland and Smyth, *Sicily and the Surrender of Italy*, 194.
- ¹⁴⁰ “Unit Journal, RCT-7, for Period 3 July 1943 – 23 July 1943,” 25 August 1943 (Donovan Research Library, Fort Benning, Georgia), 3. Hereinafter cited as DRL. Garland and Smyth, *Sicily and the Surrender of Italy*, 194.
- ¹⁴¹ Heintges Interview, 174, Heintges Papers, USAMHI.
- ¹⁴² Garland and Smyth, *Sicily and the Surrender of Italy*, 194.
- ¹⁴³ McManus, *American Courage, American Carnage*, 334.
- ¹⁴⁴ Garland and Smyth, *Sicily and the Surrender of Italy*, 226.
- ¹⁴⁵ Hugh A. Scott, *The Blue and White Devils: A Personal Memoir and History of the Third Infantry Division in World War II* (Nashville: Battery Press, 1984), 51. Lucian Truscott, Scott’s boss as the division commander, does not even acknowledge assigning any armored unit to support the 7th’s move to Agrigento. Truscott gave

Colonel Sherman's 7th Infantry the division's organic 10th Field Artillery Battalion, the entire 77th Field Artillery Regiment, the 58th Armored Field Artillery Battalion, and the 65th Armored Field Artillery Battalion, a total of approximately 148 guns. Truscott, *Command Missions*, 219-20.

¹⁴⁶ White, *From Fedala to Berchtesgaden*, 27.

¹⁴⁷ White, *From Fedala to Berchtesgaden*, 29-30.

¹⁴⁸ White, *From Fedala to Berchtesgaden*, 30.

¹⁴⁹ Taggart, *History of the Third Infantry Division in World War II*, 66.

¹⁵⁰ See "Operational Report of Second Battalion, 30th Infantry While Attached to 3rd Infantry Division," 26 August 1943, 1 in "Unit Reports of Operations in the Sicilian Campaign," in "7th Infantry Journal and File, July-August 1943," File 303-INF(7)-0.7, Box 5610, RG 407, Entry 427, NA. The 7th Infantry recorded having tank support by 14 August. "Report of Operations, RCT-7, for Period 23 July 1943 – 25 August 1943," 7.

¹⁵¹ This account is based on White, *From Fedala to Berchtesgaden*, 38-9 and "Report of Operations, RCT-7, for Period 23 July 1943 – 25 August 1943," 8.

¹⁵² "Report of Operations, RCT-7, for Period 23 July 1943 – 25 August 1943," 11.

¹⁵³ Baumgartner, *16th Infantry Regiment*, 68.

¹⁵⁴ "A History of Company 'E', 16th Infantry, 1st Infantry Division from June 1942, Until the Present," n.d., 5, File 301-INF(16)9-0.1, RG 407, ENTRY 427, NA.

¹⁵⁵ Rutledge, "'A' Company, 756th Tank Battalion (L)," 1.

¹⁵⁶ This observation is made more forcefully in J. Lee Mudd, "Honor, Fidelity, Courage: The History of the 756th Tank Battalion and the Development of the Tank-Infantry Team" (M.A. Thesis, Southern Illinois University, 2001), 20.

¹⁵⁷ "G-2 Report of Operations From 15 May To 31 July 43," 2 August 1943, 5, File 301-2, Box 5028, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.

¹⁵⁸ "A History of Company 'E', 16th Infantry, 1st Infantry Division from June 1942, Until the Present," 5.

CHAPTER IV

“THE STREETS WERE LITTERED WITH CORPSES”:

FIGHTING FOR ITALY’S TOWNS,

SEPTEMBER 1943 TO JUNE 1944

As fighting for the dusty island of Sicily ended in August 1943, Allied leaders planned their next move. The British and Americans had choices in mid-1943. After capturing Sicily, the initiative was theirs to do as they wished. As they built up for the cross-Channel invasion, the Allies could launch smaller operations of lesser importance to keep the pressure on Germany. They could invade Sardinia, Corsica, or both; they could choose to aid the Russians by invading the Balkans; or they could invade Italy. Each option had its advantages and disadvantages, but the planners also had to balance an auxiliary campaign with the massive buildup of men and material in England. The Anglo-American Combined Chiefs of Staff chose Italy while also preparing for the eventual cross-Channel assault.¹

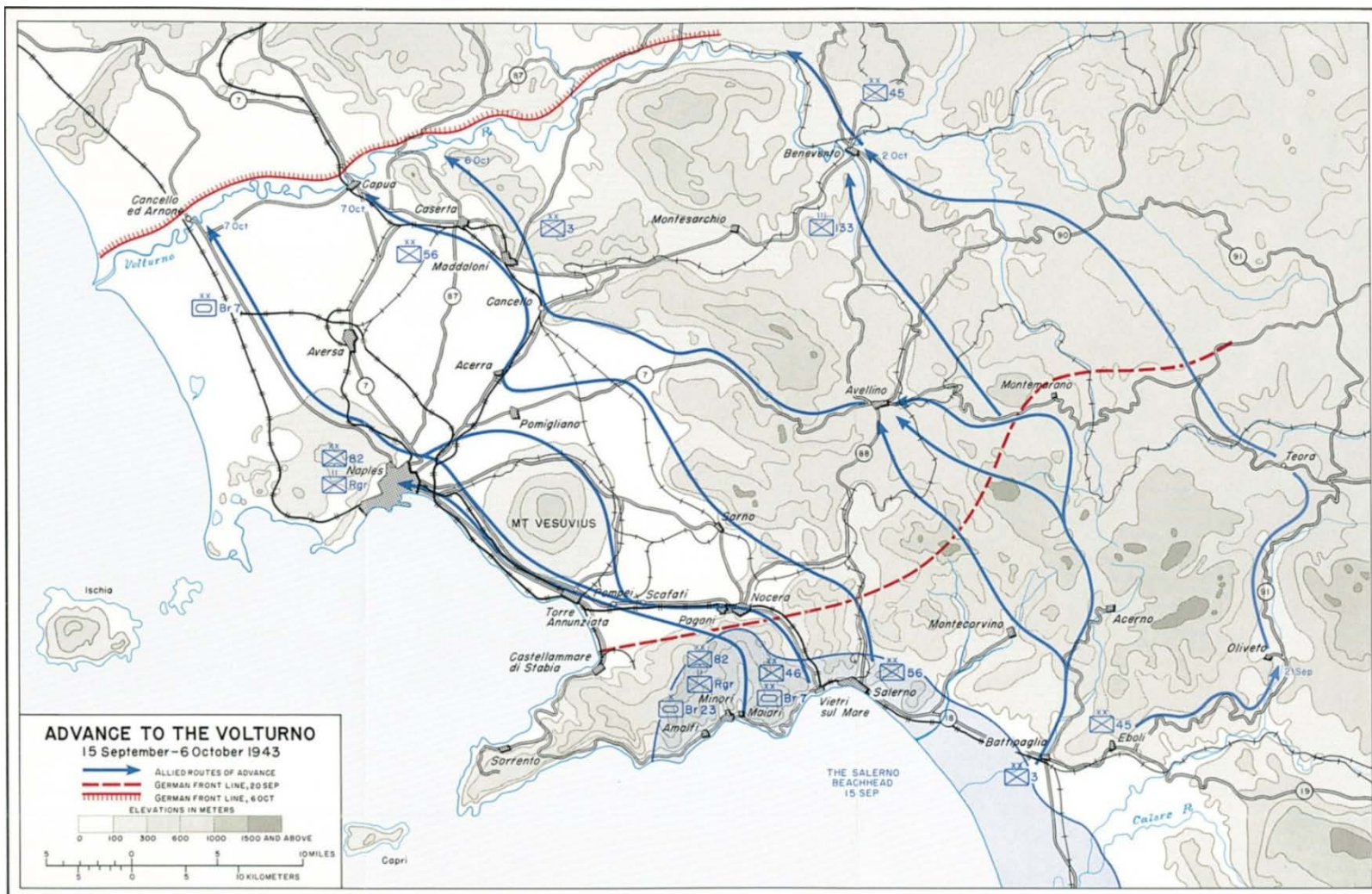
As with the decision to invade North Africa, the decision to land substantial forces in mainland Italy strained the Anglo-American alliance because the British and Americans placed different strategic importance upon Italy. The Americans approved launching limited, secondary operations in the Mediterranean region but did not want such a campaign to overshadow the build-up for the cross-Channel invasion. Pursuant to their peripheral strategy, the British wanted to keep major forces in the region, even if it meant taking all of Italy. In landing forces in Italy, the British and Americans managed

to agree that an invasion should force an Italian surrender, establish major air bases from which the British and Americans could bomb Mediterranean France and southern Europe, and, finally, to draw German forces from Russia and France into Italy.²

Of the three selected infantry divisions for this study, the 1st Infantry Division left Sicily for England in September 1943. The 5th Infantry Division remained in Iceland until early 1944 when they, too, shipped to England to prepare for the grand assault across the Channel. The 3rd Infantry Division was the only division that fought in the Italian campaign, where it remained from September 1943 until the capture of Rome on 4 June 1944.

Fighting the Italian Campaign revealed the 3rd Division improving its combat effectiveness, especially its urban combat capabilities, as it captured important crossroads and hilltop towns to slowly and painfully plod toward Rome. The division's experience in Italy fell into two parts: slogging up the Italian boot from 18 September to 17 November 1943 and then holding the beachhead at Anzio from 22 January 1944 until the capture of Rome on 4 June. Figure 4.1 shows the first month below.³ During those first fifty-nine days, the division failed to coordinate its combat arms; the infantry regiments' fights for Italy's towns and villages were generally without armored assistance. The division began developing a combined-arms mindset during the Anzio Campaign as the infantry and armored units realized the importance of improved teamwork between the infantry, tanks, tank destroyers, and artillery. When the division broke out of Anzio and fought for the town of Cisterna di Littoria in May 1944, tanks, tank destroyers, and infantry effectively worked together. The 3rd Division in the 1943-

Figure 4.1: Advance to the Volturno, 15 September-6 October 1943



1944 Italian Campaign shows the American infantry division shifting from a reliance on its infantry regiments toward increased teamwork between all the combat arms. Further, as the Americans honed their combined-arms effectiveness against the Germans in general, so they applied those new lessons and capabilities specifically to the urban environment.

The combat experience was worsened by Italy's daunting topography and poor weather. Even more mountainous than Sicily, Italy's geography significantly affected the nature of the fighting. Third Division commander Major General Lucian Truscott vividly remembered the country: "Narrow valleys were broken by intensely cultivated plots. Rugged mountains rose to elevations of more than 5,000 feet. . . . Off these roads and tracks, the country was passable only for men on foot and for mules. We were to find many places that pack mules could not climb where supplies had to be carried on the backs of men."⁴ The *Wehrmacht* proved to be as deadly effective in defensive operations as in offensive operations.⁵ The Germans' slow, grinding, fighting withdrawal up the peninsula made it a war more for the heights that covered the axes of advance than a dash across flat plains. Armor counted for little within this treacherous terrain.

The mountains affected the structure of Italian towns. A wartime report described these towns as "generally consist[ing] of closely packed houses and narrow, twisting streets." Buildings were quite sturdy, "with thick stone walls generally immune even to artillery fire except for direct hits." These towns' confusing and compact sizes made it easy for defending German soldiers to cover the approaches and flanks.⁶ The

roads tended to proceed through the towns but not always around, making it difficult for armor to bypass these places and sometimes funneling them into small, confined urban spaces, where hidden German antitank weapons and soldiers could destroy them.⁷

Italy's wet fall and winter climates affected troop movement as well as the men's health. Truscott observed that fall rains became a problem as the "mud rendered all movements difficult and frequently made movements of vehicles off roads impossible."⁸ One sergeant recalled that "the already bad road conditions worsened as heavy military vehicles turned the thin asphalt or dirt road ways into soupy and deep quagmires of bottomless mud."⁹ Many men also became ill from the rain, the mud, and the generally wet weather, thus affecting the division's fighting effectiveness. By November, the worsening climate caused more casualties than German bullets did.¹⁰ Dry clothes and hygiene were a luxury on the Italian front.¹¹

Up the Italian Boot: 18 September to 17 November 1943

In mid-September, with the plans finished, British and American naval forces steamed into Salerno Bay and landed ground forces. From the beginning the Germans made everything extraordinarily difficult. There were no perfect places to land forces in Italy; Salerno was one of the best options available despite drawbacks that the Germans quickly used in their favor. Writer Rick Atkinson has written that, for the Allied navies, Salerno offered a great place to park warships and for amphibious vessels to dump combat personnel with its "few sandbars, a negligible tide, a small port in a sheltered bay, and twenty-two miles of gorgeous beaches."¹² But for those disgorged combat personnel, fighting at Salerno was like being "inside of a cup" with Germans looking

down from the dominating heights that completely surrounded the area and exploiting the Sele River, which split the Allied positions.¹³

And that is what happened: the Germans expertly defended the higher ground from 9 to 13 September with a fury that the Allies had not experienced in either the landings on North Africa nor Sicily. American General Mark Clark commanded the Fifth U.S. Army and several times rushed rear echelon, support elements to the front to stop German counterattacks. More than once, Allied leadership considered evacuating the beaches. When it became clear the Germans were withdrawing, the British and Americans congratulated themselves for a job well done. One American officer told his men that “we are more than a match for all that can meet us.”¹⁴ In contrast, the German ground commander proclaimed that, despite supply and logistical limitations, “once again German soldiers have proved their superiority over the enemy.”¹⁵ The Germans may have retreated but they were far from defeated. They had stalled the Allied advance inland; the fight at Salerno foreshadowed what the Americans could expect in Italy. By 14 September, the Germans began a phased retreat up the Italian boot that kept the combined Anglo-American force away from Rome for many months, building pressure on the democratic Allies by prolonging both the war and human losses.

Germany’s failure to throw the Anglo-American force back into the sea came not from lack of effort but from the Allied soldiers’ stubbornness, well-laid artillery fires, and overwhelming naval gunfire support that gave Clark time to rush in reinforcements.¹⁶ One of those divisions that Clark landed to reinforce his embattled Fifth Army was the 3rd Infantry Division. Clark requested the 3rd during the worst of

the fighting at Salerno but the lead regiment, the 30th Infantry, did not land until the 18th, after the Germans had withdrawn.

Within days of the 3rd Division's arrival on the Italian mainland, the Americans were fighting to capture urban areas. The division had missed the fight for the beachhead but the fresh reinforcements helped to maintain the Allies' initiative. General Clark sent the American VI Corps, including the 3rd Division, to make a wider flanking movement on the right through the mountains while sending the British 10 Corps along the coast toward Naples.¹⁷

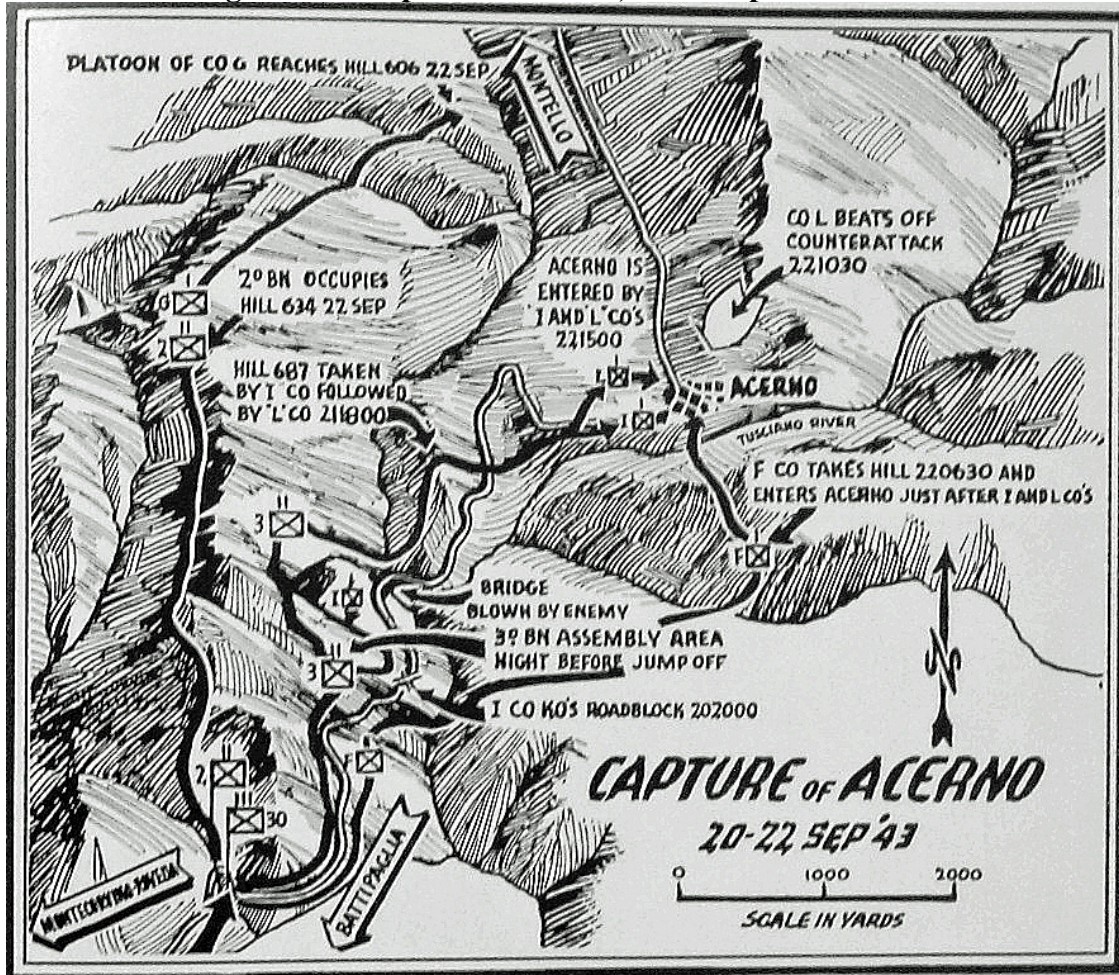
As the 30th Infantry Regiment left its assembly area in Battipaglia, it advanced toward the small mountain town of Acerno on 20 September. Control of Highway 7 toward Naples meant taking Acerno. Upon landing, the division had replaced the 36th Infantry Division on the line but received the 36th's attached 751st Tank and 601st Tank Destroyer battalions. As the 30th Infantry moved toward Acerno, it had support from A Company, 601st Tank Destroyer Battalion as well as B/751st Tank Battalion. The regimental history bemoaned its circumstances: "It would be almost impossible to find terrain more unsuited to offensive warfare. . . . There are wind-swept passes, cliffs that fall away hundreds of feet to narrow valleys below and canyons where the sun penetrates only a brief time during the day. All these rugged terrain features make rapid advances impossible."¹⁸ It also became obvious that the Germans intended to defend Acerno and the roads that led toward Naples.

Because of the mountainous landscape, it took from 20 to 22 September for the 30th Infantry to wrangle the Germans out of Acerno. There is little that indicates what

the attached armor did during the battle or even if tanks supported the infantry. Figure 4.2 shows the maneuvers toward and the terrain around Acerno.¹⁹ Third Battalion, 30th Infantry (3/30) led the way and reported minor skirmishes from advanced patrols on 20 September. By the end of the twentieth, the regiment established an observation post overlooking Acerno.²⁰ On the twenty-first, 3/30 moved along the main road toward the town. By 1800 hours, 2/30 pushed northward but to the west of the town in an attempt to cut off any escaping Germans. F Company marched to the east so that it could fall on the town from the south. This move divided the battalion while permitting the Americans to advance on Acerno from three different directions: Second Battalion from the north, Third Battalion from the west, and F Company from the south. Artillery and bombs from A-36 fighter-bombers provided support as the battalion traversed the difficult land.²¹

Given the rough ground, the various units took nearly all night to move into position. The Third Battalion had to cross a deep gorge, the Iscadella Serra, and it was almost dark when 3/30 marched over the western mountains, crossed the Iscadella Serra gorge, and shoved the enemy off the eastern bank.²² Around 0800 on 22 September, 3/30 attacked the Germans in a chestnut grove on the edge of town as 2/30 moved to its positions to take Highway 7, the north-south road out of Acerno. Amongst the trees, the regimental history recorded that 3/30 overcame chattering machine-gun fire “in a bitter hand-grenade and bayonet fight.”²³ The battalion reorganized and moved to a church on the edge of Acerno, destroying a nearby light artillery battery. At 1200, the town was still not in American hands as German mortars had stalled their attack. Between 1252

Figure 4.2: Capture of Acerno, 20-22 September 1943



and 1325, division artillery pounded Acerno with over 1,000 rounds. German artillery on the hills north of Acerno slowed Third Battalion as Second Battalion struggled to isolate the town from the north. Through efforts described as “herculean” and with tremendous difficulty, 3/30’s commander, Lieutenant Colonel Edgar C. Doleman, pushed his battalion into Acerno at approximately 1500.²⁴ A patrol inspected the houses and captured a few Germans. By early evening of the twenty-second, U.S. infantrymen controlled both the town of Acerno and the only reliable highway toward Naples.²⁵

Mainly due to the difficult ground, the Americans operated against and seized the town of Acerno just as they had taken towns in Sicily: by relying on the infantry. Yet despite the difficult ground, the Americans captured the town by maneuver rather than by a simple frontal attack. In part because of that maneuvering, there was less need for an actual fight within the town itself.

Within these dispositions, there is little to no mention of the presence of American armor, although the terrain certainly would have limited their use. In the slow push up the Italian peninsula, Truscott recalled that the division relied mostly on infantry-artillery cooperation and far less on its armor. When the Germans stopped a regiment's advance, one battalion remained in reserve "while other battalions took to the mountains on either side to outflank the enemy positions, the whole operation being supported by Division artillery emplaced as far forward as positions could be found." After the American infantrymen controlled the area, engineers would clear roadblocks, repair or rebuild damaged and destroyed bridges, and another regiment would maintain the momentum. This wearying process became the division's standard operating procedure for the next two months.²⁶ The division continued its northward advance, slowed by the mountainous land, rainy weather, and a determined and crafty German foe.

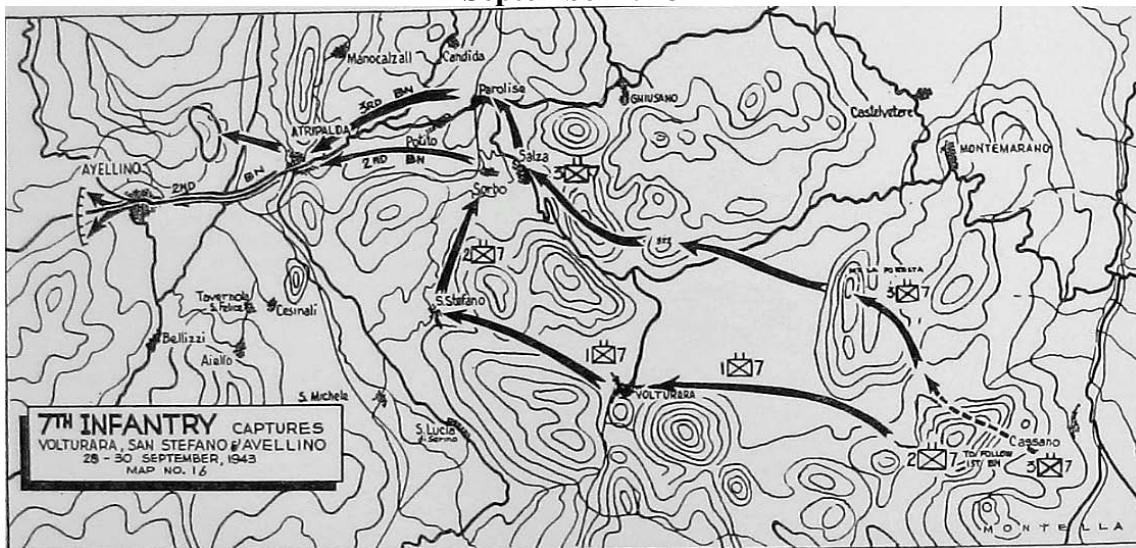
As Fifth Army pressed forward to Naples, Highway 7 remained the axis of advance to that city. Because of this, Avellino became the next notable city although the 7th did capture smaller villages en route, including Le Croci de Acerno, Volturrara, and Montemarano.²⁷ Taking Avellino was not just a division target but became a Fifth Army

objective when General Clark told VI Corps commander General John P. Lucas that the crossroads town was vital to capturing Naples. Lucas carefully funneled the 34th Infantry Division into position, intending to use the 3rd Division in support. As these divisions approached the town, the Allied Army Group commander, Field Marshal Sir Harold Alexander, shifted the corps attention to Benevento, fifteen miles north of Avellino. Responsibility for the capture of Avellino fell to the 3rd Division.²⁸

Late on 27 September, General Truscott ordered the 15th Infantry to support the 7th Regiment as it trudged over the Italian mountains northward toward Volturara.²⁹ The regiment's First Battalion captured Volturara after overcoming stiff German resistance. Taking the town entailed smaller 75-mm pack howitzers shelling the church, thus injuring civilians, because the Germans had placed an observation post there.³⁰ The 7th Infantry's history described the land as "the most rugged mountains yet encountered," preventing some men from receiving food for nearly twenty-four hours while fighting the wet and the cold.³¹ Poor road conditions notwithstanding, the 7th Infantry did not move fast enough for Truscott, who demanded to know if 3/7 had taken Avellino on 29 September.³² Figure 4.3 below shows the 7th's cross-country route in taking Avellino. For their part, the Americans made many of these marches at night, no mean feat given the topography. Night marches allowed the Americans to bypass enemy resistance and take Avellino before the Germans could destroy it.³³

Finally, on 30 September, patrols from the 7th Infantry entered an empty Avellino after crawling over the Italian mountains and taking other towns en route. For all that cross-mountain movement, the Germans evacuated Avellino and retreated north.

Figure 4.3: 7th Infantry Captures Volturara, San Stefano, and Avellino, 28-30 September 1943



From there, an intelligence summary stated, the Germans continued their habit of “road blocks and demolitions, booby-trapping the road blocks. [Their] artillery went into defiladed positions along the terrain.”³⁴ The advance on Avellino only showed the frustrating nature of combat in Italy: the Americans traversing arduous terrain but unable to come to grips with the Germans as they retreated from Avellino. Most certainly, the infantrymen did not object if these night marches postponed combat. Yet taking Avellino by way of these wearying overland night marches showed the efficacy of the Americans’ speed and maneuver that forced the Germans to retreat. Despite the enemy’s withdrawal, Truscott remembered that Avellino looked destroyed: “All about were damaged buildings, bomb craters, shell holes, and other marks of devastation, and the whole town reeked of putrefying bodies buried in the debris.”³⁵ An enlisted man in the 15th Infantry wrote that “the Air Corps and our artillery had practically pulverized

the place. There were Civilians and Germans laying all over the streets. What a smell.”³⁶

While Avellino helped the Allies advance toward Naples, the American infantry operated, like at Acerno, without the aid of much armor. Few accounts mention the presence of tanks or tank destroyers. The Germans continued this delaying action as they retreated to and defended Italy’s first major natural obstacle: the Volturno River.

Much of the story of the 3rd Infantry Division’s experience in Italy for the first month is the slow movement toward the Volturno River with comparatively little German resistance. Although it lacked the panache of the later Allied pursuit across France in the summer of 1944, this advance included a German retreat as the Germans fell back onto a more defensible body of water. Third Division soldiers continued to trudge northwestward along the Italian boot, taking several small towns along the way. If the G.I.s did not fight German defenders, then they faced booby-traps. Italian towns are not known for their wide boulevards and Truscott accused the Germans of “demolish[ing] the fronts of whole blocks of old stone buildings, completely blocking the narrow streets,” thus forcing the infantry to stop while the 10th Engineer Battalion cleared the way.³⁷ The Germans were not the only ones to be crafty. Vert Enis, a wireman in the 15th Infantry, recorded a group of desperate Italian civilians who came to the Americans with tales that the Germans were shooting civilians and destroying their town. When the Americans arrived, the civilians welcomed the soldiers with a parade, streamers, and confetti. There were no Germans. The civilians “just wanted us to move

into town so we could protect it” from a German counterattack. The Americans did not remain long.³⁸

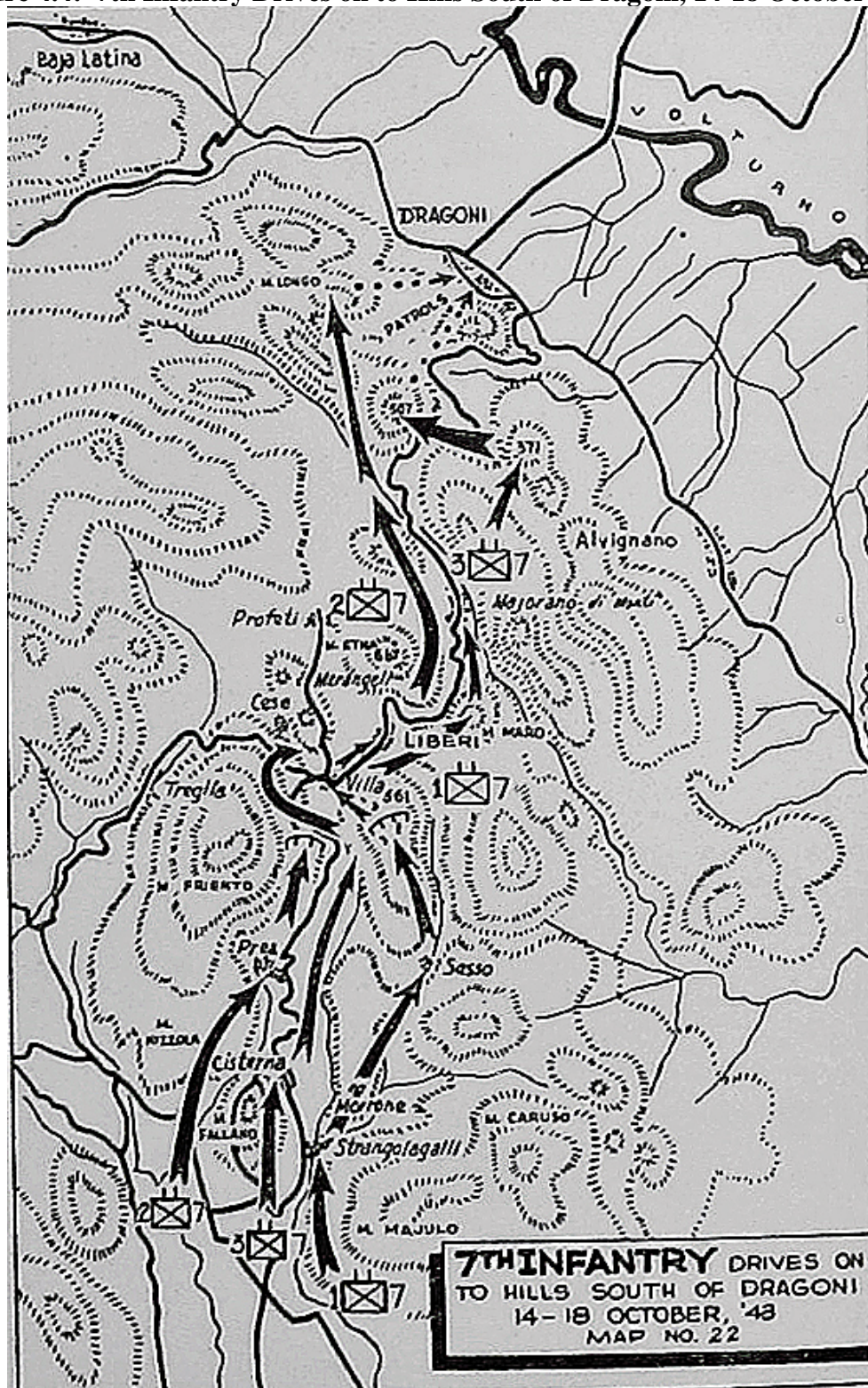
By 7 October, the division occupied positions with the rest of the Allied front between the Mediterranean and Adriatic Seas. Most of the Fifth Army had reached the Volturno and found the other side fortified by the Germans. As one might expect in Italy, the “narrow winding roads, steep hills, and swift streams” did not lend themselves to easy river-crossing operations.³⁹ Still, the American and British forces composing the Fifth U.S. Army needed to cross the river if they wanted to keep pushing toward Rome. The Germans, for their part, were equally determined to stop that crossing along with the overall Allied advance.

Within these strategic circumstances, the 3rd Division played a critical role in the river-crossing operation of 13 to 14 October. The detailed planning included intense patrolling to identify various German positions as well as to test the waters. The plans laid out, the Americans assaulted across the Volturno. The 7th Infantry made the first beachhead with ample amounts of division artillery in support. As the 7th staked its claim across the Volturno, its sister regiments crossed as well. The Germans opposed the Allies with full complements of machine gun, artillery, and mortar fire. To the Americans’ credit, armor tried to accompany the lead troops but enemy fire prevented their crossing until later. General Truscott understood the stiff resistance but urged Colonel Harry B. Sherman of the 7th Infantry to “keep pushing [tank destroyers] and [tanks] and push on up the valley.”⁴⁰

As the 7th Infantry moved northward, Sherman received orders that his first two objectives, respectively, were the towns of Liberi and Dragoni and that the infantry should bypass any resistance in order to capture those two towns.⁴¹ As the regiment moved north, it encountered resisting Germans within the small town of Cisterna. The short urban fight there was part of a rapidly developing situation that the American did not expect because the Germans had resumed their orderly retreat to more defensible positions. Figure 4.4 below shows the movement from the Volturno to Dragoni in mid-October.⁴² The regimental history described Cisterna as “a little stone village . . . on the forward slopes of Mount Fallano” that prevented an entire battalion from advancing, showing the defensive power of even small villages. For the first time, however, the Americans had armor supporting them.⁴³

By 2250 on the evening of the fourteenth, it became clear that the defenders of Cisterna would not go without a fight. As the men of 3/7 tried to enter the town, German artillery and mortars began to rain on them as the hidden defenders’ small arms and machine guns fired from the village itself. A nighttime attempt by K Company to outflank the village failed as the men became scattered over the steep, broken land.⁴⁴ Three American tanks entered Cisterna to destroy a German machine gun position but German mortars disabled two of the tanks, with one blocking the road.⁴⁵ The Third Battalion promised to go around the town if resistance continued but, by 0500 on the fifteenth, they had not accomplished that.⁴⁶ By now, the Second Battalion had moved around the town and had destroyed German armor north of Cisterna at a village called Prea. The darkness became a major problem for Third Battalion as it reported being

Figure 4.4: 7th Infantry Drives on to Hills South of Dragoni, 14-18 October 1943



“spread all over the hills around Cistern[a].”⁴⁷

As morning turned to day on 15 October, 2/7 was in Prea and 1/7 had also moved around the village; the defenders in Cisterna were now cut off but continued to resist. Further, the battalion had not used its attached artillery much except for its own mortars, although it understood that batteries of 105-mm guns stood by to assist. Division command pressured the battalion to take Cisterna quickly lest the Germans were “going to build up resistance in front of you.”⁴⁸ To that end, Truscott, eager to capture Liberi and Dragoni, moved the 15th Infantry into the area.⁴⁹ It did not help the battalion when, while conducting a personal reconnaissance, a German shell had wounded 3/7’s commander, Lieutenant Colonel John Heintges. By 1130, the battalion reported that it was still in a firefight.⁵⁰ The battle finally ended after the wounded colonel called for artillery to fire smoke rounds on the town and the Germans withdrew, influenced by the flanking positions of the 7th Regiment’s First and Second Battalions.⁵¹

Cisterna had much in common with the 1st Infantry Division’s fight at St. Cloud. Even into mid-1943, the Americans still depended heavily upon their infantrymen to perform the bulk of the fighting. In the case of Cisterna, the terrain was certainly a factor because the 7th had armor attached to it and there were indications that the Third Battalion lost cohesion from the broken topography. Inasmuch as the Americans had no qualms with bombarding Acerno and Avellino, it is not clear why they did not use any artillery on Cisterna until firing smoke rounds on the afternoon of the fifteenth aside from their own mortars.⁵² Similar to St. Cloud, Cisterna was an obstacle but the respective division commanders would not permit the town to stop an entire infantry

regiment; thus, the other battalions went around the town. This bypass certainly affected the outcome as the Germans withdrew rather than allow the Americans to trap or capture them. The skirmish at Cisterna also shows Americans' continuing need to sharpen their combined-arms capabilities.

The division took Liberi and Dragoni, continuing its northward advance. At this point in mid-October, the men had slogged over the Apennines toward the Volturno, made a riverine assault, and now were approaching the German Winter Line, a series of heavily defended positions anchored around Cassino. Soldiers endured freezing and rainy weather without adequate clothing. The ground was so challenging that sometimes even the pack mules could not get supplies, food, and equipment to the front line units. Truscott wrote that this only made the men more susceptible to disease, "imposing burdens on the Division medical service and filling the Corps and Army hospitals."⁵³ Soldiers were so exhausted that "it is safe to say the men were running on sheer fortitude" alone.⁵⁴

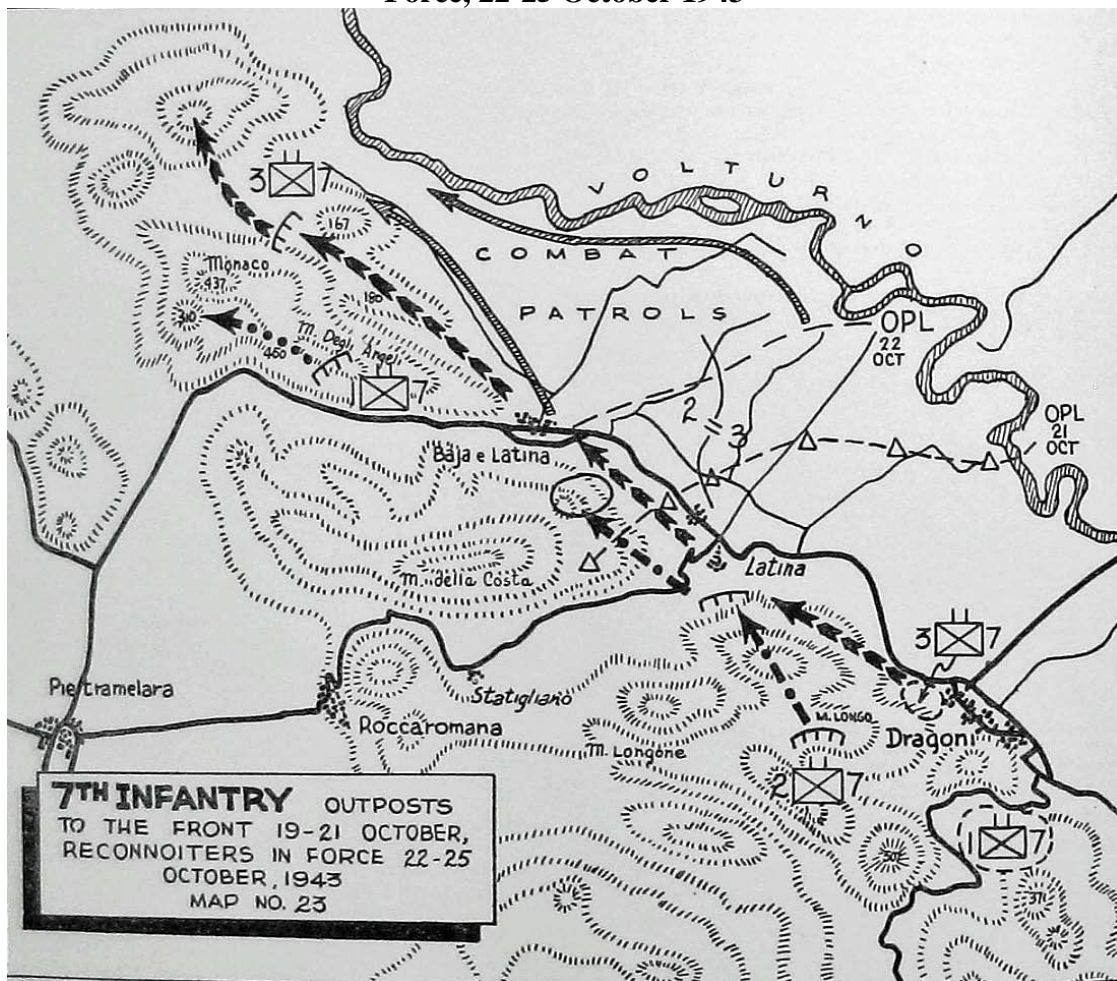
The 7th Infantry took a series of hills and a small village called Baja e Latina in the latter part of October. On the 7th's left, the other side of those hills, was the 15th also moving northward. The 15th fought Germans at a small town called Roccaromana between 18 and 24 October. Truscott described the 15th's main road around Roccaromana as "a trail which Division engineers gradually widened to make passable for jeeps, and the incessant rains often made even their passage impossible."⁵⁵ Again, whereas the division was beginning to employ armor more often with the infantry (the 7th Infantry had tank destroyers during this period), Roccaromana was a costly infantry

fight won with the aid of artillery. Armor remained largely absent from this engagement.

Roccaromana is nestled on the western slope of some Italian hills. Figure 4.5 shows the area of operations.⁵⁶ As the 15th pushed against Roccaromana, the 7th captured Latina and then Baja e Latina as the 751st Tank and 601st Tank Destroyer Battalions cleared the area between the hills and the Volturno River. Roccaromana was operationally significant because it lay on an important road that would allow the Americans to maintain contact with nearby units and supply itself. Regimental leaders had the sense to attack from those hills down toward the town, entering an empty Statigliano at 2340 on 17 October, cutting off the road to Latina by the early morning hours the next day.⁵⁷ On the eighteenth, 1/15 took the heights just to the northeast of Roccaromana, called Castle Hill. American artillery blasted the valley before them and aircraft dropped bombs onto Roccaromana while German artillery bombarded American observation posts. At 1300, C Company tenuously claimed control of Roccaromana, despite a brief withdrawal in order to resupply. By 1520, it reported the town as secure. At the same time, Second Battalion sent a strong force to take Mount Della Costa to the north. By the end of the day, the regiment struggled to maintain its gains.⁵⁸

Pursuant to their infantry doctrine, the Germans counterattacked to retake the lost ground. The 3rd Infantry Division experienced its first vicious counterattack since advancing along the northern coastal highway in Sicily. At around midnight, 19 October, a German counterattack slammed into 1/15 in Roccaromana. The 15th's regimental history recorded that German artillery shelled the Americans and then

Figure 4.5: 7th Infantry Outposts to the Front, 19-21 October; Reconnoiters in Force, 22-25 October 1943



“enemy infantry poured into the town from the surrounding fields, and down the main street.”⁵⁹ C Company broke up the attack but the Germans launched another with two tanks in support. One tank came down the main street and the other came from the First Battalion’s left flank, from the south. After the tanks shot up Americans with bazookas, the only antitank weapons, the Americans retreated to Castle Hill behind the town. The Germans regrouped and reorganized, counterattacked in the morning on the nineteenth,

and shoved the First Battalion off Castle Hill altogether. After repulsing a fourth counterattack, 1/15 retook and kept Castle Hill outside of Roccaromana while 2/15 retained its hold on Mount Della Costa.⁶⁰ By now, reports described 1/15's position as "one of disorganization."⁶¹

Division command released the 15th's Third Battalion from division reserve. Third and Second Battalions fought for Mount Della Costa northwest of Roccaromana while the town remained the domain of 1/15. First Battalion spent the remainder of the day trying to hold onto Castle Hill and prevent the Germans from overrunning them. American armor was largely absent from this fight but American artillery made its supporting presence clear. Around 0900, Second Battalion requested "constant [artillery] interdiction on road, Roccaromana to Pietramelara [sic]" to the west. By 1100, Truscott told his assistant division commander and acting commander of the 15th, Brigadier General William Eagles to send up artillery observer planes to spot the German artillery so the Americans could knock them out.⁶² Eager to take the town on the 19th, Eagles told Truscott that he planned to launch another assault on Roccaromana but this attack apparently failed.⁶³

On the twentieth, the regiment recommended "getting tanks in readiness" but the 751st Tank Battalion remained parked in an assembly area.⁶⁴ Armored support would have been useful when a C Company patrol entering Roccaromana ran into German tanks that fired directly into the Americans. The patrol, no doubt, pulled back but asked for artillery support against the tanks. After estimating a company of enemy infantry and tanks in Roccaromana, 1/15 received word of an artillery concentration planned for

the entire town.⁶⁵ Despite the artillery support, the 15th Infantry's communications made clear that "we are not going to do anything about the enemy in Roccaromana until we receive some [antitank] assistance. Will maintain observation from our position on the hill. . . . We will use [artillery] as much as we can."⁶⁶ Between the suspected German artillery in Pietramelara and American artillery firing on Roccaromana throughout 19 and 20 October, life in Roccaromana was a veritable hell.

On the twenty-first, fighting swirled on Mount Della Costa and around Roccaromana. The Americans made three more attempts to enter Roccaromana but could not keep a presence there.⁶⁷ The regimental history indicated that by the twenty-first, the regiment's organic artillery, their Antitank and Cannon Companies, were still not yet in position.⁶⁸ From Italian civilians, the Americans learned that approximately 150 Germans were not only entrenched inside the buildings but also had a 150-mm gun as well as a 100-mm gun in support.⁶⁹ Germans and American artillery traded shots on various positions but the Germans continued to control Roccaromana by noon, 22 October.⁷⁰

Further intelligence indicated how the Germans held the town. The 601st Tank Destroyer Battalion, operating in the area but not in support of the 15th Infantry, reported on the twenty-second that four *Wehrmacht* detachments and three tanks garrisoned Roccaromana, the men used the buildings as cover, and "everything else [had] pulled back in small groups last night."⁷¹ Also on the twenty-second, an observation post sighted six 88-mm multi-purpose guns, three armored vehicles, as well as machine guns within the houses covering the approaches to the town and near the

church.⁷² On the twenty-third, a 30th Infantry patrol observed five to six Germans in each of Roccaromana's outlying homes. A captain stated that he "saw 10 or 12 peeking out of the windows and housetops, estimated to be at least a platoon." Artillery fired on the town again after this report. By 22 and 23 October, patrols from 1/15 might infiltrate the town but it remained firmly within German hands.⁷³ If the 15th had tried to seize Roccaromana, the German defenders would have made it very difficult and very costly.

The Germans had tanks in Roccaromana but it appears that 1/15 had no armor support until 24 October, after the Germans had withdrawn.⁷⁴ American patrols into Roccaromana reconnoitered the German positions and shelled the town but from 19 to 24 October, the Germans controlled the town. Early on 24 October, the Nazis simply withdrew from the town and left it for the Americans. Like Cisterna, Roccaromana remained a place that the Americans did not take until the Germans pulled out. Despite the lack of combined-arms fighting, the artillery bombardments of Roccaromana rendered the town devastated after eight days of fighting. Fifteenth Infantry enlisted man Vert Enis wrote in his diary that "the whole town was strewed with dead, German and American alike. The stink was worse than Avellino."⁷⁵

In addition to lacking armored assistance, because the attached armor units were operating between the Volturno and the mountains, there was limited air support, too. Whereas the Italian geography often negated tank assistance, the lack of close air support was primarily organizational: there remained too little coordination between the air and ground at lower levels. Truscott explained that the divisions would submit a list of preferred targets for air support to Fifth Army. Within twelve hours, a committee

would decide amongst all the divisions' requests which targets to bomb. The XII Air Support Command then assigned the planes, usually fighter-bombers, to each target. Division commanders like Truscott might never know whether the committee granted or rejected their requests.⁷⁶ In late-1943, the Air Force had yet to place forward air controllers within divisions to call more efficiently for immediate close air support. Until then, XII Air Support Command focused on targets further away from the immediate frontlines.⁷⁷ Until American units like the 3rd Infantry Division developed their tank-infantry cooperation as well as air-ground coordination, combat largely centered around the infantry-artillery relationship.

Operation SHINGLE: 18 November 1943 to 4 June 1944

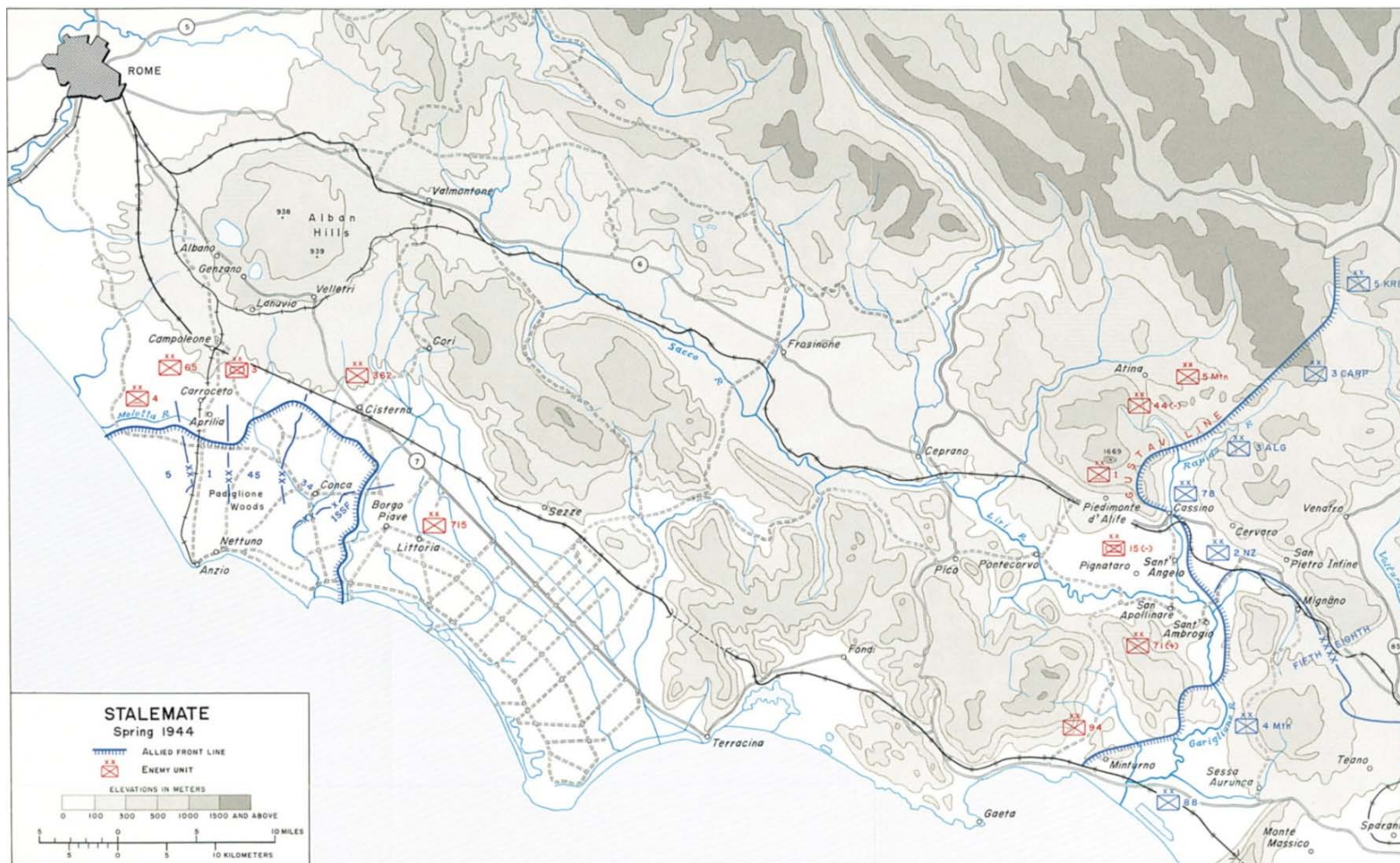
The fight around Roccaromana was merely part of the Allies' laborious drive north. After the 7th Infantry took Baja e Latina and the 15th finally secured an empty Roccaromana, the division took Pietravairano and Presenzano. After exhausting mountainous warfare, the division took Monte La Difensa, Monte Cesima, Monte Lungo, and Monte Rotondo near the German Winter Line in early November. On 17 November, after nearly two months of intense and constant combat against trench foot and sickness as well as German bullets, mines, and artillery, the men of the 3rd Infantry Division finally moved to the rear. By the 18th, the division was behind the lines to rest, refit, replace equipment and men, and begin preparations for their next campaign.

Frustrated with the slow progress of the Italian Campaign, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill revived a rejected plan of landing forces behind German lines to help the stalemated Allies in front of the Winter, or Gustav, Line to regain the momentum and

effect a quicker capture of Rome. This “end-run” had its opponents and clear drawbacks but Churchill, who many blamed for the fiasco that was the amphibious operation at Gallipoli in World War I, won the day and military leaders began planning Operation SHINGLE by December 1943.⁷⁸ VI Corps, including the 3rd Division, spearheaded the amphibious landings at Anzio in January 1944. It was their fourth amphibious operation. Operational success hinged on accomplishing two victories: quickly advancing to the Alban Hills to threaten Rome and the rear of the German Winter Line as well as a rapid hook-up between the Allies confronting the Winter Line with the VI Corps at Anzio. The Allies landed at Nettuno and Anzio on 22 January but were unable to break out toward Rome until May. The quick victory that Churchill foresaw for the landings at Anzio vanished and he became discouraged: “I had hoped we were hurling a wildcat onto the shore but all we got was a stranded whale.”⁷⁹ Figure 4.6 shows the area of operations around Rome by spring 1944; the 3rd Division remained deployed opposite the city of Cisterna di Littoria.⁸⁰

For veterans of the 3rd Infantry Division, Anzio evokes powerful memories, few of them positive. After the landings, the 30th Infantry’s history described what happened next as “four months of the worst hell on earth.”⁸¹ But Anzio was also a formative experience for the division that helped produce several innovations. The division also began to understand that its tank- infantry cooperation needed urgent refinement. The months spent on the Anzio beachhead was an unenviable nightmare but as the divisions’ various weapons systems began to merge, so the division enhanced its combined-arms capabilities and applied those lessons to urban combat.

Figure 4.6: Stalemate, Spring 1944



From November 1943 to January 1944, the division trained for the landing operation. One battalion-level exercise included the “utilization of all the fire power of all the Infantry [sic] weapons before requesting assistance.” Another emphasized the “employment of tanks.”⁸² There is no indication that of the 3rd Division’s infantry regiments had any urban combat training; likely because division planners did not make it a high priority aside from the landing operation itself.

On 22 January, the VI Corps went ashore on the beaches north and south of the coastal villages of Anzio and Nettuno. The landing occurred with total surprise and there was little resistance, although the division suffered a few casualties. Although the Allies achieved surprise, the *Wehrmacht* had suspected the Allies might try an amphibious end-run like this and began to hurry units toward Anzio. VI Corps commander General Lucas was caught in the quandary between military prudence—that is, build up the beachhead with enough men and supplies before advancing—and aggressiveness—push toward the Alban Hills, threaten Germany’s main lines of supply and communication between the Winter Line and Rome but risk weakening his force as he did so. By fatefully choosing the former, Lucas allowed the Germans to amass enough force to stop the Allies when Lucas began his own offensive. On the evening of 29-30 January, a week after the landings, Lucas ordered his units forward. Elements of the 3rd Infantry Division supported two U.S. Army Ranger battalions as they took the city of Cisterna di Littoria. Superior German numbers and firepower caught the two Ranger battalions, which lacked heavy weapons, in a powerful vise from which nearly

no one escaped. These two battalions suffered so many losses, mostly from prisoners, that the War Department disbanded this Ranger unit altogether.⁸³

What followed for the next three and a half months was the tragedy of an existence that defined Anzio. The Germans were largely on higher ground and their artillery, including monstrous 210-mm and 280-mm railroad guns, dubbed the “Anzio Express,” that could shell anywhere on the Anzio beachhead with ease. Because of this reality, nowhere was “behind” the lines; even the medical tents were not immune to the occasional, albeit unintentional, German shell. Some American soldiers preferred to suffer in their foxholes rather than in hospitals or aid stations. Life for frontline American and British soldiers was reminiscent of World War I. They had to perform most work at night: bringing up supplies, replacements, and food; maintaining communications and fighting positions; removing the dead and wounded; transferring men from one position to another; and aggressive, constant patrolling. One 3rd Infantry Division replacement described his Anzio experience: “It was just plain hell all through the day, and the nights were worse. . . . The [fox]hole got about six inches of water, and you couldn’t do anything but try to bail it out with your helmet. . . . If you got [hit] at night, you were lucky, because they could get you out right away. God help you if you got hit in daytime, because you might have to lay there all day before somebody could get to you.” His regimental commander greeted him and his fellow replacements with: “You’re going to suffer. You came here to suffer. You’re going to suffer in everything the Boche can throw at you and you’re going to suffer everything that goes with this miserable damn climate. But you’re going to take it like men.”⁸⁴

Frustration with the failure to capture Rome more quickly fell on General Lucas's shoulders. While Lucas certainly bears some responsibility for the failure at Anzio, he became an unwitting victim of the politics of war and lost command of VI Corps. On 17 February 1944, General Lucian Truscott, commanding general of the 3rd Infantry Division, became Lucas's deputy commander. Moving to division command was Brigadier General John W. "Iron Mike" O'Daniel, a bulldog of a man who commanded the division for the rest of the war. Six days later, Truscott replaced Lucas and inherited the debacle that was the Anzio beachhead. Under Truscott's leadership, the Allied position at Anzio bent under the weight of determined German counterattacks through February and March but never broke.

Anzio rightly looms large in the history of the 3rd Division because of the trials and miseries that the men endured. But Anzio is also important because the 3rd Infantry Division worked to improve its combat effectiveness. One example was the "Battle Patrol." During a stalemate in mid-March, the three regiments and the division itself created special Battle Patrols to help the division continually reconnoiter the German positions through hazardous patrols. In an example of bottom-up lesson learning, the Battle Patrol first appears in the 15th Infantry Regiment's monthly report for February 1944, when it suggested "that battle patrols of specifically trained men be developed to fulfill the more important patrol missions."⁸⁵ The other regiments soon followed suit with their own versions. The men in the Battle Patrols remained in the rear with hot food and shelter in order to maintain their mental edge because their nightly missions were often, according to one division staff officer, suicidal.⁸⁶ Each night Battle Patrols

went beyond the wire to accomplish intelligence-gathering missions.⁸⁷ These regimental Battle Patrols survived Anzio and remained in service reconnoitering and patrolling throughout the rest of the war, including towns and cities.

The second way in which the division sharpened its combat effectiveness at Anzio was by honing its combined-arms capabilities. This improvement may have occurred because the flat terrain around Anzio and Nettuno contrasted so much with the Apennine Mountains or perhaps because of the confines of the small beachhead converted tanks and tank destroyers into an auxiliary to artillery. While most of the 751st Tank Battalion was in an assembly area during the Roccaromana fight, the 7th and 15th Infantry had clearly integrated these tanks prior to the first breakout attempt on 29 January. Those not attached to an infantry regiment were ready to exploit a breakthrough or confront a counterattack.⁸⁸

The fighting at Anzio forced the 3rd Infantry Division to fight *with* and *alongside* its attached tanks and tank destroyers. Indeed, the 30th Infantry observed in January that “tanks are capable of giving Infantry closer support than they have been. If men are expendable, so are tanks. There must be closer coordination between tanks and Infantry.” The 30th Infantry was critical that “tanks fail to use their fire power against enemy infantry to full extent. Failure to engage even targets of opportunity on basis of exposing themselves is a fallacy, for in present terrain, they are exposed regardless of stealth or distance.”⁸⁹ These comments only underlie how much the infantry did not work with tanks before Anzio. A learning curve appeared at Anzio. As the positions stalemated, there were many houses used by both sides as outposts and strongpoints that

became the scenes of nasty, bitter fights. Tanks and tank destroyers helped to support American-held houses, destroy German-held houses, or, depending on location, use them as cover. For example, the 30th Infantry put L Company men in houses designated Houses 5 and 6. One squad and a machine gun were in House 6; half a squad and a machine gun were in House 5. Beyond the houses were fifty-two soldiers, antitank and anti-personnel mines, barbed wire, and a supporting tank.⁹⁰

The armored units first advocated enhancing tank-infantry cooperation. In February, the 751st Tank Battalion asserted that “tanks should not be employed in defensive positions solely as anti-tank guns.” Further, it contended that “tanks must have infantry protection at all times when occupying defensive positions.”⁹¹ Not surprisingly each party, tanks and infantry, saw the other as the problem. The next month, the 751st Tank Battalion presented more ideas for improving tank-infantry cooperation within the division. The first suggestion was most important: the need for tank and infantry commanders to plan together ahead of time and communicate clearly. That is, because “the tank commander must know [the infantry’s] plans, give him all the information you have about the enemy as well as your own troops. Ask the tank commander for his ideas before issuing orders.” Because the infantry was to protect tanks from antitank fire, company, battalion, and regimental officers should “give [tanks and tank destroyers] all the support you can with your mortars and assault guns by firing on known and suspected anti-tank guns. . . . Use prearrange[d] visual signals, during the attack, so the tank commander will know where you want his fire. Work together as a team.” The report also argued that fighting effectiveness was more than just tanks

working with infantry but also involved successful tank-artillery relations as well as tank-engineer teamwork, especially in antitank minefields.⁹² When the division made a series of limited attacks in April and fought with the 191st Tank Battalion, the 191st echoed many of these same sentiments: the importance of prior planning and clear communication between the infantry and armored elements. The 191st even recommended rehearsals of an operation to enhance tank-infantry cooperation.⁹³

The 601st Tank Destroyer Battalion also chafed under poor tank-infantry relations. Bothered that posting tank destroyers on the front lines nullified their mobility and long guns, the 601st recommended, instead, that infantry commanders take advantage of tank destroyers' long-range guns by posting them further behind the front lines.⁹⁴ Aside from the comments made by the 30th Infantry in January, the other infantry regiments did not see any need to improve their combined-arms capabilities. Until infantry officers understood their deficiencies in the area of combined-arms battle, there remained room for the 3rd Infantry Division to resolve its tank-tank destroyer-infantry-artillery challenges.

The tanks' and tank destroyers' ideas were applied by May when the division marched off the front lines. During that period, the division underwent intense training for a major Allied offensive out of Anzio and the Winter Line to capture Rome. The training and preparation indicate how the 3rd Infantry Division resolved its teamwork problems. For instance, the 7th Infantry's immediate objective included the town of Cisterna di Littoria. As such, regimental training included "street fighting," the wartime term for urban combat. This preparation was critical since Cisterna had remained in

German hands from the beginning of the campaign and the shelled ruins of the city had become a strongly defensible fortress that could delay any Allied attempt to break out of the Anzio beachhead.⁹⁵ Although not an impressive urban center (it had an estimated seven thousand people in it), one battalion commander saw Cisterna as “the principal communication center in the entire Anzio area” because one of the main roads to Rome ran through it.⁹⁶ Therefore, any breakthrough necessarily meant taking Cisterna. Indeed, although Cisterna had been thoroughly bombed over the previous four months, Lieutenant Colonel Frank Izenhour remembered that its defenses included “a series of trenches, gun pits, and fortified houses completely wired and avenues of approach mined.” The Americans estimated the enemy strength to consist of elements of the 362th Infantry Division, its artillery, and well over one hundred tanks.⁹⁷ An intelligence summary admiringly regarded the enemy’s position around Cisterna to be “an expert piece of workmanship.”⁹⁸ Quite reasonably, Truscott regarded Cisterna to be the “key locality in the German plan for containing the beachhead” as he planned the VI Corps’ offensive.⁹⁹

Accordingly, the 7th’s training included urban combat training nearly every day from 3 to 19 May as well as four days of tank-infantry training and lessons in what the regimental operations’ officer called “dirty fighting.”¹⁰⁰ Unfortunately for anyone seeking to better understand urban combat, there is little information on what that training included but the regiment did take advantage of an urban combat course on the coast at Nettuno where soldiers could conduct live-fire exercises with demolitions.¹⁰¹ Division leaders also realized that an urban operation required more specialized

equipment and an unnamed “street fighting battalion” requested a higher number of Thompson sub-machine guns, rifle-grenade launchers as well as 50-round drum and 30-round clip pouches to hold additional hand grenades, ostensibly for the attack on Cisterna di Littoria.¹⁰²

The division also specifically trained in tank-infantry cooperation, marking a significant change from past practice. Whilst the division emphasized tank-infantry teamwork for all the infantry regiments, including the 7th, the desire to improve its combined-arms effectiveness also led to some novel innovations. Former battalion commander John Heintges described General O’Daniel as “a doer . . . a gadgeteer. He’s always had some idea for new weapons.”¹⁰³ One of those new gadgets were the “Battle Sleds” that were “narrow steel tubes mounted on flat runners and were wide enough to carry one armed infantryman lying down.” An individual M4 Sherman could tow twelve sleds at one time, so a platoon of five tanks could tow sixty soldiers at once. The idea was to rapidly move soldiers to the battle safe from shrapnel and bullets.¹⁰⁴ Undoubtedly, the battle sled concept took tank-infantry cooperation to new directions and clearly shows that the 3rd Infantry Division had begun to understand the importance of combined-arms warfare.

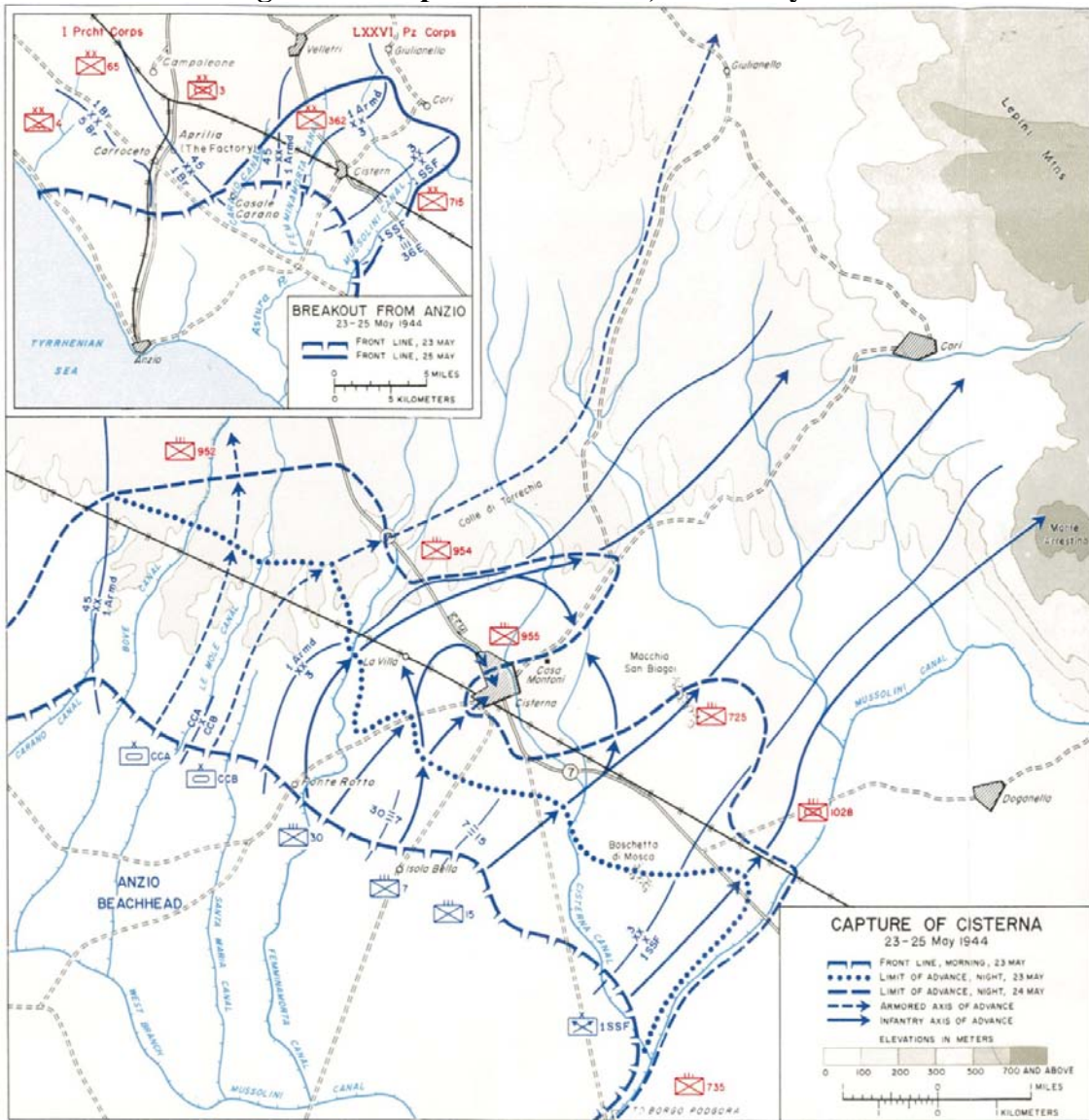
Consequently, infantry-tank training time increased. For example, the 15th Infantry trained with tanks from 7 to 18 May on the battle sleds as well as conducting mock assaults on fortified houses, which regimental and division operations officers expected to encounter after the breakout.¹⁰⁵ Likewise, the 30th Infantry reported that training during the month of May “was directed at [the] correction of deficiencies noted

during the previous combat period. . . . Stress was placed on coordinated tank-Infantry training and Tank-TD [tank destroyer]-Infantry control was developed.” This training also included combined-arms assaults and attacks with the battle sleds.¹⁰⁶

The plan called for a corps-wide breakout from the Anzio positions to hook up with the Fifth Army behind the Winter Line and then capture Rome. Figure 4.7 shows the attack on Cisterna in the early stages of the breakout.¹⁰⁷ The first priority was the capture of Cisterna by the 3rd Infantry Division and the 1st Armored Division. From there, the Americans could drive towards Cori and accomplish the operation’s first phase. The second phase was the movement towards Artena and then to Highway 6 and Valmontone. Once the Americans took Highway 6, they could cut off the Germans at the Winter Line.¹⁰⁸ The VI Corps had contingency plans to change their axis of advance if conditions called for it.

The final Allied push out of the Winter Line opened on 11 May under a tremendous artillery barrage in the Cassino sector. The attack itself out of Anzio began at 0545 on 23 May. After a massive Allied artillery barrage pounded the German positions, including those posted in the rubble around Cisterna di Littoria, the 3rd Infantry and 1st Armored Divisions lurched forth to break the four-month long stalemate. The Americans knew the Germans had used the previous four months to mine, fortify, conceal mortars and machine guns in houses and outbuildings, and otherwise prepare for this eventuality. Due to the number of mines and fortified positions, the going was initially quite rough, especially for tanks and tank destroyers. Inasmuch as the fighting devolved into the ferocious chaos of “a disorganized, bloody

Figure 4.7: Capture of Cisterna, 23-25 May 1944



brawl,” there remained a desperation to the American advance.¹⁰⁹ Soon after the attack started, the two advanced companies from the 7th Infantry claimed they were “pinned down.” O’Daniel growled that “we have no such words in our vocabulary now.” O’Daniel reminded the 7th’s Colonel Wiley O’Mohundro that he had to make his

objective by noon on the 23rd: “you’ll get a bonus if you do, something else if you don’t.”¹¹⁰ Despite this aggressiveness, the 3rd Division failed to approach Cisterna by the end of the first day.

The 7th advanced toward Cisterna from both its southwestern and northwestern sides. The 30th and 15th Infantry Regiments bypassed the town on both sides, focusing on their own regimental objectives. The division’s postwar history recorded that aerial and artillery bombardments had largely destroyed the town itself, thus allowing the Germans to use the rubble and wreckage to conceal “strongpoints, supply distributing points or tank-assembly areas.” American tankers were grateful that for the first time since landing in Italy the ground was flat and ideal for tank-infantry cooperation.¹¹¹

By 0900 on 24 May, division command wanted the 7th Infantry to extend patrols into Cisterna but the regiment would not be in a position to enter the town until that evening. German machine guns, small arms, and mines stalled the American advance. As the division’s intelligence officer put it: “enemy opposition to our attack on Cisterna consisted mainly of fiercely holding his well-protected and camouflaged positions in front of and along the railroad.” Further, the division staff detected “little or no traffic from Cisterna, indicating the enemy did not intend to evacuate the town.”¹¹²

At 1600, 3/7 received orders to take Cisterna. The regiment sent in the regimental Battle Patrol to reconnoiter the place, ceasing the bombardment while the patrol gathered intelligence. By 1750, a platoon of tanks reached Third Battalion to support the assault. Third Battalion requested a thirty-minute artillery concentration before it entered at 2000. By 2100, 3/7 was attacking but Second Battalion did not enter

the fight until 2200 when it received enough tank destroyer support.¹¹³ By now, both battalions had edged inside Cisterna, it was past sunset, and there was no sign that the combat would subside with the onset of night. After this second day of the offensive, losses mounted: the 15th Infantry commander reported that his L Company was “practically non-existent.”¹¹⁴

At 2230, Third Battalion urgently reported that American artillery was shelling them and it took thirty minutes to find out what artillery it was. Until midnight, 3/7 encountered little resistance yet within Cisterna. At 0020 on 25 May, Second Battalion radioed that it was “working from house to house—all houses occupied and mined.” O’Daniel ordered them to move the tanks from the 751st into Cisterna but poor communications prevented this move.¹¹⁵ By 0435, German snipers and machine guns had kept 3/7 from advancing deeper inside Cisterna but the battalion slowly ground its way past this fire. By 0500, the Second Battalion had finally gotten through the antitank and anti-personnel mines but found it impossible to bypass fortified houses since each house was a small fort unto itself. Further, 2/7 relied more on its tank destroyers because it had lost contact with its attached tanks.¹¹⁶

Fighting in an urban environment is challenging enough but these two battalions were attacking in the dead of night as well. Russ Cloer, a replacement reconnaissance officer, described the scene within Cisterna that night: “Fires were everywhere from artillery and white phosphorous mortar fire. We choked on smoke, cordite, and cement dust from the shattered concrete buildings. . . . The streets were littered with corpses

lying where they fell, abandoned weapons, destroyed vehicles and collapsed buildings. This was what Hell must be like.”¹¹⁷

Cloer also wrote that he led a reconnaissance patrol from the 7th Infantry Headquarters Company to find a new command post within the town. The fires within Cisterna gave him all the light he needed to see at night. A self-propelled 75-mm gun accompanied his patrol. Together, his jeep’s machine gun and the self-propelled gun fired at upper-story windows and blasted into buildings wherever they found enemy resistance. The streets were nearly impassable for vehicles; the self-propelled gun could not help but drive over the bodies of dead men.¹¹⁸

By 0600, the men could see better and the fighting continued within Cisterna as the two American battalions fought from house to house and street to street toward each other; the Third from the north and the Second from the south.¹¹⁹ By early morning, 3/7 was advancing with two assault companies and one in reserve, informing regimental headquarters that it was “moving into town and firing TDs [tank destroyers] extensively” with tanks contributing to the heavy fire fight.¹²⁰ None of this was easy: Colonel O’Mohundro radioed that “I may need some help. [Third Battalion] is held up NW of town. . . . They are suffering heavy casualties.” By the afternoon, the Third Battalion must have lost its tanks or needed more, stating first that the situation was under control “if we can get tanks” but later that “we are still holding but need tanks badly.” Third Battalion received those additional tanks by 1300.¹²¹

Individual acts of bravery dotted the intense combat. Sergeant Samuel W. Pollard, a mortar section leader in F Company organized his own patrol to eliminate the

snipers in Cisterna. His men covering him with fire, Pollard assaulted his first house by himself, taking four prisoners. Having success there, he searched every house on the street, constantly exposing himself to heavy German small arms and automatic fire. The last house on the street had an especially heavy volume of fire but he charged it anyhow, entered through a large hole in the house, wounded three German soldiers downstairs, and took twenty prisoners upstairs. He turned over these men to guards and, upon re-examining the last house, noticed a large tunnel. Pollard fired into the tunnel and called on everyone there to surrender. One hundred seven men filed out and gave themselves up. Pollard took one hundred thirty-four Germans prisoner and later received the Distinguished Service Cross.¹²²

By late morning, the two battalions were slowly advancing toward each other. They finally encountered the last main obstacle in the center of Cisterna: reports said it was a tower or castle that looked “like it was well held by pillboxes” with an antitank gun guarding the only entrance.¹²³ Fighting became reminiscent of a “street brawl” when 2/7 began to fire on the tower by 1530; they reported it captured by 1542.¹²⁴ The Americans set up a machine gun across the street from the antitank gun, keeping the gun crew away so an M4 Sherman tank from the 751st Tank Battalion could enter the castle and destroy the gun. The Americans stormed the castle, tossed grenades into every opening and caused two hundred Germans under the castle to surrender, including the commander of the city’s defense.¹²⁵ With the commander’s surrender, all that remained was to clear out isolated pockets of resistance. The two battalions received help from

1/7 around noon when it joined the urban fight but it was not until 2000 that the 7th Infantry had finally secured the town and claimed it captured.¹²⁶

Unlike previous battles like Acerno and Roccaromana, where there were no tanks, or Fedala in November 1942 where tanks worked independent of the infantry, the 3rd Infantry Division had undertaken its first major urban assault by means of a combined-arms attack. It was slow, grinding, violent work but the division was successful. Cisterna was gutted. But taking the small community was costly: 3/7 lost its commander, three company commanders, and 80 percent of the G.I.s who began the attack.¹²⁷

As the 7th Infantry fought for Cisterna, its sister regiments moved around the town and pursued the Germans northeastward around the southern edge of the Alban Hills. After cracking the initial defenses, the going turned from a slow attack into a more rapid pursuit as the Germans retreated from both the Anzio beachhead and the Winter Line. There was some resistance in the town of Artena as the division fought to cut the Germans from their line of retreat to Rome. With armored and artillery assistance, the 15th Infantry took Artena and then defended it against a German counterattack in late May. On 4 June, elated Romans greeted the triumphant Allies as they entered an undefended capital. The Germans moved to better positions further north. What the Allies had established as the main objective the previous September—the capture of Rome—they finally accomplished nine months later. Two days later, American, British, and Canadian forces landed in France, effectively turning Italy into a secondary theater. The men of the 3rd Infantry Division enjoyed a long-deserved break

in Rome and, by July, began preparing for their fifth and final amphibious operation: Operation DRAGOON and the invasion of southern France. By August, the 1st, 3rd, and 5th Infantry Divisions would all be inside France fighting the German *Wehrmacht* and capturing many villages, towns, and cities.

Most of the combat the 3rd Infantry Division faced in Sicily and Italy was against a retreating German Army. Still, the Germans' defense slowed the Allied advance to a costly crawl. Their use of Sicily's and Italy's rough mountainous terrain as well as their prolific use of anti-personnel and antitank mines, all contributed toward that effectiveness. These series of withdrawals affected the Americans' experience of urban combat in that the Nazis saw few urban locales as more valuable than their own men and not worth sacrificing valuable German soldiers in extended defense. Thus, they abandoned large urban areas like Palermo, Messina, and Rome without a fight. In Russia and France, it was Adolf Hitler who regarded places like Stalingrad and Brest more valuable than the defenders and ordered that each German soldier fight to the death. Nevertheless, when the Germans did choose to make a stand, however brief, like in Cisterna and Roccaromana in October 1943 and Cisterna di Littoria in May 1944, they could certainly force the Americans to pay for those places.

By June 1944, 3rd Division operations showed that the Americans clearly understood the value of maneuver as evidenced at Acerno, Avellino, and Cisterna di Littoria as well as the value of bypassing a place when necessary. They had shown there appeared to be value in dedicating an entire division to just one place, although most of these defended towns were generally small. What the Americans would do if the Nazis

mounted a strong defense of a large city remained to be seen. For now, the Americans were wise to keep in mind that their first priority was to destroy the German *Wehrmacht* and the Americans captured towns only insofar as it helped them defeat the enemy. Terrain and cities were not ends in themselves but only means to an end of defeating the Germans.

The Americans did not fight the Germans as effectively as they might have but the 3rd Infantry Division in Italy showed that they were making improvement. The division did not list any armor attached to it in Sicily until the very end. When it went to Italy, it had a battalion of tanks and of tank destroyers that often remained in rear areas. The rough topography was a key reason for this rear placement and the 3rd Division occasionally relied heavily on its armored units during operations such as the riverine assault across the Volturno River in mid-October. In general, the division did not fight its German opponents as a combined-arms division for the first part of its Italian Campaign.

By February and March 1944, there was a clear change in thinking and behavior when the division began to adopt more of a combined-arms mindset. It is instructive that the catalyst to increase tank-infantry capabilities came from the tankers within the open confines of the Anzio beachhead. Armor officers perceived that they offered more to the division and pressed for a more effective role. By the planning stages of the Anzio breakout, the 3rd Division's commanding general, John O'Daniel, certainly had heard what they said, even to the point of innovating new levels of cooperation with his battle sleds. Inasmuch as post-battle reviews of the battle sleds were generally negative,

it did not hinder the development of the tank-tank destroyer-infantry dynamic.¹²⁸

Further, it is noteworthy that in their June reports, the infantry regiments also recognized a need for better infantry-tank teamwork and the 751st Tank Battalion continued preaching it.¹²⁹ For all of the pain and death of the Anzio Campaign, it had taught these Americans the importance and the efficacy of combined-arms battle; something they continued to develop and improve through France and Germany.

These new combined-arms changes are apparent in the fight for Cisterna di Littoria from 24 to 25 May. It truly was a tank-infantry fight as contemporary records indicate. The tank-infantry cooperation in Cisterna di Littoria was not an accident: the street fighting course at Nettuno and the intense tank-infantry training prepared the infantrymen and tankers. In this way, Anzio—and, by extension, Cisterna di Littoria—was a turning point for the 3rd Division in World War II: as the division learned to sharpen its ability to coordinate the different combat arms in general so it improved its effectiveness in the urban environment in particular.

While the 3rd Infantry Division demonstrated that it had learned that tanks and infantry could work together in towns and village, it is important to note there were two other large urban battles during this campaign for Rome, the battles for Ortona and Cassino. It is noteworthy that the Allies fought for these cities similar to how the 3rd Division engaged the Germans in Cisterna di Littoria. The Allies' behavior in these battles showed that the improvements made in the 3rd Infantry Division were neither isolated nor in an organizational vacuum.

From 20 to 27 December on Italy's east coast, the 1st Canadian Infantry Division fought to remove veteran German paratroopers who had time to prepare an effective defense of Ortona. The Canadians, like the Americans, learned to use all their weapons at hand: tanks, antitank cannon and rockets, engineers blowing holes inside buildings to permit movement, and small teams moving under cover to take building after building. Because the Canadians were new to this style of fighting, the rubble and destruction, the narrow, winding streets, and the Germans' habit of infiltrating behind the Canadians, all conspired to turn Ortona into "some kind of evil maze."¹³⁰ In fighting from house to house, the Canadians dealt with the familiar problem of advancing under cover. Their solution was to modify a technique called "mouseholing," developed in their battle-drill schools whereby soldiers used tools to create holes in walls. To speed the process, engineers used explosives to blow holes in walls, soldiers then charged through and violently cleared rooms and buildings without exposing themselves to German fire on the streets.¹³¹ Breaching buildings by the mouseholing technique became the accepted practice among the Allies by war's end.¹³² The 1st Canadian Division forced the Germans out of Ortona but, during the course of the entire month, lost over 2,300 dead and wounded. In contrast, the German 1st Parachute Division only suffered 455 men killed and wounded. Sadly, an estimated 1,300 Italian citizens died in the crossfire.¹³³

In January, the American 34th Infantry Division attempted to pierce the Gustav Line. By early February, the division had fought to Cassino but failed to capture the place because the town is below the formidable Monte Cassino and near defended rivers. However, American riflemen used tanks alongside them as they methodically worked to

extricate German soldiers from the sturdy two-story buildings. Historian Martin Blumenson summed up the fighting for Cassino best when he observed that it became “street fighting of the most vicious sort.”¹³⁴ The Allies would not control the destroyed town until the offensive to capture Rome.

The Canadians’ battle for Ortona and the 34th Division’s battle for Cassino does not appear to have affected what the 7th Infantry Regiment did in Cisterna. While the practice of moving from building to building through blown interior walls, also known as mouseholing, became a standard practice, it is not clear whether the Canadians influenced that lesson learning. What is significant about Ortona and Cassino is that the Allies, like at Cisterna, relied upon a combined-arms solution. The 3rd Infantry Division’s artillery-tank-tank destroyer-infantry battle for Cisterna is part of a larger pattern of the Allies mastering combined-arms warfare. The stalemate at Cassino later influenced how the Americans attacked the city of Aachen later in 1944. From their Italian experience, American intelligence analysts, commanders, and soldiers took note that more intense urban warfare awaited them in the months to come and accordingly began adapting a combined-arms mindset.

Endnotes

¹See Martin Blumenson, *Salerno to Cassino* (Office of the Chief of Military History, United States Army: Washington, D.C., 1969), chapters 1 and 2.

²For more on the coalitional strife and strategic muddle, see Carlo D’Este, *Fatal Decision: Anzio and the Battle for Rome* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 11-12.

³Blumenson, *Salerno to Cassino*, Map II.

- ⁴ Lucian K. Truscott, Jr., *Command Missions: A Personal Story* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1954; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1979), 257. Historian Rick Atkinson describes the terrain best when he writes that “eight hundred miles long, [Italy] was the most vertebrate of countries, with a mountain spine and bony ribs.” Rick Atkinson, *The Day of Battle: The War in Sicily and Italy, 1943-1944* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 2007), 181.
- ⁵ Donald G. Taggart, *History of the Third Infantry Division in World War II* (Washington, D.C.: Infantry Journal Press, 1947; reprint, Nashville, TN: Battery Press, 1997), 97.
- ⁶ Headquarters, North African Theater of Operations, United States Army. *Training Memorandum, no. 3: Lessons from the Italian Campaign*, 49, 10 March 1944, DRL.
- ⁷ Headquarters, Mediterranean Theater of Operations, United States Army. *Training Memorandum, no. 2: Lessons from the Italian Campaign*, 112, 15 March 1945, DRL.
- ⁸ Truscott, *Command Missions*, 275-6.
- ⁹ Sherman W. Pratt, *Autobahn to Berchtsgaden: A Combat Soldier's View of His Role in World War II* (Baltimore: Gateway Press, 1992), 296-7.
- ¹⁰ In the first eighteen days of November 1943, the 3rd Division's 15th Infantry Regiment lost 63 men killed, 286 wounded, and 608 sick to disease. The 30th Infantry lost 83 men killed, 340 wounded, and 440 sick to disease. See “Report of Operations of Third Infantry Division, Nov. 1-18, 1943,” n.d., 10, File 303-0.3, Box 5393, RG 407, Entry 427, NA. Adding to those numbers the missing, injured in action, and non-battle injuries, each regiment suffered over 1,000 casualties between 1 to 18 November.
- ¹¹ John C. McManus, *American Courage, American Carnage: The 7th Infantry Regiment's Combat Experience, 1812 Through World War II* (New York: Tom Doherty Associates, 2009), 352. For Hollywood's graphic portrayal of Italy's rugged ground and rainy weather, see *The Story of G.I. Joe* (United Artists, 1945).
- ¹² Atkinson, *Day of Battle*, 186.
- ¹³ John T. Mason, Jr., quoted in Atkinson, *Day of Battle*, 186.
- ¹⁴ Regimental commander of 142nd Infantry Regiment, quoted in Blumenson, *Salerno to Cassino*, 97-8.

- ¹⁵ General Heinrich von Vietinghoff, quoted in Charles B. MacDonald, *The Mighty Endeavor: American Armed Forces in the European Theater in World War II* (New York : Oxford University Press, 1969), 187.
- ¹⁶ D'Este, *Fatal Decision*, 41.
- ¹⁷ Blumenson, *Salerno to Cassino*, 157.
- ¹⁸ Rupert Prohme, *History of 30th Infantry Regiment World War II* (Washington: Infantry Journal Press, 1947), 76.
- ¹⁹ Prohme, *History of 30th Infantry Regiment*, 79.
- ²⁰ "Report of Operations for September 1943," n.d., 2 in "3rd Infantry Division Report of Operations, 18 Sept-31 Oct. 1943," File 303-0.3, Box 5392, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ²¹ *Salerno: American Operations From the Beaches to the Volturno* (Washington, D.C.: Historical Division, War Department, 1944; reprint, Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1990), 83.
- ²² Truscott, *Command Missions*, 258.
- ²³ Prohme, *History of 30th Infantry Regiment*, 78.
- ²⁴ Prohme, *History of 30th Infantry Regiment*, 79.
- ²⁵ Prohme, *History of 30th Infantry Regiment*, 81.
- ²⁶ Truscott, *Command Missions*, 257-8.
- ²⁷ Taggart, *History of the Third Infantry Division in World War II*, 87.
- ²⁸ Blumenson, *Salerno to Cassino*, 161-2.
- ²⁹ Entry 121 at 2140, 27 September in "G-3 Journal and File, 27-30 September 43," File 303-3.2, Box 5448, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ³⁰ Nathan William White, *From Fedala to Berchtesgaden: A History of the Seventh United States Infantry in World War II* (n.p., 1947), 47.

- ³¹ White, *From Fedala to Berchtesgaden*, 47; “Unit Journal, Seventh Infantry For Period 26 August 1943-1 November 1943,” 16 in “7th Infantry Journal and File, 26 August-1 December 1943,” File 303-INF(7)-0.7, Box 5610, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ³² Entry 100 at 1615, 29 September in “G-3 Journal and File, 27-30 September 1943,” File 303-3.2, Box 5448, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ³³ N. W. Dragneff, “Report of Operations,” 8 November 1943, 1 in “3rd Infantry Division Report of Operations, 18 September to 31 October 1943,” File 303-0.3, Box 5392, RG 407, Entry 427, NA. Lieutenant General John Heintges describes more fully his battalion, 3/7, moved at night in Interview of Lieutenant General John A. Heintges, USA, retired by Major Jack A. Pellicci, 1974, Senior Officers Oral History Project (John A. Heintges Papers, USAMHI), 190-1.
- ³⁴ Grover Wilson, “G-2 Periodic Report for 30 September to 1 October 1943,” 1 October 1943, 1 in “G-2 Periodic Reports, September-October 1943,” File 303-2.1, Box 5430, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ³⁵ Truscott, *Command Missions*, 262.
- ³⁶ Vert Enis Diary, 38.
- ³⁷ Truscott, *Command Missions*, 263. One example of this practice was in Pietremelara where the Germans used demolitions to bring down houses and block the Americans’ advance. See Robert McFarland, *History of the 15th Infantry Regiment in World War II* (n.p., n.d., personal collection) 93. A draft copy of this history is at Fort Benning’s Donovan Research Library: “A History of the Fifteenth Infantry Regiment in World War II,” (DRL, n.d.).
- ³⁸ Vert Enis Diary, 40, personal possession. He does not mention what town this was.
- ³⁹ Blumenson, *Salerno to Cassino*, 188.
- ⁴⁰ Entries 163 at 1400 and 171 at 1432, 13 October 1943 in “G-3 Journal and File, 13 October 1943,” File 303-3.2, Box 5449, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁴¹ Entry 118 at 1555 on 14 October in “G-3 Journal and File, 14 October 1943,” File 303-3.2, Box 5450, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁴² White, *From Fedala to Berchtesgaden*, 58.

- ⁴³ White, *From Fedala to Berchtesgaden*, 57. This Cisterna is a different town from Cisterna di Littoria that the division faced outside of Anzio and captured in late-May 1944.
- ⁴⁴ *From the Volturno to the Winter Line, 6 October-15 November 1943* (Washington, D.C.: Historical Division, War Department, 1945; reprint, Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1990), 59.
- ⁴⁵ Lieutenant Colonel Albert O'Connor, G-3 Report for 14-15 October 1943, 15 October 1943, 1-2 in "3rd Infantry Division Report of Operations, 18 Sept-31 Oct. 1943," File 303-0.3, Box 5392, RG 407, Entry 427, NA. A division intelligence report says that three German tanks approached Cisterna but were put out of action by American artillery and mortar fire (Major Grover Wilson, G-2 Periodic Report for 14-15 October 1943, 15 October 1943, 2 in "G-2 Periodic Reports, September-October 1943," File 303-2.1, Box 5430, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.) To add more confusion to the mix, the 601st Tank Destroyer Battalion records two tank destroyers were disabled after mortar and machine gun fire threw their tracks within Cisterna. Unfortunately, the report only gives the unit's map coordinates and does not specify if it was in Cisterna (Captain Herbert E. Sundstrom, "Operations Report, 'C' Company (less 2nd Plat.), 13-15 October 1943," n.d., 1 in "601 Tank Destroyer Battalion Unit Journal, October 1943," TDBN-601-07, Box 18611, RG 407, Entry 427, NA). It is possible that the intelligence report confused whose tanks were in the town. Inasmuch as the 7th Infantry had A/751st Tank Battalion and C/601st Tank Destroyer Battalion attached to them the records do not state how many accompanied Third Battalion into Cisterna. Lieutenant Colonel Albert O'Connor, G-3 Report for 14-15 October 1943, 15 October 1943, 3 in "3rd Infantry Division Report of Operations, 18 September-31 October 1943," File 303-0.3, Box 5392, RG 407, Entry 427, NA. The 7th Infantry Regiment's postwar history clearly states that armor was with 3/7 at Cisterna and lost several tanks when they first entered the town. White, *From Fedala to Berchtesgaden*, 57.
- ⁴⁶ The promise to bypass Cisterna is here: Entry 172 at 2250 on 14 October in "G-3 Journal and File, 14 October 1943," RG 407, Entry 427, NA. That they had not by 0500 on the 15th is here: Lieutenant Colonel Albert O'Connor, "G-3 Report for 14-15 October 1943," 15 October 1943, 2 in "3rd Infantry Division Report of Operations, 18 September-31 October 1943," File 303-0.3, Box 5392, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁴⁷ Entry 40 at 0910, 15 October in "G-3 Journal and File, 15 October 1943," File 303-3.2, Box 5450, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁴⁸ Entry 40 at 0910, 15 October in "G-3 Journal and File, 15 October 1943," RG 407, Entry 427, NA.

- ⁴⁹ Entry 19 at 0710, 15 October in “G-3 Journal and File, 15 October 1943,” RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁵⁰ Entry 74 at 1130, 15 October in “G-3 Journal and File, 15 October 1943,” RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁵¹ White, *From Fedala to Berchtesgaden*, 58.
- ⁵² The G-3 periodic report for 14-15 October states merely that “39th FA Bn was assigned to support advance of 7th Inf at 1530A. 10th FA Bn was moved and occupied position to support the 7th Inf.” Nothing is said about any supporting fire. Albert O’Connor, “G-3 Report for 14-15 October 1943,” 15 October 1943, 3 in “3rd Infantry Division Report of Operations, 18 September to 31 October 1943,” RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁵³ Truscott, *Command Missions*, 274.
- ⁵⁴ McFarland, *History of the 15th Infantry Regiment in World War II*, 83.
- ⁵⁵ Truscott, *Command Missions*, 278.
- ⁵⁶ White, *From Fedala to Berchtesgaden*, 62.
- ⁵⁷ 2/15 to 15th Infantry, 17 October 1943, 4 in “15th Infantry Journal and File, 16-31 October 1943,” File 303-INF(15)-0.7, Box 5621, RG 407, Entry 427, NA; *A History of the Fifteenth Infantry Regiment*, 141.
- ⁵⁸ S-6, 3d Bn to Asst S-5, 18 October 1943, 2 in “15th Infantry Journal and File, 16-31 October 1943,” RG 407, Entry 427, NA; *A History of the Fifteenth Infantry Regiment*, 142.
- ⁵⁹ McFarland, *History of the 15th Infantry Regiment in World War II*, 84.
- ⁶⁰ McFarland, *History of the 15th Infantry Regiment in World War II*, 85-6. The division and regimental journals indicate that the Germans used four tanks to re-take Roccaromana. S-6 to War Room, 19 October 1943, 1 in “15th Infantry Journal and File, 16-31 October 1943,” RG 407, Entry 427, NA; Entry 2 at 0040, 19 October in “G-3 Journal and File, 19 October 1943,” File 303-3.2, Box 5450, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁶¹ S-6, 2d Bn to Asst S-5, 19 October 1943, 2 in “15th Infantry Journal and File, 16-31 October 1943,” RG 407, Entry 427, NA.

- ⁶² S-6, 2d Bn to Asst S-5, 19 October, 2 in "15th Infantry Journal and File, 16-31 October 1943," RG 407, Entry 427, NA; S-6 to G-6, 19 October, 3 in "15th Infantry Journal and File, 16-31 October 1943," RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁶³ Entry 124 at 1910, 19 October in "G-3 Journal and File, 19 October 43," File 303-3.2, Box 5450, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁶⁴ The request for tanks: S-5 to Asst S-5, 20 October, 1 in "15th Infantry Journal and File, 16-31 October 1943," RG 407, Entry 427, NA. The denial of tanks: Albert O'Connor, "G-3 Report for 20-21 October 1943," 21 October 1943, 1 in "3rd Infantry Division Report of Operations, 18 September to 31 October 1943," RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁶⁵ S-3, 1st Bn to S-5; S-5 to War Room; S-5 to S-3, 1st Bn, 20 October, 1 in "15th Infantry Journal and File, 16-31 October 1943," RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁶⁶ Entry 120 at 1630, 20 October in "G-3 Journal and File, 20 October 43," File 303-3.2, Box 5450, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁶⁷ McFarland, *History of the 15th Infantry Regiment in World War II*, 87-8.
- ⁶⁸ McFarland, *History of the 15th Infantry Regiment in World War II*, 88.
- ⁶⁹ Entry 160 at 2030, 21 October in "G-3 Journal and File, 21 October 43," File 303-3.2, Box 5450, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁷⁰ Albert O'Connor, "G-3 Report for 21-22 October 1943," 22 October 1943, 2 in "3rd Infantry Division Report of Operations, 18 September to 31 October 1943," RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁷¹ Entry 23 at 0825, 22 October in "G-3 Journal and File, 22 October 43," File 303-3.2, Box 5451, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁷² Entry 107 at 1655, 22 October in "G-3 Journal and File, 22 October 43," File 303-3.2, Box 5451, RG 407, Entry 427, NA. Machine guns near the church: 320 Airborne Arty to S-2, 15 Inf, 23 October, 3 in "15th Infantry Journal and File, 16-31 October 1943," RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁷³ Entry 67 at 1752, 23 October in "G-3 Journal and File, 23 October 43," File 303-3.2, Box 5452, RG 407, Entry 427, NA. See also Entry 57 at 1150, 22 October in "G-3 Journal and File, 22 October 43," File 303-3.2, Box 5451, RG 407, Entry 427, NA; S-3, 15th Inf to S-3, 1st Bn, 22 October, 5 in "15th Infantry Journal and File, 16-31 October 1943," RG 407, Entry 427, NA.

- ⁷⁴ In a conversation between Eagles and Truscott on 24 October, Eagles says that “I have my [antitank] now up on the just W of Castle hill [sic].” Entry 29 at 0945, 24 October in “G-3 Journal and File, 24 October 43,” File 303-3.2, Box 5452, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁷⁵ Vert Enis Diary, 48.
- ⁷⁶ Truscott, *Command Missions*, 278-9. After bemoaning this organizational inefficiency, Truscott discusses how he and other generals experimented with forward air controllers at lower organizational levels to some success.
- ⁷⁷ For example, on 23 October, a civilian reported Germany artillery in San Felice and Pietramelara, to the southwest and west, respectively. The response was to “get our air missions on it.” CO, 3d Bn, 15th Inf to S-3, 15th Inf., 23 October, 4 in “15th Infantry Journal and File, 16-31 October 1943,” RG 407, Entry 427, NA. Air-ground coordination underwent vast changes and improvements during this time; it was slow but steady. See Alan F. Wilt’s “Allied Cooperation in Sicily and Italy, 1943-1945” in *Case Studies in the Development of Close Air Support*, ed. Benjamin Franklin Cooling (Washington, D.C.: Office of Air Force History, United States Air Force, 1990), 202-3.
- ⁷⁸ For more on this debate and the influence of British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, see D’Este, *Fatal Decision*, chapters 4 and 6. See also Blumenson, *Salerno to Cassino*, chapter 17.
- ⁷⁹ MacDonald, *The Mighty Endeavor*, 201.
- ⁸⁰ Blumenson, *Salerno to Cassino*, Map VII.
- ⁸¹ Prohme, *History of 30th Infantry Regiment World War II*, 103.
- ⁸² Major Frank C. Sinsel, “Battalion in Attack,” 22 November 1943, “7th Infantry Training Memoranda,” File 303-INF(7)-3.13, Box 5618, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁸³ Of the 767 in these two battalions, only six returned; over 500 surrendered. MacDonald, *The Mighty Endeavor*, 201. Historiographically, Lucas’s decision has its supporters and critics. Although he would later replace Lucas as VI Corps commander, General Truscott defended Lucas’s decision to build strength before pushing ahead. Truscott, *Command Missions*, 311.
- ⁸⁴ Unknown soldier quoted in Taggart, *History of the Third Infantry Division in World War II*, 124-6.

- ⁸⁵ Lieutenant Colonel Roy Moore, "15th Report of Operations for February 1944," 6 March 1944, 3 in "Unit Monthly Reports of Operations for February 1944," File 303-0.3, Box 5393, RG 407, Entry 427, NA. Nathan White confirms the 15th as the "inventor" of this idea (White, *From Fedala to Berchtesgaden*, 98) but Hugh Scott attributes it to General O'Daniel. Hugh A. Scott, *The Blue and White Devils: A Personal Memoir and History of the Third Infantry Division in World War II* (Nashville: Battery Press, 1984), 114.
- ⁸⁶ Scott, *The Blue and White Devils*, 114.
- ⁸⁷ To see the structure of the 7th Infantry's Battle Patrol, see White, *From Fedala to Berchtesgaden*, 98-9.
- ⁸⁸ Field Order #3, 28 January 1944, 2 in "Report of Operations: The Landing at Nettuno, Jan 22-31st, 44," File 303-0.3, Box 5393, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁸⁹ Lieutenant Colonel Lionel C. McGarr, "Report of Operations Thirtieth Infantry," 5 February 1944, 7 in "Unit Reports of Operations From 22 Jan-31 Jan 1944," File 303-0.3, Box 5393, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁹⁰ "Unit Journal Notes," 17 March 1944, 1 in "601 Tank Destroyer Battalion Unit Journal, March 1944," TDBN-601-0.7, Box 18612, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁹¹ Lieutenant Colonel Louis A. Hamack, "Report of Action Against the Enemy for the Month of February 1944," 7 March 1944, 5 in "Unit Monthly Reports of Operations for February 1944," File 303-0.3, Box 5393, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁹² Lieutenant Colonel Louis A. Hamack, "Report of Action Against the Enemy for the Month of March 1944," 5 April 1944, 5 in "Unit Monthly Reports of Operations for March 1944," File 303-0.3, Box 5394, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁹³ Major Asbury W. Lee, "Detailed Account of 'Mr. Green Operation,'" 1 May 1944, 5-6, 8 in "Unit Monthly Reports of Operations for April 1944," File 303-0.3, Box 5395, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁹⁴ Captain James C. Grimes, "Reports of Operations for Period 1-31 March 1944," 3 April 1944, 2 in "Unit Monthly Reports of Operations for March 1944," File 303-0.3, Box 5394, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁹⁵ D'Este, *Fatal Decision*, 358.
- ⁹⁶ Lieutenant Colonel Frank M. Izenhour, "Breakout Anzio Beachhead, 23-25 May 1944," (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Command and Staff College, School of Combined

Arms, 1946-1947), 4. Estimation of population comes from White, *From Fedala to Berchtesgaden*, 117.

⁹⁷ Izenhour, "Breakout Anzio Beachhead," 5.

⁹⁸ "Section II—Intelligence Summary of Enemy Operations, 1-31 May 1944," 1 in "Report of Operations of the Third Infantry Division, May 1-31 1944," File 303-0.3, Box 5395, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.

⁹⁹ Truscott, *Command Missions*, 371.

¹⁰⁰ See 7th Infantry S-3 Reports, 1-31 May 1944 in "7th Infantry S-3 Reports, January-May 1944," File 303-INF(7)-3.1, Box 5614, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.

¹⁰¹ Taggart, *History of the Third Infantry Division in World War II*, 148; Captain R. T. Young, "Training Memorandum, #17: Street Fighting, 2nd Bn, 7th Inf.," 4 May 1944 in "Training Memorandum, 1944," File 303-INF(7)-3.13, Box 5618, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.

¹⁰² "Section III—Supply," 1 in "Report of Operations of the Third Infantry Division, May 1-31 1944," File 303-0.3, Box 5395, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.

¹⁰³ Interview of Lieutenant General John A. Heintges, (John A. Heintges Papers, USAMHI), 240.

¹⁰⁴ Taggart, *History of the Third Infantry Division in World War II*, 148.

¹⁰⁵ See "15th Infantry Report of Operations, Journal and File, May 1944," File 303-INF(15)-3.2, Box 5626, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.

¹⁰⁶ "Report of Operations-Thirtieth Infantry," n.d., 1 in "Unit Monthly Report of Operations for May 1944," File 303-0.3, Box 5395, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.

¹⁰⁷ Ernest F. Fisher, Jr., *Cassino to the Alps* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1977; reprint, Washington, D. C.: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1993), Map V.

¹⁰⁸ This plan comes from Truscott, *Command Missions*, 372-3 and Fisher, *Cassino to the Alps*, 111-2.

¹⁰⁹ McManus, *American Courage, American Carnage*, 404.

¹¹⁰ General John O'Daniel quoted in Fisher, *Cassino to the Alps*, 133.

- ¹¹¹ Taggart, *History of the Third Infantry Division in World War II*, 154.
- ¹¹² “Section II—Intelligence Summary of Enemy Operations, 1-31 May 1944,” 1 in “Report of Operations of the Third Infantry Division, May 1-31 1944,” RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹¹³ Unit Journal for May 1944, 8-9 in “7th Infantry Journal and File, May-June 1944,” File 303-INF(7)-0.7, Box 5611, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹¹⁴ Entry 224 at 2025, 24 May in “G-3 Journal and File, 23-25 May 1944,” 24, File 303-3.2, Box 5469, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹¹⁵ Unit Journal for May 1944, 10 in “7th Infantry Journal and File, May-June 1944,” File 303-INF(7)-0.7, Box 5611, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹¹⁶ Entry 24 at 0615, 25 May in “G-3 Journal and File, 23-25 May 1944,” 3, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹¹⁷ “Biography of Russ Cloer,” accessed 2 June 2011 at <http://www.dogfacesoldiers.org/info/memoirs/cloer/>
- ¹¹⁸ Russell Cloer, “Infantry Replacement: The Story of My Three Years As An Infantry Officer In World War II,” unpublished memoir, n.d. (Russell W. Cloer Papers, WWII Veterans Survey, 3rd Infantry Division, USAMHI), 75. In the Internet account, Cloer stated that an M4 Sherman supported his patrol while his Carlisle account indicated that it was an M8 self-propelled gun from the Cannon Company. Either way, it was a vehicle with a 75-mm gun mounted on it.
- ¹¹⁹ White, *From Fedala to Berchtesgaden*, 114.
- ¹²⁰ Unit Journal for May 1944, 11 in “7th Infantry Journal and File, May-June 1944,” RG 407, Entry 427, NA; Entry 24 at 0615, 25 May in “G-3 Journal and File, 23-25 May 1944,” 3, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹²¹ Unit Journal for May 1944, 12 in “7th Infantry Journal and File, May-June 1944,” RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹²² White, *From Fedala to Berchtesgaden*, 116.
- ¹²³ Entry 88 at 1005, 25 May in “G-3 Journal and File, 23-25 May 1944,” 9, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.

- ¹²⁴ Atkinson, *Day of Battle*, 547; Unit Journal for May 1944, 12-3 in "7th Infantry Journal and File, May-June 1944," RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹²⁵ Atkinson, *Day of Battle*, 547.
- ¹²⁶ White, *From Fedala to Berchtesgaden*, 117; Taggart, *History of the Third Infantry Division in World War II*, 168.
- ¹²⁷ Atkinson, *Day of Battle*, 547.
- ¹²⁸ For these generally critical reviews of the Battle Sleds, see Duncan, "Report on Battle & Cargo Sleds," 12 June 1944; Major Eugene A. Salet, "Use of Infantry-Tank M-3 Groups in Recent Operations," 12 June 1944; Captain John E. Swan, "M-3's (Battle Sleds)," 11 June 1944 in "Unit Monthly Report of Operations for May 1944," RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹²⁹ See the following reports: Colonel Wiley H. O'Mohundro, "Report of Operations, 7th Infantry, From 1 June 1944-30 June 1944 Incl.," 4 July 1944, 2; Colonel Richard G. Thomas, Jr., "Summary of Our Operations," 2 July 1944, 2-3; Colonel Lionel C. McGarr, "Report of Operations, Thirtieth U.S. Infantry," 5 July 1944, 9; 751st Tank Battalion, "Report of Action Against the Enemy for the Month of June," 1 July 1944, 6-6a, 6d-6e in "Unit Monthly Report of Operations for June 1944," File 303-0.3, Box 5396, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹³⁰ Mark Zuehlke, *Ortona: Canada's Epic World War II Battle* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1999), 283. The fighting in Ortona proper is from pages 283-373. See also G. W. L. Nicholson, *The Canadians in Italy, 1943-1945* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationery, 1956), Chapter XI.
- ¹³¹ Nicholson, *The Canadians in Italy*, 327.
- ¹³² It is not clear where mouseholing originated and, although possible, it is not clear if the Canadians in Ortona influenced later American practices. For examples of mouseholing in the 1800s, see Jonathan A. Beall, "The United States Army and Urban Combat in the Nineteenth Century," *War in History* 16 (April 2009): 157-188.
- ¹³³ Canadian casualties: Zuehlke, *Ortona*, 364. German casualties: Zuehlke, *Ortona*, 366. The Italian losses: Zuehlke, *Ortona*, 375. Zuehlke does not give Canadian casualty figures for the fighting in Ortona itself.
- ¹³⁴ Blumenson, *Salerno to Cassino*, 378-9. See also Ian Gooderson, *A Hard Way To Make a War: The Italian Campaign in the Second World War* (London: Conway, 2008), 312-315.

CHAPTER V

**“WHAT IS TAUGHT AT BENNING . . . IS ALL WRONG”:
DEVELOPING NEW APPROACHES TO
URBAN COMBAT IN THE WARTIME ARMY**

In October 1944, Colonel Francis H. Boucher admitted what the United States Army failed to foresee during the interwar period: that “an increasingly noticeable feature of this war is the difficulty of capturing villages and cities.” Boucher observed one distinctive aspect of urban combat: “when stubbornly held, a town is captured only after many successive attacks, each netting small gains and heavy losses.” While bypassing a village or city is usually best, “it is certain that there are cases when it is necessary to attack enemy-held towns and villages.”¹ While individual units such as the 1st, 3rd, and 5th Infantry Divisions refined their urban combat capabilities, America’s army also realized that not only was it necessary to attack many villages and cities but that this combat environment also required a different approach than battle in other environments.

As the Americans recognized a rise in “street fighting,” the contemporary term for urban combat, so the army began to write doctrine and train its men for when they inevitably encountered that environment. By 1943, doctrine and training remained imperfect. One officer in the 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, speaking to the urban combat in the hills and mountains of Italy, reported that “what is taught at [Fort] Benning about taking small towns or villages is all wrong.”² By late 1944, Americans

soldiers were using more sophisticated methods to capture French towns and cities. Further, Americans' improvement in urban combat paralleled their simultaneous appreciation, understanding, and implementation of combined-arms warfare. The U.S. Army worked to distill lessons from the battlefield and labored to convert those lessons into improved doctrine and training. As American G.I.s adapted toward combined-arms urban combat, the stateside army more slowly grasped the potentialities for that sort of urban fighting. As such, the American army developed different methods for handling urban combat during World War II.

This chapter has three parts. First, it is worth beginning with what lessons the various field units learned as they fought the Germans. The army processed lessons learned on the battlefield through a number of methods. Individual units compiled and analyzed their own combat experiences. During the fight in Europe, *Battle Experiences*, an unofficial, army-sanction publication, allowed soldiers from privates to generals to give hints and tips on a variety of issues in combat: from ammunition resupply to urban combat. Here, the army could report on and learn from its successes and failures. *Battle Experiences* displayed how fighting men from below regarded infantry doctrine and urban combat. Additionally, it is valuable to see what observations the U.S. Army made of other armies as they wrestled with the urban environment. The branches' professional journals discussed fighting in a variety of different environments and considered what America's allies and enemies were doing along with what they could learn from these other militaries. In these publications and lessons learned from the bottom up, officers

and enlisted men showed a growing appreciation for combined-arms warfare, including in towns and cities.

Second, the lessons learned from battle must be processed and converted into doctrine, usually in the form of field manuals and official publications designed to educate field officers, such as Fort Benning's *Infantry School Mailing List*.

Understanding that the Americans had not considered urban combat before the war, it is natural to discover that the war seriously changed military doctrine. To observe these changes requires examining not only the 1944 field manual on fighting in towns but other manuals dealing with infantry combat. Although slower than the lessons learned from fighting units or observations made by stateside professional journals, these wartime manuals reveal that the army, from the top downwards, slowly grasped the nature of urban combat. Indeed, as the army took a more sophisticated attitude towards combined-arms fighting, it codified those applications in towns and cities into its official army doctrine.

Lastly, doctrinal changes in the military affected how the army trained soldiers for the battlefield, thus justifying an investigation of wartime training in light of top-down modifications in wartime doctrine and bottom-up learning. Through much of the war in Europe, the battlefield helped mold American infantry doctrine and also affected army officers' operational and tactical decisions. As America learned and understood combined-arms battle better as well as how to handle the ubiquitous presence of towns and cities in Europe, so the U.S. Army adjusted how it prepared its soldiers for the urban battlefield.

Wartime Learning

The army made specific attempts to process lessons while in the field. These processed lessons were to develop soldiers' fighting effectiveness at different levels. During the war, combat units dissected their own combat experience while the army employed official observers. Additionally, army publications gave soldiers an avenue to explain and share what they had learned through an in-theater periodical, *Battle Experiences*. Through the professional journals and other official periodicals, the Americans also studied and shared what they might glean from their allies' combat experience. It is difficult to track these periodicals' influence but investigating what the soldiers themselves concluded helps to demonstrate what lessons the army emphasized as it worked to improve its fighting capabilities. By the end of the war, army doctrine had begun to embrace a combined-arms mentality but the men on the ground were well ahead of official doctrine especially regarding combat in the urban environment.

Specific units made in-theater attempts to process ways to develop their fighting abilities. In November 1944, the 1st Armored Group of the Mediterranean Theater of Operation (MTO) wrote what it had learned by publishing the thoughts of various armored units. In assaults on towns, the 756th Tank Battalion noticed that "infantry protection is essential for tanks." When approaching towns, the 191st Tank Battalion gave support by "shooting up the highest building," especially church steeples, because that eliminated the enemy's artillery and mortar observers. The 601st Tank Destroyer Battalion suggested that tank destroyers offer support from outside a town because their open turrets made them susceptible to snipers.³

MTO officers tallied their lessons for 1943 and 1944. In 1943, an 82nd Airborne Division officer complained that “what is taught at Benning about taking small towns or villages is impracticable out here.” He learned that the best way to capture towns was to “work the whole outfit around the town or village under cover, seize the high ground in rear of it, and firmly establish ourselves on that dominating ground.”⁴ Usually, that was sufficient to persuade the Germans to retreat. If bypassing or moving behind was impossible because of the mountainous terrain, carefully planned night attacks or infiltration sometimes proved successful.⁵

MTO staff officers in 1945 observed that Americans needed to improve their combined-arms proficiencies and gave direction on how to achieve that.⁶ That discussion included urban combat, namely, that the Americans should bypass towns whenever possible. This was especially true in the case of Italy, where “the crooked, narrow streets and thick-walled buildings provide the enemy with excellent opportunity for tank traps and antitank gun positions.” But when the Americans must capture a town, the report maintained that urban operations constituted a combined-arms operation. In these cases, armor’s “employment must be closely supported and combined with close infantry action.”⁷ In general, the report also stated that phase-lines were essential for maintaining communication and control of units and that soldiers and tanks must fight with a certain violence of speed and action to control the engagement and keep the Germans off-balance.⁸

The 3rd Infantry Division compiled a list of lessons from the first three months of campaigning in southern France. The document advocated using bazookas and rifle

grenades to allow riflemen to approach semi-fortified houses. The lessons observed that semi-fortified houses fell fastest when small arms and machine gun fire supported the attack. This publication argued that, in order to maintain command and control within towns and villages, “forward movement must be slow and thorough with frequent checks at phase lines.”⁹ The artillery staff discerned that enemy armor oftentimes hid in these towns, thus requiring artillery to expend considerable ammunition trying to knock out German tanks.¹⁰ The compilation advised tankers to work closely with infantry inside towns and villages because German antitank weapons remained a prevalent threat.¹¹ The division document modified earlier doctrinal statements proposing a speedy capture of towns and villages. As army thinkers slowly realized that fighting in towns was a combined operation, the 3rd Infantry Division’s already grasped that.

The 1st Infantry Division likewise reviewed its past operations from which to learn and improve. In a report examining infantry-tank cooperation, the division understood the importance of communication and mutual support. In towns, however, the memorandum argued that tanks would not normally participate in an assault upon a village or town but would support the infantry from the outside and in enveloping the town to prevent the defenders from escaping.¹²

After the invasion of northern France in June 1944, the army compiled observer reports on different elements of fighting in Europe. Report 55 addressed improper security issues in villages after Americans had captured them.¹³ Documents posted in November 1944 gave details of the 1st Infantry Division’s fight in Aachen, Germany. In December 1944, “Attack of Towns” described German defensive tactics that expanded

from a town's approaches to the town itself, including the presence of enemy tanks within the town, giving recommendations for an assault on these German-held places. Further, the reconnaissance should be from multiple directions and the assault, which should also converge from different directions, ought to cut off the town as soon as possible. The assault units should arm themselves liberally with rifle grenades and bazookas to destroy the tanks likely to be within the town. After taking the town, the author instructed Americans to consolidate their positions and prepare for a German counterattack.¹⁴

Aside from official observer reports, the 12th Army Group disseminated units' experiences and lessons learned through brief two-page compilations known as *Battle Experiences*. *Battle Experiences* was a prime example of inter-army communication.¹⁵ The tips and observations recorded within *Battle Experiences* focused on matters concerning supporting weapons with riflemen, matters concerning tactics, techniques, and procedures, and furthering their combined-arms proficiency. Each issue stated that "the items published will be those based on practical experience and are recommended for careful consideration by units which may encounter similar problems."¹⁶ These lessons ranged from using manure piles as camouflage to fighting with immobilized but still operable tanks to maximizing communication equipment to fighting inside towns.¹⁷ As will be discussed, army leaders worked to improve urban combat doctrine; but soldiers in-theater also sharpened their urban combat abilities.

One concept that *Battle Experiences* related was the use of regimental weapons. The 5th Infantry Division's 11th Infantry Regiment described how its Cannon Company

aided in the attack on Angers, Chartres, and Fontainebleau in August 1944. At Angers, Cannon Company acted as a “separate battery with its own fire direction center” targeting German anti-aircraft, anti-tank, and command post positions. At Chartres, Cannon Company fired on the city’s church steeple, destroyed a key German observation post, “neutraliz[ing] enemy counter fires.” A barrage from the company also ensured the surrender of nearly one thousand German soldiers.¹⁸ The 38th Infantry Regiment suggested putting machine guns into second-story windows because their experience showed that German tanks could not fire into the second story. In the same piece, another unit stated that white phosphorus grenades were better for assaulting and clearing houses than fragmentation grenades.¹⁹ Soldiers saw explosives and bazookas as invaluable ways to cover advancing assault squads or for mouseholing in order to help soldiers advance under cover.²⁰

Lessons from the 2nd Infantry Division in Brest, France and the 1st Infantry Division in Aachen, Germany prominently appeared in several *Battle Experiences*. A battalion commander in the 1st Infantry Division’s 26th Infantry remembered that “I learned to use the fire power of every available weapon in the Aachen fighting,” including mortars, artillery, and hand grenades at one strongly-held position.²¹ Of his division’s experience within Brest, the 2nd’s commanding general, Major General Walter Robertson believed “that the division came out of the Brest operation far better trained than when it went in, particularly because of the house-to-house fighting, which was essentially a squad leader’s battle.”²² Reflecting on the battle for Brest, Robertson

was “surprised” at the “extensive use of direct fire guns including [self-propelled] 155 mm guns fired at ranges as close as 500 to 600 yards.”²³

More than anything else, *Battle Experiences* instructed on the tactics, techniques, and procedures of organizing assault squads as well as support and reserve units. The periodical also advised on the methods of assaulting towns in general and buildings in particular. Improvement was imperative because, Robertson wrote, “the term ‘street fighting’ is a misnomer, for the street was one place we could not go. . . . Our procedure was to go from house to house blasting holes through the walls with satchel charges.”²⁴ A Sergeant Floyd of the 357th Infantry insisted that success depended on “knowledge of the plan of attack, intensive personal reconnaissance, following the supporting artillery as closely as possible, speed of movement, and keeping the platoon leader informed” of his squads’ positions. On 15 July, *Twelfth Army Group Battle Experiences*, pulling from a British report, asserted that it was better to assault a house from the roof downwards, citing an experience where a British patrol cleared a house but, in failing to check the upstairs, undetected Germans killed two men when the patrol left.²⁵

One company commander in the 377th Infantry Regiment said that his platoons fell into two seven-men assault squads and a third support squad, presumably carrying mostly automatic weapons and bazookas, in clearing houses. Each assault squad advanced “down opposite sides of the street under covering fire from the support and other [assault] squad.” In maneuvering toward the first house, the support squad fired on the house, including with bazookas. As the support squad lifted its fire, one assault squad rushed the house; two men cleared the first floor, two cleared the upper floors, two

cleared the cellar, and one guarded the entrance. When this first squad had secured the house, it covered the house across the street for the second assault squad. When these two houses were captured, the support squad took the third house under fire. This method “provide[d] ample fire support for the squad moving forward without exposing too many men at one time.”²⁶

One element of tactics, techniques, and procedures was infantry-tank cooperation. Although doctrine downplayed their combined-arms effect, American soldiers discovered the opposite: armor was a vital tool in this environment. Most battlefield lessons acknowledged the necessity of infantry-tank teamwork. As the 70th Tank Battalion found, tanks could not approach a town or village ahead of the infantry, for this made them susceptible to German antitank weapons. Within the village itself, infantry “should remain abreast of or close behind [tanks] to provide antitank protection.” Tank commanders might even toss grenades into buildings without expending the main gun’s ammunition. Tanks’ main strength remained the ability to destroy stubbornly defended enemy positions.²⁷ In September, elements of the 1st Infantry Division depended on infantry and tanks to capture Liège: “the leading tanks followed with infantry marching on the sidewalks. The tanks covered the infantry by firing machine guns into the windows.”²⁸ In Aachen, one officer conceded that “we kept the tanks and tank destroyers well forward, usually one to a street. Four infantrymen were assigned to protect each vehicle from bazookas and other antitank weapons.”²⁹ In this case, the soldiers’ experiences had moved ahead of established doctrine. Urban doctrine that frowned upon tanks in cities did not stop commanding officers and generals

from arranging tanks and infantry together as they fought through France's and Germany's villages, towns, and cities.

Alongside *Battle Experiences*, the U.S. Army had its professional journals. Whereas Chapter 2 showed that there were no articles on urban combat in the 1920s and 1930s, such writings began to appear during the war. Many articles were reprints of foreign articles detailing how best to fight within the urban environment. These journal articles—printed in *Infantry Journal*, *Military Review*, *Cavalry Journal*, *Field Artillery Journal*, *Tactical and Technical Trends*, and *Intelligence Bulletin*—show both a growing awareness of the urban environment and its distinctiveness as well as a realization that the urban fight was not fought by infantry weapons alone as official doctrine prescribed.

Early on, the message was just that: the urban fight was an infantry fight that tanks entered at their own risk. In September 1942, *Infantry Journal* published the advice of Bert Levy, a Spanish Civil War veteran from Britain, on fighting in the urban environment. Levy argued that “street fighting is not a negligible part of modern war: it is a very important part.” Pointing to Soviet Russia, Levy reminded his readers that “we have seen how towns and villages, stoutly and skillfully defended by regular or guerrilla forces, can be quite literally thorns in the flesh of an advancing enemy.”³⁰ The veteran described ways to defend and attack a built-up area. Given time, a defender could make a town virtually impregnable by razing the right buildings as well as through the use of fire, booby traps, and barbed wire to funnel the enemy into prearranged kill zones. Levy advocated movement through buildings by way of mouseholing. But in “making a rapid search of a house, [soldiers should] make as little noise as possible.”³¹ He strongly

opposed tanks' deployment in town fighting because "tanks can do very little in street fighting." He agreed that Germans in 1940 successfully used tanks in French towns but only because the French failed to put up a solid defense. For the most part, Levy asserted that "tanks have generally failed to penetrate streets." Writing from experience, Levy concluded that urban combat was an infantry fight through and within buildings.³²

However, as the Americans digested its Allies' lessons, they learned a contradictory viewpoint from Levy's thesis, namely that a combined armor-infantry-artillery arrangement was requisite to effectively waging urban combat. Indeed, in the same issue as Levy's piece, the *Infantry Journal* printed an article by Soviet Colonel A. Kononenko. Given how the Germans had fortified populated areas for their lines of supply and communications, the Soviets had learned how to attack these towns and disrupt the German supply system. Such attacks necessarily required "careful air reconnaissance" and had three echelons. First was a shock group of sappers and flamethrowers that violently gained a foothold on the town and "disrupt[ed] the fire system of the defense." The second echelon included a reinforced company or battalion that would "disrupt by bombardment and fire, the tactical coordination of the different garrisons that make up the enemy's system of defense." The third echelon fed from the success of the first two echelons to get into the town and destroy the rest of the enemy, assisted by the second echelon. Kononenko asserted that tanks could be quite effective when working in cooperation with infantry. Tanks, for example, accompanied the first echelon in the Soviet attack on the fortified town of Zhurovka. The Soviets had shown that knowing their enemy's defense system through reconnaissance allowed them to

bring many weapons to bear, including armor and artillery, to retake these fortified towns. Key to Soviet success was often the “close cooperation of infantry with tanks and artillery.” Levy’s article showed how a stout urban defense could cause problems to the attacker; Kononenko wrote that a well-planned combined attack, carried out with speed and violence, could be successful.³³

As the Americans read more about what Soviet urban combat included, they learned that it entailed careful reconnaissance and planning followed by explosive attacks. In contrast to Levy’s advice that units should move quietly while taking a house or building, the Soviets assaulted far more aggressively. The victor of Stalingrad, Lieutenant General Vasily Chuykov, described how Russian soldiers fought inside houses: by creating special shock troops composed of an assault group, reinforcements, and reserves.³⁴ The six- to eight-man assault group’s most important weapons were “speed and surprise.” The assault group was lightly armed but their only objective was to enter the building or house. When signaled by the assault group, the more heavily-armed reinforcement group “rushes into the building, occupies the firing points already gained by the storm [assault] groups, and establishes new ones, [and] creates a fire system of its own” prepare for a German counterattack. The reserves then entered the structure to replace any casualties and help repulse any counterattacks.³⁵

Chuykov strongly emphasized careful scouting of target buildings, arguing that “however bold the group may be, the leader will look in vain if he has not planned the whole thing thoroughly. The assault especially must be carefully prepared and accurately calculated.”³⁶ Once fighting for control of the house began in earnest,

Chuykov advised violence of action. To do this, the assault groups carried liberal quantities of hand grenades and Thompson submachine guns: “There must be two of you to rush a house: you and a grenade . . . In rushing a house let the grenade go in first; then you follow. Go through the whole house the same way: first the grenade and then you yourself.” Before entering a room, toss in a grenade. Submachine gun fire can quickly clear ceilings. In essence, Chuykov wrote, “fighting inside a house is savage fighting. Blind your enemy by every means and then hit him from the darkness.”³⁷ After achieving control, the reinforcements and reserves entered, prepared for the counterattack, and looked to the next building. As for the different arms’ coordination, Chuykov said that Soviet soldiers were “working hard to solve the tactical problems” involved in coordinating infantry, armor, and artillery most effectively. Supporting fire from both artillery and tanks “considerably increases the force of the attack” within built-up areas.³⁸ Ultimately, Chuykov agreed with Levy that street fighting “means fighting for a house, for a building, for a block. Operations develop along alleyways, inside houses, in ruins, underground. But the streets are empty.”³⁹ But Chuykov clearly disagreed with how soldiers accomplished any of that.

In short, many of the reprinted Soviet articles in *Infantry Journal* and *Military Review* recommended careful reconnaissance and planning. Careful planning allowed the consequent urban attack to be explosive, fast, and hard-hitting and prevent it from bogging down within the rubble of a town. In contrast with *FM 31-50* and Bert Levy’s 1942 article, the Russians fully endorsed combined infantry-armor-artillery fighting

against their German enemy. By 1944, American soldiers learned many of these same lessons.⁴⁰

Not only did the Americans report Soviet lessons but also British experiences. For American consideration and reflection, *Intelligence Bulletin* printed a discussion in 1944 between British infantry, artillery, antitank, and tank officers to plan how they together would take a hypothetical town “about the same size as Ortona.”⁴¹ The composition of officers assured a combined-arms approach but the discussion also made clear that the British Army’s view of urban combat had gone beyond Briton Bert Levy’s claim that the urban fight was the infantry’s domain. The give-and-take discussion identified issues that a regimental commander would have to resolve when planning an urban fight and how these British officers came to a decision. These matters included command and control concerns such as phase lines, potential German antitank positions, communication between buttoned-up tankers and soldiers, duties of engineers, supply issues, and aid station positions. Aside from the combined-arms component, the article also showed the myriad challenges that officers must expect and plan for in a bitter urban fight.⁴²

The other service journals, *Cavalry Journal* and *Field Artillery Journal*, focused less on this environment but did not ignore it entirely. *Cavalry Journal* printed a copy of Bert Levy’s early-war piece on street fighting that argued for the irrelevance of tanks. But in 1943, the journal published an essay by General Chuykov on Stalingrad, including the presence and role of tanks.⁴³ Similar to *Cavalry Journal*’s Chuykov piece on Stalingrad, *Field Artillery Journal* focused on the role of artillery in specific urban

battles, such as Stalingrad, Kaltenhouse, and Arnhem.⁴⁴ Only one *Field Artillery* article, Colonel Francis Boucher's "Artillery Attacks on Stone Villages" and quoted at the opening of this chapter, goes beyond a specific urban engagement. Instead, Boucher looked specifically at how artillerymen would have to adjust and adapt their skills for a very different environment. Boucher dissects German urban defensive techniques, evaluates the abilities and limitations of light, medium, and heavy artillery and establishes the role that artillery can play both before and during the attack on a town.⁴⁵

Tactical and Technical Trends detailed how a British platoon trained for street fighting in 1943. In clearing a street, the platoon divided into three squads. Two squads moved through and cleared the buildings lining the street while the third remained behind to offer support. The squads on either side of the street also supported each other from within the houses and buildings. The third, supporting squad advanced by bounds between a rifle group and an automatic rifle group. If resistance forced a delay in momentum, a two-inch mortar fired high-explosive or smoke rounds to help the advance resume.⁴⁶ This drill was for a rifle platoon and the article did not stipulate what training there was for larger units or for infantry-tank training. This article also remains one of a few clear descriptions of what World War II urban combat training looked like.

Wartime Doctrine

Changes in wartime doctrine gauge how army leadership applied battlefield lessons from the top down. The army continued to write new field manuals into 1942, the first year that American forces battled Axis forces, but it took time for fighting in towns and cities to warrant its own publication. There is, however, no trail of archival

breadcrumbs that maps the interactions between combat experiences, field lessons, and official doctrine. It is not possible to determine authorship of these field manuals and it is even more difficult to speculate how the manuals were written. The researcher only has the lessons that field units learned—divisions, armies, and army groups—and the end doctrine produced. It is as though the researcher can observe a river flow into and then flow out of a mountain but is blind to the twists, turns, or deviations within the mountain.⁴⁷ Officers creating new doctrine may have relied upon reprints of Soviet articles, observer reports, after-action reports, *Battle Experiences*, or the combat interviews conducted by combat historians such as Lieutenant Colonel William Goddard, Major Kenneth Hechler, Technical Sergeant Monroe Ludden, and Staff Sergeant Forrest Pogue but it is not clear if they did nor the extent.⁴⁸ Part of the reason for this mystery was organizational: the U.S. Army capably culled and gathered many lessons from the field but had no central organization to process, evaluate, and apply those lessons.⁴⁹

Inasmuch as the intermediate steps remain obscure, it is plain that the doctrine produced by the United States Army during World War II follows the pattern seen in the lessons learned in the field, albeit more slowly. Initially, army doctrine did not completely embrace a combined-arms mentality, even in its first urban combat manual. Later wartime manuals reflect the transition toward combined-arms warfighting, including within urban locations.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the 1941 edition of *Field Manual [FM] 100-5: Operations* said very little about urban combat. Armor had little relevance and relied

mostly upon artillery and aerial bombardment for infantry support. In the space of two pages, it also offered little instruction on whether to attack or bypass a built-up area and was vague on the tactics of assaulting within a town.⁵⁰ However, officers might have gleaned from earlier instruction on how to attack a “fortified locality” if they tailored that doctrine to suit immediate needs.⁵¹

In February 1942, soon after America entered the war, the army published a manual on the rifle regiment. The manual said nothing about urban combat, except to point the reader to the 1941 edition of *Field Manual [FM] 100-5: Operations*.⁵² Manuals on lower levels of regimental organization, the company and battalion, had more to say on the topic. The 1942 field manuals for a rifle company and heavy weapons company emphasized incorporating all an infantry regiment’s organic weapons: attached artillery as well as 81-mm mortars, heavy machine guns, and 57-mm towed antitank guns.⁵³ At the company level, however, there was no consideration of combined infantry-artillery-armor action in the attack in general nor in the urban environment in particular.

The 1942 edition of *FM 7-20: Rifle Battalion* also remained limited in scope on the topic of urban combat. The manual compared fighting through a defended town as similar to fighting through woods in that both environments affected unit organization as well as command and control, even though direction was easier to maintain in a town.⁵⁴ In moving through a defended town, *FM 7-20* presented options: rifle companies might “advance by bounds from street to street or from house to house.” Both methods had their advantages as well as drawbacks: advancing down streets helped to maintain

control but presented targets for snipers while moving through houses offered riflemen more cover but hampered control.⁵⁵ Because the objective in capturing a defended town was to control the exits on the opposite side of the attack, assaulting units ought to bypass hostile resistance knowing that reserves and supporting units took responsibility for mopping up any bypassed enemy later.⁵⁶

In this 1942 discussion, the army never included the possibility of tank and tank destroyer support. This was not unusual because many believed early in the war that tanks had no place in street fighting, due to tanks' vulnerabilities in the confines of a town or city. Instead of tank support within villages, towns, and cities, a battalion was to rely on its supporting weapons such as machine guns, mortars, regimental Cannon Company and Antitank Company detachments, and division artillery.⁵⁷

Doctrinally, a 1942 infantry battalion captured a town by incorporating and exploiting all its organic weapons, but it does not necessarily follow that, at the tactical levels of command, the army had adopted a combined-arms way of fighting. Failing to appreciate a combined-arms arrangement in the 1942 manual on rifle battalions was not limited to street fighting. Indeed, sections discussing the attack offered instructions for when tanks were present and when they were not present. As such, the manual gave room for tank-infantry attacks but never emphasized a close armor-infantry-artillery partnership.

This lack of armor-infantry-artillery cooperation reflected larger organizational debates within the United States Army. By 1942, military thought supported pooling tank, tank destroyer, and antiaircraft units into their own units to be used when and

where the situation required. After combat in North Africa, there were those who argued that attaching these units to infantry divisions would give constant exposure to different weapons that would facilitate teamwork and a combined-arms mentality. But by 1943, there remained separate armor and antiaircraft units pooled at the corps and army level—per doctrine—as infantry divisions had independent tank, tank destroyer, and antiaircraft battalions assigned to them.⁵⁸ Due to this top-level debate and emphasis on pooling, the 1942 manual stressed that battalions should employ all accessible organic and supporting weapons, including close-air support, which did not always include tanks.⁵⁹

By 1944, the army responded to its combat experiences with changes in doctrine. Three publications of that year showed the army slowly grasping the nature of urban combat and that fighting it effectively required a combined-arms approach. Those manuals included a new edition of *FM 100-5: Operations*; new doctrine on urban combat itself, *FM 31-50: Attack on a Fortified Position and Combat in Towns*; and, lastly, an updated *FM 7-20: Infantry Battalion*.

The 1944 manual on operations, *FM 100-5*, devoted a little more space to combat in towns—nearly three pages—than the earlier 1941 edition, which covered the issue in two.⁶⁰ The 1944 edition emphasized a holding attack as the best way to capture a defended town or city, the enveloping force being the main attack that also isolated the town's enemy garrison from reinforcement and resupply. If a frontal attack was the only option, the revised doctrine broke the capture into two phases: the assault to the near edge of the town to gain a foothold onto the place; followed by reorganization and the advance through the town itself.⁶¹ While speed was the key in order “to capture quickly

the exits on the far side,” hastiness was not. The army stressed that attacking units must have sufficient reconnaissance of the town as well as a plan to capture the town.⁶²

FM 100-5 (1944) also emphasized speed in capturing a defended town rather than a more methodical advance; the capture and advance occurs prior to a thorough mopping up process. In this way, capturing the exits from the town’s far side had first priority and “assault units are freed from the responsibility of mopping up the town.”⁶³ As units attacked the near side of the town, artillery, air support, and a unit’s organic weapons assisted the assault. Assault units were to “[push] through the defensive area in a series of bounds,” presumably through the streets themselves. Behind, reserves and supporting units would remove stubborn enemy defenders from their positions.⁶⁴ The army, even in mid-1944, generally minimized any contribution armor might have in this environment: “Strongly defended towns rarely present opportunities for tanks to exploit their mobility due to the restrictions of barricades, debris, streets, cellars, and short range antitank methods.” The manual never ruled out the use of armor and it conceded that tanks might play a role in street fighting but neither did it speculate nor specify under what conditions tanks might be gainfully employed.⁶⁵

The operations doctrine appeared to officers in June 1944, after the 3rd Infantry Division had captured Cisterna di Littoria and before the Anglo-American offensive in northern France had broken out of the hedgerows into open country. Previous manuals gave officers some instruction on conducting an urban operation but this combat environment received its own detailed attention in January 1944 with *FM 31-50: Attack on a Fortified Position and Combat in Towns*. This work argued that the urban

environment was distinct unto itself for several reasons: its three-dimensional nature; the difficulty in locating hostile fire; the urban geography hampered movement, maneuver, and communications; the presence of civilians; urban fighting was inherently decentralized, impeding command and control; and enhanced the critical importance of using organic, supporting weapons such as a regiment's Cannon Company, Antitank Companies, and mortars. In light of these considerations, street fighting was distinct from combat in the desert, wooded areas, or the jungle.⁶⁶

From the beginning, *FM 31-50* asserted that fighting in towns was not an entirely infantry affair and that supporting weapons were critical to the capture of a town. But still, armor was not a "supporting weapon" and it was not as useful in this environment. Because the urban geography "subject[ed armor] to close range attack by various weapons" and because tanks could not "elevate or depress their main weapons to fire into the upper floors or basements of nearby buildings," tanks simply were not a good asset in the streets.⁶⁷ The manual conceded that individual tanks and tank destroyers might fire on strongly defended positions but infantry support was absolutely essential to protect tanks in streets and were best placed in reserve.⁶⁸ In general, American urban operations doctrine by early 1944 did not rely entirely on riflemen but it still did not fully endorse a combined-arms approach either.

Intelligence and reconnaissance remained essential before a battalion, regiment, or division could decide to fight within a town or city. It was best if a unit could by-pass a defended area. When a unit attacked, the Americans employed two phases: Phase I was getting a foothold on the area and Phase II was the systematic elimination of the

opposition.⁶⁹ Getting a hold on a town was similar to an attack on an organized position, for which the army had doctrine.

Once they had achieved a foothold, the first phase, soldiers moved to Phase II: fighting for and capturing the place. In instructions to regiments and battalions, the *FM 31-50* emphasized using all units and organic weapons: namely, engineers as well as machine guns, Cannon Company, Antitank Company, mortars, and observed artillery fire. The task for commanding officers was preserving command, control, and communication: knowing where their units were vis à vis the enemy in order to maintain the momentum. In this second phase, *FM 31-50* differed from *FM 100-5*'s exhortations that officers ought to push through a town quickly and have supporting and reserve units mop up opposition from behind the assault echelon. Early on, *FM 31-50* cautioned that soldiers should expect an increased possibility of close-quarters action and, therefore, should have a large supply of grenades and explosives.⁷⁰

Combat in Towns provided instruction on how to organize rifle companies and rifle squads inside towns and cities. The instruction dealt far more with tactics, techniques, and procedures. Here, also, were signs of learning and improvement. The 1942 battalion officer's field manual had advised that soldiers could advance through a town two different ways: either moving carefully on the streets or through backyards and alleyways.⁷¹ *Combat in Towns* does not present a choice for rifle squads and riflemen—they should advance “house-to-house through side yards; over rooftops; by breaching walls; or through backyards, streets, or alleys.” Doctrine implied that assault units were to avoid the streets in street fighting.⁷² By 1944, the army learned that it was unsafe to

advance, even by bounds, along the streets. Moving along the streets might preserve command, control, and communication but was too dangerous because the enemy usually had the streets targeted.

Lastly, *FM 31-50* described the techniques of planning, organizing, and executing assaults on and the clearing of houses and buildings. It advised inconspicuous and discreet movement within the urban environment. Assaulting and clearing buildings were jobs for riflemen cooperating together, whether individuals supporting each other or as squads offering mutual support. Supporting weapons such as machine guns and mortars helped the overall advance. But it was vague in squad formation. According to the manual, “covering teams” supported “searching teams” assaulting buildings and homes but neglected to describe those teams’ compositions. It was up to the soldiers themselves to learn by trial and error how to formulate the best combination of weapons for support and assault squads.⁷³

The manual assumed a certain violence of action in that all levels of command were encouraged to use all weapons at their disposal to extricate the enemy from defended positions. Therefore, these instructions fully assumed the destruction of private property. For example, soldiers were encouraged to bore through a roof downwards, to shoot through walls and floors, to toss hand grenades down flights of stairs and into rooms; and to move into adjacent buildings and rooms by blowing holes in interior walls, called “mouseholing.”⁷⁴ The close-quarters nature of the fight helps to explain why attacking units would require a large supply of hand grenades and explosives. American soldiers were careful not to kill innocent civilians but American

urban combat doctrine in a conventional conflict had few qualms with destroying a town in order to save it.

The army's urban combat doctrine received further elaboration in Fort Benning's publication for officers, *The Infantry School Mailing List*. The purpose of the *Mailing List* was to instruct officers going through the army's Infantry School. In July 1944, the *Mailing List* published its one wartime article on street fighting, "Principles of Town and Village Fighting."

The *Mailing List* explained reasons for investing Allied strength in a city or town: usually "when to by-pass [the place] will endanger the advancing troops or imperil the plan of the higher commanders."⁷⁵ Because of this situation, American officers could expect the enemy to defend more thoroughly those urban locales critical to the Allied advance. Pursuant to this line of thought, the 3rd Infantry Division, for example, ordered the 7th Infantry Regiment to capture Cisterna. Fear of what the enemy would do if he simply went around partly explains why General George S. Patton invested an army corps in the capture of Metz, France. The article asserted that the Russians had proven the "soundness" of the principles explicated.⁷⁶ These principles included the need for accurate intelligence; fighting in urban locations was inherently decentralized, making control by higher commanders "practically nonexistent;" the fighting should be systematic, meaning that plans ought to be simple and clear with definite and limited objectives; assault troops were to avoid the streets; "every movement has covering fire;" support squads and reserves closely followed assault units; soldiers should execute plans with speed and aggression.⁷⁷

As “Town and Village Fighting” expounded upon these principles, it largely fell in line with *FM 31-50*’s prescriptions. Although acknowledging difficulties in command, control, and communication, fighting aggressively for limited objectives with clearly communicated simple plans helped to ease that problem.⁷⁸ The article also advised on how best to use grenades and small arms such as light machine guns, rifles, submachine guns. At the squad-level, the article’s authors instructed how squads should cover each other as they advanced through buildings, captured houses, and crossed streets, working together, purposefully, and methodically. As with *FM 31-50*, the article encouraged the use of all supporting weapons such as artillery, towed antitank guns, mortars, and machine guns. The publication saw tanks’ vulnerability as a serious liability and argued that tanks and tank destroyers “are seldom employed in close support of an attack on a village or town.” Similar to *FM 31-50*, it did not write off the presence of tanks but was unenthusiastic to their usage.⁷⁹ Writers of *FM 31-50* and “Principles of Town and Village Fighting” doubtless would have accepted using tanks to help envelop and isolate an urban location but remained unenthusiastic toward their close support of infantry within and inside these places.

FM 100-5, *FM 31-50*, and the *Mailing List* piece were published between January and July 1944, before the Americans fought on the European continent in earnest. The October 1944 edition of *FM 7-20: Infantry Battalion*, revealed a more sophisticated attitude regarding urban combat. Like *FM 31-50*, the 1944 version removed any option for soldiers’ inner-city movement: “leading troops avoid streets as much as possible. . . . The advance will ordinarily be from house-to-house through side

yards; over rooftops; by breaching walls; or through back yards, or alleys.” If an advance must take place along a street, it was through “two or more parties, each covering the opposite side of the street.”⁸⁰ The 1942 manual encouraged speed in capturing a town but the 1944 revisions emphasized *thoroughness*, specifying the areas where reserve units should look for by-passed resistance such as cellars and tunnels.

FM 7-20 (1944) offered clearer and more specific advice for fighting in the urban environment than the 1942 edition. In 1942, one sentence explained the duties for the regimental Cannon Company: “elements of the regimental cannon company, attached or in close support may be employed for direct fire against buildings and barricades held by hostile elements.”⁸¹ The 1944 revisions described how Cannon Company detachments helped in the assault on the first phase of an urban operation—that of capturing the near side of a town—as well as how the company’s self-propelled howitzers could operate as direct support weapons against defended buildings behind the advancing riflemen.

The 1944 edition expanded the role for Antitank Company as well. In 1942, Antitank Company advised only giving “close protection to the front and flanks of the attacking echelon.”⁸² Two years later, Antitank Company was to fire on enemy positions not destroyed by Cannon Company or artillery. Within the town itself, Antitank Company must continue to provide “all-around antimechanized protection,” thus assuming that German tanks would be involved in combat for these towns.⁸³ In sum, the 1944 edition offered necessary and more detailed descriptions of what each supporting weapon’s role was when fighting inside urban places.

Most important, the revised edition specified clear roles for tanks, something that did not even appear in *FM 31-50*. By October 1944, the army had processed that “within a town, tanks may advance with infantry squads.” The doctrine asserted that “tanks fire against hostile street barricades and against hostile snipers or machine guns in buildings . . . In advancing on a street, tanks should be ready to move into a side street to avoid antitank gun fire.”⁸⁴ By late-1944, the Americans had pushed through France and were approaching Germany and had encountered many towns and cities of varying sizes. American soldiers had seen the importance of integrating supporting weapons such as mortars and heavy machine guns as well as Cannon and Antitank Companies with riflemen but also realized that tanks and tank destroyers were necessary contributions.

These lessons inconsistently appeared in other branches’ doctrine as well. The field artillery manual for 1944 did not devote much space to urban combat but it did acknowledge that artillery’s flat trajectory and limited observation limited artillery’s usefulness in combat in built-up areas. Therefore, many infantry-supporting missions might be “best performed by tanks, tank destroyers, or infantry cannon weapons.” It saw its chief purpose being “mass employment against critical areas and against the defender’s artillery.”⁸⁵ Armored doctrine did not change much during the war. Following early war thought, the 1942 *FM 17-10: Armored Force, Tactics and Techniques* stated that tanks had little business fighting inside towns and cities. Tanks should encircle and flank to isolate towns and cut off reinforcements. Attacking into a town was “only as a last resort or when the locality can be surprised.” Even then, tanks and tank destroyers should provide direct support of the infantry from outside the town.

In defense, armor should support the infantry by helping to envelope attacking forces.⁸⁶ The November 1944 edition of *FM 17-42: Armored Infantry Battalion* said nothing of combat in towns and pointed the reader to *FM 31-50*.⁸⁷ The field manual for tank destroyers covered how these weapons cooperate within a combat team but said nothing about battle inside towns and cities.⁸⁸ While artillery justly acknowledges its deficiencies in urban combat, armored doctrine was slow to recognize how important tanks could be in urban combat. As army planners gradually learned these combined-arms lessons, so it affected the soldiers' training.

Wartime Training

The U.S. Army in 1941 and 1942 endorsed the incorporation and integration of regimental and battalion supporting weapons, including heavy machine guns, mortars, bazookas as well as combat engineers, Cannon Company, Antitank Company, and field artillery. But it did not stress combined-arms operations that brought infantry weapons and the riflemen alongside tanks or tank destroyers. As the 1942 field manuals indicated, pooling tanks and tank destroyers rather than assigning them permanently to infantry divisions reflected the United States Army's lack of combined-arms outlook. Training was little different. With different training centers for infantry, tanks, artillery, antiaircraft units, and tank destroyers, training new soldiers for the European Theater of Operations reflected the lack of organizational amalgamation.⁸⁹ As the war influenced American infantry doctrine so it also influenced army training, including how the army addressed the urban environment.

Wartime training occurred in two different general areas: stateside and in-theater. Stateside training pertained to preparing former civilians for the rigors of modern combat. Separating the combat arms stateside, and therefore training, did not facilitate an attitude of coordination and cooperation. To be fair, creating an effective and efficient training system was anything but easy: army planners had to provide for a multitude of training for occupations from pilots to artilleryists to riflemen to mechanics to cooks to communications specialists to tank drivers. The army also had to prepare men for combat from the deserts of North Africa and the jungles of the southwest Pacific to the woods and villages of continental Europe. Training newly created divisions composed solely of draftees dramatically differed from peacetime Regular Army training, in part because peacetime training had did not have the urgency to make its soldiers immediately prepare for combat, whereas combat zones needed these draftee divisions as soon as a training program could prepare them and ship them to active fronts.⁹⁰

Stateside training had two elements. The first was the creation of preparing combat divisions. Early in the war, draftees were brought together and they trained as one unit. Usually, veteran divisions provided experienced officers and NCOs to help prepare these raw recruits for battle. The 9th Infantry Division, for example, transferred men to the 82nd Airborne Division as it formed in January 1942. The 101st Airborne Division's cadre came from the 82nd Airborne. Having trained together as a unit for nearly a year, these divisions were to proceed intact to a combat theater. As the war progressed, there was no need for new divisions, only the individual men to replace

fighting units' losses. In 1944, stateside training emphasized the individual replacement, who joined a division after arriving in Europe.⁹¹

Prewar planning created a program that trained millions of young American men but the war greatly modified it. With no peacetime urban combat doctrine, there was likewise no peacetime urban combat training. By 1943, as more American forces experienced combat, planners adjusted the training better to fit the grim realities of modern warfare. One modification injected more realism in training, including, among others, urban combat tactics. Former civilians, now conscripted soldiers, learned how to assault buildings within a mock village. This village fighting course had three purposes: to teach draftees for the chaos, confusion, and mayhem of urban fighting; the proper tactics, techniques, and procedures of urban combat, such as assaulting and capturing buildings and houses, moving from roof to roof as well as avoiding and setting booby traps; and, lastly, to do all of this as a team—whether squad or platoon. Eventually, in a mock village battle draftees demonstrated their proficiency at cover, mutual support, and teamwork to clear streets, assault houses, and fire on surprise, moving targets under simulated fire and explosions. It remarkably included tank support at the end of, but not during, the exercise.⁹²

One replacement soldier to the 3rd Infantry Division wrote home in July 1943 that his stateside training included an attack on a mock village. The “enemy” fired live ammunition well over their heads. The first man tossed a hand grenade (a small sack of flour) through a window and got on all fours after the grenade’s “explosion,” to allow the next man to jump on his back and spring through the window. After a thorough

search of the building and capturing the men inside, they would take up firing positions to support the assault on the next building. While the grenades were fake, the draftees did fire on dummy targets inside the buildings. Facing two-story buildings, the men moved through the second-story first and assaulted downwards. Despite this training, this combat veteran could not “recall this attack and conquer concept being used in actual combat.”⁹³ In contrast, a replacement in the 1st Division recalled using his stateside training when nervously assaulting rooms in Soller, Germany in 1945.⁹⁴

While the mock village fight might have included tank support at the end of the exercise, combined-arms training generally did not include armor. Especially as the army created new divisions, “combined-arms training” remained the realm of infantry-artillery cooperation that rarely included tanks, tank destroyers, or airplanes. After eleven months of fighting in urbanized France and Germany, that urban combat effectiveness required strong combined-arms teamwork was not lost on American military leadership. As some soldiers in Germany prepared to redeploy and fight the Japanese, renewed training included a village-fighting course that emphasized infantry-tank cooperation.⁹⁵ By 1945, American high command finally understood how to capture urban areas; training reflected that understanding. But even this improvement must be qualified. One veteran recalled that his stateside training in 1944 prepared him for a towed 57-mm antitank cannon crew but that training never included house-to-house or village fighting training whatsoever.⁹⁶ The army was too selective as to who should receive this training.

To be sure, the effectiveness of stateside training remained limited if only because no one was trying to kill these draftees, a basic and fundamental difference. Leroy Stewart, a scout in the 26th Infantry Regiment, remembered receiving replacements during the fight in Aachen, sometimes at night, and feeling sorry for them. He wrote that “all the Inf[antry] training you could get would never have you ready when it came time to go into combat.”⁹⁷ As such, it is important to note that the army understood the value of giving draftees some experience and understanding—albeit a very limited one—of combat in built-up areas.

The realization that urban combat training was necessary did not escape those units already serving overseas. The Americans stationed in England before the invasion of Normandy trained intensely from hardening marches and physical training to attending various schools and facilities for amphibious assault, attacking fortified positions, to participating in large-unit exercises. The 1st Infantry Division arrived in November 1943 from Sicily to begin preparing in earnest for the invasion. By December, the division’s 18th Infantry Regiment was doing “street fighting training.” It is noteworthy, though, that only rifle and weapons companies underwent this training, excluding both Cannon and Antitank Companies from this training.⁹⁸ Of the three infantry regiments, the 18th most eagerly trained for this contingency. First Battalion felt compelled to develop “an effective standard operating procedure” for towns and villages because the “memories of Saint Cloud, Algeria linger in our heads.”⁹⁹ Apparently, the difficulties it regiment experienced in capturing a small North African town in November 1942 still stung. Using an abandoned, bombed out British

neighborhood in Weymouth, the regiment worked out how to capture the village as well as its houses with as few casualties as possible. Platoons advanced through defended blocks, endured booby traps, and worked with its squads as well as teams within the squads as they assaulted and cleared houses. By the end of December 1943, the regiment was satisfied that “a definite operating procedure is gradually evolving.”¹⁰⁰ In January, 3/18 did two full exercises at Weymouth while individual platoons and squads did more.¹⁰¹ The next month, 1/18 incorporated smoke and hand grenades at Weymouth.¹⁰²

The 16th and 26th Infantry Regiments also trained at Weymouth but the 16th Infantry, the regiment that landed at Omaha Beach in June 1944, focused its training on the amphibious assault as well as establishing and securing the beachhead. The 26th Infantry inquired about the Weymouth facility but was less enthusiastic about training there since the soldiers could not use live ammunition. Some regimental planners opposed going to Weymouth “unless we are definitely ordered to do this type of training because we can do it all here” and because live firing was prohibited. A week later, the regiment prepared to train at Weymouth.¹⁰³ The 26th Regiment’s communications indicate that the regiments had a certain degree of control over their training. It was not the 1st Division that forced the 18th to train at Weymouth but the regiment itself to prevent another fiasco as happened at St. Cloud.

It is worth mentioning that the way in which assault divisions prepared for the invasion of France in 1943 and 1944 reveal an increased awareness of combined-arms fighting by broadening the “regimental combat team” concept. Created in the 1930s, the

combat team originally paired an infantry regiment with an artillery battalion as the infantry division organization changed.¹⁰⁴ Regiments landing in North Africa trained within this framework.¹⁰⁵ Combat Team (CT) 18 included the 18th Infantry Regiment, 32nd Field Artillery Battalion, B/1st Engineer Battalion, 1/531st Engineer Shore Regiment, and batteries from the 431st Separate Battalion Coastal Artillery (Antiaircraft). Armor did not land with CT 18 in North Africa.¹⁰⁶

As the army embraced a more combined-arms awareness, the regimental combat team went beyond just infantry-artillery teamwork. By March 1944, when CT 16 participated in an amphibious exercise, the combat team included the 16th Infantry Regiment, 7th Field Artillery Battalion, 1st Engineer Battalion, 741st Tank Battalion, 62nd Field Artillery Battalion, A and C Companies, 81st Chemical Weapons Battalion, 20th Engineer Battalion, an air support party, elements of the 5th Engineer Special Brigade, 103rd Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion, and the 15th Ordnance Bomb Disposal Squad.¹⁰⁷ By mid-1944, most regimental combat teams were built around an infantry regiment as well as artillery, tank, and tank destroyer battalions. Indeed, 5th Infantry Division wartime records consistently used the language of the regimental combat team. Instead of reporting the activities of the 2nd, 10th, and 11th Infantry Regiments, division records detailed the actions of Combat Teams 2, 10, and 11.¹⁰⁸ Prolonged exposure sustained working relationships, thus developing these combined-arms teams and directly affected how American soldiers engaged in urban operations through 1944 and 1945.

Even in-theater, the American divisions continued their training. As the 3rd Infantry Division showed prior to the breakout from Anzio in May 1944, American infantry divisions were occasionally pulled off the frontlines to undergo training. The division's 7th Infantry Regiment underwent specialized training in urban combat. At Nettuno, as far away from German guns as a unit could be on that beachhead, the 7th Infantry used the small town to learn the tactics and techniques of urban combat, which the regiment used when it assaulted Cisterna di Littoria. Unlike the 1st Infantry Division at Weymouth, the 7th Infantry had live-fire exercises at Nettuno prior to the breakout from Anzio, although it is unclear if tanks were involved in this training.¹⁰⁹

By the time that the 3rd Infantry Division landed in southern France in August 1944, the division had as mature a combined-arms mentality as any division in the European Theater of Operations.¹¹⁰ This attitude of cooperating with their attached armor battalions certainly helped them as they passed through, fought in, and captured French and German towns and is evident in how the 7th Infantry Regiment trained as late as March 1945. By late-February 1945, the division came off the frontlines and prepared for the push into Germany. The division rested in the Lorraine region of France. In a significant step, the 7th Infantry Regiment converted Pournoy la Chetive, a city that the 5th Infantry Division had fought for and defended against strong German counterattacks, into an urban combat training facility. The regiment tried to make the training as realistic as possible at Pournoy, including the use of live ammunition, explosives, flame throwers, bazookas, and two tank destroyers that represented supporting tanks.¹¹¹ By the time the 3rd Division fought its major urban operation in

Nuremberg the next April, the division was well-prepared to use all available weapons effectively, including armor.

While there is no indication that 5th Infantry Division units trained for urban combat as enthusiastically as the 18th Infantry Regiment or the 3rd Division, elements did attempt to train for this environment nonetheless. When in division reserve in mid-December 1944, the 5th Division's 10th Infantry Regiment asked to use nearby abandoned houses for training purposes, including the use of live ammunition, bazookas, rifle grenades, and explosives within these houses. This request shows foresight, especially since the division would soon replace the 95th Infantry Division fighting in the streets of Saarlautern, but division staff denied it. The Civil Affairs detachment informed the 10th Infantry that "we weren't supposed to destroy private property and if we did we would certainly have to pay [for] all the damage we did." Because the houses remained in good order, the 10th Infantry's request was simply not possible. If the regiment's companies destroyed those houses, the 5th Division "will be publicized the world over for destroying good homes." The 10th Infantry's desire for realistic training facilities was prescient but it died in the name of public relations.¹¹²

Even at the corps level, some found ways to process these lessons. On 13 and 14 December 1944, the XIX Army Corps hosted a lecture and demonstration of how the 30th Infantry Division captured "a succession of small villages within mutually supporting distance of one another, the intervening terrain being generally open with excellent fields of fire."¹¹³ The division took visiting officers on an impromptu staff ride through towns it had taken the previous November to show how division units

accomplished the towns' capture. Like the Soviet experience, the intent was to use surprise and speed against the Germans. The presentation explained that the 30th Division's basic method was to lay down an intense barrage "by all type of weapons on the village to be attacked and on adjacent enemy localities" while assaulting troops moved behind the barrage from the safest route and quickly attacked from one or more directions when it lifted.¹¹⁴

By *FM 31-50*'s doctrine, assaulting troops completed the first phase—getting a toehold on the village—when the barrage lifted. Assaulting soldiers relied on rifle grenades and rifle fire to "neutralize enemy fire during the remaining distance to the village" and tanks fired their main guns and machine guns. Upon entering a village, soldiers moved quickly to prevent a German response. Prior planning made use of aerial photographs and visual reconnaissance so that infantry squads and platoons attacked specifically assigned houses and sections of the town as their "immediate objective."¹¹⁵

At this point, tanks, which had only offered fire support assaulted quickly in order to join the infantry at the objective. Operating off the roads hindered the tanks and caused losses among the armored units but their presence in the towns multiplied the infantry's power, so division leaders accepted those tank losses. American antitank assault teams destroyed any German tanks inside the village while "some antitank or tank destroyer guns and have machine guns move into the town as soon as practicable behind the assault infantry." If the villages lay abreast each other, the division recommended assaulting a "flank village" en route to capturing all three. Upon capture of the village, the division prepared for counterattack, rearranged artillery and mortar

support for successive villages and towns, and lay mines to the approaches of the locales.¹¹⁶

The division staff stated that the assault itself could take less than an hour but preparation took several hours more because officers had to coordinate artillery, mortar, tank, tank destroyer, and antitank firing plans as well as to brief and inform the assault troops. If the division mission included subsequent villages, the 30th Infantry Division tried to save time and retain the initiative by having one infantry battalion prepare and plan while another attacked its objective. The division was confident that “these coordinated attacks have gained more objectives in a given time and eliminated more of the enemy with minimum loss to our own troops than when the attacking units are under pressure to inch forward, showing some progress hourly.”¹¹⁷

Much of this in-theater training was at each division’s own discretion. No corps or army-level orders demanded that these infantry divisions have any urban combat training. Because of its difficulties and failures at St. Cloud, the 18th Infantry Regiment was motivated to prepare for its next urban battle. The 7th Infantry Regiment had known that it would encounter more urban combat and so trained for it. Although limited, there is evidence that the 5th Infantry Division conducted wartime urban combat training: division headquarters rejected the 10th Infantry Regiment’s request to do house-to-house fighting drills. In October 1944, and as a result of costly failures against Lorraine towns, the 2nd Infantry trained to assault villages until it became, its postwar history said, “second nature.”¹¹⁸ This suggests that the divisions could choose for themselves how they would train their men.

This movement from incorporating all of a unit's organic weapons to a more robust view combined-arms warfare is part of a long process dating back to World War I. As the military rethought its organizational paradigm after World War I, one fundamental lesson was realizing that a modern army could no longer solely rely on the rifleman and his bayonet. That is, at the tactical and operational levels, modern warfare dictated that the rifleman work with the mortarman, automatic rifleman, and machine gunner. Incorporating all regimental or battalion weapons was a lesson slowly integrated during the interwar period; embracing a combined-arms way of fighting took longer.

Integrating company, battalion, regimental, and divisional weapons before combining the combat arms follows what happened within the U.S. Army during the interwar period. Through the 1920s and 1930s, army thinkers questioned military organization from the company to the division. At the divisional level, "combined-arms" meant infantry-artillery cooperation and the "regimental combat team" was an infantry regiment paired with an accompanying artillery battalion for more effective teamwork. Armored units, in contrast, remained distinct and separate from infantry units.¹¹⁹ This segregation influenced the wartime "pooling" concept at the division and corps levels while doctrine began to encourage the company through the division to use all the weapons within their organization.

By 1942, infantry doctrine clearly accepted that doctrine of units utilizing all organic weapons within their organizations, from the M1 Garand rifle to machine guns to mortars to towed antitank guns to Cannon Company's self-propelled howitzers. Thus,

early wartime doctrine showed that Americans had imbibed and applied the World War I lesson of incorporating a unit's weapons at all levels of military organization while not fully incorporating armor. The early "pooling" concept exposes a military hesitant to embrace a combined-arms mentality. Only after the infantry division achieved integration could it take the next step of combining with the different combat arms, namely, tanks and tank destroyers. Later wartime doctrine reveals the process of Americans slowly broadening what they incorporated as they included tanks, tank destroyers, and, eventually, airpower into their battle plans.

The regimental combat team concept by 1944 also helps to show that augmentation process. The armored units not included in November 1942 had become essential team players eighteen months later with the invasion of France. Simultaneously, America's combat experiences in the urban environment further pushed army thinkers and planners to integrate and include more weapons, thus continuing the expansion of how the U.S. Army understood combined-arms warfare. As the army learned the art of combined-arms warfare in general, soldiers quickly saw how they could apply it within cities, towns, and villages in particular.

It becomes difficult to say that Americans never achieved proficiency at combined-arms operations when divisions like the 3rd Infantry Division worked quite hard to achieve a high level of effectiveness. Indeed, whereas the Americans did not have enough of an appreciation for combined-arms operations at the onset, the war persuaded many of them that modern combat hinged on cooperation between all combat arms. In terms of urban combat, early wartime journal articles and doctrine indicated

this lack of appreciation to bring all weapons to bear on the enemy. Changes in wartime attitudes toward combined-arms cooperation are evident in both official doctrine as well as professional journal articles. Lessons applied came from two different directions. From below, soldiers and officers processed their experiences, giving ideas and thoughts on how to fight against the Germans. Although recorded inter-division communication seems to be limited, periodicals such as *Battle Experiences* were ways for army field units to assist and advise each other. Army leaders encouraged soldiers' ideas and disseminated them throughout the army. From the top, the army stateside slowly but steadily followed the lead and experiences of the combat units by providing new doctrine that increasingly merged the combat arms together. The learning process converged from both directions in the U.S. Army during World War II as the Americans developed new ways to fight urban combat.

As these divisions prepared and trained during the war itself, they understood the realities of urban combat and prepared for it. How they prepared for it and with what fervor varied amongst the divisions: the 3rd Infantry Division devoting more time and effort than the 5th Infantry Division. This points to a reality of the American war effort in World War II: that given the autonomy of the infantry divisions, it is difficult to generalize to what extent every division achieved combined-arms proficiency but it is clear that American divisions tried to learn during the war in order to become more effective. In reality, the divisions were *unequal* in their eventual performance in that some reached combined-arms effectiveness to different degrees than others. Left to themselves, however, American infantry divisions were generally successful in adapting

to the rigors of modern war, including urban combat.¹²⁰ The battles through France and Germany from 1944 to 1945 help to show this adaptation in the 1st, 3rd, and 5th Divisions.

Endnotes

- ¹ Francis H. Boucher, "Artillery on Attacks on Stone Villages," *Field Artillery Journal* 34, no. 10 (Oct. 1944): 708.
- ² Anonymous officer quoted in Army Ground Forces Board, AFHQ, NATO, "Street Fighting in Italy," 22 January 1944, 1, DRL.
- ³ AFHQ, MTO, AGF Board, "Lessons Learned in Combat," 24 November 1944, DRL, 2.
- ⁴ Headquarters, North Africa Theater of Operations, "Lessons from the Italian Campaign," 10 March 1944, DRL, 50. This quote pulls from the same officer quoted above in note 2.
- ⁵ Headquarters, North Africa Theater of Operations, "Lessons from the Italian Campaign," 50-3.
- ⁶ Headquarters, Mediterranean Theater of Operations, "Lessons from the Italian Campaign," 15 March 1945, DRL, 22-40.
- ⁷ Headquarters, Mediterranean Theater of Operations, "Lessons from the Italian Campaign," 15 March 1945, DRL, 112.
- ⁸ Headquarters, Mediterranean Theater of Operations, "Lessons from the Italian Campaign," 76.
- ⁹ Headquarters, Third Infantry Division, "Report of Lessons Learned in Combat from 15 August 44 to 15 Oct. 44," 2 Nov. 44, DRL, 1:3.
- ¹⁰ Headquarters, Third Infantry Division, "Report of Lessons Learned," 2:2.
- ¹¹ Headquarters, Third Infantry Division, "Report of Lessons Learned," 3:1.
- ¹² Headquarters, 1st US Infantry Division, "Operations Memorandum, no. 1: Employment of Tanks with Infantry," undated, DRL, 7.

- ¹³ Colonel Pete T. Heffner, Jr., "Improper Security in Villages," 11 January 1945, European Theater of Operations, G-3 Division, Observers' Reports, 1944-1945, RG 498 (Records of the Headquarters, European Theater of Operations, United States Army [World War II]), National Archives, College Park, Maryland.
- ¹⁴ Colonel Ralph J. Canine, "Attack of Towns," 1 December 1944, 1-2, European Theater of Operations, G-3 Division, Observers' Reports, 1944-1945, RG 498 (Records of the Headquarters, European Theater of Operations, United States Army [World War II]), National Archives, College Park, Maryland.
- ¹⁵ The Twelfth Army Group published *Battle Experiences* every five or six days; indeed, some are entitled either *First Army Battle Experiences* or *Twelfth Army Group Battle Experiences*. In 1944, the Headquarters, European Theater of Operations, United States Army gathered many of the lessons and published the lessons learned between July 1944 and April 1945. The consolidated publication, however, does not note when the army published the original lessons. Headquarters, European Theater of Operations, United States Army, *Battle Experiences, July 1944 to April 1945* (n.p., 1945).
- ¹⁶ Heading quoted in *Battle Experiences* 2 (5 July 1944): 1.
- ¹⁷ "Manure Piles as Camouflage," *Battle Experiences* 4 (1 Dec 1944): 1; "Immobilized Tanks," *Battle Experiences* 30 (5 January 1945), 1; "Communication Expedients," *Battle Experiences* 38 (17 January 1945), 1.
- ¹⁸ "Value of Infantry Cannon," *Battle Experiences* 6 (5 Dec 1944), 1.
- ¹⁹ "Second Story Machine Gun Positions," "Grenades in Village Fighting," *Battle Experiences* 48 (31 January 1945), 2.
- ²⁰ See *Battle Experiences*, 18; "City Fighting in Brest," *Twelfth Army Group Battle Experiences* 76 (25 October 1944), 1; "Street Fighting in Brest," *Twelfth Army Group Battle Experiences* 61 (9 October 1944), 2.
- ²¹ "City Fighting," *Twelfth Army Group Battle Experiences* 89 (10 November 1944), 1.
- ²² "Fighting in the City of Brest," *Twelfth Army Group Battle Experiences* 50 (28 September 1944): 2.
- ²³ "Fighting in the City of Brest," *Twelfth Army Group Battle Experiences* 50 (28 September 1944), 1.

- ²⁴ “Fighting in the City of Brest,” *Twelfth Army Group Battle Experiences* 50 (28 September 1944), 1.
- ²⁵ “House Fighting,” *Twelfth Army Group Battle Experiences* 4 (15 July 1944), 1.
- ²⁶ *Battle Experiences*, 17-18. See also “City Fighting in Brest,” *Twelfth Army Group Battle Experiences* 76 (25 October 1944): 1-3; “Street Fighting in Brest,” *Twelfth Army Group Battle Experiences* 61 (9 October 1944): 1-3; “Street Fighting in Aachen,” *Twelfth Army Group Battle Experiences* 80 (31 October 1944): 1.
- ²⁷ “Tanks in Village Fighting,” *Twelfth Army Group Battle Experiences* 82 (2 November 1944): 1.
- ²⁸ “An Infantry Battalion Commander with an Armored Division,” *Twelfth Army Group Battle Experiences* 53 (1 October 1944): 1.
- ²⁹ “City Fighting,” *Twelfth Army Group Battle Experiences* 89 (10 November 1944): 1. See also *Battle Experiences*, 19-21.
- ³⁰ Bert Levy, “Street Fighting,” *Infantry Journal* 51 (September 1942): 22. Reprinted: Bert Levy, “Street Fighting,” *Cavalry Journal* 51 (September-October 1942): 46-52.
- ³¹ Levy, “Street Fighting,” 27.
- ³² Levy, “Street Fighting,” 22, 29.
- ³³ Colonel A. Kononenko, “Attack on a Fortified Inhabited Point,” *Infantry Journal* 51 (September 1942): 62-3.
- ³⁴ Lieutenant General V. I. Chuykov, “Street Fighting Tactics,” *Infantry Journal* 53 (December 1943): 60. Another version of this article is in Lieutenant General V. I. Chuykov, “Street Fighting—The Lessons of Stalingrad,” *Military Review* 24 (July 1944): 95-99; Lieutenant General V. I. Chuykov, “Tactics of Street Fighting: Military Lessons of Stalingrad,” *Cavalry Journal* 52 (September-October 1943): 58-62.
- ³⁵ Chuykov, “Street Fighting Tactics,” 61.
- ³⁶ Chuykov, “Street Fighting Tactics,” 62.
- ³⁷ Chuykov, “Street Fighting Tactics,” 62-3.
- ³⁸ Chuykov, “Street Fighting Tactics,” 63.

- ³⁹ Chuykov, "Street Fighting Tactics," 63.
- ⁴⁰ Other translated reprints of Soviet articles include Colonel I. Ziberov, "Armored Units in Street Fighting," *Cavalry Journal* 52 (May-June 1943): 44-6; Major Q, "When the Red Army Attacks a City," *Infantry Journal* 56 (March 1945): 52-3; Captain K. Budrin, "Night Battle for a Populated Point," *Military Review* 22 (October 1942): 89-90; Colonel V. Urbanovich, "Mortars in an Inhabited Place," *Military Review* 23 (February 1944): 66; "How the City of Yukhnov Was Captured," *Military Review* 22 (January 1943): 72-3; "Tank Attacks on Occupied Villages," *Military Review* 22 (January 1943): 74; "Planning an Attack Against a Village," *Military Review* 22 (January 1943): 94; Major P. Slesarev, "Tactics of Combat for Inhabited Places," *Military Review* 23 (June 1943): 74-5; "Fighting for Cities in Offensive and Defensive Action," *Military Review* 23 (January 1944): 92-3; Captain M. Makukhin, *Military Review* 24 (January 1945): 117-120; "Soviet Tanks in City Fighting," *Intelligence Bulletin* (June 1946) accessed 26 September 2011 at www.lonesentry.com/articles/sovtanks/index.html; "Tank Warfare in Streets," *Tactical and Technical Trends*, no. 14 (17 December 1942): 34; "Tactics of Street Fighting on the Russian Front," *Tactical and Technical Trends*, no. 26 (3 June 1943): 53-9.
- ⁴¹ "The British Discuss Combat in Towns," *Intelligence Bulletin* 2, no. 12 (August 1944): 73.
- ⁴² "The British Discuss Combat in Towns," 74-85.
- ⁴³ Bert Levy, "Street Fighting," *Cavalry Journal* 51, no. 5 (September-October 1942): 46-52; V. I. Chuykov, "The Tactics of Street Fighting," *Cavalry Journal* 52, no. 5 (September-October 1943): 58-62.
- ⁴⁴ Esen, "Artillery in the Defense of Stalingrad," *Field Artillery Journal* 34, no. 6 (June 1944): 343-5; Lt. Col. I. P. Tooley, "Artillery Support at Arnhem," *Field Artillery Journal* 35, no. 4 (April 1945): 202-4; Captain Eugen Maurey, "Close Support at Kaltenhouse," *Field Artillery Journal* 35, no. 4 (April 1945): 205-8.
- ⁴⁵ Francis H. Boucher, "Artillery on Attacks on Stone Villages," *Field Artillery Journal* 34, no. 10 (Oct. 1944): 708-9.
- ⁴⁶ "British Street Fighting Tactics," *Tactical and Technical Trends* 36 (21 October 1943): 25-6. Other articles on British tactics include: "Street Fighting—Tips from a Platoon Commander in Italy," *Military Review* 24, no. 8 (November 1944): 116-8; "British Notes on Street Fighting," *Tactical and Technical Trends* 17 (28 January 1943) accessed 26 September 2011 at www.lonesentry.com/articels/ttt07/british-street-fighting.html.

- ⁴⁷ I would like to thank Dr. Bruce Gudmundsson of the Marine Corps University for this simile. Email with Dr. Bruce Gudmundsson, 25 September 2013.
- ⁴⁸ For the story of the combat historian, see Forrest C. Pogue, *Pogue's War: Diaries of a WWII Combat Historian* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2001). See also Vetock, *Lessons Learned*, 69-70.
- ⁴⁹ This is the main point in Chapter 3 of Vetock's *Lessons Learned*. Vetock, *Lessons Learned*, 55-71. Indeed, Vetock cannot identify how field lessons influenced wartime doctrine, only that they did (see pages 67-9).
- ⁵⁰ U.S. War Department, *Field Manual [FM] 100-5: Field Service Regulations, Operations* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1941), 209-10.
- ⁵¹ *FM 100-5* (1941), 182.
- ⁵² *FM 7-40: Rifle Regiment* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1942), 179.
- ⁵³ *FM 7-10: Rifle Company, Rifle Regiment* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1942), 62; *FM 7-15: Heavy Weapons Company, Rifle Regiment* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1942), 59.
- ⁵⁴ *FM 7-20: Rifle Battalion* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1942), 130-1.
- ⁵⁵ *Rifle Battalion* (1942), 131.
- ⁵⁶ *Rifle Battalion* (1942), 130-1.
- ⁵⁷ *Rifle Battalion* (1942), 131-2.
- ⁵⁸ For information on this debate, see Robert R. Palmer, "Reorganization of Ground Troops for Combat" in *The Organization of Ground Combat Troops*, Kent Robert Greenfield, Robert R. Palmer, and Bell I. Wiley, eds., (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1947), 293-7, 305-8. Because independent tank, tank destroyer, and anti-aircraft battalions were attachments, they could be, and oftentimes were, detached from the infantry division. The longer these independent battalions remained attached to the division, the better the teamwork but these independent battalions were never "organically" included with infantry divisions in the same way that an infantry division had its own permanently attached field artillery and engineer battalions, for example. The organizational debate on independent tank battalions as attachments or permanent members of an infantry division continued after the war.

- ⁵⁹ See *Rifle Battalion* (1942), 90-2, 95-100, 104.
- ⁶⁰ *FM 100-5: Operations* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1941), 209-10; *FM 100-5: Operations* (Washington, D.C.: 1944), 246-9.
- ⁶¹ *Operations* (1944), 247.
- ⁶² *Operations* (1944), 247.
- ⁶³ *Operations* (1944), 247.
- ⁶⁴ *Operations* (1944), 248.
- ⁶⁵ *Operations* (1944), 248.
- ⁶⁶ *FM 31-50: Attack on a Fortified Position and Combat in Towns* (Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1944), 62-7.
- ⁶⁷ *Combat in Towns* (1944), 61.
- ⁶⁸ *Combat in Towns* (1944), 73.
- ⁶⁹ *Combat in Towns* (1944), 68-9
- ⁷⁰ *Combat in Towns* (1944), 70.
- ⁷¹ *Rifle Battalion* (1942), 136.
- ⁷² *Combat in Towns* (1944), 81.
- ⁷³ To see one example, described earlier, see the comments of the Captain of A/377th Infantry in *Battle Experiences*, 17-18.
- ⁷⁴ *Combat in Towns* (1944), 85-90.
- ⁷⁵ "Principles of Town and Village Fighting," *The Infantry School Mailing List* 28 (July 1944): 171.
- ⁷⁶ "Principles of Town and Village Fighting," 171.
- ⁷⁷ "Principles of Town and Village Fighting," 172-4.
- ⁷⁸ "Principles of Town and Village Fighting," 174-6.

- ⁷⁹ “Principles of Town and Village Fighting,” 184-5.
- ⁸⁰ *FM 7-20: Infantry Battalion* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1944), 160.
- ⁸¹ *Rifle Battalion* (1942), 132.
- ⁸² *Rifle Battalion* (1942), 132.
- ⁸³ *Infantry Battalion* (1944), 161.
- ⁸⁴ *Infantry Battalion* (1944), 162.
- ⁸⁵ *FM 6-20: Field Artillery, Tactical Employment* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1944), 65-6.
- ⁸⁶ *FM 17-10: Armored Force Field Manual, Tactics and Techniques* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1942), 142-3.
- ⁸⁷ *FM 17-42: Armored Infantry Battalion* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1944), 104.
- ⁸⁸ *FM 18-5: Tactical Employment, Tank Destroyer Unit* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1944).
- ⁸⁹ Robert R. Palmer, “Organization and Training of New Ground Combat Elements,” in Kent Robert Greenfield, Robert R. Palmer, and Bell I. Wiley, eds., *The Organization of Ground Combat Troops* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1947), 411.
- ⁹⁰ Bell I. Wiley, “The Building and Training of Infantry Division,” in Robert R. Palmer, Bell I. Wiley, and William R. Keast, eds., *The Procurement and Training of Ground Combat Troops* (Washington, D.C.: Historical Division, Department of the Army, 1948), 442.
- ⁹¹ Peter R. Mansoor, *The GI Offensive in Europe: The Triumph of American Infantry Divisions, 1941-1945* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1999), 53-6; Lee Kennett, *G.I.: The American Soldier in World War II* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1987), 48-9.
- ⁹² William R. Keast, “The Training of Enlisted Replacements,” 338 and Wiley, “The Building and Training of Infantry Divisions,” 449 in *The Procurement and Training*

of Ground Combat Troops. See also Mansoor, *The GI Offensive in Europe*, 110 and Kennett, *G.I.*, 42-54.

⁹³ Robert Lynch, *A Letter Marked Free: A Powerful and Gripping Account of a Combat Soldier in WWII* (Indianapolis: Dog Ear Publishing, 2007), 21.

⁹⁴ Raymond Gantter, *Roll Me Over: An Infantryman's World War II* (New York: Presidio Press, 1997), 167-8.

⁹⁵ Bell I. Wiley, "Redeployment Training: Plans and Problems," in *The Procurement and Training of Ground Combat Troops*, 625, 8.

⁹⁶ Gerald Astor, *The Bloody Forest: Battle for the Huertgen: September 1944-January 1945* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 2000), ix-x.

⁹⁷ Leroy Stewart, "Hurry Up and Wait," 1975, WWII Veterans Collection, 1st Infantry Division, 26th IN Regiment, Box 2, USAMHI, 60.

⁹⁸ See, for example, "Report of Activities, G-3 Section, 1 February 1944 to 29 February 1944," 4 March 1944, 5, File 301-3, Box 5104, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.

⁹⁹ Captain Edward W. McGregor, "Record of Events for the Period December 1 to 28, 1943," 29 December 1943, 1 in "18th Infantry Historical Report, December 1943," File 301-INF(18)-0.3, Box 5254, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.

¹⁰⁰ McGregor, "Record of Events for the Period December 1 to 28, 1943," 29 December 1943, 1 in "18th Infantry Historical Report, December 1943," RG 407, Entry 427, NA.

¹⁰¹ 1st Lieutenant Joseph P. Gurka, "Battalion Journal for the Month of January, 1944," 29 January 1944, 1 in "18th Infantry Historical Report, January, 1944," File 301-INF(18)-0.3, Box 5254, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.

¹⁰² Captain Edward W. McGregor, "S-3 Periodic Report for the Month of February, 1944," 28 February 1944, 2 in "18th Infantry Historical Report, February 1944," File 301-INF(18)-0.3, Box 5254, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.

¹⁰³ 26th Infantry Unit Journal, 22 December 1943 and "Training Notes, no. 53: Period 1 January 1944 to 14 January 1944 Inclusive," 28 December 1943, 3 both in "26th Infantry Historical Report, December 1943," File 301-INF(26)-0.3, Box 5267, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.

¹⁰⁴ Kenneth Finlayson, *An Uncertain Trumpet: The Evolution of U.S. Army Infantry Doctrine, 1919-1941* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), 127.

- ¹⁰⁵ George F. Howe, *Northwest Africa: Seizing the Initiative in the West* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1956; reprinted Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, 1993), 62-3. Howe never states what composed these regimental combat teams.
- ¹⁰⁶ “History, Battle of Oran, Combat Team 18,” 19 November 1942, 2, File 301-INF(18)-0.3, Box 5253, RG 407, Entry 427, NA. Neither CT 16 nor CT 26 listed what composed their combat teams for Operation TORCH, which suggests that no tanks were within either team.
- ¹⁰⁷ “Report of Activities, G-3 Section, 1 March 1944 to 31 March 1944, inclusive,” 4 April 1944, 3, File 301-3, Box 5104, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁰⁸ The 1st Infantry Division oftentimes also used the same language in regards to its infantry regiments-turned-combat teams as well. See, for example, “G-3 Report of Operations, 1 September to 30 September 1944, Inclusive,” 5 October 1944, File 301-03, Box 5105, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁰⁹ Donald G. Taggart, *History of the Third Infantry Division in World War II* (Washington, D.C.: Infantry Journal Press, 1947; reprint, Nashville, TN: Battery Press, 1997), 148; Captain R. T. Young, “Training Memorandum, #17: Street Fighting, 2nd Bn, 7th Inf.,” 4 May 1944 in “Training Memoranda, 1944,” File 303-INF(7)-3.13, Box 5618, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹¹⁰ See, for example, “Training Memorandum, # 29: Training Schedule for Period 17-22 July 1944 (Incl),” 14 July and “Training Memorandum, #31: Infantry-Tank Assault Teams,” 17 July 1944 in “Training Memoranda, 1944,” File 303-INF(7)-3.13, Box 5618, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹¹¹ Nathan William White, *From Fedala to Berchtesgaden: A History of the Seventh United States Infantry in World War II* (n.p., 1947), 229. See also “Training Memorandum, #6: Training Directive—Third Phase,” 27 February 1945 in “Training Memoranda, 1945,” File 303-INF(7)-3.13, Box 5618, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
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- ¹¹³ “Method of Attack Against Villages Used by the 30th Infantry Division in the Advance to the Inde River, November 16 to 28, 1944,” 1 in Headquarters, XIX Corps, *XIX Corps Demonstration: 2nd Armored Division Tank-Infantry Assault of Tactical Locality; 30th Infantry Division Infantry Assault of Fortified Village*, 10 December 1944 (Combined Arms Research Library, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas).

- ¹¹⁴ “Method of Attack Against Villages,” 1.
- ¹¹⁵ “Method of Attack Against Villages,” 1.
- ¹¹⁶ “Method of Attack Against Villages,” 2.
- ¹¹⁷ “Method of Attack Against Villages,” 2-3.
- ¹¹⁸ *Second Infantry Regiment, Fifth Infantry Division* (Baton Rouge: Army & Navy Publishing Co., 1947), 46.
- ¹¹⁹ These interwar debates and conclusions are covered in more detail in Finlayson, *An Uncertain Trumpet*, chapters 4-8.
- ¹²⁰ Although concerned with World War I, the range of American infantry divisions’ fighting effectiveness is one of the larger points made in Mark Ethan Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War: The American Army and Combat in World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

CHAPTER VI

“KNOCK ‘EM ALL DOWN”: URBAN COMBAT WITH THE **1ST INFANTRY DIVISION, JUNE TO DECEMBER 1944**

In mid-1944, Anglo-American forces began what the Americans had wanted since entering the global conflict in December 1941: the invasion of continental Europe. On 6 June, the Americans, British, and Canadians assaulted the beaches of Normandy in northern France. Ten weeks later, on 15 August, American and Free French troops landed in southern France. Finally, American, British, Canadian, Free French, and Soviet military forces were arrayed against their German enemy throughout the continent of Europe. After breaking out of their beachheads, the American advances across northern, central, and southern France shared similar experiences in fighting against weakened German forces through the summer but bogged down before strengthened German defenses within restrictive terrain in the fall and winter.

As the German army retreated, it established defenses anywhere it could: along rivers or the static Siegfried and Maginot Lines as well as within thick forests and French, Dutch, and German towns. Allied operations occurred amidst a degree of urban settlement that did not exist in northern Africa, Sicily, or Italy. French farmers typically lived in a town and farmed the ground around it, in contrast with American farming families that often live in a farmhouse surrounded by their acreage.¹ As such, French towns usually lay a short distance from others. Usually road-bound, Germans and Allies

gave significant operational value to otherwise unimportant French towns and cities at important road junctions and at crucial river-crossing sites.

Through June, July, and August, the 1st, 5th, and 3rd Infantry Divisions fought for and through more villages, towns, and cities than in previous campaigns. These American divisions experienced combat through the entire urban spectrum: from L/15th Infantry's attack on the village of Allan in August to 2/10's assault and defense of the town of Pournoy-la-Chétive in September to the 1st Infantry Division's operations against the city of Aachen in October to XX Corps' investment of the city of Metz in November. As the Americans continued to develop a maneuver-based, combined-arms mentality, they applied this mindset to seizing French towns and cities. A combined-arms approach to urban combat became especially important when each division had to *defend* an urban location rather than attack it. These three divisions' various urban battles demonstrate that the American military had learned how to use the combat arms in concert by the time the Germans launched their Ardennes Forest counter-offensive in December 1944.

Complicating the combined-arms approach to urban warfare, each division also found it necessary to conduct training for inexperienced replacements as they integrated into their veteran organizations. The American replacement system served as a reminder that while an infantry division, as a combat organization, could become efficient in battle, many soldiers fresh to combat were assigned to the veteran units. A second complication was the nature of the defender. Fighting in a town against an enemy desperate to retreat seemed relatively straightforward, but when the German *Wehrmacht*

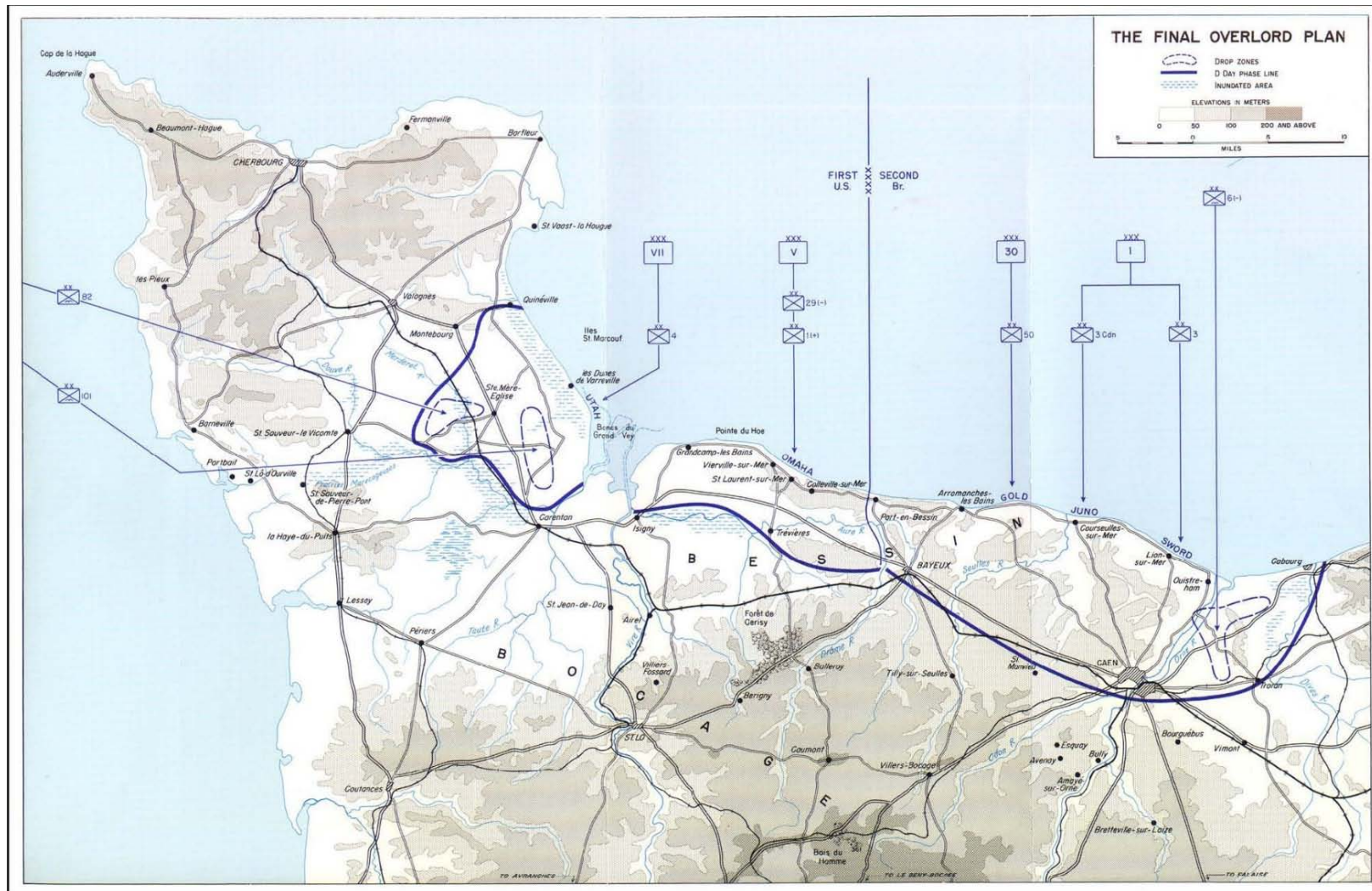
dug in its heels to stubbornly defend the towns and cities behind the Siegfried Line urban combat became much more costly and complex. A third complication was geography. Fighting for towns in heavily forested regions especially strained the Americans' infantry-armor-artillery teamwork. These challenges notwithstanding, the Americans had learned by December 1944 that modern war required the coordination of all the combat arms. While this learning continued during the campaign for France, the Americans consistently demonstrated improved combined-arms capabilities in urban combat.

The 1st Infantry Division landed elements on Omaha Beach on 6 June 1944 and fought through the Normandy Campaign and participated in the breakout from the bocage, or the hedgerow country, with Operation COBRA. After pursuing the Germans through northern France, the division fought costly urban battles in the Siegfried Line, within the city of Aachen, and through the Hurtgen Forest.

To prepare for the invasion of Europe, the 1st Infantry Division's rifle companies had performed street fighting drills in the streets of Weymouth in southern England. Invading northern France, British and Canadian forces attacked beaches code-named "Sword," "Juno," and "Gold." The Americans assaulted beaches code-named "Omaha" and "Utah." The 1st Infantry Division led the amphibious assault on "Omaha." Map I below shows the final plans for Operation OVERLORD as well as the villages and coastal roads just behind the beaches.²

The 1st Division (reinforced by the 29th Infantry Division's 116th Infantry Regiment) landed the 116th, 16th, and 18th Infantry Regiments on "Omaha" early on 6

Figure 6.1: Final Overlord Plan



June. Its objective on the first day was to establish a beachhead by seizing the coastal road and to also control the high ground over the important Paris-Cherbourg highway. The 16th Infantry's mission included seizing Colleville-sur-Mer behind the assault beaches.³

The 16th Infantry arranged itself into "Battalion Landing Teams," or BLTs, where a company each of engineers, 4.1-inch mortars, tanks, and a naval shore fire control party would support an infantry battalion. The rifle companies likewise broke down into sections, rather than platoons, for this amphibious assault. The 16th Infantry's 2nd BLT was to land on Beach Easy Red, capture Colleville-sur-Mer behind the beach, and establish defensive positions and to prepare to improve those defenses with tanks. The regiment's 3rd BLT was to capture the towns of Le Grande Hameau, La Vailee, and Ste Honorine-des-Pertes as well as make contact with the British 50th Division on the regimental and divisional left. The 1st BLT, initially held in reserve, was to seize the towns of Formigny and Surrain and maintain contact with the 116th Combat Team on the regiment's right.⁴

By 0630 on 6 June, the 16th's G Company crowded aboard the small assault craft two thousand yards from the beach. In the next five hours, the troops reached the beaches, assaulted through a murderous hail of gunfire, and captured the bluffs above the shoreline. The assault on Normandy was chaotic: few tanks made it ashore, G Company landed on top of the previous two waves and successive waves landed on top of it. Assisted by disorganized elements of other companies and regiments, the survivors of G Company slowly and painfully wound their way to the high bluffs.⁵ By noon, much of

the company had seized the crest of the bluffs and cleared its positions of any Germans. Now the company could attack Colleville-sur-Mer. (Figure 6.2 shows the area around Colleville.)⁶

Around 1300, G Company, reinforced by machine guns, approached the town. The Germans awaited them. First Section infiltrated into the western edge, seizing a church and nearby houses. Captain Joseph T. Dawson, the company commander, stormed the church with a sergeant and a private. Three Germans killed the private but Dawson and his sergeant took the church and steeple. The ensuing firefight that led to three Americans killed and another two wounded. When Dawson left the church, a sniper's bullet wounded him lightly in the knee.

Dawson doubted his ability to capture the town with troops he had on hand, especially after learning from French civilians that 150 Germans were in Colleville and knowing his company had taken severe losses from the landing. Around 1425, 2/16's commander requested tanks and reinforcements to strike inland. Remaining on the western edge, 2nd Section deployed north of town while the 3rd and 5th Sections deployed on the south. Soon after the Americans appeared, the Germans counterattacked but lost eighteen killed and eight taken prisoner as the Americans repulsed their attack. Because of the chaos of the landings, the lack of a clear front, and sketchy communications, G Company grasped onto the western outskirts of Colleville and waited for the 18th Infantry to relieve them.

At 1530, U.S. naval vessels suddenly began shelling Colleville and caused eight American casualties. After 90 minutes, the shelling stopped when naval gunners learned

Figure 6.2: Colleville-sur-Mer



who was there. Dawson remembered later that this shelling “absolutely leveled” Colleville and it “angered me beyond all measure because I thought it was totally disgraceful.” The navy had orders to shell Colleville an hour after the landings or whenever its gunners had proper visibility. At 0800 on 7 June, a large patrol entered Colleville and, according to a post-battle report, “moved carefully from house to house, shot a few enemy riflemen, and captured eight prisoners.”⁷

Although a small engagement relying solely on the infantry, the fight in Colleville after making a major amphibious assault signifies not only the many village and town fights that Americans could expect as they advanced through France but also that they were part of a larger operation or strategy. That is, urban actions occurred as a part of an amphibious assault, a river crossing, while fighting through a heavily wooded area, or while operating against a larger city. These urban fights did not happen within an operational or strategic vacuum.

On 7 June, the Allies attempted to achieve the objectives they failed to get on the sixth. The days after the landings were uncertain ones as the Allies awaited a massive German counterattack and consolidated their positions as rapidly as possible to link the Utah-Omaha-Gold beaches. The 1st Infantry Division struggled to seize key roads, bridges, and the high ground, all goals that required controlling the area’s towns and villages. The Americans soon confronted the hedgerows, or the centuries-old property markers throughout the region that were impenetrable walls of vines and trees and gave the Germans superior concealment but made observation difficult. The division’s rifle companies and battalions, assisted by the 741st and 745th Tank Battalions, took several

villages in the area. The 18th and 26th Infantry Regiments captured their original D-Day objectives of Trévières and Port en Bessin on the seventh. Later the same day, 1/18 attacked Engranville against some opposition while 3/18 took Surrain, and 1/26 seized Russy. Early on 8 June, B/18 and tanks fought for and gained control of the town of Formigny.⁸ The 26th took Tour en Bessin on the eighth and the 16th secured Mosles, thus helping to secure the important Isigny-Bayeaux coastal highway. After capturing Tour-en-Bessin, the Americans pressed forward to link with the British 50th Division around Caumont, an important crossroads town.

On 12 June, the 26th Infantry received orders to attack south toward Caumont. The 18th Infantry was in support. Both regiments operated as combat teams, each incorporating a battalion of tanks, a company of tank destroyers, and a platoon of engineers.⁹ On the twelfth, the 18th made it to the St. Lô-Caumont road; 2/26 approached Caumont and encountered enemy tanks and artillery. Unable to take Caumont on the twelfth, the 26th pulled back to allow division artillery to pound the town and surrounding areas. The Americans still relied on heavy firepower when the infantry were not initially successful.

The next day, 2/26 assaulted Caumont. By 0730, the 26th radioed to division headquarters that the “going [was] pretty tough in the town,” in part because the American had underestimated the number of enemy soldiers. Five minutes later, it became a house-by-house fight as tanks and infantry had “to blast” the Germans inside the houses. At 0800, F Company reported being shoved out of the town but the battalion was moving three companies abreast with tanks in front of them. The 26th described the

fighting as “hard” and that there were seven or eight enemy tanks in the town moving west toward the 18th Infantry’s position. By 0900, the 26th declared Caumont to be in their hands, established antitank defenses, and rooted out the few snipers left behind. After withdrawing, the Germans began shelling the town. Artillery from both armies left the town in ruins. The 1st Engineer Battalion cleared the streets of the rubble and put out fires. The Americans set up a defensive line outside Caumont and began patrolling to their front.¹⁰ On 13 June, the 1st Infantry Division established a new defensive line along the Caumont-St. Lô road, linking the American beachhead with the British. As the most exposed Allied position, the division endured German artillery and patrolled along that line until the Allies came up with a new plan to break out of the frustrating hedgerow country.

The Big Red One remained along the Caumont-St. Lô road until mid-July. The Americans and Germans conducted patrols and exchanged artillery barrages. On 14 July, the 5th Infantry Division came ashore and replaced the 1st Infantry Division on the frontlines; the Big Red One redeployed to the rear. To the west during this time, XIX Corps’s 29th, 30th, and 35th Infantry Divisions, as well as V Corps’s 2nd Division, fought for St. Lô among the marshes, rivers, hedgerows, and outlying villages but a fierce German defense stymied them until late July. St. Lô fell when American forces entered on 18 July for the first time. Most of the fighting was in a semi-circle north of the city. What little street fighting there was came as American patrols entered the city on 18 July. By the nineteenth, the city was under American control. With XIX Corps’s capture, the Americans took a vital highway away from the Germans, which they used

when they broke out of the hedgerows. To the east, the British experienced incredible difficulties taking Caen from an equally stalwart defense. To the northwest, VII Corps's 4th, 9th, 79th, and 90th Divisions pushed toward the port of Cherbourg. These divisions advanced up the Cherbourg Peninsula in the days after the invasion and fought against its many defenses. The port finally surrendered on 27 June before an intense urban battle could develop. Since these important urban actions did not involve the 1st, 3rd, or 5th Divisions, they are not analyzed in this dissertation.

In the stalemating hedgerows, First U.S. Army commander Lieutenant General Omar Bradley planned Operation COBRA: the breakout from the hedgerows to the open plains of central France. In this campaign, the 1st Infantry Division transitioned to the American right. Following saturation bombing of the German frontline positions near St. Lô, three VII Corps divisions, the 9th, 4th, and 30th, would pour through the massive gap in the line. The 1st Division had instructions to closely follow the lead units.

On 25 July, two thousand bombers dropped five thousand tons of bombs on Germans near St. Lô.¹¹ Despite friendly casualties from bombs falling short of their target, VII Corps pushed across the St. Lô-Périers road. On the twenty-sixth, the 3rd Armored Division's Combat Command B (CCB) led the 1st Infantry Division's attack south, followed by the 18th Infantry Regiment as the infantry advanced toward Marigny.¹² The 18th Infantry were surprised to discover German defenders there on the morning of 27 July. As the Americans passed into the town, the Germans opened fire. Fighting became house by house as the Germans defended from the narrow streets, tight alleyways, and buildings to slow the American advance. To support their advances, I

and L Companies brought up machine guns and mortars to Marigny's main street. Despite the tough urban battle, 3/18 reported the town secure on the twenty-seventh as the regiment turned its attention to antitank weapons south of Marigny.¹³

COBRA broke the German defensive line in Normandy and soon the breakthrough turned into a pursuit. The commander of 1/26, Lieutenant Colonel Francis Murdoch, remembered that "it was push, push, push, with fighting from time to time." Murdoch credited much of the division's success to its organic artillery but, while the Americans encountered many small towns and villages along the way, he "did not believe in shooting artillery into every little town we came across." His battalion often attacked on foot at night, "mov[ing] silently into the town, then bring[ing] in our tanks."¹⁴ Typically, the Germans withdrew or, more rarely, they surrendered.

Combat Team 26 made effective use of August. On 21 August, battalion and artillery commanders met with the tank and tank destroyer commanders to "thrash out" the appropriate use of armor with assault infantry. Each battalion had developed its own method of integrating tanks and tank destroyers. For example, First Battalion preferred to place tanks behind the lead company and tank destroyers behind the tanks but before the second company. Second Battalion put its tanks out front by fifty yards, followed by infantry walking alongside the tank destroyers. Third Battalion mounted half a company onto its platoon of tanks and the other half-company mounted on its platoon of tank destroyers. Colonel John Seitz permitted his battalion commanders to decide how best to employ tanks and tank destroyers. Although maintenance issues cut short the discussion, the combat team actively acted to improve its combined-arms capabilities.¹⁵

Indeed, the combat team went further by creating three “battle groups” of a battalion of infantry, a platoon of tanks, a platoon of tank destroyers, and artillery.¹⁶

The division also reevaluated its tank-infantry coordination. The 1st Division’s own monthly report of operations for August advocated permanently including tank, towed tank destroyer, and self-propelled tank destroyer battalions into the divisional organization. The report advocated tanks working together, preferably as a platoon of five tanks. It encouraged the infantry’s active cooperation and support of tanks in combat. In well-defended areas, tanks became assault guns that knocked out enemy positions and moved forward alongside the infantry. Infantry-mounted tanks, assisted by artillery and reconnaissance, could roll ahead of the main body of infantry. Against a fortified town or village, it was best for tanks to support the infantry’s attack by firing from outside or to control the town’s rear and prevent the defenders’ escape.¹⁷ By the end of August, the 1st Infantry Division clearly understood that to win in urban combat it was imperative to incorporate its weapons together.

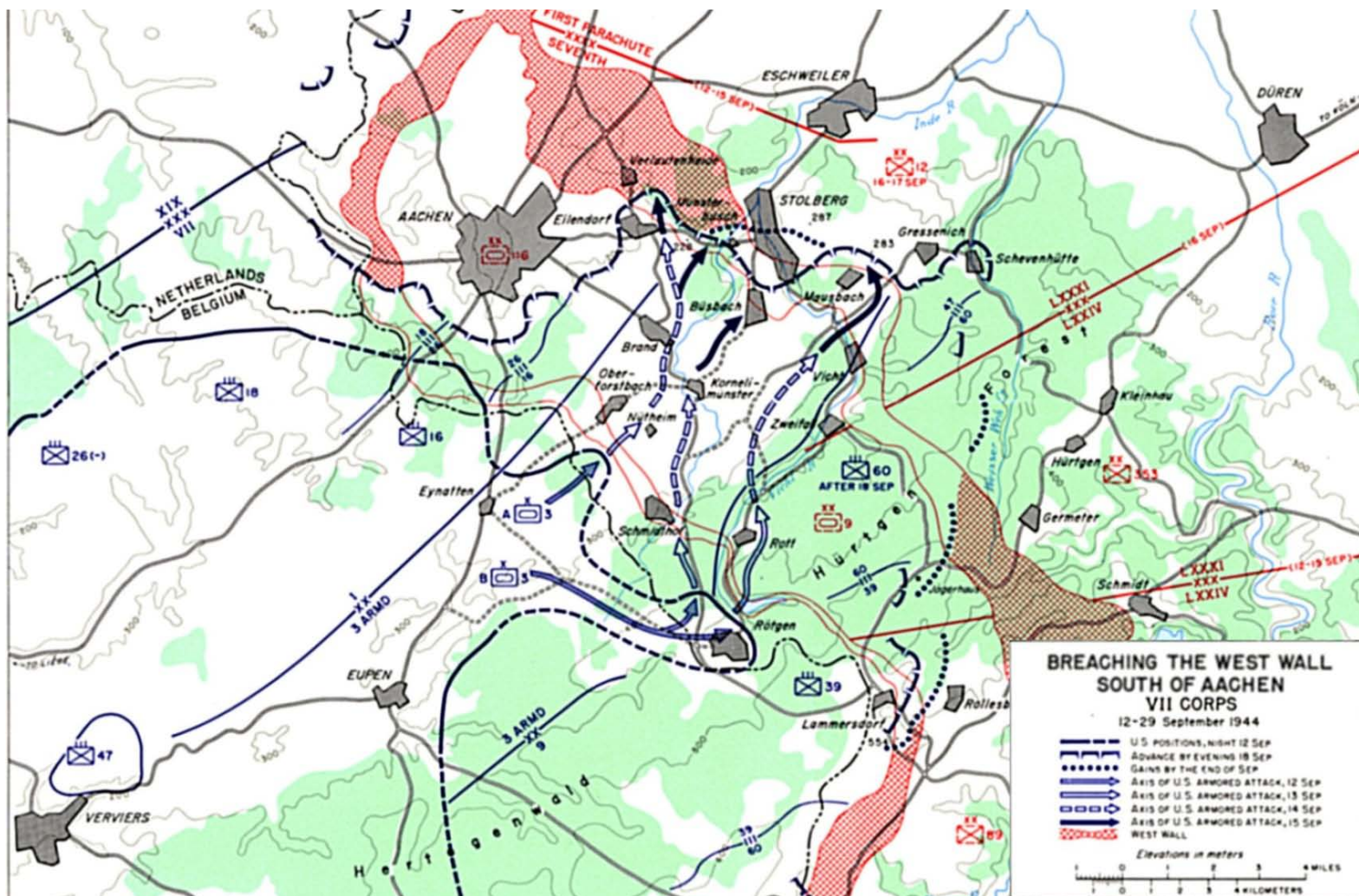
Meanwhile, the British and Americans failed to close their pincers at Falaise and Argentan and allowed approximately twenty German divisions to escape. Even so, between D-Day and mid-September, the Germans had lost nearly 300,000 men as well as another 200,000 trapped in coastal ports on the Brittany Peninsula. By September, the 1st Division—along with the First U.S. Army—progressed across northern France, through southern Belgium, and approached the German border. The 1st Infantry Division, now in VII Corps, again occupied the left flank of the First U.S. Army. At the same time, George S. Patton’s Third U.S. Army, including the 5th Infantry Division,

aggressively raced across central France, moving just south of Paris. Alexander Patch's Seventh Army, with the 3rd Infantry Division, lurched ahead from the beaches of southern France.

As the Americans neared the West Wall, also called the Siegfried Line, by early-September, many believed that the *Wehrmacht* teetered on the brink of collapse and that one more major battle would result in an Allied victory. The Allies had options but also serious limitations. Chief among them was logistics: the supply dumps located several hundred miles behind the frontlines failed to keep the Allies adequately supplied. Another limitation was geography: the terrain along the German border channeled the Allies' advance into narrow, eminently defensible corridors.¹⁸ Both situations helped the hard-pressed *Wehrmacht* defenders to reconstitute themselves behind the Siegfried Line fortifications and prevent the Allies from winning the war by Christmas 1944. To inspire his soldiers to dig in their heels, Adolf Hitler gave the order to "Stand your ground or die! . . . Every bunker, every block of houses in a German city, every German village must become a fortress."¹⁹

As the Big Red One and other VII Corps units faced the Siegfried Line near the Belgian-German border, they encountered not one line of fortifications but two: the Scharnhorst Line to the west and the Schill Line to the east. Map III shows the VII Corps situation by mid-September as well as the 1st Infantry Division's area of operations around Aachen.²⁰ First Army did not have the strategic priority but VII Corps commander General Joseph Collins attempted to plow his way through the West Wall anyhow. Collins ordered a "reconnaissance in force" of the Siegfried Line for 12

Figure 6.3: Breaching the West Wall South of Aachen, VII Corps, 12-29 September 1944



September but this failed because the Germans managed to cobble together a defense to prevent a breakthrough.²¹ As the Germans expertly incorporated villages, towns, and cities into their defensive schemes, as per their *Führer's* order, they challenged everything the Americans thought they knew about urban warfare.

When the “reconnaissance-in-force” failed, Collins planned a corps-level operation that relied on the 3rd Armored Division to pierce the Scharnhorst and Schill Lines while the 1st and 9th Infantry Divisions covered the northern and southern flanks respectively. The 1st Division, on the corps’s left/northern flank, was to take the high ground east of Aachen.²² Initially, Collins ordered Huebner to capture Aachen on 13 September but Huebner persuaded his boss to let the 1st Division settle for the high ground east of Aachen, link up with the 30th Infantry Division on the right flank of XIX Corps, and cut off the city. After all, Huebner reasoned, if the goal was to break through the enemy defenses, then bogging down in a costly, ponderous urban battle was counterproductive. Unbeknownst to the Americans, the city was lightly defended and its commandant, General Gerhard von Schwerin, was ready to disobey Hitler’s orders and surrender the city.²³ As historian Harry Yeide observes, the fog of war was such “that a German division commander who wanted to prevent unnecessary deaths among his compatriots was thwarted by an American division commander who wanted the same for his men.”²⁴

With 1/26 attached to the 3rd Armored Division, CTs 16 and 18 moved through the Scharnhorst Line from 13 to 18 September. Encountering heavy German resistance, the 26th Infantry Regiment attacked south of Aachen, confusing von Schwerin: why did

the Americans not attack his relatively undefended city?²⁵ Combat Teams 16 and 18 penetrated deeper into the Scharnhorst Line defenses, encountering its pillboxes and tank traps. The German soldiers in the Scharnhorst Line were not Germany's finest frontline soldiers, but the defensive scheme magnified the combat power of the defenders, stalling the Americans and making the attacks into the West Wall costly.²⁶ For their part, the Americans learned that destroying or capturing each pillbox required teams of riflemen, machine gunners, rifle grenadiers, engineers, bazookas, tanks, tank destroyers, explosives, and plenty of nerve.²⁷ Ammunition and fuel shortages, along with German counterattacks and bad weather, conspired to prevent an American penetration of the West Wall.²⁸ Nevertheless, by the fifteenth, the 1st Infantry Division had a semi-circle position around Aachen, covering it from the south, southeast, and east although it had yet to penetrate the eastern Schill Line.²⁹ On the seventeenth, the 15,000-man *12th Infantry Division*, a fresh and fully equipped unit redeployed from Russia, reinforced the weakened German defenses materially and psychologically. The ability of the Germans to bring up reinforcements vis á vis the Americans' lack of sorely-needed reserves helped halt the VII Corps by the eighteenth.³⁰

Before the showdown inside Aachen, division units fought in several urban battles within the Siegfried Line defenses. On 17 September, 1/16 and tanks from the 745th Tank Battalion assisted elements of the 3rd Armored Division in taking Munsterbusch. The wooded, hilly terrain amplified the combat power of German machine guns, antitank guns, tanks, and small arms in and around the many pillboxes and house cellars.³¹ Despite an artillery preparatory bombardment, the fighting in

Munsterbusch became house to house and room to room and devolved into a savage hand-to-hand battle.³² By the nineteenth, the 16th Infantry Regiment had many casualties plus sixteen cases of battle fatigue.³³ The soldiers needed a rest but already had their next objective.

Located in a valley astride the Vicht River, Stolberg was ringed by pillboxes that formed the city's first defensive barrier.³⁴ The fight for Stolberg also constituted the 1st Infantry Division's first significant urban action in the European Theater of Operations. The battle from 19 to 22 September foreshadowed the kind of intense urban combat the Americans could expect as they entered Germany. Germans defenses necessitated more house-by-house, room-by-room, cellar-by-cellar assaults. Rainy weather made a difficult operation more miserable.

On the eighteenth, a platoon from the 745th Tank Battalion and C/634th Tank Destroyer Battalion got into Stolberg's outer edge "shooting up" and "reducing buildings" defended by German snipers, antitank guns, and machine guns.³⁵ Tank destroyers fired around 100 rounds of high-explosive rounds into buildings outside Stolberg at the cost of one tank destroyer.³⁶ When 1/16 attempted to get inside the city on the nineteenth, A and C Companies remained pinned down due to heavy resistance and B Company's gain was minimal.³⁷

On the nineteenth, 1/16's target was a factory in northern Stolberg. D Company reported that the fight into the city's edge was "extremely difficult" because of German small-arms, mortar, and artillery fire; the 634th Tank Destroyer Battalion described their defenses "well organized."³⁸ Indeed, enemy fire was enough to force the tanks to

withdraw.³⁹ The number of fortified houses inside Stolberg revealed the Germans' determination. A tanker remembered that the Germans used "every house as a gun emplacement and each street as a line of fire."⁴⁰ Several German tanks helped defend against that American attack: around 2000, a bazooka team stalked a German tank around a church but the problem of enemy tanks continued into the next day. Tiring of the Germans in the cellars and the German tanks inside the city, 1/16 impatiently cried out for Molotov cocktails of a concussion grenade and a bottle of gasoline.⁴¹

The 16th Regiment's fight for Stolberg revealed many of the frustrating problems of urban combat. The Americans fought well-motivated, veteran German soldiers in the cellars and houses. On the twentieth, the 16th Regiment's commander, Colonel Frederick Gibb, complained that "this thing in town is going very slow" even though Stolberg "is practically knocked level."⁴² American counterattacks restored any lost ground but the veteran *12th Infantry Division* was not the demoralized *Wehrmacht* from the previous July and August.⁴³ German attacks, well supported by their own mortar and artillery, sometimes shoved the Americans out of their positions.⁴⁴ A second problem the Americans struggled to overcome was a lack of infantry-tank teamwork with the 3rd Armored Division. The First Battalion commander, Major Edmund Driscoll, grumbled early on the twenty-first that "there is no cooperation between the armored and myself and I would like to get away from them as soon as possible."⁴⁵ Despite Driscoll's protest, radio traffic indicated that 3rd Armored Division tanks elsewhere worked "practically in line with our companies."⁴⁶ A third challenge was the battle's exasperating three-dimensional nature. Alongside forcing the Americans into a

house-to-house fight and destroying American tanks operating with the infantry, the Germans also used underground tunnels to get behind the Americans after they cleared a house and tanks had passed.⁴⁷ The 16th complained to division headquarters that “you clean out one house and they come through a tunnel and come out behind you.”⁴⁸ B Company sent a patrol that simply vanished, presumably ambushed by Germans hiding in the tunnels.⁴⁹

The 16th Infantry Regiment limited its involvement in Stolberg to the northwestern part of the town. On the twentieth, 1/26, attached to CCA, 3rd Armored Division, fought into Stolberg from the southeast. However, getting to that point required rigorous fighting: while CTs 16 and 18 attacked the Siegfried Line from 13 to 18 September, 1/26 helped the 3rd Armored Division seize Nutheim and Busbach between 13 and 15 September. After hard and costly combined-arms fighting from 16 to 20 September, the battalion took Dieppenlichen and Weissenberg. When 1/26 received orders to move northwest into Stolberg, the battalion fielded less than half its strength and fought alongside an understrength tank battalion of 16 medium and light tanks.⁵⁰

As the Americans approached from the east in the open, German artillery opened up on the attackers. Most of the infantry made it safely into the city but the tanks suffered heavily.⁵¹ While 1/16 had fought the two previous days in Stolberg, now 1/26 was entering from the south and east but encountering the same veteran *12th Infantry Division*. A post-battle interview described the battle as “a matter of cleaning out the area, house by house, of kicking in doors, lobbing grenades, and fighting at close range.”⁵² It was slow and grinding work. By the end of the twenty-first, elements of A

Company were approximately one-third into the city. The next day, A Company fought down the main street, Adolf Hitler Strasse, and B Company advanced down a parallel street but the Americans were stopped at a cross street from German tank, machine gun, and small-arms fire. C Company had tried to enter the northern part of Stolberg but returned to support the other rifle companies.⁵³ Outside the city, 3rd Armored Division units became embroiled in a larger fight against the German defensive line. Although Stolberg was partially in American hands, the depleted and beleaguered 1/26 returned to its parent unit.⁵⁴ For its part, 1/26 received a Presidential Unit Citation for the heavy fighting and losses incurred from assaulting several pillboxes and bunkers, capturing five towns, and its combat in Stolberg. Amidst the chaos of war, the 1st Division and its regiments failed to coordinate 1/16's and 1/26's fight in Stolberg. Neither regiment's records mention the other so that these two units fought independent battles within the same city. By the twenty-second, coordination was a moot point: ten days of intense combat had exhausted the Germans and Americans.

VII Corps's attempt to pierce the Siegfried Line failed. The Americans had to reconsider their operational approach.

By October, the Ninth U.S. Army came onto the front, thus allowing First Army to shorten its frontage. Despite the addition of this small army, September's battles forced First Army to replenish its stocks and manpower before renewing the campaign. Even then, First Army commander General Courtney Hodges perceived that he had to accomplish four tasks before reaching the Rhine. First, the Americans had to clear the Germans out of the thick woods composing the Hürtgen Forest—a difficult assignment,

to say the least. Secondly, First Army leaders now believed that they must capture Aachen. Thirdly, and to accomplish the second task, XIX Corps north of Aachen needed to break through the Scharnhorst Line and help encircle Aachen. Fourthly, the Peel Marshes, located along the border between the American 12th Army Group and the British 21 Army Group, needed to be captured.⁵⁵ The 1st Division became intimately involved in the first two tasks.

The 1st Infantry Division, on the left (northern) flank of VII Corps, received the mission to capture Aachen. Geographically, Aachen lies within the Dutch-Belgian-German border region and the city sits in a bowl surrounded by hills. Of the 165,000 Germans who called the place home before World War II, less than 20,000 remained by October 1944.⁵⁶ Historically, Charlemagne had made the city his home as well as the capital of his Holy Roman Empire and was also where his body was buried. Because the Nazis venerated it for its prominent place in German history, Aachen loomed large in the Nazi Party's psyche. Due to its relative safety over the centuries, the city never constructed strong fortifications like other cities, such as Metz.⁵⁷ Similar to many European cities, Aachen was, according to General Collins, "a jumble of solid stone houses, through which meandered narrow cobbled streets."⁵⁸ If the Americans bypassed and ignored Aachen, the large metropolis could separate and wedge XIX Corps from the rest of First Army and threaten the lines of communication as First Army fought toward Düsseldorf, Bonn, and Cologne on the Rhine.⁵⁹ The city's industries produced clothing, electric motors, machine parts, radio parts, and railroad cars for the German war effort.⁶⁰ Hitler ordered the German Army to defend Aachen to the last man as General Hodges

ordered its capture, thus resulting in one of the largest urban battles on the Western Front.

The five to six thousand German defenders belonged to Colonel Gerhard Wilck's *246th Infantry Division*.⁶¹ In truth, the defense was a jumble of different units—including reclassified Air Force and naval personnel, a battalion of men in their fifties and sixties, a 150-man SS battalion, and 125 Aachen policemen—with the *246th* at the core.⁶² These ad hoc units did not have the sort of organizational cohesion enjoyed by the Americans. Augmenting the defenses were five Mark IV tanks, six 150-mm guns, nineteen 105-mm howitzers, and eight 75-mm pieces.⁶³ The Germans estimated that the Americans would attack from the south or west and planned accordingly. Their objectives were to defend Lousberg and Salvatorberg, the two hills in northern Aachen that commanded the high ground and was the main outside supply link. The Germans planned to control the main intersections and use the sewers for covered movement.⁶⁴

The American plan to seize Aachen had two parts. The first step was to isolate the city, requiring XIX Corps's 30th Infantry Division to encircle the northern and northeastern half of the city as the 1st Division took the southern and eastern half. The second step was the 1st Division's attack from the east, which did much to unhinge the German defense plan.⁶⁵ During the September battles, the 1st Division managed to generally cut off Aachen from the south and southeast. On 2 October, the 30th Division began a slow, costly penetration through the Scharnhorst Line north of Aachen, to help the 1st Division seal off the city. When the "Old Hickory" Division was far enough into the West Wall by 8 October, the 16th and 18th Regiments attacked and secured the area

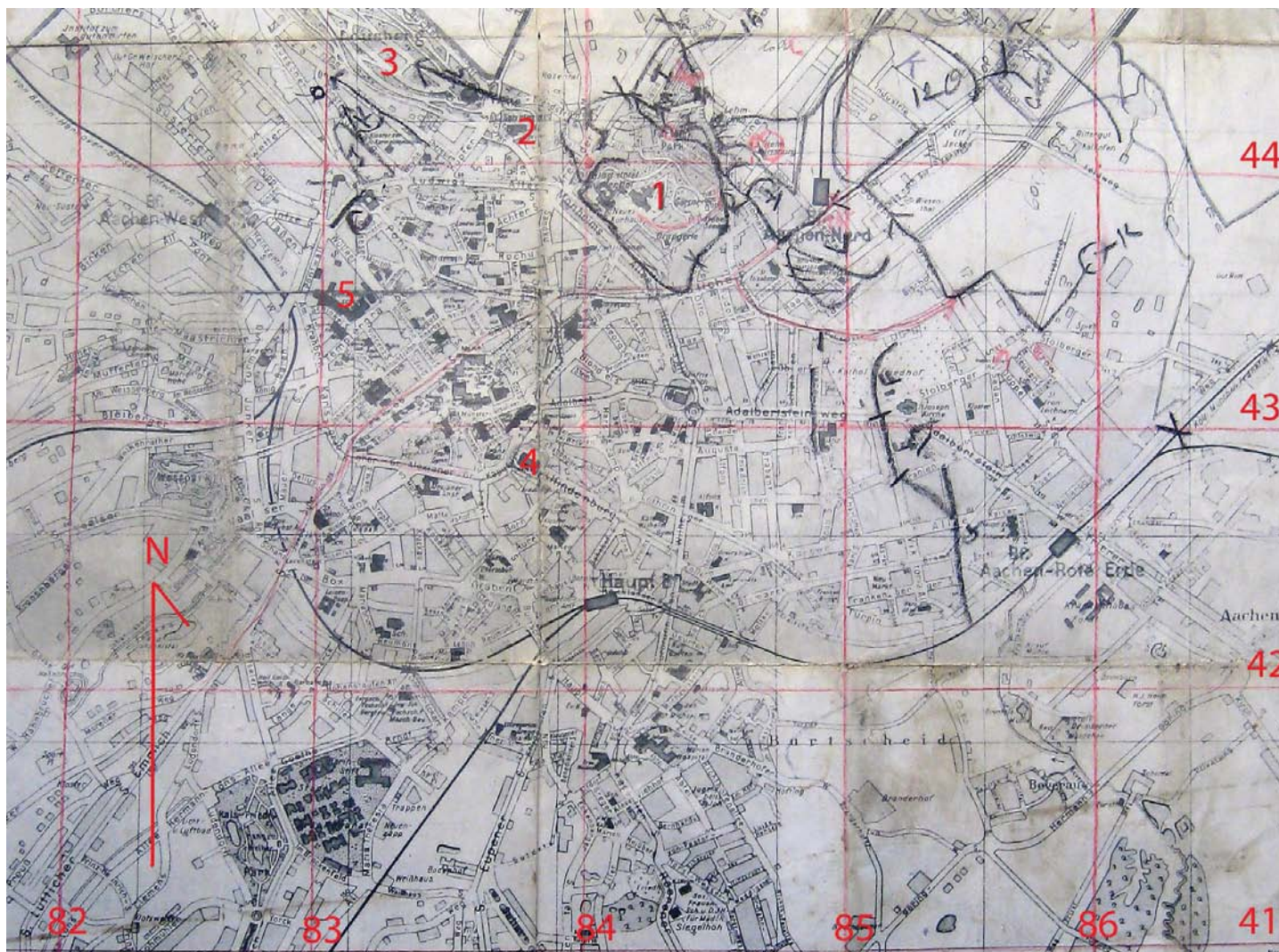
east of Aachen. The 16th and 18th Infantry Regiments withstood savage and brutal counterattacks from the Germans while the struggle for Aachen raged inside the city. Holding the line east of Aachen was as unenviable as the task of capturing the city itself.

With these two regiments waiting to link with the 30th Infantry Division, Colonel John Seitz's 26th Infantry received the responsibility of capturing Aachen. But because 1/26 was still recuperating from its Siegfried Line attacks, Seitz could only use his Second and Third Battalions, commanded respectively by Lieutenant Colonel Derrill M. Daniel and Lieutenant Colonel John T. Corley. General Huebner warned Seitz not to become too invested in Aachen because the 26th Infantry might have to help the 18th and 16th Infantry Regiments. Figure 6.4 shows the city of Aachen in 1944.⁶⁶

The area of operations for Corley's 3/26 was the northern part of Aachen, including the apartments and factories in the northeast and especially the Lousberg and Salvatorberg hills. This axis meant seizing a spa-bath-hotel-park complex at Farwick Park as well as the observation tower on Observatory Hill. Because these positions formed the heart of the German defensive arrangement, Third Battalion had a stiffer battle, including confronting an SS battalion.⁶⁷ Daniel's Second Battalion assaulted into the city's center on Corley's left (southern) flank.

In planning the attack, Daniel wrote that he and his staff expressed the most concern about avoiding what the Allies had experienced in Cassino the year before.⁶⁸ To prevent another Cassino, battalion leadership relied on the application of massive firepower. Mortars and artillery could isolate an area in Aachen; tanks, tank destroyers, and machine guns could pin down the defenders; and infantrymen armed with small

Figure 6.4: The Assault on Aachen, October 1944



arms, bayonets, and grenades would kill or capture the defenders. The Second Battalion coined the slogan “Knock ‘em all down!” to remind the soldiers “the necessity for keeping up a continuous stream of fire with all available weapons.” Each rifle company therefore became a small combined-arms task force that included three tanks or tank destroyers, two 57-mm antitank guns, two additional bazooka teams, and two heavy machine guns. Each company headquarters also retained demolitions and flamethrower teams that went forward to assist in breaching a building. In contrast with the division’s desire to prevent collateral damage at St. Cloud in November 1942, the previous restraints on violence had loosened because there were no such qualms in methodically leveling Aachen two years later. No doubt this lack of concern for collateral damage might also be because they were now assaulting a German town. This lack of concern was obvious for the many urban encounters in the months to come. Daniel also put all three rifle companies on the line, trusting that higher headquarters would provide reserves if needed.⁶⁹

The battalion staff acknowledged three drawbacks with its plan. First, emphasizing firepower meant having enough ammunition. To resolve this issue, Daniel made sure that a supply dump was “kept practically in back of the troops.”⁷⁰ The second challenge was the matter of movement: the different company task forces had to coordinate their advance within the streets and minimize German antitank fire. To maintain command and control, the battalion developed and distributed “measles sheets.” There were maps that numbered every important building and intersection in red to make communication easy and accurate—there were so many red marks that it

looked like the map had measles. Similarly, Daniel assumed that the infantry would naturally “avoid the streets as they would the plague,” thus leaving the armor vulnerable. He planned for tanks and tank destroyers to remain on side streets, firing from around corners, and moving when it was clear. Riflemen also guarded and helped physically protect the armor from enemy antitank weapons.⁷¹

The presence of 20,000 civilians created the third challenge. The presence of civilians was tricky because the Americans believed that the German soldiers might dress in civilian clothes to enter the fight. Daniel ordered Second Battalion “to search every building, every room, every closet, every cellar, even the manholes in the street, to be absolutely certain that no German was behind our front lines.” The battalion understood how much that would slow things down but the colonel was determined not to have the enemy attack from the rear.⁷² While Corley never recorded his plan nor any task organization, it is clear that he also created combined-arms teams and acted similar to 2/26.

While infantry and armor skirmished on the city’s outskirts on 10 October, the 30th Infantry Division was still trying to link with the 18th Infantry.⁷³ At the same time, the Americans gave the city an ultimatum: unconditionally surrender within 24 hours or “the American Army Ground and Air Forces will proceed ruthlessly with air and artillery bombardment to reduce it to submission.”⁷⁴ When the Germans rejected the offer, the Americans began preliminary assaults as 3/26 cleared the factory district in northeast Aachen.⁷⁵ I Company led the assault by sending a platoon down each street, one squad on each side and the third in reserve. The squads entered each building

warily, supported by armor.⁷⁶ At the same time, Daniel's 2/26 began house-to-house fighting on the southeast side of Aachen. During this time, division and corps artillery shelled the city itself.

Early on Friday the thirteenth, Huebner officially ordered the 26th Infantry to capture Aachen.⁷⁷ The Second and Third Battalions proceeded along planned phase lines, achieving limited objectives. Second Battalion confronted the immediate problem of moving past a well-defended railroad embankment without losing too many of their tanks and tank destroyers.⁷⁸ With the help of bombers, artillery support, mortars, and grenades, Daniel's rifle companies were fighting inside the city by the afternoon.

Once inside Aachen, the soldiers avoided the streets. Discovering that a common wall and door connected most basements on a block kept the Americans off the machine-gun swept streets. To continue the advance under cover, the men liberally used explosives and concussion grenades to "mousehole": they blew holes in walls to move from house to house. Not surprisingly, this consumed much of their high explosives and bazooka ammunition.⁷⁹ But the infantrymen were able to clear some blocks without ever appearing on the streets.⁸⁰ One soldier remembered he and his comrades discovering one basement that did not have a door, so they used explosives to make their own hole. When engineers applied too many explosives and nearly brought the entire house down, the G.I.s learned to combine discernment with "Knock 'em all down!"⁸¹

By now, the Americans understood that successful urban combat required many weapons working in concert. Artillery dropped rounds two or three blocks in front of the Americans to isolate pockets of Germans. Because the artillery fired from south of

Aachen rather than from behind the assault troops, there was less concern of friendly fire from rounds falling “short.” Tanks or tank destroyers, usually two to a street, used their machine guns and cannon to fire two or three buildings ahead and on all corners of intersections.⁸² Both American armor and artillery found success firing high-explosive rounds with a delayed fuse to explode inside a building and kill more defenders.⁸³ Tanks fired armor-piercing ammunition to punch holes through buildings followed by high-explosive rounds. By forcing the enemy down to buildings’ cellars, the armor assisted infantrymen assaulting buildings. The Americans employed their machine guns to fire at possible sniper positions ahead of the infantry. Gunners chose their positions carefully lest the muzzle blast cause dust to rise from the rubble and betray their position.⁸⁴ Similar to the Soviets, the G.I.s entered buildings with hand grenades first but also used bazookas and rifle grenades.⁸⁵ The infantrymen would clear a house and signal that they were finished and away from the tanks’ muzzle blast. Consistent with their “Knock ‘em all down!” motto, Daniel’s Second Battalion “made a habit of opening up fire without waiting for actual targets to appear hoping to scare them out or pin them down.”⁸⁶ The Germans did likewise as they were just as eager to fire on suspected or exposed Americans.⁸⁷

The regiment controlled the air assets overhead and likewise took advantage of another powerful weapon: close air support.⁸⁸ Artillery and rifle companies marked targets with red smoke for fighter-bombers to attack.⁸⁹ By the evening of the first day, the attached air support party informed the regiment when fighter-bombers were available and requested more targets.⁹⁰ For the rest of the battle, the 33rd Field Artillery

Battalion continued to fire red smoke shells for close air support missions into Aachen. For all the many difficulties in air-ground cooperation throughout World War II, a result of various technological and organizational challenges, the Americans used Aachen to improve their close air support capabilities and become a better combined-arms military.⁹¹

But progress on the thirteenth remained slow as infantrymen assaulted every building and cleared every room. F Company bogged down against a stubborn defense in the Friedhof Cemetery. Daniel's fear of German soldiers masquerading as civilians proved valid when his battalion discovered civilians in "ill fitting clothes," who the Americans believed were German soldiers.⁹² By 1700, Third Battalion struggled to take some apartment buildings and move past the German artillery raining down on its position.⁹³ The Germans dug in around the northeastern factory district and showed the vulnerability of armor in a city when a German rocket disabled a tank accompanying K Company. L Company attempted to press along Julicher and Tal Streets but the fire was so heavy down Julicher that soldiers attacked buildings from the rear and by climbing over walls or through holes in order to keep off the streets.⁹⁴ As historian Charles MacDonald describes the first day, 3/26 marked its progress in "buildings, floors, and even rooms" rather than blocks.⁹⁵

Despite their combined-arms capabilities, things had not gone well for the Americans by the end of the first day. The two battalions were not in contact and Third Battalion failed to make its objectives as it also struggled with Germans using the sewers to get behind the Americans.⁹⁶ Colonel Daniel complained that this separation allowed

Germans to infiltrate behind the Americans and undermine their forward progress. The fighting was already tearing apart the city. A *New York Times* correspondent observed that “everywhere there are marks of the recent battle: Pink marks of bullets on the red brick of the houses, tangled twisting wire festooned from lampposts, dirty brown water in shell holes, the side of a house torn away.” Further, he wrote, “the streets are strewn with the debris of war, empty cartridge cases, torn papers, broken glass and bits of furniture.”⁹⁷ Despite the pre-assault planning including the “measles system” and the combined-arms fighting, the chaos of the urban combat along with the rubble, debris, and meandering streets made it difficult for the officers to maintain command and control over the battle.

The Americans also discovered that many apartment buildings could withstand tanks’ 75-mm guns and tank destroyers’ 90-mm guns. Huebner loaned a 155-mm self-propelled howitzer to each battalion.⁹⁸ Third Battalion staff officers reported that “the 155 did the trick—2 shots and the building disappeared.”⁹⁹ The muzzle blast alone of the 155-mm howitzer could make sections of houses collapse.¹⁰⁰ Despite heavy artillery support, progress remained slow. Third Battalion’s I Company, depleted from its losses, only just barely took the Observatory Hill near Farwick Park on the fourteenth.¹⁰¹

On the fifteenth, the Germans outside Aachen launched a vicious attack on the 16th Infantry Regiment that concerned many on the division staff; a pouring rain made everyone miserable.¹⁰² Inside Aachen, Wilck assaulted Corley’s Third Battalion from the south, southwest, and northwest that nearly unhinged 3/26 from its positions on Farwick Park. Officers cried out that “everything seems to be coming out of town” but

likely included a battalion of infantry and six tanks or assault guns.¹⁰³ German tanks, which may have included a behemoth Tiger tank, rolled down Manheims Allee firing on American positions, briefly retook Observatory Hill, and tore a hole in Third Battalion's lines.¹⁰⁴ American tank destroyers moved quickly to counter the German armored threat. Third Battalion begged for Second Battalion to ease the pressure as it desperately rushed the battalion's Ammunition and Pioneer Platoon—men usually not accustomed to combat—on the line.¹⁰⁵ After two hours of frantic fighting—described by a correspondent as “fantastically hopeless savagery”—the Americans restored their position on Observatory Hill and Corley counterattacked against the tired Germans.¹⁰⁶ In these few hours, I Company fired over 500 mortar rounds directed by a forward observer who remained in his perch in the Observation Tower despite being under heavy fire from the Germans.¹⁰⁷ Second Battalion lost a tank destroyer, an antitank gun, and a heavy machine gun but cost the Germans a tank and a platoon of infantry.¹⁰⁸ The German attacks outside the city were to complement Wilck's counterattack. The SS soldiers continued to challenge Corley's gains, even to the point of hand-to-hand combat in the halls of the Quellenhof Hotel, but the failure of both attacks contributed to falling German morale.¹⁰⁹

By now, the Americans had stopped receiving hot chow from behind the lines and survived on C-rations, though downtime in cleared buildings allowed soldiers to heat their rations and make coffee. The heavy fighting also restricted the use of wheeled vehicles because the rubble and debris caused too many flat tires. The men relied on the tracked M-29 Weasel to supply them and evacuate the wounded.¹¹⁰ During the battle,

the battalions neared an organizational crisis from the casualties. For example, losses forced one company to leave skeleton crews for its 60-mm mortars and commit the rest as riflemen.¹¹¹ In part, this was because when the units received an infusion of replacements during the battle, these raw men seemed to die at a frightful rate. The units suffered doubly when veteran soldiers and officers became casualties.¹¹²

Fighting on 16 October revealed the chaotic nature of urban combat. German tanks and infantry attacked down Hindenburgstrasse toward Second Battalion but the tanks soon retreated. American and German infantry fought it out at the Hindenburg-Wilhelm intersection before the German soldiers also retreated. A few blocks north, two tanks with F Company destroyed a German 75-mm antitank gun.¹¹³ Daniel made use of his attached 155-mm self-propelled howitzer but his artillery was unable to furnish close support.¹¹⁴ Daniel's attached armor operated alongside the infantry but the nature of the streets prevented them from knocking out several German tanks. A German soldier managed to disable one tank destroyer and some of its crew. A pillbox at the State Theater on Hindenburgstrasse prevented Second Battalion from advancing until Daniel's 155-mm self-propelled howitzer destroyed several buildings and the pillbox, which turned out to be a camouflaged German tank.¹¹⁵ At the same time, Third Battalion withstood another German counterattack to retake lost high ground. Before noon, 3/26 lost approximately fifty men killed, wounded, and missing, including a veteran company commander.¹¹⁶ Corley held his ground but begged for more men. Consequently, Daniel sent his F Company to assist 3/26.

One veteran remembered that during the drive across France, they counted their progress in miles. In Aachen, the Americans counted their progress in yards and sometimes it took all day to move one block.¹¹⁷ Corley reported to Seitz the familiar refrain: assaulting each building to clear each room, and move to the next.¹¹⁸ The *New York Times* correspondent Drew Middleton reported how “doughboys poke their rifles through holes blown in walls by bombs and shells during the bombardment and play a nightmarish game of hide-and-seek in the ruins with German sniper and machine-gun nests.”¹¹⁹ On the seventeenth, most of 3/26 rested, accepted new replacements to bolster the weakened rifle companies, and prepared to fight through Farwick Park to the Salvatorberg and Lousberg heights. To the best of their abilities, the companies tried to inoculate the inexperienced men to the rigors of urban combat but these replacements were completely new to this environment, despite whatever stateside training they had. One replacement was a green lieutenant tasked with leading a rifle platoon, although he had experienced, veteran noncommissioned officers to support him.¹²⁰ One soldier from K Company remembered feeling sorry for replacements because their training was never sufficient to prepare them for the life and death struggle of combat.¹²¹ This inoculation was critical because the next day 3/26 assaulted a large building called the Kurhaus, the Palace Hotel (or Palast Hotel Quellenhof), the gardens, walks, and tennis courts that had made the place a popular tourist destination in peacetime.¹²²

On the eighteenth, Third Battalion, its tanks, and tank destroyers pressed toward Farwick Park. The ability to collapse buildings with the 155-mm self-propelled howitzer as well as to mark targets for fighter-bombers gave the Americans an edge in

firepower.¹²³ There was intense close-quarters fighting as American G.I.s stormed the Palace Hotel. German artillery and self-propelled guns remained potent weapons. German armor “rumbled around corners to fire at buildings in which Americans are firing on them.”¹²⁴ By 1130, the battalion controlled Farwick Park along with large quantities of food and ammunition as well as 20-mm antiaircraft gun posted in a second-floor window of the hotel. By the early evening, the battalion prepared to attack Salvatorberg and Lousberg.

The 634th Tank Destroyer Battalion staff report observed that “enemy opposition is apparently disintegrating” by 19 October.¹²⁵ Yet the fighting raged on as Third Battalion captured Salvatorberg and Lousberg by noon. In Second Battalion, F Company pushed through cellars and backyards because pressing down the open streets remained unwise.¹²⁶ By now, the fighting had stretched the division thin. Its only reserve was 1/26 but that battalion was assisting the 16th and 18th Infantry Regiments to defend against the Germans’ many attacks. A battalion from the 28th Infantry Division deployed within Aachen to hold what the Americans took. Task Force Hogan, composed of a battalion each of armored infantry and tanks from the 3rd Armored Division, assisted Corley’s northern (right) flank as 3/26 drove on the hills.¹²⁷ The miserable weather accompanied them: Drew Middleton reported that the “rain fell in sheets on already sodden ground . . . [and the] mud is thick and clinging.”¹²⁸ The Germans still held western Aachen south of Lousberg and were determinedly ensconced in buildings as their perimeter dwindled.

On the twentieth and twenty-first, 2/26 fought against German soldiers defending the Technical High School on the western edge of Aachen. German machine gun, sniper, and mortar fire slowed the American advance.¹²⁹ The walls of the Technical High School were thick enough to justify employing the 155-mm self-propelled howitzer, the surprise weapon of the Battle for Aachen. Staff officers planned to bombard the school as F and E Company deployed around it.¹³⁰ At the same time, Corley's Third Battalion became entangled in fierce street to street and house to house fighting south of Lousberg. Three of Corley's four company commanders were wounded and a direct hit from a German mortar had wiped out an entire machine gun squad.¹³¹

By the twenty-first, elements of 2/26 were several hundred yards beyond the city's western railroad tracks and a 155-mm howitzer was pounding the Technical High School.¹³² German automatic, antitank, and small arms fire pinned down two platoons of F Company. A squad wormed its way inside after five hours of fighting, relying mainly on organic weapons, rifle grenades, bazookas, nerve, and guts.¹³³ With his last defensible position breached by midday, Colonel Gerhard Wilck finally surrendered the destroyed city and a quiet descended for the first time in ten days.

Although the end was all but inevitable, the urban environment and determined defenders made the American victory costly. Colonel Daniel's battalion alone consumed 5,000 mortar rounds, 40,000 .30-caliber machine gun rounds, 4,300 grenades, nearly 27,000 rounds of rifle ammunition, and 50 gallons of flamethrower fuel.¹³⁴ The cost in human life was high: the two battalions lost the equivalent of two rifle companies

with 75 killed and 414 wounded.¹³⁵ Grizzled veterans noticed new replacements staring at them. When asked why the stares, a replacement simply said, “You look like hell.”¹³⁶ The city itself looked like giants had trampled it: after a four-hour long tour of the city, an intelligence officer wrote that “burst sewers, broken gas mains and dead animals have raised an almost overpowering smell in many parts of the city. The streets are paved with shattered glass; telephone, electric light and trolley cables are dangling and netted together everywhere, and in many places wrecked cars, trucks, armored vehicles and guns litter the streets.”¹³⁷ Aachen was knocked down.

The fighting in Aachen taught the Americans many tactical lessons about urban combat. Colonel Seitz was especially impressed with the 155-mm self-propelled howitzer as well as soldiers’ copious use of explosives and grenades. Seitz praised the infantry-artillery-air teamwork. The infantry requested air, artillery marked targets with smoke shells, and fighter-bombers strafed and bombed the designated target. Seitz did not believe that the fighter-bombers destroyed anything important but he was pleased with the coordination. The colonel also echoed Daniel’s belief that command and control was vital inside Aachen, especially at night when adjacent units should “keep close physical contact.”¹³⁸ At the same time, the supporting 33rd Field Artillery Battalion was confident that their artillery fires helped cover the infantry’s advance and destroyed German tanks. Oftentimes, observed artillery fire forced Germans to flee from their antitank positions and mortar positions and permitted American direct-fire weapons to destroy them. Overall, observation and wire communications were critical to the artillery’s effective support of the infantry and armor within the city.¹³⁹

Lieutenant Colonel Derrill Daniel also recorded what lessons Aachen taught him. In a post-battle interview, Daniel identified two elements vital to successful urban fighting: thorough searches of buildings as well as command and control. The first, thoroughness, meant searching every building from the cellar to the attic to ensure that no one was inside, soldier nor civilian, that could attack from the rear. The battle's three-dimensional nature complicated this meticulousness: after forcing their way into a building, G.I.s had to clear each room on each floor as well as the subterranean cellars, catacombs, and the sewers that linked everything.¹⁴⁰ The second element required maintaining a definite front so that no one raced too far ahead, no one lagged too far behind, and the flanks remained secured. The "measles sheets" maps that pinpointed prominent intersections and buildings helped maintained command, control, and communications between advancing units. Daniel assigned each company its area and a platoon most often had its own street. At cross streets, each platoon would meet in the middle in order to clear every hiding place.¹⁴¹ Further, in postwar retrospect, Daniel credited part of their success to the direction of their attack: coming from the east rather than the west or the south, where the Germans expected. He also believed that "the ruthless application of all available fire power" and thoroughness allowed his men to advance successfully. He confirmed that assaulting troops must avoid the streets at all costs, depending on explosives to move from building to building.¹⁴²

It is also noteworthy that Daniel's plan was influenced more by the fighting against Cassino, Italy in 1943 than the fighting against Brest the month before Aachen. Daniel had surely read about the fighting in Cassino while he and the rest of the 1st

Division trained in England. The struggles at Cassino had made news but when active campaigning began, Daniel gives no indication that he had had time to process the success at Brest just a few weeks before his men attacked into the heart of Aachen. While Daniel apparently mulled over the events in Cassino, he may have had far less time to do the same for Brest while leading his battalion against the Germans.

The Americans also gained valuable insights into improving a combined-arms approach to large-scale urban combat. Contrary to previous views that the vulnerability of tanks rendered them useless in cities, the armor was fundamental to the American victory in Aachen. One company report stated that “the tanks with their cannon were invaluable in reducing strongpoints.”¹⁴³ According to another soldier’s observation, tanks and tank destroyers “present such a mobile base of fire [by] spraying streets with machine gun fire or blasting buildings with direct cannon fire greatly assists the attacking infantry.”¹⁴⁴ Tank-tank destroyer-infantry-artillery teamwork was essential to American success in this major urban battle.

Although necessary, armor did have vulnerabilities within a large city. Towed and self-propelled antitank weapons lay concealed within the city. German soldiers could drop grenades onto the open tops of tank destroyers or suddenly fire a rocket from amongst the rubble, atop buildings, within a cemetery, or after hiding in a cellar or sewer. Therefore, as one tanker put it, “the infantrymen had to protect their protectors.”¹⁴⁵ One method was to assign several infantrymen to protect each armored vehicle in order to knock out hidden antitank positions. Aside from security, these soldiers also acted as runners and informed tank commanders of friendly infantry hidden

from the tanks' view. However, increasing casualties within the assault squads forced officers to return these riflemen to their squads.¹⁴⁶ Another method of protection was soldiers tossing grenades into ruins and windows or armored units firing their cannon into suspected antitank positions. While this method occasionally flushed Germans into the open, the enemy usually withdrew under the cover of the interconnected cellars.¹⁴⁷ A third method put infantry in front of armored vehicles, sometimes as far as one hundred yards in advance, wherein the G.I.s identified targets for tanks and tank destroyers and helped them fire more effectively on enemy positions.¹⁴⁸ As the American military oriented itself around a combined-arms mindset, so it applied that mindset to an environment that many had thought would be a purely infantryman's fight. Aachen showed the successful integration of those weapons.

The fighting inside and outside Aachen exhausted the 1st Division. After Wilck surrendered the city, VII Corps allowed the division to rest, refit, and replenish its ranks with new replacements. This was necessary because the Hürtgen Forest loomed ahead. By late-1944, the division was a completely different organization from the unit that sailed to England in 1942 to train for Operation TORCH. Before entering the Hürtgen Forest in mid-November, G/16th Infantry had six officers and 165 enlisted men; only fifteen were with the company in 1942.¹⁴⁹ An incoming stream of green men replacing the outgoing stream of veteran casualties created a constant need to prepare those inexperienced enlisted men, noncommissioned officers, and officers for the horrors and rigors of battle. Despite the perpetual personnel turnover, the battle-wise Major General

Clarence Huebner along with combat-hardened officers, sergeants, and corporals led at the division, regimental, battalion, company and platoon levels.

From VII Corps's attempt to break through the Siegfried Line in September until January, thousands of Americans had fought and died in the forests simply known as the Hürtgen. The months-long fight in these forests has remained a point of deep criticism against the operational and strategic abilities of the American corps, army, and army group commanders. One of the chief critiques is that American generals and their staffs failed to understand that the key to the region were not the towns and crossroads in the forest but the Roer River dams south of the area.¹⁵⁰

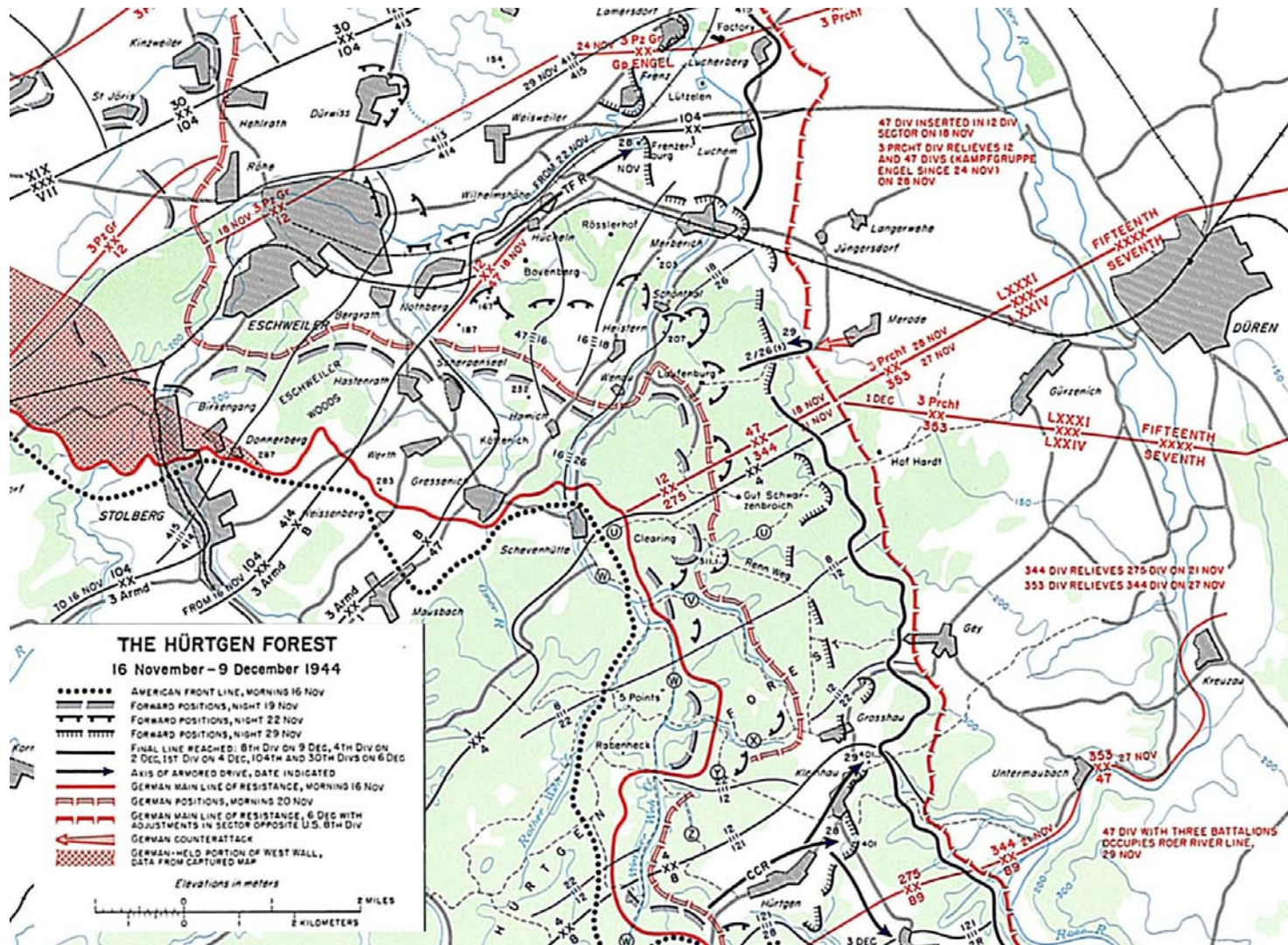
Another criticism is that the Hürtgen was not a place to fight. On one level, the terrain helped the relatively weaker Germans to make the Americans pay for even the slightest advances. One artilleryist complained that "maps did not show . . . the deadly ravines and elevated observation posts the Germans held above them." The maps also failed to reveal "the fir trees whose branches, down to the ground, hid machine gun nests, dug-outs, self-propelled guns, mortars, artillery."¹⁵¹ German artillery also weaponized the thousands of trees by setting their shells to explode within the treetops in order to rain wooden and metallic shrapnel on American infantry. On another level, the terrain hurt the Americans. The few roads and trails that wound through the thick forests were useless because they were mined, inadequate, washed out by the fall rains, or all three. Infantry officers often found themselves lost. American units stumbled upon German kill zones with frightening regularity.¹⁵² The forests and insufficient road networks also conspired to minimize the effectiveness of American armor, artillery, and

airpower and severely tested the Americans' growing dependence on combined-arms mobility and firepower.¹⁵³ Dropping temperatures, snow, freezing rain, and long nights in November and December turned the campaign into a nightmare.¹⁵⁴ Personnel losses from trench foot as well as battle casualties quickly drained fighting units of combat veterans. First Infantry Division veterans regularly portrayed the fighting in the Hürtgen Forest as some of the worst combat they saw since assaulting the beaches of Normandy.

Previous attempts to advance through the forest in September and October succeeded only in depleting American ranks with little to show for their efforts. V and VII Corps, including the 1st Division, crashed into the forests again in November. The objective then of VII Corps's three infantry divisions and one armored division was to fight northeasterly and seize the Roer River crossings near Jülich and Düren. The 1st Division's ultimate goal—in the corps center and along the northern parts of the Hürtgen Forest—was to take the towns of Jungersdorf and Langerwehe. Once through the forest, the corps could begin looking toward Düren on the Roer River.¹⁵⁵ The division's first objective was the forest town of Hamich and the nearby high ground at Hill 232. Figure 6.5 shows the corps operations in the area, including the 1st Division and its principal towns.¹⁵⁶

Having reconstituted itself by November, the renewed division was in line west of the Hürtgen waiting for orders. The planners intended for an aerial bombardment to precede the corps offensive but rain, fog, clouds, and overcast skies forced the postponement of the bombardment until the sixteenth. When the bombers dropped their payload, 1/16 stepped off against Hamich and its determined German defenders.

Figure 6.5: The Hürtgen Forest, 16 November-9 December 1944



The terrain around the village of Hamich was ominously well suited for defense. The regiment needed to take Hill 232 beyond the village because it commanded the entire area. Hill 232's capture was necessary but, as the new regimental operations officer noted, "not only was [the area] wooded, but it was hilly. [It was a] terrible place to make an attack."¹⁵⁷ Another account renders it "very thick pine woods."¹⁵⁸ As the 16th Infantry planned the advance, it used "measles sheets," similar to what 2/26 used in Aachen, to plan the fight for Hamich.¹⁵⁹

Following the aerial bombardment and under artillery support, Lieutenant Colonel Ed Driscoll's 1/16 attacked into Hamich but met with a hail of gunfire. Although the attacking companies—A and C—each had two platoons of tanks and a platoon of tank destroyers, the defending Germans of the *12th Volksgrenadier Division* kept First Battalion at bay with mounting losses from well-constructed dugouts that covered the approaches to the village with machine guns and mortars, supported by enemy artillery and tank fire.¹⁶⁰ Colonel Driscoll remembered Germans posted in second-story windows to "deliver grazing machine gun fire across the ground approaching the town."¹⁶¹ As B Company arrived in the evening for another attempt at Hamich, the Germans counterattacked. The counterattack failed but it was sufficient to keep 1/16 out of the town. Tanks ran into many difficulties supporting the infantry due to the poor road conditions. Until other American units took the nearby town of Gressenich, the main road to Hamich remained unusable, forcing the attackers to use narrow, unpaved secondary routes. Several tank destroyers managed to briefly enter Hamich but, without infantry support, were vulnerable when they met fire from all sides.

Artillery damaged one M-10 and a bazooka destroyed another. The damaged M-10, however, still knocked out two German tanks.¹⁶² Notwithstanding this brief penetration, the American attack stalled.¹⁶³

Through the seventeenth, Driscoll tried to drive into Hamich but succeeded only in losing more riflemen, despite strong artillery support.¹⁶⁴ Although the 9th Infantry Division captured Gressenich that day, control of the Gressenich-Hamich road did not turn the tide: an American tank-infantry attack had some success until mud, German tanks, and German artillery stopped it.¹⁶⁵ German artillery observers on Hill 232 helped the 100 Germans in Hamich keep the Americans out of the village.¹⁶⁶ By evening of the seventeenth, First Battalion reported that it had suffered heavy losses from constant German artillery fire, earlier infantry-tank assaults had failed, C Company's commander had been killed and the company needed replacements or they would not be able to hold their position. Simply put, 1/16 lacked the strength to complete the mission.¹⁶⁷

Third Battalion received orders to take Hamich on the eighteenth instead of Hill 232. The attack followed a fighter-bomber and artillery bombardment that pounded Hamich and Hill 232. Third Battalion attacked Hamich as Second Battalion took Hill 232. Finally, the Americans saw progress: before 1000 hours, Third Battalion infantry, tanks, and tank destroyers fought its way inside Hamich to begin cleaning the Germans out of the village while, with surprising ease, 2/16 took Hill 232. Yet, Third Battalion took the rest of the day in fighting from house to house and capturing Hamich. By the afternoon, the battalion was still fighting for Hamich's destroyed buildings and houses.

Having lost one tank destroyer and two tanks, Second Battalion lamented that “the casualties are more than they should be.”¹⁶⁸

But the Germans were desperate to control Hamich. At 2100, two hundred German infantry and five or more tanks counterattacked and a furious firefight erupted.¹⁶⁹ The Americans repelled the infantry but wrestled with the German tanks. One Sherman tank put a round into a Mark V Panther tank eight yards away. American armor claimed three tanks and two self-propelled guns but lost three tanks and two tank destroyers.¹⁷⁰ During the night, as German tanks roamed the streets, “people [were] screaming for bazooka ammunition and bazookas.”¹⁷¹ Private Carmen Turchiarelli of K Company fired a bazooka from a second-story window into the fuel tank of a German Tiger tank, causing it to explode. During the night, K Company’s executive officer successfully brought artillery onto his own positions to prevent the Germans from overrunning them.¹⁷² There were as many as four separate counterattacks that night. At 0600 on the nineteenth, the Germans launched another tank-infantry sortie but were unsuccessful. By noon, First and Third Battalions operated inside the burning town, trying to dig out the last remaining Germans holed up in cellars and buildings.¹⁷³ However, the 16th’s rifle companies were heavily depleted from these three days of fighting: C and B Companies were each the size of a platoon while I and A Companies each had 90 men. A typical rifle company typically contained 150 enlisted men.¹⁷⁴

As the 16th fought elsewhere in the green nightmare of the Hürtgen, the 18th Infantry tackled the challenge of Heistern on 20-21 November. A study of the area showed that the Germans prepared Heistern as they had Hamich: “hasty field

fortifications along the edge of the built-up area, backed by individual strongpoints in the houses and the whole forward area covered by as heavy an artillery concentration as [the Germans] could muster.”¹⁷⁵ It seemed the German artillery fell even more intensely on the twentieth. The 18th endured fanatical house-to-house fighting. Despite poor roads, supporting tanks from B/745 Tank Battalion fired on houses containing the enemy and helped to take 75 to 100 prisoners.¹⁷⁶ By evening, 3/18 held southern Heistern although it had left several snipers in their rear.¹⁷⁷ The Third Battalion defeated several counterattacks with artillery support.¹⁷⁸ When the Americans took Heistern and the surrounding hills, the 1st Division could anticipate taking their objectives of Langerwehe and Jungersdorf on the eastern side of the forests. By now, dramatic personnel losses had weakened the infantry battalions but injecting them with inexperienced replacements was unavoidable in order to maintain the drive.

As the 16th and 18th Infantry Regiments fought eastward, the 26th Infantry deployed on the division’s right. During this period the 26th’s battalions plodded slowly against aggressive German resistance. As the corps commander pressured Huebner, so Huebner pressured the 26th’s Colonel John Seitz to make progress that was longer than hundreds of yards.¹⁷⁹ Because the 26th fought mostly within the forest with slick ground and few roads, its armored support was largely unhelpful. By 27 November, the 16th Infantry prepared to attack Luchem and the 18th eyed Langerwehe. The 26th Infantry’s Third Battalion attacked Jungersdorf with supporting armor. Many of the men in this attack had replaced the losses incurred in Aachen, making the Hürtgen Forest their first

battle and Jungersdorf their first urban fight. Seven hours and a bitter close-quarters battle later, 3/26 controlled the city of Jungersdorf.¹⁸⁰

The next day at 1000 hours, Lieutenant Colonel Derrill Daniel's 2/26 attacked the nearby town of Merode, with a promise of artillery support from the division.¹⁸¹ One replacement tanker remembered that Merode was in the open down a gentle slope 600 yards from the woods from which the Americans would emerge.¹⁸² Combat interviews described Merode as "a strongly fortified village blocking several eastern exits from the forest leading to the Roer River and the [strategic] approaches to the Cologne plain [sic]." The Germans could easily defend the town because it was in the open: approaches to it lacked cover and their artillery had long since "zeroed in" on the woods outside the town.¹⁸³ One, possibly two, battalions of German soldiers defended the town.¹⁸⁴

When 2/26 and their armor stepped out of the woods on a frontage of three to four hundred yards, a storm of German shells nearly stopped the attack as it began.¹⁸⁵ One American tanker recalled the bombardment: "The assaulting company is taking a beating. . . . A sergeant in front of us gets hit in the leg, and I see him drag himself to the ditch. Then a shell lands in that exact spot where he was laying . . . It is like that all over, men getting hit just enough to stop them and then getting torn apart by that unmerciful shrapnel."¹⁸⁶ Though drained by losses and stunned from the enemy bombardment, 2/26 pressed toward Merode. As the Americans methodically captured the area's bunkers, pillboxes, and castle, the Germans pulled out of Merode, abandoning defenses that had concealed machine gun and panzerfaust positions.¹⁸⁷ At 1500, the

Americans were inside Merode. American fighter-bombers that strafed the area may have killed some Americans.¹⁸⁸ By 1700, 2/26 had E and F Companies, tanks, and tank destroyers controlled the town but the two tanks withdrew after fighting in the town ended.¹⁸⁹ Most fatefully, communications into Merode were poor and three inoperable tanks blocked the sole road into the town.

German artillery opened up on the Americans in Merode around 1900 hours but regimental and division leaders did not seem concerned about it. This curtain of artillery blocked the western approaches to Merode and kept reinforcements from assisting the defending Americans. Following this artillery barrage, several tanks and a battalion from the German *5th Parachute Regiment* counterattacked.¹⁹⁰ By 2000 hours, American staff officers became more concerned about Second Battalion's unsupportable positions inside Merode. Neither towed nor self-propelled antitank weapons could enter the fray, so the battalion rushed in bazooka ammunition to balance the odds.¹⁹¹ The battalion desperately tried to remove the tanks or create a path around the tanks. The well-laid defenses prevented the Americans from getting armored support into Merode. The poor communications made it difficult for artillery to support the American infantry for lack of observation but the 33rd Field Artillery Battalion fired missions in support anyhow.¹⁹² Colonel Seitz told division that the presence of enemy tanks and Daniel's inaccessibly precarious position meant that the infantry were "going to take a beating."¹⁹³ The 1st Division was forced to wait for daylight but, throughout the twenty-ninth and thirtieth, E and F Companies were effectively isolated.

On the afternoon of 30 November, the 26th Infantry could only account for two men from E Company and fourteen from F Company. The Germans captured those not killed in the fighting. Lieutenant Sidney Miller, an F Company platoon leader, remembered thinking that “surely as long as we had occupied a part of the village of Merode that additional support would be sent.” Although the lack of communications prevented Second Battalion from receiving that information, a German prisoner of war reported that portions of F Company were in the southwestern portion of Merode.¹⁹⁴ German tanks hunted the American infantrymen by firing into every building.¹⁹⁵ Desperate but hopeful, Daniel remained convinced by early evening that knots of survivors were still fighting since German artillery continued to shell the area.¹⁹⁶ Although not clear when, the last radio contact from Merode was a series of messages: “There’s a Tiger tank coming down the street now, firing his gun into every house . . . He’s three houses away, now, and still firing into every house . . . Here he comes . . .”¹⁹⁷ The Germans retook the town.

On 1 December, 26th Infantry patrols tried to learn the fate of their fellow G.I.s in Merode but intense German fire kept them at bay. The division gave up these two companies and the attached heavy weapons from H Company as lost.¹⁹⁸ To the defenders’ credit, later German prisoners attested that most Americans were captured on 1 December only as they ran out of ammunition.¹⁹⁹ Although Merode confirmed the necessity of combined-arms fighting in an urban defense, the reason why the infantry fought alone were because the circumstances prevented the Americans from rushing armor to support the beleaguered defenders.

With the failure to take Merode but Jungersdorf and Langerwehe in hand, the 1st Division attacked Luchem, the last town outside of the hated Hürtgen Forest. It fell on 3 December when 1/16 employed speed, surprise, and creativity over the usual methodical assault. Rather than follow the artillery barrage that routinely signaled the beginning of an attack, the infantry set off before dawn in a foggy drizzle after the artillery concentrated on specific locations. The battalion's information placed several roadblocks and defense positions on the perimeter of Luchem; patrols prior to the assault destroyed several of these outposts to allow the G.I.s to maintain surprise. A platoon from B Company infiltrated from the northwest as A Company attacked from the southwest at 0600. Infantrymen dropped grenades into cellar windows by 0700. When the Americans gained the town, they pulled a page from German tactics at Merode by shelling the far side of Luchem to prevent the Germans from counterattacking. As expected, riflemen fought house to house, tanks and tank destroyers fired directly into buildings. By noon, the battalion and its attached armor had cleaned out and secured most of the city and its nearby environs and then prepared an all-around defense. The German counterattack the next day quickly failed.²⁰⁰

One reason for these new tactics was the battalion's leadership. After the losses suffered from Hamich, hundreds of replacements filled 1/16 but there was not enough time to prepare them for battle. Further, just as Jungersdorf and Merode were many replacements' first urban battle in the 26th Infantry, so Luchem was the first street fight for the replacements in 1/16. Naturally, they depended on capable combat leaders. A postwar account stated that any night attack was very risky but works "when well

planned, competently led, and with good communication.” In many ways, the success at Luchem was possible not because of the men but because of their leaders.²⁰¹ Still, some inexperienced men rose to the occasion: one replacement in his first battle was killed singlehandedly taking out a machine gun nest. His action shook the Germans out of their position and allowed other G.I.s to press the attack. Private Robert T. Henry posthumously received the Medal of Honor for his efforts.²⁰² The battalion maintained the surprise and initiative and employed the violence of action necessary to take Luchem with a minimal loss against a determined enemy.

Having been in combat since 16 November, the division finally pulled off the line for a well-deserved rest on 4 December. By 7 December, the division was in Belgium, where the men found tents, showers, new and warm clothing, real food, entertainment, and new soldiers to replace the thousands lost. The rest also brought the men a reprieve from tree bursts, shrapnel, bullets, mines, trench foot, seeing buddies torn to pieces, and the despair that accompanied units fighting for too long. Indeed, this rest was necessary: the 1st Medical Battalion had treated over 6,000 wounded soldiers in November and another 500 in the first four days of December. Together, the three infantry regiments lost 500 men killed and 345 men missing.²⁰³ In Belgium, the division expected to train the many new replacements before its next battle. There was also a command change. General Clarence Huebner became deputy commander of V Corps and the commanding general of division artillery, Clift Andrus, became the commanding general of the 1st Infantry Division.

Despite the division's intent to rest, rehabilitate, and retrain, Adolf Hitler had other plans. On 16 December, the Germans launched a massive counteroffensive designed to punch a hole in the Allied line and retake the port of Antwerp. As Germans smashed through Allied units, the Big Red One found itself fighting on the northern shoulder of a giant "Bulge" in their lines.

Meanwhile, we can turn to the 5th and 3rd Infantry Divisions and their urban actions in France.

Endnotes

- ¹ Leroy Stewart, "Hurry Up & Wait," 1975, 36, unpublished memoir in WWII Veterans Collection, 1st Infantry Division, 26th Infantry Regiment, Box 2, USAMHI.
- ² Gordon A. Harrison, *Cross-Channel Attack* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, United States Army, 1951), Map II.
- ³ Russell F. Weigley, *Eisenhower's Lieutenants: The Campaign of France and Germany, 1944-1945* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981), 89.
- ⁴ "16th Combat Team Invasion of France," n.d., 6, File 301-INF(16)-0, Box 5231, RG 407, Entry 427, NA. As a reminder, 2nd Battalion, 16th Infantry (2/16)—as a typical infantry battalion in the American military—was composed of four companies: three rifle companies (E, F, G) and a heavy weapons company (H) whose weapons were interspersed through the rifle companies.
- ⁵ "History of Company 'G', 16th Infantry, from 6 June 1944-7 June 1944," 17 June 1944, 1 in "1st Infantry Division, Omaha Beach," Box 24011, RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.
- ⁶ Map found in Box 24131, ML 98, RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.
- ⁷ The narrative of the amphibious assault and fight for Colleville draws from the following sources: "History of Company 'G', 16th Infantry, from 6 June 1944-7 June 1944," 17 June 1944, 1-3 and "16-G on D Day," n.d., 1-5 in "1st Infantry Division, Omaha Beach," Box 24011, RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA; "16th CT Invasion

of France,” n.d., 10, File 301-INF(16)-0.3.0, Box 5238, RG 407, Entry 427, NA; 6 June Entries in “Journal, 16th Infantry, 1-30 June 1944,” 1-4, File 301-INF(16)-0.7, Box 5238, RG 407, Entry 427, NA; Captain Joseph T. Dawson, “Interview: Joseph Dawson,” 16 April 1991, 32-33, Oral Histories Collection, MRC; Steven E. Clay, *Blood and Sacrifice: The History of the 16th Infantry Regiment from the Civil War through the Gulf War* (Wheaton, IL: Cantigny First Division Foundation), 197-8. The quote comes from “16-G on D Day,” 5 in “1st Infantry Division, Omaha Beach,” Box 24011, RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.

⁸ Entries 8 and 14, 8 June in “G-3 Journal and File, 1-8 June 1944,” File 301-3.2, Box 5123, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.

⁹ “G-3 Report of Operations, 31 May 1944 to 30 June 1944 Inclusive,” 28, RG 407, Entry 427, NA. During the early fighting in Normandy, the 1st Infantry Division had two tank battalions, the 743rd and 745th Tank Battalions, attached to it. It would later lose the 743rd but keep the 745th attached to it.

¹⁰ This account comes largely from the G-3 Periodic Report for 13 June 1944 as well as the G-3 Journal for 13 June in “G-3 Journal and File, 12-15 June 1944,” File 301-3.2, Box 5123, RG 407, Entry 427, NA; 26th Infantry Regiment Journal in “Report After Action, 26th Infantry, 1 June 1944 to 30 June 1944,” 51-3, File 301-INF(26)-0.3, RG 407, Entry 427, NA; Manley, “History of the 26th Infantry Regiment,” 87, MRC.

¹¹ Martin Blumenson, *Breakout and Pursuit* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961), 234. Blumenson goes into more details about the bombing errors and amicide on 24 and 25 July.

¹² Whereas the infantry division formed combat teams with its infantry regiments as the centerpiece, armored divisions formed similar teams, usually three per division, called Combat Commands. Typically, they were called Combat Command A (CCA), Combat Command B (CCB), and Combat Command Reserve (CCR). Each combat command paired a tank battalion with an armored infantry battalion.

¹³ See “The Battle of Marigny, 27 July 1944: Company ‘I’, 18th Infantry,” 2 in “1st Division WWII Outstanding Combat Achievements by all Rifle Companies Report, 16 Inf-18 Inf-26 Inf,” MRC; “Interview with Maj. A. V. Middleworth, S-3, of the 18th Inf Regt, 1st Division,” in “The 1st Division in the Breakthrough of July 25th,” Box 24011, RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA; “18th Inf Regt, Action of the 3rd Bn at Marigny, 26-27-28 July,” in “The 1st Division in the Breakthrough of July 25th,” Box 24011, RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.

¹⁴ Francis Murdoch quoted in *Blue Spaders: The 26th Infantry Regiment, 1917-1967* (Wheaton, IL: Cantigny First Division Foundation, 1996), 65.

- ¹⁵ “Action Against Enemy, Report After,” 5 September 1944, 7, in “Action Against Enemy, Report After, Month of August 1944,” File 301-INF(26)-0.3, Box 5267, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁶ Clisson, “S-3 Periodic Report,” 31 August 1944 in “Action Against Enemy, Report After, Month of August 1944,” File 301-INF(26)-0.3, Box 5267, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁷ Lieutenant Colonel Clarence E. Beck, “G-3 Report of Operations, 1 August to 31 August 1944, Inclusive,” 10 September 1944, 61-64, File 301-3, Box 5105, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁸ Charles B. MacDonald, *The Mighty Endeavor: American Armed Forces in the European Theater in World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), 333-4.
- ¹⁹ Adolf Hitler quoted in Rick Atkinson, *The Guns at Last Light: The War in Western Europe, 1944-1945* (New York: Henry Holt a& Co., 2013), 251.
- ²⁰ Map comes from MacDonald, *The Siegfried Line Campaign* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1963), Map III.
- ²¹ Charles B. MacDonald, *Siegfried Line Campaign* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1963), 66; Weigley, *Eisenhower’s Lieutenants*, 304.
- ²² MacDonald, *Siegfried Line Campaign*, 67, 72.
- ²³ J. Lawton Collins, *Lightning Joe: An Autobiography* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), 269; MacDonald, *Siegfried Line Campaign*, 71.
- ²⁴ Harry Yeide, *The Longest Battle, September 1944 to February 1945: From Aachen to the Roer and Across* (St. Paul, MN: Zenith Press, 2005), 16-17.
- ²⁵ MacDonald, *Siegfried Line Campaign*, 75.
- ²⁶ John W. Baumgartner, *Sixteenth Infantry, 1861-1946* (Bamberg, Germany: n.p., 1946; reprint, Du Quoin, IL: Cricket Press, 1995), 155.
- ²⁷ See, for example, Lieutenant Colonel Clarence E. Beck, “G-3 Report of Operations, 1 September to 30 September 1944, Inclusive,” 5 October 1944, 44-5, File 301-3, Box 5105, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ²⁸ Baumgartner, *Sixteenth Infantry*, 157-8.

- ²⁹ MacDonald, *Siegfried Line Campaign*, 81.
- ³⁰ MacDonald, *Siegfried Line Campaign*, 89-90.
- ³¹ “The Attack on Stolberg: 16-17-18 September 1944, Company ‘A’, 16th Infantry,” 7, in “1st Division WWII Outstanding Combat Achievements by all Rifle Companies Report, 16 Inf-18 Inf-26 Inf,” MRC.
- ³² Baumgartner, *The Sixteenth Infantry*, 161-2; “Recommendation for Unit Citation of 16th Infantry Regiment, First U.S. Infantry Division,” n.d., 1-2, in “History, 16th CT Breach of the Siegfried Line, Germany,” File 301-INF(16)-0.3.0, Box 5238, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ³³ Major Eston T. White, “16th Infantry S-3 Periodic Report for 1600 19 September to 1600 20 September,” 20 September 1944 in “Report After Action, 16th Infantry, September 1944,” File 301-INF(16)-0.3, Box 5233, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ³⁴ “History of Company ‘D’, 16th Infantry,” 16 July 1945, 5, File 301-INF(16)10-0.1, Box 5250, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ³⁵ S-3 Report for 745 Tank Battalion, 18 September 1944 in “745 Tank Battalion After-Action Report, June-December 1944,” File ARBN-745-0.3, Box 13471, RG 407, Entry 427, NA. Because the 16th Infantry did not receive the order to move into Stolberg until the 19th, it is likely this tank action was more a continuation of the Munsterbusch fight, given the proximity of Munsterbusch to Stolberg. The German commander of the *12th Infantry Division* acknowledged losing some pillboxes and “some rows of houses taken” in Stolberg on 18 September. From their records, it is not clear what role 1/A/745 Tank Battalion had in the fight for Stolberg. It is possible they had little role as 1/16 likely worked with tanks from the 3rd Armored Division. Major General Gerhard Engel, “First Battle of Aachen, 16 Sept-22 Sept 1944,” Foreign Military Studies, MS # A-971 (Karlsruhe, Germany: Historical Division, Headquarters United States Army, Europe, Foreign Military Studies Branch, March 1946), 11.
- ³⁶ S-3 Report for 634th Tank Destroyer Battalion, 19 September 1944 in “G-3 Journal and File, 17-20 September 1944,” File 301-3.2, Box 5132, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ³⁷ White, “16th Infantry S-3 Periodic Report for 1600 19 September to 1600 20 September,” 20 September 1944 in “Report After Action, 16th Infantry, September 1944,” RG 407, Entry 427, NA.

- ³⁸ “History of Company ‘D’, 16th Infantry,” 5, RG 407, Entry 427, NA; S-3 Report for 634th Tank Destroyer Battalion, 19 September 1944, 1 in “G-3 Journal and File, 17-20 September 1944,” RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ³⁹ “History of Company ‘D’, 16th Infantry,” 16 July 1945, 5, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁴⁰ Harold D. Howenstine, *History of the 745th Tank Battalion, August 1942 to June 1945* (Nurnberg, Germany, n.p., n.d.), 57.
- ⁴¹ Red 5 to S-3, 20 September, 19; S-3 to Capt. Murphy, 20 September, 20; S-3 to Capt. Groves, 20 September, 20 in “Journal CT 16, September 1944,” File 301-INF(16)-0.7, Box 5239, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁴² S-6 to G-6, 20 September 1944, 8 in “Journal CT 16, September 1944,” RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁴³ “History of Company ‘D’, 16th Infantry,” 5, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁴⁴ Engel, “First Battle of Aachen,” 16.
- ⁴⁵ Red 6 to S-3, 21 September, 3 in “Journal CT 16, September 1944,” RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁴⁶ Entry 39 at 1200, 20 September 1944 in “G-3 Journal and File, 17-20 September 1944,” RG 407, Entry 427, NA; S-3 to G-3, 20 September 1944, 9 in “Journal CT 16, September 1944,” RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁴⁷ Engel, “First Battle of Aachen,” 16.
- ⁴⁸ Entry 39 at 1200, 20 September 1944 in “G-3 Journal and File, 17-20 September 1944,” RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁴⁹ S-3 to G-3, 20 September 1944, 9 and S-2 to Red-2, 20 September 1944, 10 in “Journal CT 16, September 1944,” RG 407, Entry 427, NA; Entry 39 at 1200, 20 September 1944 in “G-3 Journal and File, 17-20 September 1944,” RG 407, Entry 427, NA. A study of the Germans opposite VII Corps does not indicate to what extent the Germans prepared Stolberg for defense against the Americans, inasmuch as it was important to the German *12th Infantry Division*. Instead, the study described the fighting within Stolberg as “confused, disorganized house-to-house fighting.” It is likely that the Germans merely used pre-existing tunnels rather than construct new ones themselves. See Lucian Heichler, *The Germans Opposite VII Corps in September 1944* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1952), 72.

- ⁵⁰ “Record of Events, 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry (Atchd to 3rd US Armd Division), 13 September-22 September 1944,” 14 in “1st Div., Siegfried Line, Sept. 1944,” RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA. Out of a full complement of 871 officers and men, 1/26 only had 404.
- ⁵¹ The direction of the attack comes from the combat interview: “Record of Events, 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry (Atchd to 3rd US Armd Division), 13 September-22 September 1944,” 14 in “1st Div., Siegfried Line, Sept. 1944,” RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA. German records also indicated that a strong attack came from east: Heichler, *Germans Opposite VII Corps*, 73.
- ⁵² “Record of Events, 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry (Atchd to 3rd US Armd Division), 13 September-22 September 1944, 15 in “1st Div., Siegfried Line, Sept. 1944,” RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.
- ⁵³ “Record of Events, 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry (Atchd to 3rd US Armd Division), 13 September-22 September 1944, 16 in “1st Div., Siegfried Line, Sept. 1944,” RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.
- ⁵⁴ *Stolberg*, 31.
- ⁵⁵ MacDonald, *Siegfried Line Campaign*, 351-2.
- ⁵⁶ MacDonald, *Siegfried Line Campaign*, 307.
- ⁵⁷ Weigley, *Eisenhower’s Lieutenants*, 357.
- ⁵⁸ Collins, *Lightning Joe*, 269.
- ⁵⁹ Weigley, *Eisenhower’s Lieutenants*, 357.
- ⁶⁰ 1st Lieutenant Harry Condron, “The Fall of Aachen,” n.d., 1 in “1st Div., Battle of Aachen, 8-22 Oct. 1944,” Box 24012, RG 427, Entry 427-A, NA.
- ⁶¹ The size of the defense force differs. At the low end, Charles Whiting puts the German defense at 2,000. Charles MacDonald says “roughly 5,000” and that there were 4,392 “combat effectives” in the city by 16 October, while an Army historical source says “approximately 6,500.” The commander of Second Battalion recorded that 5,600 soldiers alone were captured during the operation. Whereas the size of Wilck’s force was likely between 5,000 and 6,000 men, the defenders surely outnumbered the attacking American force. Charles Whiting, *Bloody Aachen* (New York: Stein and Day, 1976), 136; MacDonald, *Siegfried Line Campaign*, 308, 314; Major Robert E. Price, III, et al., *Aachen: Offensive, Deliberate Attack, MOUT* (Fort

Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, 1984), 63; Lieutenant Colonel Derrill Daniel, "The Capture of Aachen," n.d., 17, Folder 228.01, HRC Geog. M Germany, 370.2 - Aachen, Center for Military History Archives, Fort McNair, Washington, D.C.

⁶² Price, *Aachen*, 63.

⁶³ MacDonald, *Siegfried Line Campaign*, 308.

⁶⁴ Price, *Aachen*, 60, 89; Daniel, "The Capture of Aachen," 17-8, Center for Military History Archives, Fort McNair, Washington, D.C.

⁶⁵ Price, *Aachen*, 59-60.

⁶⁶ The map comes from "Pharus-Plan Aachen" in "1st Div., Battle of Aachen, 8-22 Oct. 1944," Box 24012, RG 427, Entry 427-A, NA. The 1 marks Farwick Park along with the *Kurhaus*, the Hotel Quellenhof, and Observatory Hill. The 2 marks Salvatorberg. The 3 marks Lousberg. The 4 is the Stadttheatre at the end of Hindenburgstrasse. The 5 marks the Technical High School. The numbers along the side and bottom mark the military grid imposed upon the map.

⁶⁷ Christopher R. Gabel, "'Knock 'em All Down': The Reduction of Aachen, October 1944" in William G. Robertson, ed., *Block By Block: The Challenges of Urban Operations* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College Press, 2003), 79.

⁶⁸ Daniel, "The Capture of Aachen," 4, Center for Military History Archives, Fort McNair, Washington, D.C.

⁶⁹ Daniel, "The Capture of Aachen," 5, 7, Center for Military History Archives, Fort McNair, Washington, D.C.; "Clearing Area South of the Rail Road Tracks," n.d., 10 in "1st Div., Battle of Aachen, 8-22 Oct. 1944," Box 24012, RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.

⁷⁰ "Clearing Area South of the Rail Road Tracks," 10 in "1st Div., Battle of Aachen, 8-22 Oct. 1944," RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.

⁷¹ "'Aachen': 8-20 October 1944, Second Battalion, 26th Infantry," 5 in the "1st Division WWII Outstanding Combat Achievements by all Rifle Companies Report," MRC.

⁷² Daniel, "The Capture of Aachen," 5-7, Center for Military History Archives, Fort McNair, Washington, D.C.

- ⁷³ The use of tank destroyers in these preliminary phases: “Clearing Area South of the Rail Road Tracks,” 1-3 in “1st Div., Battle of Aachen, 8-22 Oct. 1944,” RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.
- ⁷⁴ *Selected Intelligence Reports*, 77.
- ⁷⁵ Blue 6 to S-6, 12 October 1944 in “S-3 Unit Report for Month of October,” 81 in “Report After Action, Month of October, 1944,” File 301-INF(26)-0.3, Box 5268, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁷⁶ “Clearing Area South of the Rail Road Tracks,” 7 in “1st Div., Battle of Aachen, 8-22 Oct. 1944,” RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.
- ⁷⁷ Danger 6 to S-3; S-3 to White; S-3 to Blue, S-3, 13 October 1944 in “S-3 Unit Report for Month of October,” 86, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁷⁸ 26th Infantry Unit Citation, quoted in *Aachen: Military Operations in Urban Terrain, 26th Infantry Regimental Combat Team, 8-20 October 1944* (n.p.: 26th Infantry Regimental Association, 1999), 18.
- ⁷⁹ “Aachen, 8-20 October 1944, Second Battalion, 26th Infantry,” 7 in the “1st Division WWII Outstanding Combat Achievements by all Rifle Companies Report,” MRC; Daniel, “The Capture of Aachen,” 10-11, Center for Military History Archives, Fort McNair, Washington, D.C. It is difficult to say where the practice of “mouseholing” originated and how the Americans picked up the idea. *FM 31-50*, published ten months before this battle, suggests breaching buildings and rooms through holes created by explosives. Rick Atkinson explains that this method was learned from the experiences at Cassino and Ortona. Although quite reasonable, Atkinson does not cite any source making this claim. *FM 31-50: Attack on a Fortified Position and Combat in Towns* (Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1944), 85-91; Atkinson, *The Guns at Last Light*, 294. The 2nd Infantry Division also used these tactics at Brest. See “Fighting in the City of Brest,” *Twelfth Army Group Battle Experiences* 50 (28 September 1944), 1-2.
- ⁸⁰ “Aachen, 8-20 October 1944, Second Battalion, 26th Infantry,” 7-8 in the “1st Division WWII Outstanding Combat Achievements by all Rifle Companies Report,” MRC.
- ⁸¹ Stewart, “Hurry Up & Wait,” 60, USAMHI.
- ⁸² Major William R. Campbell, “Tanks with Infantry,” (Fort Knox, KY: General Instruction Department, The Armored School, 1947): 6.

- ⁸³ “Clearing Area South of the Rail Road Tracks,” 9 in “1st Div., Battle of Aachen, 8-22 Oct. 1944,” RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA; Daniel, “The Capture of Aachen,” 11, Center for Military History Archives, Fort McNair, Washington, D.C.
- ⁸⁴ “Aachen, 8-20 October 1944, Second Battalion, 26th Infantry,” 10 in the “1st Division WWII Outstanding Combat Achievements by all Rifle Companies Report,” MRC.
- ⁸⁵ See, for example, Lieutenant General V. I Chuykov, “Street Fighting Tactics.” *Infantry Journal* 53 (December 1943): 60-3.
- ⁸⁶ “Clearing Area South of the Rail Road Tracks,” 9 in “1st Div., Battle of Aachen, 8-22 Oct. 1944,” RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.
- ⁸⁷ 26th Infantry Unit Citation, quoted in *Aachen*, 22.
- ⁸⁸ Capt. McNamara to Dextrous 3, 13 October 1944 in “S-3 Unit Report for Month of October,” 86, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁸⁹ Capt. Rennie to S-3, 13 October 1944; Lt. Smith to S-3, 13 October 1944 in “S-3 Unit Report for Month of October,” 88, RG 407, Entry 427, NA. Artillery marking targets: “Unit Report 33rd F.A. Bn. 1 thru 31 October 1944,” 1 November 1944, 4-6, 11 in “33rd Field Artillery Battalion Report of Operations, June-December 1944,” File 301-FA(33)-0.3, Box 5226, RG 407, Entry 427, NA. The Battle of Aachen is not the first time that artillery had marked targets for fighter-bombers with red smoke. See: “7th Field Artillery Unit Journal for September 1944,” 1 October 1944, 8 in “7th Field Artillery Battalion Journal and File, September 1944,” File 301-FA(7)-0.7, Box 5210, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁹⁰ Air OP to S-3, 13 October 1944 in “S-3 Unit Report for Month of October,” 94, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁹¹ For more on the story of close air support in World War II, see the essays in Benjamin Franklin Cooling, ed., *Case Studies in the Development of Close Air Support* (Washington, D.C.: Office of Air Force History, United States Air Force, 1990). See also Michael D. Doubler, *Closing with the Enemy: How G.I.s Fought the War in Europe, 1944-1945* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1994), 63-86. See also “32nd Field Artillery Battalion Historical Report, 1 October 1944 to 31 October 1944,” 1 November 1944, 8 in “32nd Field Artillery Battalion Report of Operations, June-December 1944,” File 301-FA(32)-0.3, Box 5212, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁹² G-6 to S-6, 13 October 1944 in “S-3 Unit Report for Month of October,” 90, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.

- ⁹³ G-6 to S-6, 13 October 1944 in “S-3 Unit Report for Month of October,” 94, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁹⁴ “Clearing Area South of the Rail Road Tracks,” 12-3 in “1st Div., Battle of Aachen, 8-22 Oct. 1944,” RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA; *Aachen*, 31.
- ⁹⁵ MacDonald, *Siegfried Line Campaign*, 311.
- ⁹⁶ Danger 6 to S-3; S-6 to White 6, 13 October 1944 in “S-3 Unit Report for Month of October,” 96-7, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁹⁷ Middleton, “Counter-Attack Fails,” 4; Drew Middleton, “First Storms City,” *New York Times*, 14 October 1944, 1, 4.
- ⁹⁸ To define terminology, trucks towed 155-mm howitzers; the soldiers then manhandled them into position where they remained in static positions. A 155-mm “self-propelled” howitzer was a 155-mm gun mounted on top of a truck that could, therefore, propel itself. This weapon gave Lieutenant Colonels Daniel and Corley the power of a 155-mm artillery piece as well as mobility.
- ⁹⁹ Danger 6 to S-3, 14 October 1944 in “S-3 Unit Report for Month of October,” 101, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁰⁰ Stewart, “Hurry Up & Wait,” 63, USAMHI.
- ¹⁰¹ S-6 to Blue 6, 14 October 1944 in “S-3 Unit Report for Month of October,” 103, RG 407, Entry 427, NA; “Clearing Area South of the Rail Road Tracks,” 13 in “1st Div., Battle of Aachen, 8-22 Oct. 1944,” RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.
- ¹⁰² *Aachen*, 22.
- ¹⁰³ Blue 2 to S-6, 15 October 1944 in “S-3 Unit Report for Month of October,” 117, RG 407, Entry 427, NA; “Clearing Area South of the Rail Road Tracks,” 13 in “1st Div., Battle of Aachen, 8-22 Oct. 1944,” RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.
- ¹⁰⁴ Blue 5 to S-3 and Blue 6 to S-6, 15 October 1944 in “S-3 Unit Report for Month of October,” 118, RG 407, Entry 427, NA; “Clearing Area South of the Rail Road Tracks,” 13 in “1st Div., Battle of Aachen, 8-22 Oct. 1944,” RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA. In the moment, American G.I.s in World War II had a habit of mistaking every German tank for a Mark VI “Tiger” tank. Even Lieutenant Colonel Corley, a man not given to panic, claimed that one tank was indeed a Tiger. The combat interview report, “Clearing Area South of the Rail Road Tracks,” records two Mark VI tanks in

this attack on the Third Battalion. According to historian Harry Yeide, German records maintain they were assault guns and not Tigers. Yeide, *Longest Battle*, 93.

¹⁰⁵ Blue 5 to S-3, 15 October 1944 in "S-3 Unit Report for Month of October," 118, RG 407, Entry 427, NA; "Clearing Area South of the Rail Road Tracks," 13 in "1st Div., Battle of Aachen, 8-22 Oct. 1944," RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.

¹⁰⁶ "Aachen Fighting Fantastic," 5; Blue 6 to S-6, 15 October 1944, 118; Major Green to S-6, 119 in "S-3 Unit Report for Month of October," 118, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.

¹⁰⁷ "Clearing Area South of the Rail Road Tracks," 14-5 in "1st Div., Battle of Aachen, 8-22 Oct. 1944," RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.

¹⁰⁸ Daniel, "The Capture of Aachen," 12-3, Center for Military History Archives, Fort McNair, Washington, D.C.

¹⁰⁹ Yeide, *Longest Battle*, 94.

¹¹⁰ "Clearing Area South of the Rail Road Tracks," 12 in "1st Div., Battle of Aachen, 8-22 Oct. 1944," RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.

¹¹¹ "Clearing Area South of the Rail Road Tracks," 13 in "1st Div., Battle of Aachen, 8-22 Oct. 1944," RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.

¹¹² Michael D. Runey, "Chaos, Cohesion, and Leadership: An American Infantry Battalion in Europe, October-December 1944," (M.A. Thesis, Pennsylvania State University, 2001), 72.

¹¹³ "Clearing Area South of the Rail Road Tracks," 12, 13 in "1st Div., Battle of Aachen, 8-22 Oct. 1944," RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.

¹¹⁴ White 6 to S-3, 16 October in "S-3 Unit Report for Month of October," 125, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.

¹¹⁵ Daniel, "The Capture of Aachen," 14-5, Center for Military History Archives, Fort McNair, Washington, D.C.

¹¹⁶ Blue 6 to S-6, 16 October in "S-3 Unit Report for Month of October," 130, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.

¹¹⁷ Stewart, "Hurry Up & Wait," 63, USAMHI.

¹¹⁸ S-6 to Blue 6, 17 October in "S-3 Unit Report for Month of October," 143, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.

- ¹¹⁹ Drew Middleton, "Americans Mop Up In Suicidal Aachen," *New York Times*, 18 October 1944, 3.
- ¹²⁰ Runey, "Chaos, Cohesion, and Leadership," 79-80.
- ¹²¹ Stewart, "Hurry Up & Wait," 60, USAMHI.
- ¹²² "Farwick Park, Aachen, 18 October 1944, Third Battalion, 26th Infantry," 1 in the "1st Division WWII Outstanding Combat Achievements by all Rifle Companies Report," MRC.
- ¹²³ Blue 6 to S-3, 17 October 1944, 145; Air Officer to S-3, 17 October 1944, 146 in "S-3 Unit Report for Month of October," 125, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹²⁴ Drew Middleton, "Germans Prolong Agony of Aachen," *New York Times*, 19 October 1944, 5.
- ¹²⁵ S-3 Report for 634th Tank Destroyer Battalion, 19 October 1944 in "G-3 Journal and File, 19-21 October 1944," File 301-3.2, Box 5135, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹²⁶ Chesnut, "Company 'F,' 26th Infantry at Aachen, Germany," 3, MRC.
- ¹²⁷ MacDonald, *Siegfried Line Campaign*, 314.
- ¹²⁸ Drew Middleton, "Battle of Aachen Moving to a Close," *New York Times*, 20 October 1944, 3.
- ¹²⁹ Chesnut, "Company 'F,' 26th Infantry at Aachen, Germany," 3, MRC.
- ¹³⁰ Danger 6 to S-3, 20 October 1944 in "S-3 Unit Report for Month of October," 170, RG 407, Entry 427, NA; "Clearing Area South of the Rail Road Tracks," 21-2 in "1st Div., Battle of Aachen, 8-22 Oct. 1944," RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.
- ¹³¹ Blue 6 to S-6, 20 October in "S-3 Unit Report for Month of October," 173, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹³² Daniel, "The Capture of Aachen," 16-7, Center for Military History Archives, Fort McNair, Washington, D.C.
- ¹³³ 26th Infantry Unit Citation, quoted in *Aachen*, 28.
- ¹³⁴ "Clearing Area South of the Rail Road Tracks," 10, 11 in "1st Div., Battle of Aachen, 8-22 Oct. 1944," RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.

- ¹³⁵ Yeide, *Longest Battle*, 96.
- ¹³⁶ Stewart, "Hurry Up & Wait," 66, USAMHI.
- ¹³⁷ Lieutenant Robert G. Botsford quoted in *Selected Intelligence Reports*, 80.
- ¹³⁸ 26th Infantry S-3 Periodic Report for 1-31 October 1944, 31 October, 2 "Report After Action, Month of October, 1944," File 301-INF(26)-0.3, Box 5268, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹³⁹ "Unit Report 33rd F.A. Bn. 1 thru 31 October 1944," 11, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁴⁰ 26th Infantry Unit Citation, quoted in *Aachen*, 30.
- ¹⁴¹ Daniel mentions these two elements in "Clearing Area South of the Rail Road Tracks," 8-9 in "1st Div., Battle of Aachen, 8-22 Oct. 1944," RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.
- ¹⁴² Daniel, "The Capture of Aachen," 20-1, Center for Military History Archives, Fort McNair, Washington, D.C.
- ¹⁴³ Chesnut, "Company 'F,' 26th Infantry at Aachen, Germany," 3, MRC.
- ¹⁴⁴ "Employment of Armored Vehicles in Street Warfare as Seen by an Infantryman," n.d., Sgt. Manley Manuscripts, 26th Inf. History, MRC. This is a one-page report.
- ¹⁴⁵ Campbell, "Tanks with Infantry," 7.
- ¹⁴⁶ Campbell, "Tanks with Infantry," 7; "Employment of Armored Vehicles," MRC.
- ¹⁴⁷ "Employment of Armored Vehicles," MRC.
- ¹⁴⁸ Campbell, "Tanks with Infantry," 6, 7.
- ¹⁴⁹ Major John G. W. Finke, "The Operations of Company 'G', 16th Infantry (1st U. S. Inf. Div.) in the Drive to the Roer River, 17-27 November 1944 (Rhineland Campaign)," (Fort Benning, GA: Advanced Officers Course, 1946-1947), 3-4. Copy at USAMHI.
- ¹⁵⁰ See, Edward G. Miller, *A Dark and Bloody Ground: The Hürtgen Forest and the Roer River Dams, 1944-1945* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1995), xiii; MacDonald, *Siegfried Line Campaign*, 324-8, 341-2; Atkinson, *The Guns at Last Light*, 310-5. See also a postwar account where a field officer, having a few drinks under his belt, asked his division commander what justified the attacks into

the Hürtgen Forest: Malcolm Marshall, ed., *Proud Americans of WWII: Men of the 32nd Field Artillery Battalion in Action, World War II, as Part of the 18th Regimental Combat Team, 1st U.S. Infantry Division* (New London, NH: Malcolm Marshall, 1994), 264.

- ¹⁵¹ Marshall, *Proud Americans of WWII*, 264.
- ¹⁵² Finke, "Operations of Company 'G', 16th Infantry in the Drive to the Roer," 12-4, 17; Miller, *A Dark and Bloody Ground*, 29-30.
- ¹⁵³ Weigley, *Eisenhower's Lieutenants*, 364-5; Miller, *A Dark and Bloody Ground*, xiv; Robert Sterling Rush, *Hell in Hürtgen Forest: The Ordeal and Triumph of an American Infantry Regiment* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001), 23-4.
- ¹⁵⁴ Major Kenneth W. Hechler, "Hürtgen Forest, 16-30 Nov. 1944, 1st Bn., 26th Inf., 1st Div.," 24 May 1945, 5 in "1st Inf. Div, Battle of Hamich Ridge (Hürtgen Forest), 16-29 Nov. 44," RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.
- ¹⁵⁵ Wheeler, *The Big Red One*, 345; MacDonald, *Siegfried Line Campaign*, 408-9. This line of thinking failed to take into consideration the Roer River dams, as noted in footnote 192 above.
- ¹⁵⁶ MacDonald, *Siegfried Line Campaign*, Map VI.
- ¹⁵⁷ Eston White, quoted in Clay, *Blood and Sacrifice*, 218.
- ¹⁵⁸ Major Kenneth W. Hechler, "Hürtgen Forest, 16-30 November 1944, 1st Bn., 16th Inf., 1st Div.," 24 May 1945, 1 in "1st Inf. Div, Battle of Hamich Ridge (Hürtgen Forest), 16-29 Nov. 44," RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.
- ¹⁵⁹ G-3 to Lt. Rameriz, 16 November, 2 in "16th Infantry Journal, November 1944," File 301-INF(16)-0.7, Box 5239, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁶⁰ After its tough fighting against the Americans in September, the German *12th Infantry Division* became the *12th Volksgrenadier Division*.
- ¹⁶¹ Hechler, "Hürtgen Forest, 16-30 November 1944, 1st Bn., 16th Inf., 1st Div.," 1, RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.
- ¹⁶² Major Kenneth Hechler, "Hürtgen Forest, 16-30 Nov. 1944, 634 Tank Destroyer Bn.," 25 May 1945, 2-3 in "1st Inf. Div, Battle of Hamich Ridge (Hürtgen Forest), 16-29 Nov. 44," RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.

- ¹⁶³ Hechler, "Hürtgen Forest, 16-30 November 1944, 2nd Bn., 16th Inf., 1st Div.," 1, RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.
- ¹⁶⁴ For the role played by artillery, see "7th Field Artillery Unit Journal for November 1944," 1 December 1944, 3-5 in "7th Field Artillery Battalion Journal and File, November 1944," File 301-FA(7)-0.7, Box 5210, RG 407, Entry 427, NA; "32nd Field Artillery Battalion Historical Report, 1 November 1944 to 30 November 1944," 1 December 1944, 3-4 in "32nd Field Artillery Battalion Report of Operations," RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁶⁵ *Selected Intelligence Reports*, 91-2. Mud and enemy tanks as a factor: Red 6 to S-6, 17 November, 8 in "16th Infantry Journal, November 1944," RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁶⁶ The estimation of 100 Germans in Hamich: G-3 to S-3, 17 November, 5 in "16th Infantry Journal, November 1944," RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁶⁷ Radio transmission at 1530, 17 November, 10 in "16th Infantry Journal, November 1944," RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁶⁸ Red 2 to S-2, 18 November, 11 in "16th Infantry Journal, November 1944," RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁶⁹ Blue 5 to S-3; S-6 to G-6; Delight 3 to Major Rawie, 18 November, 17 in "16th Infantry Journal, November 1944," RG 407, Entry 427, NA. Those three conversations indicate fifteen German tanks. In retrospect, Lieutenant Karl Wolf, K Company's executive officer, remembered that it was five tanks and 200 infantry: Astor, *Bloody Forest*, 192. Combat interviews with the 745th Tank Battalion likewise indicated that it was five tanks and 200 infantry: Major Kenneth W. Hechler, "Hürtgen Forest, 16-30 Nov. 1944, 745th Tk. Bn.," 23 May 1945, 2 in "1st Inf. Div, Battle of Hamich Ridge (Hürtgen Forest), 16-29 Nov. 44," RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.
- ¹⁷⁰ Hechler, "Hürtgen Forest, 16-30 Nov. 1944, 745th Tk. Bn.," 23 May 1945, 2, RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.
- ¹⁷¹ Blue 6 to S-6, 19 November, 1 in "16th Infantry Journal, November 1944," RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁷² Astor, *Bloody Forest*, 193; Blue 6 to S-6, 19 November, 1-2 in "16th Infantry Journal, November 1944," RG 407, Entry 427, NA.

- ¹⁷³ S-3 to Red 3, 19 November, 6 and G-6 to S-6, 19 November, 9-10 in “16th Infantry Journal, November 1944,” RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁷⁴ G-6 to S-6, 19 November, 4 in “16th Infantry Journal, November 1944,” RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁷⁵ G-2 Report for November 1944, 1 December 1944, 9 in “1st Inf. Div, Battle of Hamich Ridge (Hürtgen Forest), 16-29 Nov. 44,” RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.
- ¹⁷⁶ S-3 Journal for 745 Tank Battalion, 20-21 November 1944 in “745 Tank Battalion, After-Action Reports, June-December 1944,” File ARBN-745-0.3, Box 13471, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁷⁷ “Record of Events,” 2 December 1944, 3 in “3/18 After-Action Reports, November-December, 1944,” File 301-INF(18)7-0.3, Box 5265, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁷⁸ For artillery support, see “32nd Field Artillery Battalion Historical Report, 1 November 1944 to 30 November 1944,” 1 December 1944, 4-5 in “32nd Field Artillery Battalion Report of Operations,” RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁷⁹ Astor, *Bloody Forest*, 196.
- ¹⁸⁰ This account largely comes from Runey, “Chaos, Cohesion, and Leadership,” 143-4.
- ¹⁸¹ G-6 to S-6, 28 November, 166, “S-3 Unit Journal” in “Headquarters 26th Infantry, Report After Action, Month of November 1944,” File 301-INF(26)-0.3, Box 5268, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁸² Astor, *Bloody Forest*, 285.
- ¹⁸³ Major Kenneth W. Hechler, “Hürtgen Forest, 16-30 November 1944, 2nd Bn., 26th Inf., 1st Div.,” 25 May 1945, 3 in “1st Inf. Div, Battle of Hamich Ridge (Hürtgen Forest), 16-29 Nov. 44,” RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.
- ¹⁸⁴ The combat interviews claim one battalion defended Merode: Hechler, “Hürtgen Forest, 16-30 November 1944, 2nd Bn., 26th Inf., 1st Div.,” 3-4 in “1st Inf. Div, Battle of Hamich Ridge (Hürtgen Forest), 16-29 Nov. 44,” RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA. But Harry Yeide asserts that it was two battalions: Yeide, *Longest Battle*, 183-4.
- ¹⁸⁵ Yeide, *Longest Battle*, 183-4.
- ¹⁸⁶ PFC Alvin Bulau, quoted in Astor, *Bloody Forest*, 285.

- ¹⁸⁷ Hechler, "Hürtgen Forest, 16-30 November 1944, 2nd Bn., 26th Inf., 1st Div.," 1 in "1st Inf. Div, Battle of Hamich Ridge (Hürtgen Forest), 16-29 Nov. 44," RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.
- ¹⁸⁸ White 6 to S-6, 29 November, 174, "S-3 Unit Journal," RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁸⁹ Maurice A. Belisle, "The Operations of the 26th Infantry Regiment (1st Infantry Division) in the Attack on the Hürtgen Forest, 16 November-5 December 1944 (Rhineland Campaign)," (Fort Benning, GA, Advanced Infantry Officers Course, 1949-1950), 24-5.
- ¹⁹⁰ Hechler, "Hürtgen Forest, 16-30 November 1944, 2nd Bn., 26th Inf., 1st Div.," 4 in "1st Inf. Div, Battle of Hamich Ridge (Hürtgen Forest), 16-29 Nov. 44," RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.
- ¹⁹¹ Lt Betz to S-3, 29 November, 177, "S-3 Unit Journal," RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁹² "Unit Report 33rd F.A. Bn. 1 thru 30 November 1944," 1 December 1944, 10 in "33rd Field Artillery Battalion Report of Operations, June-December 1944," File 301-FA(33)-0.3, Box 5226, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁹³ S-6 to G-3, 30 November 1944, 180, "S-3 Unit Journal," RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁹⁴ S-3 to G-3, 30 November, 184, "S-3 Unit Journal," RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁹⁵ Lieutenant Sidney Miller, quoted in Miller, *A Dark and Bloody Ground*, 120; Entry 11, 30 November in "G-3 Journal and File, 28-30 November 1944," File 301-3.2, Box 5138, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁹⁶ S-6 to White 6, 30 November, 188, "S-3 Unit Journal," RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁹⁷ Hechler, "Hürtgen Forest, 16-30 November 1944, 2nd Bn., 26th Inf., 1st Div.," 4 in "1st Inf. Div, Battle of Hamich Ridge (Hürtgen Forest), 16-29 Nov. 44," RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.
- ¹⁹⁸ 1st Lieutenant John E. Reynolds, "Activities of 26th Infantry, for December 1944," 1 January 1945, 1 in "26th Infantry Report After Action, Month of December 1944," File 301-INF(26)-0.3, Box 5268, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁹⁹ Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2, First United States Infantry Division, *Selected Intelligence Reports*, vol. 1, *June 1944-November 1944* (Germany: n.p., 1944), 103.

²⁰⁰ This narrative comes from Hechler, "Hürtgen Forest, 16-30 November 1944, 1st Bn., 16th Inf., 1st Div.," 5-6; Hechler, "Hürtgen Forest, 16-30 Nov. 1944, 745th Tk. Bn.," 4 in "1st Inf. Div, Battle of Hamich Ridge (Hürtgen Forest), 16-29 Nov. 44," RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA; "'The Attack on Luchem:' 3 December 1944, First Battalion, 16th Infantry," 5-15 in the "1st Division WWII Outstanding Combat Achievements by all Rifle Companies Report," MRC.

²⁰¹ "'The Attack on Luchem:' 3 December 1944, First Battalion, 16th Infantry," 15 in the "1st Division WWII Outstanding Combat Achievements by all Rifle Companies Report," MRC.

²⁰² Clay, *Blood and Sacrifice*, 222.

²⁰³ Wheeler, *Big Red One*, 349-50.

CHAPTER VII

“A SEEMINGLY ENDLESS NUMBER OF BRUTAL, TOE-TO-TOE SLUGFESTS”: URBAN COMBAT FOR THE 5TH AND 3RD INFANTRY DIVISIONS, JUNE TO DECEMBER 1944

5th Infantry Division

Having spent the war training in Iceland, England, and Ireland, the Major General Leroy Irwin's Red Diamond Division eagerly anticipated its first combat assignment. Unlike the 1st and 3rd Divisions, the 5th had no combat experience when it entered the ETO. As it tangled with the veteran German forces, the green 5th Division learned that the war against the Germans required more than the infantryman's rifle and that it was far better to combine the combat arms together against the enemy. As it learned combined-arms fighting in general, the division learned to apply those tactical and operational lessons specifically to the urban environment. Like other divisions, 5th Division soldiers also had to learn how to incorporate green replacements who filled in for veteran casualties. Between June and December 1944, the 5th Division fought within General George S. Patton's Third Army to participate in Operation Cobra, the Lorraine Campaign and the attack on Metz. The division was fighting within Saarlautern when it joined Patton's ninety-degree turn to slam into the *Wehrmacht's* southern advance at the Battle of the Bulge.

The 5th Division began arriving through Utah Beach on 10 July. By the fifteenth, the division had relieved the 1st Infantry Division in the Caumont area. In this

sector, the 5th Division acclimated itself to the weather, the terrain, and to their enemy's various weapons. In these initial days, most action was between dueling artillery and combat patrols. Operation COBRA called upon the 5th Infantry Division's 2nd Infantry Regiment to wrest the town of Vidouville from elements of the German *3rd Parachute Division*. To one veteran, Vidouville was the "first in a seemingly endless number of brutal toe-to-toe slugfests with the Germans for control of a city or town."¹

The 2nd Infantry attacked at 0630 on 26 July. The veteran Germans grudgingly retreated. First Battalion slogged through Le Militiere Woods; artillery and armor support helped dislodge the Germans. The American advance through the forested area faltered against well-sited German strongpoints and concealed heavy weapons: an 88-mm gun knocked out two American tanks.² As A and C Companies approached Vidouville, Second Battalion's F Company entered the town itself. By 1600, Vidouville and the highway south of town were in the 5th Division's hands but constant German counterattacks made the Americans' hold tenuous.

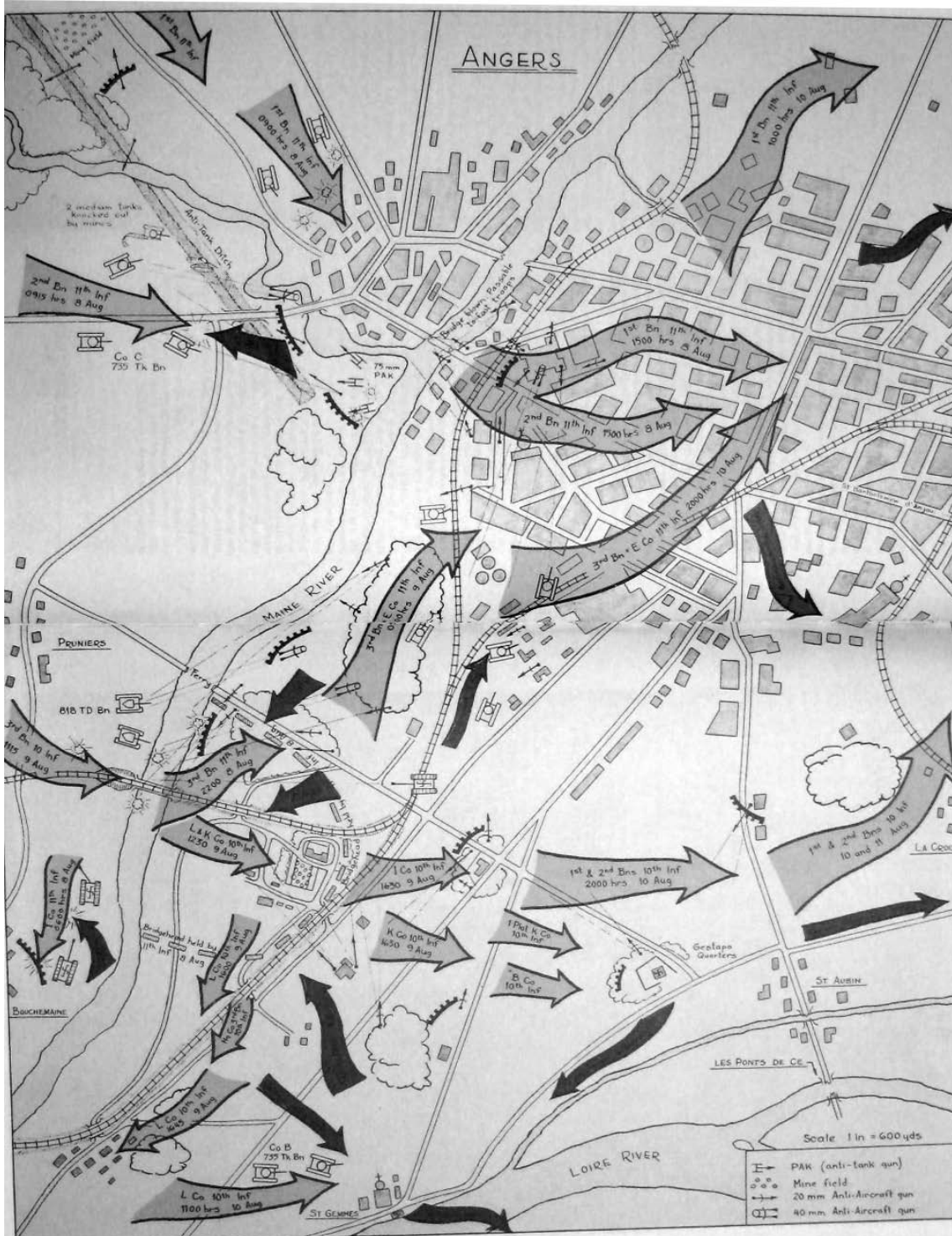
The new frontline division had to learn its own lessons in fighting the Germans. As Captain Tommy Gilliam's B Company deployed around Vidouville, it failed to clear all the buildings and a sniper killed a platoon leader when he stood up to get better reception for his radio.³ In another instance, one veteran recalled how soldiers "casually" walked across Highway 3 unaware of a nearby German tank until its machine gun fired on the green riflemen. The Americans quickly took cover after losing several dead and wounded.⁴ These deaths confirmed the veteran's reflection that "experienced

combat soldiers acquire their experience by being lucky enough to see, and yet survive, someone else's mistake.”⁵

After Vidouville, 10th Infantry's A Company had an opportunity to put into effect room-clearing drills they had practiced before landing in Normandy. First Battalion pressed forward to the small village of Vieux Calais. Soldiers wielding the Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR) fired on the unit's flanks as well as at the building's front doors and windows. One squad approached the first building, threw grenades, then stepped in to find it empty. As each squad entered each house, the automatic riflemen kept firing on the hedgerows behind them to discourage any would-be German reinforcements.⁶ Tanks were not involved this time but at least the squads understood that speed, thoroughness, and decisive action were necessary.

By early August, the 5th Infantry Division transferred from First Army to General George S. Patton's recently activated Third U.S. Army. While the 1st Division pressed across northern France, the 5th Division—with Third Army—pursued the enemy through central France as fast as Patton's divisions could go. At this time, the division received orders to seize Angers, with a prewar population of 80,000, at the confluence of the Loire and Maine Rivers. (See Figure 7.1 below.)⁷ According to the 11th Regiment's history, the city had become the “largest strategically important city to be attacked by the Allies after the fall of Cherbourg” because the city's supply depots was a key rail center for the Brittany Peninsula as well as hosting a Gestapo headquarters and a naval command station for the Atlantic Fleet at St. Nazaire.⁸ Further, German soldiers retreating from the Brittany Peninsula flooded through Angers, making it critical to

Figure 7.1: Battle for Angers, France



cutting off the Germans in Brittany. Division intelligence estimated 600 to 1,000 enemy soldiers in the city and as intelligence speculated that the city's strategic importance might force a strong German defense of the place, so the Red Diamond staff planned accordingly.⁹

The 11th Combat Team included the 11th Infantry Regiment, C Company and 1st Platoon, D/735th Tank Battalion, C/818th Tank Destroyer Battalion, and 1st Platoon, B/7th Engineer Battalion. Taking the city required seizing an intact bridge across the north-south Maine River or the east-west Loire River.¹⁰ As the 11th Combat Team approached Angers, Task Force Thackeray (led by the division G-2, Lieutenant Colonel Donald Thackeray) scouted south and east of Angers to capture a bridge across the Loire River as well as to screen the division as it proceeded toward Angers.¹¹

In the early morning hours of 8 August, 3/11 marched southward to take the town of Brouchemaine as First and Second Battalions tried to force a crossing west of Angers. The Americans quickly ran into enemy resistance west of Angers and the Maine. The Germans pinned down I/11 in Brouchemaine but had already blown the bridge in the area. Major William Birdsong shifted the rest of his Third Battalion to Pruniers to relieve I Company and by 1700 discovered a prize: the railroad bridge south of Pruniers was intact. A patrol quickly captured it undamaged. The battalion now had a bridge over the Maine River. The Americans dug up antitank mines and crossed the Maine River, sprinting apprehensively past a boxcar laden with high explosives.

Third Battalion (minus I Company but reinforced by E Company) reached the opposite side around 2200 hours and endured heavy fire from 88-mm, 40-mm, and 20-

mm guns. During the night of 8-9 August, 3/11 defended against counterattacks trying to break its tenuous bridgehead over the Maine. At several points during that long night, Germans nearly broke through the American line, sometimes by tying explosives around their own suicidal soldiers and sending them into the inky darkness. The American infantrymen fired at the Germans' muzzle flashes and sometimes hit the explosives, thus virtually disintegrating the unfortunate enemy. With the Pruniers bridge under fire, few reinforcements and little resupply could cross: a few light tanks managed to creep over the narrow span. Third Battalion absorbed the brunt of the German's company-size attacks and tenaciously held its ground.¹² Captured documents indicated that the Germans expected the American efforts to come from the west or northwest. As such, Third Battalion's attack from Pruniers surprised the Germans, effectively and inadvertently making it a successful flanking movement.¹³

During Third Battalion's ordeal on the right side of the Maine, Second and First Battalions joined the fight further north, where the Germans expected the main attack. First and Second Battalions confronted strongpoints and antitank defenses west and northwest of Angers. On 9 August, Second Battalion's G Company and tanks worked together to clear the outskirts of Angers west of the Maine River. Soldiers fired bazookas and Browning Automatic Rifles from buildings' second-stories onto Germans below.¹⁴ On the same day, the 10th Infantry Regiment crossed the Pruniers bridge and reinforced the struggling 3/11.

On 10 August, the 11th Regiment struck into Angers itself. The 10th Infantry elements that had reinforced 3/11 continued westward to encircle the south of Angers.

The 11th's Third Battalion (plus E Company) attacked northward along the railroad while Second Battalion attacked over the Maine River from the west and First Battalion from the northwest. Street fighting came next: light tanks from D/735 Tank Battalion accompanied 3/11 northward, firing into buildings and forcing Germans outside while bazookas and 57-mm antitank guns blasted into the numerous rock walls, pillboxes, and buildings that hid Germans. By late afternoon, Third Battalion had hooked up with Second Battalion.¹⁵

French civilians inside the city enthusiastically greeted the liberating Americans. The civilians crowded into the regimental command post, requiring staffers to physically eject them. As Second Battalion approached from the west, G Company had to break contact with the Germans because "French, Germans, and Americans were so intermingled it was impossible to tell friend from foe." Elsewhere, the French helped G.I.s. One enlisted man remembered a Frenchman who gave him something to drink during the fight, while another pointed out a sniper. Others were caught in the crossfire: mortar shrapnel took off one Frenchman's leg as he tried to cross a street.¹⁶

The fighting varied in intensity, in part because the Germans drained much of their strength counterattacking 3/11's bridgehead. Louis Lauria, a wireman in the 11th's Cannon Company, recorded a sharp engagement. Because Angers's buildings limited the effectiveness of radio communications, Lauria's job of maintaining wire communications became vital. He recalled that the Americans fought from house to house while the Germans fired from windows and doorways. The Americans fired their rifle grenades and submachine guns to good effect. Lauria also remembered that the

Germans had mined the roads leading into Angers. As the Americans fought through the city, the combat became more intense, seeming “like a hundred Fourth of Julys.”

German mortars and snipers as well as 20-mm and 40-mm guns prevented American movement in the open streets, so G.I.s crawled in and through buildings to maintain cover and sustain the attack. Nevertheless, the American infantrymen, assisted by light tanks and a rewired Cannon Company, advanced eastward until the city was theirs by the end of 10 August.¹⁷

The presence of tanks throughout the battle against Angers reveals that the 5th Infantry Division had learned early that good infantry-tank-artillery cooperation was vital to success in the urban environment.¹⁸ Additionally, the 11th Infantry Regiment’s Cannon Company argued that by acting independent of the combat team’s artillery battalion, it could provide better support. Cannon Company relied on its own fire direction control center to monitor the fall of its rounds and knocked out German 20-mm and 40-mm guns through observed fire.¹⁹

After Angers, the division participated in Third Army’s aggressive drive across central France. Division and regimental commands employed all organic transportation to shuttle the infantrymen forward as rapidly as possible, including trucks, tanks, tank destroyers, and even captured vehicles. These early days helped cement a combined-arms mindset and a growing awareness for tank-infantry teamwork. A staff sergeant noted that one outcome of the “pig-a-back jaunt across France [was that] we got to know the tankers, and the TD [tank destroyer] men and it helped our morale a lot.” By sharing living spaces and rations together, it was no longer “I wonder if they’ll send us some

tanks'; it was . . . 'There's DEPENDABLE II moving up on our right—wait 'till Maguire gets that 75 lowered on those.'"²⁰ Even though the infantrymen could often move through unoccupied towns and villages in France, it did not mean that they could move recklessly. An infantryman in the 2nd Infantry remembered that they still proceeded with caution: "Soldiers never walked down the middle of a street. We split our outfits in half, and advanced simultaneously up both sides of a street, with the men hugging close to the buildings. The men on the right hand side of the street kept their eyes and guns fixed on the left hand side, while the men on the left did the same for the men on the right."²¹

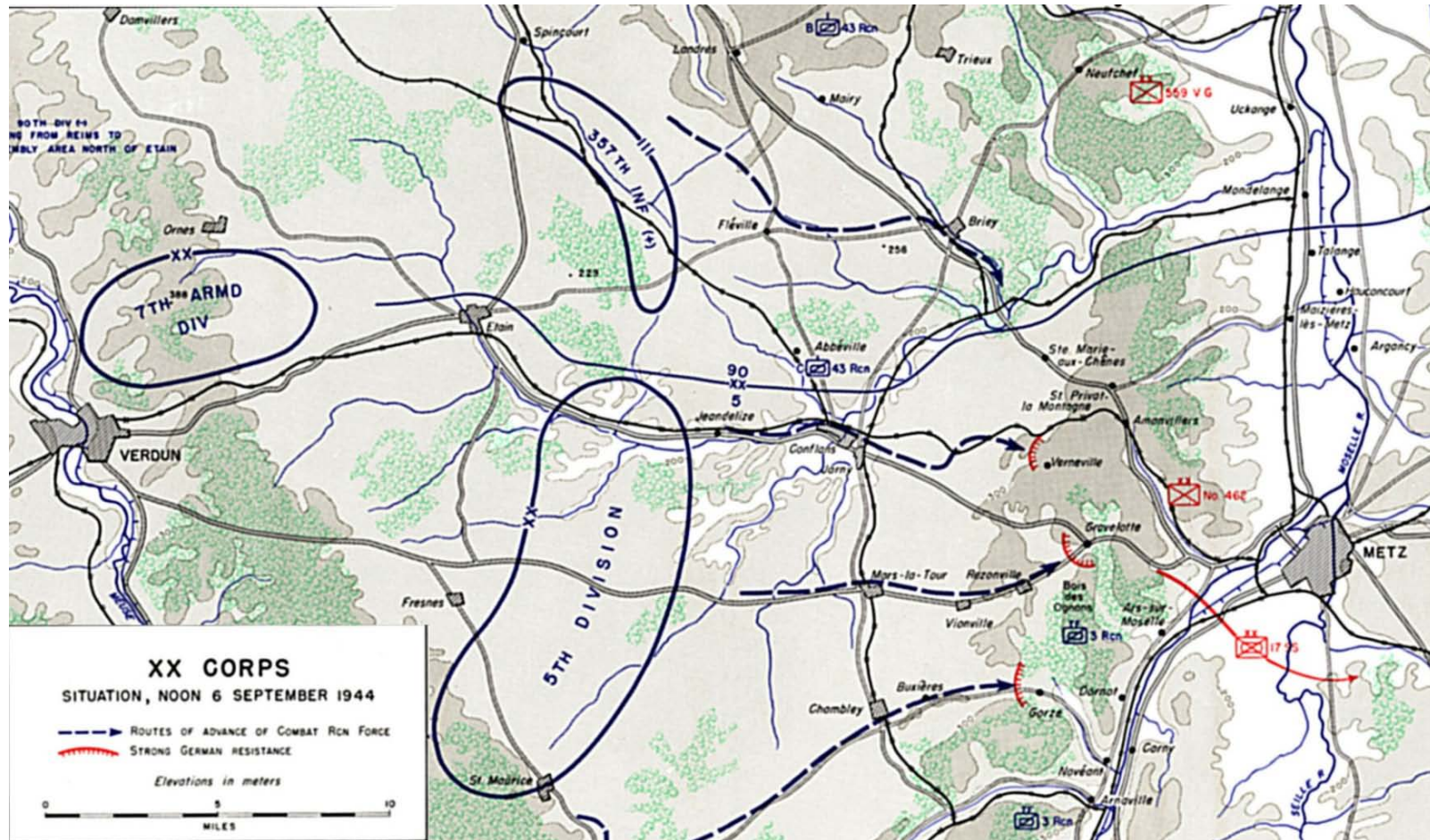
During the heady days of August, the division's units liberated hundreds of ecstatic French citizens in towns along the axis of their advance toward the Franco-German border. Third Army darted south of Paris to cross the Seine River because a quick crossing would help the Allied eastward drive.²² The 5th Infantry Division, on Third Army's left flank in XX Corps, liberated the Seine River towns of Fontainebleau and Montereau on 23 and 24 August. On 30 August, the division encircled and captured Reims. The division seized these towns from the retreating Germans with relative ease. Once the division had taken these places, it forced crossings at the Marne and Meuse Rivers, thus entering the Lorraine region of France in early September. Like the Americans further north, Patton's Third Army slowed to a crawl from a lack of gasoline, bad weather, and stiffening enemy resistance. On 31 August, Third Army received no gasoline; its vehicles crossed the Meuse on fumes. When the G.I.s resumed the advance in earnest, the pursuit was over but it took awhile for Allied leadership to understand that

the situation had changed.²³ These logistical matters were strategic concerns at army and army group levels but the decisions directly affected the conduct of operations in Lorraine and prolonged the combat.

The division's major urban operation during the Lorraine Campaign was capturing the French fortress city of Metz, located on the Moselle River. (See Figure 7.2 for the 5th Division's area of operations from September to November.²⁴) The army that had conducted brilliant *blitzkrieg* strategies against Poland, the Low Countries, and France fell back upon fortifications in September, taking positions in the partially finished Siegfried Line in northwestern Germany and the Maginot Line in central France. The commanding general of the German *Army Group G*, Generaloberst Johannes Blaskowitz, stated that he intended to create a defense along the Maginot Line—from Metz in the north to Remiremont in the south—as the way to stop the *Wehrmacht's* retreat through France. The Germans were hard-pressed to deploy quickly along the Maginot Line but capably and effectively used the fixed fortifications as well as the region's natural terrain against the Americans. As *Army Group G* observed the American pursuit slowing by September, it spent the time improving the Maginot Line.²⁵

As the 5th Division rushed toward the Moselle River in early September, the 1st Division prepared to assault into the Siegfried Line in an attempt to break through the West Wall. The fixed fortifications that the 5th Division encountered—the Maginot Line and forts around Metz—were different than what the 1st Division encountered at the West Wall. The West Wall relied on bands of pillboxes, antitank traps, and obstacles to stall an attack until mobile reserves counterattacked. The Maginot Line consisted of

Figure 7.2: XX Corps (Situation, Noon 6 September 1944)



self-contained forts of varying sizes and strengths.²⁶

Metz displayed a veritable museum of European military fortifications. Before the 1940s, fifth-century Huns were the last people to capture Metz by force. Over time, Metz rose in political and economic importance. Beginning in the late 1600s, famed French military engineer Sébastien le Pestre de Vauban dramatically improved Metz's forts. As artillery and firepower improved, these forts were expanded to the hills north and west of Metz.

After annexing Alsace and Lorraine in 1871, the Germans improved the fortifications to trenches, bombproof bunkers, barracks, as well as observation and command posts linked by tunnels and telephone lines. Reinforced concrete turrets protected batteries of 100-mm and 150-mm guns. Larger *feste* such as the Fort Driant that the 5th Division futilely assaulted in October covered 355 acres. Altogether, 43 fortified positions ringed Metz, manned by the 14,000 *soldaten* of the German *462nd Volksgrenadier Division*. The corps-level operation for Metz necessarily meant neutralizing the artillery fire from the many fortified positions that peppered the entire region at the cost of manpower and resources.²⁷

Unfortunately, the Americans had not yet processed one lesson learned from the urban combat in Brest: that these older fortifications could still withstand modern firepower. As the 5th Division depended on Michelin road maps to orient themselves against Metz on 7 September, it completely failed to understand that it was attacking one of the most heavily fortified cities in Europe.²⁸ The Americans were ignorant because,

due to the rapid pursuit, intelligence was slow in distributing maps of the region and failed to appreciate the strength of the numerous fortresses.

The battle for Metz differed from the battle for Aachen in two ways. First, the fortifications around Metz were a much higher caliber than the Siegfried Line fortifications. Germany desperately rebuilt the Siegfried Line but only just managed to stop the Allied momentum. Second, the battle against Metz was an operation for the XX Corps—and arguably the entire Third Army—while the battle for Aachen was the 1st Division’s battle within the larger First Army operation to pierce the Siegfried Line. These fortifications and the presence of well-motivated and well-trained soldiers slowed XX Corps operations and revealed an important principle: the fighting *outside* the target city in order to isolate it can sometimes be more costly than the fight within it.²⁹

Like Aachen, capturing Metz was an operational means toward accomplishing a strategic end. On 6 September, the 5th Division and regimental staffs met to discuss the upcoming operation. General Irwin informed his officers that the goal was to “force a crossing of the Moselle [River], capture Metz, proceed to the Siegfried Line, capture Saarbrucken, capture Mainz [on the Rhine River], and then proceed to the east of the line.” Later that day, XX Corps ordered the 5th Division to merely “*bypass* Metz if it does not fall like a ripe plum.”³⁰

In the first several days of September, looking ahead to the Rhine, the 5th Division sought to immediately force a crossing of the Moselle River south of Metz. The 11th Combat Team failed to get over at Dornot while the 10th Combat Team successfully gained a beachhead further south near the town of Arnaville.³¹ During this

time, the 2nd Combat Team, on the division's northern/left flank, attempted to capture the town of Amanvillers, where troops from a German Officer Candidate School, the *Fahnenjunkerschule Regiment* of the *462nd Division*, put up fanatical resistance.

As the 10th and 11th Regiments marched toward the Moselle River south of Metz, the 2nd Regiment directed itself toward Amanvillers on the division's left, or northern, flank. On 8 September, Germans infiltrators killed or captured two officers and 66 men before First Battalion repulsed them. Second Battalion captured Verneville with great difficulty and only after the German OCS cadets had repelled earlier attacks.³² Accurate enemy artillery, machine guns, and mortars prevented the shaken First Battalion from entering Amanvillers.³³ On 9 September, Major General Walton Walker, commanding general of XX Corps, attached the 2nd Combat Team to the 7th Armored Division and the 7th Armored Division's Combat Command B to the 5th Infantry Division.³⁴ Americans made another attempt on the ninth but German artillery and antitank fire destroyed several of CCA's tanks that had supported 1/2's attacks. A German soldier stated that "the Americans seem determined to take the town at any price. Tanks and infantry are attacking seven times during the day, but . . . are repulsed. In the seventh attack three Sherman-tanks are destroyed by [antitank] guns and panzerfaust."³⁵

That evening, the 2nd Infantry's colonel, A. Worrel Roffe, protested to the 7th Armored Division that it was useless to attack these fortified positions.³⁶ Roffe also complained to the 5th Division that the regiment had suffered 346 casualties with little to show for it and that any further attacks against these well-built fortifications would be

equally fruitless. Lieutenant Colonel Randolph Dickens, the assistant chief of staff in charge of operations (the G-3), spoke with Irwin about Roffe's predicament and confessed that "it would seem to me that a frontal attack is not the way to take Metz."³⁷

In Amanvillers, B/2 received 35 infantry-trained replacements. Captain Tommy Gilliam ordered his first sergeant to "put each new man between two old men and pray." Days later, only two replacements remained. During the fight, Gilliam received another 65 replacements with no stateside infantry training and "they were asking how to fire an M-1 [Garand] because all they had ever had before was a carbine." Gilliam called eleven batteries of artillery (approximately 60 guns) to fire on the town church and a German tank. After the artillery adjusted and fired five rounds each, the church and the tank were no more. The accompanying tank company commander confessed an unwillingness to enter the town because he was convinced that German antitank guns and Tiger tanks were behind every corner. He feared "that once they got into the town, his tanks didn't have a chance."³⁸ The tanker had a reason to fear: with four assaults in five days, the infantry and tanks had gained the town but lost it each time.³⁹ Captain Robert Russell, the battalion's operations officer, remembered a fighter-bomber dropping a 500-pound bomb on Amanvillers. When the battalion assaulted immediately afterwards, Russell recalled that "the Germans rose up out of the town thru the smoke and attacked us. All hell broke loose! Confusion reigned! Panic set in! Our troops had to pull back to the railroad tracks [west of the town] again."⁴⁰

Late on the tenth, with the support of fighter-bombers, a combined tank-infantry attack captured Amanvillers when the tanks hit the town from the south. Elements of the

regiment withstood a vicious counterattack early on the eleventh that slammed into the regiment after midnight and threatened to break the Americans' line. Instead of counterattacking on the eleventh, hidden mortar and small-arms fire from inside Amanvillers forced First Battalion to pull back 500 yards west of the town. After the battalion withdrew, an air mission strafed the town but the heaviest German artillery barrage yet prevented 1/2 from recapturing the place.⁴¹

On the twelfth, 3/2 relieved the weakened 1/2 and fought on the twelfth and thirteenth but made little gain. As the 7th Armored Division tried to reorganize for another assault on 14 September, the 5th Division's General Irwin called off the attack. The 2nd Regiment was simply too beat up to do any good. The Third Battalion's journal recorded the relief with relief: "Received warning order that were to be relieved (which is good news, this is sure a hell hole)."⁴² By then the town of Amanvillers had been ripped apart by both American and German artillery—little was still standing by 14 September.

The 2nd Infantry Regiment returned to 5th Division control on the fourteenth and the 90th Infantry Division tried to take Amanvillers and the area's fortifications but were equally unsuccessful. In the end, the Americans bypassed Amanvillers and the Germans surrendered after the fall of Metz in November. The German officer-cadets who had done so much to effectively defend Amanvillers escaped before the Americans trapped them.

There are three reasons why the Americans failed to take and hold Amanvillers. The first was the lack of intelligence that failed to warn the 2nd Infantry what it was

about to attack in terms of terrain, fortifications, and enemy. The dearth of American reconnaissance coupled with Third Army's lack of intelligence about the enemy to their front as well as the nature of these Metz forts, forced the 2nd Infantry to attack "blindly, groping in the midst of battle to feel out the contours of the German defense line."⁴³ Secondly, First Battalion could not avoid the several hidden *festen* east of Amanvillers, called the Lorraine Forts, that pounded the Americans with near impunity.⁴⁴ The Americans had no weapon against these fortified positions and this enemy artillery mercilessly shelled the Americans in ways rarely seen after June 1944.

Third was the nature of the defender: the officer-cadets were some of the most effective and fanatical Nazi soldiers the 5th Infantry Division encountered in World War II. These well-motivated forces trained on the ground they defended and exacted a costly toll from the 2nd Infantry. The assaults on Amanvillers were analogous to a foreign invader attacking the U.S. Army's School of Infantry at Fort Benning, Georgia, where many American officers had intimate knowledge of the fort's training grounds. Aside from knowing the land, they were exceptional soldiers: the officer-candidates sometimes camouflaged their foxholes with steel covers and fired into the backs of Americans after they passed by.⁴⁵ In another instance, these cadets infiltrated into C Company's lines at night and took two rifle platoons captive.⁴⁶ They were quite adept at nighttime counterattacks, firing into the air, shouting "Fall back, we are surrounded!"⁴⁷ Because of these reasons, it is little wonder the 2nd Infantry failed to take Amanvillers.

Due to their decimated state, the 2nd Infantry Regiment needed an infusion of replacements. Amazingly, many of these men had no stateside infantry training.⁴⁸ After

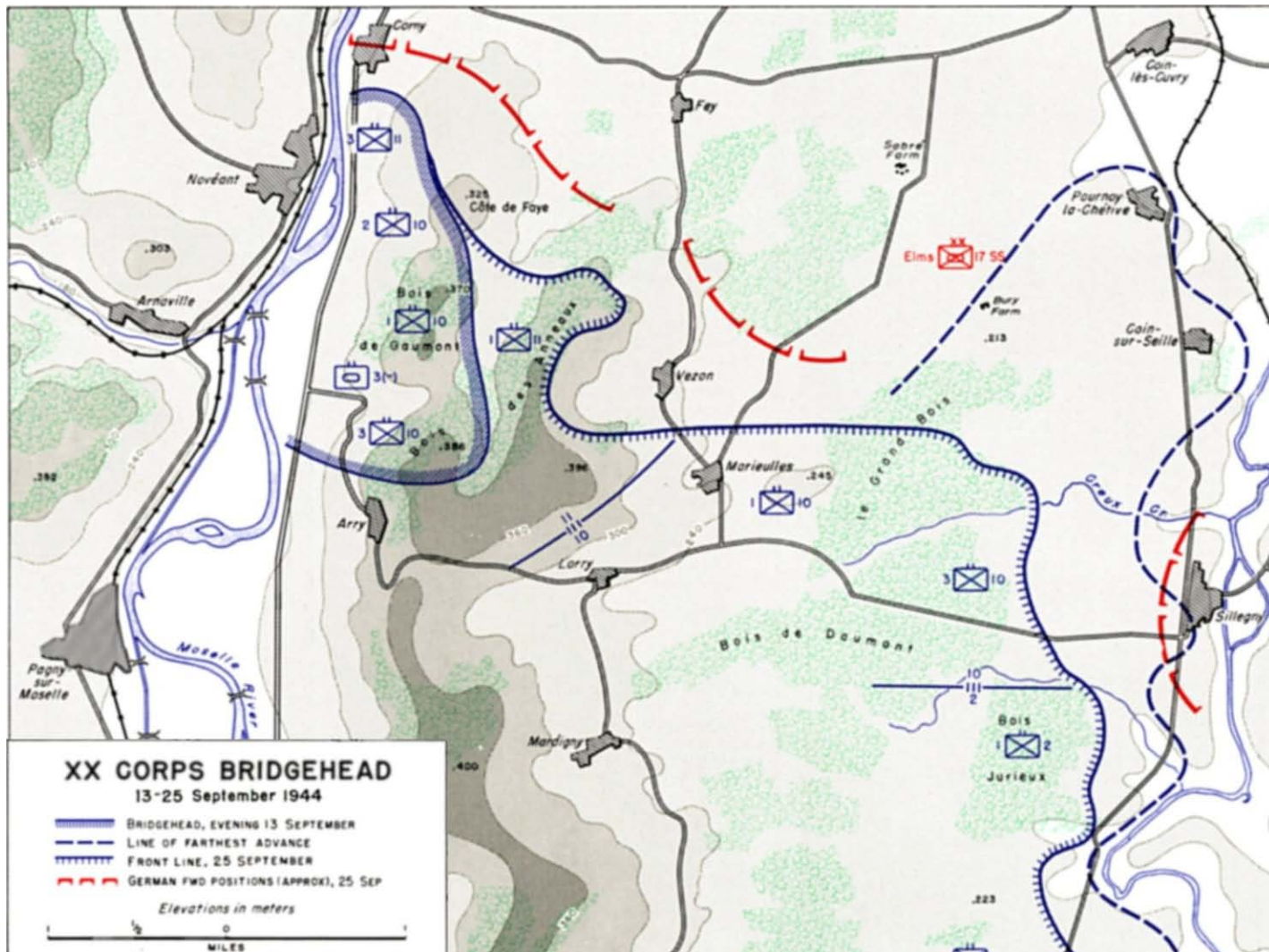
the 90th Division relieved it, the 2nd Infantry went into division reserve and ramped up training these raw replacements, including house-to-house fighting within towns and villages. Such practical training benefitted the 2nd Infantry when the division attacked east of the Moselle River.⁴⁹ While the regiment fought on the division's left flank, the 10th and 11th Infantry Regiments had fought just as hard, losing as many men as they crossed the Moselle River and secured a bridgehead on the eastern side, including capturing the towns of Arry and Corny.

With the 2nd Infantry Regiment relieved from Amanvillers and Verneville and preparing for the next advance, the division pushed its Moselle River bridgehead further east. XX Corps, spearheaded by the 7th Armored Division south of Metz, wanted to rapidly shift east and encircle Metz. This risky plan depended on an inadequate road network to cooperate and for clear weather to permit air support.⁵⁰ Figure 7.3 shows the 5th Infantry and 7th Armored Divisions' drive east of the Moselle River.⁵¹

The 5th Infantry Division and 7th Armored Division advanced eastward by 16 September but collided with strong German resistance. As at Amanvillers, the Germans were not content to defend passively but launched strong counterattacks that kept the Americans off balance and exasperated an impatient Patton. On 18 September, the two divisions confronted the Seille River, a major obstacle to their encirclement. As seen on Map III, the 5th Division received the task of taking the towns of Pournoy-la-Chétive and Coin-sur-Seille. The 10th Infantry's Second Battalion had its hands full taking Pournoy between the 20 and 23 September.

On the twentieth, the 10th Infantry's Second Battalion, assisted by two

Figure 7.3: XX Corps Bridgehead, 13-25 September 1944



companies of the 737th Tank Battalion and a platoon of tank destroyers, assaulted from the south. One sergeant reported that Pournoy was a fortified town with flank support, zeroed-in machine guns, mortars, artillery, and armor while the Americans attacked over 1,500 yards of open ground. The regimental history recorded that when 2/10 attacked at 1100, the Germans were waiting and, “at that moment, Pournoy seemed a terribly long way off.”⁵²

Encountering a hailstorm of lead, the 10th Infantry executed a marching fire wherein the infantrymen kept up a steady volume of fire while advancing toward their objective. Numerous casualties fell along the way and tanks, tank destroyers, and artillery helped from the rear. With great difficulty, the officers, NCOs, and veteran soldiers cajoled the shaken, inexperienced replacements to keep going, especially after a momentary repulse. Tank destroyers aided the assault by firing on buildings as well as enemy personnel, vehicles, and tanks.⁵³ The different platoons maneuvered to take specified sections of the town and cut German access to the railroad east of the town. After “five savage, bloody hours” of close-quarters urban fighting, Pournoy-la- Chétive was in Second Battalion’s hands. The dead of both sides littered the streets.⁵⁴ F Company deployed to the east, G Company to the north, as E Company covered the town’s southern approaches.

After losing the town, the Germans shelled Pournoy ceaselessly from *festen* to the east as well as from Coin-lès-Cuvry a mile to the north. A tanker quipped that “we were shelled only once at Pournoy and that was all the time.”⁵⁵ During the day, German artillery targeted the supporting armor and restricted the men to cellars and their

foxholes. The town was already on fire from the American artillery while rain and intense vehicle traffic had turned the roads into a sea of mud and made supply difficult.⁵⁶

At 0100, the Germans counterattacked with infantry and tanks from the north, knifing into the town. Two platoons of infantry followed tanks that fired into houses. F Company was nearly cut off by this counterattack as poor communications limited the artillery support that battalion could provide. By the morning, 450 men of the original 800 remained in the battalion. F Company was virtually wiped out, having only 35 men left, and E Company only had 64. On the twenty-first, a fog permitted the battalion to improve its position and get C Company to replace the shattered F Company. Throughout the twenty-first, the Germans continued to blast away at Pournoy and launched regiment-size counterattacks from Coin-lès-Cuvry.

On the twenty-second, German assaults came from the southwest rather than the north, allowing the 2nd Infantry to assist 2/10 from its position in Coin-sur-Seille. But because German artillery rained on Pournoy accurately and unceasingly, the Americans became exhausted because sleep was impossible and their nerves frayed.⁵⁷ Colonel Carroll became concerned as his men neared their breaking point and it was “virtually impossible to keep the men awake.”⁵⁸ A First Battalion soldier that helped relieve Second Battalion recalled that the town “‘was blowed to hell’ . . . Dead American soldiers and blown-up American jeeps still lay as evidence of the terrific battle that took place in Pournoy.”⁵⁹ First Battalion’s stay was short because the division redeployed west of the Moselle River to silence one of the larger *feste*, Fort Driant, before the final drive on Metz.

Although costly, the American success was a result of the combined infantry-artillery-tank-tank destroyer cooperation. Despite many supply shortages and restrictions placed on artillery ammunition, the 10th Regiment's attached artillery battalion was critical in repulsing the German counterattacks.⁶⁰ The tanks and tank destroyers were so active around Pournoy that every tank destroyer on the line was in urgent need of repairs.⁶¹ Although the defense of Pournoy was costly, its success was not solely because of the infantry.

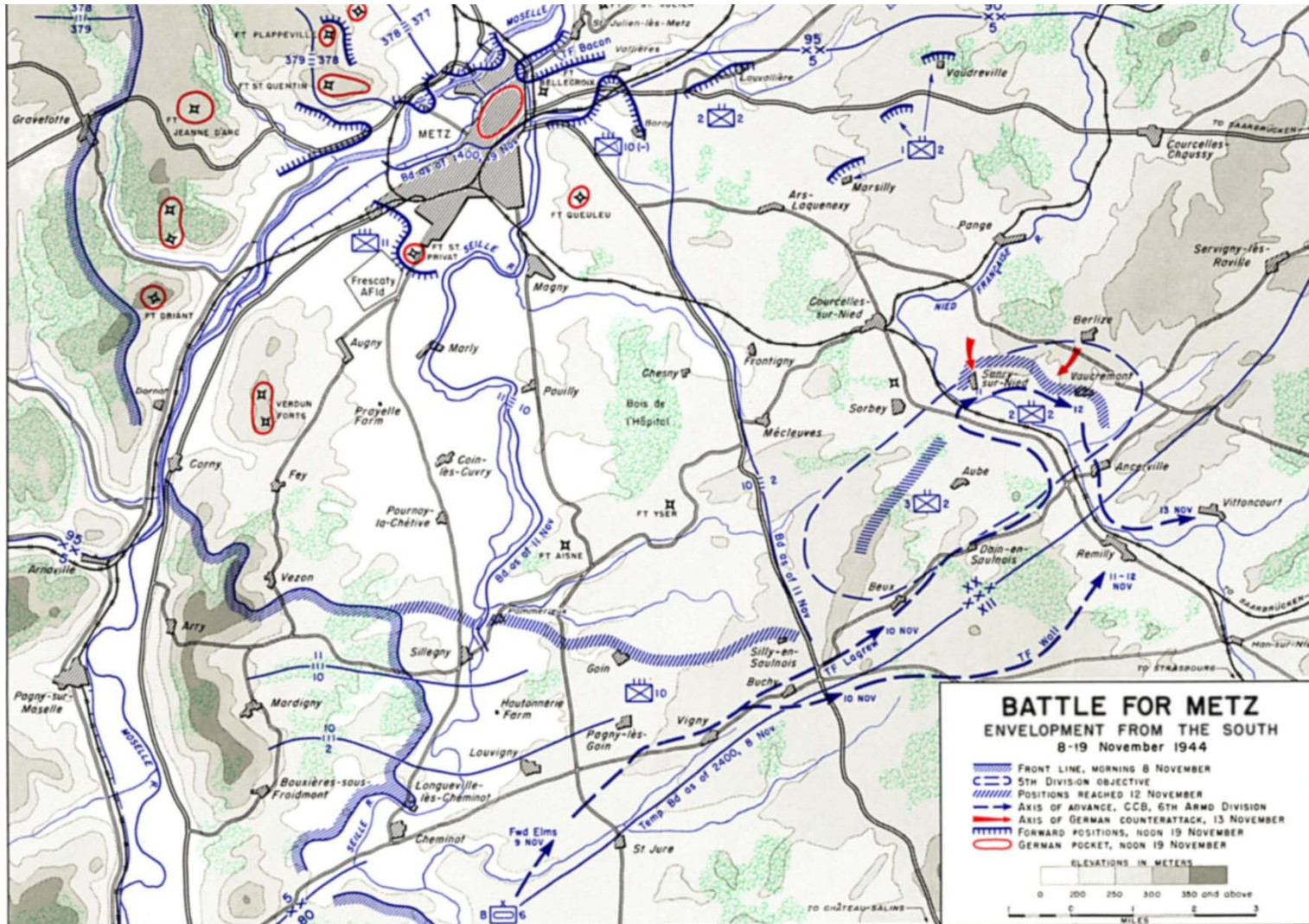
Strategically, Pournoy had few consequences, especially since this attempted envelopment of Metz failed and the Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) halted the Allied drive for logistical reasons. The encirclement of Metz, therefore, stopped because of concerns at the army-group level and occurred around the same time as First Army's failure to penetrate the Siegfried Line.⁶² Beginning in late September, the 11th Infantry Regiment attempted to capture Fort Driant but it was a disaster. The lack of intelligence on the strength of these fortifications doomed these attacks.⁶³ Like the 1st Division entangled in the Siegfried Line, the 5th Division was likewise ensnared in the Maginot Line. In September 2 CT paid dearly for its failure to take Amanvillers, 11 CT failed to cross the Moselle River at Dornot, 10 CT fought with desperation to secure the crossing at Arnaville and its Second Battalion clung to Pournoy-la-Chétive by its fingernails. As a result, the division had absorbed approximately 5,000 replacements into its ranks by the end of the month.⁶⁴

The October pause allowed XX Corps units to achieve local, limited objectives: 5th Division turned its attention to Fort Driant west of the Moselle while the 90th

Infantry Division to the north continued its northern envelopment of Metz. With the 11th Infantry's failure to take Fort Driant and anticipating a new move, the 5th Division trained its thousands of raw replacements and integrated them into the veteran units in the latter part of October. Mostly likely as a result of the costly failures at Amanvillers, the 2nd Infantry conducted street fighting training until, its postwar history stated, "it no longer seemed a strange game, but rather a sort of second nature."⁶⁵ Rest camps gave the men a shower, hot food, rest, and time away from German artillery. The fall rains that swelled the Moselle River and its tributaries beyond their banks complicated river-crossing preparations.

By 1 November, the 5th Division deployed east of the Moselle River and prepared to participate in XX Corps's next movements against Metz. The XX Corps's strategy was to envelop Metz from the north and south. The 90th Infantry and 10th Armored Divisions enveloped from the north while the 5th Division moved eastward south of Metz. Figure 7.4 shows the 5th Division's southern envelopment.⁶⁶ The 2nd Infantry Regiment advanced first and maintained contact with XII Corps to the south. The 2nd's mission was to take the town of Sanry-sur-Nied, bridge the Nied River, and head north to link with the 90th Division to cut off Metz. The 11th and 10th Regiments marched east but then turned north and helped take the city proper. This plan allowed the division to isolate Metz before assaulting it. Inside Metz were the Germans of the *462nd Volksgrenadier Division* but facing the 5th Division south of the city was the *17th SS Panzer Grenadier Division*.⁶⁷

Figure 7.4: Battle for Metz, Envelopment from the South, 8-19 November 1944



XX Corps's renewed offensive began on 9 November when the 2nd and 10th Infantry crossed the swollen Seille River. Because the French civilians had long since left the towns in the region, the Americans "permit[ted] the maximum use of supporting fires." Previous artillery fires had already destroyed many of these towns.⁶⁸ The 2nd Infantry's Second Battalion crossed the Seille and immediately assaulted Cheminot without tanks because the bridges could not support them. In the absence of armor, 1/2 used marching fire and artillery to quickly take and occupy Louvigny.⁶⁹ The 10th and 11th Combat Teams continued their eastward movement and then turned shifted toward Metz. The 2nd Infantry marched east to the Nied River where it would turn north and link up with the 90th Infantry Division.

Units from the 6th Armored Division units seized Sanry-sur-Nied and its bridge across the Nied River. The 2nd Infantry deployed to protect the river town against a major counterattack on the thirteenth. Having defended the bridge over the all-important Nied River, the 2nd Infantry turned north and, on 19 November, linked with the 90th Infantry Division that was battling southward. After two months of fighting, Third Army had finally cut off and isolated Metz.

By 14 November, the 11th and 10th Infantry Regiments—the 11th on the left and the 10th on the right—engaging in and capturing several towns and villages along the way to Metz. Like further north where the 1st Division was mired in the Hürtgen Forest, the weather was cold, wet, and miserable. Trench foot caused more casualties than German bullets.⁷⁰ The attack on Metz did not require the intense urban fighting required of Aachen the month before. The 10th Infantry utilized marching fire, along with tanks,

tank destroyers, and artillery concentrations, to quickly seize towns such as Fleury and Marly.⁷¹ The marching fire was necessary if only because many of these soldiers in the three infantry regiments were replacements new to combat and also because the ground over which they assaulted was often open with no cover from the *Wehrmacht* defenders. The 10th Infantry worked its way along Metz's eastern outskirts and connected with the 95th Division in a suburb outside the city on 15 November.

On 14 November, the Metz garrison had received a new commander from the Eastern Front who had experience in city fighting in Russia. Hitler remained determined to hold the French city but even this veteran commander, Generalleutnant Heinrich Kittel, remained doubtful that he could hold for long. Kittel's force included the *462nd Volksgrenadier Division*, a depleted *38th SS Panzer Grenadier Regiment*, the staffs for the *22nd* and *25th Fortress Regiments* as well as three fortress machine gun battalions, two SS machine gun battalions, a fortress engineer battalion, five fortress infantry battalions, two fortress artillery battalions, and two antiaircraft battalions.⁷² The Metz defense also included *Volkssturm* units of boys and old men that often surrendered when the opportunity arose.⁷³

As the 10th Infantry focused on southeast Metz, the 11th Infantry crashed into Metz from the south, the 95th Division assaulted from the west and the 90th Division entered from the north. By 18 November, elements of 3/11 joined the assault. A and C/11 searched for snipers in houses along the southern outskirts. On the nineteenth, Third Battalion companies, supported by tanks, fought deeper into Metz but both street combat and house-to-house combat was heavy.⁷⁴

By the twentieth, most German resistance had ended but the main buildings still required searching. One enlisted man recalled how a squad of twelve men cleared houses and buildings along the path of A/10's advance. Several men covered a building's rear and sides while a search party entered, clearing each room of each building. It was still wisest to avoid the streets as there remained nominal resistance from machine guns and 20-mm cannons. The Americans still took care in the process of clearing southeastern Metz. In one instance, German machine gun fire pinned down an American squad; two sergeants scampered across rooftops to get better vantage points. By the end of the twentieth, the 10th Infantry controlled and cleared most of southeast Metz to the railroad station, having cleared approximately 40 buildings, and fighting had largely ended.⁷⁵ When Metz formally surrendered on 22 November, the division turned its attention to the forts outside the city that were now surrounded.

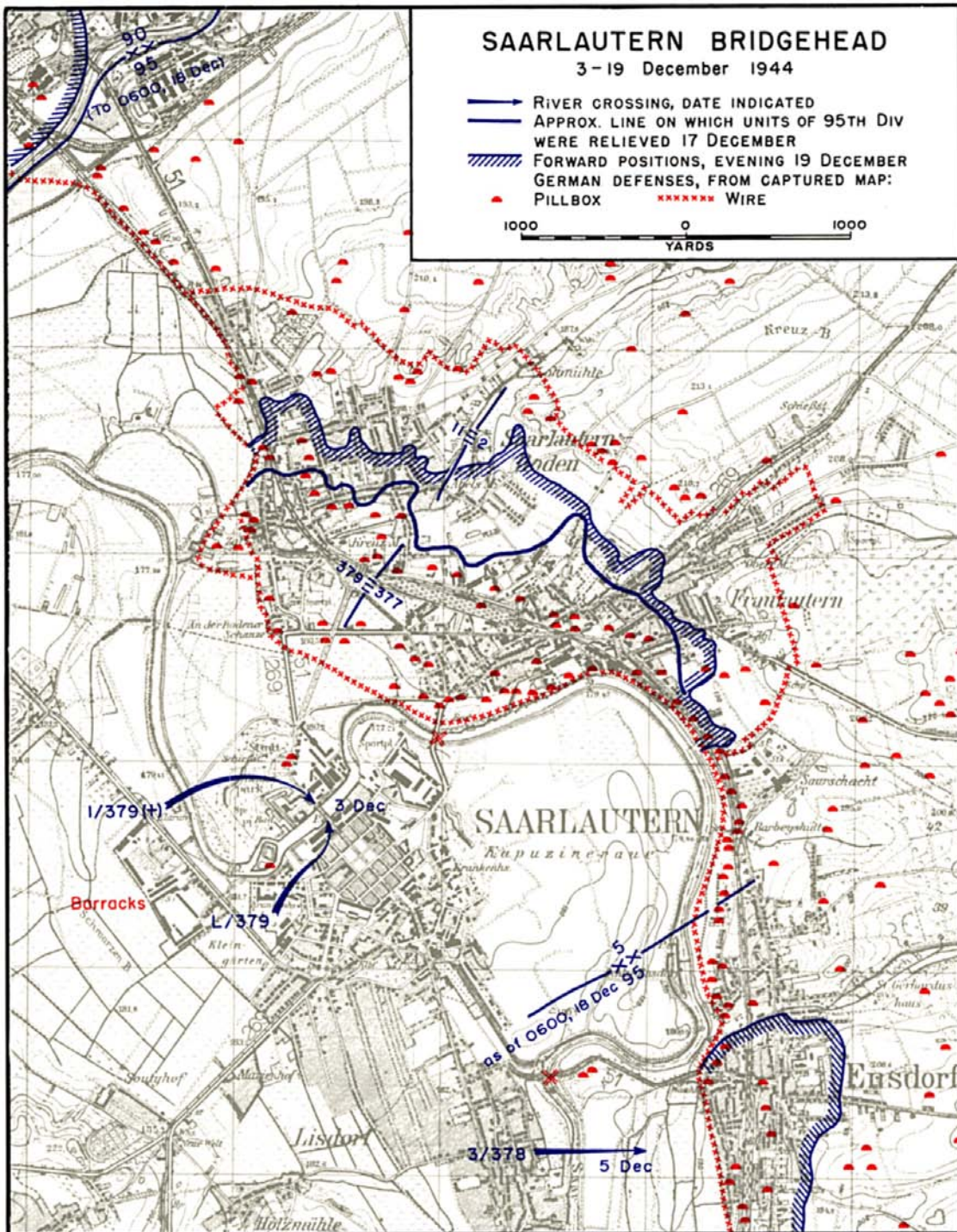
Getting into and taking Metz appeared anticlimactic compared to what happened in Aachen. The isolation and envelopment operation, lasting two months. Priorities were also different: Aachen was a division-level operation but Metz involved the entire XX Corps. Despite these differences, both Metz and Aachen called for using all ground forces, especially since overcast skies minimized any tactical air support. The envelopment demanded actions by infantry, artillery, tanks, and tank destroyers. The 5th Infantry Division necessarily had to move as a combined-arms force because of the flooding rivers, worsening weather, and an enemy who purposely defended the outlying villages and towns to slow the Americans.⁷⁶ The infantry, tanks, and tank destroyers made the assaults in various combinations while the artillery fired many devastating

“time-on-target” concentrations on the enemy that defended the devastated towns and villages.⁷⁷ The battle inside Metz did not match Aachen but the methods were similar and they showed a maturing American combined-arms mindset.

After the fall of Metz, the 5th Division confronted the next layer of outlying fortifications. The Americans simply surrounded these fortifications and waited for the defenders to surrender, which each eventually did. The Americans captured Metz in order to renew the momentum toward the Rhine River. General Patton spurred his army in that direction. Soon after Metz fell, the 10th Armored Division and the 90th and 95th Infantry Divisions moved northeast toward the Saar River and German territory. The Germans abandoned the Maginot Line and fell back upon the Siegfried Line along the Saar River. With the 10th Armored and 90th Infantry Divisions operating on the northern/left flank of XX Corps, the 95th Infantry Division struggled as it moved along the corps right flank toward Saarlautern. The corps objective was not the Saar itself but Germany east of the Saar River. The Saar River runs generally north-south but, as Figure 7.5 shows, curves and turns around Saarlautern, separating that city from Saarlautern-Roden and Fraulautern.⁷⁸

Slowed by well-defended high ground west of the Saar River, the 95th Infantry Division drove the Germans eastward. By 2 December, the division began fighting for the portion of Saarlautern south and west of the river’s meandering curve. The 95th Division bled itself white as it pushed against this stiff resistance. Aerial reconnaissance located a bridge across the Saar that connected Saarlautern with Saarlautern-Roden. In a gutsy assault early the next day, two companies from the division seized and held the

Figure 7.5: Saarlautern Bridgehead, 3-19 December 1944



bridge across the Saar. For the next two weeks, the 95th Infantry Division tried to take Saarlautern-Roden and Fraulautern but the urban combat overwhelmed a division whose combat effectiveness was dropping by the day.⁷⁹ On 15 December, the 5th Division received orders to relieve the 95th Division and seize the urban space east of the Saar River.

A tanker, Captain H. L. West, recounted that “fighting in the ruins of what once had been a thriving, large city [was] the most nerve racking type of fighting.” West recollected that “the enemy was in the same block as you or in the house next door.” “It was normal,” he said, “to fight all day with neither side advancing more than a house or two.”⁸⁰ In this sense, Saarlautern was like any other city where the Americans challenged the Germans. But Saarlautern was different than Metz and Aachen in that the Saarlautern cities could not be surrounded and that the Germans integrated the Siegfried Line fortifications into the cities themselves. In the cities along the Siegfried Line, West observed, many structures “were merely a front for defensive positions consisting of heavily reinforced concrete cellars.” In many other cases, “houses were merely frame works, cleverly camouflaging pill boxes with walls seven and eight feet thick.”⁸¹ Another veteran remembered that some pillboxes looked like store fronts and machine-gun nests resembled coal piles. Oftentimes, the Americans discovered these concealed positions when the Germans opened fire. Another veteran described Saarlautern as “street fighting at its worst.”⁸² This sometimes forced an adjustment because assault teams were not assaulting a home but a cleverly disguised fortified position.⁸³ The battles for Saarlautern and its surrounding cities raged for months, but the 5th Division’s

fight was brief because the German counteroffensive through the Ardennes forced the division to redeploy a few days into its fight on the Saar.

Combat Team 10 had bloodied itself securing the 95th Division's right flank after bypassing German resistance in the rush toward the Saar. On 15 December, the entire division prepared to relieve the 95th fighting inside Saarlautern, or more properly, Saarlautern-Roden and Fraulautern on the opposite side of the Saar River. Between 9 and 15 December, soldiers in the 11th Infantry Regiment also underwent training behind the lines, expecting to relieve either the 90th or the 95th Divisions along the river.⁸⁴ During this time the 10th Infantry Regiment wanted to assault abandoned houses in order to prepare itself for the upcoming urban fight but were denied by higher authorities because they feared a public relations fiasco if American soldiers conducted live-fire drills in undamaged homes.⁸⁵ Along with training, intelligence also aided the Americans. Before entering these cities, the division received maps with each house numbered and the city gridded. Like Colonel Derrill Daniel's "measles sheets," these maps helped the Americans to maintain command and control when assaulting Saarlautern.⁸⁶

The 95th Division had begun to make progress by the sixteenth. On 17 December, the 11th Infantry Regiment took over the fight in Fraulautern while the 2nd Infantry relieved 95th Division elements inside Saarlautern-Roden. By now these two cities had endured over ten days of intense urban combat and had become shells of their former selves. The flotsam and jetsam of war littered the entire area.⁸⁷ On the eighteenth and nineteenth, the two combat teams maintained that progress. Just as the

1st Infantry Division slogged its way through the Hürtgen Forest, so the 5th tried to plod through these twin cities.

On 18 December, the 11th began to attack northward with its supporting armor. Tank destroyers' larger 90-mm guns were especially proficient at blasting the hidden pillboxes. Tank dozers then came along and buried any survivors who refused to surrender. Working methodically with "rockets, artillery, and direct tank fire," the regiment cleared two city blocks and 178 houses. Not easily outdone, the Germans counterattacked with an infantry-tank-artillery force but the Americans drove them off after desperate close-quarters fighting that sometimes saw Germans tanks fire at point-blank range at the Americans. Unlike Aachen that was isolated, German infantry and tanks occasionally infiltrated into the Americans' rear that night. German mortar and artillery shells fell frequently during this entire period. The combat team's organic artillery, the 19th Field Artillery Battalion, actively supported the regiment as it slowly fought through the city. On the nineteenth, the regiment took another 40 houses.⁸⁸

Accounts of these few days in Saarlautern center on the G.I.s' "mouseholing," or breaching a building by blowing holes in common walls with explosives or tank rounds. One veteran remembered this was necessary because the Germans posted automatic weapons at the ends of streets.⁸⁹ After creating a mousehole, clearing a building required at least three infantrymen: one cleared the upper floors, another cleared the first floor, and a third threw a grenade in the cellar.⁹⁰ Inasmuch as the 5th Division's progress rested firmly on a combined-arms mindset, that approach was becoming the normal standard operating procedure for the urban environment. For all the differences

between Saarlautern and Aachen, the practice of mouseholing and the combined-arms mindset showed that the American soldiers conducted their urban operations with striking similarities.

The soldiers routinely assaulted pillboxes but had limited options: either destroy them or seal them and move on. Explosives or tank destroyers could eliminate most pillboxes but that was costly in manpower and time. There were not enough welding kits to seal all the pillboxes and tank dozers were not always on hand to bury them. Early on the nineteenth, the 2nd Infantry communicated to division command that it discovered a new way to seal the pillboxes: placing thermite grenades at the entrances. The thermite grenades burned hot enough to melt and seal shut the bunker entrances. Later that day, the regiment cried out for more thermite grenades, reporting that “if we can get them [then] we can take right off.” Later that day, the division pressured the commander of the 7th Engineer Combat Battalion to find more grenades since the 2nd Infantry “is quite enthusiastic about these thermite grenades. Looking for some more tho, they seem to be running out of them [sic].” By the afternoon of the nineteenth, the division rationed 500 thermite grenades between its three regiments. While the 90th Division asserted that the best way to handle these concealed fortified positions was the close-range, direct fire of tanks, tank destroyers, or a 155-mm self-propelled gun, the 5th Division used thermite grenades to merely seal the defenders in their positions, then advancing.⁹¹ After leaving Saarlautern, the 2nd Infantry submitted a paper to the division’s intelligence officer describing how to use a thermite grenade to seal a pillbox shut.⁹²

On 20 December, the German counteroffensive through the Ardennes Forest forced Patton's Third Army to help stop the *Wehrmacht*. By then, the 5th Division had extricated itself from Saarlautern and turned the battle back to the 95th Division. In preparation for the drive north, XX Corps reclaimed the division's attached tank and tank destroyer battalions. General Irwin lamented that he would "comply but with a bleeding heart," indicating how vital the two battalions had become to the division since their partnership formed in July.⁹³ The 803rd Tank Destroyer and 737th Tank Battalions joined the division and remained there for the duration of the war. By mid-December 1944, the 5th Infantry Division and its combat teams had clearly learned that successfully and effectively fighting in the urban environment—whether offensively or defensively—demanded a combined-arms approach.

3rd Infantry Division

Lastly, the 3rd Division landed with Operation DRAGOON in southern France in August 1944. Fighting alongside French forces in the Seventh Army of the 6th Army Group, the division fought its way through southern France, up the Rhone Valley, and through the Vosges Mountains. By the end of this period, the division was in Strasbourg on the Rhine River.

With the 3rd Division's participation, the Allies took Rome on 4 June, two days before American, British, and Canadian forces launched Operation OVERLORD. As Chapter 4 showed, Major General John "Iron Mike" O'Daniel's 3rd Division learned to combine its infantry-armor-artillery power by the time it broke out of the Anzio beachhead and captured the town of Cisterna in May 1944. The division refined its

Figure 7.6: Breakout from the Blue Line, 17-19 August 1944



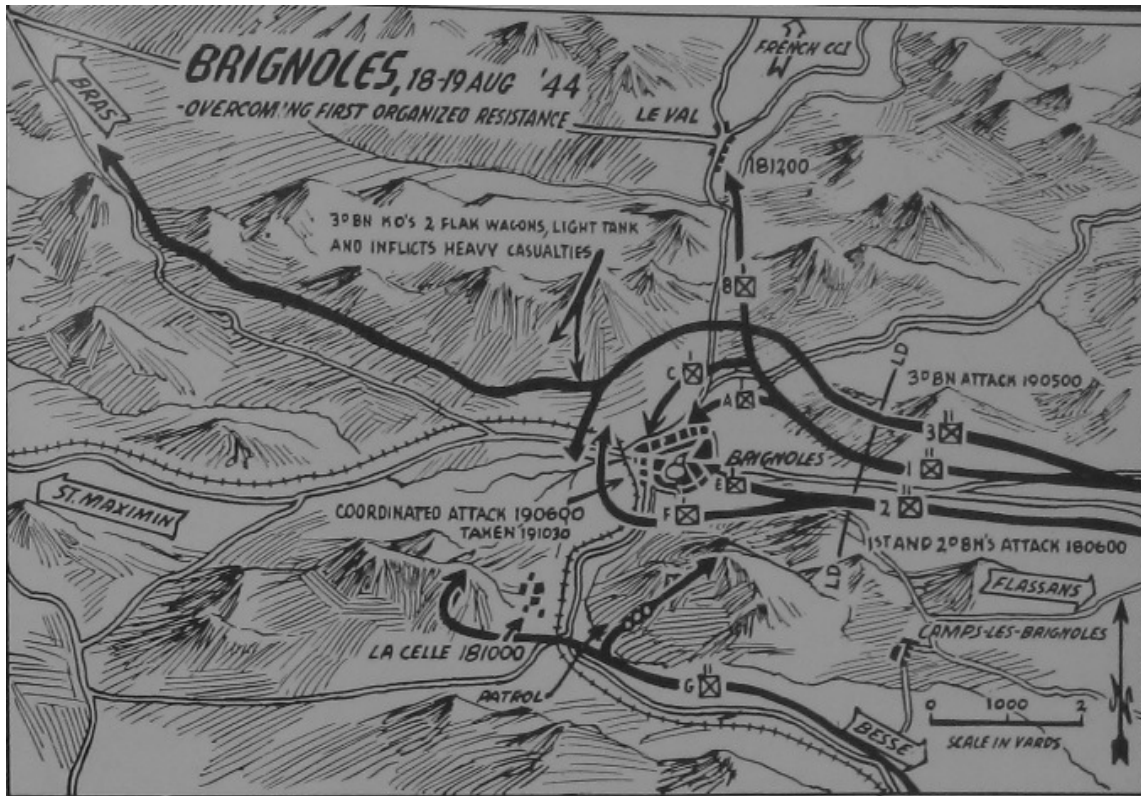
combined-arms capabilities after Operation DRAGOON put troops ashore southern France in August.

One objective was to capture the port of Marseilles to aid the Allies' eastward advance in Germany. As the ports in northwestern France had proven to be disappointments, so Marseilles gained strategic value and importance. The other objective of DRAGOON was to coordinate with OVERLORD. By August, the Allies had broken out of the hedgerow country, forcing the Germans to pull units from southern France to bolster positions in the North and East. Figure 7.6 shows the area of operations in southern France.⁹⁴

After the battle for Rome, the 3rd Division—now under the auspices of the Seventh U.S. Army in the 6th Army Group—trained for DRAGOON through June and July, including assaulting fortified positions, mastering different weapons, and improving tank-infantry coordination.⁹⁵ Compared to other landings in World War II, DRAGOON was smoothly. With light casualties, the division took its objectives on the first day of capturing the towns of St. Tropez and Cavalaire sur Mer. A few days later, the division took Ramatuelle, la Mole, Cogolin, and Collobrieres. As the Americans proceeded westward to isolate Toulon and Marseilles, they swept aside nominal German resistance. French forces eventually seized control of the port cities.

The Germans might have turned the rugged terrain against the Americans like in Italy but their collapsing defense only allowed them to stall the American advance through roadblocks. Because of the enemy's rapid retreat, the Americans relied on any available motor transport. The division's postwar history described the scene: "it was a

Figure 7.7: Brignoles, 18-19 August 1944



common sight to see a whole rifle battalion moving down a road—doughboys draped over the 3-inch guns of tank destroyers, clinging to the slippery-sided tanks of the 756th [Tank Battalion], or loaded sixes-and-sevens to trailer-hauling jeeps.”⁹⁶

The battle for Brignoles was the division’s first significant fight from 17 to 19 August, shown in Figure 7.7.⁹⁷ As the division marched westward, Brignoles sat along the 30th Infantry’s axis of advance; capturing it would cut off Marseilles and Toulon. By the seventeenth, Germans prevented 2/30 from marching to Brignoles via Highway 7. That night, the regiment decided to fall upon the town from two different directions: 1/30 descended from the north while 2/30 attacked from the south and west. Other units

protected the attackers' flanks. On the morning of the eighteenth, the two battalions began their attack, supported by armor and their heavy weapons companies. Second Battalion's E Company encountered many snipers in trees and houses. G Company, on the heights south of town protecting the regiment's left/southern flank, helped direct the artillery shelling of Brignoles. But First Battalion engaged more resistance: even though 1/30 received the bulk of the armor support, only A Company was close to entering the town by day's end. The armor was especially crucial since the German positioned machine guns in houses on the outskirts. Of the twelve tank destroyers engaged, five were knocked out by German fire. That night, E Company remained locked in street fighting but withdrew to the northeast part of Brignoles for security reasons.

On the nineteenth, 3/30 moved around Brignoles to maintain the westward drive, effectively cutting off the town. E Company pushed into the town from the northeast part of the town as F Company attacked from the south and west. A and C Companies assaulted from the north with armored support. Third Battalion's wide flanking move around the town as well as A Company and three tanks entering the town from the north helped to break the resistance by 1030.⁹⁸

Despite the rugged terrain, the regiment's plan to assault from multiple directions closely resembled how the same regiment took the town of Acerno, Italy, the previous September. Unlike in Italy, the C/601 Tank Destroyer and C/756 Tank Battalions helped the 30th Infantry to capture Brignoles. Similar to the October 1944 edition of the infantry battalion manual, the 601st Tank Destroyer Battalion also learned that their vehicles were vulnerable inside towns and that they were most useful in a small urban

battle at the town's edge firing at the enemy inside the locale.⁹⁹ The regiment advanced as if Brignoles were a momentary distraction. The division proceeded down Highway 7 toward Aix-en-Provence, north of Marseilles. The 30th Infantry's plan to take Aix was similar to Brignoles: infantry and armor converging from different directions but the Germans withdrew before a fight could develop. With Brignoles and Aix taken, the division continued its westward mission toward the Rhone River and cutting off Toulon and Marseilles.

The fighting around Montélimar signified the end of Operation DRAGOON and the beginning of the Rhone River campaign as the Americans turned their attention north. VI Corps commanding general, and former 3rd Division commander, Lucian Truscott pushed his corps hard toward the Rhone because he knew the retreating German *Nineteenth Army* would attempt to escape the Franco-American drive. Terrain and intelligence confirmed to Truscott that the best place to trap the Germans was at the river town of Montélimar, a major road junction.¹⁰⁰

Despite Truscott's aggressive urgings, VI Corps was not quick enough to capture Montélimar and the Germans were able to defend the city and the roads to get their forces out of the region. The Germans' defense of Montélimar and counterattacks combined with American indecision, ammunition shortages, and a tenuous supply line prevented VI Corps from completely cutting the German line of retreat between 21 and 25 August. The 36th and 45th Infantry Divisions found themselves north and northeast of the city and the 3rd Division approached from the south. American artillery shelled convoys along Highway 7 as ammunition became available. With all the fighting north

and northeast of Montélimar, Truscott ordered the 3rd Division northward from Avignon on 25 August but supply problems slowed the division. The Germans were anxious to pull their last units out of the region, but as the 3rd Division threatened from the south, so enemy resistance stiffened¹⁰¹ Nevertheless, every motorized vehicle was hauling G.I.s, whether trucks, tanks, or tank destroyers.

This stiffening defense was evident by the twenty-first at Allan, south of Montélimar. The firefight in Allan was part of a larger operational picture. Although off the path, L/15 advanced through Allan on the twenty-seventh because the company commander, Captain James W. Coles, thought it would help him close the trap on the Germans.¹⁰² The Germans indicated that they would fight for Allan when they captured a patrol sent to reconnoiter Allan. L Company rapidly deployed with its armored support to seize Allan. The Germans were surprised because they had not expected an American attack and had not prepared as thoroughly as they might. Regardless, American tank destroyers fired at buildings' second-stories that might conceal a German soldier with an antitank weapon. The meeting engagement in Allan included infantrymen, tanks, and tank destroyers on both sides at close ranges. A bazooka team from I Company knocked out a Mark VI Tiger tank that had caused trouble for the Americans. The outcome remained in doubt until the afternoon when Cannon Company's self-propelled howitzers fired from the east and I and K Companies threatened from the west. The fighting see-sawed into the evening on the twenty-seventh, especially when a Mark V Panther tank entered late into the fray. By 1730, the battalion commander reported that L Company was "disorganized" as he committed the

reserve armor platoon. At 2245, the battalion reported that L Company captured the town but only four tank destroyers and one tank remained operable.¹⁰³ The company relied as much on individual soldiers' personal bravery as on its attached tanks and tank destroyers to root out the enemy.

The next day, 28 August, the battle began for Montélimar. The 15th Infantry's First Battalion penetrated the city from the northwest while Second Battalion entered from the southeast. Elements of the 7th and 30th Infantry Regiments engaged from the east. The division trapped portions of two German divisions inside Montélimar and they became desperate to break out. At one point, 1/15 battled an entire German regiment trying to escape. House-by-house fighting was common, lasting into the early morning hours of the twenty-ninth. The 3rd and 36th Divisions' artillery battalions caught several large convoys fleeing Montélimar, slaughtering men and horses and annihilating trucks, trains, foodstuffs, supplies, and large artillery pieces. By 1100 on the twenty-ninth, Montélimar was in American hands but most of the German *Nineteenth Army* had escaped, albeit after suffering horrendous losses.¹⁰⁴

The Americans' northward pursuit continued. The veterans of North Africa, Sicily, and Italy remember it as the "Champagne Campaign."¹⁰⁵ According to a 15th Infantry report, enemy resistance after Montélimar was "practically nil and consisted only of scattered fragmentary units whose only action was one of evasion."¹⁰⁶ Figure 7.8 shows the Seventh Army drive from Lyon to Belfort.¹⁰⁷ As the 6th Army Group drove north, the terrain became more arduous, especially as they approached the Vosges Mountains. The trap at Montélimar having failed, VI Corps hoped to force the Germans

Figure 7.8: Seventh Army Advance toward Belfort, 4-14 September 1944



into the oncoming Third Army before they could enter the menacing High Vosges Mountains.¹⁰⁸ The “Champaign Campaign” ended as German resistance increased around Besançon and *Army Group G* fought to keep possession of the Belfort Gap. Guarding the Belfort Gap was critical to the Germans because it could allow an invader easy passage into Germany between the Swiss border and the Vosges.

Still trying to trap the Germans before they could make a stand, Seventh Army drove northeast, with VI Corps in the center advancing toward Belfort. The German defense of Besançon on the Doubs River was more an attempt to protect the Belfort Gap and allow units to withdraw and redeploy into position. The *159th Reserve Division* received orders to hold Besançon until 15 September to allow withdraw German units to man the Belfort Gap.¹⁰⁹ As German resistance strengthened, the 3rd Division was ordered to take Besançon. Figure 7.9 below shows a plan of Besançon and its position on the Doubs River.¹¹⁰ Like Metz, Besançon sat astride a river, housing 80,000 people. Like Saarlautern, the city of Besançon sits along a severe bend in the Doubs River, with an imposing Vauban fort, La Citadelle, on the high bluffs along the bend. It was not designed to fall. The Seventh Army regarded the city as “a fortress built by nature and improved by generations of military engineers.”¹¹¹

Because of its daunting fortifications, the defenders garrisoned the area forts and blew the bridges but did not fortify the city itself. The 3rd Division fell on Besançon as one. On the fifth through 7 September, the division worked its way around Besançon and took the various fortresses. Several times, these forts were able to withstand modern artillery so that the assaults required tanks and tank destroyers to offer direct support to

Figure 7.9: Plan of Besançon



the assaulting infantrymen. Because of the mediocre nature of the defenders, these fortifications fell rapidly with low losses. On the sixth, 3/7 received orders to seize the city itself. Throughout the seventh, elements of the 7th Infantry fought within Besançon.¹¹² Much of the reason for the success of the quick capture of Besançon, a city that ought to have been as difficult a task as Metz from to the terrain and fortifications, was the nature of the defender. Just as the Americans never took Amanvillers in part

because of the well-trained and well-motivated officer-cadet defenders, so Besançon fell rapidly because the 3rd Division quickly isolated it and the second-class defenders were less devoted to defending it. The German command intended Besançon to hold out until 15 September but the city surrendered a week earlier on 8 September. Both Amanvillers and Besançon show how important the quality of defenders were in urban combat.

At the same time further north, the 1st Division attempted to fight through the Siegfried Line and the 5th Division tried to cross the Moselle River. The 3rd Division drove the Germans north and northeast, the various infantry companies and battalions engaging in many minor street fights and enemy resistance notably increasing. In Rioz and Quenoche, First and Second Battalions, 15th Infantry engaged in house-by-house fighting.¹¹³ Vesoul, the Germans' last link to Belfort, became the center of a new defensive line for the *Nineteenth Army*. Like Besançon, a small stream divided the town and high bluffs offered the defenders good terrain to repel attackers. VI Corps dispatched the 3rd and 36th Infantry Divisions to take the city of Vesoul on 10 September. Intelligence indicated that as German defense efforts covering Belfort in the Vosges Mountains increased, so they would likely stubbornly defend Vesoul.¹¹⁴

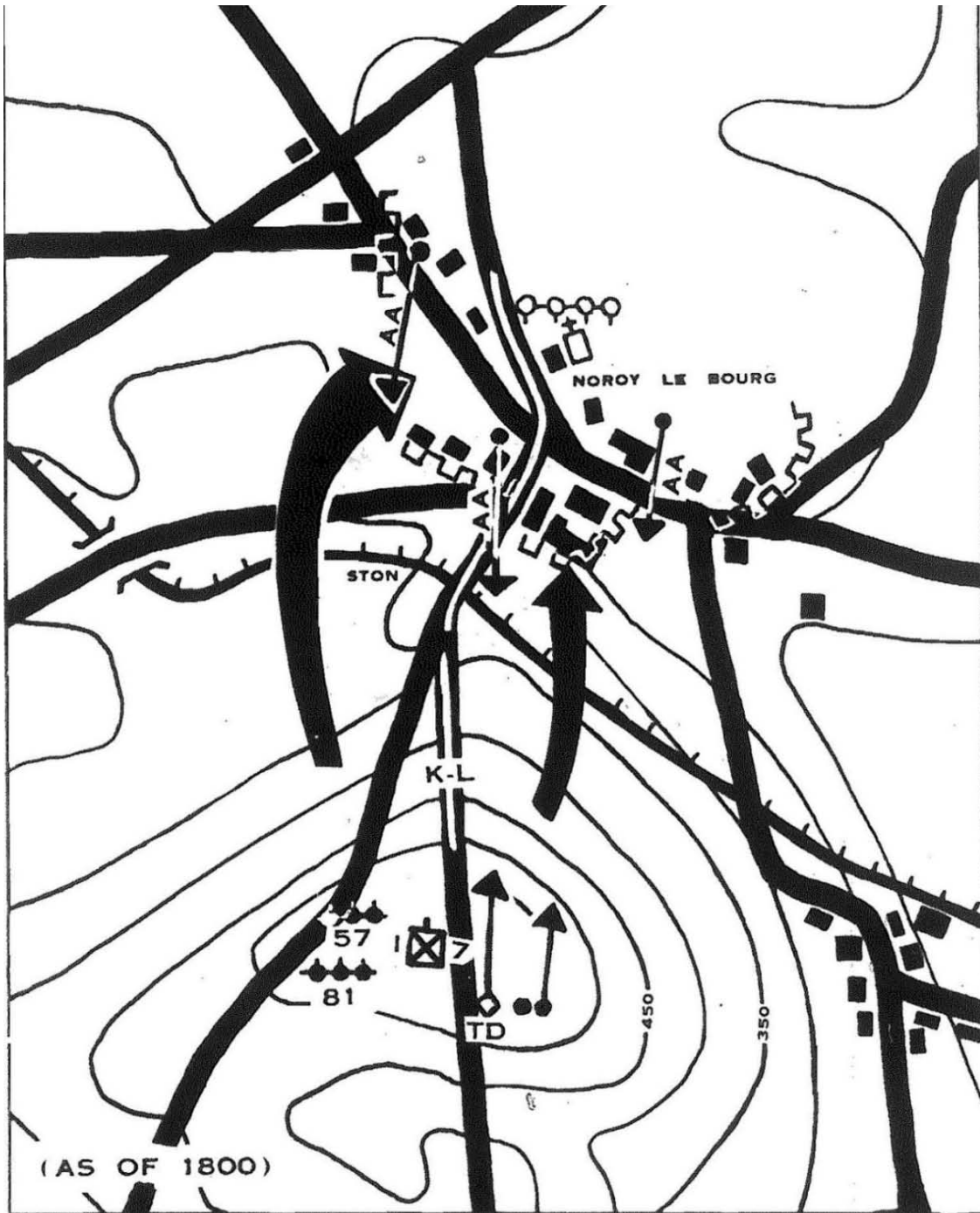
Through the eleventh, the 15th Infantry Regiment shoved German delaying units onto Vesoul. By the end of the day, 3/15 had taken the high ground on the southern edge of the city. At 0630 on the twelfth, 3/15 entered Vesoul, incurring stiff antitank fire and 2/15 pushed into nearby Navenne. Elements of the 36th Division attacked from the north. Both battalions made slow progress, building-to-building and house-to-house, against strong resistance and counterattacks. Tanks supported 3/15 but remained outside

the city. At 1415, 3/15 had cleared Vesoul.¹¹⁵ Because the Americans expected a strong defense, VI Corps deployed two infantry divisions along with their attached armor and artillery. The Germans were hard-pressed enough elsewhere that while resistance was heavy enough for the 15th Infantry's Second and Third Battalions, most German soldiers had fled from Vesoul to other delaying positions. While the Germans could have made a stubborn and costly defense of Besançon and Vesoul, given their strategic locations and *Army Group G's* need to slow its retreat, the 3rd and 36th Division outmaneuvered the defenders and coaxed most of the Germans out of the city.¹¹⁶ The Americans relied upon their developing combat teams to continue fighting eastward.

As the 15th Infantry fought for Vesoul, the 7th Infantry took on Noroy-le-Bourg, a small crossroads town to the east that controlled the secondary roads leading to Belfort. The 7th Infantry's daily report merely noted that Third Battalion began the assault on Noroy at 1645, took it at 2005, and captured 70 Germans prisoner, killing and wounding "many more."¹¹⁷ Although Noroy-le-Bourg failed to occupy anyone's attention above the regiment, this "run of the mill," small-unit urban action served as an excellent way to show how American infantry battalions maneuvered against the multitude of small towns in France as well as how deeply the Americans had embraced a combined-arms mentality by September 1944. Figure 7.10 shows the assault on Noroy-le-Bourg.¹¹⁸

By late afternoon on 12 September, 3/7 had taken the heights overlooking Noroy-le-Bourg and expected to assault the town the next day. As an important crossroads, it was as valuable for the Americans as it was for the Germans. The commander, Major Lloyd B. Ramsey, gathered his staff and company commanders as well as the tank and

Figure 7.10: 3/7 Assault on Noroy-le-Bourg, 12 September 1944



tank destroyer platoon leaders to plan the assault from the southern heights as the sun began to set in the west. Ramsey identified that a battalion of infantry, antiaircraft flak wagons, light artillery, and mortars defended the town. He directed K Company to assault the western part of town with a platoon of heavy machine guns while L Company and a platoon each of machine guns and tanks would assault the eastern part of the town and heights beyond to the north. I Company was to remain in reserve as the tank destroyers, 81-mm mortars, heavy machine guns, and 57-mm antitank guns deployed on the southern heights to provide fire support.

By beginning its assault in the late afternoon, regimental and division leaders hoped to prevent the Germans from reinforcing the battalion defending Noroy. The supporting fire on the heights silenced the antiaircraft flak wagons but enemy mortar and artillery threatened to pin down K and L Companies. In response, Lieutenant John Greene, a platoon leader in L Company, rose to his feet and started his own marching-fire advance. Greene's riflemen resumed the attack because of his initiative. When enemy fire again threatened to pin down L Company, Lieutenant Greene kept the attack moving by refusing to let the men stop. Likewise, Staff Sergeant John Stanton made long rushes in the open to knock out a German machine-gun position. From there, Stanton ran to a concealed position and knocked out a flak wagon.

American antitank guns on the heights destroyed a German convoy that tried to escape Noroy. With that, K Company received permission to swing wide to the left and enter the town from the western roads to cut off escape and reinforcement. Ramsey sent a platoon from I Company to cut off the town from the east. Once the Americans broke

into the outskirts, it became a violent struggle, house-by-house. Sergeant Stanton led the way by sprinting down a fire-swept street to throw a grenade into a German-filled barn. He took ten prisoners there and then fifteen more from a fortified cellar. For his actions, Stanton received the Distinguished Service Cross.

As darkness came over the battlefield, the L Company's infantry and tanks cooperated to take each successive building from the Germans. According to a postwar report, "the excellent coordination between tank and infantry was still the deciding factor which permitted L Company to continue advancing through the town" despite the darkness.¹¹⁹ Notable individual actions stood out, such as Lieutenant Raymond Zussman, the tank platoon leader assigned to Third Battalion. With tank-to-tank communications out, Zussman relied on verbal and hand signals. Exposed to the enemy, he reconnoitered forward positions for the tanks and infantry and he directed tank fire onto German positions. He rushed, cleared, and took several houses by himself and returned to his tanks with prisoners in tow. When approaching an intersection that Zussman thought the Germans might have targeted, he investigated and took another 30 prisoners. By himself, Zussman accounted for 17 dead Germans and 92 prisoners as well as two antitank guns, one 20-mm flak gun, two machine guns, and two trucks captured. For his efforts, Lt. Zussman received the Congressional Medal of Honor.

By 2015, L Company was just short of the church on the north end of Noroy. Around that time, K Company and I Company converged from the west and east, respectively. K Company blasted a German company attempting to retreat or redeploy. I Company severed Noroy-le-Bourg's eastern road. By the time I Company joined the

fight, it was completely dark and movement was necessarily slow as it searched all the houses and buildings along its path. Because Vesoul had not yet fallen, K Company organized a defense to the west in case of counterattack. The next day, the battalion figured that the Germans had suffered 75 killed and 308 prisoners along with the loss of a light artillery battery, mortars, flak wagons, and various vehicles and ammunition destroyed. Third Battalion only suffered one dead and twelve wounded (including Lieutenant Greene). One tank was damaged when, after the fight, it ran over an unexploded shell.

Similar to 2/10's fight at Pournoy-la-Chetive, 3/7 had to attack over open ground in order to wrestle a town from the Germans. The company commanders received oral direction from Major Ramsey but were free to meet the situation as they saw fit. The company commanders maintained contact with Ramsey as well as with each other. During the street fighting, the tanks operated with riflemen, offering critical direct fire support. Even as they fought for Noroy in hours of darkness, cooperation and coordination between the infantry and tanks allowed tanks to function inside an urban battle at night.¹²⁰ Greene, Stanton, and Zussman also demonstrated that successfully and effectively taking villages and towns required individuals to lead the fight and put themselves in danger. The Americans' conception of combined-arms warfare matured but it still required soldiers to do the dirty, brutal, violent fighting.

Three days later, 3/7 found itself in another urban battle, this time *defending* the village of Vy-les-Lure on 15-16 September. Vy-les-Lure sits northeast of Noroy-le-Bourg and southwest of the larger city of Lure. On the afternoon of the fifteenth, Third

Battalion attacked Vy-les-Lure with L Company on the left, I Company on the right, M Company heavy weapons interspersed between the two, and K Company in reserve. As the assault companies advanced, they came under strong German artillery and mortar fire. This fire pinned down I Company, killing its company commander and communications personnel. Captain Ralph Yates shifted his L Company to the left to escape the plunging shells and maneuver his troops closer to town. Yates maneuvered his company down secondary fields to the outskirts of Vy-les-Lure. Intense German fire pinned down the Americans in a cemetery and momentarily stopped their assault. As German grenades dropped over the cemetery wall, the Americans tossed them back. Captain Yates picked up a BAR, stood up, and fired into the nearest house, ordering his men to assault that house and find better cover. The soldiers stormed this residence under Yates's supporting BAR fire, killed one German soldier, and took two others captive. When Yates entered the house, it became the company command post.¹²¹

As men funneled through one door into the command-post, German machine gun fire felled many of them. The private carrying Yates's radio collapsed after being badly riddled. Sergeant Dean Barnette removed the wounded soldier's radio and tried to pull the man to safety but a German machine gunner put nine rounds through Barnette's body. Barnette managed to get himself inside the house as someone else dragged the radioman into the command post. With no radio, L Company lost communications with Third Battalion and regimental headquarters. M Company's mortarmen attached to Yates's company entered the house without their equipment and only their personal arms. The heavy machine gunners managed to get their machine gun in the post but the

Germans killed the ammunition carrier, making the machine gun useless. Before long, the only automatic weapons the Americans had were a few Browning Automatic Rifles and a limited supply of ammunition.

Lieutenant Samuel Selvog and a small party attacked another house down the fire-swept streets. Selvog took a house to the right-rear of Yates's command post. Private Ned Finch and four others braved intense enemy fire to take a house two hundred yards in advance of the company position. Finch's position accounted for 17 killed enemy and two machine gun positions destroyed or silenced.¹²² Ninety minutes into this fight, the Germans tried to infiltrate into Yates's command post but failed. The Germans then relied on their artillery and mortars to kill the Americans. When Selvog's house began burning, he abandoned it for a nearby house and established an all-around defense on both floors and attic.

Americans in the upper-story noticed Germans wheeling an 88-mm cannon into position less than one hundred yards from their position and opened fire. Before long, this 88-mm gun and another further away shelled Selvog's position and Yates's command post. A 170-mm shell dropped into a hayloft connected to the command post, landing ten feet from one soldier but failed to explode. Six other such shells devastated a wooden shack outside the command post and shook the entire house. Between bombardments, the Germans assaulted the command post but accurate American fire kept them away. Private James Goldsmith sniped at an enemy machine gun team and prevented it from setting up close to the command post. Goldsmith stood his ground until fatally wounded.

At 1625, the regiment began to take notice of Third Battalion's firefight. I and K Companies remained outside the town while L Company was trapped inside. The lack of communications neither allowed information of the precarious state of L Company nor the ability to fire artillery because there was no observation. Major Ramsey's Third Battalion requested an artillery liaison plane to fly over Vy-les-Lure.¹²³ Apparently, this plane never got off the ground because, two hours later, Colonel Ben Harrell complained to division headquarters that he had lost communications with most of Third Battalion and could not fire artillery because he did not know where his men were.¹²⁴

At 1930, a strong German attack slammed into Selvog's and Yates's positions. The rifle company repulsed the German onslaught but was running short of grenades and rifle ammunition. After repelling the Germans, Yates reorganized his position but his men only had two or three clips of ammunition per man. Having been in Vy-les-Lure for several hours with no help, Yates sent four men to find Third Battalion to report their condition and get reinforcements. The four riflemen managed to escape unscathed and found regimental headquarters.

As darkness crept over Vy-les-Lure, having received no message from battalion, and with no expectation of support, Yates and his soldiers clung tenaciously to their small gains but knew they could not hold for long in their depleted state. At 2100, the Germans renewed their artillery and mortar bombardment in preparation for another assault on the two houses. The shellings were powerful enough to make the two German captives beg the Americans to surrender before they all died. Covered by darkness, the Germans launched their second attack and captured several American soldiers not with

either Selvog or Yates. The Americans carefully picked their silhouetted targets so as to not waste precious ammunition. American fire was again sufficient to prevent the enemy from overrunning their positions but the Germans prepared to charge for a third time. This time, as the Germans crept toward Yates, American artillery miraculously fell and virtually wiped out the assaulting force. Several Germans were killed with grenades in their hands and others fell twenty feet from the command post. This was enough to break the attack and save the besieged company.¹²⁵

Soon after this final assault failed, a patrol from K Company and the Battle Patrol made contact with an exhausted L Company. During the night, the company regrouped and tended its wounded. But the Americans could not know if the Germans would launch another counterattack and had to remain vigilant all night. Shortly before dawn on the sixteenth, Yates sent out a patrol and discovered that the Germans had left the town. On the defense, L Company claimed 18 killed, 2 captured, and approximately 70 Germans wounded. The company suffered 7 killed, 16 missing, and 14 wounded out of nearly 180 defenders, including men from M Company.

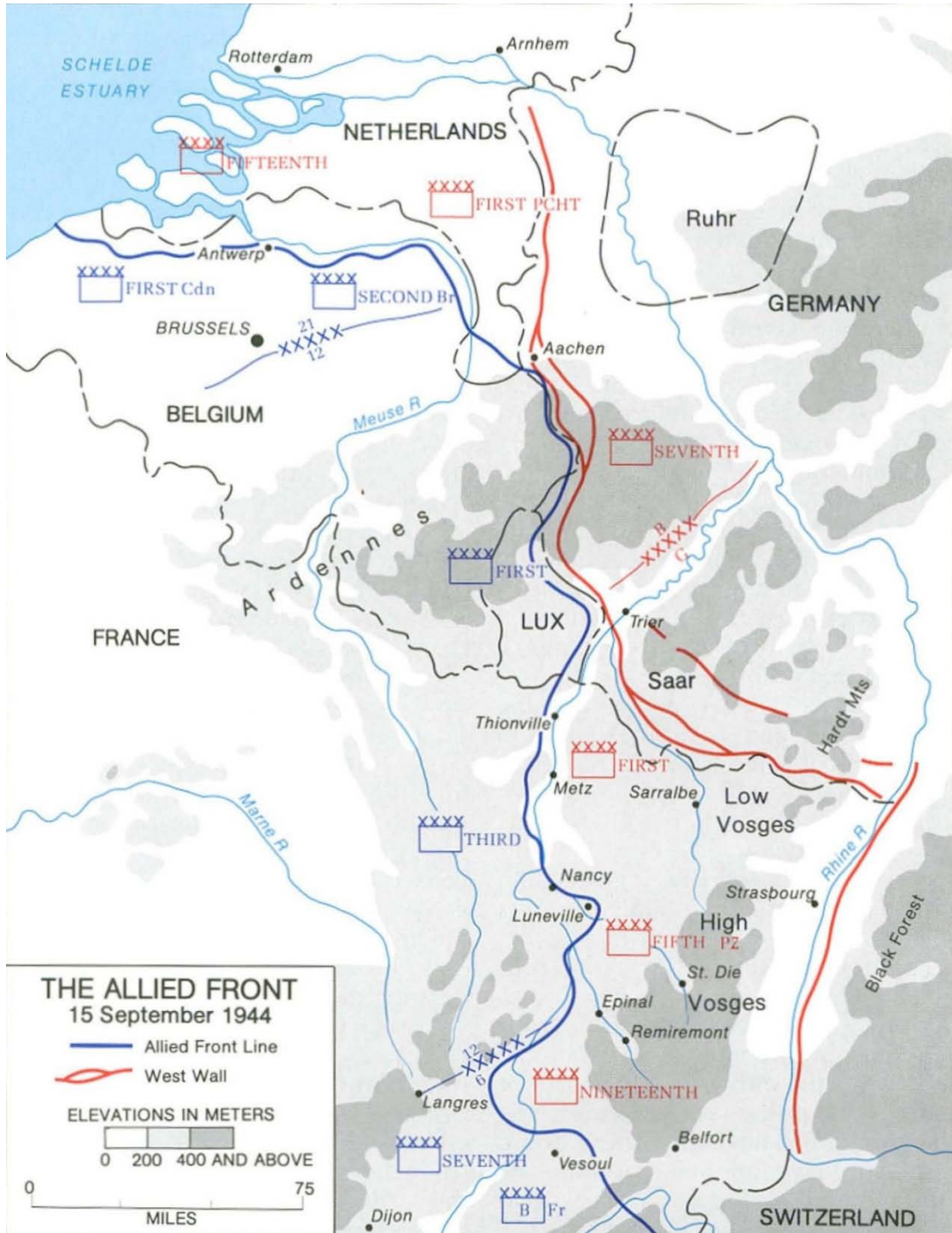
Neither side employed armor in the brief, savage fight for Vy-les-Lure. If the Germans had tanks available, they might have defeated L Company like they would capture the 26th Infantry's two rifle companies in Merode later in November. The absence of any armor gave a curious parity in Vy-les-Lure. It was an infantryman's battle that showed the power of the defense in urban combat. This absence of armor indicates how important armor had become in cities: rather than being an environment hostile to tanks, mechanized vehicles could quickly tip the balance. Vy-les-Lure

represents the 3rd Infantry Division's only significant urban defense during the six months in France and signified the beginning of the Vosges Mountain campaign. By mid-September, Seventh Army had decided that it would have to trudge through the mountains in order to destroy *Nineteenth Army*. This difficult terrain produced much tougher combat.

By mid-September, the 6th Army Group began its campaign through the Vosges by having the French on the army group's right threaten the Belfort Gap—the easiest the easiest and shortest way around the Vosges into Germany—in order to force *Army Group G* to commit many resources to stop them. With the French providing the holding attack by fixing a large portion of German men and material in place, Devers sent Seventh Army to make the main attack through the mountains into Germany and onto the Rhine River.¹²⁶ Figure 7.11 shows the Allied frontlines on 15 September.¹²⁷ At that time, the 1st Division was in the Aachen sector, the 5th Division was fighting just west of Metz, and the 3rd Division was east of Vesoul. The 3rd Division drove northeast from Vesoul toward Strasbourg.

One of the key challenges was the rugged mountainous terrain and the high rounded crags of 1,000 to 4,000 feet. As Figure 7.11 shows, the Vosges are divided into two ranges: the Low Vosges in the north and High Vosges in the south. VI Corps moved primarily through the High Vosges, which was the significantly more difficult axis of advance. This situation gave the German defenders excellent high ground positions, superior long-range observation, and cover within the forested areas. The area was also as forested as the Hürtgen. Ernest Hemingway had referred to the Hürtgen

Figure 7.11: The Allied Front, 15 September 1944



Forest as “Passchendaele with treebursts;” the campaign through the Vosges was the Hürtgen with mountains.¹²⁸ One battalion commander recalled battle there was like “Indian fighting” in colonial America; another officer described the combat as akin to jungle combat.¹²⁹ Just as the 1st Division fought tooth and nail for towns and villages in the Hürtgen Forest, so the 3rd Division would fight for the towns and villages in the Vosges Mountains.

Topographical challenges were complicated by the impending winter. Like the Hürtgen Forest, the Vosges Mountains presented another severe test for the Americans’ maturing combined-arms capabilities. Jeeps, ammunition carriers, armored cars, trucks, tanks, and tank destroyers found the going tough through the forested mountains and its constricting road network. Lastly, no military force had ever battled its way through the Vosges. The German defenders, despite their exhausted state, could remain confident that history was on their side because the mountains were such a force multiplier against their attackers.

The VI Corps divisions—the 3rd, 36th, and 45th Infantry Divisions—certainly had experience in similar terrain because each had fought up Italy’s Apennine Mountains. The 3rd and 45th had both fought through Sicily’s mountainous terrain as well. Regardless of this experience, the Vosges campaign was different than Sicily or Italy. In part this was because the Americans were fighting on the Franco-German border. As one veteran remarked, “In Italy, the Germans could afford to trade real estate for time, men and materiel. . . [But in the Vosges] their fortifications were deeper and more extensive, their firepower heavier and more intense, and their troops grimmer and

more determined.”¹³⁰ The Germans had a tendency through this campaign to incorporate towns that sat on road networks into their defensive schemes. As they obstinately defended towns on the Americans’ most likely axis of advance, so the 3rd Division was guaranteed to fight in the urban areas.¹³¹

Like the 1st and 5th Divisions, the 3rd Division also had to deal with the problem of training and preparing replacements. By the end of September, after the first two weeks into the Vosges campaign, the 15th Infantry Regiment and 756th Tank Battalion complained about the low quality of replacements. By the end of the month, the 15th Infantry noted that enemy resistance had strengthened, his artillery accuracy increased dramatically, and that they were now using “houses, hedge rows, woods, and high points extensively and [that] these positions were well-manned.” In contrast, the regiment complained that “our troops lack the drive they must have to achieve the final defeat of the enemy” in part because the replacements were not as “sufficiently trained nor as capable leaders as previously received.” For example, three out of six new lieutenants could not handle combat and had to be evacuated and many enlisted replacements did not know how to fire rifle grenades or operate bazookas.¹³²

Just as the infantry regiment had to retrain these new soldiers so the tank battalion also complained that nearly half of its men “have to be trained for their jobs after being received.” The 756th Tank Battalion protested that a replacement’s classification of “Armored Force” was too general a category because “an armored infantryman cannot be made into a tank driver any faster than a general replacement. . . . [and] Truck drivers are classified as tank drivers.” Training these fresh troops to do their

jobs and become proficient at combined-arms operations while the unit engaged in combat stretched that unit's capabilities.¹³³ These replacements that affected their units' overall combat performance no doubt affected how their units engaged in the urban environment.

Through the rest of September, the division pushed northeast through the western part of the High Vosges. The division traversed the Moselle River and cleared towns like Maxonchamp and Rupt-sur-Moselle. On 4 and 5 October, the 7th Infantry maneuvered itself in position against Vagney, a crossroads town near the Moselotte River. At 0400 in wet, rainy weather, 3/7 crossed the Moselotte to approach Vagney. K Company crossed the river with little opposition but continuous heavy fire prevented I Company from going over until later that afternoon. When K Company got across, it quickly took the outskirts of Vagney by 0700, and fought a bitter house-by-house battle throughout the rest of 6 October. On the battalion's right/southern flank, L Company got across and moved towards the south to seize Zainvillers and its bridge over the Moselotte but failed to take it.

Four tanks from A/756th Tank Battalion fired on German soldiers holed up inside Vagney's railroad station that afternoon.¹³⁴ Supporting artillery and infantry fire had destroyed self-propelled guns inside the town as well. Throughout the day, First and Second Battalions along with their tank support, which were north of Vagney, moved south to cut off the town from the east. The Second Battalion then continued south to help I Company take Zainvillers. The wet ground caused several tanks to bog down and fail to support the attack.

By the early evening, K Company had captured most of Vagney but was hit by a German counterattack of two tanks and nearly 200 infantrymen.¹³⁵ I Company crossed the Moselotte River to assist K Company's defense. Combat continued into the night when 3/7 finally repelled several counterattacks. Early on the seventh, K and I Companies depended upon the emerging combined-arms methods to clear each building and house in Vagney and deploy east of the town.

On the seventh, the regiment as well as First and Third Battalions located their command posts inside Vagney as the 7th Regiment fought toward the east against continued heavy resistance. At 1700, the Germans unleashed an artillery barrage over Vagney that, along with rain, fog, and decreasing light, allowed a stronger counterattacking force of three tanks and three hundred men to infiltrate into the American-held town that had few infantrymen defending it.¹³⁶ German tanks found and blasted the command posts, causing American casualties. As Lieutenant James Harris of the 756th Tank Battalion surveyed the scene, a burst of enemy machine gun fire caught him square in the chest and killed the man beside him. Harris dragged himself thirty yards under fire to his tank to redeploy it to a better firing position. A German tank fired and a piece of shrapnel nearly sheared off Harris' leg at the hip; he died soon after. U.S. infantry, tanks, and tank destroyers rushed into Vagney to blunt the counterattack. After several hours of desperate urban fighting, the Americans expelled the Germans from Vagney for a second time.¹³⁷

By the end of the month, individual units had formed different opinions of the 3rd Division's capabilities. The 30th Infantry was especially critical of its infantry

during October. The 30th asserted that night movements through forests and towns were especially dangerous activities that the regiment should avoid because night disrupted unit cohesion especially against stout German defenses. The regiment also observed that tank-infantry cooperation suffered because when accompanying tanks “buttoned up” and there became no way for an infantryman to communicate targets to the supporting armor. While the 30th Infantry complained about communication problems, the 756th Tank Battalion was confident that tank-infantry cooperation had improved as the infantry better understood tanks’ limitations and capabilities and the armored unit became more familiar with infantry tactics. Although never perfected, these two combat arms valued the importance of maintaining effective teamwork.¹³⁸

After resting and reinforcing in October, the 3rd Division continued its slow push through towns in the Vosges. With their backs to the Meurthe River, the Germans stubbornly gave ground. In the first days of November, the 7th Infantry spent five days fighting for Le Haute Jacques, or the “crossroads of hell.” U.S. artillery bombarded the town of LaSalle before 2/15 and its attached armor fought house-by-house from 2 to 3 November against heavy and ubiquitous German small arms, machine guns, mortars, and tanks. Assault guns from the 756th Tank Battalion offered direct support, firing 105-mm rounds into enemy-occupied houses.¹³⁹ A few miles to the east, B/15 defended the town of Nompateize against aggressive regiment-size counterattacks.

On 20 November, the 3rd Division made an assault across the Meurthe River, relying heavily on secrecy and the cover of night, only bringing down American firepower after enough men had crossed. The operation was successful but the 7th

Infantry Regiment suffered 167 casualties. The division continued its slow eastward drive toward Strasbourg. At most towns, the Germans delayed the Americans before withdrawing. At Nayemont, on 22 November, the Germans defended the town from the oncoming 7th Infantry with a strong complement of artillery, flak wagons, infantry, and mines. A one-company assault escalated into all of 1/7 ejecting German forces from the town. American tanks supported as the infantry eliminated German antitank weapons. The G.I.s of A Company, aided by tanks and mortars, worked their way through Nayemont, house by house. Throwing hand grenades, one squad assaulted a house and took eleven prisoners. Germans in a house fifteen yards away opened up on these Americans, who doggedly held on to their prize. First platoon leapfrogged squads from building to building, taking fifteen houses this way. Before long, the balance of 1/7 had enveloped Nayemont by 1700.¹⁴⁰

Concurrently, 3/7 moved toward Saales, which became the Germans' defensive obstacle along the route to Strasbourg. By now, VI Corps observed that German resistance was weakening and ordered its divisions to maintain their momentum.¹⁴¹ The 7th Infantry's Third Battalion, reinforced by tanks, made a surprise, early morning attack on 22 November, entering Saales just as the Germans were waking up, completely unaware of the Americans' presence. Third Battalion control Saales by mid-day on the twenty-second.¹⁴² The 7th's commander, Colonel Ben Harrell, ordered First Battalion and its attached armor to proceed east to Bourg-Bruche in order to pre-empt the expected counterattack.¹⁴³

By late afternoon, 1/7 and its armor were outside Bourg-Bruche. A German prisoner stated that there were 150 men in the town and they might surrender; instead the garrison stubbornly fought back. Other intelligence gathered from prisoners indicated that they had only arrived that day as an emergency unit.¹⁴⁴ B Company entered the town but accurate German artillery and automatic fire forced it to seek cover. An American lieutenant directed an M4 Sherman tank to support the stricken infantrymen. Combat raged through the night as B and C Companies fought the Germans at close quarters for the rooms and buildings of Bourg-Bruche; the Americans and Germans until dawn attacked and counterattacked. On the twenty-fourth, A Company arrived from the east. The infantry and American tanks of A/756 Tank Battalion spent much of the second day evicting the enemy infantry and supporting armor. By 1700, it was finally in American hands. In five days, the 7th Infantry had assaulted across the Meurthe River to fight within Nayemont, Saales, and Bourg-Bruche.¹⁴⁵

On the twenty-fourth, a tired 7th Infantry went into division reserve as the 15th and 30th Infantry Regiments spearheaded the 3th Division's drive toward Strasbourg, no doubt encouraged by a rumor that the division that took Strasbourg would receive a 72-hour pass.¹⁴⁶ After Bourg-Bruche, the 3rd Division left the Vosges Mountains and debouched onto the plains of Alsace. In the end, the French 2nd Armored Division, fighting northward from Belfort, reached Strasbourg first.

Upon the division's arrival to Strasbourg, the 7th Infantry took command of the city and the infantrymen, tanks, and tank destroyers patrolled the streets and neighborhoods. The regiment also cleared out the areas between the Rhine River and

Strasbourg. On 30 November, the 7th Infantry seized the Kehl Bridge over the Rhine and proceeded into Kehl, Germany. Until 2 December, the 7th Infantry fought the “Battle of the Apartment Houses” against German infantry posted inside homes and buildings with various small arms, antitank rockets, automatic weapons, and covered by snipers. The G.I.s of the 7th Infantry advanced systematically, taking Kehl’s buildings one by one with the aid of a few tank destroyers that blasted holes into the sides of buildings and allowed infantrymen to “mousehole.” Artillery also gave the troops necessary support as they moved through the city. Second Battalion radioed that the Germans were making it difficult for the G.I.s but, late on 2 December, 2/7 controlled Kehl, Germany.¹⁴⁷

As a city on the Rhine as well as on the border of France and Germany in Alsace, Strasbourg has a unique history of living under French or German control. In contrast to other liberated French towns and cities, the citizens of Strasbourg received their Allied occupiers much more coolly than other French towns and cities. Some civilians were not convinced that the Germans would not return and others were friendly toward the German cause. Nevertheless, being there afforded the men of the 3rd Infantry Division a chance to rest, refit, and prepare for their next offensive. Like the 1st Infantry Division after its ordeal through the Hürtgen Forest, the 3rd Division rested and retrained until forced to return to the war after the German counteroffensive through the Ardennes Forest.

As with the other divisions, the 3rd Division was able to refine how it handled the urban environment. The reports of the 601st Tank Destroyer Battalion argued that

when the enemy held a small town in the open, it was better for the armor to remain behind the assaulting infantry and to fire on enemy-held houses. Often, strong support fire from the armor just behind the infantry was enough to keep the enemy lying low.¹⁴⁸ The 30th Infantry observed that attempting to thoroughly clear towns at night was not a good idea. The regiment asserted that its best option was to contain the Germans inside the town while the main force simply bypassed it. By the end of December, the 7th Infantry argued that when fighting in buildings on both sides of a street, hand signals were an effective means of coordinating fire and movement.¹⁴⁹

Organizational problems persisted, namely because the independent tank destroyer and tank battalions were under corps command and corps headquarters could transfer these battalions. For example, in November, VI Corps removed the armor attached to the 3rd Division to lend to other divisions. The 601st Tank Destroyer and 756th Tank Battalions loudly protested this detachment because it undermined the combined-arms teamwork that they worked so hard to maintain. The 601st Tank Destroyer Battalion recommended making itself an integrated part of the 3rd Division so that when the division rested and refitted, the armor could do likewise and not have to participate in another division's operations.¹⁵⁰ The 756th Tank Battalion complained that receiving orders to detach tank platoons and companies rendered supply and maintenance "well nigh impossible." Worse, the 756th argued that transferring the battalion from one unit with established relationships to another with no prior association was counterproductive, especially when they had to form that teamwork in combat. The 756th concluded that "there is no substitute for teamwork based on

familiarity and mutual confidence.”¹⁵¹ Combined-arms warfare had become integral to the American Army.

Conclusion

American divisions utilized a combined-arms approach to battle as each fought through France. As American infantry doctrine slowly recognized the importance of combined-arms fighting, the soldiers in 1st, 3rd, and 5th Infantry Divisions relied increasingly on armor-infantry-artillery teamwork. For example, the 26th Regimental Combat Team created battalion-size combat teams with its “Battle Groups.” The 5th Infantry Division referred to the 2nd, 10th, and 11th Regimental Combat Teams throughout its wartime records. The 3rd and 5th Infantry Divisions employed their attached tanks and tank destroyers as infantry transports as they pursued the enemy in August and September. The 5th’s commanding general lamented the loss of his tank destroyer and tank battalion, and their established relationships, to Third Army control during the Battle of the Bulge. Likewise, officers in the tank and tank destroyer battalions in the 3rd Infantry Division loudly protested when VI Corps detached them for service elsewhere in November, thus disrupting established armor-infantry relationships.

As these units improved their combined-arms capabilities, they applied these lessons specifically to urban combat, even down to the company and battalion levels. L Company, 15th Infantry fought alongside tanks and tank destroyers against German infantry and armor in an unplanned street fight for Allan in August 1944, knocking the Germans out of the town after a bitter close-quarters battle. The 7th Infantry’s Third Battalion, after only a few hours’ planning, assaulted Noroy-le-Bourg. Armor gave

direct fire support from the rear and entered the town after the riflemen secured a foothold. The two battalion commanders leading the attack on Aachen had several days to plan, organize, and prepare for the assault. The tanks and assaulting infantry implemented well-designed teamwork and cooperation: the tanks provided mobile fire support, thus allowing the infantry to carry out assignments more effectively, and the infantrymen diligently protected the tanks from antitank fire concealed within buildings and amidst the rubble. The Americans in Aachen also labored to improve air-ground cooperation between ground forces and fighter-bombers.

Heavily forested and mountainous terrain, such as the Hürtgen Forest and Vosges Mountains, limited tanks' and tank destroyers' firepower. Despite the terrain difficulties, the Americans clung to established combat-team relationship against towns like Hamich and Heistern in the Hürtgen as well as Nayemont and Bourg-Bruche in the Vosges. The combined-arms arrangements may have changed with the varying circumstances but these attacks involved all the combat arms nonetheless.

From a different perspective, the Americans' experiences when they defended towns also demonstrated how important armor and artillery were in this environment. Each division had to mount an urban defense at least once: 2/26 at Merode in the Hürtgen Forest; 2/10 at Pournoy-la-Chetive during the Metz campaign; and L/7 at Vylles-Lure before the Vosges Mountain campaign. In each example, the presence or absence of tanks was crucial. After the 26th Infantry's E and F Companies had chased the Germans out of Merode on 29 November, the enemy made a quick counterattack. Heavy German artillery as well as destroyed tanks that blocked the only usable roads

prevented American armor from rescuing the beleaguered rifle companies.

Communication problems also meant division artillery could not assist. In the absence of American armor, German tanks entered Merode with impunity to kill or capture the majority of two rifle companies. Although they tried to rush bazookas into the town, the Americans had no chance at a successful defense without effective armored support.

In contrast, when the Germans assaulted the 5th Infantry Division's 2/10 at Pournoy-la-Chetive, American tanks and tank destroyers were instrumental in maintaining the American hold on the town, despite strong German artillery and counterattacks. The tanks and tank destroyers offered support behind the infantry's attack and once in the town helped expel the German defenders. Their presence along with artillery support was critical to 2/10's three-day hold on Pournoy. Indeed, by the time the battalion left the town, most of the armor there needed repairs from the days of constant fighting.

Lastly, L Company, 7th Infantry defended Vy-les-Lure against strong German infantry attacks. There was no armor in this battle, thus creating parity as German infantry maneuvered to extricate the Americans and the G.I.s fought desperately to keep their hold on Vy-les-Lure. It is questionable whether the Americans, having no armor or antitank support, could have held onto Vy-les-Lure if German tanks rolled into town. With neither side enjoying tank support, this battle became a desperate infantryman's fight that the Americans won when a well-placed and well-timed American artillery salvo wiped out the Germans' last major assault. These cases demonstrate that tanks and

artillery could not win a battle alone, but strong, well-coordinated tank-artillery-infantry teamwork was a powerful combination.

Alongside coordinating the combat arms, the divisions had improved their ability to assault an urban area. Americans understood the importance of maneuver and isolation, as seen at the cities of Aachen, Metz, and small towns like Brignoles. They learned that movement inside the towns through “mouseholing”—as at Aachen, Saarlautern, and Kehl—was critical to preventing excessive casualties.¹⁵² At Saarlautern, the 2nd Infantry learned a simple solution to the problem of the city’s many pillboxes by using thermite grenades to melt and seal the rear doors shut. The 16th Infantry learned to use surprise and a controlled artillery bombardment to assist the attack on Luchem in the Hürtgen.

Focusing solely on the attackers tells only half the tale; the defenders also get a vote. When the Germans assumed positions to renew the fighting by September, the Americans quickly learned how the defender affects an urban fight. For example, in August the Germans could have made the 5th Division’s 11th Infantry pay much more dearly for Angers, sitting at the confluence of the Main and Loire Rivers. A stronger defense might have held up the Third Army’s drive into central France but these Germans were concerned more with withdrawing than stopping Third Army’s pursuit. Yet when the 5th Division’s 2nd Infantry tried to capture Amanvillers, the fanatical German officer-candidates were supported by enough artillery from a reinforced *festung* that the 2nd failed to seize the town until the defenders finally withdrew. Even when the 2nd Infantry cooperated with the combat command of an armored division, the

Americans could not control Amanvillers. Indeed, the Americans never took Amanvillers by force and the officer-candidates escaped encirclement.

Stolberg, in the Siegfried Line in mid-September, resisted American attempts to seize it. American units hit Stolberg from the west and east, but the attacks were uncoordinated. The staunch German defense, which included German armor and employing the town's tunnels and sewers, prevented the 1st Division from taking the city. The German stand at Stolberg was sufficient enough to keep the Americans at bay until November.

On the other end of the spectrum, the 3rd Division fought bitter urban battles in southern France, but few were on the level as those engaged by the 1st and 5th Divisions. In most places, German soldiers in the south fell back. The German *Army Group G* did not neglect the urban environment: although it failed, German command relied on a stout defense of Besançon to protect the Belfort Gap. In early October, after 3/7 took Vagney, the G.I.s had to fight off an enemy tank-infantry force that infiltrated into Vagney and nearly destroyed three command posts. However, by the time the 3rd Division disrupted the nascent Winter Line by seizing Saales and Bourg-Bruche in November, the Germans were unable to stop the American assaults. It would only be speculation to estimate what would have happened if the Germans had put up a stronger urban defense before mid-September but it stands to reason that many of these urban battles in France were not as costly as they might have been because of the German retreat. Amanvillers, Stolberg, and Bourg-Brouche revealed that the German soldier became a vicious enemy whenever he stood and fought.

Field Manual 31-50 was published before the invasion of Normandy but it is difficult to determine to what extent it influenced the 1st, 3rd, and 5th Divisions. The 18th Infantry was already training for urban combat and the 3rd Division had accepted a view of urban combat that afforded a greater degree of combined-arms fighting. Soldiers were already receiving stateside training in village and town combat. The divisions' records do not indicate whether *FM 31-50* had any influenced their combat decisions. Indeed, in many ways, the three divisions were ahead of the field manual and were already formulating more sophisticated urban combat techniques, as Lieutenant Colonel Derrill Daniel indicated with his planning of the assault on Aachen, as the 5th Division showed with its attacks on towns outside Metz, and even in small-unit actions like one of the 3rd Division's battalion's fight at Noroy-le-Bourg. This suggests that inasmuch as the army was learning institutionally through the war, the combat units were also learning experientially and this had a greater influence on their decisions in battle.

The Americans had improved their urban combat capabilities but casualties—dealing with the loss of veterans and training and inserting new replacements—hindered the process. As demonstrated in Chapter 5, the army improved draftees' training. But, as one veteran of Aachen remarked, “all the inf[antry] training you could get would never have you ready when it came time go into combat.”¹⁵³ As such, there was a constant need to maintain these combined-arms and urban combat capabilities. Whether infantry-artillery-tank-tank destroyer cooperation, attacking under fire, or fighting in a city, veteran units became frustrated that replacements did not have the requisite combat

knowledge, despite their training, stateside and in Europe. The constant outflow of veteran soldiers and officers as casualties and continual influx of replacements showed that learning and relearning these ideas and skills was imperative to American military success over the *Wehrmacht*. Each experienced, veteran division and its subunits had to keep learning these lessons because of the high rate of casualties and replacement. The 2nd Infantry trained its men in urban combat before the last major push to take Metz in November. In most cases, a base of veteran corporals, sergeants, and officers helped to ensure that the replacements had experienced teachers.

In the midst of the fights for Aachen and the Hürtgen Forest, the 1st Infantry Division received newly arrived troops. The 5th Division's 2nd Infantry accepted new soldiers during the battle for Amanvillers. Each time, they lost a heavy proportion of those green soldiers. Replacements filled 2/10 when it attacked across open ground to take Pournoy-la-Chetive in late September. Initially, the inexperienced men wavered until forced across by their veteran sergeants and officers, aided by direct fire support behind them. The same month, units in the 3rd Infantry Division also complained about the capabilities their inadequate replacements. As the 26th Infantry attacked Jungersdorf and Merode at the end of the Hürtgen Forest campaign, many of those G.I.s were new to the regiment since the battle for Aachen. They were in an urban battle for the first time. This meant that as units came off the line, they would have to train on various urban combat techniques, such as tank-infantry cooperation, assaulting fortified positions, and coordinating artillery fires. The baseline of veteran corporals, sergeants, and officers worked to incorporate replacements into these veteran divisions.

While the issue of personnel turnover continued to plague the American military through the rest of World War II, these three divisions' experiences in towns and cities between June and December 1944 show organizational learning. The American military had to master how to integrate its infantry weapons before it could combine its arms but by December 1944 the American soldier had embraced combined-arms operations and had applied those capabilities to the urban environment. The Battle of the Bulge as well as the invasion of Germany required the Americans to sharpen and refine these developing combined-arms, urban operations capabilities.

Endnotes

- ¹ Michael C. Bilder, *A Foot Soldier for Patton: The Story of a "Red Diamond" Infantryman with the U.S. Third Army* (Philadelphia: Casemate, 2008): 104.
- ² Fifth Division Historical Section, *The Fifth Infantry Division in the ETO: Iceland, England, Ireland, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Czechoslovakia, Austria* (Headquarters Fifth Infantry Division, 1947; reprint, Nashville: The Battery Press, 1997). This division history, including the reprinted volume, is not paginated. This account comes from the section entitled "The Battle of Vidouville."
- ³ Tommy R. Gilliam, "A History of the First Battalion, Second United States Infantry Regiment, 21 August 1941 to 30 March 1945, ATO and ETO," n.d., 49, Tommy R. Gilliam Papers, WWII Veterans Surveys, 5th Infantry Division, Box 1, MHI.
- ⁴ Bilder, *Foot Soldier for Patton*, 106.
- ⁵ Bilder, *Foot Soldier for Patton*, 93.
- ⁶ Mark C. Goodman, "Company 'A,' 10th U.S. Infantry Regiment, 5th Division, Combat Narrative, 1941-1945," n.d., 32, unpublished memoir, copy in Mark C. Goodman Papers, WWII Veterans Survey, 5th Infantry Division, Box 2, MHI.
- ⁷ The map is from Fifth Division Historical Section, *The Fifth Infantry Division in the ETO*.

- ⁸ *Eleventh Infantry Regiment, Fifth Infantry Division* (Baton Rouge: Army and Navy Publishing Co., 1946), 7. Hereinafter cited as *Eleventh Infantry Regiment*; Sgt. Ludden, “Dusty at Angers,” n.d., 1 in “5th Infantry Division Battle of France (Angers-Fontainebleau, Aug. 1944), Box 24022, RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.
- ⁹ Sgt. Ludden, “Dusty at Angers,” 1-2 in “5th Infantry Division Battle of France (Angers-Fontainebleau, Aug. 1944), RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA; “G-2 After-Action Report for August 1944,” 3 September 1944, 4-5, File 305-2, Box 5899, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁰ *Eleventh Infantry Regiment*, 7.
- ¹¹ “Force Thackeray,” 1 in “5th Infantry Division Battle of France (Angers-Fontainebleau, Aug. 1944), Box 24022, RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.
- ¹² *Eleventh Infantry Regiment*, 8-10.
- ¹³ *Eleventh Infantry Regiment*, 10.
- ¹⁴ Ludden, “Dusty at Angers,” 14-15 in “5th Infantry Division Battle of France (Angers-Fontainebleau, Aug. 1944), RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA; *Eleventh Infantry Regiment*, 11.
- ¹⁵ *Eleventh Infantry Regiment*, 10-1.
- ¹⁶ *Eleventh Infantry Regiment*, 11; Louis J. Lauria, *Running Wire at the Front Lines: Memoir of a Radio and Telephone Man in World War II* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2011), 54-5.
- ¹⁷ Lauria, *Running Wire at the Front Lines*, 49-59.
- ¹⁸ Ludwikosky, et al., “735th Tank Battalion in the Reduction of Metz,” (Fort Knox, KY: Officers Advanced Course, Armored School, 1950), 17-8.
- ¹⁹ Captain Alexander B. Campbell, “Use of Cannon Company in an Infantry Regiment,” n.d., 1-2, File 305-INF(11)-0.6, Box 6021, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ²⁰ Staff sergeant, 10th Infantry quoted in Public Relations Section, Tenth Infantry Regiment, *History of Tenth Infantry Regiment, United States Army* (Birmingham, AL: Military Service Co., 1946), 25. Hereinafter cited as *History of Tenth Infantry Regiment*.
- ²¹ Bilder, *Foot Soldier for Patton*, 136-7.

- ²² *Fifth Infantry Division in the ETO*, “Across the Seine.”
- ²³ Christopher R. Gabel, *The Lorraine Campaign: An Overview, September-December 1944* (Fort Leavenworth: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1985), 6.
- ²⁴ Map comes from Hugh M. Cole, *The Lorraine Campaign* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1950), Map XII.
- ²⁵ “The Defense of Metz: Interview with Genoberst Johannes Blaskowitz,” 20 July 1945, 1-2, Box 24128, ML 7, RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.
- ²⁶ Weigley, *Eisenhower’s Lieutenants*, 299; Cole, *The Lorraine Campaign*, 126-7.
- ²⁷ This discussion of Metz’s fortifications relies upon Anthony Kemp, *The Unknown Battle: Metz, 1944* (London: Frederick Warne, 1980), 29-30, 233-238; Gabel, *Lorraine Campaign*, 19.
- ²⁸ Weigley, *Eisenhower’s Lieutenants*, 327; Gabel, *Lorraine Campaign*, 20. The orders to capture Metz came on 6 September: Lieutenant Colonel R. C. Dickens, “After Action Against the Enemy Report,” 2 October 1944, 2, File 305-3, Box 5925, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ²⁹ Louis A. DiMarco, *Concrete Hell: Urban Warfare from Stalingrad to Iraq* (Osprey: Oxford, 2012), 10. The fighting for St. Lô and Caen also help to show this tendency.
- ³⁰ “Notes on General Irwin’s Conference, 06150B Sep 44,” 1; “To CG Corps,” 6 September 1944, 2 in “G-3 Journal and File, 5-8 September 1944,” File 305-3.2, Box 5930, RG 407, Entry 427, NA. Italics added.
- ³¹ For more on the Dornot and Arnaville crossings, see Cole, *Lorraine Campaign*, 117-83; Charles B. MacDonald, “River Crossing at Arnaville,” in Charles B. MacDonald and Sidney T. Mathews, eds., *Three Battles: Arnaville, Altuzzo, and Schmidt* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1952); Major S. J. Argersinger, et al., *Moselle River Crossing: 5th Infantry Division, September 1944* (Fort Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute, 1983).
- ³² “German OCS VI, Defense of Metz, 2-24 Sept 1944,” 8-12, Folder 246, Box 24082, RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.
- ³³ Cole, *Lorraine Campaign*, 152.
- ³⁴ “Notes on Conference of CG XX Corps at Div CP 091030B Sep,” 9 September 1944 in “G-3 Journal and File, 9-12 September 1944,” File 305-3.2, Box 5930, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.

- ³⁵ “German OCS VI, Defense of Metz, 2-24 Sept 1944,” 23-4, RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.
- ³⁶ Cole, *Lorraine Campaign*, 153.
- ³⁷ Col Roffe to Col Dickens; Col. Dickens to Gen Irwin, 10 September, 1, “G-3 Journal and File, 9-12 September 1944,” RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ³⁸ Gilliam, “A History of the First Battalion, Second United States Infantry Regiment,” 66-8, Tommy R. Gilliam Papers, MHI. Gilliam does not give the dates for these events.
- ³⁹ Ludwikosky, et al., “735th Tank Battalion in the Reduction of Metz,” 19.
- ⁴⁰ Robert C. Russell, “World War II Memoirs,” 23, Robert C. Russell Papers, WWII Veterans Surveys, 5th Infantry Division, Box 1, MHI.
- ⁴¹ Whereas some sources indicate that the assault on 10 September failed, three wartime sources (alongside the 1950 Fort Knox paper “735th Tank Battalion in the Reduction of Metz” cited above) state that the assault successfully captured Amanvillers by 2100, albeit only temporarily: Giroux, “Operations Report for Period 110700B Sep 44 to 120700B Sep 44,” 12 September 1944, 1 in “2nd Infantry Regiment Journal File, 4 September-2 October 1944,” File 305-INF(2)-0.8, Box 5997, RG 407, Entry 427, NA; “Unit History for Month of September 1944,” 6 October 1944, 4 in Joseph M. Swantek Papers, MHI; “After Action Report for September 1944,” 3 October 1944, 5-6 in “2nd Infantry Regiment After-Action Reports, 13 July-31 December 1944,” File 305-INF(2)-0.3, Box 5993, RG 407, Entry 427, NA. All three confirm the extremely heavy volume of German artillery fire that prevented 1/2 from re-entering Amanvillers as does the regimental history: *Second Infantry Regiment, Fifth Infantry Division* (Baton Rouge: Army & Navy Publishing Co., 1947), 41. Hereinafter cited as *Second Infantry Regiment*. It is noteworthy that the translated German document on the OCS cadets’ defense of Amanvillers indicates that the Americans never took the town on 10 September: “German OCS VI, Defense of Metz, 2-24 Sept 1944,” 24, RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.
- ⁴² Third Battalion journal quoted in Cole, *The Lorraine Campaign*, 157.
- ⁴³ Cole, *Lorraine Campaign*, 152.
- ⁴⁴ Cole, *Lorraine Campaign*, 128.
- ⁴⁵ To Col Roffe, 2d Inf, 10 September, 1, “G-3 Journal and File, 9-12 September 1944,” RG 407, Entry 427, NA; “Unit History for Month of September 1944,” 2 in Joseph M. Swantek Papers, MHI; “After Action Report for September 1944,” 2 in “2nd

Infantry Regiment After-Action Reports, 13 July-31 December 1944,” RG 407, Entry 427, NA.

- ⁴⁶ Gilliam, “A History of the First Battalion, Second United States Infantry Regiment,” 66, Tommy R. Gilliam Papers, MHI; Russell, “World War II Memoirs,” 22-3, Robert C. Russell Papers, MHI.
- ⁴⁷ “After Action Report for September 1944,” 2 in “2nd Infantry Regiment After-Action Reports, 13 July-31 December 1944,” RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁴⁸ Captain Tommy Gilliam complained that many of his replacements during this time had received no infantry training; some had never even fired the M-1 Garand. See Gilliam, “A History of the First Battalion, Second United States Infantry Regiment,” 67, Tommy R. Gilliam Papers, MHI.
- ⁴⁹ Russell, “World War II Memoirs,” 24, Robert C. Russell Papers, MHI.
- ⁵⁰ Cole, *Lorraine Campaign*, 165-6.
- ⁵¹ Cole, *Lorraine Campaign*, Map XVI.
- ⁵² *History of Tenth Infantry Regiment*, 60.
- ⁵³ “Unit Journal, 818 Tank Destroyer Battalion, 1 September to 30 September 1944,” n.d., 16 in “818th Tank Destroyer Bn A/A Reports and Unit Journal, July-Nov 44,” File TDBN-818-0.3, Box 23828, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁵⁴ Cole, *Lorraine Campaign*, 175-6; *History of Tenth Infantry Regiment*, 61.
- ⁵⁵ Tanker quoted in Cole, *Lorraine Campaign*, 177.
- ⁵⁶ “Order of Events,” n.d., 2 in “5th Infantry Division Moselle River Crossing, 8-2 September 1944,” Folder 38, Box 24023, RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA; Cole, *Lorraine Campaign*, 176-7; Road conditions: Mark Goodman, “Company ‘A,’ 10th U.S. Infantry Regiment,” 94, MHI.
- ⁵⁷ “Order of Events,” 2-4 in “5th Infantry Division Moselle River Crossing, 8-24 September 1944,” RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA; Cole, *Lorraine Campaign*, 176-7.
- ⁵⁸ *History of Tenth Infantry Regiment*, 62-3.
- ⁵⁹ Goodman, “Company ‘A,’ 10th U.S. Infantry Regiment,” 94, MHI.

- ⁶⁰ The artillery's complaints about ammunition rationing and restrictions: "After Action Against the Enemy Report, from 0001 hrs 1 September to 2400 hrs 30 September 1944," 3 October 1944, 5-6 in "A/A Reports, HQs and HQ Battery, 5th ID Div Arty, July-December 1944," File 305-ART1-0.3, Box 5979, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁶¹ "Unit Journal, 818 Tank Destroyer Battalion," 17 in "818th Tank Destroyer Bn A/A Reports and Unit Journal, July-Nov 44," RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁶² For discussion of these logistical and strategic reasons, see Weigley, *Eisenhower's Lieutenants*, 383-6; Kemp, *Unknown Battle*, 102-6; Cole, *Lorraine Campaign*, 256-60. That the Germans observed this Allied pause in the Third Army sector: Kemp, *Unknown Battle*, 105.
- ⁶³ For more on the 11th Infantry's ill-fated assaults on Fort Driant: *Eleventh Infantry Regiment*, 29-33; *Fifth Infantry Division in the ETO*, "The Assault on Fort Driant;" Cole, *Lorraine Campaign*, 260-75; Kemp, *Unknown Battle*, 107-26; John Nelson Rickard, *Patton at Bay: The Lorraine Campaign. September to December, 1944* (Praeger: Westport, CT, 1999), 138-45.
- ⁶⁴ Kemp, *Unknown Battle*, 74.
- ⁶⁵ *Second Infantry Regiment*, 46.
- ⁶⁶ Cole, *Lorraine Campaign*, Map XXXII.
- ⁶⁷ Kemp, *Unknown Battle*, 148.
- ⁶⁸ Captain Emile J. Bussolati, "The Operations of the 1st Battalion, 2d Infantry (5th Infantry Division) in the Crossing of the Seille River and Subsequent Attack on the Town of Louvigny, South of Metz, France, 9 November 1944 (Rhineland Campaign)," (Fort Benning, GA, Advanced Infantry Officers Course, 1949-1950), 11.
- ⁶⁹ For more on the small-unit action for Louvigny, see Emile Bussolati's "The Operations of the 1st Battalion, 2d Infantry (5th Infantry Division) in the Crossing of the Seille River and Subsequent Attack on the Town of Louvigny, South of Metz, France, 9 November 1944 (Rhineland Campaign)," (Fort Benning, GA, Advanced Infantry Officers Course, 1949-1950).
- ⁷⁰ Sergeant Monroe Ludden, "10th Infantry Combat Team, Metz Operation, 9-24 November 1944," 26 November 1944, 9-10 and Sergeant Monroe Ludden, "11th Infantry Combat Team, Assault on Metz, 9-24 November 1944," 29 November 1944,

3-4 in "5th Infantry Division Assault on Metz 9-24 Nov 1944," Box 24023, RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.

⁷¹ Ludden, "10th Infantry Combat Team, Metz Operation, 9-24 November 1944," 5 in "5th Infantry Division Assault on Metz 9-24 Nov 1944," RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.

⁷² Cole, *Lorraine Campaign*, 430-1. The German Table of Organization and Equipment in Metz is from Cole, *Lorraine Campaign*, 432, footnote 26.

⁷³ "After Action Report for November 1944," 5 December 1944, 2 in "10th Infantry After-Action Reports," File 305-INF(10)-0.3, Box 6003, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.

⁷⁴ Ludden, "11th Infantry Combat Team, Assault on Metz, 9-24 November 1944," 5-6 in "5th Infantry Division Assault on Metz 9-24 Nov 1944," RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA. Tanks' use: Msg. to Ex O 11th Inf, "G-3 Journal and File, 19 November 1944," 4 in "G-3 Journal and File, 16-19 November 1944," File 305-3.2, Box 5934, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.

⁷⁵ Goodman, "Company 'A,' 10th U.S. Infantry Regiment, 5th Division, Combat Narrative, 1941-1945," 106-8, Mark C. Goodman Papers, MHI. Metz declared clear: Msg To Corps Capt Lull/Maj V, "G-3 Journal and File, 20 November 1944," 10 in "G-3 Journal and File, 20-22 November 1944," File 305-3.2, Box 5937, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.

⁷⁶ Cole, *Lorraine Campaign*, 449; Major P. R. Stephenson, et al., *The Battle of Metz: Offensive, Deliberate Attack, MOUT* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, 1984), 67.

⁷⁷ The "Time-on-Target," or TOT, bombardment was a unique American concept in World War II. Fire Direction Control Centers gave the necessary information to several artillery batteries so that each shell landed at the same spot at the same time. TOT bombardments often devastated German positions. For TOT firings, see "After Action Against the Enemy Report, From 0001 hrs, 31 October to 24 hrs, 30 November 1944," 1 December 1944 in "After-Action Reports, HQs and HQ Battery, 5th ID Div Arty, July-December 1944," File 305-ART1-0.3, Box 5979, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.

⁷⁸ Map comes from Cole, *Lorraine Campaign*, Map 47.

⁷⁹ For more on the XX Corps from Metz to the Saar River, see Cole, *Lorraine Campaign*, 499-519. For a detailed study of the capture of the bridge at Saarlautern, see Captain Albert V. Kinslow, "Operations of the 1st Battalion, 379th Infantry (95th Inf. Div.) Saarlautern, Germany, 2-6 December 1944 (Rhineland Campaign)" (Fort

Benning, GA: Advanced Officers Course, 1946-1947); "Report of Operations Conducted by the 95th Infantry Division in the Vicinity of Metz, France and Saarlautern, Germany During the Period 8 November – 3 December 1944." 25 February 1945, DRL.

⁸⁰ Captain H. L. West, "The Fight at Saar-Lautern and the Subsequent Breaching of the Siegfried Line," (Fort Knox, KY: The Armored School, n.d.), 1.

⁸¹ West, "The Fight at Saar-Lautern and the Subsequent Breaching of the Siegfried Line," 1, 2.

⁸² Bilder, *Foot Soldier for Patton*, 178; *Second Infantry Regiment*, 59; Lawrence Nickell, *Red Devil: Able Company, Double Dynamite: An Old Man's Memories of World War Two* (Nashville: Eggman Publishing, 1996), 116. The aerial photographs in Cole's *Lorraine Campaign* shows the placement of pillboxes within cities inside the Siegfried Line, including Saarlautern, Saarlautern-Roden, and Fraulautern. See Cole, *Lorraine Campaign*, insert between 554-5, 562, 564, insert between 572-3, 581-1.

⁸³ West, "The Fight at Saar-Lautern," 2-3.

⁸⁴ "After Action Against the Enemy Report for Period 1 December to 31 December 1944," 3 January 1945, 4 in "11th Infantry Regiment After-Action Reports, August 1944-May 1945," File 305-INF(11)-0.3, Box 6021, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.

⁸⁵ Entries at 1035 and 1100, 14 December 1944 in "G-3 Journal and File, 12-15 December 1944," File 305-3.2, Box 5940, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.

⁸⁶ Entry at 0810, 17 December 1944 in "G-3 Journal and File, 16-18 December 1944," File 305-3.2, Box 5940, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.

⁸⁷ Nickell, *Red Devil*, 115.

⁸⁸ *Eleventh Infantry Regiment*, 42. See also "After Action Against the Enemy Report. From 0001 hrs, 1 December to 2400 hrs 31 December 1944," 1 January 1945, 6-8 in "A/A Reports, HQs and HQ Battery, 5th ID Div Arty, July-December 1944," RG 407, Entry 427, NA; "After Action Against the Enemy Report," 1 January 1945, 3 in "818th Tank Destroyer Battalion After-Action Reports and Unit Journal, December 44," File TDBN-818-0.3, Box 23828, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.

⁸⁹ Bilder, *Foot Soldier for Patton*, 179; *Second Infantry Regiment*, 59; Nickell, *Red Devil*, 116; "History of the 3rd Battalion, Second Infantry Regiment in Combat,"

n.d., 7, Leon Belardinelli Papers, WWII Veterans Surveys, 5th Infantry Division, MHI.

- ⁹⁰ Karl T. Clarkson, "The Story of G. I. Joe (Karl), A Combat Infantryman in World War II, 5th Division, 3rd Army, European Theatre of Operations," 1978, 15-6, Unpublished memoir, copy in Karl T. Clarkson Papers, WWII Veterans Surveys, 5th Infantry Division, MHI.
- ⁹¹ Entries at 0935, 1140, 1255, 1330, 1200, 19 December 1944 in "G-3 Journal and File, 19-22 December 1944," File 305-3.2, Box 5941, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁹² "Sealing Pill-Boxes," n.d., in "G-3 Journal and File, 19-22 December 1944," RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁹³ Entry at 1140, 20 December 1944 in "G-3 Journal and File, 19-22 December 1944," RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁹⁴ Jeffrey J. Clarke and Robert Ross Smith, *Riviera to the Rhine* (Center of Military History, United States Army: Washington, D.C., 1993), 172.
- ⁹⁵ "Report of Operations, 3d Inf Div in France, Aug 16-30, 1944," n.d., 5, File 303-0.3, Box 5397, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁹⁶ Donald G. Taggart, *History of the Third Infantry Division in World War II* (Washington, D.C.: Infantry Journal Press, 1947; reprint, Nashville, TN: Battery Press, 1997), 211-2.
- ⁹⁷ Rupert Prohme, *History of 30th Infantry Regiment in World War II* (Infantry Journal: Washington, D.C., 1947), 215.
- ⁹⁸ Taggart, *History of the Third Infantry Division*, 214-5; Prohme, *History of the 30th Infantry Regiment*, 214-6; "30th Inf Attack on Brignoles, 17-19 August," n.d., in "15-30 Aug. 1944, Landing in South France and Advance to Rhine River" Box 24018, RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.
- ⁹⁹ "Report of Operations for period 1-31 August 1944," 31 August 1944, 3 in "3rd Infantry Division Unit Reports of Operations, August 1944," File 303-0.3, Box 5396, RG 407, Entry 427, NA; 30th Infantry S-3 Journals, 18-19 August 1944 in "30th Infantry S-3 Journal and File, 15-20 August 1944," File 303-INF(30)-3.2, Box 5648, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.

- ¹⁰⁰ Weigley, *Eisenhower's Lieutenants*, 229-31; *Report of Operations: The Seventh United States Army in France and Germany, 1944-1945* (Heidelberg, Germany: Aloys Gräf, 1946), 1:193-4.
- ¹⁰¹ Robert McFarland, *History of the 15th Infantry Regiment in World War II* (n.p., n.d., personal collection), 166.
- ¹⁰² Jeff Danby, *The Day of the Panzer: A Story of American Heroism and Sacrifice in Southern France* (Philadelphia: Casemate, 2008), 174.
- ¹⁰³ The narrative of the fight in Allan comes from the following: Danby, *Day of the Panzer*, 171-232; McFarland, *History of the 15th Infantry Regiment*, 162-4; Capt. Laughlin, "3rd Bn 15th Inf, Montèlimar-Allan," n.d., 1-4 in "15-30 Aug. 1944, Landing in South France and Advance to Rhine River," RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA; 15th Infantry Journal, 27 August, 2 in "15th Infantry Journal, S-Reports, August 44," File 303-INF(15)-0.7, Box 5623, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁰⁴ Taggart, *History of the Third Infantry Division*, 219-22; McFarland, *History of the 15th Infantry Regiment*, 168-72; Nathan William White, *From Fedala to Berchtesgaden: A History of the Seventh United States Infantry in World War II* (n.p., 1947), 141-2.
- ¹⁰⁵ Russell Cloer, "Infantry Replacement: The Story of My Three Years As An Infantry Officer In World War II," unpublished memoir, n.d. (Russell W. Cloer Papers, WWII Veterans Survey, 3rd Infantry Division, USAMHI), 109.
- ¹⁰⁶ "15th Infantry Operations Report for the Month of September," 6 October 1944, 2 in "Unit Monthly Reports of Operations for September 1944," File 303-0.3, Box 5398, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁰⁷ Map comes from Clarke and Smith, *Riviera to the Rhine*, Map 11.
- ¹⁰⁸ Weigley, *Eisenhower's Lieutenants*, 234.
- ¹⁰⁹ "Summary of Enemy Operations," n.d., 2 in "Operations Report, 3d Inf Div, Sept 1-30 1944," File 303-0.3, Box 5397, RG 407, Entry 427, NA; Lieutenant Colonel William Goddard, "7th Inf at Besançon," n.d., 1 in "1-8 September 1944, Besançon," Box 24019, RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.
- ¹¹⁰ White, *From Fedala to Berchtesgaden*, 149.
- ¹¹¹ *Report of Operations*, 1:260.

- ¹¹² Goddard, "7th Inf at Besançon," n.d., 4-5 in "1-8 September 1944, Besançon," RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.
- ¹¹³ McFarland, *History of the 15th Infantry Regiment*, 181; 15th Infantry S-3 Periodic Report, 11 September 1944, 1 in "15th Infantry Journal and S-Reports, September 1944," File 303-INF(15)-0.7, Box 5623, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹¹⁴ *Report of Operations*, 1:278-9; Clarke and Smith, *Riviera to the Rhine*, 191.
- ¹¹⁵ McFarland, *History of the 15th Infantry Regiment*, 181-4; 15th Infantry Journal, 12 September in "15th Infantry Journal and S-Reports, September 1944," RG 407, Entry 427, NA. As for tanks in Vesoul, the 756th Tank Battalion Unit Journal indicated supporting the infantry until it entered Vesoul. After the infantry entered the town, the tanks established roadblocks and supported from high ground to the south. Lieutenant Colonel Glenn Rogers, "756 Tank Battalion Commander's Narrative, September 1-30, 1944," n.d., 2 in "3rd Infantry Division Unit Reports of Operations, September 1944," File 303-0.3, Box 5398, RG 407, Entry 427, NA; 756th Tank Battalion Unit Journal, 12 September in "756th Tank Battalion Unit Journal, September 1944," File ARBN-756-0.7, Box 13518, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹¹⁶ Clarke and Smith, *Riviera to the Rhine*, 192.
- ¹¹⁷ 7th Infantry Regiment S-3 Report for 12-13 September, 13 September 1944, 1, in "7th Infantry S-3 Reports, September 1944", File 303-INF(7)-3.1, Box 5613, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹¹⁸ "Battalion Attack on Noroy le Bourg," *Infantry School Mailing List XXX* (April 1947): 104.
- ¹¹⁹ "Battalion Attack on Noroy le Bourg," 106.
- ¹²⁰ The narrative largely comes from "Battalion Attack on Noroy le Bourg," *Infantry School Mailing List XXX* (April 1947): 101-12. Quotes from pages 106 and 112. Staff Sergeant Stanton: White, *From Fedala to Berchtesgaden*, 151-2. Lieutenant Raymond Zussman: Taggart, *History of the Third Infantry Division*, 232-3.
- ¹²¹ This narrative largely comes from White, *From Fedala to Berchtesgaden*, 155-7.
- ¹²² White states that Finch took a third house in advance of the company, aided in the company's defense but the history focuses on Yates's and Selvog's positions as the battle developed. He never mentions whether Germans captured Finch's position or Finch abandoned the advanced position. White, *From Fedala to Berchtesgaden*, 155.

- ¹²³ Radio communications, "1625 (Msg fr 3rd Bn)," 15 September, 26 in "7th Infantry Journal and File, September 1944," File 303-INF(7)-0.7, Box 5611, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹²⁴ Entry 98, 15 September in "G-3 Journal and File, 15 September 1944," File 303-3.2, Box 5472, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹²⁵ White does not specify who ordered this American bombardment nor who fired it. The 10th Field Artillery Battalion, which supported the 7th Infantry Regiment, does not mention this episode in its monthly report. "10th Field Artillery Battalion Report of Operations," n.d., 1 in "Unit Monthly Reports of Operations for September 1944," RG 407, Entry 427, NA. It is possible that the four men who escaped from Vy-les-Lure and found regimental headquarters had a hand in it.
- ¹²⁶ Keith E. Bonn, *When the Odds Were Even: The Vosges Mountain Campaign, October 1944-January 1945* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1994), 69-70; Clarke and Smith, *Riviera to the Rhine*, 224.
- ¹²⁷ Clarke and Smith, *Riviera to the Rhine*, 227.
- ¹²⁸ Ernest Hemingway, quoted in Rush, *Hell in Hürtgen Forest*, 1.
- ¹²⁹ Eugene Salet, "Manuscript Memoir of Major General Eugene Salet," 321-2 in Eugene A. Salet Papers, MHI; 36th Infantry Division After-Action Report quoted in Clarke and Smith, *Riviera to the Rhine*, 295.
- ¹³⁰ Chester Tanaka, quoted in Bonn, *When the Odds Were Even*, 94-5.
- ¹³¹ Cloer, "Infantry Replacement," 109 in Russell W. Cloer Papers, WWII Veterans Survey, 3rd Infantry Division, USAMHI; Eugene Salet, "Manuscript Memoir of Major General Eugene Salet," n.d., 327, MHI.
- ¹³² "15th Infantry Operations Report for the Month of September," 4 in "3rd Infantry Division Unit Reports of Operations, September 1944," RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹³³ Rogers, "756 Tank Battalion Commander's Narrative, September 1-30, 1944," 5-6 in "3rd Infantry Division Unit Reports of Operations, September 1944," RG 407, Entry 427, NA; J. Lee Mudd, "Honor, Fidelity, Courage: The History of the 756th Tank Battalion and the Development of the Tank-Infantry Team," (M.A. Thesis, Southern Illinois University, 2001), 60.
- ¹³⁴ "756th Tank Battalion Unit Journal, October 1944," n.d., 10, ARBN-756-0.7, Box 13519, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.

- ¹³⁵ This number comes from “Seventh Infantry Unit Journal for 1-31 October 1944,” n.d., 10 in “7th Infantry Journal and File, August, October-December 1944,” File 303-INF(7)-0.7, Box 5611, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹³⁶ This number comes from Major Rathbun, “3rd Bn, 7th Inf. Moselle River Crossing and Vagney,” 17 November 1944, 4 in “11 September-10 November 1944, Moselle Crossing to St. Die,” Box 24019, Folder 25, RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.
- ¹³⁷ The narrative on the fight in Vagney comes from: White, *From Fedala to Berchtesgaden*, 155; Major Rathburn, “3rd Bn, 7th Inf. Moselle River Crossing and Vagney,” RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA; G-3 Journal and File for 6 and 7 October, File 303-3.2, Box 5471, RG 407, Entry 427, NA; “Seventh Infantry Unit Journal for 1-31 October 1944,” RG 407, Entry 427, NA; “756th Tank Battalion Unit Journal, October 1944,” RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹³⁸ “Operations Report, Thirtieth U.S. Infantry,” 5 November 1944, 16 in “Unit Monthly Reports of Operations for October 1944,” File 303-0.3, Box 5398, RG 407, Entry 427, NA; “Commander’s Narrative, 756th Tank Battalion for October 1-31, 1944,” n.d., 4 in “Unit Monthly Reports of Operations for October 1944,” File 303-0.3, Box 5398, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹³⁹ “Commander’s Narrative, 756th Tank Battalion, November 1-30, 1944,” n.d., 3 in “3rd Infantry Division Unit Reports of Operations, November 1944,” File 303-0.3, Box 5398, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁴⁰ White, *From Fedala to Berchtesgaden*, 182-3.
- ¹⁴¹ *Report of Operations*, 2:431-2.
- ¹⁴² White, *From Fedala to Berchtesgaden*, 183-4. Tanks from the 756th Tank Battalion briefly stated they supported the attack on Saales: “Commander’s Narrative, 756th Tank Battalion, November 1-30, 1944,” 1 in “3rd Infantry Division Unit Reports of Operations, November 1944,” RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁴³ The order for 1/7 and its attached armor to take Bourg-Bruche: Telephone 1st Bn, 1610, 23 November in “Seventh Infantry Unit Journal for 1 November through 30 November 1944,” n.d., 24 in “7th Infantry Journal and File, August, October-December 1944,” RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁴⁴ Telephone from 1st Bn, 2400, 23 November; Telephone from PWI, 0125, 24 November in “Seventh Infantry Unit Journal for 1 November through 30 November 1944,” n.d., 24 in “7th Infantry Journal and File, August, October-December 1944,” RG 407, Entry 427, NA.

- ¹⁴⁵ White, *From Fedala to Berchtesgaden*, 184-7.
- ¹⁴⁶ Clarke and Smith, *Riviera to the Rhine*, 400-1.
- ¹⁴⁷ White, *From Fedala to Berchtesgaden*, 188-90. Use of artillery: Telephone to 2nd Battalion, 0925, 1 December in "7th Infantry Unit Journal, December 1944," 1 in "7th Infantry Journal and File, August, October-December 1944," RG 407, Entry 427, NA. Use of armor: Communications on 1 December in "7th Infantry Unit Journal, December 1944," 2-3 in "7th Infantry Journal and File, August, October-December 1944," RG 407, Entry 427, NA; S-3 Reports for 601st Tank Destroyer Battalion, 1-2 December in "601 Tank Destroyer Battalion Unit Journal, December 1944," TDBN-601-0.7, Box 18614, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁴⁸ Walter E. Tardy, "601st Tank Destroyer Battalion, Report of Operations for the Period 1-30 November 1944," 3 December 1944, 4 in "Unit Monthly Reports of Operations (December 1944)," File 303-0.3, Box 5400, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁴⁹ "Operations Report, Thirtieth U.S. Infantry," 5 December 1944, 17 in "Unit Monthly Reports of Operations, November 1944," File 303-0.3, Box 5398, RG 407, Entry 427, NA; "7th Infantry Report of Operations for Period 1-31 December 1944," 4 January 1945, 2 in "Unit Monthly Reports of Operations (December 1944)," File 303-0.3, Box 5400, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁵⁰ Tardy, "601st Tank Destroyer Battalion, Report of Operations for the Period 1-30 November 1944," 3 in "Unit Monthly Reports of Operations, November 1944," RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁵¹ "Commander's Narrative, 756th Tank Battalion, November 1-30, 1944," n.d., 4-5 in "Unit Monthly Reports of Operations, November 1944," RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁵² The practice of "mouseholing," or blowing holes into buildings' common walls to permit soldiers to advance along a street under cover is discussed earlier in Chapters 4 and 6.
- ¹⁵³ Stewart, "Hurry Up & Wait," 60, USAMHI.

CHAPTER VIII

“FIGHTING FROM HOUSE TO HOUSE

AND STREET TO STREET”:

URBAN COMBAT FROM DECEMBER 1944 TO MAY 1945

On 16 December, the Germans launched a massive counteroffensive against General Courtney Hodges’s First U.S. Army in the Ardennes Forest. It was a desperate gamble by Hitler to ram through Allied lines and seize the all-important port of Antwerp to the northwest. The attack precipitated the Battle of the Bulge, so named after the bulge created within the American positions.

Hitler’s gamble failed when the First U.S. Army stopped giving ground on 27 December. Two weeks later, in January 1945, the Americans began flattening the Bulge as well as reversing the momentum by invading Germany and working to end the war. Allied troops pinched off the northern and southern shoulders of the Bulge at Houffalize on 16 January. The Americans declared the battle over on 28 January.¹ The 1st and 5th Infantry Divisions, a part of First and Third Armies, respectively, fought in bitterly cold temperatures amidst bone-chilling winds and through winter storm conditions against a frantic German enemy in the Ardennes. To the south, the Sixth Army Group, including the 3rd Infantry Division in Seventh U.S. Army, fought from December to February to close the Colmar Pocket in similar conditions. Given the size, scope, and drama of the Ardennes counteroffensive, the Battle of the Bulge has justly received more attention than the fighting in the Colmar Pocket.² But fighting against and reducing the Colmar Pocket was just as severe for the 3rd Infantry Division: six of its soldiers received

Congressional Medals of Honor during this time for actions well above and beyond the call of duty. The German *Wehrmacht* had not merely rolled over.

By December 1945, the American soldier had clearly understood the value and efficacy of combined-arms battle. The American rifle company and battalion had integrated their infantry weapons and the infantry regiment and division had learned how to incorporate the other combat arms of artillery, armor, and engineers into an effective fighting unit. Pushing back the German onslaught reinforced this approach. As General Dwight D. Eisenhower, the commander-in-chief of Allied Forces in the European Theater, looked to the invasion of Germany, it was understood that the Americans would maintain these operational combinations. Combined-arms fighting in the urban setting was vital as the 1st, 5th, and 3rd Divisions fought their way into Germany, despite geography and weather that sometimes restricted or strained the relationship.

This chapter confirms how during the Battle of the Bulge and the invasion of Germany combined infantry-armor-artillery teamwork became the standard for the Americans, including in the urban environment. This organization and method of warfighting was imperative as the 5th and 3rd Divisions engaged in difficult and costly urban combat against the Germans in January 1945. Because they could capitalize upon well-developed tank-infantry coordination, the 1st Division slashed into the city of Bonn in early March. Victory sometimes created overconfidence as the 3rd Division's 7th Infantry experienced in Utweiler in mid-March. By the time the 3rd and 45th Divisions hit the major city of Nuremberg in late April, the American combined-arms team was formidable against a seriously weakened German enemy.

1st Infantry Division

After the 1st Infantry Division fought through the Battle of the Bulge, the division joined the Allied advance through the rest of Germany and across the Rhine River. As the war wound down, the Big Red One helped to eliminate enemy holdouts in the Harz Mountains.

When the Germans launched their Ardennes counteroffensive, the 1st Division was resting and refitting after surviving the meat grinders of Aachen and the Hürtgen Forest. As such, much of the 1st Division's experience was helping to shore up the northern shoulder of the Bulge. By keeping the northern shoulder solid against German attacks, the Americans, including the Big Red One, prevented the Germans from breaking out as widely as they wanted to press toward Antwerp. In contrast with the 5th Division that attacked into the southern shoulder, the 1st Division fought no urban battles until the Americans worked to close the Bulge in mid-January.

Despite the 1st Division's limited urban combat during this time, towns and villages of the Ardennes Forest played a significant role in the Battle of the Bulge. The 101st Airborne Division's defense of Bastogne, a critical road junction, is the most famous example. Although pummeled by the German breakthrough, the 106th Division delayed the German advance for several days by defending St. Vith. The 28th Infantry Division's stout defense of Clerf, Vianden, and Wiltz, delayed the German advance enough to give the 101st Airborne time to defend Bastogne. The defense of Stavelot and Trois Ponts by rear-echelon and support personnel prevented the Germans from getting over the Amblève River and breaking through the American lines. East of the 1st

Division, the 2nd Division aided in the withdrawal of the 99th Division by blunting the advance of the Germans at the twin towns of Krinkelt and Rocherath. Urban combat, especially in towns located at road junctions or near bridges over rivers, was critical in the Americans stopping the German counteroffensive.³ This pattern continued. The 1st Division's monthly report observed that when the Americans attacked in mid-January to close the Bulge, the Big Red One attacked from town to town "with little emphasis on fighting for key terrain features, such as hills. The chief reason of this may be the lack of road facilities by which the Germans could supply isolated key points." That is, these otherwise insignificant towns and villages became operationally important insofar as they helped the Germans to retain their positions or helped the Americans to force a German retreat.⁴

After stopping the German counteroffensive, the Allies quickly shifted to flattening the Bulge and resuming their own offensive. Figure 8.1 shows the division's area of operations during this time.⁵ One major challenge was the weather: frigid conditions seared the winter of 1944-1945, one of the coldest on record. Wounded men froze to death and weapons simply would not fire in the bitter temperatures.⁶ Men in C/16 used dynamite to dig foxholes in the frozen ground.⁷ The division's history likened these urban attacks in the waist-deep snow to wading through waist-deep water. A well-conditioned, fully-equipped soldier could go no further than 300 yards before taking a break.⁸

Nevertheless, the 1st Division seized the initiative on 15 January when Combat Team 16 (CT 16), including the 16th Infantry Regiment, A/745th Tank Battalion,

Figure 8.1: 1st Infantry Division Area of Operations, January 1945



C/634th Tank Destroyer Battalion, and 7th Field Artillery Battalion, attacked Faymonville, Belgium followed by Schoppen.⁹ Capturing Faymonville and its vicinity would help maintain the attack to the southeast. In the days before the Americans attacked, the 7th Field Artillery shelled the town frequently to soften the German defense as infantry patrols reconnoitered the area and captured prisoners.

On 15 January, two battalions from CT 16 attacked Faymonville and an estimated one thousand German defenders in two battalions.¹⁰ Around 0600, First Battalion moved against the town and Third Battalion attacked from the northeast through the snow in single-digit temperatures, supported by the 7th Field Artillery and the 745th Tank Battalion's Assault Gun Platoon.¹¹ To preserve surprise, no preparatory artillery bombardment signalled the American assault.¹² Almost immediately, 1/16 came under heavy fire from small arms, machine gun, and mortars as they entered the town. By 0730, the rifle companies called for tank support as the resistance stiffened. Third Battalion riflemen wormed their way through several houses in the northeast corner but First Battalion had difficulty getting inside the town. By 0900, only the lead tank entered the town when a mine stopped the second and held up the other tanks. Enemy fire halted A Company on the western edge of Faymonville, where, according to one officer, "a man can't raise his head," and B Company inched into the edge of the town.¹³ Colonel Frederick Gibb informed General Andrus that the German defense had stopped First Battalion but 3/16 could flank the town if it progressed fast enough. If they had attacked three days earlier, Gibb complained, then Faymonville might have fallen faster.¹⁴

Around noon, I/16's reserve, C Company, entered the fight for Faymonville to relieve the pressure on A and B Companies. C Company took losses as it deployed slowly in the snowy conditions and in broad daylight. First and Second Platoons instantly became pinned down but progressed as tanks assisted. By end of the day, the three companies and supporting armor had fought their way halfway through the town.¹⁵

Tanks supported riflemen as they assaulted from house to house with their main cannon and machine guns. The tanks accompanying Third Battalion discovered anti-personnel canister rounds to be very effective. The 745th Tank Battalion's A Company lost tanks in the fight for Faymonville to mines and the snow but offered significant help for the riflemen wresting the village from German control.¹⁶ One reason why the infantrymen required armored support was because the homes and buildings in Faymonville were not connected to each other. That is, it was not possible to use "mousehole" tactics, or bore their way through buildings' common walls in order to keep off the streets and avoid the Germans' fields of fire. Soldiers assaulting each individual house in its sector constantly ran a gauntlet of enemy fire. By noon, both A and B Companies had suffered sixteen casualties.¹⁷ Frank Hoxie Smith of I/16 wrote that he stormed a house in the northeast part with three other squadmates, by tossing a grenade into the cellar. He was proud to capture six or eight German prisoners without loss of life. Nearby, a Lieutenant Jackson allowed a soldier to drop a grenade down a vent pipe, exploding in a furnace around which a group of Germans were huddling. Several were killed or badly burned and the rest scattered. Jackson's command ended up

killing all the Germans in the house. Hoxie did not remember any prisoners in that group. There were many ways to take a house or building in combat.¹⁸

As darkness fell, the town's southern limits were not quite in American hands. The house-by-house fight for Faymonville bled into the sixteenth; the stout German defense turned a one-day battle into two. The regiment planned to complete its control of the village and then attack Schoppen with Second Battalion as soon as Faymonville fell. To help the impending assault on Schoppen, four artillery battalions fired time-on-target bombardments on the waiting town by the afternoon of the fifteenth.¹⁹

At 0700 on the sixteenth, 1/16 infantrymen, tanks, and assault guns, resumed its slow push through Faymonville, breaking down strong German resistance. American soldiers checked every house and every cellar to ensure their advance. An hour later, soldiers declared Faymonville cleared and the regiment immediately ordered 2/16 to seize Schoppen but German tanks and friendly artillery stopped Second Battalion's advance.²⁰ By this point, soldiers in both armies were using snowsuits and winter camouflage, causing one company to report that "Germans and Americans [were] unrecognizable to each other, until only a few feet apart."²¹ Despite regiment's desire to take Schoppen, it would have to wait. Those not blessed enough to find shelter in a burned-out home, used entrenching tools and dynamite to dig foxholes to fend off the extreme cold and knee-deep snow.²²

Raymond Gantter, a soldier in 2/16, remarked that Faymonville had changed hands four different times and was impressed that the town still remained after all the fighting. After the battle, Gantter and his comrades occupied a half-demolished house.

Dead animals littered the landscape, bullet holes pockmarked the exterior, and German and American ammunition littered the area alongside the broken remains of a family's home: children's toys, pots and pans, muddy linens, broken dishes, and old letters. Gantter observed as the civilians trickled back into the area to pick through what the armies had not destroyed, mournfully beginning the process of rebuilding in the cold.²³

Division artillery pounded Schoppen again on 17 January as temperatures sank and a winter storm hit the area on the eighteenth. Despite the winter storm, the division continued the attack southeastward on the nineteenth. The 18th Infantry radioed that the exhausted, fully-laden men encountered snow drifts four to five feet high and only tracked vehicles, such as armor or the M-29 Weasel, could get through the snow.²⁴ Notwithstanding setbacks, the winter storm helped the American tank-infantry attack by preventing the Germans from seeing or hearing the approach until it was too late. Frank Hoxie Smith remembered that his squad and accompanying tank made it inside the town with few problems because the wind was in their faces, thus covering their noisy advance, and most Germans never expected a fight in weather so terrible and made themselves comfortable in Schoppen's homes. Before long, the town was in American hands and many surprised Germans were taken prisoners.²⁵ In one of his first fights, Richard Rivard, an enlisted man from L/16, recalled entering a burning Schoppen around 0800, supported by tanks and tank destroyers. Small-arms fire peppered his squad as it cautiously advanced through the burning town, assaulting buildings and homes but finding few Germans. When a comrade was hit by machine-gun rounds, a tank destroyer's 90-mm cannon fired right over Rivard and knocked out the machine

gun. The memoirs during this time focus on the men's constant struggle to warm themselves and find food.²⁶ An E/16 report documented that some platoons were down to only five men.²⁷

In late January, the 18th Infantry Regiment took Moderscheid, Hepscheid, and Heppenbach by mounting riflemen atop tanks and tank destroyers, waiting until the moon offered just enough light to permit movement, and attacking into the center of the towns, hurriedly dismounting, and quickly clearing the homes and buildings. These “brazen” tactics produced sharp firefights as well as large numbers of German prisoners. One veteran remembered that the Americans were motivated by a desire to both kill the enemy and to quickly wrestle the warm buildings from the Germans so the captors could enjoy them.²⁸

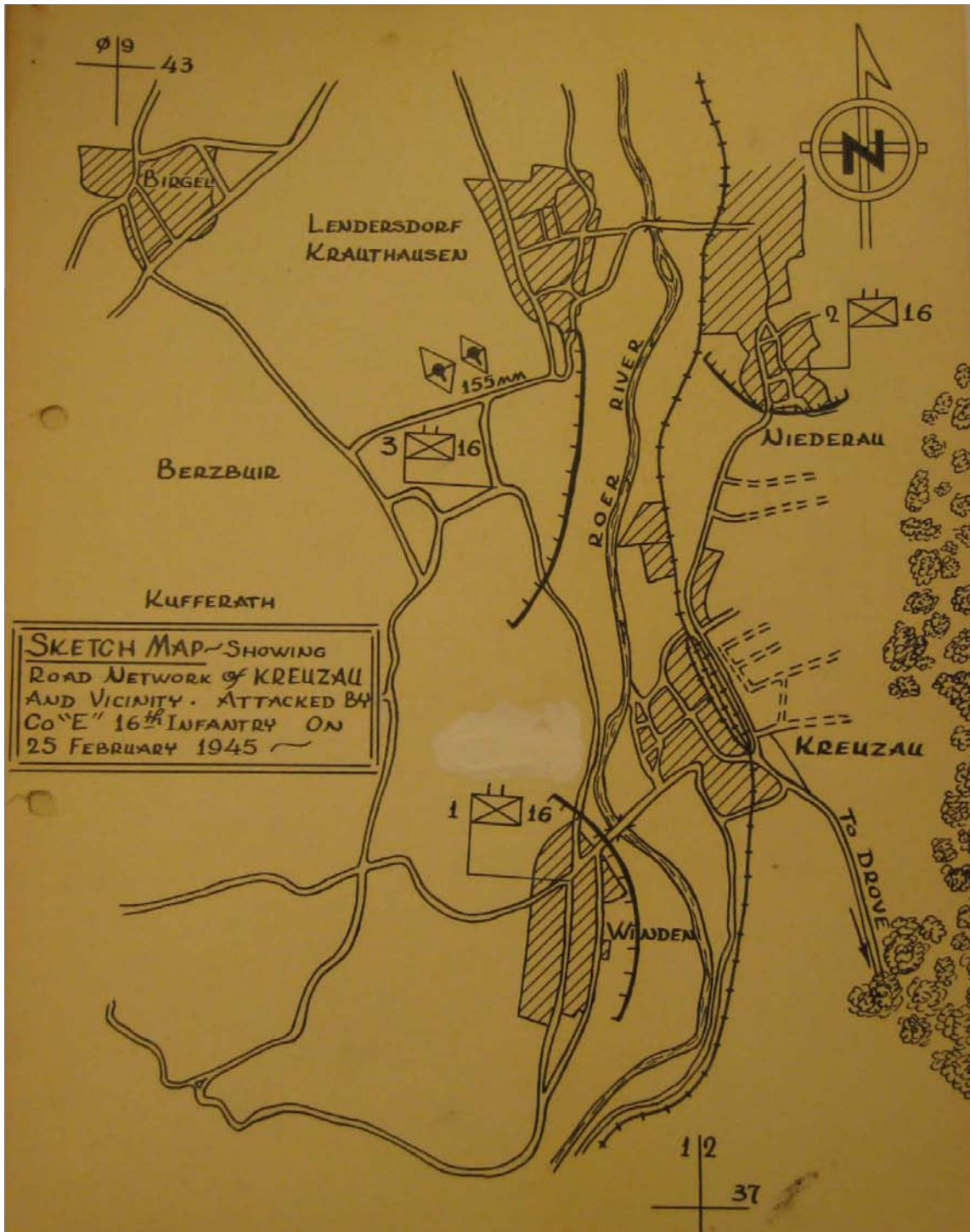
The Americans closed the Bulge and restored their previous lines on 25 January. Eisenhower wanted to keep the momentum so he ordered fresh attacks into Germany. The Big Red One punched a hole through the Siegfried Line and, by 4 February, marched off the frontlines to rest, refit, and prepare for the next major obstacles: crossing the Roer and Rhine Rivers.

By early February, the Big Red One deployed south of Düren opposite the town of Kreuzau, Germany, just east of the Hürtgen Forest, and waited for the flooded Roer River to recede. The division used that time to carefully and closely plan the crossing—one regiment using aerial photographs to construct a sand table of the buildings and streets—while the Germans prepared for the inevitable assault with massed artillery of their own. During these days, division artillery thoroughly shelled Kreuzau and its

immediate area. Roving 155-mm self-propelled guns blasted the Germans. The Battle of Aachen had taught them that using a delayed fuse allowed the rounds to explode inside buildings.²⁹ The Roer River crossing was an army-level operation involving the First Army's III, V, and VII Corps. On 25 February, 2/16 and 3/16 both crossed over the Roer River by crossing the 8th Infantry Division's bridges to their immediate left (north). The maneuver turned out to be amazingly bloodless; by the end of the day, the 1st Division had a strong beachhead on the east bank of the Roer.³⁰ Although a minor engagement, 2/16's attack on Kreuzau is similar to 3/7's attack on Noroy-le-Bourg the previous September and it gives an excellent glimpse into how infantry battalions and their rifle companies planned attacks on towns late in the war and shows how integral combined-arms thinking had become. Figure 8.2 indicates Kreuzau and its surrounding area.³¹

The 8th Division's capture of Niederau allowed the 16th Infantry to immediately turn south. Lieutenant Colonel Walter Grant's Second Battalion received orders to seize Kreuzau with 4.2-inch mortars, two 155-mm self-propelled guns, and a platoon each of tanks, tank destroyers, and regimental antitank guns as well as the support from four artillery battalions and First Battalion. E and F Companies were the assault companies and aimed at taking the town and then striking toward the south and southeast. E Company occupied the battalion left and had more tanks attached to protect its left flank from any counterattacks from the east. The fire plan included continuous fire poured against the eastern and southeastern outskirts to isolate the town. The 4.2-inch mortars shelled the town's eastern edge as 81-mm mortars delivered a rolling barrage through the

Figure 8.2: Sketch Map Showing Road Network of Kreuzau and Vicinity



town itself. The two 155-mm self-propelled guns across the Roer targeted any observed tanks, antitank weapons, or machine-gun positions. By firing its automatic weapons and mortars from Winden across the Roer, 1/16 hoped to fool the Germans into thinking the attack would come from there.³²

E Company planned to rush First Platoon with tanks, tank destroyers, heavy machine guns, and a minesweeping team into Kreuzau's northern edge to gain a foothold as quickly as possible and then have Second and Third Platoons attack through First Platoon with the armored support. The two platoons would clear their designated zones with the tanks and work in conjunction with F Company. Second Platoon placed its light machine guns and 60-mm mortars behind the tanks. First Platoon, the heavy machine guns, and two tank destroyers would remain at the edge of town and protect against expected counterattacks from the east.³³ Clearly, the attack on Kreuzau was not a haphazard operation.

The Americans planned for the Germans to follow their usual tactics for defending towns like Kreuzau: begin by defending outside the town and fall back to strongpoints within the place.³⁴ As Second Battalion attacked from Niderau to the north it came under fire from Kreuzau, but heavy counterfire silenced the resistance. E Company's First platoon quickly took the northeastern side of the town. Two houses and twelve prisoners fell but when a sniper claimed three G.I.s, the company commander called for tank support to fire at any possible enemy strongpoint. The tank eliminated the sniper and the attack resumed. As First Platoon reached its objective and deployed to protect the battalion's left, Second and Third Platoons alongside their armored support

advanced through Kreuzau with F Company to the right along the Roer. Resistance remained light until both companies reached the southern edge of town around 1500. The river prevented any maneuver to the right and there was no cover to the left, so the tanks, tank destroyers, mortars, heavy and light machine guns, and rifle companies laid a heavy volume of fire on the last line of defense. This was sufficient to force the defenders to give ground and allow the rifle companies to clear the remainder of the town, link up, and prepare the place for all-around defense. The attack netted 51 prisoners and 15 enemy killed; the anticipated counterattack also never came. First Battalion's feint from Winden across the Roer River seemed to have fooled the Germans.³⁵

With Kreuzau in hand, the 16th Infantry sent its G Company and tanks to capture Drove to the southeast. According to one wartime interview, enemy resistance was surprisingly "not tenacious," although the American still lost one tank and one comrade to mines.³⁶ The first building that assistant squad leader Raymond Gantter assaulted with his men was an apartment house. Gantter vividly described the all-encompassing fear of clearing the large building in the dark, how "shadows crouching in the doorways and windows are evil." The noise of steps, the building settling and creaking, and randomly falling objects added to the tension. The dark uncertainty made everything worse: "Someone is waiting for you . . . at the head of the stairs, machine gun leveled at the landing . . . perhaps around the corner of that half-open door." Gantter willed himself to keep moving, remembering what he learned in basic training about how to clear a room: shouting "*komme sie raus!*" to encourage German soldiers to surrender,

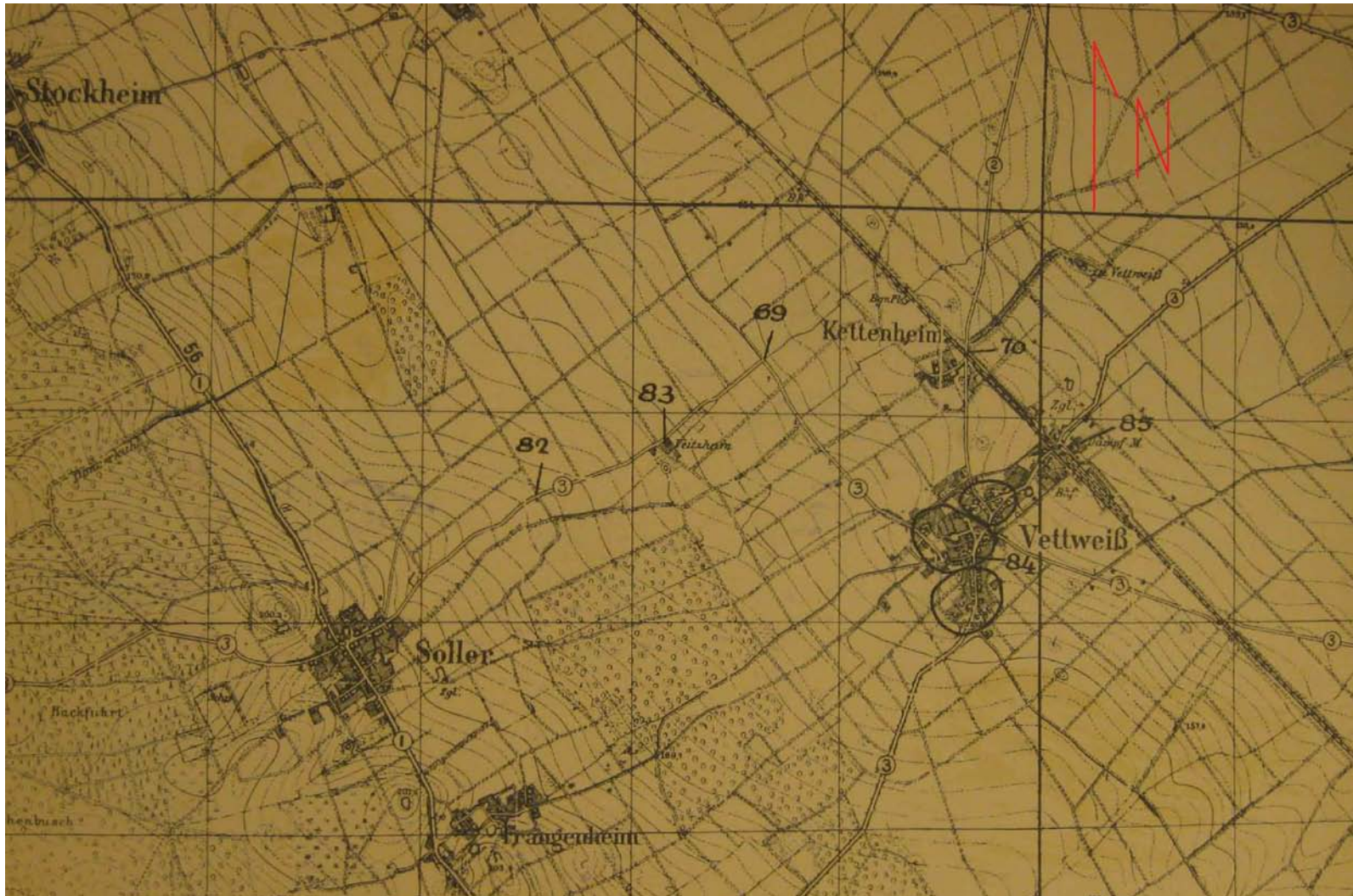
firing a few rounds through the ceilings, heaving grenades into the cellar, all followed by “a moment of pure panic because where the hell has the rest of the squad gone?”³⁷

Gantter also learned the difficulties of handling inexperienced soldiers paralyzed by fear, huddling under a window, bunching together and presenting a fine target for an enemy shell or grenade. Gantter’s squad leader yelled and screamed at them for the ignorant mistakes that could cost lives. As Gantter’s men took the apartment building, other squads and platoons leapfrogged around them to clear other buildings. Gantter and his men bounded past squads clearing other buildings, “hugging the buildings and stepping over the dead.” (Due to one feeble counterattack, the Americans and remained alert for what could come.) An 88-mm shell fired from a German Mk VI Tiger tank into the house Gantter and his eight men were defending caused more than enough fear and alarm. German resistance might have decreased but the American infantryman could not let down his guard.³⁸

Around 0200 on 27 February, G Company, aided by bombardments from the 7th Field Artillery Battalion, wearily captured Soller. Gantter recalled that taking Soller was “Drove all over again—sweating, tensions, and terror; darkened houses and shadows that moved.”³⁹ A little later, B/16 captured Frangenheim to the southeast.⁴⁰

Kreuzau, Drove, and Soller in the Americans’ hands, they turned their attention to Vettweiss in the early morning hours of 27 February. The commander of 3/16 gave the assignment to Captain Karl Wolf’s I Company at 0100, with K and L Companies in support. Map III presents the area around Vettweiss.⁴¹ Vettweiss proved to be more difficult than anticipated. I Company received orders to attack Vettweiss supported by

Figure 8.3: Vettweis, Germany



the battalion's armor—a platoon each of medium tanks, light tanks, and tank destroyers, in part because the enemy strength inside the town was unknown. If I Company encountered few Germans, the company would clear the town and the battalion would continue its eastward advance. If resistance was heavy, then K and L Companies would enter the town and help capture it. Inasmuch as they preferred to wait until dark to take the town, H-Hour was set for 1200.⁴²

The plan of attack—based on aerial photographs and maps—came from Captain Wolf and with the armored officers' suggestions. From eastern Soller, the officers could see where they would approach Vettweiss. First Platoon mounted the light tanks, Second Platoon rode the medium tanks, and Third Platoon got on the tank destroyers. Light machine gun squads were attached to each platoon. Following a twenty-minute artillery barrage, each platoon was to cover the distance from Soller to its assigned section of Vettweiss as quickly as possible. One hundred yards from Vettweiss, the infantry planned to dismount and attack on foot as the armored motored forward behind the infantrymen.⁴³

At 1200, I Company boarded the tanks and tank destroyers and went “like hell” toward Vettweiss, covering the open ground as quickly as possible.⁴⁴ Early in the attack, the medium tanks and tank destroyers began to bog down in the wet soil. Further, German antitank fire destroyed several Sherman tanks and immobilized others. The infantrymen not dead or wounded scrambled off these tanks and sprinted into town. The stuck tanks exhausted their main gun and machine gun ammunition in support of the infantry. The crews then joined the infantry's assault. In the chaos, Captain Wolf and

his executive officer were nearly hit by the tanks behind them as his men reached Vettweiss in a disorderly fashion. Of three platoons of armor, only two light tanks were still mobile and undamaged; they quickly moved to assist the riflemen. Wolf regrouped his company; it set out to clear and capture the town. Around 1300, Third Battalion reported that Wolf's men, reinforced by K Company, were advancing but required more antitank weapons. By 1345, the town was in American hands. Aside from the German antitank fire, one replacement soldier recalled that the Germans did not actively defend Vettweiss itself although Cannon Company fired on Germans fleeing to the east. I Company reportedly killed four civilians who were manning antitank guns. By 1800, 3/16 had deployed within the town and prepared for its next move toward Gladbach.⁴⁵ I Company's postwar description of this small-unit action credited the tankers for their assistance and "magnificent fighting spirit."⁴⁶ With Vettweiss in hand by the late afternoon, L Company took Gladbach the next day in a similar fashion: with soldiers mounted atop tanks, jeeps, and half-tracks roaring into the town supported by mortars, armor, and artillery.⁴⁷

Kreuzau and Vettweiss help support Major Albert Smith, the 16th Infantry's operations officer's description of the division's infantry-tank relations. Because the 1st Division assigned the same tank and tank destroyer companies to the same infantry regiment and same armored platoons to the same infantry battalions, infantry commanders perceived their armor as organic, rather than merely attached, thus facilitating in strong infantry-tank ties that added to the already strong infantry-artillery teamwork.⁴⁸ Mounting infantrymen atop armor and halftracks was not limited to just the

16th Infantry. First Battalion, 18th Infantry took Kelz, Germany through similar methods and sped inside Kelz, overcame “moderate resistance,” and captured seven 88-mm guns, two 75-mm guns, anti-aircraft weapons, and twenty prisoners. Like at Drove, tanks were destroyed by well-placed mines—which the Germans were relying more heavily on—rather than an active German defense.⁴⁹

The Americans began to encounter stiffer, more traditional defenses when 1/26 attacked the town of Erp, east of Soller, on 1 March. Without an artillery preparation, B and C Companies attacked two fresh training battalions in Erp working with tanks that offered immediate assistance after combat engineers cleared the mines. German mortars, tanks, and four 88-mm guns supported the training battalions and heavily engaged the Americans into 2 March. After midnight on 2 March, A Company joined the fight and then German aircraft strafed the Americans within Erp. Late on the second, First Battalion finally declared Erp cleared, although the 88-mm guns had pulled out of the town. Indeed to showcase the Americans’ confidence, Colonel Seitz reported to General Andrus at 2230 that the battalion faced stiff resistance but had determined that it still did not need its supporting armor. When the armor did arrive in the early hours of 2 March, a wartime report described the tanks’ assistance as “invaluable” and the entire battle just another “typical 26 Inf[antry] tank-infantry attack.”⁵⁰

After Erp, the Americans fought more determined German defense but the combat teams of the Big Red One steadily continued toward the Rhine, the next major obstacle for the Allies. Any bridge over the Rhine, therefore, had immense value to the Americans because capturing such a bridge would help them defeat their German enemy

as well as give them an advantage over their British ally. The Big Red One's maneuvering since jumping the Roer River in late-February had been part of a larger army group-level operation to cross the Rhine in early-March called Operation LUMBERJACK. Writing as much from his personal experience as a junior officer as an historian, Charles B. MacDonald described the rapid, late-war American infantry division in March and April 1945 as "the equivalent of the enemy's once-powerful panzer grenadier divisions." By now, MacDonald observed, "riflemen were long accustomed to cling to the backs of attached tanks and tank destroyers or to leap aboard two-and-one-half ton trucks . . . then to spin forward along highways and side roads in wake of the armor or, when resistance developed, to lend their numbers to reopen the path."⁵¹

The 1st Division was bone-tired from its rapid pursuit into Germany. The division had covered much ground in the first week of March, endured heavy spring rains, and exhausted itself. Because the terrain of the Cologne Plain was flat and open, the enemy could easily detect attacks. This geographic reality forced the regimental combat teams to advance and attack under the cover of darkness whenever possible and to employ smoke in daylight assaults on the numerous towns in the region. The teams also tried to vary their tactics against the Germans in order to retain some element of surprise. The 26th Infantry often kept its tanks behind the infantry but on call so the sounds of the tanks' treads would not betray an oncoming attack. The regiments also leapfrogged over each other to let soldiers get some rest.⁵² The quality of German military effectiveness had noticeably eroded since the Americans had crossed the Roer.

An unofficial 18th Infantry history noted that “once the Division tanks and [tank destroyers] broke into a town in support the infantry which had infiltrated forward, often at night, enemy resistance became individual rather than coordinated.” As town after town fell and the Germans experienced mounting losses, German officers rounded up stragglers and shoved them into the line at strongpoints, which, a German prisoner commented, might be merely ten riflemen in a ditch.⁵³ As the Americans steamed inexorably toward the Rhine, the *Wehrmacht* desperately tried to defend west of the river and to obey the orders of the *Fuhrer* to not retreat a single inch. However, thousands of *frontsoldaten* just as desperately tried to flee over the Rhine by any means possible.⁵⁴

On the sixth, boundary changes made at First Army and 21st Army Group-level assigned Bonn to the 1st Division.⁵⁵ Late on 7 March, a beleaguered and fatigued 1st Division received the order to capture Bonn and seize its bridge over the Rhine intact. With only a few hours to plan, Combat Teams 16 and 18 considered the best way to capture the bridge in the heart of a major German city.⁵⁶ As the 16th and 18th Infantry Regiments planned their assault on Bonn, the attack showed how experienced they had become at combined-arms fighting and how much the Americans could think creatively. Figure 8.4 shows the area around Bonn.⁵⁷

Meanwhile, German generals were convinced the Americans would target Bonn’s bridge over the Rhine.⁵⁸ According to American intelligence, Bonn’s defense included elements of the *62nd Volks Grenadier Division*, the *253rd Replacement Regiment*, the Combat School for *Army Group B*, a battalion of police, *Volkssturm* units, and stragglers assembled into ad hoc *kampfgruppen*, or battle groups. Elements from the

Figure 8.4: Bonn, Germany



1st *SS Division* were reportedly nearby as well. Supporting fire came from anti-aircraft battalions as well as seven tanks and three assault guns from the *106th Panzer Brigade*. An intelligence report estimated 600 effective defenders and 20,000 citizens in the city. The commander of Bonn's defenses planned two rings of defense but failed to complete either ring before the American attack. Nevertheless, 20-mm, 75-mm, and 88-mm guns alongside various repurposed anti-aircraft cannon guarded the approaches to Bonn. The Americans did not expect Bonn to go without a fight.⁵⁹

To take the bridge intact but not provoke a bloody urban battle, the 16th and 18th Infantry Regiments used speed and surprise. The 16th Infantry's plan was to quickly roll two battalions atop armor and trucks without any artillery preparation in the early morning hours. Third Battalion, 16th Infantry was to take northwestern Bonn and stop any German reinforcements that might come from Cologne to the north. First Battalion attacked on Third Battalion's right. To the right of 1/16 was the 18th Infantry in Bonn's southern fringes. The 16th's battalions also included platoons of medium and light tanks, tank destroyers, 57-mm antitank guns, as well as artillery observers and 105-mm assault guns.⁶⁰ The assault forces received orders to avoid firefights in order to get inside the city before the enemy could realize what was happening and react.

Elsewhere, around noon on the seventh—fourteen hours before the 16th and 18th Infantry Regiments attacked Bonn—elements of the 9th Armored Division unexpectedly came upon the standing Ludendorff Bridge over the Rhine in Remagen and quickly seized it. Despite this strategic find, the 1st Division remained eager to capture Bonn and its bridge. As such, the 16th Infantry's mounted First and Third Battalions sped

toward Bonn at 0400 from their lines of departure on 8 March. For the most part, they achieved surprise. First Battalion's capture of the suburban Dransdorf just west of Bonn significantly slowed it. The rifle companies contended with 200 Germans and various supporting weapons for several hours, including some house-to-house fighting. After finally getting through Dransdorf, they entered Bonn itself by 1000. After they deployed in the center of the city, the Germans pinned the companies down with machine gun, tank, and artillery fire. The enemy then got behind parts of C Company in the urban mess. Late in the day, 1/16 reorganized and redeployed with Second Battalion. Most of the fighting in Bonn centered around Third Battalion's attempts to seize the bridge.

Third Battalion relentlessly drove into Bonn despite its unprotected flanks, machine-gun fire, and enemy flares that threatened to expose them. A combat interview stated that this "dash was the key factor in taking Bonn."⁶¹ Once inside Bonn, K Company took the lead. Disarmed captured sentries marched alongside their captors. At one point, a soldier in a German patrol asked from what panzer division was K Company as the Germans marched along the opposite side of the street. K Company's history recorded that in the confusion of the German situation, they clearly mistook the Americans for Germans. At 0530, the company thought that the bridge remained intact.⁶² The battalion commander reported just before 0700 that K Company was on the Rhine but enduring heavy resistance.⁶³ First Battalion entered the fight in Bonn about the same time that resistance increased inside the city. It became clear that the one effective line of defense was a partial ring of enemy armor holding the bridge's western edge. The American infantrymen and tanks were unable to break those defenses.⁶⁴

According to an intelligence officer, the German defense resembled more “the nature of a covering action for a withdrawal” across the bridge rather than a stout defense.⁶⁵ The desperation of keeping the bridge open outweighed the Americans’ attempts to capture it.

In the meantime, 2/16 cleaned up strongpoints bypassed by the other two battalions. Through the morning and afternoon, the Germans and Americans battled inside Bonn. When the battle began in earnest, K Company’s history described “infantry crowded into doorways, windows, alleyways, and other places from which they could fire into the streets.” The attached assault guns (105-mm guns on the M-4 Sherman chassis) and tanks took on and destroyed German armored vehicles, cars, trucks, and an ambulance hauling food and ammunition coming from the north. K Company contented itself with controlling its sector and securing the buildings and streets down to the river.⁶⁶

By noon, the regiment’s commander, Colonel Frederick Gibb, informed General Andrus that his men still could not reach the bridge but more reinforcements might help him reduce the defenses. By 1300, First Battalion’s path was blocked by German armor.⁶⁷ Throughout the day, regimental headquarters continually inquired of the state of the bridge and pressured its officers to reach the bridge but the Americans could not. In the afternoon, regimental leaders hatched a plan to throw the 26th Infantry into the fight to quickly seize the bridge but it does not appear to have been implemented. At 1400, division headquarters attached 1/26 to the 16th Infantry in case the situation

allowed the regiment to use the extra battalion.⁶⁸ Around 1800 and again at 2100, 2/16 attacked into Bonn for the bridge.⁶⁹

After midnight of the ninth, the Americans still did not control the bridge. By 0435 on the ninth, E/16 reached the waterfront.⁷⁰ The first report of the bridge's status came at 0534 that the Germans had blown it.⁷¹ Later reports confirmed it. Nothing in regimental or division records mentioned a massive explosion. A combat interview asserted that the explosion occurred between 2000 and 2100 on the eighth.⁷² It is possible that the Americans mistakenly reported that the bridge was intact. At 0645, First Battalion commander posited that the Germans destroyed the bridge before the Americans got into the city because no one ever heard an explosion.⁷³ Through the ninth, the Americans mopped up western Bonn, took prisoners, and consolidated their control over the city.

The 18th Infantry, clearing Bonn's southern half, first had to attack through suburban Duisdorf. The only road that could handle armor was flanked on both sides by high ground. The Germans exploited this situation by posting many self-propelled guns and 20-mm anti-aircraft guns on these heights. B and C Companies fought through the western part of Duisdorf. The defenders numbered 500 to 600 men from two training battalions; the high number of 20-mm guns forced the Americans to move carefully. A wartime report recorded the direct fire from the anti-aircraft weapons as "comparable to a Hollywood production" but the Americans took few casualties.⁷⁴ First Battalion slowly deployed and methodically seized all of Duisdorf against an enemy desperate to

stop them. Sherman tanks came in to support First Battalion's attack.⁷⁵ Duisdorf was in the 18th Infantry's hands by 0900.⁷⁶

As 1/18 contended within Duisdorf, the other two battalions successfully drove into Bonn. Third Battalion, at the rear of the column of battalions, reached Bonn late on the eighth.⁷⁷ Once inside Bonn, the resistance decreased notably. Second and Third Battalions deployed within Bonn but their roles in capturing the bridge went unrecorded.

Raymond Gantter, in the supporting Second Battalion, remembered that "in the darkness we bumped into things, stumbled over each other, and cursed and clattered loud enough to wake all [of] Bonn." As day broke, the German citizens lined up for their daily bread and potato rations regardless of the American presence.⁷⁸ Upon taking Bonn, the 16th Infantry felt like "conquerors" in its first major city and many Americans satisfied their desires for food, drink, and sex or "liberating" valuables. The 16th Infantry acted with enough "unsoldierly and shameful behavior" that the regiment was removed from Bonn soon thereafter.⁷⁹ At this point in the invasion of Germany, civilians became more of a challenge as the Americans encountered conquered, not liberated, people.

The 1st Division celebrated the attack on the city of Bonn for the way it seized a major city without provoking a costly, destructive urban battle. Late in the war and after only four hours of planning, G.I.s mounted atop tanks and tank destroyers boldly charged into a major city without any artillery support. The ability to quickly launch a nighttime, combined-arms urban attack with creativity and a degree of "cockiness" was a result of the division's veteran status.⁸⁰ But in its haste, the operation was not flawless.

The attacking 16th and 18th Infantry Regiments were not in physical contact and seemed not to coordinate their attacks. First Battalion, 16th Infantry permitted parts of the city's defense to infiltrate behind their positions in Bonn. That might have been a result of not having reconnoitered before attacking. Lastly, the Americans failed to take the bridge intact, which might not have been possible depending on when the Germans destroyed it. Postwar accounts justly applauded the daring assault but tend to downplay the failure to capture the most important feature within Bonn: the bridge over the Rhine. The Big Red One had become an effective, combined-arms force but it, too, made mistakes late in the war.

The Allies' seizure of the Ludendorff Bridge in Remagen, approximately three miles from Bonn, offset the failure to capture Bonn's bridge. Higher command immediately began shifting divisions through Remagen before it collapsed or German artillery destroyed it. The Germans failed to launch counterattacks largely because they lacked fuel and manpower. The 1st Division crossed the Ludendorff Bridge on 15 and 16 March.

As First Army crossed the Rhine at Remagen in strength, Eisenhower continued to rely upon British 21 Army Group as the main punch through the Ruhr. First Army would be the southern arm of a massive pincer movement. The 1st Division's and VII Corps's breakout from the bridgehead began on 23 March.⁸¹ As the Americans steamrolled west of the Rhine, Raymond Gantter wrote that war could still be a comedy of errors when his G/16 squad assaulted a village on 21 March and were attacked by American fighter-bombers, precipitating a chaotic rush to cover and frantic attempts to

inform the pilots they were attacking Americans. As the G.I.s took the village, Germans tanks rolled in unaware of the American infantry presence. Gantter screamed at his bazookaman to fire at the tanks but he refused because his assistant was not there to pull the rocket's safety pin. When the assistant showed up, he explained that he was trying to find where he dropped his bag of rockets; the squad now only had the one bazooka rocket. Gantter looked to his grenadier but the rifle-grenadier broke his weapon in the bombing attack. Three tanks gathered in that village but Gantter's squad could do nothing, so it withdrew. "War," Gantter wrote, "wasn't always heroics and cool efficiency in our army."⁸²

As the Germans amassed men, tanks, and fuel, they fought against the Rhine crossing. On 18 March, Combat Team 18's First and Second Battalions took Quirrenbach after a sharp fight. In rapid order, the three combat teams took Rostingen, Wullscheid, Orscheid, and Stockhausen alongside Quirrenbach on the eighteenth.⁸³ On 19 March, 2/18 seized Eudenbach and defended against a strong artillery-supported enemy counterattack. The Americans kept their gains and repulsed the counterattacks.

Combat Team 18 sent 2/18 to capture Uckerath. VII Corps planned to breakout from the Remagen bridgehead once 2/18 had seized the town. The reinforced battalion assaulted at approximately 2000 hours on 23 March. It attacked over two kilometers of open ground and crossed a stream. The battalion's operations officer, Major Edward McGregor, remembered that the nighttime advance went as well as could be expected but some soldiers remained exposed in the open and required smoke from mortars to

conceal their movement.⁸⁴ The enemy's defensive strongpoints, supported by eight to twelve tanks, covered the approaches into Uckerath.

The Germans stoutly defended Uckerath through the twenty-fourth by using the open ground to their advantage. Second Battalion recorded that the assault companies, E and F, encountered "intense" small arms, mortar, artillery, automatic, as well as "devastating" armored, self-propelled fire from the dug in Germans. This enemy fire stalled E Company's attack 800 yards from Uckerath. Ten tanks and various self-propelled guns "skillfully protrude[ed] their big guns from buildings in the town." By 1800 on the twenty-fourth, the assault companies' were stopped. At 2000, the battalion resumed its advance in the dark. G Company protected the northern/left flank as E and F Companies attacked straight into the city.⁸⁵

The battalion recorded that E and F Companies "had little difficulty in entering the town but the problem of remaining there was not so simple." Giant German Mark VI "Tiger" tanks blocked the approaches into the city as German armor blasted buildings suspected of concealing American soldiers at point-blank ranges. As a reminder of the power of armor in the urban fight, the G.I.s found it difficult to organize themselves as they had no way of stopping the Tigers.⁸⁶ B Company, 745th Tank Battalion also recorded frustration at combating fierce German armor and antitank rocket fire from Uckerath through the early morning hours of the twenty-fifth.⁸⁷ After midnight on the twenty-fifth, the 18th Infantry reported that it cleared most of central Uckerath but was slowed in southern Uckerath because the "enemy is putting a terrific fight on and won't

give an inch.”⁸⁸ At 0430 on the twenty-fifth, the battalion reorganized and renewed its efforts at defeating the German defenders.

Throughout the period, the 32nd Field Artillery Battalion unleashed several bombardments in support of 2/18: from firing smoke to conceal movement to helping to break up counterattacks to firing directly into the city itself. Indeed, at one point, G Company was alone in northern Uckerath by 1500 of the twenty-fourth and defended against an overwhelming counterattack until a “box barrage” from the 32nd Field Artillery Battalion around the company’s position saved it from near-certain destruction.⁸⁹

As the battalion resumed the attack early on the twenty-fifth, it received orders to finish the job so that the 3rd Armored Division could move through Uckerath breaking open the Remagen bridgehead. At 0600, 2/18 declared the town secured.⁹⁰ In the final stages of mopping up, 3rd Armored Division elements passed through the city with no problems. Uckerath was Second Battalion’s “last great battle of World War II.”⁹¹

Allied ground and air forces were pulverizing the German military in late March but, like a wounded dragon, the *Wehrmacht* could still lash out. Early on 24 March, the 16th Infantry’s G Company, including Sergeant Raymond Gantter as senior NCO of his platoon, assaulted Geisbach on the Sieg River as the regiment attacked elsewhere throughout that night. G Company attacked Geisbach from two different directions with little to armored support to battle German infantry and armor within the small river town.⁹² Grantter remembered the Germans firing *panzerfausts*, their version of the bazooka, at his men “and this was a fantastic and outrageous thing, to fire bazookas at

men. It wasn't according to the rule!" In the inky darkness, it was difficult to determine friend from foe from civilian and Gantter had to will, cajole, and force his platoon of experienced and inexperienced men forward. One replacement failed to search a house when ordered to because the doors were locked. "For Chrissake, smash 'em, *smash 'em*, what've ya got a rifle butt for?" His platoon slashed through the village, "fighting, smashing, terrorizing women and children." One of Gantter's "trigger-happy infants" nearly killed other elements of the company in the confusion of the fighting.

The Germans counterattacked with infantry, armor, and artillery and threatened to wipe out G Company. Gantter described the chaos that beset his platoon. Replacements refused to stay at their post for fear of being killed. Two bazookamen fired before receiving the command and a third ran away in fear. Gantter felt shame as his command wilted from an all-consuming fear welling up in his men. His soldiers refused to hold a line and many fled. The company's commanding officer, Captain Wirt, determinedly led a smaller G Company back into Geisbach. At Wirt's request, fifty 105-mm and 155mm guns forced a dazed enemy into the open, thus helping the company to retake the town. Gantter witnessed sturdy stone houses blown off their foundations by the distant guns. The men assaulted houses and chased German tanks and assault guns after the armored support that Wirt had begged for finally entered the fight. The company-level fight for Geisbach is not prominent in the monthly reports or the regimental or division histories but Gantter reflected on how fights like these contributed to a weary, benumbed, apathetic mindset.⁹³ Although the Americans sensed the end of

the war, the fights at Uckerath and Geisbach showed how violent combat remained and how treacherous the urban environment continued to be.

After Geisbach, the advance resumed. Gantter wrote that days later G Company again became motorized infantry: riding tanks, tank destroyers, and trucks through seven towns trying to find German stragglers.⁹⁴ Into early April the division—along with the rest of First Army and in cooperation with Ninth Army to the north—helped to prevent large elements of *Army Group B* from escaping further east. On 18 April, 317,000 German soldiers surrendered to the Americans.

The 1st Division's last combat assignment was into the Harz Mountains, where the Allies suspected that Hitler might use the mountains as a final redoubt.⁹⁵ VII Corps did not encounter the level of combat that it had in 1944 or early 1945. The division's combined-arms combat teams drove through many roadblocks within the heavily forested region. The mountainous terrain and poor road network gave the region's many towns and villages operational value but taking them was not nearly as difficult as Stolberg and Aachen the previous fall or Uckerath and Geisbach. Gantter recalled entering a burning St. Andreasburg, the area's most important city.⁹⁶ The division's monthly report stated that the Harz Mountains operations "was not thought by some that a great deal of organized opposition would be met but as can be seen from the fighting which occurred and the [40,000 prisoners of war] which were taken it proved to be definitely a major operation."⁹⁷ The Harz was a major operation but more determined enemy would have exacted a higher toll from the Americans. By April 1945, the

American advance had become a combined-arms juggernaut attuned to the urban environment.

The combat teams continued pursuing toward Karlsbad, Czechoslovakia into May until ordered by SHAEF to cease fire on 7 May. The Germans finally surrendered on the eighth. With the cease-fire, World War II for the 1st Infantry Division was over.

5th Infantry Division

The 5th Infantry Division, along with the rest of Third Army, assaulted the southern shoulder of Bulge in December 1944 and saw severe urban combat through December 1944 and January 1945. After the Bulge was eliminated, the 5th Division fought to and across the Rhine and against collapsing German resistance into Czechoslovakia by May 1945.

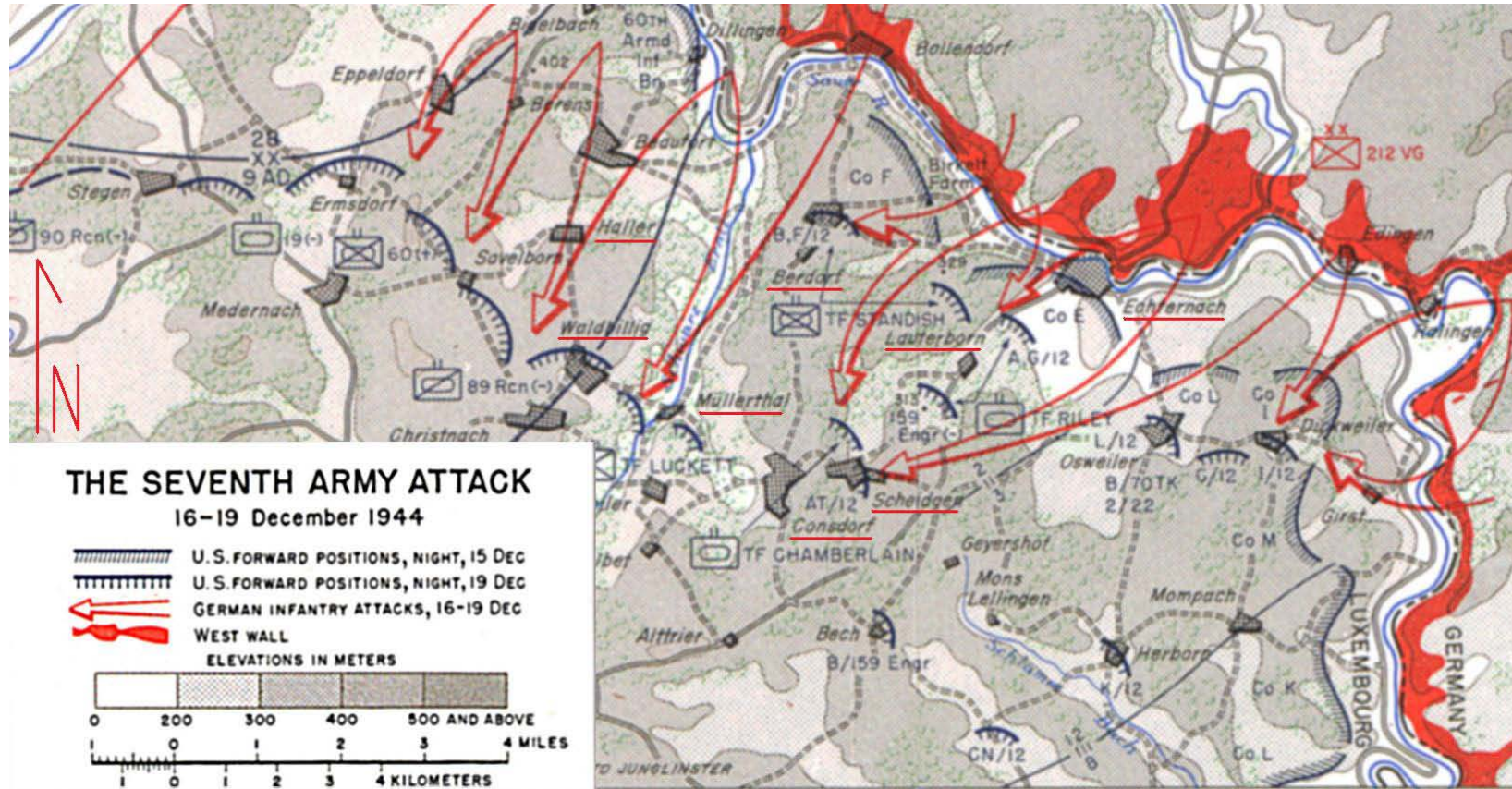
By December 1944, the General Leroy Irwin's Red Diamond Division had proven itself to be every bit the veteran combat organization that the 1st and 3rd Divisions had become. As the 1st Division helped hold the northern shoulder of the Bulge in December 1944, so the 5th Division—as part of Third Army—helped charge into the southern shoulder. The 5th Division encountered more urban combat than the 1st Division and terrain significantly affected combat units' tactical decisions. Along the Bulge's southern shoulder, France-Luxembourg-Germany region, land was more difficult. As the historian Russell Weigley describes the terrain in this area, “the disadvantages of the Ardennes as a military arena were amply in evidence: the wooded areas were numerous, large, and thick with trees; the ravines were many, steep-sided, and deep.” Further, the road network was not conducive to military maneuvering and

the numerous east-west rivers blocked Third Army's northward advance.⁹⁸ The topography was reminiscent of the 3rd Division's fight through the Vosges and many roads cut through deep, steep draws from the extensive and confusing rivers. The terrain strained the Americans' combined-arms fighting by minimizing their tanks' and tank destroyers' effectiveness.⁹⁹ The weather conditions were as horrid and uncomfortable for the Red Diamond Division as they were for the Big Red One. These combined factors spelled trouble. Figure 8.5 shows the fighting in this area.¹⁰⁰

Third Army's abrupt right-face northward into the German left/southern flank meant withdrawing the 5th Division from its fight in Saarlautern on 18 December to lead Third Army's attack. The division lamentably lost its attached tank and tank destroyer battalions. The division quickly integrated the armor replacements, the 737th Tank Battalion and 803rd Tank Destroyer Battalion. By 22 December, Combat Team 10 had relieved elements of the 4th Infantry Division and was helping to push back the German onslaught. On the twenty-third, the 5th Division was all together with the 10th Infantry on the left, 2nd Infantry in the middle, and 11th Infantry on the right. By Christmas Eve, the combat teams fought to relieve the 4th Division and secured the area around Echternach and the Sauer River, also called the Sure River. As the division went into a new operation, it found incredibly active and accurate German artillery supporting a well-motivated German force that effectively used the difficult terrain to its advantage.¹⁰¹ But by the twenty-sixth, 10th Infantry patrols were inside Echternach on the Sauer but found it empty of all Americans.¹⁰²

Fighting on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day was long, confusing, and

Figure 8.5: The Seventh Army Attack, 16-19 December 1944



complicated by the steep ridges in the area. By the twenty-sixth, the 2nd Infantry Regiment had fought its way to Berdorf. The regiment's Second Battalion sent E and G Companies to assault from the east and west. When G Company's commanding officer approached Berdorf and saw one hundred men lined up in the road, he thought it was E Company and asked for confirmation. The response came back: "Yah, Das ist E Company." The Americans opened fire and killed many but several ducked into houses and defended them. The fighting became house-by-house for E and G Companies through Berdorf. The two companies took southern Berdorf easily but the Germans in northern Berdorf offered a stronger defense. The 737th Tank Battalion's A Company helped with these attacks but the record does not indicate how.

By nightfall, most of Berdorf was taken. The Americans found many houses with Christmas trees and food being prepared. The Germans responded to the American attack by plastering the town all day as soldiers fought through the town's houses. Colonel A. Worrel Roffe was impatient to advance First Battalion so he pressed it through Berdorf but Germans caused too many casualties; the colonel had to wait until Second Battalion controlled the town. Second Battalion claimed Berdorf cleared around 0200 on the twenty-seventh.¹⁰³ By the twenty-sixth, Third Army was fully engaged in countering the Ardennes counteroffensive.

For the first two weeks of 1945, the 5th Division, with the rest of XII Corps, defended along the left (west) bank of the Sauer River and patrolled along and over the river. In preparation for the inevitable river assault, division elements reconnoitered crossing sites. Snow accompanied the bitter cold. One Red Diamond veteran, Louis

Lauria, described the situation as being under “eight degrees and the wind was blowing around 25 miles an hour.” Further, Lauria wrote, “the snow was a foot high” and the men sustained themselves by eating cold canned meals.¹⁰⁴ On 18 January, the division, concurrent with the 1st Division along the northern shoulder, attacked out of its foxholes to help pinch the Bulge shut.

The division had to cross the Sauer River, which constituted its own challenges and required its own planning. In addition to crossing the Sauer, the 2nd Infantry also had to seize three towns on the river—Erpeldange to the northwest, Ingeldorf in the center, and Diekirch to the east—as well as capture two large heights. Third Battalion planned to cross the Sauer under cover of darkness and take the small town of Ingeldorf from the east. First and Third Battalions would then fan out to the northwest and northeast, respectively, and conquer the heights. There was no preparatory bombardment because the Americans hoped to keep the crossing a surprise but that surprise was lost. Third Battalion failed to achieve a beachhead and could not attack Ingeldorf. The battalion’s operations officer reckoned that all the patrolling had tipped off where the assault would be coming.¹⁰⁵ Second Battalion was supposed to march across a footbridge after 3/2 took Ingeldorf but now was tasked with crossing the Sauer and capturing Ingeldorf from an awakened enemy. Second Battalion scrapped any hopes of a footbridge and filled assault boats to make an unplanned boat crossing, supported by massive amounts of artillery and tank fire from the rear.¹⁰⁶ One veteran from G Company recalled that “crossing with German fire to our front and American fire from

our rear was as frightening as all hell.” He mused about how anyone survived that assault.¹⁰⁷

During this debacle, 1/2 managed to slip over unnoticed. First Battalion dashed over the river on a footbridge, silenced a troublesome machine-gun position, and attacked Erpeldange. Mortars and artillery supported 1/2’s attack on Erpeldange on the left flank of the regiment’s operations along the Sauer River. By 0830, C Company had cleared most of the town of its defenders as A and B Companies moved north to other targets. When engineers installed an armor-supporting bridge, tank destroyers crossed the Sauer and fired directly into Erpeldange’s buildings that concealed the enemy. One tank destroyer pushed its main gun through a house window and took twenty-seven German soldiers prisoner. River assaults are a notoriously infantry-based affair given the tendency of armor to sink. But once the engineers constructed the Bailey bridge, armor supported C Company’s attack into Erpeldange.¹⁰⁸

Given 1/2’s success, Third Battalion’s K Company used the same footbridge to attack Ingeldorf from the west rather than the east. K Company controlled the town by 1530. East of Ingeldorf, the taller factory buildings in Diekirch’s northwestern portion, gave L and I Companies trouble as they deployed; a preparatory artillery bombardment fell on Diekirch at 1550 for ten minutes. Third Battalion attacked Diekirch from the west, aided by five tanks from A/737th Tank Battalion. Approximately one hundred prisoners were claimed and resistance lightened after the artillery bombardment. The main enemies were the mines and booby traps that pestered the Americans. Sergeant Michael Bilder remembered that street fighting went on inside Diekirch most of the

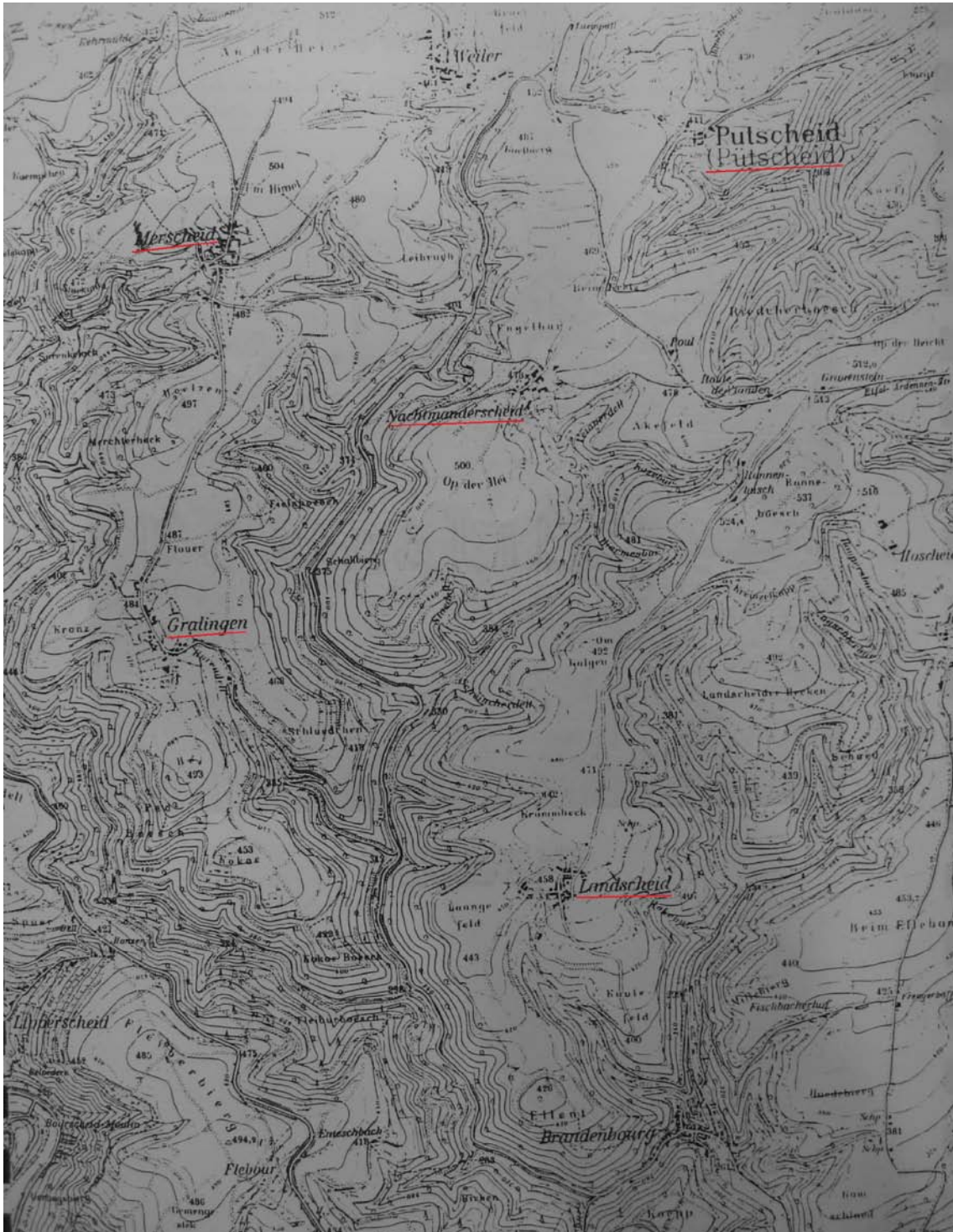
day.¹⁰⁹ By 0745 on the nineteenth, 3/2 and its supporting tanks resumed the attack and claimed Diekirch by noon.¹¹⁰ Afterwards, Third Battalion gathered itself and continued the northward fight.

By the twentieth, the regimental combat teams dealt with more urban combat because, the Eleventh Infantry discovered, the Germans incorporated urban locations on high ground into their defensive scheme. Therefore, “any town could be considered an enemy concentration area,” releasing division and corps artillery to mercilessly pound and shell these towns.¹¹¹ Tenth Infantry’s Third Battalion took Landscheid. On the twenty-first, 2nd Infantry attacked and took Lipperscheid. Eleventh Infantry targeted Hoscheid by the twenty-second as it relieved the 2nd Infantry. Figure 8.6 indicates the difficult topography in this area.¹¹²

Second Battalion, 11th Infantry attacked Hoscheid on 22 January and suffered terrific firepower from Hoscheid as well as Gralingen and Moscheid to its left. First Battalion peeled off to the right to attack Gralingen. Gralingen proved to be its own challenge because, the regiment’s records stated that “the steep grades, nature of the ground and deep snow proved to be a great obstacle causing general fatigue among the foot elements and prohibiting movement of vehicles.” First Battalion infantrymen endured mortar and artillery fire as well as automatic and rifle fire on the approach toward Gralingen. After five hours of fighting within the town—with only the indirect aid of tank destroyer fire from the rear due to the tough terrain—the battalion claimed Gralingen.¹¹³

In the meantime, Second Battalion suffered many casualties around Hoscheid

Figure 8.6: 10th Infantry Area of Operations, January 1945



with little to show for its efforts by the end of the twenty-second. Armor tried to assist but the topography minimized their efforts. On the twenty-third, 2/11 tried to push into the town but German fire slowed their efforts to a near crawl. E and F Companies worked their way to southern Hoscheid but failed to penetrate the town by day's end. Tank destroyers offered limited artillery support against German forces. Tanks had difficulties maneuvering over and along the steep ridgelines; C/737th Tank Battalion lost two tanks from attempting to move in support of the infantry.¹¹⁴

On the twenty-fourth, the regiment finally took the town from the Germans. American artillery subjected Hoscheid to a terrible bombardment. The battalion engaged in vicious house-by-house combat as it entered the town and captured it by 1800. The battalion found destroyed Mark VI and Mark V tanks inside Hoscheid. The 737th Tank Battalion noted that there were three 75-mm self-propelled guns concealed there. The battalion claimed two were destroyed but the damaged third withdrew.¹¹⁵ In its morning report for 24 January, G Company, or the "Gruesome Gents from Gallant George," proudly claimed to have captured 51 prisoners along with seven-eighths of Hoscheid, had destroyed 16 machine guns, had helped knock out one tank and one self-propelled antiaircraft gun. The company credited its combat efficiency to the training of its commander, Captain Durst, and the dogged determination of the company's executive officer, Lieutenant Anderson.¹¹⁶

During these fights, Third Battalion attacked Merscheid.¹¹⁷ After Hoscheid, Second Battalion turned its attention to Hoscheiderdickt, the next village defended by Germans in the area. Savage street fighting and town combat broke out as the enemy

hampered the Americans fought to flatten the Bulge. Temperatures dropped and snowplows had to clear the roads.¹¹⁸ Division and corps artillery battalions actively assisted the Americans in these urban fights. The 11th Infantry's history credited division and corps artillery battalions for their invaluable support as these combat teams attacked the towns and villages in the Bulge's southern shoulder, especially praising artillery battalions' devastatingly effective "Time on Target" bombardments.¹¹⁹ By immediately attacking Hoscheiderdickt after capturing Hoscheid, CT 11 was an example of the regimental combat teams fighting the Germans without rest or pause.

On the twenty-fourth, at the very end of the Battle of the Bulge, Combat Team 10 took on its most difficult challenge of the battle: the town of Putscheid. After taking other preliminary towns, the regiment turned its attention to the northeast toward Putscheid. The regimental history described Putscheid as located "in a hilly and partly wooded area on the western side of the Our River." The town's approaches were "across exposed ground on three sides" and were covered by the positions of the veteran *130th Panzer Lehr Division*.¹²⁰ Vicious enemy fire also came from the high ground and towns around Putscheid.¹²¹ Similar to the German situation at Besançon, the *130th Panzer Lehr Division* was trying to slow Allied advances so German forces could withdraw from the Bulge. In contrast to the failed German defense at Besançon, the *Panzer Lehr Division* fought far more desperately and successfully to delay the Americans.¹²²

Early on the twenty-fourth, 1/10 tried to seize Putscheid but failed in the face of counterattacking enemy infantry and tanks, withdrawing to allow supporting artillery to

pound Putscheid.¹²³ Regimental wartime records vaguely describe what happened but more detailed accounts paint a far more brutal fight. A and B Companies stepped off from Nachtmanderscheid for Putscheid at 0330. Halfway there, they suffered serious German small arms and tank fire. The assault began when the infantry and armor were a few hundred yards away from the town but immediately confronted enemy self-propelled guns and tanks inside and outside the town. Mortar and artillery fire from surrounding towns added to the chaos of the urban battle and greatly complicated the Americans' task.¹²⁴ Around 0900, Division informed Regiment that it was aware of 1/10's difficulty in taking Putscheid and offered the regiment "all the artillery to take [the town] apart." The 10th Infantry declined the offer because it had men on the outskirts but did ask for close air support; cloudy skies prevented fighter-bomber support. By 0930, both Division Artillery and the 46th Field Artillery Battalion were preparing to bombard Putscheid.¹²⁵

At approximately 1300, the supporting armor shelled Putscheid as advance elements waited just outside the town; A Company remained 200 yards away. When the shelling ceased, German machine gun fire again stopped A Company but B Company, on A/10's left, managed to enter the town. Immediately, the Americans came under a hail of enemy automatic, tank, artillery, and small-arms fire. Tank destroyers usually did not enter towns because of their vulnerable open tops but this time they maneuvered to engage German tanks inside Putscheid and aid the stricken infantrymen. As the afternoon, A Company infiltrated the streets but both companies suffered accurate German shelling from towns and heights north of Putscheid, preparatory to a

counterattack. The insides of most the Putscheid's homes and buildings were destroyed in the house-to-house fighting.

Before long, it was an American combined-arms attack against a German combined-arms attack. The 737th Tank Battalion recorded that its B Company destroyed two Mark IV tanks and three trucks. The 803rd Tank Destroyer Battalion credited itself with killing a Mark V tank, an armored car, and blowing up a house with approximately 15 enemy inside.¹²⁶ The Americans lost one tank destroyed and three damaged. The increasing German artillery outside Putscheid and the strong resistance inside the bloody town forced the Americans to give ground. To cover the retreat, many men rose to the occasion: Vincent P. Cerrito and PFC Louis Belair each carried out wounded men from Putscheid while under fire; Sergeant James Tinsley's platoon withdrew under the accurate covering fire of Tinsley's machine gun. All three men earned the Silver Star for their actions. When the G.I.s had left Putscheid, division artillery and the 46th Field Artillery Battalion fired "Time on Target" bombardments that devastated the town and many Germans within it.¹²⁷

Having failed to capture Putscheid on its first attempt, 1/10 spent the next three days nursing its wounds and preparing to renew the attack. Nighttime patrols revealed the Germans comfortably ensconced in Putscheid. When an enemy tank was discovered concealing itself in a house, tank destroyer fire and white phosphorus mortar shells convinced it to leave the area. The battalion planned its second assault for the twenty-eighth. The battalion plan relied on A and C Companies, supported by Second Battalion. A Company would take the heights to the west while C Company attacked from the east,

which meant attacking over an exposed hump in the ground. E Company deployed to the northwest to cut off the defenders' escape. The advance elements deployed in the early morning hours on the twenty-eighth. At 0600, First Battalion stepped off and came under a hail of German lead. A Company had its position by 0800 but for the first several hours, C Company was pinned down in its exposed position east of Putscheid and came under fire from German small arms, machine guns, artillery, and tanks. By 0930, the Germans attacked these suffering infantrymen and C Company took fearsome losses. By 1000, C Company had retreated and was badly disorganized. Because of poor visibility, artillery could not effectively support the company nor stop the German attack.

Elements of Second Battalion were now aroused to help the attack and A Company prepared to strike from the west. At 1255, 4.2-inch mortars fired smoke shells to help mask the movement of two platoons of tanks as they drove ahead of the infantry. The infantry entered and engaged an angry defense. One veteran recalled the rifle platoons "leapfrogging" through the houses and buildings. The lead platoon seized the first house and the second platoon took the next two. The Germans then counterattacked with tanks and infantry in strength. The fighting was severe enough that the company commander adjusted the artillery to fire directly on his house. Just as the Germans approached his building and the American shells were falling, the commander jumped out the window.

The tanks withdrew but rejoined with tank destroyers. This combined force of artillery, infantry, tanks, and tank destroyers broke a German counterattack as the

Americans finally secured Putscheid. In the process, the Americans destroyed a King Tiger tank, two halftracks, and 75-mm howitzer. A Company fought its way through the town; B Company advanced from the south; and a greatly weakened C Company reentered from the east. The Germans proceeded to shell the town but it was now under American control.¹²⁸

First Battalion's attack on Putscheid on 28 January, along with a few other Third Army actions also along the Our River, signified the end of the Bulge created on 16 December. During the Ardennes Offensive, the Americans sustained 41,000 casualties. The process of sealing off and flattening the Bulge claimed another 39,000 killed, wounded, and captured Americans.¹²⁹ In the process, these soldiers endured terrible weather conditions and fought over very difficult terrain. The Germans were back in the West Wall but Eisenhower had no intention to allow them to remain there for long. Despite Eisenhower's aggressive stance, the division's history related a fatalist attitude among many Red Diamond men by late-January, especially as Germany gave no indication of surrender: "to the majority who were killing and being killed, it only meant that the Boche was deliberately intent on killing as many Americans as possible before he finally gave up." Therefore, to most infantrymen on the frontlines, "the situation was far from bright." As such, the average G.I. "resigned himself to the conclusion that unless Germany gave up soon, or he was wounded, he would be very lucky indeed to make a return trip home."¹³⁰

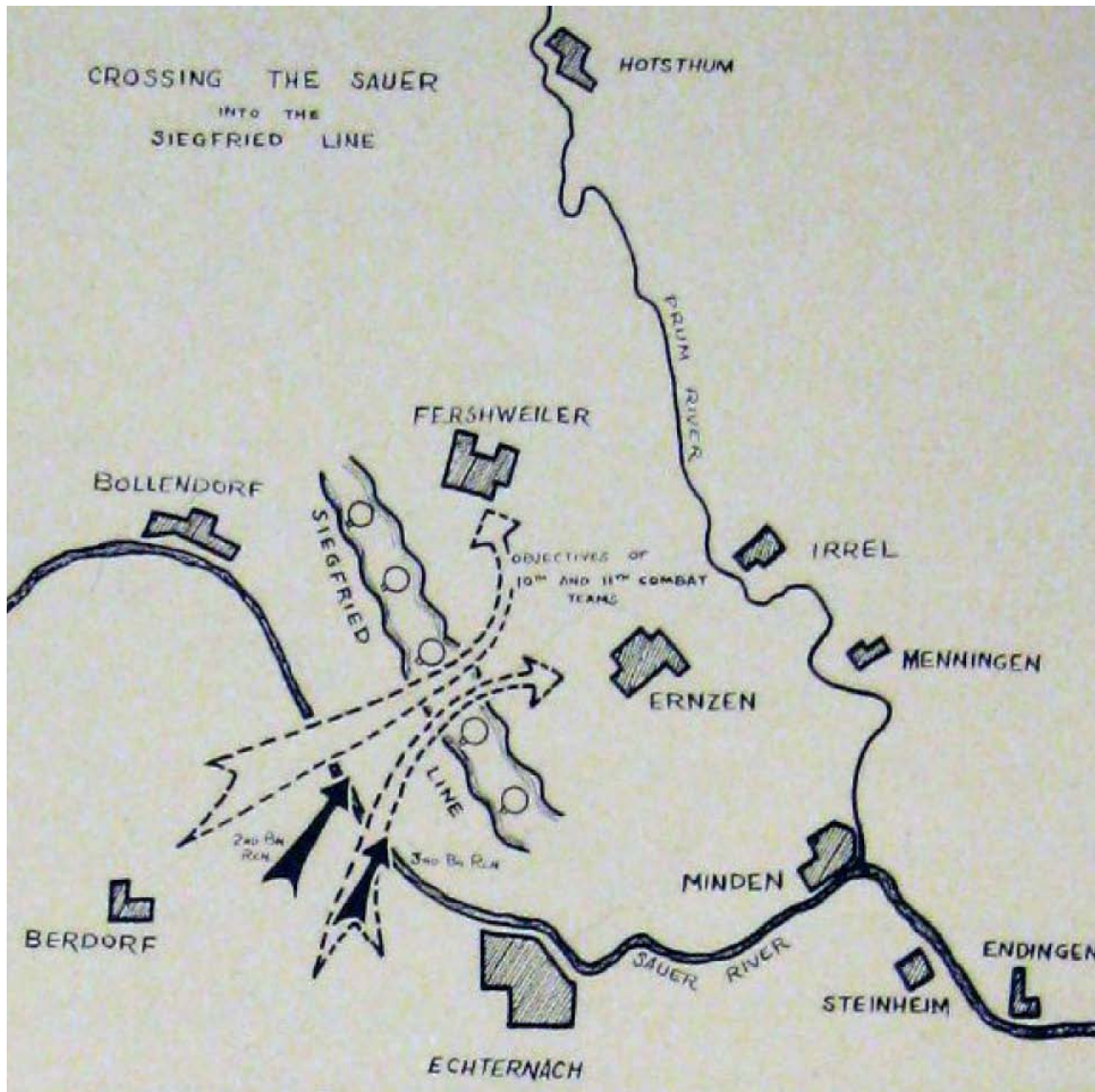
The American soldiers reinstated their lines in late-January but there was to be no rest or respite from the fighting. In early February, the 5th Division prepared to cross

the Sauer River again and attack into the Siegfried Line to enter Germany and help end the war. In a snow-rain mix, elements of the 10th and 11th Infantry Regiments attempted to cross the Sauer near where they fought over four weeks previous: to the west of Echternach. The crossing also occurred amidst daunting topography—historian Charles MacDonald described it as running through deep draws through “clifflike sides sometimes 600 feet high”—with a treacherously rapid current swollen by the previous days’ precipitation.¹³¹ Figure 8.7 indicates the attack across the Sauer River into the Siegfried Line.¹³²

Veterans at river crossings, 10th and 11th Infantry Regiments sent assault troops to the other side of the Sauer on 7 February but the current nearly capsized the entire river crossing operation. Holding superior ground augmented the weakened German defenders’ combat power. For the first several days, the regiments struggled to get men across and reinforce them. Artillery and armor actively offered critical support from the opposite bank.¹³³ In the meantime, air and ground forces heavily shelled and bombed the principal towns of Ernzen and Ferschweiler in preparation for the eventual American advance. On the ninth, General Irwin ordered eight battalions of artillery, or nearly 200 guns, to shell the two towns.¹³⁴ With no restrictions on ammunition, artillery may have fired as many as two thousands shells at Ernzen.¹³⁵ On the twelfth, having enough men and machines on the opposite side, the 5th Division began its assault into the Siegfried Line and the area towns.

By the tenth, entire battalions were across the river and moved inland. The 10th Infantry took Bollendorf and discovered that, like at Saarlautern, the Germans were

Figure 8.7: Crossing the Sauer into the Siegfried Line



camouflaging pillboxes to look like buildings. Thermite and fragmentation grenades assisted the dangerous assessment of capturing pillboxes. Assaulting from the rear of these fixed positions was less costly as pillbox garrisons tended to surrender when attacked from behind. It helped that many of the German defenders had only recently

deployed there and were not determined to hold out for long. Bollendorf fell on the twelfth and gave convenient bridging sites to the division.¹³⁶ The tanks and tank destroyers that crossed the river augmented the combat teams' firepower. On the thirteenth a patrol from 3/10 reached the outskirts of Ferschweiler until it drew fire from German soldiers and a self-propelled gun. The next day, Valentine's Day, L Company made a surprise assault on the town at 0630; there was no preparatory artillery but, as has been mentioned, artillery had already thoroughly worked over the town the previous several days. First and Second Platoons attacked from the west and east respectfully but resistance was light except for the northwestern part of Ferschweiler. Capturing the town's northwest corner required rifles, grenades, and bazookas. As the Americans had come to expect, the fighting was house by house. Light and heavy mortars supported the attacks while the company's machine gun platoon protected the flanks. By 1100, the Germans yielded the town; tanks had entered the fray around 1000.¹³⁷ Neither Diesburgerhof nor Ferschweiler slowed the 10th Infantry's advance.

The 11th Infantry's crossing, on the 10th's right, was far more trying. The regimental operations officer said succinctly that "nothing in this operation went according to plan." But the German defenders gave up easily, he noted, and generally did not fight.¹³⁸ Many German soldiers voluntarily surrendered as the 11th Infantry secured its beachhead. Tank shelling from the 737th Tank Battalion began fires within Ernzen on the thirteenth. The next day, all the three rifle battalions advanced and E and F Companies entered a bombed-out, burning Ernzen alongside two platoons of A/737th Tank Battalion.¹³⁹

The 5th Division continued northeast to target Bitburg. The 2nd and 10th Infantry Regiments led the division, taking places like Shankweiler, Stockem, Halsdorf, and Messerich along the way and crossing the Ernztal, Prüm, and Nims Rivers in the process. Once past the Prüm, the land flattened and the division did not have to fight through any more deep draws and steep ridgelines. The floodwaters from the early spring thaw receded, thus aiding in the crossings.¹⁴⁰ The division's movements from the Siegfried Line toward Bitburg revealed how weak the Germans had become: positions that might have been well-defended and exacted a costly toll on the attacking Americans now fell easily.¹⁴¹

On 26 February, a refreshed 11th Infantry left the division reserve and resumed the lead into Bitburg. The XIX Tactical Air Command provided invaluable service attacking and destroying enemy columns fleeing out of Bitburg. American heavy bombers had also pulverized Bitburg itself. By now the Allies' control of the air was complete. On the twenty-sixth, A and B Companies attacked toward Masholder, a suburb just south of Bitburg; C Company reconnoitered and patrolled the city's western defenses. German armor tried to stop the Americans, forcing the G.I.s to deploy and American armor to reinforce them in case the Germans launched an armored counterattack that night but none came. On the twenty-seventh, A and B Companies maintained their attack into Masholder, helped by tanks from A/737 Tank Battalion and tank destroyers from C/803 Tank Destroyer Battalion.

By the twenty-eighth, Masholder was in Americans' hands and 3/11 advanced to attack Motsch, just east of Bitburg. In the late morning and early afternoon, 1/11

deployed with tanks and tank destroyers to attacked the cratered city. A and B Companies cautiously entered Bitburg from the south as tanks and tank destroyers lined heights over Bitburg and shelled the city in support of 1/11. Tanks from the 4th Armored Division were nearby, the division being on the 5th Division's left, and they also shelled Bitburg. As First Battalion cleared Bitburg by noon, Third Battalion struggled to take an eastern suburb, Motsch. By the end of the day, the last day of February, the 5th Division controlled both Bitburg and Motsch.¹⁴²

However, they did not take it fast or aggressively enough for the commanding general. When informed by the division's operations officer that a roadblock and artillery had stopped First Battalion, General Irwin pressured the infantry to disregard and bypass centers of resistance if need be to secure a hold on Masholder. When division pressured the 11th's commanding officer, Colonel Paul Black, Black responded that his men were moving forward, even without tanks.¹⁴³ Having endured intense urban combat in cities like Angers and Saarlautern, taking Bitburg with far less fighting was doubtless a welcome relief to the men of the 5th Division.

As the Americans improved their combined-arms capabilities in urban combat, thus becoming more effective as a fighting organization, they also improved their technology. Veteran Michael Bilder, a sergeant in the 2nd Infantry, recalled the influence that the new M-26 Pershing tank had on urban combat. The M-26's 90-mm cannon and thicker armor was superior to the M-4 Sherman. In urban combat, Bilder recollected that the infantry had to work diligently to make sure a street was cleared of enemy tanks or antitanks weapons before friendly tanks could proceed. But Pershing

tanks “turned sharply around corners blind, and simply crushed any anti-tank guns and their crews that happened to be in their path.” Additionally, most Sherman tanks had received additional armor and an improved cannon during the war, which helped to overcome many of the Sherman’s main limitations.¹⁴⁴

After Bitburg, the division continued its advance through Germany but resistance was sporadic. The 10th Infantry’s Third Battalion took Metterich on 3 March after a light struggle. Massive artillery and close air support destroyed much of the counterattack the Germans attempted. The infantry and supporting armor had few problems with the remainders. Late on 22 March, the 11th Infantry crossed the Rhine at Nierstein and Oppenheim. The crossing brought a curious mix of some enemy and others still fighting. The regiment’s A and B Companies advanced toward Geinsheim amidst a terrific Germany artillery barrage. The officers and NCOs rallied their men to continue moving forward. German forces sallied from Geinsheim but the two companies, supported by artillery to the rear, quickly destroyed much of that counterattack. On the twenty-third, B Company fought its way into Geinsheim by using the well-worn tactic of “marching fire.” Once the battalion entered the town, resistance stopped. The two companies claimed over one hundred prisoners, many elderly *Volkssturm*.¹⁴⁵

Enough Germans fought that the Americans could not assume that towns were empty of defenders but any defense was becoming noticeably feebler than previous campaigns. The 10th Infantry reportedly encountered “only low-class emergency units . . . formed of 50-60 year old men who were not fit to offer any serious resistance.” In the

advance toward Frankfurt, the regiment fought against units with teenage boys.¹⁴⁶ Local *Volkssturm* units and police forces tried to defend Gross Gerau from the 11th Infantry in late-March. When B Company and tanks used “marching fire” on these defenses, they all but collapsed. Scattered Germans defended Gross Gerau vigorously with *panzerfausts*, the German shoulder-fired, antitank rocket similar to the American bazooka, but simply could not hope to stop a combined infantry-tank assault into the town.¹⁴⁷

The 11th Infantry described the Germans’ combat effectiveness at this late stage in the war as heavily reliant on tanks, self-propelled assault guns but not artillery. Due to lack of fuel, the *Wehrmacht* simply abandoned many of these vehicles. Many German officers and NCOs were excellent leaders but the large numbers of elderly and sick soldiers severely limited their command options. Those German soldiers whose homes were overwhelmed by Russian forces simply had no reason to fight and they surrendered in large numbers.¹⁴⁸

The division’s last action against a major city was the attack on Frankfurt-am-Main. Frankfurt had a pre-war population of 500,000 but British and American air forces had bombed it mercilessly. It had perhaps 100,000 civilians still in the city when the 5th Division turned its eyes on it.¹⁴⁹ With Third Army armored divisions driving at high speeds, they encountered the main bridge over the Main River at Frankfurt but found it too damaged for vehicles to cross. Late on the twenty-sixth, 3/11 sprinted across the well-defended bridge against strong German artillery and anti-aircraft artillery fire to secure a small bridgehead for the Americans. The Germans tried to destroy the

Main bridge by actively shelling it but failed to do so. By the next day, 3/11 was across the Main River inside Frankfurt.

The division responded rapidly by sending 3/10 to reinforce them. Together, the battalions snaked their way inside the bombed city. As the G.I.s attacked the railroad station, they endured snipers, 88-mm fire, and civilians helping to direct and adjust German artillery.¹⁵⁰ When 1/10 entered the operation, it took sniper fire from a church steeple that turned out to be a nine year old boy.¹⁵¹ Tanks entered Frankfurt as soon as engineers built bridges that could sustain them.¹⁵² The initial city blocks witnessed intense urban combat but, in the end, Frankfurt fell like Bonn to the Americans. Before long, all three regimental combat teams were inside Frankfurt, and some entered a house-by-house fight. When the German commandant was wounded and his second-in-command killed by American artillery, the German defense slackened. By 30 March, the city and its suburbs were in American hands.¹⁵³

The 5th Division rested, refitted, replenished, and dealt with German civilians for a few days in Frankfurt while the war proceeded to engulf the rest of Germany. The division went into Third Army and then SHAEF reserve for a short time. The 5th Division helped to reduce the Ruhr Pocket. In one instance, a military commander tried to make stand against the Americans in a town but, according to a wartime interview, that commander “found the civilian population was invariably opposed and displayed resentment toward the commander in question.” In other towns and cities, “white flags appeared well in advance of the entry of our infantry.”¹⁵⁴ After the Ruhr Pocket, the division targeted Czechoslovakia with the rest of Third Army. The urban combat was

sporadic as April turned to May. The 5th Division and its regimental combat teams were inside Czechoslovakia when the men received Eisenhower's orders to cease fire on 7 May.

3rd Infantry Division

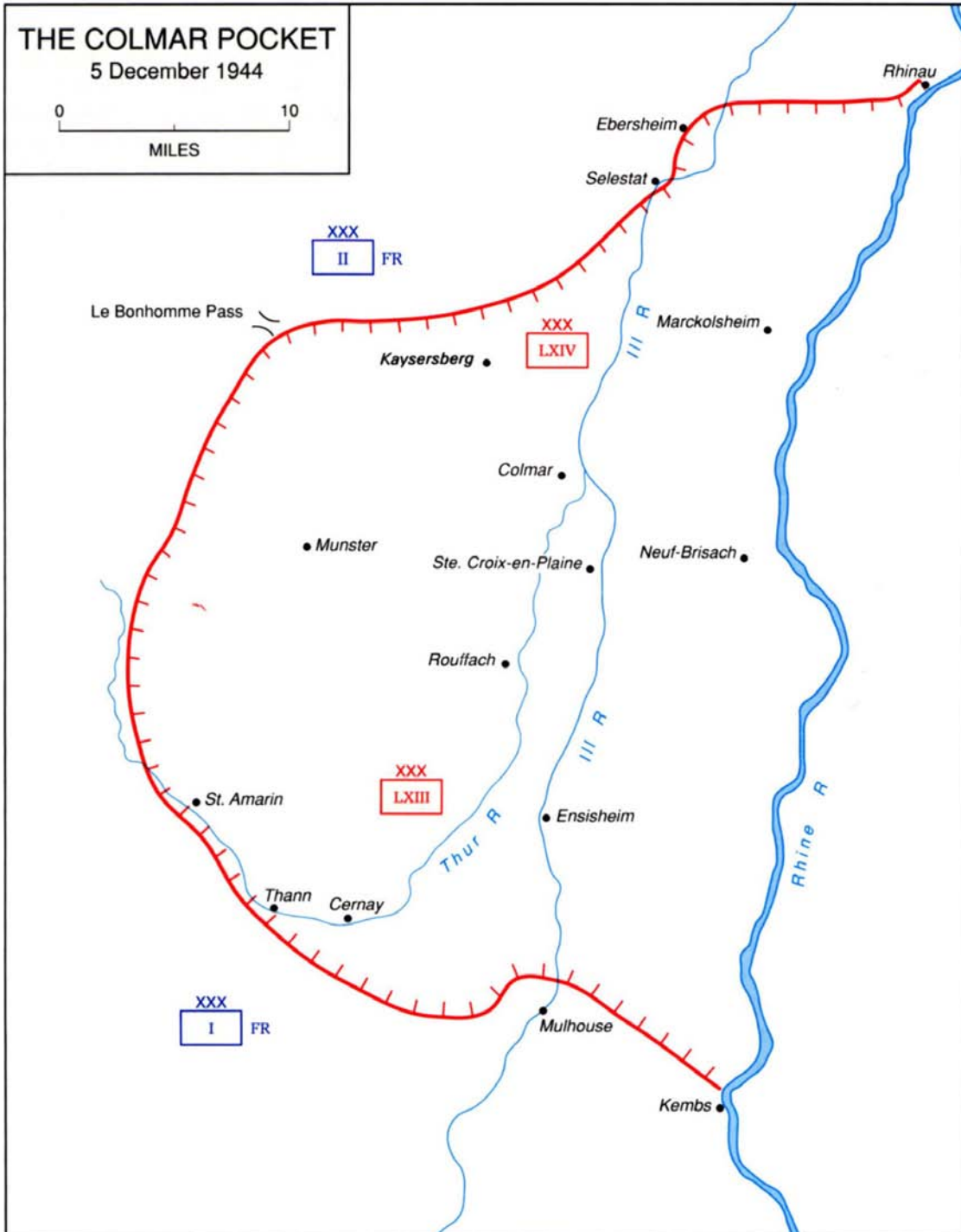
By early December, the 3rd Infantry Division found itself in Strasbourg and had secured the bridge over the Rhine by seizing Kehl. While American units in the north worked to reduce the Bulge, the veteran 3rd Division found itself under French command helping to reduce in the strongly-held Colmar Pocket. After eliminating this German stronghold, the division proceeded across the Rhine in March and fought the Germans in street-by-street fighting within Nuremberg in mid-April. By the end of the war, the division was moving through southern Germany.

During their time in Strasbourg, 3rd Division soldiers busied themselves with patrolling the city and enjoying female companionship inside the city. The division also maintained a training regimen. Among other things, the 30th Infantry's training included small-unit exercises such as mock attacks on fortified positions as well as houses and fighting from house to house within villages and towns.¹⁵⁵ While the 3rd Division rested and trained during the first two weeks of December, the war continued. Through November and into December, much of Seventh Army was attacking northward and preparing to cross the Rhine. The German counteroffensive and Third U.S. Army's ninety degree move north to reinforce the southern flank of the First U.S. Army, forced Seventh Army to extend its flanks further north and changing the latter army's plan of attack.¹⁵⁶

During this time, a strongly fortified pocket of Germans had crystallized south of Strasbourg, near Mulhouse in Alsace, along the eastern edge of the Vosges and the western bank of the Rhine, centered around the Alsatian city of Colmar, aptly called the Colmar Pocket.¹⁵⁷ The German *Nineteenth Army* filled the Colmar Pocket while the French First Army confronted it. Despite its vulnerability as a bulge, strong interior lines allowed the Germans to cross the Rhine to construct a strong defense and reinforce strong attacks. The 7th Infantry's history described the terrain: several rivers crisscross across the flat land between the Rhine and the Vosges Mountains, all connected by a system of canals. The Germans exploited these waterways and fortified the numerous towns to help defend against northern and southern attacks. The French 2nd Armored Division and the exhausted American 36th Infantry Division tried but failed to reduce the small bulge. As a result of these failed Allied attacks, the 7th Infantry's history attested that "the German lines surrounding Colmar became a virtual ring of steel as the enemy emplaced himself in the most strategic positions the mountain studded region, rivers and canals afforded."¹⁵⁸ Temperatures that remained in the single digits and teens, only to dip below zero at night, did nothing to help matters for the infantrymen, artillerymen, and tankers. Figure 8.8 shows the Colmar Pocket; the 3rd Division attacked from north of Kaysersberg.¹⁵⁹

Within this context, the rested 3rd Division turned south to help destroy the strong German positions in Alsace. In terms of severity, fighting in the Colmar Pocket lies just behind the fighting around Anzio twelve months before, making it the division's "second greatest fight of the entire war." The 30th Infantry history described

Figure 8.8: Colmar Pocket, 5 December 1944



the fighting as “soul-trying.”¹⁶⁰ Former Major General Eugene Salet, then the commanding officer of 2/15, blamed the Colmar Pocket on the 36th Infantry Division’s failure to break out of the Vosges and push the Germans across the Rhine. Because of that division’s “ineptness,” Salet contended, 2/15 and the rest of the 3rd Division were “to suffer an agonizing period” in the Colmar Pocket.¹⁶¹ Reducing the pocket meant the three regimental combat teams scratching and clawing their way over flat, snow-covered plains and through many of the well-defended and fortified Alsatian towns within the pocket.

The 30th Infantry, backed by the 41st Field Artillery Battalion as well as tanks and tank destroyers from the French 5th Armored Division, kicked off the 3rd Division’s attack into the Colmar Pocket. The regiment, temporarily attached to the 36th Infantry Division, was ordered to take Kaysersberg and the dominating Kaysersberg hills in order to begin pushing in the Germans’ Colmar Pocket.¹⁶² The towns within the division’s area of operations in the northern part of the pocket can be seen on Figure 8.9.¹⁶³ As the topographic lines on Map IX show, Kaysersberg is in a valley surrounded by steep hill masses to the north and south.

The 30th’s attack began between 0700 and 0800 on 15 December, working with French tanks. The regiment moved slowly against strong resistance, minefields, and roadblocks but by the end of the day had taken the small village, Toggenbach, to the northwest of Kaysersberg. Two different reconnaissance patrols managed to worm their way into the outskirts of the city. The next day, 36th Infantry Division artillery fired preparatory bombardments as the regimental combat team prepared to assault

Figure 8.9: Fighting in the Upper Colmar Pocket, 15-29 December 1944



Kaysersberg and the hills to the north and south.¹⁶⁴ The combat team's normal tank and tank destroyer attachments of C/756th Tank Battalion and C/601 Tank Destroyer Battalion rejoined the regiment. With the assistance of French North African soldiers, or Goums, First Battalion was to take Hill 512 south of Kaysersberg and Second Battalion would attack the heights north of the city while 3/30 would capture the city itself.

First and Second Battalions spent most of the sixteenth attacking the wooded heights north and south of the city. They met with fierce resistance but were able to take their objectives. Enemy prisoners had identified two infantry battalions within Kaysersberg reinforced by self-propelled guns. While First Battalion stormed its heights with surprise, Third Battalion assault companies attacked from the southwest and became entangled in a vicious urban fight. One veteran, Staff Sergeant Russell Dunham, whose actions in early-December earned him the Congressional Medal of Honor, reconnoitered the city. Dunham remembers the Weiss River that ran through the city and a large tower that rose above the buildings in this typical Alsatian town.¹⁶⁵

Sources classified the urban fight in Kaysersberg as a specially bitter one. The battalion fought its way into the heart of the city but a tank-infantry counterattack exploded into Kaysersberg. French tanks found it difficult to support the battalion because extensive property damage and street debris inhibited their movement. I Company lost two commanding officers on the sixteenth. One wounded lieutenant in K Company manned a light machine gun and kept the enemy at bay for two hours. Elsewhere, another wounded lieutenant used a machine gun to kill or wound thirty-five German soldiers, rescue two wounded soldiers, and then return to his position to kill ten

more. Both received the Distinguished Service Cross for helping to maintain I and K Companies' positions. Sergeant Emil Byke ran a phone through one hundred yards of sniper fire to call for mortars on that observation post. By the end of this second day of fighting, the Third Battalion had taken much of Kaysersberg at great cost to itself and had repulsed the Germans' counterattack.¹⁶⁶

According to Sergeant Dunham, the fighting became worse on the seventeenth, the third day of fighting.¹⁶⁷ The regiment's history reported that "the street fighting was continuing with undiminished fury" alongside furious fighting north and south of the city.¹⁶⁸ Dunham recalled this battle as one "that kept us one the move as we fought from one house to another, from one position to the next." Indeed, he confessed, the fighting was so intense inside the town that the details have blurred together. Both sides took heavy losses contesting the city and civilians huddled in cold fear for their lives in their basements. By the eighteenth, the battalion had control of the city but at a fearful price.¹⁶⁹

While the usual armor attachments rejoined the regiment on the sixteenth, it is not clear how they assisted the fight in Kaysersberg since the other two battalions engaged in equally bitter fights and also defended against strong counterattacks to the south and north. The only mention of armor assisting the infantry is in the regiment's daily S-3 report that stated simply that tanks, tank destroyers, and flakwagons followed I and K Companies.¹⁷⁰ Only the 601st Tank Destroyer Battalion noted offering any assistance to the 30th Infantry in its attack on the city on 18 December.¹⁷¹ The division's artillery states that the 41st Field Artillery Battalion fired thousands of rounds

in support of the regiment there.¹⁷² Dunham's only mention of armor was the French tanks that entered after the fighting was largely over.¹⁷³ Because the entire regiment fought in these four days, it is possible that I and K Companies had a few tanks on hand to support their bloodied advance through Kaisersberg.

The fighting continued when the 30th Infantry rejoined the 3rd Division. On the nineteenth, the 15th Infantry linked up with the 36th Division and French forces to seize Sigolsheim, Bennwihr, and Kientzheim but these efforts failed.¹⁷⁴ The 15th Infantry pulled back to reassess its position and situation. A prisoner of war report on 22 December revealed that Sigolsheim had approximately 200 Germans defending it with a hard core of SS soldiers, and were well supplied with antitank weapons and machine guns. Further, the defenders received reinforcements everyday from Colmar and planned to counterattack from there once they had enough personnel.¹⁷⁵

As such, the Americans pounded Sigolsheim and Bennwihr with artillery for two days.¹⁷⁶ Early on 23 December, the 15th Infantry simultaneously attacked the two towns with battalion-sized task forces. First Battalion attacked Sigolsheim from Kientzheim to the west with tanks and tank destroyers; 3/15 advanced from the west to assault Bennwihr with a platoon of tanks.¹⁷⁷ These movements touched off a week of intense urban combat against defenders resolved not to lose their towns to the Americans. The Americans wanted these two towns since it would allow them to drive south to Colmar and help destroy the Colmar Pocket.¹⁷⁸ Sigolsheim and Bennwihr were emblematic of the combat in the Colmar Pocket: brutal, nasty fighting against German soldiers resolved to hold their ground.

Third Battalion's attack against Bennwihr had more immediate success than 1/15 but at great cost. I Company and a section of four tanks fought their way from the west and encountered a combined-arms defense of the place. They found approximately 400 soldiers supported by tanks ensconced in ruined and bombed-out buildings.¹⁷⁹

Tragically, the Americans thought Bennwihr would fall easily. Division intelligence carefully monitored the enemy occupancy of and movements within Sigolsheim but Bennwihr does not appear in G-2 reports until the battle. Further, early on the first day, Colonel Hallett Edson ordered battalion commander Major John O'Connell to send K Company to capture Hill 216 to the southeast when I Company cleared Bennwihr.¹⁸⁰

But Bennwihr proved to be a tough nut to crack. I Company attacked southern Bennwihr from the west.¹⁸¹ Staff Sergeant John Shirley recalled that his platoon followed behind the four medium tanks through vineyards. Almost immediately, tanks ran into trouble as they bogged down in plowed fields and some turrets became entangled in the wire, allowing German infantrymen and antitank guns to knock out three supporting tanks in short order. The infantry sprinted to the cover of Bennwihr's buildings and received a heavy fire from enemy small arms, machine guns, and artillery. Shirley barely got his men and his wounded platoon leader to a cellar within a crumbling house in the town.¹⁸²

Having launched their attack at 0730, I Company was halfway through Bennwihr by 0845. The company bypassed a schoolhouse but at 0800 a reinforced SS company launched a counterattack and halted the last supporting tank.¹⁸³ A surprise appearance by enemy armor and the counterattack from the schoolhouse threw I Company into

disarray. Fighting swirled around the schoolhouse all day but the Germans controlled it at day's end. K Company was supposed to move attack Hill 216 southeast of town but had to send a platoon to aid I Company.¹⁸⁴

The urban fight in the rubble of Bennwihr went back and forth between the two opposing forces but the Germans, having more men and armor, gained the upper hand and shoved I and K Companies to northern Bennwihr. After getting most of First Platoon and its wounded lieutenant to a cellar but unable to contact his company commander, Sergeant John Shirley and his men could do nothing but defend against several attacks from German infantry. With no bazooka, Shirley called for an artillery bombardment to knock out a Mark IV tank. Undamaged, this German tank fired directly into Shirley's building and into his cellar, which convinced the stunned, scared, and wounded Americans to surrender. Shirley escaped a German POW camp by trailing behind the column and hitting his guard to make good his escape to American lines.¹⁸⁵

Around the same time, a Mark VI "Tiger" tank and 30 to 40 German infantry slammed into the American positions from the south. The Tiger was impervious to American rifle grenades and bazookas; the radio transcripts are filled with concern over knocking out this beast. The reinforcing platoon from K Company also ran into troubles trying to link up with I Company. Second Lieutenant James Morris took his Third Platoon through buildings of Bennwihr to contact I Company but had to defend against several German attacks. Morris called in artillery yards away from his men's positions to repulse these counterattacks. Observing from a house, Morris then tried to bring artillery upon a nearby tank but this only served to make the tank fire at Morris's

observation post. Morris was able to stall this German tank by putting his platoon in a static defensive position.¹⁸⁶

By the end of the short wintry day, Third Battalion had brought mortars, artillery, tanks, tank destroyers, and infantrymen to bear on Bennwihr. Bennwihr's urban architecture and rubble complicated this process: the American tank destroyers could knock out neither the Tiger tank nor the self-propelled guns running loose because buildings shielded their targets.¹⁸⁷ And by the end of this short wintry day, I Company, which taken a severe beating, maintained a tenuous finger hold on Bennwihr.¹⁸⁸ Most of 3/15 had withdrawn to the southern edge of Mittelwihr.¹⁸⁹ With dark, patrols tried to find and destroy that Mark VI tank; there was no indication that they did. The battalion remained confident that the Germans depended on the Tiger to hold Bennwihr. Intelligence had discovered, however, that every third German soldier was armed with a bazooka. On 23 December, the Americans had failed in the face of Bennwihr's stiff German defense.

As First Battalion opened its attack against Sigolsheim at the same time as 3/15, it had the support of 2/15 deployed in the saddle between Hill 351 and Mont de Sigolsheim. With B Company in reserve in Kientzheim, A and C Companies and their armored supports attacked from the west and immediately endured intense small arms and machine-gun fire as well as mortars, antitank rockets, and German tanks. The tanks came under rocket fire or bogged down in the churned mud-snow mix. Guiding on the main east-west road, C Company was on the left and A Company on the right. C Company encountered a convent that stopped its attack with furious fire. Tank

destroyers fired on the convent but with little success. A Company gained the first few houses but could not advance any further. It became clear that these Germans were not following the usual habit of defending the outskirts; these were defending from within the town.¹⁹⁰

Stalled by the defender's stand, American artillery, tank destroyers, and P-51 fighter-bombers tried to help the attack gain momentum but these measures failed. By afternoon, nearly all the American tanks were destroyed or stuck in the mud. Counterattacks slammed into the Americans but Captain Elmo Toffanelli's A Company withstood them—in part from his active leadership—despite taking fearful losses themselves.¹⁹¹ By evening, neither company had moved past the first houses and their armored support was virtually gone. Just before 2200, 1st Battalion reported that it could hold its meager gains if it were “not hit by too large a force.”¹⁹² As battalion, regimental, and division leaders planned the next day's steps, a strong counterattack swept A and C Companies from the town. Germans attacked down Hill 351 and from the city's center to shove the two companies back to Kientzheim. The 15th Infantry had conceded Sigolsheim and Bennwihr back to the enemy. The 15th Infantry had not endured urban combat this intense since C Company's lone fight for Roccaromana, Italy against German armor and massed artillery. For the next several days, the Americans shelled Sigolsheim.

Despite the concurrent retreat from Sigolsheim by First Battalion, the 15th Infantry decided to keep the pressure on the Germans. Acting division commander Brigadier General Robert Young pressured Colonel Edson to send 3/15 into southern

Bennwihr well before daybreak to assure capture of the road intersection just south of the town.¹⁹³ There was to be no letup for Third Battalion.

The division and regiment decided to attack Hill 351 on Christmas Eve before renewing the attack on Sigolsheim. First and Second Battalion attacked the hill as Third Battalion's K and L Companies slugged it out again in Bennwihr. From 24 to 26 December, First and Second Battalions bloodied themselves against several hundred SS soldiers determined to hold their hill positions at all costs. As much out of desperation as bravery on the twenty-sixth, First Battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Keith Ware, personally led an eleven-man and one-tank assault against six machine gun positions to finally take the hill. Ware's actions earned him the Congressional Medal of Honor.¹⁹⁴

The night of 23-24 December, Major John O'Connell intended to have his Third Battalion attack from the west again. Indeed, for the past month, the 36th Division had attacked Bennwihr from the west with no success.¹⁹⁵ The supporting elements of the 756th Tank Battalion complained that they had not been part of the planning in the earlier attack on Bennwihr but this time, B Company's Captain David Redle convinced O'Connell not to repeat the same plan of attack. Redle suggested sending tank destroyers in a feint west of Bennwihr while the main attack launch from the east.¹⁹⁶ Having failed to adequately plan for the initial attack, the second day's assault brought improved tank-infantry coordination and gained more success.

Early on the twenty-fourth, the 15th Infantry wheeled into action: First and Second Battalion assaulted Hill 351, division artillery pounded Sigolsheim throughout

the day while P-47 fighter-bombers bombed and strafed Sigolsheim, and Third Battalion renewed the attack on Bennwihr.¹⁹⁷ K Company plunged in from the east and fought to the south while L Company rushed from the northeast and cleared the northern half of the town.¹⁹⁸ Both companies infiltrated quickly; a K Company squad leader helped by compelling a self-propelled German tank destroyer to surrender. Bazookas incapacitated another two tanks.¹⁹⁹ Supporting tanks and tank destroyers also each claimed knocking out Mark IV tanks during the day.²⁰⁰ Soon enough, both companies were fighting through the maze of rubble and half-standing houses in their assigned sectors of Bennwihr. Fighting became house-by-house in short order.

K Company, a platoon from L Company, a tank, and a tank destroyer repulsed counterattacks from Sigolsheim and from the basements of southern Bennwihr. One counterattack pushed K Company back but it soon regained the lost ground.²⁰¹ Artillery offered key assistance by breaking up a battalion-size attack on nearby Mittelwihr to trap 3/15 in Bennwihr. The shelling helped the infantry brushed aside the German attack. Both companies made significantly better progress than the day before but faced stubborn German resistance in Bennwihr's ruins, necessitating constant house-to-house assaults and attacks, avoiding the streets and avenues swept by concealed German machine-gun positions, and enduring heavy German artillery concentrations.

The officers, sergeants, and privates displayed personal bravery and courage, contributing to the slow, painful capture of Bennwihr.²⁰² L Company simply bypassed the schoolhouse strongpoint and cleared its sector first. When finished, the company directed a tank to pummel the school with round after round. While under fire, one

soldier slowly crawled over 30 yards of open land, concealed himself behind brush near the schoolhouse, and opened fire on the snipers within to allow other soldiers to approach the strongpoint. They killed three Germans and took thirteen others prisoner. By the end of the day, the combined-arms forces of infantry, tanks, tank destroyers, and artillery had wrenched the Germans from all but the very southern tip of Bennwihr from the enemy.²⁰³

The regiment continued pressing its attacks on Christmas morning. First and Second Battalions maintained the attack on Hill 351 while I and L Companies attacked Hill 216 in more furious fighting. In Bennwihr, K Company cleared the snipers and the last remaining holdouts out of the town's southern tip that had been reinforced the night before. Earlier attempts having failed, and after beating back a counterattack, the company vented its angry frustration and the battle on Christmas 1944 took a sinister, murderous turn. Antitank grenades exploded window barriers, white phosphorous grenades and flamethrowers set fire to the houses, and fragmentation grenades killed anyone else. As flames engulfed each house, the company surrounded the infernos and, at approximately forty yards distant, opened up with everything available on the last houses, gunning down all who tried to escape. It took nearly all day. Employing tanks, machine guns, mortars, grenades as well as small arms, K Company wiped out these fanatic defenders. The company took few prisoners.²⁰⁴

Elsewhere, I and L Companies fought for Hill 216 southeast of Bennwihr but could not take all of it. That night, the regiment's Antitank Company relieved them. Third Battalion then planned for the attack on Sigolsheim from the east, its rear, on 26

December. According to a deserter, the past several days of fighting had depleted Sigolsheim's garrison and it expected the next attack to come from the west again.²⁰⁵ As such, the Americans planned to attack from the east. Over the course of that night, as the three battalions situated themselves for another day of attacking strongly defended German positions, medium and heavy artillery pounded Sigolsheim all night long.²⁰⁶

Moving along the road east of Hill 351, Third Battalion attacked into eastern Sigolsheim, facing fanatical resistance. Very early in the advance from Bennwihr to Sigolsheim, a German artillery concentration landed right in the battalion's midst, scattering I and L Companies, and delaying them for most of the day. After ten hours of reorganization and redeployment, around 1700, K and L Companies and their tank support finally entered Sigolsheim's maze of rubble and destruction. Because of the late hour and shortened days, Third Battalion only managed to confirm that German troops still blocked their way. By 2300, the battalion came under heavy small arms, rocket, and machine-gun fire and also confirmed the presence of enemy armor.²⁰⁷

After having made the necessary defensive preparations for a long night within Sigolsheim, the Americans made ready to attack at light on 27 December. But at 0325, weary Americans were awakened by a screaming counterattack of 50 to 60 German soldiers firing machine guns, small arms, and flamethrowers. Unlike on the twenty-third, K and L Companies held firm against sporadic fighting in various houses and buildings through the cold night. American mortars and artillery remained busy for hours supporting the infantry.

Second Battalion's G Company reinforced L and K Companies, now mustering a total of 66 riflemen. The companies divided into five combat teams, each supported by a tank, and at 0900 began another day of urban combat. K Company seized the troublesome convent in northwestern Sigolsheim, L/15 cleared out the central part of the town, and G Company occupied the southern part.²⁰⁸ The tank-infantry teams attacked into what the regimental history considered some of the worst street fighting endured during the entire war.²⁰⁹ The stubborn enemy bitterly resisted the American tank-infantry teams from battered house to destroyed house. The battalion commander observed that few diehard Germans surrendered and they audaciously fired their antitank *panzerfaust* rockets in the open from the middle of streets.²¹⁰

The Germans' organization were admixtures of forces but the SS soldiers forming the core of the defense were some of the best in the *Nineteenth Army*.²¹¹ Dislodging them from Sigolsheim required a superior effort on the part of the exhausted 15th Infantry. Early in the day's fighting, two houses held up one of L Company's platoons, now down to a mere eight men.²¹² The commanding officer, 1st Lieutenant Eli Whiteley, left his men to bring back badly needed bazooka rockets in a pillow case, taking a hit in the arm in the process. Using smoke grenades to cover his movements and fragmentation grenades to breach his entries, the wounded Whiteley single-handedly assaulted down a street to seize three well-defended houses, crossing streets covered by machine guns, mortars, and artillery to kill several and take over twenty enemy prisoners. At the last house, a soldier fired a bazooka into the wall, giving the platoon leader enough room to rush inside, kill five, and take twelve prisoner. Afterwards,

Whiteley and his men continued fighting, despite their wounds. By the end, Whiteley was severely wounded in his head, shoulder, arm, and leg. According to one of his soldiers, the lieutenant consented to be evacuated after L Company's CO "knock[ed] him out cold."²¹³ Whiteley earned the Congressional Medal of Honor for his efforts.

Stiff fighting continued through the rest of the twenty-seventh. The Germans converted another schoolhouse into a deadly strongpoint and continued to use the convent in the northwestern corner to their advantage. The tank-infantry teams worked together to take them from the Germans. The main danger for tanks in cities is antitank weapons and the Germans heavily relied on their version of the bazooka, the *panzerfaust* rocket, to knock out the accompanying Sherman tanks. The tanks, then, adjusted their tactics. One tanker recalled finding a concealed position that allowed him to expose his tank long enough to fire and then back into the concealment when the Germans fired their *panzerfausts* at him. By the end of these battles, the Americans found over two hundred spent *panzerfaust* tubes.²¹⁴

By day's end, I Company and the 15th Infantry's Battle Patrol had joined the fight but G, K, L Companies and tanks had cleared most of Sigolsheim. The night of 27-28 December, the Germans tried to infiltrate forces into the convent but were discovered and destroyed. The fighting continued through the night as the three companies maintained a steady advance. On the twenty-eighth, German artillery unleashed bombardments over the advancing Americans but it was little help. By 1000 on the twenty-eighth, the regiment claimed to have cleared Sigolsheim and K Company troops occupied the convent in the northwestern corner.²¹⁵ The weeklong nightmare was over.

With the end of the draining fights for Kaysersberg, Bennwihr, Sigolsheim, and Hill 351, the division could content itself with having dented the Colmar Pocket's formidable forward positions. As Hitler's Ardennes Offensive lost momentum around this time, he launched Operation NORDWIND north of the 3rd Division and its sector fell quiet. For the first three weeks of January, the division licked its wounds, incorporated new replacements, clashed with enemy patrols along the Weiss River, and temporarily absorbed the 254th Infantry Regiment to give it combat experience. The 3rd Division's leaders prepared for the inevitable eradication of the Colmar Pocket; few had any illusions that it was going to be easy.

These Germans were some of the most fanatical that the 3rd Division had encountered. They received orders not retreat an inch, which they took to heart. The urban environment augments the combat power of the defender. To American officers and enlisted men who had forgotten that lesson, Kaysersberg, Bennwihr, and Sigolsheim were powerful reminders. Fanatical Germans, who were often SS soldiers, made a vigorous defense from prepared positions, battered mounds rubble, and buildings left standing after the shelling and bombing. Selling their lives dearly, defenders showed how well-motivated troops made capturing a town or city a very costly proposition. An officer observed that few German soldiers surrendered and that these fanatical defenders armed with a generous supply of *panzerfausts*.²¹⁶ In these preliminary fights along the Colmar Pocket, the 3rd Division fought a different enemy than it had yet encountered since landing in southern France five months prior. Instead of a joyous time, such enemies turned Christmas 1944 into a nightmare for the men of the 3rd Division. The

601st Tank Destroyer Battalion summed it up best: “morale was ‘excellent’ on the morning reports but nowhere else!”²¹⁷

In late-January, the 1st French Army, along with the American 3rd Infantry Division in its II Corps, began to bludgeon the Colmar Pocket by attacking the salient from north and south. The 3rd Division led the northern wing and targeted Neuf Brisach, the city controlling the main bridge over the Rhine and, therefore, Colmar. The Allies planned to assault Colmar after sealing it off entirely. Supporting from the south, the French I Corps began their offensive a few days early. Both logistical problems and terrain features plagued the French forces. The northern attack had to cross several rivers. Further, the German forces appeared to be depleted with significantly less armor than the Allies but the Germans could count on difficult terrain to favor them as well as adequate stores of ammunition, good interior lines, and the network of fortified Alsatian towns and villages to canalize and bleed the Allied attack.²¹⁸ Turning these villages and towns into hedgehogs against the Allied offensive was something they had learned along the Eastern Front as well further north along the Siegfried Line.²¹⁹ Figure 8.10 shows the division’s area of operations within the Colmar Pocket.²²⁰

Of the three combat teams, the Combat Team 7 experienced some of the more intense urban combat. On 22 January, the 7th Infantry led the division’s attack, by crossing the Fecht River at Guemar. In the intervening weeks, the men had become accustomed to having some warmth and reluctantly left those warm comforts for the cold reality of combat in bone-chilling temperatures.²²¹ The soldiers covered themselves in a variety of white capes, sheets, and mattress covers, otherwise known as “spook

Figure 8.10: 3rd Division's Reduction of the Colmar Pocket, 22 January-6 February 1945



suits,” to camouflage themselves.²²² After crossing the Fecht, the 30th Infantry moved to cross the Ill River to the southeast and fought heavy counterattacks there while the 7th Infantry quickly marched south.

The 7th Infantry made its crossing without attracting the attention of too much enemy artillery. First Battalion's objective was Ostheim, so it turned south, marched through the Foret Communale de Colmar and upwards of 18 inches of snow to attack from the north and east.²²³ Proceeding without armor—it had not yet crossed—A Company deployed two assault platoons abreast followed by light machine guns and the reserve platoon; 60-mm mortars brought up the rear. The company struggled through a minefield and eliminated various enemy machine-gun positions. After the attack began, it took nearly all day to clear the stubbornly held southern portion of its German inhabitants. Two German tanks, a Mark IV and a Mark VI, assisted the defenders but when a bazooka destroyed the Mark IV, the Mark VI withdrew. Indicating the value of friendly armor in a built-up area, one veteran recalled the attack stalled by a sniper that was most likely in the church steeple. But only armor, which had not yet joined the fight, had the power to shoot down a steeple. Finally, around 1700, Ostheim fell and the battalion moved to its next objective.²²⁴

On 25 January, the 7th Infantry's Second and Third Battalions jumped off towards Houssen just before 0600. Second Battalion sent F and G Companies as the assault companies, following behind an artillery barrage and tanks behind the assault companies. Between the Americans' line of departure in the woods north of Houssen and the town itself was one thousand yards of open, snow-covered land sited German riflemen and machine guns in trenches, bunkers, and foxholes. They had also posted machine guns in the houses and an antitank gun in a street. The tanks and tank destroyers offered support where possible in the dark chaos. After an hour, G Company

and a tank destroyer finally wiggled its way into town, where they began the slow process of clearing out the Germans. The Americans encountered snipers, machine guns, and more antitank positions as the fighting became street to street and at close quarters. The two companies claimed over 30 prisoners. Since they had bypassed positions north of Houssen, those Germans swung their attention to the Americans within Houssen until blasted by American riflemen, tanks, and tank destroyers.

Third Battalion attacked from the northeast and did not have the same problems as 2/7 in penetrating Houssen. Instead, a fog and smoke screen served to break up and disorganize the the battalion as men, according to combat interviews, “wandered about aimlessly.” Taking advantage of the Americans’ disorganization, Germans infiltrated their positions and inflicted losses. In this confusion, Third Battalion lost two tanks to enemy fire. With the morning light, the Americans responded by eliminating the bypassed positions from the earlier attack or took the defenders prisoner. After this success, First and Second Battalions secured nearby Rosenkranz and prepared to defend the towns. Other regimental elements stomped out other German positions. Showing the Americans’ poor defensive measures, a German patrol infiltrated Houssen on the morning of 26 January, seized a house, and knocked out a tank destroyer. A Sherman tank ended the minor threat by firing its main gun into the house.

January 26 concluded Phase I of the 3rd Division’s operation in the Colmar Pocket. By attacking down the corridor caused by the Fecht and Ill Rivers, the 7th Infantry had sealed off Colmar from the north by taking Houssen and Rosenkranz. At the same time, the 15th and 30th Infantry Regiments fought vicious battles to hold a

bridgehead over the Ill River and secure positions north of the important Colmar Canal.²²⁵ In these few days, the 7th Infantry had taken nearly 400 prisoners while suffering over 300 casualties itself, including approximately 90 evacuated due to the cold. Chilled to the bone, veterans recalled that “rifles and machine guns were chilled into uselessness [and] Bazooka rounds, upon contact, refused to explode.” Having isolated Colmar from the north and been relieved by elements of the 28th Infantry Division, the 3rd could begin Phase II, isolating Colmar from the east.²²⁶

Phase II sent the 7th and 15th Infantry Regiments over the east-west Colmar Canal, driving south, and cutting off Colmar from the east by slashing southward. The Colmar Canal presented its own crossing challenges: it was fifty feet wide, five feet deep, and slow moving. The banks were steep and soldiers planned to use rubber boats under the cover of darkness and supporting weapons. Artillery bombardments fell throughout the twenty-eighth; the 7th Infantry crossed at 2100 on 29 January at Wickerschwihr. First and Third Battalions advanced rapidly and took a burning Bischwihr from the north and south. Thinking the town empty of any enemy, men from 1/7 carelessly exposed themselves in the town’s streets until fired upon by the Germans. By midnight, the town was in Americans’ hands. When the Americans discovered uniformed women in the garrison, they became extra thorough in frisking them. With no armor across, they established defenses and prayed the Germans would not counterattack.²²⁷

Second Battalion marched to the southwest toward Wihr-en-Plaine and Horbourg to cut off Colmar from the east. By moving fast, the battalion hoped that speed and

surprise would compensate for the lack of accompanying armor. Once engineers had constructed a bridge, armor was to cross and support their usual attachments, especially the exposed Second Battalion. As 2/7 approached Wihr-en-Plaine in the nighttime cold from the northeast, battalion commander Major Jack Duncan recalled that “it was too easy and too quiet. I felt like we were walking into something.” Duncan was proved right when two German *Panzerjägers* (tank destroyers) at 0130 sprang their trap by slamming into the unassisted infantry’s right flank and heavy weapons opened up on the Americans.²²⁸ The assault companies, F and G, reached Wihr-en-Plaine’s northern edge but the German armor threatened to obliterate the battalion headquarters and E Company. One F Company private, Earl Reitan, remembered sprinting toward Wihr-en-Plaine as fast as he could with his heavy load in the deep snow and through the entanglements of a vineyard to the cover of outlying buildings.

The German guns encircled the isolated Americans and raked them with cannon and machine-gun fire. Bazookamen maneuvered to destroy the threat. On the last bazooka, one *panzerjäger* was set afire and the other withdrew. Duncan’s command group, reinforced by the E Company, joined F and G Companies’ slow fight for the town. After gaining entry into the town, the battalion had another savage house-to-house fight. After Duncan radioed about the *Panzerjägers*, L Company came to reinforce 2/7. In the early morning hours, two Mark VI “Tiger” tanks and German infantry counterattacked in Wihr-en-Plaine from the east and west against the Americans who were desperately short of adequate weapons. American soldiers, German soldiers, and German tanks fought savagely in Wihr-en-Plaine. Lacking adequate antitank support,

the Americans faced the threat of total destruction. Reitan recalled diving into a house but one of the Tigers saw him. The soldiers cowered against a wall, expecting the tank's 88-mm main cannon to annihilate them. The tank fired at point-blank range and put a hole in the home as it shook violently but no one was killed or injured. Reitan praised the Alsatians for building sturdy stone houses that could absorb such damage.²²⁹

Second Battalion fought with desperation, killing many of the counterattacking German soldiers and holding off the enemy tanks with the few bazookas remaining. They used them well: one American fired a rocket into a tank's engine and turned it into an inferno. In the fighting elsewhere, a new replacement, in his first battle, knocked out two machine-gun positions and captured ten Germans soldiers. This helped finally break the counterattack. In the morning light, Major Duncan put his men inside buildings and called for an artillery barrage on the town itself. Pozit-fuse shells, which reliably detonated above ground, helped to empty the streets of enemy. Heavy artillery fell outside the town to prevent German reinforcements from infiltrating.

With daylight on 30 January, American armor entered the fight and helped the battalion to hold Wihr-en-Plaine. Enemy artillery rained upon the Americans. By 1000, the Americans were in defensible positions in the northern half of the town and able to stop a morning counterattack. In the afternoon, Second Battalion, L Company, and the regimental Battle Patrol attacked and cleared out buildings to the south. Second Battalion's fight in Wihr-en-Plaine served as a violent reminder to the 7th Infantry and 3rd Division that urban combat is not solely an infantryman's affair.²³⁰

Second Battalion's objective, however, was nearby Horbourg, which held the bridge to eastern Colmar over the Fecht River. As the battalion consolidated its control over Wirh-en-Plaine, the division's commanding general, Major General John O'Daniel, ordered 2/7 to take Horbourg with the "greatest possible speed" in cooperation with French armor.²³¹ The battalion readied itself but the French refused to coordinate. The attack went in with only two American M-4 tanks.²³²

At 2100 on the thirtieth, a weakened Second Battaion's fight for Horbourg was difficult and painful. The Germans were determined to keep their escape route to Neuf Brisach and the Americans were just as determined to seal it shut. And, again, the soldiers fought house-to-house and street-to-street. As with many of these towns in Colmar Pocket, indeed through World War II: Horbourg only had operational value insofar as it helped the Allies to destroy the German forces and bring about their unconditional surrender. American and German artillery pounded the town. Late on the thirty-first, the Americans controlled Horbourg and the Germans had destroyed the bridge that connected Colmar and Horbourg over the Ill River. The fighting had taken a fearsome toll. By 31 January, Private Earl Reitan's E Company was down to 18 men.²³³ By 2300 on the thirty-first, units from the 75th Infantry Division relieved 2/7.

With Horbourg and Andolsheim in American hands, the division moved into the third and final phase of eliminating the Colmar Pocket: seizing Neuf Brisach. As with the previous phases, in order to take Neuf Brisach, the 7th Infantry would have to plow its way through other towns. The 7th Infantry led the attack southward down the narrow corridor created by the north-south Rhine-Rhone Canal and the Rhine River. The

regiment stepped off at 0500 on 2 February from Artzenheim and quickly seized Baltzenheim and Kunheim in quick succession from defenders eager to surrender. But as Second and Third Battalions approached Biesheim, the last town before the all-important Neuf Brisach, they found enemy foxholes, zig-zag trenches, and bunkers designed to prevent the Americans from advancing.

I Company managed to penetrate this outer defense and get into Biesheim, where a German defense and Mark V Panther tank awaited them. It seemed as though every house had to be assaulted. Tanks and tank destroyers helped assault teams of eight to ten men to storm houses with grenades, submachine guns, and rifles. One platoon would attack a house or building in Biesheim under the suppressing and covering fire of another platoon.

Second Battalion's attack against northeast Biesheim included four tanks and two tank destroyers. The tanks opened fire on six-foot outer wall; the cannon fire gave the infantry access into the town. The infantry cleared buildings and tore down roadblocks to give armor the ability to maneuver. The combined-arms fighting continued when 2/7 cleared a defended row of houses: tank and bazooka fire allowed the infantry to close with the enemy inside the houses and take nearly fifty prisoners. By the end of 2 February, Biesheim was in the Americans' hands at the cost of twenty-six killed and seventy-seven wounded.²³⁴

Having taken Beisheim, the end was in sight as the regiment prepared the isolation of Neuf Brisach. As with Colmar, the division had neither intention nor need to attack Vauban-style, fortified Neuf Brisach. Shortly after midnight on 5 February, the

regiment moved behind a heavy artillery barrage to seal off Neuf Brisach's eastern side. The regiment fought its way south from Biesheim as the 30th Infantry took Neuf Brisach's eastern suburbs. The German garrison began fleeing the city southward into the waiting arms of the French forces coming from that direction. Early on 6 February, Neuf Brisach surrendered to the Americans and without any fighting within it. During this last drive, American and French forces entered Colmar and took it relatively bloodlessly. The 3rd Division returned to VI Corps control in the Seventh U.S. Army while the French finished the last of the resistance within the Colmar Pocket; the city was in Allied control on 9 February.²³⁵ The focus now became crossing the Rhine.

The division's history bragged that the division had "fought from house to house and street to street in the fortress towns of the Alsatian Plain" against an enemy that grudgingly gave ground and at a steep price.²³⁶ Whenever possible, the division problem cut off and isolated towns, such as Colmar and Neuf Brisach, rather than assault them. However, the division had made mistakes during this time. The 15th Infantry failed to understand the nature of Bennwihr's defenses before the attack on 23 December. The fighting in Wihr-en-Plaine and Horbourg confirmed to the 7th Infantry confirmed that urban combat required every weapon available. That is, the regiment's February report asserted, if one battalion was enough to take a town, then two should take it. This should help to accomplish the objective faster, the first battalion can hold the town, and the second battalion can be use against another objective.²³⁷

By mid-February, the division transferred to Lorraine and SHAEF reserve. The division took in new replacements, maintained and repaired equipment, got new

uniforms, enjoyed time away from the chaos of war, and trained for upcoming operations. As mentioned in Chapter 5, it was here that the 7th Infantry converted the town of Pournoy-la-Chetive, which the 5th Division's 10th Infantry Regiment had assaulted and then defended the previous September, into a street-fighting course. Because the course included armor, it was designed to facilitate and improve tank-infantry cooperation in urban combat. Aside from combined-arms urban combat training, the regiment also initiated a tank-infantry training for other types of fighting.²³⁸

After nearly a month off the front lines, the division, now part of XV Corps in the Seventh U.S. Army, prepared for the invasion of Germany. The veterans no doubt tried to push the memories of the harsh fighting during the hard winter as spring came. But new troops had no memory of the previous harsh winter and the inhuman fighting for the Colmar Pocket because they, the inexperienced replacements, had just entered the war. The previous weeks of training were designed to integrate the many new men and prepare for yet another attack into a highly fortified area.

The 3rd Division's attack on 15 March was part of a combined Third and Seventh Army offensive through the Saar-Palatinate that would proceed through some of Germany's most valuable industrial areas. American planners expected the offensive to include assaulting through the Siegfried Line, and crossing the Rhine. Seventh Army planners decided to rely upon the 3rd and 45th Divisions to cross the Rhine because of their previous experience in amphibious operations. This offensive added added the firepower of various tactical air units to hit destroy valuable targets behind the front lines and the Eighth Air Force to bomb cities such as Zweibrucken, Kaiserslautern, Homburg,

and Neunkirchen further behind the lines. The overall German commander, German Paul Hausser, in command of *Army Group G*, preferred staged withdrawals back to the Rhine but received orders to hold the region and not retreat.²³⁹ Because of this inter-army offensive, the 5th Division in Third Army and the 3rd Division in Seventh Army both crossed the Rhine within days of each other.

From 3rd Division, the 7th Infantry's First and Second Battalions as well as the 30th Infantry's First and Third Battalions led the attack into Germany. In the weeks of stalemate along this sector, the Germans had time to mine, fortify, bunker, and prepare for the eventual American attack. In their preparations, the 7th Infantry sent officers to ask for advice on how to defeat these fortifications. In early March, 1st Lieutenant Nicholas Pellicciari interviewed officers from the 9th Division's 47th Infantry Regiment on how to best grapple with the Siegfried Line and submitted his observations to 3rd Division headquarters for divisional dissemination.²⁴⁰

The four battalions stepped off in a steady rain behind an artillery barrage at 0100 on 15 March. However, decisions made in these first hours nearly led to the destruction of 2/7. A setback at Utweiler was minor but it showed just how much new replacements could affect a veteran division's operations as well as how careless even a veteran division could become, First Battalion appeared to handle its resistance with little problem. When Second Battalion marched into a minefield, the attack stalled. Engineers from the 44th Division were supposed to mark a path through the minefield with engineer's tape, which the lead company, F Company, followed. When the engineer tape ended, Captain Earl Swanson thought the minefield had also ended and

ordered his F Company to move. This fateful decision cost him his life, along with his radio operator and several other soldiers. In the dark, rainy confusion, company organization rapidly disintegrated as enemy automatic-weapons fire and mines exploded.

E Company worked its way around the minefield and into Utweiler. The defenders were well-motivated Germans from the *17th SS Panzer Grenadier Division*. Armor was not accompanying these infantrymen because mines and Germany artillery had destroyed several tanks, thus convincing the other tanks and tank destroyers to stay put until engineers had cleared the road of mines.

Nevertheless, by 0600, the battalion controlled Utweiler and awaited the tanks' arrival before advancing. As it waited, the battalion let down its guard entirely. A veteran Lieutenant Colonel Jack Duncan had posted his battalion headquarters inside Utweiler's warm, dry buildings where radio contact to regimental headquarters and artillery support was spotty, rather than dig in outside in the rain. As Colonel Duncan relaxed, so did his officers, sergeants, and privates. Some sergeants found temporary companionship with the town's women and failed to look after their men's protection and defense. But why establish outposts? Sherman tanks were due to arrive any minute and an enemy counterattack this far from the Siegfried Line was not considered probable. One lieutenant later confessed that these decisions "would not have been made earlier in the war when the Germans were more feared."

At approximately 0800, a German tank-infantry counterattack caught Duncan's battalion completely by surprise. Having no armored support, 2/7 unwisely fired its bazookas at the German tanks outside the rockets' effective range. Sensing the

Americans' lack of antitank weapons, the Germans surged into Utweiler and quickly retook the town. The tanks blasted buildings containing American soldiers and so captured many prisoners. Lieutenant Wes McKane recalled G Company surrendering without putting up a fight.

Colonel John Heintges did not know anything because radio contact was lost. Before 1000, a sergeant who had escaped Utweiler reported the counterattack and that the battalion was in serious danger. Through the morning, Heintges, under pressure from General O'Daniel, patched together a force to attempt to save 2/7. Finally, at 1400, Third Battalion took the initiative, supported by fifteen tanks and tank destroyers as well as the regiment's Antitank Company, to counterattack Utweiler. Artillery shelled beyond the town to prevent the Germans from reinforcing. By 1515, 3/7 reported good progress in knocking out the enemy armor and regaining the town. By 1600, the Americans had regained control.

Second Battalion was nearly shattered by these mistakes. It had begun the attack with 640 men but could muster only half of them by day's end. The action at Utweiler did not stop the division's drive toward the Siegfried Line and the Rhine as O'Daniel aggressively ordered his units to renew the offensive. The errors at Utweiler showed that even veteran units were susceptible to lapses in judgment. Earl Reitan has studied this battle and has argued that 2/7's mistakes and errors was symbolic of how tired and "worn out" the division had become from over two years of combat, especially as the men anticipated the end of the war soon and were becoming more hesitant to see action

against the Germans. Replacements, however, refilled Second Battalion and it continued to fight until the end of the war.²⁴¹

After the attacks into Germany on 15 March, the division quickly made ground and fought through the Siegfried Line in only a few days. After having been at the banks of the Rhine when they took Strasbourg and after reducing the Colmar Pocket, the division finally crossed it on 26 March between Worms and Sandhofen. The Germans defended the crossing but could not stop the division.

Between 26 March and 17 April, the division drove east from the Rhine across the Main River and then southeast to Nuremberg. In the process, the division took scores of towns. At various towns and villages, the combat teams confronted stiff resistance against their invasion or none at all. The 7th Infantry faced strong urban combat within Sandhofen and the 15th Infantry's First Battalion endured heavy urban combat taking Miltonberg on the Main River on 30-31 March. Each time, employing tactics developed since 1944, towns fell to the Americans. By early April, the 15th Infantry's history recounted "the allied offensive had assumed the proportions of a victory march through Germany."²⁴²

One important element had become the civilian population as organized German military effort disintegrated. The Americans realized they were no longer liberating French civilians; now they were conquering the Germans. The 15th Infantry's history stated that where a German town offered resistance, American artillery, armor, and infantry leveled it. American forces fired upon buildings not showing a white flag of surrender. It did not take long to convince Germans in these towns that resistance was

not only futile but foolish; these towns typically “lost all heart to fight on.” Towns that did not resist these tank-infantry punches bore no resemblance to the other countries welcoming the Americans as liberators. The American ground forces passed through “town after town and city after city [that] had completely lost its identity, smashed by our air corps and ripped and torn by our artillery and infantry.” The 15th Infantry’s history remarked with a sense of self-righteousness that this reality was in “drab contrast to the proud people who set out to conquer the world.”²⁴³

By mid-April, the 3rd, 42nd, and 45th Divisions, perhaps 35,000 soldiers, looked toward Nuremberg, a major city split by the Regnitz River. Nuremberg’s cultural importance rivaled Aachen. It was the location for important German churches, museums, artisans, and artists. Because of this, the Nazis had selected the city to be the shrine of their party. The city was the site of mass Nazi rallies, such as one in 1934 that swept 250,000 Germans into a cult of Hitler-worship. In 1935, Hitler introduced his first anti-semitic statutes in Nuremberg, the so-called “Nuremberg laws,” wherein Germany would be protected from the perceived menace of European Jews.²⁴⁴ Although the city had not asked for this special fascist attention, it would reap the whirlwind as the American XV Corps approached it. Beyond the city’s psychological value, capturing its road network would undermine Germany’s *First Army* and help the Allies on the way to Munich.²⁴⁵ The 42nd Division fought for the western suburb of Fuerth while the 3rd Division attacked from the north and the 45th Division attacked from the south and east. The difficulty would come when the 3rd and 45th Divisions hit the thick, centuries-old wall around the old city. Northern Nuremberg is mapped out in Figure 8.11.

The core of the city's defenses was a ring of antiaircraft positions. The *9th Volksgrenadier Division* had command of the city's defense and were aided by the *2nd Mountain Division* and the *17th SS Panzer Grenadiers*. Outside the city was *Gruppe Grafenwoehr*, consisting of two infantry battalions and thirty-five tanks. Within the city were many *Luftwaffe* personnel and *Volkssturm* units. Many civilians, including the dedicated Nazi *gauleiter*, were also militarized. To German generals, the city had no special significance and they preferred not to have to defend the city itself. Indeed, by 16 April, there were practically no prepared defenses against a ground attack.²⁴⁶ But to the soldiers defending Nuremberg, it took on a special significance. One German officer described these auxiliary units as "absolutely inadequate." The *Volkssturm* units were too old to fight and the civilian population "seemed to be useless."²⁴⁷ Extrapolating from the number of prisoners taken, there may have been between eighteen to twenty-five thousand German defenders in the area.²⁴⁸

As the 42nd and 45th Divisions deployed west and east, respectively, the 3rd Division advanced from the north. On 15, 16, and 17 April, the division captured the suburbs thoroughly. The preliminary clearing operations were violent, nasty little urban actions that foreshadowed what Nuremberg had in store for the Americans. At this time, the 14th Armored Division eliminated the German tank-infantry unit *Gruppe Grafenwoehr* as a viable armored threat to the attack on the city.²⁴⁹

As the division approached Nuremberg, the plan became to send the 7th and 15th Infantry Regiments directly south into the city. Initially, the 30th Infantry was in reserve but deployed to the division left to attack westward into the city.²⁵⁰ As it fought its way

Figure 8.11: Town Plan of Nuremberg



toward Nuremberg and anticipated a strong fight, a German prisoner of war informed the 15th Infantry that there forty or fifty German tanks and assault guns were aiding in the city's defense. This information was either an inaccurate statement or a blatant lie because the Germans had few tanks inside the city.²⁵¹ At 1700, 3/15 complained about the suburbs' "stubborn," stiff defense.²⁵² By the end of the day, patrols were reaching Nuremberg itself.

On the eighteenth, the city of Nuremberg became encircled. Through 18 and 19 April, the 3rd and 45th Divisions aggressively pressed into and fought through the city. All accounts consistently dwell on the extremely stubborn resistance from the defenders. Units fought from room to room as they advanced house-by-house.²⁵³ This sort of defense necessitated a combined-arms approach. The Germans fought so hard that it would have been impossible for infantry alone to capture the city. Infantry, armor, and artillery were sufficient to capture the city. The process remained violent and brutal. O'Daniel ordered the 30th Infantry to use tanks and tank destroyers on these stubborn houses.²⁵⁴

The street fighting through these three days was as intense as anything the 1st Division encountered in Aachen and the 5th Division faced in Saarlautern. Unlike those two places, civilians played a major part. Civilians fought alongside German soldiers, fortifying every floor and room in houses. The Germans established strongpoints, making extensive use of antitank and sniper fire against the Americans. The 7th Infantry's Second Battalion assaulted a factory under cover of smoke, clearing each

room in turn. First Battalion took fifty prisoners when it seized an apartment building.²⁵⁵

The commander of L/15, Captain John Toole, remembered the isolation of having no flank protection and hearing nothing but the houses on fire in his street. He sent out patrols in the evening to find I and K Companies but his men did not feel at ease with being on their own like that. Germans feigned surrender and killed his men. Toole recalled the anger he felt in getting his men bunched up in a street to be gunned down by German soldiers. When he returned to battalion headquarters, he heard of a German woman firing a *panzerfaust* and knocking out tank. The battalion commander was determined to issue incendiary grenades to the men and burn the city down. Toole remembered thinking, “Why, the whole city’s already on fire!”²⁵⁶

By the end of the nineteenth, the Americans had slowly wound their way to the walled Old City. A 155-mm self-propelled gun fired twenty rounds at the wall at point-blank range but caused little damage. In the early morning hours on the twentieth, the division breached the Old City walls and poured inside. Heavy urban combat resumed through the twentieth: booby-trapped bodies, abundant *panzerfausts*, and civilians joining the military. However, by the afternoon of the twentieth, the 3rd Division declared the city to be cleared of German combatants. After the division breached that wall, the German soldiers began to surrender once they saw that American victory was inevitable.

In comparing the urban combat in Aachen with what happened in Nuremberg, it appears that combat there was not managed as well as in Aachen. That is, the American

advance through Nuremberg was not as methodical as through Aachen. The 15th Infantry's history commented on the "painstaking, slow, deliberate way of fighting" from having to check every room in every house. What is more, German soldiers sometimes infiltrated behind the Americans in Nuremberg, something that the Americans in Aachen worked hard to minimize. While the 3rd Division maintained close tank-infantry ties, the 3rd Division did not adhere to other American lessons of urban combat, such as thoroughly ensuring that their rear had nobody in it, civilian and soldier. Just as the division dispatched a lieutenant to observe how the 9th Division assaulted the Siegfried Lines, there was no such observer from the 3rd Division to inquire how the Big Red One took Aachen nor how the 2nd Division breached the city walls of Brest. Nuremberg constitute the 3rd Division's largest and one of its most intense urban battle in World War II.²⁵⁷ Although the city was shell of its former glory, Nuremberg later hosted the trials of Germany's most notorious and infamous leaders.

Of course, the 3rd Division continued its advance. In the last days of the war, the division seized the cities of Augsburg and Munich but without bloodshed. The division found itself in Austria when the Germans agreed to a cease-fire on 7 May and surrendered on 8 May.

Conclusion

Combat after December 1944 showed that the U.S. military had adopted combined-arms fighting. In many ways, the 1st Division at Bonn and the 3rd Division at Nuremberg showed how tank-infantry-artillery teams were an essential part of victory in modern war. As the Americans fought for those villages, towns, and cities, they did so

in a combined-arms manner that usually brought infantry into greater degrees of cooperation with artillery, tanks, and tank destroyers. This cooperation was now a part of the American way of war. After the 5th Division's tanks and tank destroyers were taken from them by corps headquarters before joining the Battle of the Bulge in December, the division received two new attached battalions. The Red Diamond Division quickly established solid working relationships with those not attached battalions. They understood that their lives and their division's success depended on it.

However, as the conduct of the several 3rd Division attacks show, not all the divisions thoroughly learned the lessons of urban combat. The 15th Infantry failed to appreciate the defense at Bennwihr and let its Third Battalion become entangled in a vicious fight against a bitter enemy. In late January, 2/15 gambled that speed and surprise might help them to seize Wihr-en-Plaine and lost that gamble. The battalion relearned the lessons on the importance of armor support in an urban battle as it fought against difficult resistance in late January. At Utweiler, 2/7 failed to provide its own security and defense after it seized it on 15 March 1945 and was nearly overrun by a German counterattack. At Nuremberg, the 3rd Division seems to have failed to maintain adequate rear security and did not always thoroughly clear buildings of their enemy presence. The 3rd Division fought in many difficult battles through World War II and is not defined by these mistakes. Lessons sometimes had to be relearned throughout the war. The three divisions developed mature ways to handle the urban environment, despite occasional mistakes.

In terms of urban combat, villages, towns, and cities continued to be tactical and operational targets as the Americans pursued the broad-front strategy of destroying the *Wehrmacht*. The towns of the Colmar Pocket had no significance except they helped the Allies to reduce that pocket west of the Rhine River. When the Americans were forced to engage in urban combat, some battles, such as against Putscheid, Uckerath, and Nuremberg, showed the power of the defender in this environment. As the Americans fought the Germans, they learned the efficacy of combined-arms fighting. As they applied these lessons to ensure the Allies' eventual victory, they had to re-learn how difficult fighting in towns and cities was. Nevertheless, the Americans learned well enough, and maintained strong enough organizations to defeat the German fascist threat. Throughout the course of this conflict, the Americans had overcome its prewar unpreparedness, and drew upon resources of modern arms and firepower that the German *Wehrmacht* could not defend against or resist, regardless of how often they counterattacked. The American Army that stood victorious in 1945 reflected four years of improved training, effective logistics, and remarkable soldierly qualities than their enemies could have imagined in 1941.

Endnotes

¹ Russell Weigley writes that First Army stopped giving ground on 27 December in Russell F. Weigley, *Eisenhower's Lieutenants: The Campaign of France and Germany, 1944-1945* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981), 540. Charles MacDonald describes the patrols that met outside Houffalize in Charles B. MacDonald, *A Time for Trumpets: The Untold Story of the Battle of the Bulge* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1985), 615-7.

- ² The battle encompassed over one million American soldiers, claimed more than 41,000 American casualties, and untold tens of thousands of German soldiers. Hugh Cole, *The Ardennes: The Battle of the Bulge* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1965; reprint, Washington D.C.: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1993), 674.
- ³ This argument is made in John S. D. Eisenhower, *The Bitter Woods: The Battle of the Bulge* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1969; reprint New York: Da Capo Press, 1995), 463.
- ⁴ "G-3 Report of Operations, 1 January to 31 January 1945, Inclusive," 5 Feb 1945, 64, File 301-3, Box 5106, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁵ Map comes from Cole, *The Ardennes*, Map II.
- ⁶ 1st Lieutenant Leonard Richardson, "A History of Company 'E', 16th Infantry, 1st Infantry Division from June 1942, Until the Present," n.d., 10, File 301-INF(16)9-0.1, Box 5249, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁷ "History of Company 'C' First Battalion 16th Infantry From 8 June 1944," 15 June 1945, 12, File 301-INF(16)9-0.3, Box 5250, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁸ H. R. Knickerbocker, ed., et al, *Danger Forward: The Story of the First Division in World War II* (n.p., 1947; Reprint, Nashville: Battery Press, 2002), 327.
- ⁹ Field Orders to CT 16 on 13 January 1945 in "G-3 Journal and File, 15 January 1945," File 301-3.2, Box 5141, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁰ Enemy estimation: G-6 to S-6, 15 January 1945, 7 in "16th Infantry Journal, January 1945," File 301-INF(16)-0.7, Box 5240, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹¹ John W. Baumgartner, *Sixteenth Infantry, 1861-1946* (Bamberg, Germany: n.p., 1946; reprint, Du Quoin, IL: Cricket Press, 1995), 195; "Extract from Unit Journal, 1-31 January 1945," 1 February 1945, 4 in "7th Field Artillery Battalion, Journal and File, January 1945," File 301-FA(7)-0.7, Box 5211, RG 407, Entry 427, NA; "745th Tank Battalion Report After Action, January 1945," 1 February 1945, 13 in "745th Tank Battalion After Action Reports, January-July 1945," File ARBN-745-0.3, Box 13471, RG 407, Entry 427, NA. The assault gun was a 105-mm gun mounted on an M-4 Sherman chassis.
- ¹² Frank Hoxie Smith, "Combat Experiences of Frank Hoxie Smith," n.d., 21-2, Frank Hoxie Smith Papers, WWII Veterans Collection, 1st Infantry Division, 16th Infantry Regiment, Box 2, MHI.

- ¹³ Red-5 to S-3, 15 January 1945, 5 in "16th Infantry Journal, January 1945," RG 407, Entry 427, NA. The status of B Company: G-6 to S-6, 15 January 1945, 7 in "16th Infantry Journal, January 1945."
- ¹⁴ G-6 to S-6, 15 January 1945, 7 in "16th Infantry Journal, January 1945," RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁵ "History of Company 'C' First Battalion 16th Infantry From 8 June 1944," 15 June 1945, 12, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁶ S-3 to G-3, 15 January 1945, 11 in "16th Infantry Journal, January 1945," RG 407, Entry 427, NA; "745th Tank Battalion Report After Action, January 1945," 1 February 1945, 13 in "745th Tank Battalion After Action Reports, January-July 1945," RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁷ S-3 to Red-6, 15 January 1945, 9 in "16th Infantry Journal, January 1945," RG 407, Entry 427, NA. Ultimately, A Company suffered 40 casualties and B Company suffered 30 casualties on the fifteenth. Red to Capt. Clark, 16 January 1945, 1 in "16th Infantry Journal, January 1945," RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁸ Smith, "Combat Experiences of Frank Hoxie Smith," 20-1, Frank Hoxie Smith Papers, MHI.
- ¹⁹ "1st US Infantry Division Artillery S-3 Periodic Report, 14-15 January," 15 January, 2 in "G-3 Journal and File, 15 January 1945," File 301-3.2, Box 5141, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ²⁰ Entries 18 and 20, 16 January in "G-3 Journal and File, 16-18 January 1945," File 301-3.2, Box 5141, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ²¹ "History of Company 'F', 16th Infantry, From 1 July 1942 to 10 May 1945," n.d., 17, File 301-INF(16)9-0.1, Box 5249, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ²² "History of Company 'C' First Battalion 16th Infantry From 8 June 1944," 15 June 1945, 12-3, RG 407, Entry 427, NA; Smith, "Combat Experiences of Frank Hoxie Smith," 22, Frank Hoxie Smith Papers, MHI.
- ²³ Raymond Gantter, *Roll Me Over: An Infantryman's World War II* (New York: Presidio Press, 1997), 143-4.

- ²⁴ “G-3 Report of Operations, 1 January to 31 January 1945, Inclusive,” 5 February 1945, 34, File 301-3, Box 5106, RG 407, Entry 427, NA; Baumgartner, *Sixteenth Infantry*, 197-8.
- ²⁵ Smith, “Combat Experiences of Frank Hoxie Smith,” 22, Frank Hoxie Smith Papers, MHI.
- ²⁶ Richard P. Rivard, Army Service Experiences Questionnaire, n.d., WWII Veterans Collection, 1st Infantry Division, 16th IN Regiment, Box 2, MHI, Carlisle, PA. Including an unpublished memoir, n.d., 57-8.
- ²⁷ Richardson, “A History of Company ‘E’, 16th Infantry, 1st Infantry Division from June 1942, Until the Present,” n.d., 10, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ²⁸ Frank S. Parr, “Regimental War Time History,” 1951, 192, Stanhope Mason Papers, MRC.
- ²⁹ Interview with Major Albert H. Smith, n.d., 1-2 in “1st Infantry Division Roer River to Bonn, 25 Feb-9 March 1945,” Box 24013, RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA. Sand table: Gantter, *Roll Me Over*, 163-4. Gantter resented that most sand tables were only for officers and sergeants. He asserted that the privates should have been included in these briefings more often.
- ³⁰ James Scott Wheeler, *The Big Red One: America’s Legendary 1st Infantry Division from World War I to Desert Storm* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2007), 370; Charles MacDonald, *The Last Offensive* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1973; Reprint, Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1992), 191-2; “Attack on Kreuzau, 25 February 1945: Company ‘E,’ 16th Infantry,” n.d., 1-3 in “1st Division WWII Outstanding Combat Achievements by All Rifle Companies Report, 16 Inf-18 Inf-26 Inf,” MRC. Hereinafter cited as “Rifle Companies Reports.”
- ³¹ The map comes from “Attack on Kreuzau” in “Rifle Companies Reports,” MRC.
- ³² “Attack on Kreuzau,” 4-6 in “Rifle Companies Reports,” MRC.
- ³³ “Attack on Kreuzau,” 7-9 in “Rifle Companies Reports,” MRC.
- ³⁴ “Attack on Kreuzau,” 6-7 in “Rifle Companies Reports,” MRC.
- ³⁵ “Attack on Kreuzau,” 12 in “Rifle Companies Reports,” MRC. E Company in trouble at 1500: Capt Elder to Maj Smith, S-3, 25 February 1945, 10 in “16th Infantry Journal, February 1945,” File 301-INF(16)-0.7, Box 5240, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.

- ³⁶ Interview with Major Albert H. Smith, Jr., S-3, 15 March 1945, 3 in “From the Roer to the Rhine, 25 February-9 March 1945,” Box 24013, RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.
- ³⁷ Gantter, *Roll Me Over*, 167-8.
- ³⁸ Gantter, *Roll Me Over*, 168-75.
- ³⁹ “Extract from Unit Journal, 1-28 February 1945,” 1 March 1945, 6 in “7th Field Artillery Battalion, Journal and File, February 1945,” File 301-FA(7)-0.7, Box 5211, RG 407, Entry 427, NA; Gantter, *Roll Me Over*, 180.
- ⁴⁰ Steven E. Clay, *Blood and Sacrifice: The History of the 16th Infantry Regiment from the Civil War through the Gulf War* (Wheaton, IL: Cantigny First Division Foundation, 2001), 229.
- ⁴¹ Map comes from “The Attack on Vettweis [sic], 27 February 1945: Company ‘I’, 16th Infantry” in “Rifle Companies Reports,” MRC. Also found in “7th Field Artillery Battalion, Journal and File, February 1945,” RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁴² Plan: “The Attack on Vettweis [sic]” 1-2 in “Rifle Companies Reports,” MRC. The preference to go under the cover of night: Interview with Major Albert H. Smith, Jr., S-3, 3 in “From the Roer to the Rhine,” RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.
- ⁴³ “The Attack on Vettweis [sic],” 3-5 in “Rifle Companies Reports,” MRC.
- ⁴⁴ White-3 to S-3, 27 February 1945, 5 in “16th Infantry Journal, February 1945,” File 301-INF(16)-0.7, Box 5240, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁴⁵ “The Attack on Vettweis [sic],” 7-9 in “Rifle Companies Reports,” MRC. The lack of urban defense in Vettweis: Smith, “Combat Experiences of Frank Hoxie Smith,” 24-5, Frank Hoxie Smith Papers, MHI. Tank support: S-3 Report for 745th Tank Battalion, 27 February 1945 in “745th Tank Battalion, After-Action Report, January-July 45,” File ARBN-745-0.3, Box 13471, RG 407, Entry 427, NA. Civilians manning anti-tank guns: I Company, 16th Infantry Regiment, “Company History, 1 August 1942 to 14 July 1945,” 25 July 1945, n.p., File 301-INF(16)9-0.1, Box 5249, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁴⁶ “The Attack on Vettweis [sic],” 10 in “Rifle Companies Reports,” MRC.
- ⁴⁷ See “The Attack on Gladbach, 28 February 1945: Company ‘L’, 16th Infantry,” in “Rifle Companies Report,” MRC.

- ⁴⁸ Interview with Major Albert H. Smith, 2 in “1st Infantry Division Roer River to Bonn, 25 Feb-9 March 1945,” RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.
- ⁴⁹ “Records of Events for Month of February 1945,” 3 March 1945, 2 in “1/18 After-Action Reports, January-May 1945,” File 301-INF(18)7-0.3, Box 5265, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁵⁰ Information on the attack on Erp came from: Interview with Captain Cedric A. Lafley, 26th Infantry S-2, n.d., 4 in “1st Infantry Division Roer River to Bonn, 25 Feb-9 March 1945,” RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA; “Regimental Activities of the 26th Infantry for the Month of March,” 1 April 1945, 1-2 in “26th Report of Operations, March 1945,” File 301-INF(26)-0.3, Box 5269, RG 407, Entry 427, NA; G-6 to S-6, 1 March 1945, 10, in “26th Infantry Unit Journal, March 1945” in “26th Report of Operations, March 1945,” RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁵¹ Charles B. MacDonald, *The Mighty Endeavor: American Armed Forces in the European Theater in World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), 462.
- ⁵² Interview of Major Earl Green, Assistant G-3, 4 April 1945, 1-2 in “1st Infantry Division Roer River to Bonn, 25 Feb-9 March 1945,” RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA. Veteran and historian Charles MacDonald writes of the Cologne Plain’s flatness by saying that “hardly was there a commander who did not continue to push his men through much of the night in order to overcome the advantage that flat, open fields afforded the enemy in observation.” Charles B. MacDonald, *The Last Offensive* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973; Reprint, Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, 1993), 194.
- ⁵³ Frank S. Parr, “Regimental War Time History,” 1951 (Stanhope Mason Papers, MRC), 196-7.
- ⁵⁴ MacDonald, *The Mighty Endeavor*, 429-30.
- ⁵⁵ MacDonald, *The Last Offensive*, 196.
- ⁵⁶ Entry 121 at 2317 and Entry 122 at 2335, 7 March 1945, 11-12 in “G-3 Journal and File, 5-8 March 1945,” File 301-3.2, Box 5146, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁵⁷ Map comes from “The Attack on Bonn, 8 March 1945: Third Battalion, 16th Infantry,” in “Rifle Companies Report,” MRC.
- ⁵⁸ MacDonald, *The Last Offensive*, 195.

- ⁵⁹ Interview of Captain Fred W. Hall, Jr., S-2 for 16th Infantry Regiment, 15 March 1945, 1-2 in "1st Infantry Division Roer River to Bonn, 25 Feb-9 March 1945," RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA; "The Attack on Bonn, 8 March 1945: 16th Regimental Combat Team," 1 in "Rifle Companies Report," MRC; 2nd Lieutenant John W. Baumgartner, "Most Successful Attack of the Regiment," 28 August 1945, 1, 4-5 in "The Attack on the City of Bonn," File 301-INF(16)-0, Box 5231, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁶⁰ Another reason why the division fired no artillery into Bonn was a standing VII Corps order that prohibited its divisions, including the Big Red One, from bombarding Bonn due to the city's large population and the presence of several hospitals. Interview of 18th Infantry Staff Officers, 14 March 1945, 7 in "1st Infantry Division Roer River to Bonn, 25 Feb-9 March 1945," RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.
- ⁶¹ Interview of Major Albert Smith, 6-7 in "1st Infantry Division Roer River to Bonn, 25 Feb-9 March 1945," RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA; "World War II History of Company C, 16th Infantry, 1 August 1942 to 15 June 1945," n.d., 16, File 301-INF(16)9-0.1, Box 5249, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁶² "History, Company K," n.d., 14, File 301-INF(16)9-0.1, Box 5249, RG 407, Entry 427, NA. Another account of K Company in Bonn is in the "Rifle Companies Report:" "The Attack on the City of Bonn, 8 March 1945: Company 'K,' 16th Infantry," in "Rifle Companies Report," MRC.
- ⁶³ Battalion commander report: Major Wozenski Blue-6 to S-5, 8 March 1945, 3 in "16th Infantry Journal, March 1945," File 301-INF(16)-0.7, Box 5241, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁶⁴ The bridge defenses: Interview of Major Albert Smith, 7 in "1st Infantry Division Roer River to Bonn, 25 Feb-9 March 1945," RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA; "History, Company K," 14, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁶⁵ Interview of Captain Fred W. Hall, Jr., S-2 for 16th Infantry Regiment, 15 March 1945, 1-2 in "1st Infantry Division Roer River to Bonn, 25 Feb-9 March 1945," RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.
- ⁶⁶ "History, Company K," 14-5, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁶⁷ Noon message: General Andrus to Colonel Gibb, 8 March 1945, 8 in "16th Infantry Journal, March 1945"; 1300 message: Major Smith to Capt Smith, Red-3, 8 March 1945, 9 in "16th Infantry Journal, March 1945," RG 407, Entry 427, NA.

- ⁶⁸ Entry 89 at 1405, 8 March 1945, 10 in “G-3 Journal and File, 5-8 March 1945,” RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁶⁹ Interview of Major Albert Smith, 7 in “1st Infantry Division Roer River to Bonn, 25 Feb-9 March 1945,” RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA; 16th Infantry S-3 Report, 9 March 1945 in “G-3 Journal and File, 9-16 March 1945,” File 301.3.2, Box 5146, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁷⁰ Colonel Driscoll, Red-6 to Lt. Kestlinger, 9 March 1945, 3 in “16th Infantry Journal, March 1945,” RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁷¹ G-3 to Major Smith, 9 March 1945, 3 in “16th Infantry Journal, March 1945,” RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁷² Interview of Major Albert Smith, 7 in “1st Infantry Division Roer River to Bonn, 25 Feb-9 March 1945,” RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.
- ⁷³ Colonel Driscoll to Colonel Horner, 9 March 1945, 3 in “16th Infantry Journal, March 1945,” RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁷⁴ “Record of Events for the Period March 1st-31st, 1945, Incl.,” 4 April 1945, 1-2 in “First Battalion, 18th Infantry After-Action Reports, January-May 1945,” File 301-INF(18)7-0.3, Box 5265, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁷⁵ Entries 28, 34, 37, and 41, 8 March 1945, 3-5 in “G-3 Journal and File, 5-8 March 1945,” RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁷⁶ Most of this account on Duisdorf comes from Interview of 18th Infantry Staff Officers, 14 March 1945, 5-6 in “1st Infantry Division Roer River to Bonn, 25 Feb-9 March 1945,” RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.
- ⁷⁷ “Battalion Journal for the Month of March, 1945,” 2 April 1945, 2-3 in “Third Battalion, 18th Infantry After-Action Reports, March-May 1945,” File 301-INF(18)7-0.3, Box 5265, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁷⁸ Gantter, *Roll Me Over*, 212-4.
- ⁷⁹ Gantter, *Roll Me Over*, 215-6.
- ⁸⁰ Major Albert Smith, in his interview, said that the men of K Company, dashing into Bonn, were “feeling a bit cocky.” Interview of Major Albert Smith, 7 in “1st Infantry Division Roer River to Bonn, 25 Feb-9 March 1945,” RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.

- ⁸¹ Wheeler, *The Big Red One*, 375-6.
- ⁸² Gantter, *Roll Me Over*, 234-40.
- ⁸³ Lt. Col. Clarence Beck, "G-3 Report of Operations, 1 March to 31 March 1945, Inclusive," 5 April 1945, 18 in "Division After-Action Reports," File 301-3, Box 5106, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁸⁴ "Interview with Maj Edward W. McGregor, S-3 of 18th Inf," 3 April 1945, 4 in "Expansion of the Remagen Bridgehead, 17-21 March 1945," RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.
- ⁸⁵ These assessments come from "2/18 History for the Month Ending, 31 March 1945," 3 in "2/18 After-Action Reports, January-May 1945," RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁸⁶ "2/18 History for the Month Ending, 31 March 1945," 3 in "2/18 After-Action Reports, January-May 1945," RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁸⁷ "745th S-3 Journal, March 1945," 1 April 1945, 25 in "745th Tank Battalion After Action Reports, January-July 1945," RG 407, Entry 427, NA. For unknown reasons, B/634th Tank Destroyer Battalion had no part in this fight.
- ⁸⁸ Entry 5, 25 March in "G-3 Journal and File, 23-26 March 1945," File 301-3.2, Box 5147, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁸⁹ 32nd Field Artillery Battalion Report After Action, March 1945," 6-7 in "32nd Field Artillery Battalion Report of Operations, January-May 1945," RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁹⁰ Entry 22, 25 March in "G-3 Journal and File, 23-26 March 1945," RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁹¹ Parr, "Regimental War Time History," 201, MRC.
- ⁹² 634th Tank Destroyer Battalion states that it supported the regiment's attacks but not specifically where. 634th Tank Destroyer S-3 Report, 23-24 March 1945 in "G-3 Journal and File, 23-26 March 1945," RG 407, Entry 427, NA. The 745th Tank Battalion only states that it entered the Geisbach fight hours later. 745th Tank Battalion S-3 Report, 24 March 1945, 1-2 in "745 Tank Battalion After-Action Report, January-July 1945," RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁹³ This account of the fight in Geisbach largely draws from Gantter, *Roll Me Over*, 250-279.

- ⁹⁴ Gantter, *Roll Me Over*, 292.
- ⁹⁵ MacDonald, *The Last Offensive*, 391.
- ⁹⁶ Gantter, *Roll Me Over*, 330-1.
- ⁹⁷ “G-3 Report of Operations, 1 April to 30 April 1945, Inclusive,” 5 May 1945, 42-3 in “G-3 Operations Reports,” File 301-3, Box 5107, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ⁹⁸ Russell F. Weigley, *Eisenhower’s Lieutenants: The Campaign of France and Germany, 1944-1945* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981), 522. See also Fifth Division Historical Section, *The Fifth Infantry Division in the ETO: Iceland, England, Ireland, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Czechoslovakia, Austria* (Headquarters Fifth Infantry Division, 1947; reprint, Nashville: The Battery Press, 1997). This division history, including the reprinted volume, is not paginated. This account comes from the section entitled “First Crossing of the Sauer.”
- ⁹⁹ Cole, *The Ardennes*, 507.
- ¹⁰⁰ Map V is Map V in Cole, *The Ardennes*. The towns underlined were those within the 5th Division’s area of operations.
- ¹⁰¹ Cole, *The Ardennes*, 499, 507-8. Cole also credits the extensive American artillery, replete with the new POZIT fuse (a new shell that could reliably and effectively explode at a certain height over the ground and cause more destruction), gave the Germans as many headaches as their artillery caused the Americans. Cole, *The Ardennes*, 507-8.
- ¹⁰² Cole, *The Ardennes*, 504.
- ¹⁰³ This account largely comes from T/Sgt Monroe Ludden, “2nd Regiment, Fifth Division: Echternach Battle,” 7-9 January 1945, 5-6 in “5th Infantry Division Ardennes 22-31 Dec 1944,” Box 24023, RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA; *Second Infantry Regiment, Fifth Infantry Division* (Baton Rouge: Army & Navy Publishing Co., 1947), 62. A/737th Tank Battalion’s presence: “737th Tank Battalion Action Against Enemy Report,” 1 January 1945, 3-4; 737th Tank Battalion Journal, 26 December 1944 in “737th Tank Battalion Journal and File, July 1944-May 1945,” File ARBN-737-0.3, Box 13461, RG 47, Entry 427, NA. Cole uses similar sources in Cole, *The Ardennes*, 504.
- ¹⁰⁴ Louis J. Lauria, *Running Wire at the Front Lines: Memoir of a Radio and Telephone Man in World War II* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2011), 120.

- ¹⁰⁵ “3d Bn, 2d Inf, 5th Division, 16 Jan 45 to 2 Feb 45,” 9 February 1945, 2 in “5th Infantry Division, Sauer River Crossing, 16 January-16 February 1945,” Box 24024, RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.
- ¹⁰⁶ “Crossing Action by G Company, 2nd Infantry Regiment, On the Sure River, 18 January 1945,” n.d., 2-3 in “5th Infantry Division, Sauer River Crossing, 16 January-16 February 1945,” RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.
- ¹⁰⁷ Michael C. Bilder, *A Foot Soldier for Patton: The Story of a “Red Diamond” Infantryman with the U.S. Third Army* (Philadelphia: Casemate, 2008), 193.
- ¹⁰⁸ This comes from Captain Dello G. Dayton’s interviews with First Battalion, 2nd Infantry Regiment, 9 February 1945, 2-4 in “5th Infantry Division, Sauer River Crossing, 16 January-16 February 1945,” RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA; Lieutenant Colonel Charles W. Goodwin, “Appendix No. 1 to Action Against the Enemy Report, 803rd Tank Destroyer Battalion, January 1945,” n.d., 4 in “803rd Tank Destroyer Battalion After-Action Reports, January-May 1945,” File TDBN-803-0.3, Box 23757, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁰⁹ Bilder, *A Foot Soldier for Patton*, 194.
- ¹¹⁰ “3d Bn, 2d Inf, 5th Division, 16 Jan 45 to 2 Feb 45,” 9 February 1945, 2-4 in “5th Infantry Division, Sauer River Crossing, 16 January-16 February 1945,” RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.
- ¹¹¹ *Eleventh Infantry Regiment, Fifth Infantry Division* (Baton Rouge: Army and Navy Publishing Co., 1946), 55. Hereinafter cited as *Eleventh Infantry Regiment*.
- ¹¹² Mark C. Goodman, “Company ‘A,’ 10th U.S. Infantry Regiment, 5th Division, Combat Narrative, 1941-1945,” n.d., 129, unpublished memoir, copy in Mark C. Goodman Papers, WWII Veterans Survey, 5th Infantry Division, Box 2, MHI.
- ¹¹³ “After Action Against the Enemy Report for Period 1 January to 31 January 1945,” 3 February 1945, 4 in “11th Infantry Regiment After-Action Reports, August 1944-May 1945,” File 305-INF(11)-0.3, Box 6021, RG 407, Entry 427, NA. Tank destroyer assistance in Hoscheid: “Appendix No. 1 to Action Against the Enemy Report, 803rd Tank Destroyer Battalion, January 1945,” 4 in “803rd Tank Destroyer Battalion After-Action Reports, January-May 1945,” RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹¹⁴ 737th Tank Battalion Journal, 23 January 1945 in “737th Tank Battalion Journal and File, July 1944-May 1945,” RG 47, Entry 427, NA.

- ¹¹⁵ “737th Tank Battalion Action Against Enemy Report,” 2 February 1945, 3 in “737th Tank Battalion Journal and File, July 1944-May 1945,” RG 47, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹¹⁶ G/11’s 24 January Morning Report quoted in *The Fifth Infantry Division in the ETO*, “First Crossing of the Sauer.”
- ¹¹⁷ “After Action Against the Enemy Report for Period 1 January to 31 January 1945,” 5 in “11th Infantry Regiment After-Action Reports, August 1944-May 1945,” RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹¹⁸ *The Fifth Infantry Division in the ETO*, “First Crossing of the Sauer.”
- ¹¹⁹ *Eleventh Infantry Regiment*, 55.
- ¹²⁰ Public Relations Section, Tenth Infantry Regiment, *History of Tenth Infantry Regiment, United States Army* (Birmingham, AL: Military Service Co., 1946), 113. Hereinafter cited as *History of Tenth Infantry Regiment*.
- ¹²¹ Goodman, “Company ‘A,’ 10th U.S. Infantry Regiment,” 126-7, MHI.
- ¹²² Lieutenant Colonel D. W. Thackeray, “G-2 After-Action Report, January 1945,” 3 February 1945, 7-8 in “Fifth Infantry Division, G-2 After-Action Reports,” File 305-2, Box 5900, RG 407, Entry 427, NA; “After Action Report for January 1945,” 1 February 1945, 2-3 in “10th Infantry Regiment After-Action Reports, January-May 1945,” File 305-INF(10)-0.3, Box 6003, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹²³ “After Action Report for January 1945,” 1 February 1945, 4 in “10th Infantry Regiment After-Action Reports, January-May 1945,” File 305-INF(10)-0.3, Box 6003, RG 407, Entry 427, NA; “10th Infantry Regiment, Crossing of Sure River and Push North Therefrom,” 18 February 1945, 4 in “5th Infantry Division, Sauer River Crossing, 16 January-16 February 1945,” RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.
- ¹²⁴ *History of Tenth Infantry Regiment*, 113.
- ¹²⁵ Entries at 0905 and 0923, 24 January 1945, “G-3 Journal and File, 20-25 January 1945,” File 305-3.2, Box 5944, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹²⁶ These tallies come from “737th Tank Battalion Action Against Enemy Report,” 2 February 1945, 3 in “737th Tank Battalion Journal and File, July 1944-May 1945,” RG 47, Entry 427, NA; “Appendix No. 1 to Action Against the Enemy Report, 803rd Tank Destroyer Battalion, January 1945,” n.d., 5 in “803rd Tank Destroyer Battalion After-Action Reports, January-May 1945,” File TDBN-803-0.3, Box 23757, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.

- ¹²⁷ This account largely borrows from *History of Tenth Infantry Regiment*, 113-4. Anecdotes on the three men comes from: Goodman, "Company 'A,' 10th U.S. Infantry Regiment," 125, MHI. Division artillery judged the bombardment effectively "destroyed one tank and resulted in many enemy dead." Colonel Samuel W. Horner II, "After Action Against the Enemy Report," 3 February 1945, 5 in "After-Action Reports, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 5th Infantry Division Artillery, January-May 1945," File 305-ART1-0.3, Box 5979, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹²⁸ This pulls from *History of Tenth Infantry Regiment*, 114-6. The veterans' memories come from Goodman, "Company 'A,' 10th U.S. Infantry Regiment," 125, MHI. That tanks led the attack from the west and the tallied destroyed: "737th Tank Battalion Action Against Enemy Report," 2 February 1945, 4 in "737th Tank Battalion Journal and File, July 1944-May 1945," RG 47, Entry 427, NA. Poor visibility on the morning of the attack: Entry at 0740, 28 January 1945, "G-3 Journal and File, 26-31 January 1945," File 305-3.2, Box 5944, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹²⁹ MacDonald, *The Last Offensive*, 53.
- ¹³⁰ *The Fifth Infantry Division in the ETO*, "First Crossing of the Sauer."
- ¹³¹ MacDonald, *The Last Offensive*, 100.
- ¹³² Map comes from *Eleventh Infantry Regiment*, 57.
- ¹³³ See MacDonald, *The Last Offensive*, 101-5; *The Fifth Division in the ETO*, "Across the Sauer into the Siegfried Line;" *Eleventh Infantry Regiment*, 56-60; *History of Tenth Infantry Regiment*, 118-22; "Breaching the Siegfried Line by the 11th Infantry," n.d., in "5th Infantry Division, Sauer River Crossing, 16 January-16 February 1945," RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.
- ¹³⁴ "5th Infantry Division Artillery After Action Against the Enemy Report," 2 March 1945, 5 in "After-Action Reports, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 5th Infantry Division Artillery, January-May 1945," RG 407, Entry 427, NA. Placing eight battalions of artillery on Ernzen and Ferschweiler: General Eddy to General Irwin at 2015, 9 February in "5th Infantry Division G-3 Journal and File, 8-10 February 1945," File 305-3.2, Box 5942, RG 407, Entry 427, NA. For the role of artillery in this operation, see also *Eleventh Infantry Regiment*, 63-4.
- ¹³⁵ Interview of Major Cornelius Coghill, 3 April 1945, 2 in "5th Infantry Division, Sauer River Crossing, 16 January-16 February 1945," RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.

- ¹³⁶ *History of the Tenth Infantry Regiment*, 123. Efficacy of rear attacks and German defenders' mindset: "10th Infantry After Action Report for February 1945," 2 March 1945, 2 in "10th Infantry Regiment After-Action Reports, January-May 1945," RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹³⁷ This account draws mostly from Interview of Lieutenant Louis J. Merlino, CO, L Company, 18 February 1945 in "5th Infantry Division, Sauer River Crossing, 16 January-16 February 1945," RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA; Interview of Captain J. J. McCluskey, Executive Officer, and Captain H. D. Bowers, 18 February 1945, 5 in "5th Infantry Division, Sauer River Crossing, 16 January-16 February 1945," RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA. The entrance of tanks is in 737th Tank Battalion Journal, 14 February 1945 in "737th Tank Battalion Journal and File, July 1944-May 1945," RG 47, Entry 427, NA. In the after-action report, the battalion mistakenly reports helping to attack on 13 February. Merlino does not mention the presence of tanks at all. It is not clear how the tanks helped so late in a fight that was under L Company's control by 1000.
- ¹³⁸ Interview of Major Cornelius Coghill, S-3, 3 April 1945, 1, 3 in "5th Infantry Division, Sauer River Crossing, 16 January-16 February 1945," RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.
- ¹³⁹ "737th Tank Battalion Action Against Enemy Report," 2 March 1945, 3-4 in "737th Tank Battalion Journal and File, July 1944-May 1945," RG 47, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁴⁰ MacDonald, *The Last Offensive*, 114.
- ¹⁴¹ *History of the Tenth Infantry Regiment*, 132.
- ¹⁴² This account pulls from *Eleventh Infantry Regiment*, 65-6; MacDonald, *The Last Offensive*, 114-5.
- ¹⁴³ From General Irwin to Colonel Dickens at 1925 and From Colonel Dickens to Colonel Black at 1928, 27 February in "5th Infantry Division G-3 Journal and File, 26-28 February 1945," File 305-3.2, Box 5947, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁴⁴ Bilder, *Foot Soldier for Patton*, 208.
- ¹⁴⁵ *Eleventh Infantry Regiment*, 78-9.
- ¹⁴⁶ "10th Infantry After Action Report for March 1945," 2 April 1945, 3 in "10th Infantry Regiment After-Action Reports, January-May 1945," RG 407, Entry 427, NA.

- ¹⁴⁷ “After Action Against the Enemy Report for Period 1 March to 31 March 1945,” 3 April 1945, 3 in “11th Infantry Regiment After-Action Reports, August 1944-May 1945,” RG 407, Entry 427, NA; Interview of 1st Lieutenant Robert V. Gray, 1/11 S-2, 6 April, 7 in “5th Infantry Division Sauer-Mosel-Rhine 7 February-31 March 45,” RG 40, Entry 427-A, NA.
- ¹⁴⁸ “After Action Against the Enemy Report for Period 1 March to 31 March 1945,” 3 April 1945, 3-4 in “11th Infantry Regiment After-Action Reports, August 1944-May 1945,” RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁴⁹ *The Fifth Infantry Division in the ETO*, “Crossing the Rhine.”
- ¹⁵⁰ *The Fifth Infantry Division in the ETO*, “Crossing the Rhine.”
- ¹⁵¹ Goodman, “Company ‘A,’ 10th U.S. Infantry Regiment,” 141-2, MHI.
- ¹⁵² “737th Tank Battalion Action Against Enemy Report,” 1 April 1945, 7 in “737th Tank Battalion Journal and File, July 1944-May 1945,” RG 47, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁵³ *The Fifth Infantry Division in the ETO*, “Crossing the Rhine.”
- ¹⁵⁴ 1st Lieutenant Robert E. Maxwell, “Crushing the Ruhr Pocket,” 15 April 1945, 2 in “5th Infantry Division Crushing the Rose Pocket (Ruhr Pocket) 9-15 April 1945,” Box 24024, RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.
- ¹⁵⁵ Training Memorandum #4, 2 December 1944, 1 in “30th Infantry S-3 Journal and File,” File 303-INF(30)-3.2, Box 5651, RG 407, Entry 427, NA. Training in house-to-house fighting, attack on a village, and street fighting: 30th Infantry S-3 Reports, 7-12 December 1944, in “30th Infantry S-3 Journal and File,” RG 407, Entry 427, NA. The reports do not state whether tanks or tank destroyers participated in this training but the 756th Tank and 601 Tank Destroyer Battalions were often detached from 3rd Division service and assigned to help other infantry regiments, and thus were not available for combined-arms training with the 30th Infantry. See Chapter 7 for the frustration caused by these detachments.
- ¹⁵⁶ For more on how the Ardennes counteroffensive affected the 6th Army Group, see Jeffrey J. Clarke and Robert Ross Smith, *Riviera to the Rhine* (Center of Military History, United States Army: Washington, D.C., 1993), 489-91.
- ¹⁵⁷ For more on why German forces formed the Colmar Pocket, see Clarke and Smith, *Riviera to the Rhine*, 434-7.

- ¹⁵⁸ Nathan William White, *From Fedala to Berchtesgaden: A History of the Seventh United States Infantry in World War II* (n.p., 1947), 197. See also Earl A. Reitain, *Riflemen: On the Cutting Edge of World War II* (Bennington, VT: Merriam, 2001), 67 and Captain Edgar B. Mooney, "The Colmar Pocket: 7th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Infantry Division, 22 January-8 February, 1945," March 1945, 1-2 in "3rd Infantry Division, 22 January-8 February 1945, Colmar Pocket," Box 24019, RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA. Hereinafter referred to as Mooney, "The Colmar Pocket."
- ¹⁵⁹ Clarke and Smith, *Riviera to the Rhine*, 487.
- ¹⁶⁰ Donald G. Taggart, *History of the Third Infantry Division in World War II* (Washington, D.C.: Infantry Journal Press, 1947; reprint, Nashville, TN: Battery Press, 1997), 283; Rupert Prohme, *History of 30th Infantry Regiment in World War II* (Infantry Journal: Washington, D.C., 1947), 286.
- ¹⁶¹ Eugene Salet, "Manuscript Memoir of Major General Eugene Salet," 323-3 in Eugene A. Salet Papers, MHI.
- ¹⁶² Prohme, *History of 30th Infantry Regiment in World War II*, 287.
- ¹⁶³ Map located in G-3 Maps, File 303-3.7, Box 5510, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁶⁴ S-3 to Web-Gr at 0653, 16 December 1944, 2 in "30th Infantry S-3 Journal and File," RG 401, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁶⁵ Russell E. Dunham, *Episode on Hill 616: The Story of Congressional Medal of Honor Recipient Russell E. Dunham and His 400 Days in Combat During World War II as Told to D. Ray Wilson* (n.p.: Crossroads Communications, 1981), 171-2.
- ¹⁶⁶ Prohme, *History of 30th Infantry Regiment in World War II*, 290.
- ¹⁶⁷ Dunham, *Episode on Hill 616*, 174.
- ¹⁶⁸ Prohme, *History of 30th Infantry Regiment in World War II*, 289-92.
- ¹⁶⁹ Dunham, *Episode on Hill 616*, 174-5.
- ¹⁷⁰ S-3 Report, 15-16 December 1944, 2 in "30th Infantry S-3 Journal and File," File 303-INF(30)-3.2, Box 5651, RG 407, Entry 427, NA. The term "flakwagons" generally referred to German anti-aircraft weapons. But, around this time the 3rd Division's records began to refer to its attached anti-aircraft weapons as flakwagons.

- ¹⁷¹ “601st Tank Destroyer Battalion Summary of Events,” n.d., 3 in “3rd Infantry Division Unit Reports of Operations, December 1944,” File 303-0.3, Box 5400, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁷² “3rd Infantry Division Artillery Report of Operations, December 1-31 1944,” 4 January 1945, 1 in “3rd Infantry Division Unit Reports of Operations, December 1944,” RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁷³ Dunham, *Episode on Hill 616*, 175.
- ¹⁷⁴ Eugene Salet’s 2/15 made the failed attack on Sigolsheim; his memoir offers a scathing critique of how the 36th Division handled that day’s fighting. See Salet “Manuscript Memoir of Major General Eugene Salet,” 334-7 in Eugene A. Salet Papers, MHI.
- ¹⁷⁵ IPW Report, 22 December 1944 in “15th Infantry Unit Journal, December 1944,” File 303-INF(15)-0.7, Box 5624, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁷⁶ Robert McFarland, *History of the 15th Infantry Regiment in World War II* (n.p., n.d., personal collection), 243.
- ¹⁷⁷ Operations Instructions, No. 31, 22 December 1944 in “15th Infantry Unit Journal, December 1944,” RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁷⁸ Taggart, *History of the Third Infantry Division in World War II*, 290.
- ¹⁷⁹ John Shirley, *I Remember: Stories of Combat Infantryman in World War II* (Livermore, CA: Camino Press, 1993), 60-1. Size of German garrison in Bennwihr: McFarland, *History of the 15th Infantry Regiment in World War II*, 237.
- ¹⁸⁰ See the G-2 Periodic Reports for 19-22 December 1944 in “G-2 Periodic Reports,” File 303-2.1, Box 5432, RG 407, Entry 427, NA; “3rd Bn CO to Ex O,” 0755, 23 December 1944 in “15th Infantry Unit Journal, December 1944,” RG 407, Entry 427, NA. The 15th Infantry’s unit journal also contains the regiment’s daily S-2 intelligence reports but these do not offer as much intelligence analysis as the division’s daily intelligence reports, also known as the periodic G-2 reports.
- ¹⁸¹ That they attacked southern Bennwihr are mentioned here: Entry 76 at 1130, 23 December 1944, 8, in “G-3 Journal and File for 23 December, 1944,” File 303-3.2, Box 5485, RG 407, Entry 427, NA; S-3 Reports for 221200-231200 December 1944 in “15th Infantry Unit Journal, December 1944,” RG 407, Entry 427, NA.

- ¹⁸² Shirley, *I Remember*, 60-1; McFarland, *History of the 15th Infantry Regiment in World War II*, 246.
- ¹⁸³ J. Lee Mudd, "Honor, Fidelity, Courage: The History of the 756th Tank Battalion and the Development of the Tank-Infantry Team," (M.A. Thesis, Southern Illinois University, 2001), 69.
- ¹⁸⁴ Entry 76 at 1130, 23 December 1944, 8, in "G-3 Journal and File for 23 December 1944," RG 407, Entry 427, NA. See also S-3 Reports for 221200-231200 and 231200-241200 December 1944 in "15th Infantry Unit Journal, December 1944," RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁸⁵ Shirley, *I Remember*, 61-5.
- ¹⁸⁶ McFarland, *History of the 15th Infantry Regiment in World War II*, 238.
- ¹⁸⁷ Entry 94 at 1350, 23 December 1944, 10 in "G-3 Journal and File for 23 December 1944," RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁸⁸ Entry 7 at 0150, 24 December 1944, 2 in "G-3 Journal and File for 24 December 1944," File 303-3.2, Box 5486, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁸⁹ McFarland, *History of the 15th Infantry Regiment in World War II*, 238.
- ¹⁹⁰ 1st BN Co to CO at 1250, 23 December 1944 in "15th Infantry Unit Journal, December 1944," RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁹¹ McFarland, *History of the 15th Infantry Regiment in World War II*, 236.
- ¹⁹² 1st Bn CO to CO at 2155, 23 December in "15th Infantry Unit Journal, December 1944," RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁹³ Entry 179 at 2330, 23 December 1944, 25 in "G-3 Journal and File for 23 December 1944," RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁹⁴ See McFarland, *History of the 15th Infantry Regiment in World War II*, 238-9, 252-7; Taggart, *History of the Third Infantry Division in World War II*, 291, 387-8; Salet "Manuscript Memoir of Major General Eugene Salet," 337-8 in Eugene A. Salet Papers, MHI; Daniel R. Champagne, *Dogface Soldiers: The Story of B Company, 15th Regiment, 3rd Infantry Division, From Fedala to Salzburg: Audie Murphy and His Brothers in Arms* (Bennington, VT: Merriam Press, 2003), 112-5.
- ¹⁹⁵ McFarland, *History of the 15th Infantry Regiment in World War II*, 240.

- ¹⁹⁶ Lieutenant Colonel Glenn Rogers, "Commander's Narrative, 756th Tank Battalion, December 1-31, 1944," n.d., 5 in "3rd Infantry Division Unit Reports of Operations, December 1944," RG 407, Entry 427, NA; Mudd, "Honor, Fidelity, Courage," 70. Mudd interviewed Redle for his work but does not say whether this anecdote came from that interview with the former captain. Additionally, it is not clear if Major O'Connell chose to use tank destroyers as a diversion but he did send the battalion from the east.
- ¹⁹⁷ For when artillery shelled and planes bombed Sigolsheim, see the 15th Infantry's Journal for 24 and 25 December in "15th Infantry Unit Journal, December 1944," RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ¹⁹⁸ McFarland, *History of the 15th Infantry Regiment in World War II*, 240.
- ¹⁹⁹ "3d Bn S-3 to S-3," at 0955, 24 December 1944, 1 in "15th Infantry Unit Journal, December 1944," RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ²⁰⁰ 601st Tank Destroyer Battalion Journal, 24 December 1944 in "601st Tank Destroyer Battalion Unit Journal, December 1944," File TDBN-601-0.7, Box 18614, RG 407, Entry 427, NA; Rogers, "Commander's Narrative," 2 in "3rd Infantry Division Unit Reports of Operations, December 1944," RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ²⁰¹ S-3 Report for 241200-251200 December 1944 in "15th Infantry Unit Journal, December 1944," RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ²⁰² For examples, see McFarland, *History of the 15th Infantry Regiment in World War II*, 240-2.
- ²⁰³ Except where noted, this relies on McFarland's *History of the 15th Infantry Regiment in World War II*, 240-2.
- ²⁰⁴ McFarland, *History of the 15th Infantry Regiment in World War II*, 242-3.
- ²⁰⁵ Entry 73 at 1530, 25 December 1944, 10 in "G-3 Journal and File, 25 December 1944," File 303-3.2, Box 5486, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ²⁰⁶ Working with artillery for overnight bombardment of Sigolsheim: Entries 86, 87, and 116, 25 December, 12, 15-6 in "G-3 Journal and File, 25 December 1944," RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ²⁰⁷ See Entry 102 at 2320, 26 December, 15-6, "G-3 Journal and File, 26 December 1944," File 303-3.2, Box 5486, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.

- ²⁰⁸ Company numbers: “CO to CO 3d Bn” at 0635, 27 December, 1 in “15th Infantry Unit Journal, December 1944,” RG 407, Entry 427, NA; Plan of attack: 3d Bn CO to S-3 at 0855, 27 December, 1 in “15th Infantry Unit Journal, December 1944,” RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ²⁰⁹ McFarland, *History of the 15th Infantry Regiment in World War II*, 248.
- ²¹⁰ CO 3d Bn to CO at 1355, 27 December 1944 in “15th Infantry Unit Journal, December 1944,” RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ²¹¹ See the regimental IPW and S-2 reports for December to see the ad hoc units that formed around the SS in *Kampfgruppe Braun* in “15th Infantry Unit Journal, December 1944,” RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ²¹² James Woodall, *Texas Aggie Medals of Honor: Seven Heroes of World War II* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2010), 117.
- ²¹³ Eli Whiteley was part of the Texas A&M College Class of 1941 and is honored in the Texas A&M Memorial Student Center. This account draws from McFarland, *History of the 15th Infantry Regiment in World War II*, 248 and Woodall, *Texas Aggie Medals of Honor*, 118-20.
- ²¹⁴ Mudd, “Honor, Fidelity, Courage,” 71.
- ²¹⁵ Regimental S-3 Report for 271200-281200 December, 2 in “15th Infantry Unit Journal, December 1944,” RG 407, Entry 427, NA; McFarland, *History of the 15th Infantry Regiment in World War II*, 249-50.
- ²¹⁶ “15th Infantry Report of Operations for the Month of December,” 5 January 1945, 4 in “3rd Infantry Division Units Reports of Operations,” RG 407, Entry 427, NA. On the lack of surrendering: “CO 3d Bn to CO,” 1355, 27 December 1944 in “15th Infantry Unit Journal, December 1944,” RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ²¹⁷ Edward L. Josowitz, *An Informal History of the 601st Tank Destroyer Battalion* (Salzburg, n.d.), 38.
- ²¹⁸ Clarke and Smith, *Riviera to the Rhine*, 535-9.
- ²¹⁹ Russell F. Weigley, *Eisenhower’s Lieutenants: The Campaign of France and Germany, 1944-1945* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981), 422.
- ²²⁰ Figure 8.10 is in “Maps,” File 303-3.7, Box 5509, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.

- ²²¹ A good perspective on this is 1st Lieutenant Charles K. Blum, “The Operations of the Third Platoon, Company E, 7th Infantry Regiment (Third Infantry Division), East of Ostheim, in the Colmar Pocket, Alsace, 22-23 January 1945. (Alsace Campaign),” Advanced Infantry Officers Course, 1947-1948, DRL.
- ²²² White, *From Fedala to Berchtesgaden*, 207.
- ²²³ Captain Edgar B. Mooney, “The Colmar Pocket: 7th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Infantry Division, 22 January-8 February, 1945,” March 1945, 9, Box 24019, RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA. Hereafter cited as Mooney, “The Colmar Pocket.”
- ²²⁴ White, *From Fedala to Berchtesgaden*, 207-8; Mooney, “The Colmar Pocket,” 15-6; W. Bert Craft, *Agony of Hell* (Paducah, KY: Turner Publishing, Co., 1994), 72. Craft reports that engineers built a bridge across the Fecht for tanks but the lead tank collapsed the bridge, thus delaying armored support to the battalions. Although Mooney reports that the attack in Ostheim finally gained momentum when Americans tanks came to the support of the Americans.
- ²²⁵ For more on the fighting at Maison Rouge, see Clarke and Smith, *Riviera to the Rhine*, 542-7. See also the narratives written from the combat interviews: Lieutenant Melvin J. Lasky, “La Maison Rouge: The Story of an Engagement,” February-March 1945 and Lieutenant William A. Sutton, “30th Infantry in Operation Grandslam,” 13 April 1945 in “22 January-8 February 1945, 1945 Operation Grandslam,” Box 24020, RG 407, Entry 427-A, NA.
- ²²⁶ This largely pulls from the combat interviews and narrative in Mooney, “The Colmar Pocket,” 31-49. Men wandering aimlessly in Houssen, pg. 36. The problems caused by the cold, pg. 47. Casualties: the regimental history breaks it down as 73 officers and men killed and 284 wounded, including 145 non-battle casualties. White, *From Fedala to Berchtesgaden*, 212. The combat interview narrative asserts 370 casualties including 58 killed and 93 men evacuated for cold-related problems such as trench foot and frostbite. Mooney, “The Colmar Pocket,” 49.
- ²²⁷ Mooney, “The Colmar Pocket,” 57-8.
- ²²⁸ For the timing: Intercept on OP Line at 0030 on 30 January 1945, 71 in “7th Infantry Unit Journal, January-May 1945,” File 303-INF(7)-0.7, Box 5611, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ²²⁹ Reitan, *Riflemen*, 72.
- ²³⁰ This pulls from Mooney, “The Colmar Pocket,” 61-72; White, *From Fedala to Berchtesgaden*, 216-8; Reitan, *Riflemen*, 70-4.

- ²³¹ Telephone from Commanding General at 1555 on 30 January, 73 in “7th Infantry Unit Journal, January-May 1945,” RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ²³² The American infantry and French tanks struggled to work well together. Even the 7th Infantry’s history notes that there could have been better coordination, planning, and liaison between the two agencies. White, *From Fedala to Berchtesgaden*, 214. See also Mooney, “The Colmar Pocket,” 73.
- ²³³ Reitan, *Riflemen*, 76-7.
- ²³⁴ This account pulls from Mooney, “The Colmar Pocket,” 78-101.
- ²³⁵ Clarke and Smith, *Riviera to the Rhine*, 551.
- ²³⁶ Taggart, *History of the Third Infantry Division*, 324.
- ²³⁷ Lieutenant Colonel John A. Heintges, “7th Infantry Report of Operations for February 1945,” 5 March 1945, 3 in “3rd Infantry Division Unit Reports of Operations, February 1945,” File 303-0.3, Box 5400, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ²³⁸ Nathan William White, *From Fedala to Berchtesgaden: A History of the Seventh United States Infantry in World War II* (n.p., 1947), 229. See also “Training Memorandum, #6: Training Directive—Third Phase,” 27 February 1945 in “Training Memoranda, 1945,” File 303-INF(7)-3.13, Box 5618, RG 407, Entry 427, NA. The 30th Infantry’s monthly report listed similar training (street fighting and tank-infantry training) but did not specify or detail how it did that training. See Colonel Lionel C. McGarr, “Operations Report, Thirtieth U.S. Infantry,” 5 March 1945, 5 in “3rd Infantry Division Unit Reports of Operations, February 1945,” RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ²³⁹ MacDonald, *The Last Offensive*, 236-8; *Report of Operations: The Seventh United States Army in France and Germany, 1944-1945* (Heidelberg, Germany: Aloys Gräf, 1946), 3:697-703. Hereinafter cited as *Report of Operations*.
- ²⁴⁰ 1st Lieutenant Nicholas Pellicciari, “Observations in the Breaching of the Siegfried Line and Conclusions Drawn from the Infantry Viewpoint,” 11 March 1945 in File 303-INF(7)-0.4, Box 5610, RG 407, Entry 427, NA. Although it does not deal with urban combat, Pellicciari’s report is a rare example of divisions communicating and learning from each other and is especially notable because the 9th Division was in First Army.
- ²⁴¹ This account draws from Earl Reitan’s writings on Utweiler. Reitan fought in 2/7 but was on detached service at the time of this battle. See Reitan, *Riflemen*, 83-93 and

Reitan, "Disaster at Utweiler (15 March 1945)," unpublished paper, n.d. I am indebted to Professor John McManus for giving me a copy of this paper. See also White, *From Fedala to Berchtesgaden*, 235-40. Reitan also uses 7th Infantry Journal for 15 March, 4-5 in "7th Infantry Unit Journal and File, January-May 1945," RG 407, Entry 427, NA and G-3 Journal and File for 15 March 1945 in "G-3 Journal and File, 15 March 1945," File 303-3.2, Box 5495, RG 407, Entry 427, NA. The lieutenant quoted is Lieutenant Wes McKane quoted in Reitan, "Disaster in Utweiler (15 March 1945), 18.

²⁴² McFarland, *History of the 15th Infantry Regiment in World War II*, 287.

²⁴³ McFarland, *History of the 15th Infantry Regiment in World War II*, 287-9.

²⁴⁴ White, *From Fedala to Berchtesgaden*, 265; Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich in Power, 1933-1939* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 123-6, 542-5.

²⁴⁵ Major C. M. Broadwater, III, et al., *The Battle of Nuremberg, 15-20 April 1945* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, 1984), 12.

²⁴⁶ MacDonald, *The Last Offensive*, 423; Broadwater, et al., *The Battle of Nuremberg*, 5, 10-1. See also Ekkehard Albert, "XIII SS Corps (26 Mar-6 May 1945)," Foreign Military Studies, MS #B-737 (Karlsruhe, Germany: Historical Division, Headquarters United States Army, Europe, Foreign Military Studies Branch, n.d.), 37-8.

²⁴⁷ Generalleutnant Benignus Dippold, "Defense of Nuremberg (12-16 Apr 45)," Foreign Military Studies, MS #B-145 (Karlsruhe, Germany: Historical Division, Headquarters United States Army, Europe, Foreign Military Studies Branch, August 1946), 4.

²⁴⁸ Broadwater, et al., *The Battle of Nuremberg*, 20.

²⁴⁹ MacDonald, *The Last Offensive*, 424.

²⁵⁰ Prohme, *History of 30th Infantry Regiment in World War II*, 344.

²⁵¹ IPW to S-2 at 1305, 17 April 1945 in "15th Infantry Unit Journal, April 1945," File 303-INF(15)-0.7, Box 5625, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.

²⁵² 3d Bn Ex O to Ass't S-3 at 1728, 17 April 1945 in "15th Infantry Unit Journal, April 1945," RG 407, Entry 427, NA.

²⁵³ White, *From Fedala to Berchtesgaden*, 263; See also Telephone from Div Arty, Entry 26 at 05555, 18 April, 4 in “G-3 Journal and File, 18 April 1945,” File 303-3.2, Box 5501, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.

²⁵⁴ Telephone from CG to CO, 30th Inf at 1130, Entry 51, 18 April 1945, 7 in “G-3 Journal and File, 18 April 1945,” RG 407, Entry 427, NA.

²⁵⁵ McFarland, *History of the 15th Infantry Regiment in World War II*, 295; White, *From Fedala to Berchtesgaden*, 263-4.

²⁵⁶ John H. Toole, *Battle Diary* (Missoula, MT: Vigilante Press, 1978), 136-43.

²⁵⁷ McFarland, *History of the 15th Infantry Regiment in World War II*, 297.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION: “I COULD SEE NO SCARS OF BATTLE”

And so it was that World War II in Europe ended when German officers signed the terms of unconditional surrender on 8 May 1945. At this point, Allied statesmen, diplomats, and politicians began implementing a new direction for Europe. Although East vied against West as a “cold war” developed, the western European powers reconciled far more with western Germany than they had in 1918. Indeed, the emerging western European community rivaled what happened in European diplomacy after the fall of Napoleon in 1815.

Having experienced such a long war, the Allies could not simply rest on their success and not plan for future conflicts, especially in the face of the emerging Cold War between East and West. This planning factored in urban combat. Before 1941, United States Army officers gave little consideration the possibility of urban combat but, after 1945, they could not afford to ignore its likelihood. Towns and cities composed one environment among several possible combat environments that received attention in the professional military journals of the postwar United States military. Postwar articles written about the subject reveal how the military perceived the state of urban combat after its experience in World War II. The theme of combined-arms thinking threads through these articles.

In one notable report, Brigadier General George Taylor, chief of staff of the 1st Infantry Division, commander of the 26th Infantry in North Africa, and commander of the 16th Infantry in Sicily, reflected on how best to engage in urban combat.¹ He began

by noting the most common elements that should affect an officer's plan of attack into a built-up area: its population density; the size, location, and the terrain of the area; and the extent of defensive preparations. Once the commander had evaluated how these elements would affect his plan of attack, Taylor argued that the principles of war applied to the attacker only insofar as he was able to seize the commanding ground in the town's outskirts.

Having gotten a foothold within the outskirts, officers needed to be flexible because the usual rules of battle did not always apply. This was because, he noted, "the large towns and cities of Germany present a maze of buildings, alleys, fortifications, cellars, subways, and sewers that offer countless places of shelter and concealment to defending troops." The possibilities of tripping enemy ambushes or defending against enemy infiltration were much higher. Taylor showed that the attacker must maintain tight command and control within the maze of a battered, broken city where many homes and buildings were crumbling and half-standing, thus giving the enemy many opportunities to inflict injury and the attacker many circumstances to lose direction and control. Therefore, Taylor advocated an approach to combat in built-up areas that was thorough, methodical, and combined.²

The commander maintained command and control by establishing clear boundaries, phase lines, and control points. This kept the line units together and prevented gaps from opening between them. Numbering important positions, intersections, and buildings, such as on the veteran divisions' "measles sheets," aided in communication and quickly getting artillery support. Part of that thorough command

and control meant clearing every room and every hiding place in every house and building to kill the enemy and evacuate all civilians so they could not help any enemy that might infiltrate.³

Soldiers' movement, Taylor maintained, must not be through the open streets, where they would be exposed to enemy fire but through buildings instead. The streets must be clear so that assault guns, tanks, and tank destroyers could assist the infantry's attack. Medium and heavy artillery might have a reduced role but high-angle weapons such as mortars became more important in the city. In the attack, Taylor advocated using all weapons on hand but especially praised the tank-infantry team. Artillery offered preliminary bombardments as well as harassing and interdiction fire. Mutually supporting armor-infantry teamwork was a requirement for success. Armor fired on machine-gun nests and strongpoints to help infantrymen advance as other soldiers also searched for and eliminated antitank positions to protect the armor.⁴

Villages were different only in that they were smaller. Taylor broke combat in villages into different categories. If commanding ground was beyond the village, then the assault companies should bypass the village and seize the high ground, allowing reserve units to mop up the defenders in the cut off village. If the village rested on the high ground, then taking it was similar to assaulting a fortified position. And if attackers had to cross open ground, then it was best to attack that village at night. Neutralizing a village also required tank-infantry-artillery cooperation and coordination.⁵

Taylor's essay on urban combat closely followed the lessons learned from the 26th Infantry's September 1944 fight in Aachen, which he acknowledged.⁶ Thus it

indicates how wartime experiences likely shaped postwar reflection and thinking about combat.

General Taylor was not alone in considering and reflecting how the U.S. Army should fight urban combat after its World War II experiences. Whereas there were no prewar articles and no prewar doctrine on urban combat, World War II created a different postwar outlook. American professional military journals no longer ignored fighting in built-up areas and the military took steps to revise *FM 31-50* in 1952. Postwar writing, and especially the revised version of *FM 31-50*, reflects the culmination of what the army learned about urban combat and how it had processed those lessons.

Between 1945 and 1952, there were three types of articles on urban combat. Reprints of Soviet articles on urban combat were the first type of postwar articles. These essays typically appeared in *Military Review*'s "Foreign Military Digests" section. Whereas reprinted Soviet articles during the war discussed the lessons of Stalingrad, the postwar articles drew insights from the Battle for Berlin. A February 1946 essay arguing that self-propelled artillery had a role in urban combat used examples from the fighting in Berlin. Along these lines, the Soviets seemed to have gleaned many of the same lessons as the Americans had from their experiences: understanding the special conditions inherent in fighting in built-up areas and the need for close coordination among the combat arms.⁷

This is not to say that American urban combat doctrine was the same as the Soviets. Influenced by the fighting with in Aachen, General Taylor endorsed a methodical, thorough push through a town or city. Lieutenant Colonel V. Iakovlev

concluded with some elements of the American urban combat experience: namely, in having a well-organized combined-arms approach, but Iakovlev envisioned a different role for Soviet assault groups. These assault groups merely gained entry into buildings in order to maintain the Russians' momentum. But these teams should not be responsible for clearing a building's upper stories. Instead, he asserted, assault teams should simply seal off the first floor from the upper floors and let units behind them deal with room clearing. Using the street fighting in Berlin for examples, Iakovlev indicated that it was more important to maintain the speed and momentum of the attack than to methodically eliminate all threats within a particular building.⁸

The second type of postwar article was one that merely narrated an urban action somewhere, usually pertaining to American forces. Typically, these narratives did not feature much analysis but left that to the readers themselves. With the war against Japan all but over, Nelson Randall's August 1945 piece highlighted how artillery batteries' massed direct fire helped the infantry to capture the city of Manila from fanatical Japanese defenders.⁹ Brigadier General R. W. Grow detailed how armored units took Mulhausen in April 1945 but did not explicitly derive lessons from that action.¹⁰ Similarly, a Soviet reprint also described how an antitank unit successfully captured Skvir from the Germans in 1943.¹¹

This third type of publication attempted to closely investigate the nature of urban combat, how to fight within built-up areas, or how the environment affected a specific branch. Several articles appeared in Fort Benning's *Infantry School Quarterly*. This periodical typically dealt with small-unit tactics. Articles written after the war assumed

that small infantry units, such as rifle platoons, would have to cooperate units armed with other weapons.¹² *Infantry School Quarterly* did not neglect battle in built-up areas. In 1948, “Tactics and Techniques of Small-Unit Fighting in Built-Up Areas,” instructed a combined-arms approach to urban combat at the squad, platoon, and company levels. This piece covered some of the elementary aspects of urban combat: the increased strength of the defense, reasons why an officer might need to attack a village, town, or city, and how to launch a controlled, methodical attack. This article, written between the original 1944 publication of *FM 31-50* and its 1952 revisions, closely followed the 1944 *FM 31-50* but more explicitly supported the utility of tanks and crew-served recoilless rifles within urban combat.¹³ Many of these sentiments were echoed in a 1950 article. That article assumed a combined-arms approach and emphasized planning, junior officers’ command and control, and the value of flexibility and creative thinking within the chaos of such fighting.¹⁴ A 1952 article continued many of the same themes within the context of the Korean War and fighting within Korean towns and villages.¹⁵

Other *Infantry School Quarterly* essays dissected small-unit urban engagements, whether a company or a battalion. These articles closely described the planning of these actions as well as the fighting that occurred and made a conscientious effort to cull lessons from these actions. One such battle analysis was the Third Battalion, 7th Infantry’s quickly-planned, late-afternoon attack on Noroy-le-Bourg during the 3rd Division’s campaign in southern France in the fall of 1944. The lessons described included the importance of diligent junior officers that kept the attack moving in the face of strong enemy fire; that veteran, well-trained officers can adapt to new circumstances

and change a battle plan accordingly; and the importance of coordination between the infantry and tanks in capturing towns such as Noroy, especially in darkness.¹⁶ Another article studied F/23rd Infantry, of the 2nd Infantry Division, and its experiences within the port city of Brest, France in September 1944. The Germans forced the Americans to fight block by block and street by street for Brest's port. Among other things, the article admonished junior officers to be mindful of communication difficulties in urban terrain, the importance of command and control amidst a city's ruins, and to make use of armor to help reduce enemy strong points.¹⁷

Also noteworthy were the student monographs at Fort Benning's and Fort Knox's advanced officers' courses. After the war, many junior officers who attended those courses had also fought in World War II. Part of their curriculum included describing a small-unit action, typically one that they had experienced, and dissecting the mistakes made and successes achieved in the engagements. These student monographs covered a wide range of topics: from jungle warfare to airborne operations to river crossings to urban combat. These student officers analyzed their own experiences and attempted to learn from them. By keeping them on file at Fort Benning and Fort Knox, they became potential historical lessons for future officers. This dissertation drew upon several student monographs as they related to urban combat.¹⁸

In sharp contrast to the 1920s and 1930s, the U.S. Army reflected upon, processed, and learned about urban combat between 1945 and 1952. All the above examples, whether one general's unpublished ruminations, or student monographs, or published articles in professional journals, constitute lower forms of institutional

learning. That is, they did not have the power to change military doctrine. Such discussions built upon what had happened in the recent past but did not have the power to officially change the doctrine of the U. S. Army. In 1952, however, taking these views into consideration, and in light of a war in Korea, the U.S. military revised its urban combat field manual. The 1952 edition of *FM 31-50: Combat in Fortified Areas and Towns* represents the highest form of institutional learning. It processed some lessons of the recent past and adapted military doctrine to fit its understanding of the military reality. And it is clear that the 1952 edition shows institutional learning.

It is worth repeating that pursuant to the army's practice of not denoting authorship, it is not possible to determine who helped to write this revised edition. It is also not possible to determine how these authors wrote that manual: that is, what access they had to what documents to aid their writing. While one cannot link specific historical lessons that influenced the revised manual, the revised edition is worth contrasting with its earlier 1944 cousin.

The 1952 edition of *FM 31-50* is a more defined manual than its 1944 predecessor. Its definitions and assertions are more precise, but also more descriptive, fuller, and more nuanced. The first major section gives the general, tactical, and intelligence characteristics of urban combat. In contrast, the 1944 *FM 31-50* reads more vaguely as a result of the American army not having experienced as much urban combat. That is, in elaborating upon the 1944 version's more general and more vague characteristics of urban combat, the revised edition clearly bore proof of extensive experience with combat in that environment, and offered a more complete picture of

what to expect. The 1952 edition assumed from the beginning that urban combat would include mortars, machine guns, recoilless rifles, and tanks fighting alongside infantrymen with artillery support.¹⁹

The 1952 edition of *FM 31-50* greatly modified the 1944 version. It offered a more complete picture and gave fuller instructions that took into account what had happened in World War II. In the defense of a town, both manuals explain that many of the principles of defending a fixed position apply to a built-up area. That is, an adequate defense must include the front and flanks, is mutually supported by the weapons at hand, offers all-around protection, and is a defense-in-depth. Both acknowledge that a defender should not select any location that the enemy can bypass but the 1952 edition explained that a defender chooses a position that therefore requires the enemy to attack. It also warned that defending a town or city is different than an organized defense elsewhere in that observation is limited, fields of fire are reduced, there is increased cover and concealment for a variety of weapons, mobility for infantry and tanks is limited, communication is impeded, and command and control is decentralized.²⁰

In planning the defense, the deployment of regiment, battalion, company, platoon, and squad-sized units do not differ. The discussion of support changed. The 1944 version focused on the different supporting units that might assist the infantry regiment, including artillery, the antitank mine platoon, engineers, communication, the intelligence and reconnaissance platoon, chemical units that fired a larger 4.2-inch mortar, and, lastly, tanks. By January 1944, it was assumed that artillery would be the main weapon of support for an infantry unit defending a town or city. Artillery was to

prevent an enemy from penetrating into the town or city, be capable of shelling likely avenues of assault, and be able to prevent an enemy's envelopment maneuver. Tank units, on the other hand, were good as a mobile reserve and for counterattack. It is worth emphasizing that the 1944 edition, written through 1943 and published in January 1944, acknowledged a combined-arms stance but did not stress combined-arms battle in the ways that field units were being employed by then nor as subsequent wartime field manuals instituted.²¹

By 1952, a change in language occurred in the wake of a change in mindset. Rather than organizing different supporting units, a commander was now expected to integrate different supporting weapons. The revised edition discussed how machine guns, recoilless rifles, mortars, tanks, and, artillery helped support a prepared urban defense. Artillery did not have the primacy in 1952 that it did in 1944; tanks, on the other hand, received much more attention in 1952. Rather than describe tanks' use in a single sentence, the new manual discussed in depth how tank platoons, attached to front-line units, could stop enemy tanks, aid in the overall defense, or cover important avenues of assault. In general, tanks would remain generally static because of their limited maneuverability within towns. It is also noteworthy that the manual included a photograph of an M-4 Sherman moving through rubble in a town street to remind the reader that tanks would experience far less maneuverability. The later edition did not neglect how supporting units such as engineers as well as the antitank mine platoon, and intelligence and reconnaissance platoon aided in the defense as well.²²

Furthermore, the 1952 version described how to conduct the defense. An urban defense consisted of three elements: security forces, main line forces, and reserve forces. Security forces, positioned at the outskirts of the defense to observe as well as direct air and artillery support, should “delay, deceive, and disorganize the enemy.” Through pre-planning, security forces ought to channel the enemy through obstacle and mine-strewn avenues of approach to eliminate as many as possible. The main line forces engaged the enemy “by increased fires and by close combat in the streets and within buildings.” The manual encouraged main-line forces to use every weapon available to keep the enemy at bay and defend “at all costs” or until ordered to withdraw. Regimental and battalion reserves were to be used to prevent encirclement and for counterattack. Reserve units needed to prepare plans for counterattack before the battle if the enemy breached the main line of resistance, especially at areas critical for the regimental or battalion defense. Ideally, plans for counterattack were to be arranged with higher headquarters in cooperation with artillery and tanks in order to maximize the effect of a counterattack. These plans for counterattack might include premade passages through buildings before the battle where a counterattack was likely to occur.²³ Not only had the mindset become more thoroughly combined-arms oriented but the instructions for how to defend and how to counterattack suggest a more mature doctrine that was the fruit of urban combat experience in World War II.

Like the defense, there were key differences in the new edition explaining the urban *attack*. The revised *FM 31-50* asserted that the objective in fighting for a city or town was “the seizure of the entire built-up area.” Further, limited objectives within a

city or town included “installations such as railroad stations, telephone exchanges, and public utility works” but contended these were also locations where the enemy was likely to make a strong defense. Lastly, it advocated a methodical, thorough approach to urban combat wherein “all enemy are cleared from each zone before resuming the attack to the next phase line.”²⁴

The 1944 manual had described the attack in two phases. Phase I was the assault on the outskirts and gaining a foothold on the town or city and Phase II included the fight within the location for control of it. The 1952 manual parsed an urban attack into three parts. Phase I is where the attacker isolated the city and cut it off from reinforcement and resupply; Phase II, then, was the assault on the city’s outskirts to gain entry into the place; Phase III was the “systematic house-by-house, block-by-block advance through the built-up area.”²⁵

Focusing on the infantry aspect of urban combat, the 1944 manual organized instruction on the attack by the responsibilities at the rifle regimental, battalion, company, platoon, and squad levels. Supporting units are discussed at their appropriate levels of command. For example, the regimental level of command briefly considered the role of armor, artillery, engineers, and chemical combat troops. The battalion level instructed the use of its antitank platoon, ammunition and pioneer platoon, and its heavy weapons company. The squad level explained how squads support each other in the assault on houses and buildings.²⁶

World War II taught Americans that taking a town required many weapons working in coordination and combination. As such, the 1952 manual explained how

artillery, tanks, antiaircraft artillery, engineers, mortars, machine guns, recoilless rifles, and bazookas assisted in capturing a built-up area. Not surprisingly, the revised manual significantly elevated the role played by tanks in the attack, especially in concert with the infantry. The manual emphasized and closely defined how an infantry-tank team should operate inside a built-up area.

The 1952 manual then explained how to conduct the attack through Phases II and III. Unlike the 1944 manual, there was no need to differentiate between levels of command. It discussed control measures: the decentralization of the fighting and command as well as the assigning objectives and boundaries that it mattered little if it was a division or a battalion attacking a city, these characteristics and principles would hold true. The tactics, techniques, and procedures for house-to-house fighting as well as assaulting and breaching entry into houses and buildings were largely the same. The revised manual was briefer in this regard but both manuals advocated supporting fires between squads, the application of firepower, and quick movement. Both also encouraged a thorough, methodical approach of clearing every room in order to minimize the possibility of the enemy infiltrating into rear areas.²⁷

The U.S. Army was mired in the Korean War by 1952 and had encountered urban combat within the towns, villages, and major cities on the Korean Peninsula. Those experiences likely influenced the 1952 rewriting of *FM 31-50*. However, the revised manual also strongly reflected the U.S. Army's World War II experience as well. The emphasis on the necessity of the combined-arms approach is a fundamental outgrowth of what the army assimilated in World War II. Allowing for a few

technological and organizational changes, this dissertation has shown how the 1st, 3rd, and 5th Infantry Divisions were fighting more in line with the 1952 urban combat manual than the 1944 manual by the end of World War II. In many ways, the 1952 revision accurately reflected the lessons that the field armies had learned about urban combat in World War II and how it was fighting within that environment by the end of that conflict.

Conclusion

In December 2004, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld responded to National Guard complaints of shortages and old equipment in the Iraqi insurgency. The secretary said “You go to war with the army you have, not the army you might want or wish to have at a later time.”²⁸ His comment was controversial and was judged by many to be impolitic but it is not entirely wrong. The United States has always gone to war with the army it had and not the army it wanted or needed. The challenge has been to quickly improve, adapt, and become more effective as that army identifies weaknesses in various areas.

World War II was no different. In November 1942, the 1st and 3rd Divisions participated in the landings in North Africa. Both divisions encountered limited urban combat but both responded similarly. Elements of the 7th Infantry Regiment encountered enemy resistance within the coastal city of Fedala but there was no coordination with its tanks as it captured the city. Likewise, the 18th Infantry relied solely on its infantrymen to take the town of St. Cloud, which it accomplished only when Oran fell and ordered the St. Cloud garrison to surrender. By the end of war, these

organizations, along with their sister regiments and parent divisions, had learned how to capture towns and cities from the Germans. Awareness of the urban environment sharpened and combined-arms coordination and techniques had improved. As a result, two battalions from the 26th Infantry, one of the 18th Infantry's sister regiments, captured Aachen after the division had isolated it. The 3rd and 45th Divisions seized Nuremberg in 1945. And the 5th Division fought with the rest of XX Corps to seal off and seize Metz. In many ways during World War II, the U.S. Army became the army it wanted to be but it was a process that took many months, trial and error, and many thousands killed and wounded.

Because the enemy always gets a vote, the Germans helped with this transformation. In order to defeat an enemy as sophisticated as the *Wehrmacht*, the American infantryman, artilleryman, and tank crew had to make organizational changes at the tactical level and bring about greater combined-arms coordination. In contrast to the operational unpreparedness in 1942 and 1943, the American soldier had become more proficient in urban combat in 1944 because his experience against such an experienced enemy demanded it.

Examining the American response to urban combat in its war against Germany shows elements of that learning process. As such, this dissertation argues that learning occurred from two different directions: by the infantry divisions themselves as they fought in various combat environments, including the urban environment, and by the Army during the war and afterwards as it processed and analyzed the various battlefields to adjust doctrine or create it anew.

Very early in the war, American soldiers were thrust into an environment for which they did not have adequate training. It is no surprise that they struggled in their first urban battles at Fedala and St. Cloud. After the North African Campaign, the field army became aware that it needed to adjust and so it created the Fifth Army Invasion Training Center in North Africa for those units going to Sicily. Part of the training center included training in *movement down a street and house-to-house fighting*. But because this training only involved the infantry, and most likely just the riflemen, it showed that the field forces were moving in the right direction but were not fully prepared yet.

The Sicily Campaign revealed the field units slowly learning. At places like Barrafranca, the 1st Division began to see the importance of effective tank-infantry teamwork as its infantry regiments advanced and captured towns and villages. Fighting in Troina taught the difficulty of urban combat, as it took the Americans several days to pummel and finally subdue the town's defenders. The 3rd Division landed without armored support and moved through much of Sicily with little assistance from tanks or tank destroyers. As the division proceeded along the island's northern coastal highway, racing the British toward Messina, the Germans tended to fortify and defend from the mountainous terrain rather than the area towns. While the divisions had begun to grasp the nature of urban combat with the Fifth Army Invasion Training Center, they still had yet to learn that effective fighting within towns and cities required a combined-arms approach and not one that relied almost exclusively on the infantry.

The 3rd Division brought this infantry-centered attitude to Italy. Through much of the division's fighting up the Italian peninsula, the infantry bore the brunt of the fighting as organic artillery offered support along the way. During one of the division's more vicious urban fights in Italy, C/15's battle of Roccaromana in October 1943, tanks and tank destroyers offered no help at all but fulfilled missions elsewhere. The treacherous, mountainous terrain limited armor's help, but no one attempted to use armor even in a modified form in the attack on Roccaromana. The fight at Roccaromana remained an American infantry-artillery attack against German infantry, artillery, and armor.

It was not until February and March of 1944, when the 3rd Division was locked in the beach at Anzio, that the attached armor battalions advocated improved tank-infantry teamwork and coordination. Preparing for the breakout from Anzio involved both street fighting training at Nettuno and training in tank-infantry cooperation, including tank-infantry assaults on fortified houses. When the division broke out of the Anzio beachhead toward Rome, it had prepared itself for fighting for towns and cities, such as Cisterna di Littoria, and the infantry and tanks had developed far better teamwork.

During this time in England, the 1st Division also improved its urban combat effectiveness. As the division prepared for the invasion of Europe, the 18th Infantry used a bombed out British community to train its rifle companies in urban combat to prevent another fiasco like St. Cloud. Although it only involved its rifle companies and

it did not include any armor, the regiment was still processing and learning from its past battles.

It was in northwest Europe, then, that American divisions came to better understand and conduct combined-arms warfare and to apply it against the German *Wehrmacht* in towns and cities. After breaking out of the hedgerows, both the 1st and 5th Divisions relied heavily on their attached tank and tank destroyer battalions. Progress for both divisions required that infantry-armor-artillery teamwork as they helped push the German military toward the Siegfried Line. Both divisions came to depend upon that cooperation through the latter part of 1944: the 5th Division in Lorraine helping to capture Metz and the 1st Division entangled within the Siegfried Line. As these divisions understood and mastered combined-arms fighting in general, so they applied it specifically to urban combat.

By the time the 3rd Division landed in southern France, urban combat had ceased being solely an infantry affair and had become a cooperative effort with artillery, tanks, tank destroyers, and infantry. The Germans expertly used the forests, mountains, rivers, and broken terrain to stymie American advances against Metz, the Siegfried Line, and southern Germany through late 1944. But the 1st and 5th Divisions captured Aachen and Metz regardless of German efforts to defend them. The Hürtgen Forest and the Vosges Mountains dramatically challenged the Americans' combined-arms arrangements but those combinations produced advances nonetheless.

After recovering from the shock of the Ardennes Counteroffensive in December 1944, the Americans made strong artillery-tank-infantry attacks to flatten the Bulge and

begin the main invasion of Germany. The 5th Division saw vicious urban combat at Putscheid and the 3rd Division fought savagely at Sigolsheim, Bennwihr, and Biesheim, places where German defenders tenaciously resisted American attacks, though the war appeared to be going against them. These costly engagements were powerful reminders of the strength of the defender in urban combat.

As enemy resistance collapsed in March and April 1945, the Americans sped rapidly through Germany's cities and towns to facilitate the destruction of the *Wehrmacht*. Still, the 1st Division's failure to capture the bridge at Bonn and the 3rd Division's near-fiasco at Utweiler showed that, even late in the war, the Americans committed costly errors. Anticipating the end of the war, the 7th Infantry captured Berchtesgaden in a very different way than it seized Fedala in 1943.

The three infantry divisions learned as they fought the Germans. In this sense, there is a degree of individualism in the American infantry division in World War II, fighting its own war and not communicating with other units. Records for the 1st, 3rd, and 5th Divisions indicate very few examples of inter-division or intra-corps learning or communication. This is not to say there are no examples. Significantly, the 12th Army Group disseminated combat units' battle lessons by publishing *Battle Experiences*. In its pages the 1st and 5th Divisions discussed the best methods to capture towns and cities and how to maximize a regiment's organic weapons.²⁹ In terms of intra-corps discussion were the December 1944 exercises of XIX Corps on how to capture villages and towns with tanks and infantry.³⁰ And one rare example of inter-division communication was

the 7th Infantry Regiment's observations of how the 9th Division attacked into the Siegfried Line in order to emulate their successes in March 1945.³¹

It is also noteworthy that as Lieutenant Colonel Derrill Daniel's 2/26 planned its movements within Aachen in October 1944, he did not draw any lessons from the battle within Brest, France, which had occurred one month earlier in September. Instead, foremost in his mind was preventing the mistakes and the stalemate of Cassino, Italy, which occurred the previous January and February as the 1st Division prepared for the invasion of Europe.³² Yet as both the 2nd Division in Brest and the 1st Division in Aachen employed "mouseholing" tactics, it is possible that more communication occurred but went unrecorded.³³

These constitute informal but noteworthy forms of institutional learning. However, it is clear that the U.S. Army, at various levels, processed its battle experiences and tried to improve upon them. One product of lesson processing, and an example of top-down learning, was the U.S. Army's first field manual on urban combat, *FM 31-50* in 1944. *FM 31-50* had pulled from the army's experiences in terms of urban combat but by the time that it was published in January 1944, many of the field divisions had already progressed beyond it. These units had already found ways to employ armor to augment the striking power of an urban assault, like the 16th Infantry at Kreuzau and Vettweiss in March 1945, for example. However, later field manuals, such as *FM 7-20: Infantry Battalion*, published in October 1944, reflected the combined-arms tendencies in urban combat more than *FM 31-50*.

It is worth considering the interaction between combat units and official doctrine such as the army's urban combat manual in *FM 31-50*. While the 1944 manual called for only a small degree of combined-arms fighting in a built-up area, American soldiers through the latter half of 1944 modified the official doctrine by conducting much more combined-arms fighting in the urban environment. The divisions' records are silent on the degree to which *Battle Experiences* and field manuals influenced units in the field. Short of an officer or NCO explicitly claiming that these publications guided a specific battle or operation, it is very difficult to determine how, or even if, they influenced the battlefield. Colonel Derrill Daniel acknowledged the influence of the difficulties at Cassino in Italy, and he wished to avoid them in Aachen. Nothing in the 5th Division records illuminates how the 2nd Infantry discovered that thermite grenades could effectively neutralize pillboxes in Saarlautern, although it strongly indicates that it might have been trial and error or was serendipitous. Whereas it is unclear if *FM 31-50* affected the 1st, 3rd, and 5th Divisions, their actions in northern France, Lorraine, and southern France showed that they were ahead of the army's institutional learning curve. The October 1944 field manual on the rifle battalion, *FM 7-20*, is evidence that the army was trying to catch up.

In the question of influence, *FM 7-20*, and its increased emphasis on combined-arms fighting in towns and cities, suggests that battlefield experiences had a greater bearing on doctrine than doctrine had on combat leaders' decisions. Field units were more attuned to doctrinal strengths and deficiencies as they endured battle than military planners or the writers of doctrine. These combat leaders were therefore more likely be

ahead of the institutional state of learning in wartime. In this sense, it is logical for these combat units to have more sophisticated and mature warfighting practices, such as in the urban environment, than codified current doctrine suggested. What is notable is that military planners stateside observed these patterns and changes and endorsed them as they could. It is significant that, for example, the role of armor changed from a vague, limited role in *FM 31-50* to a more prominent function in the later *FM 7-20*, very possibly as a result of the successes and battlefield lessons learned by combat units such as the 1st, 3rd, and 5th Divisions. The army's institutional learning may have lagged behind combat units' battlefield experiences but it sought to catch up nonetheless.

The process of "catching up" was uneven. The 1942 manual for tanks, *FM 17-10*, saw no place for tanks within towns and cities and that manual was never updated. Some of this unevenness is because the World War II U.S. Army lacked a central organization to cull, process, and analyze lessons that the army should be learning in wartime. Without such an organization, doctrinal improvements were imbalanced: the 1942 *FM 17-10* warned against tanks' involvement in urban combat, *FM 31-50* (early 1944) recognized that tanks might contribute to street fighting, and the late-1944 *FM 7-20* more strongly emphasized tanks' participation in urban combat. Although sometimes irregular, army field units and military planners eventually came to agree that the best way to assault a town or city was within a combined-arms mindset. The 1952 revisions to *FM 31-50* reflected the wartime lessons learned in blood of the combined-arms nature of urban combat in the attack and the defense.

One major hindrance to the divisions' learning process was the constant turnover from casualties and replacements. Experienced veterans became casualties and unable to train new replacements. Especially when integrated into a combat unit during a battle, new replacements died at fearful rates. By the time the 26th Infantry's Second and Third Battalions, the conquerors of Aachen, attacked Merode and Jungersdorf in the Hürtgen Forest, a large number of those units were making their first urban assault because they were the replacements from the battle in Aachen. The divisions' records are replete with complaints about the inadequate stateside training of replacements. This called for constant in-theater training and, during rest periods, most of these divisions did just that. After the Colmar Pocket drained many veterans from the 3rd Division, it absorbed new replacements. Part of rebuilding those units meant hard training in Lorraine for the upcoming invasion of Germany. In February 1945, *this training included a street fighting course* in Pournoy-la-Chetive. It was up to the replacements to learn these skills and enough seem to have learned these skills and contribute toward the Allies' victory over Germany.³⁴

When all the fighting and destruction was over, Europe slowly picked itself up and rebuilt. The Germans rebuilt their cities as they labored to move away from the Nazi nightmare. In 1957, Colonel John Corley, who led one of the battalions into Aachen, brought his two sons to see the old battlefields that he and the rest of the 1st Division had fought over in the fall and winter of 1944. In Aachen, father and sons stayed in the same Quellenhof Hotel at Farwick Park that Corley's men had assaulted during the battle. The hotel had been rebuilt since the battle gutted it. The three enjoyed

first-class service in the same place that had once housed German mortars and a 20-mm gun. Corley reported that “I could see no scars of battle” when he visited Farwick Park’s tennis courts, gardens, mineral bath pool, and walking paths. As Corley wandered around rebuild Aachen, he marveled at what his men had accomplished and how the city had transformed itself; he even got lost during his walk. After thirteen years, he had to exert effort to find a few buildings that still had battle damage.³⁵ Whereas military thinkers estimate that urban warfare will increase as global urbanization trends rise and whereas modern urban warfare means even more death, misery, and destruction than in the 1940s, it is a small reassurance that those who survive will still rebuild their lives and begin anew.

Endnotes

¹ George Taylor, “The Attack of Cities and Towns,” n.d., in Brigadier General George A. Taylor Papers, MRC, FDM. This essay is undated but the language suggests a postwar environment.

² Taylor, “The Attack of Cities and Towns,” 3-4.

³ Taylor, “The Attack of Cities and Towns,” 4, 6-8.

⁴ Taylor, “The Attack of Cities and Towns,” 4-5, 15.

⁵ Taylor, “The Attack of Cities and Towns,” 9-11.

⁶ Taylor, “The Attack of Cities and Towns,” 15.

⁷ Lieutenant Colonel P. Melnikov, “Self-Propelled Artillery in Street Fighting,” *Military Review* 25, No. 11 (February 1946): 100-3. See also Major Velenetz, “Reconnaissance in Large Cities,” *Military Review* 26, no. 4 (July 1946): 95-7; Major N. Noskov, “Employment of Large Armored Units in Street Fighting,” *Military Review* 26, no. 4 (July 1946): 112-4; Colonel-General V. Kozakov, “Notes on Soviet Artillery in Berlin Operations,” *Military Review* 26, no. 7 (October 1946):

114-5. Major General I. Managarov, "Street Fighting in Large Cities," *Military Review* 25, no. 10 (January 1946): 105-7 examines the fighting in Budapest rather than Berlin.

⁸ Lieutenant Colonel V. Iakovlev, "Notes on Street Fighting," *Military Review* 25, no. 12 (March 1946): 111-3.

⁹ Major Nelson H. Randall, "The Battle of Manila," *Field Artillery Journal* 35, no. 8 (August 1945): 451-6.

¹⁰ Brigadier General R. W. Grow, "The Capture of Muhlhausen," *Armored Cavalry Journal* 55, no. 6 (November-December 1946): 13-14.

¹¹ Colonel Boris Samoilov, "How Artillery Captured a Town," *Field Artillery Journal* 35, no. 6 (June 1945): 366-7. See also Lieutenant Colonel Thomas H. Hayes, "Factory into Pillbox," *Infantry Journal* 58, no. 1 (January 1946): 53-4.

¹² See "Combat Tactics of the Rifle Platoon," *Infantry School Quarterly* 31, no. 2 (October 1947): 32-55.

¹³ "Tactics and Techniques of Small-Unit Fighting in Built-Up Areas," *Infantry School Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (January 1948): 111-123.

¹⁴ Major Houck Spencer, "Town Combat," *Infantry School Quarterly* 37, no. 2 (October 1950): 141-49.

¹⁵ Captain Alfred Phillips, "The Village," *Infantry School Quarterly* 40, no. 2 (April 1952): 100-7.

¹⁶ "Battalion Attack on Noroy Le Bourg," *The Infantry School Mailing List* 30 (April 1947): 101-12. Using this essay, the fight at Noroy is described in more detail in Chapter 6.

¹⁷ "Operations of a Rifle Company at Brest, France," *Infantry School Quarterly* 32, no. 2 (April 1948): 114-37. See also "The Defense of Hofen, Germany," *Infantry School Quarterly* 33, no. 1 (July 1948): 43-58.

¹⁸ Examples from Fort Benning: Major John G. W. Finke, "The Operations of Company 'G', 16th Infantry (1st U. S. Inf. Div.) in the Drive to the Roer River, 17-27 November 1944 (Rhineland Campaign)," (Fort Benning, GA: Advanced Officers Course, 1946-1947). Copy at USAMHI. And Captain Emile J. Bussolati, "The Operations of the 1st Battalion, 2d Infantry (5th Infantry Division) in the Crossing of the Seille River and Subsequent Attack on the Town of Louvigny, South of Metz,

France, 9 November 1944 (Rhineland Campaign),” (Fort Benning, GA, Advanced Infantry Officers Course, 1949-1950). Example from Fort Knox: Major William R. Campbell, “Tanks with Infantry,” (Fort Knox, KY: General Instruction Department, The Armored School, 1947). And Captain H. L. West, “The Fight at Saar-Lautern and the Subsequent Breaching of the Siegfried Line,” (Fort Knox, KY: The Armored School, n.d.).

¹⁹ *FM 31-50: Combat in Fortified Areas and Towns* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 1952), 52-8. Hereinafter cited as *FM 31-50* with the edition’s year in parentheses.

²⁰ *FM 31-50* (1944), 95-6; *FM 31-50* (1952) 59-60.

²¹ *FM 31-50* (1944), 98-101. The manual’s combined-arms shortcomings are mentioned in Chapter 5 as are the improvements in other, successive field manuals.

²² *FM 31-50* (1952), 63-70.

²³ *FM 31-50* (1952), 72-4.

²⁴ *FM 31-50* (1952), 76.

²⁵ *FM 31-50* (1944), 69; *FM 31-50* (1952), 76-7.

²⁶ *FM 31-50* (1944), 70-91

²⁷ *FM 31-50* (1950), 82-95; *FM 31-50* (1944), 81-91.

²⁸ Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld quoted in Eric Schmitt, “Iraq-Bound Troops Confront Rumsfeld Over Lack of Armor,” *New York Times*, 8 December 2004.

²⁹ See, for example, “City Fighting,” *Twelfth Army Group Battle Experiences* 89 (10 November 1944), 1 and “Value of Infantry Cannon,” *Battle Experiences* 6 (5 Dec 1944), 1.

³⁰ “Method of Attack Against Villages Used by the 30th Infantry Division in the Advance to the Inde River, November 16 to 28, 1944,” in Headquarters, XIX Corps, *XIX Corps Demonstration: 2nd Armored Division Tank-Infantry Assault of Tactical Locality; 30th Infantry Division Infantry Assault of Fortified Village*, 10 December 1944 (Combined Arms Research Library, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas).

- ³¹ 1st Lieutenant Nicholas Pellicciari, "Observations in the Breaching of the Siegfried Line and Conclusions Drawn from the Infantry Viewpoint," 11 March 1945 in File 303-INF(7)-0.4, Box 5610, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ³² Lieutenant Colonel Derrill Daniel, "The Capture of Aachen," n.d., 17, Folder 228.01, HRC Geog. M Germany, 370.2 - Aachen, Center for Military History Archives, Fort McNair, Washington, D.C.
- ³³ 2nd Infantry Division use of mouseholing tactics: "Fighting in the City of Brest," *Twelfth Army Group Battle Experiences* 50 (28 September 1944), 1-2.
- ³⁴ Nathan William White, *From Fedala to Berchtesgaden: A History of the Seventh United States Infantry in World War II* (n.p., 1947), 229. See also "Training Memorandum, #6: Training Directive—Third Phase," 27 February 1945 in "Training Memoranda, 1945," File 303-INF(7)-3.13, Box 5618, RG 407, Entry 427, NA.
- ³⁵ Colonel J. T. Corley quoted in *Aachen, Military Operations in Urban Terrain: 26th Infantry Regimental Combat Team, 8-20 October 1944* (n.p.: 26th Infantry Regimental Association, 1999), 50.

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