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P. one file

SUMMIT

of the

SIEGFRIED

87 Infantry Division

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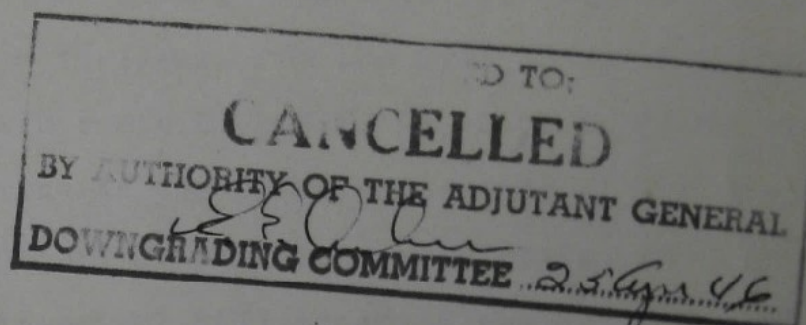
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On about 1 January 1945, a letter was received from troops
to convert service troops to rifle units. On 22 January a Third
U. S. Army letter (numbered A. G. 220.01 GNMCA - 2) covered the

87th Inf Div
Siegfried Line
Schnee-Eiffel Sector
3-8 Mar 45

Narrative historical officer on duty with the Division at the time. A
full and comprehensive account from Division level down to include details
of all battalion operations, with a little detail of combat at company and
lower level. 51 pages

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SUMMIT OF THE SIEGFRIED

(An account of the capture of Hill 649 by the 87th Infantry Division on 3 March 1945. Numbers (1) indicate source shown by name at end of report.)

The long system of fortifications of Western Germany, known as the Siegfried Line, reached one of its highest and most formidable points in the mountainous terrain of the SCHENIFEL. (43)

The Siegfried Line from its widest point in the SAAR area, split into two chains south of ORMONT (L0893) and continued northward for 40 miles to AACHEN as a double line of pillboxes. Just north of ORMONT on the eastern branch of the chain of fortifications was a high bald point which commanded the terrain for many miles. This was Hill 649 (L0993). (43)

Hill 649 was the command terrain feature in the zone of advance of the 87th Infantry Division. This high, fortified peak with its twelve camouflaged pillboxes, dug into steep

slopes, was considered impregnable by its defenders. (5)

Hill 649 was important not only because it was high, precipitous, and well fortified. Its position in the Siegfried Line was strategic as well as tactical. On the Kyll River at STADT-KYLL (L1495) ran the main route from COLOGNE which supplied the German defensive positions in the SCHNEIFEL sector of the Siegfried Line. Hill 649 helped guard this supply route. (6)

The fall of this important hill presaged the collapse of the entire Siegfried Line fortifications in the rugged SCHNEIFEL region of Western Germany. Tactics involved in its taking were mountainous in nature and supplies were hand carried over a two and one half mile route. Horses and oxen had to be used and were rented from the German civilians to supply the troops fighting to take the hill. (1)

This part of Germany had not been penetrated by the Allies. In December 1944, before the German counter-attack, the 106th Infantry Division had reached the Siegfried Line defenses at a point farther south than ORMONT. The defenses surrounding Hill 649 had withstood attack and had continuously guarded the entrance to Western Germany until they were taken by the 87th Infantry Division on 3 March 1945. (44)

(Although this report is in detail for the period 1-3 March, it also touches on a longer period. This is done not only because the action prior to the actual taking of the hill is im-

portant to the latter action, but so that there may be related a longer period in the History of the 87th Infantry Division.) (46)

The general situation on the Third U. S. Army front prior to this action at Hill 649 was either defensive or slow moving. VIII U. S. Corps (of which the 87th Infantry Division was a part) had carried on some flanking offensives with the 90th Infantry Division while the 4th and 87th Infantry Divisions had held the northern portion of the Corps zone. The 87th Infantry Division on 26 February resumed the offensive to clear the enemy from the EIFEL, a drive which ran into greater difficulty than had been expected. (7)

TERRAIN:

The terrain involved in this study is that of the EIFEL region of Western Germany. It lies approximately six degrees thirteen minutes East Longitude and fifty degrees eighteen minutes North Latitude. Here in the EIFEL the terrain is mountainous with elevation averaging above six hundred meters (approximately two thousand feet). The slope in some places is as much as sixty degrees which makes it prohibitive for vehicles and extremely difficult for men and animals. (43)

Two geographical locations captured by the 87th Infantry Division are of importance from a terrain standpoint. (1, 2, 3, 6, etc.)

(1) The town of ORMONT lies in a valley with a minimum floor elevation of five hundred and thirty six meters. The surrounding hills, sixty to one hundred meters above it, roll downward to the Taubkyll River which runs north through the town. The hills with the steepest slopes are to the east of the town. These are covered with heavy fir growth which extends almost to the edge of the town. One fair quality road ran north and south through the town. This road branched south of the town and for purposes of this report will be referred to as the west ORMONT and east ORMONT roads. Other than the woods to the east and those that cover the hill a quarter of a mile south of town, there is very little concealment along the bare side hills near the town. A few hedges grace houses which are scattered along the edge of the valley but these houses hug the town. The hedges are not in pattern and have slopes guarded by pillboxes and dragon's teeth which must be crossed before the town is reached. (46)

The hill slope is steepest to the east of town where it reaches approximately fortyfive degrees, but on the hill to the south it is a more moderate (twenty degrees). (46)

(2) Hill 649 was the commanding feature of the terrain in the 87th Infantry Division's zone of the EIFEL. Its six hundred and forty nine meters was not the highest elevation, but it was the highest point free of vegetation in the area.

Other than its land bridge to the southeast, the hill was isolated and stood out prominently above the deep stream bottom far below. Six four nine's steepest side was to the west where the terrain could be called precipitous, dropping as much as sixty degrees from the plateau level. Hill 649 (also known as "Gold B" or "Goldbrick Hill") had its sharpest rise near its summit on the south side. The longest drop was on its north side where there was a long steep slope to the BOOGEN stream below. To the northeast and east the hill dropped more gently into a forest valley and tributary stream of the Kyll River. On the southeast an arm of land connected the hill to the wooded area on its southeast. This arm of land resembled a plateau, its either side dropped away to the valley below. From the edge of the woods to the southeast of Hill 649 (which was the Line of Departure for the attack) and leading towards 649 the first 200 yards of plateau was flat, and A gradual rise then began and increased towards the end of the next 400 yards. The last two hundred yards became steeper as 649 gained the top where a shelf of ground had to be mounted in order to reach the summit. (46)

In addition to ORMONT and Hill 649, there were several other terrain features which will be referred to in this study. These are the three hills over which the men and supplies had to be moved before Hill 649 could be attacked. These are termed "A", "B", and "C" for purposes of this report. There was the draw

to convert service troops to rifle units. On 22 January a Third U. S. Army letter (numbered A. G. 220.01 GNMCA - 2) covered the

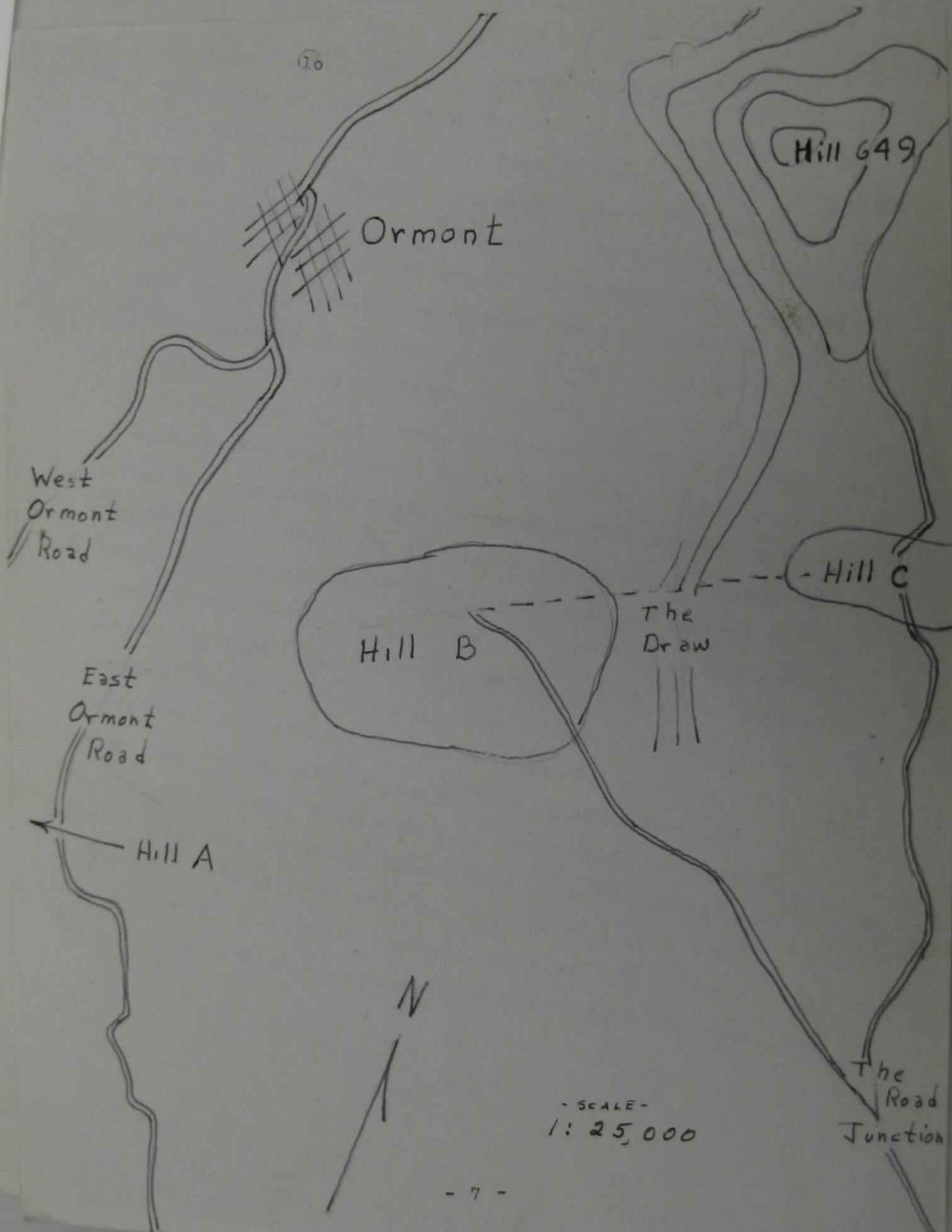
through which it was found impossible to move tanks and tank destroyers after effort to do so had tied up the operation for a period of time. Also there was the road junction by means of which armor was quickly moved into position to launch the attack on Hill 649. (46)

These key points and their respective map locations are as follows: (See sketch, page 7)

Hill 649 (Gold B Hill)
ORMONT (L0893)
West ORMONT Road
East ORMONT Road
Hill A (L0790)
Hill B (Stein B Hill) (L0892)
Hill C (Knipp Hill) (L0992)
The Draw (Dreis Draw) (L0992)
The Road Junction (L1091)

The three hills, "A", "B", "C" were heavily wooded, so heavily wooded in fact that tanks found it difficult to move on the level areas near the top without becoming emmeshed in the dense growth of trees. In addition to the vegetation difficulty, the ground was so wet and muddy, that in places it represented a bog appearance. (27, 42)

The unit commanders who took part in this action were in accord that this was the roughest terrain the division had ever encountered. At TILLET where the enemy resistance had been more determined, terrain had not been nearly as rough as it was in the BIPER. The 346th Infantry Regiment termed the terrain "tight" and referred to the well developed mine and booby trapped areas which were so well employed in advantageous parts of the



terrain. Colonel Tupper of the 347th Infantry Regiment said, "The woods are as bad as anything we have ver run into. They were extremely thick and were heavily mined and booby trapped." Colonel Sugg of the 345th Infantry Regiment observed that the density of the woods and steepness of the terrain not only caused difficulty but the ground became successively higher between Prum and the Kyll watershed summit. This afforded the enemy good continuous observation of our movements and by this means he was able to keep us almost constantly under artillery fire. (16,34)

Viewed from an airplane, the terrain of the EIFEL takes on a much flatter appearance. Points of elevation which are extreme when observed from the ground blended into almost illusionary insignificance to the sky-rider. Flying at an altimeter height of eight hundred feet, which was only two hundred to three hundred feet above the summit of Hill 649, several observations stood out: The maps used during this action were extremely accurate for showing wooded areas. Overprinted defense areas of pillboxes were not so accurate. Certain areas which were covered with deciduous trees appeared more open and easily accessible to tanks when seen from the air rather than from the ground. Pillboxes do not lend themselves to air observation. Only pillboxefaces and engineer demolition work were easily viewed. On the southwest point of Hill "B" and the top of Hill "C" were trees of the most densely wooded areas

in the region. There were many hasty fortifications, especially trenches, which showed most clearly from the air. The canyon between Hills "B" and "C" was noticeably steep. While water bodies could be seen, and even little pools on the ground, mud was not noticeable. (46)

THE ENEMY:

Prior to the fall of O MONT and Hill 649 the double line of pillboxes and bunkers in the 87th Infantry Division front was held by approximately 4,600 troops. Most of these troops which were in the line on 28 February had had inferior training and were low in morale. The number estimated to be in the line was an increase in the amount which had been estimated to have been there 5 February when the first penetration of the Siegfried Line was made by the Division. (5) The three weeks delay in continuing the attack after the 87th Infantry Division broke through the Siegfried Line had caused considerable change in enemy strength and dispositions. The pause from 11 to 26 February had given the enemy time to reinforce his fortified positions. (1)

Another factor which had caused change in enemy dispositions to the front of the 87th Infantry Division was the movement of the Division's southern boundary to exclude WILLERATH and OLZHEIN. (1, 5) These two towns were taken over by the 4th Infantry Division. The 5th Paratroop Division was therefore no longer iden-

to convert service troops to rifle units. On 22 January
U. S. Army letter (numbered A. G. 220.01 GNMCA - 2) covered the

tified nor included in capability reports of the Division. (5)

Several types of units defended the Siegfried Line fortifications in the zone of advance of the 87th Infantry Division. There was an administrative division, the 406th, which was thought to be in control of parts of the sector. This administrative division had in its charge the Fortress and Security Battalions. (5)

The Security Battalion commanded by Captain Herzig was the 1075th with an approximate strength at the time of 900. Some 600 of these were later captured and the rest were believed to have escaped or were killed. Prisoners from the 1075th Security Battalion claimed that they could not fire the weapons in the pillboxes. This was attributed to their desire to impress their captors with the fact that they had not fired upon Allied Soldiers. (5)

The Fortress Battalion was composed of pillbox fighters. They were adept in handling the weapons in the pillboxes, most of which were of Danish manufacture. For enemy capability estimating purposes they were considered a part of the Security Battalion. (5)

A third type was the Volks Grenadier Divisions. These were the newly formed infantry units. It was believed that they operated through and reinforced the Security and Fortress Battalions. From these units came patrols which continually probed the front lines of the 87th Infantry Division during the early days of February prior to the attack. (5)

There was a continual changing of small units on the Division front. The only reason attributed to this change was a rotation policy which the Germans used to keep their troops alert to the expected Allied attack. (5, 21, 35)

The enemy continually endeavored to determine Allied intentions by sending patrols into the 87th Infantry Division's zone. German prisoners constantly spoke of their certainty that the 87th Infantry Division would attack during the days following the initial cracking of the Siegfried Line. (5)

The 246th Volks Grenadier Division made its appearance after the 87th Infantry Division had penetrated the Siegfried Line on 5 February. Prior to that time the 18th Volks Grenadier Division had been in the line with the Fortress and Security Battalion elements. (5)

The fourth major enemy unit which faced the 87th Infantry Division in its final drive through the Siegfried Line was the 26th Volks Grenadier Division. This Division on 5 February had been opposite the 106th Infantry Division in the ~~V~~ U. S. Corps zone of First U. S. Army, but by 261900 February two regiments (the 77th and 78th) had been moved to the front of the 87th Infantry Division. (5)

In the two day period between the attack and fall of ORMONT the Germans reinforced their front by approximately five hundred troops. Many of these reinforcements came from the 106th Infantry Division front where no Allied attack had been ordered at the time. Recapitulation of these units and there strengths were as follows: (5)

<u>UNIT</u>	<u>26 to 28 FEBRUARY</u>	<u>AFTER 28 FEBRUARY</u>
18th VG Division	1000	2500
26th VG Division	750	1200
1075th Security Bn	900	900
246th VG Division	1500	
	<u>4150</u>	<u>4600</u>

The location of enemy units on 26 February when the attack jumped off was from north to south as follows. The 246th Volks Grenadier Division was the largest unit with three regiments stretched along the entire front. On the north was the 404th Regiment at HALLSAIAG (L0795), the 352nd Regiment was in the center at ORMONT and the 689th Regiment near NEUNDORF (L0988) was on the south. The 18th Volks Grenadier Division had some elements in bunkers near the center of the Division zone. The 26th Volks Grenadier Division had moved two of its battalions south, one to REUTH (L1189) and one to ORMONT. The 1075th Security Battalion with elements of the Fortress Battalion maintained pillboxes from LOSHEIM (L0396) to ORMONT. (5)

The approximate time of the movement of these units was as follows. On the initial (5 February) penetration of the Siegfried Line by the 87th Infantry Division, the 246th Volks Grenadier Division made its first appearance. By 21 February it became evident that this unit was relieving the 18th Volks Grenadier Division and that the relief was well under way. No prisoners were taken on 23 February. But on 24 February the 246th Volks Grenadier Division was again identified by prisoners. Again on the 25th and 26th of February prisoners were not taken.

On 27 February the 246th Volks Grenadier and elements of the 18th Volks Grenadier Divisions both appeared. The 246th Volks Grenadier Division was last identified on 28 February when it moved to the XII U. S. Corps front. (5)

The various attacks on the Siegfried Line by the 87th Infantry Division did achieve tactical surprise. (1, 5, 6, 16) Capt C. T. Buchholz, commanding officer, 1075th Security Battalion, said, "Tactical surprise was achieved on 5 February. But you Americans are prone not to follow up attacks." (1, 5)

The attack of 26 February achieved less surprise because the Germans had been expecting the Division to attack for some time. A prisoner said, "We watched the armored unit (11th Armored Division) on your left flank and expected an attack from that direction." (21)

Soldiers of the 18th Volks Grenadier Division were found still digging foxholes by the first attacking elements of the 87th Infantry Division. When Capt Buchholz was captured he said that he thought that the 132nd Infantry was to his front. The lieutenant who was captured with him said that he had believed that the 82nd Airborne Division was to their front. (5)

Other than the units listed above, the Germans had no reserves capable of reinforcing the 87th Infantry Division's front. One evidence of this was the decreasing number of prisoners captured during the three day action. It is normal to expect the number of prisoners to increase as successful battles progress. These sample figures for the two regiments involved

in the action of Hill 649 show the opposite to be true.

PRISONER DECLINE

	346th Infantry	347th Infantry
1 March	125	149
2 March	85	101
3 March	63	37

During this same period the 345th Infantry captured 707 prisoners (compared with 367 battle casualties)

During the time of this attack the enemy was considered capable of an active delaying action, employing the use of mines, mortars, and artillery fire. The enemy was also considered capable of launching determined counterattacks on the flanks to seize limited objectives. (5)

KNOWLEDGE OF THE ENEMY SITUATION

Prior to the attack, the 87th Infantry Division and its regiments possessed most of the enemy information given above. There had been two weeks of intensive reconnaissance and preparation of intelligence studies and units had made good use of the time. Regimental Intelligence and Reconnaissance platoons and the Division Reconnaissance Troop had made deep penetration into the enemy lines. (5)

The enemy had been observed preparing hasty fortifications, principally around the pillboxes. This led the units to the belief that the boxes would be more stoutly defended. There ~~was~~ also tactical reconnaissance, and prisoners of war reported that tanks were in the area; although none were found. (5)

Regimental information about the enemy compared favorably with that of Division. The regiments, through their own reconnaissance, had determined refinement of enemy boundary lines. The 346th Infantry Regiment had learned in more detail the location and strength of certain units. For example, west of ORMONT the 1075th Security Battalion was known to defend boxes in an arc from (067927) to (080913). The location of the two lines of defense east and west from ORMONT were determined more exactly and the depth of the pillbox area was judged to be 2000 meters. The work of the Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoons was supplemented by combat or "Tiger" patrols. (21) (See note A) Main defenses and individual automatic weapons positions were located. The S-2's of the regiments traced the relief of small units and came to know the personalities of many of the unit commanders facing them. Information was gained from civilians who had worked as engineers of the Siegfried Line. Maps were captured showing the exact location of pillboxes, their direction of fire, crew strength and supply points. Enemy patrols were intercepted to gain additional information. One patrol which penetrated to ALLMUTHEN (LO494) was captured. An officer prisoner who led this patrol asked if he could be informed of the location of the 87th Infantry Division's main line of resistance. His unit had been conducting extensive patrolling for days and had been unable to locate it. (21, 35)

The enemy information was secured progressively by the lower

units. During the first part of the waiting before the attack on 26 February, patrol work was primarily of a reconnaissance nature. Enemy defenses were located, their strength determined. Also determined were enemy minefields, dragon's teeth, possible passage points through the teeth, and weak points in the outpost line. For example, east of KEHR(L054937) a raid was made on an outpost almost nightly. (21) This was a command point of terrain and after each raid the enemy would outpost it again. Some of the strong points where organization of boxes were found to give all around defense were at (L0594) and (L0595). During the days immediately preceding the attack, strong combat patrols picked up prisoners and from them was determined supply routes, mortar and artillery locations, assembly and rest areas, and last minute changes in unit identifications. (21, 35)

WEATHER:

Weather affects the planning of military actions and the speed with which missions can be accomplished. This was especially true during the taking of Hill 649. Weather affected the operation in a number of ways. (46)

Of first importance was its effect on visibility. (34) The action which precipitated the capture of Hill 649 began on 26 February in a heavy fog. The attack had been planned for night but the hour was changed from 2200 to 1500. (8) The cloak of

fog in the afternoon made possible a surprise attack which was thought to have had more success than the planned night attack. (1)

Each morning during the action, moisture and ground haze prevented the best use of tanks until about 0930 because of the difficulty of using the prism sights for accurate firing during weather conditions which produced insufficient light for good visibility. (34, 40)

At the time the action took place there was considerable snow on the ground. This snow was not deep but camouflage^{cau-}tion had to be taken when soldiers were in the open. Hill 649 was entirely covered with snow at the time it was taken and was referred to by prisoners as the "White Hill." Although the weather was cold during the operation, it was not so extreme as to affect the health and morale of the men to any appreciable extent. (27)

The 346th Infantry Regiment did not place as much emphasis on the weather in relation to their action as did the other two Regiments. The 345th Infantry Regiment stressed the importance of the thaw which began just prior to their entrance into the Siegfried Line because of the many riverlettes which were made by the melting snow. The noise from these little streams helped patrols to conceal the noise of their movements. (16)

Cloudy weather also aided the enemy. As long as the sky was clear enough for Allied planes to stay up, the enemy stayed in his fortified positions and fought, but when cloudy and rainy weather prevented detection of movement, the enemy withdrew. (5)

THE DIVISION WHICH MADE THE ATTACK:

The 87th Infantry Division had been in the European Theater of Operations campaign less than two months when it penetrated the Siegfried Line at ORMONT. It was first committed on the Third U. S. Army front in the LORRAINE area of France on 13 December 1944. After ten days of action the Division moved to an assembly area near RHEIMS, France. From there it went to SEVISCOURT, Belgium where the 345th Infantry Regiment made contact with the enemy at MOIRCY on 1 January 1945. The other two regiments (346th and 347th) went into the line along the ST. HUBERT-EASTOGNE sector to stop the deepest penetrations of the German counterattack. During the first part of January, the Division took ST. HUBERT, MOIRCY, BONNERUE, PIREMPRE, and TILLET. On 13 January the Division was shifted from VIII U. S. Corps to XII U. S. Corps and moved to ECTERNACH () with a defensive mission along the Our River. On 26 January the Division was returned to VIII U. S. Corps and started towards ST. VITH, finally arriving at GRUFLANGE, seven miles southeast of ST. VITH on the 27th of January. Contact was again made with the enemy as the Division helped straighten the Allied line running north and south from ST. VITH. ANDLER and SCHONBERG were taken after a twenty-five mile advance by the Division in six days. (9)

On 5 February, just prior to the penetration of the Siegfried Line in the SCHNÉE EIFEL, the division was composed of:

Division Headquarters and Headquarters Company
 345th Infantry Regiment
 346th Infantry Regiment
 347th Infantry Regiment
 87th Division Artillery
 334th Field Artillery Bn (105mm Howitzer, truck drawn)
 335th Field Artillery Bn (105mm Howitzer, tractor drawn)
 336th Field Artillery Bn (105mm Howitzer, truck drawn)
 912th Field Artillery Bn (105mm Howitzer, truck drawn)
 312th Engineer Combat Bn
 312th Medical Battalion
 87th Signal Company
 87th Reconnaissance Troop
 87th Quartermaster Company

The phases of the action which followed were divided into periods of inactivity and intensive action. (46)

5-11 Feb - Initial penetration of Siegfried Line
 11-26 Feb - VIII U. S. Corps ordered Division on defense
 26-28 Feb - Renewal of attack on Siegfried Line
 1-3 Mar - Capture of ORMONT and Hill 649
 3-8 Mar - Rapid movement to objective across Kyll River against rapidly retreating enemy

The 87th Infantry Division strength was near its T/O when it hit the Siegfried Line of 5 February. Its losses from the LORRAINE CAMPAIGN had been made up by reinforcements. These reinforcements had received orientation under a new Division program. The reinforcement problem did not seriously affect the Division until about the first of the year because the Division had not received an appreciable amount of reinforcements until it reached LIBRAMONT in the ARDENNES. (4)

At first the few reinforcements and "return to duty" men were handled in small groups by a sergeant in the Quartermaster Company who not only checked them to insure they had the necessary clothing and supplies but contact was made with

the reinforcements at the 79th Replacement Battalion at BOUILLON. (4)

The first large groups of reinforcements began to arrive by 1 January. By this date the Division had received 130 officers and 640 enlisted men, since first being committed in the European Theater of Operations. The Division did four things to orient these new reinforcements: (1) made check of insurance, allotments and other personal affairs; (2) made medical check; (3) checked reinforcements' training and weapons; and (4) supplied necessary equipment. (4)

This program was continued until the Division left VIII U. S. Corps and went to XII U. S. Corps in January. At that time the Division was 2600 under strength. (4)

Plans had been made to expand the Quartermaster Section which processed the reinforcements, when a decision was made to use the Antitank Company as a reinforcement Training Company. (4) (See note B)

Battle casualties began to have a more serious effect on the Division during February. These were replaced by reinforcements which had to be oriented and trained. Fifty two officers and 1174 enlisted men (a total of 1226 reinforcements) in addition to 677 "return to duty" men had to be absorbed. (4)

This figure of nearly two thousand reinforcements practically paralleled the casualty figure for the same period. From 5 February until 8 March there were 73 officer and 1778 enlisted men casualties. The Division reached its peak casualties of 250 on 27 February. From then on there was almost a constant

drop to 3 March when there was a slight increase in casualties until 5 March and then a drop to the 7th with final casualties recorded for the action on the 8th of March. (4)

Studying the regimental figures for later comparison with tactical action, the 346th Infantry Regiment had the highest overall casualties during the Siegfried Line penetration. This included the action of taking Hill 649. The 345th Infantry Regiment had the highest regimental peak on 27 February, and the 347th Infantry Regiment was consistently the lowest. (4)

During the immediate time of the attack on ORMONT and Hill 649, the Division and regimental casualty breakdown was as follows:

DATE	DIV*	345	346	347
26 Feb	11	5	5	0
27 Feb	256	135	121	0
28 Feb	195	83	107	5
1 Mar	143	58	61	24
2 Mar	125	30	81	13
3 Mar	99	33	40	23
	829	344	415	65

* Includes attached troops. (4, 17, 20, 38)

The taking of ORMONT and Hill 649 was part of a larger plan to exploit the penetration of the Siegfried Line which had been made between 5-11 February. The action was a flanking movement which struck northeast to take Hill 649 from its most advantageous side for the attacker. (1)

The 87th Infantry Division had been given the mission of resuming the attack through the Siegfried Line and overcoming the strenuous resistance which had developed on the Third U. S. Army's left flank. (45)

The front line of the Division on 26 February ran generally from LOSHEIM (L0396) to the north of NEUENDORF (██████). The southern boundary of the Division had been shifted north to permit the concentration of the greater force of the Division on a narrower front. (7)

The plan was one of penetration and pivoting. The Division order, dated 241900, called for the 345th Infantry Regiment to exploit its initial penetration of the Siegfried Line in the SCHNEIFEL by leading the attack on the south flank of the Division and taking the high ground west and northwest of REUTH (L1189). This was to enable the Division to get in behind the defenses of the Siegfried Line. (1)

The 347th Infantry Regiment was to take the area west of ORMONT and, in the first plan and order, the 346th was to take ORMONT and Hill 649. This latter mission later developed into too much of an assignment for the one regiment and the boundary between the 347th and 346th Infantry Regiments became gridline "09". This changed the missions of the two Regiments. The 347th on the left, the 346th on the right drove north almost simultaneously taking ORMONT and Hill 649 respectively. The 345th continued its drive eastward and northeastward. (6)

Initially the attachments and supporting units for the Regiments were: (8)

607th TD Bn	<u>345th</u>	<u>346th</u>	<u>347th</u>
735th Tk Bn	Co C	Co B	Co A
312th Med Bn	Co B	Co A	Co C
312th Engr Bn	Co A	Co B	Co C
	Co A	Co B	Co C

One order which did not appear in writing, was that the Infantry should attack only when full use could be made of supporting weapons. (22) This applied especially to tanks and tank destroyers. (40, 41) This verbal order caused the attack on Hill 649 to be the most perfectly executed of any such battalion attack participated in by the officers of the battalion. (23, 27, 42) It also delayed the attack 24 to 48 hours, (40) caused no end of misunderstanding on the use of tanks and tank destroyers as supporting weapons in mountainous terrain, and revealed considerable variation in tactical knowledge and leadership between lower unit commanders. (46)

THE NORTH FLANK AND THE 11TH ARMORED DIVISION:

Indirectly bearing upon the ORMONT and Hill 649 action was the exposed condition of the north flank of the Division and the mission of the 11th Armored Division. (1)

As the attack had progressed between 5 and 11 February, the north flank of the 87th Infantry Division became more and more exposed. It has already been noted under another part of this report on the "ENEMY" that the elements of the 26th Volks Grenadier Division were shifted from the front of the 106th Infantry Division to reinforce the enemy's positions to the front of the 87th Infantry Division. General Culin felt that the lack of action on the part of this adjacent unit on his left materially

affected his operation. If V U. S. Corps with the 106th Infantry Division on its right flank had attacked simultaneously with the 87th Infantry Division on 26 February, the enemy front of the 87th Infantry Division probably would not have been reinforced from the 106th Infantry Division front. (1)

The mission of Combat Command A of the 11th Armored Division throughout this action was purely a defensive one. (1, 6) During the night of 25-26 February it relieved the 347th Infantry Regiment. The 87th Infantry Division endeavored to secure the services of Combat Command A for an offensive mission while it was on this left flank. In fact, plans had been under way for the armor to rush one of the Division objectives at a critical time in the attack but no authority could be secured from VIII U. S. Corps for such an offensive use. The 347th Infantry Regiment learned that it was being saved for an offensive mission elsewhere. (3, 6, 7)

One value of the 11th Armored Division in its position during the Division attack was that its presence confused the enemy. Prisoners stated that they had expected the armored division to attack, and the feint made by Combat Command A of the 11th Armored Division on 26 February prior to the 87th Infantry Division's attack further reacted to mislead the enemy on the 87th Infantry Division's intentions. (5)

THE 345TH LEADS OFF:

Although the taking of ORMONT (by the 347th Infantry Regiment) and Hill 649 (by the 346th Infantry Regiment) were the turning points in the Division action after which the enemy defense crumbled, the penetration of the Siegfried Line by the 345th Infantry Regiment helped make possible the later action. (6, 16)

The initial penetration of the Siegfried Line by the 345th Infantry Regiment had taken place between the 5th and 9th of February in an attack of 11,000 yards which carried the Regiment 6000 yards through the Siegfried Line. The 3rd Battalion, under the command of Lt Col Thomas E. Matlock, with Company F leading, had attacked southeast between (L066895) and (L030875). Each pillbox and bunker had been attacked individually. OLZHEIM (L0987) and NEUENDORF () were taken on 8 February by the 3rd Battalion under the command of Lt Col Mike Moran. (16)

The 345th Infantry Regiment went into Division reserve on 9 February and remained out of the line until just before the second Siegfried Line push started. On 26 February the Regiment attacked to take the high ground northeast of REUTH (L1189) and SCHONFELD (L1390) but ran into considerable opposition. Moving north, NEUENSTEN (L0890) was taken by 28 February. The regimental attack then turned east, with very little advance being made until 1 March because of enemy counter-attacks. By 3 March (when Hill 649 was taken by the 346th) the 345th Infantry Regiment had cut the road leading north from REUTH (L1189). (16)

THE CAPTURE OF ORMONT:

The initial attack on ORMONT (L0693) was made by the 346th Infantry Regiment which started out at 261500 February to take both ORMONT and Hill 649. The job became involved, enemy resistance was determined, and the mission of taking ORMONT was given to Col Sevier E. Tupper's 347th Infantry Regiment on the 28th of February. (7)

The 347th Infantry Regiment had been the last Regiment relieved in the WANDERFELD (L0098) sector and had moved to KOBSCHEID (L0289) from where it was to follow the 346th Infantry Regiment cleaning up pillboxes. But the 346th Infantry Regiment got bogged down by (1) fire from defenses on the southwest side of Hill "B" and (2) inability to clear the road block south of ORMONT on the west ORMONT road (L077918). This delay caused the Division Commander to move the regimental boundary of the 346th and 347th Infantry Regiments to the right to approximately gridline "09" and include ORMONT and the eastern setting of pillboxes as far north as HALLSCHIAG (L0795) in the zone of the 347th Infantry Regiment. (34)

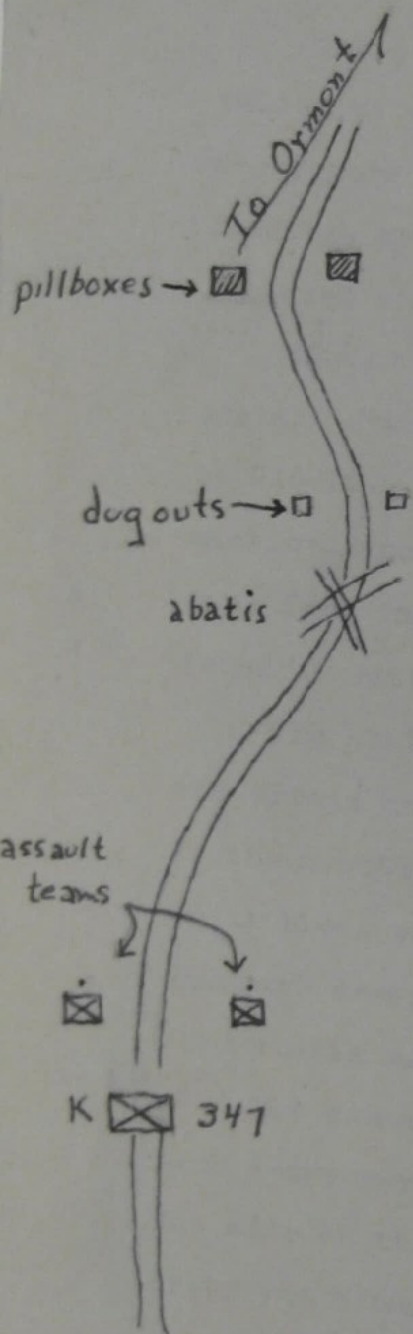
The regimental plan was to place an artillery Time on Target on ORMONT and then attack with the 3rd Battalion on the right, flanking ORMONT from the east as the 2nd Battalion moved up along the left line of boxes west of ORMONT to the railroad tracks west of HALLSCHIAG. This zone was later extended to SCHEID (L0696). (34)

The detailed action of the taking of ORMONT was given to the 3rd Battalion under the command of Lt Col Pickhardt. When the mission was assigned, the Battalion moved to an assembly area in the vicinity of the road junction at (L0689). On the morning of 28 February, the regimental commanding officer issued orders that the 3rd Battalion would relieve elements of the 346th Infantry Regiment holding positions south of ORMONT. The Battalion moved north along the west ORMONT road in order, K, L, M, and I. While Company K was effecting the actual relief of the 346th in forward positions, Companies I and L dug in along the road. By 280900 Company K had completely relieved Company I of the 346th and had taken over the pillbox command post at (L074918). (34,36, 37)

The order for the actual attack of ORMONT was received at the Battalion Command Post (L068901) at 281300 February.

The action of the succeeding 24 hours followed the Battalion plan. Companies I and L, in that order, moved to the high ground east of ORMONT at (L087925). During the night of 28 February and 1 March the companies moved as far as the west edge of Hill "B", at (L081918). The mission of these two companies was to clear the woods and cover by fire the attack of Company K on ORMONT. The action of these two companies, though in support of the attack on ORMONT, was carried on quite separate from the taking of ORMONT. (39)

Each rifle company had a machine gun platoon attached and the mortars of Company M were in general support at (L073914). (39)



The commander of Company K was first concerned with the road block south of ORMONT. It had been reported as the most perfectly placed and defended road block ever seen by the officers and men who had seen it.

The abatis was placed at a curve in the road at (L077918). Guarding it were four prepared defensive positions in addition to riflemen in the woods and considerable artillery and mortar fire. (See sketch) The four prepared positions consisted of two dugouts, and two pillboxes, one of each about twenty five yards off either side of the road. The dugouts were one hundred fifty yards in front of the pillboxes and in the vicinity of the abatis. (39)

The success in overcoming the road block was attributed in a large part to the use of infantry-armor teams. (See note C) Before these teams of Company K moved towards ORMONT, the ammunition and pioneer platoon swept the road of mines to within fifty yards of the dugouts by creeping along the sides of the road after dark and laying prima cord netting which was ignited to detonate the road mines. This made it possible for Company K

to move forward with its tanks and tank destroyers. (13)

The six tanks and four tank destroyers supporting the Battalion were split into two teams of three tanks and two tank destroyers each. One team advanced down the road with tanks leading, supported by two platoons of Company K. These groups attacked simultaneously from each side of the road. (34)

The attack on the road block began three hundred yards distant down the road at 010635 and the dugouts were cleared by 010805. Seven prisoners who had manned thirty caliber machine guns were taken from the two dugouts. The last fire came from one of the pillboxes at 011015. No Germans were found in either box when the attacking troops reached them. (39)

The abatis was found to be too large for destruction by the troops so the engineers were called upon to remove it. In the meantime the ammunition and pioneer platoon removed a small block on the trail to the left of the road and the tanks and tank destroyers were gotten around that way. (The large road abatis was removed by 011245.) (36)

The commander of Company K moved his platoons, tanks and tank destroyers north through the woods and deployed them along the edge of the woods and road south of ORMONT. (Tank and tank destroyer commanders were responsible to infantry company commanders during this action.) (34)

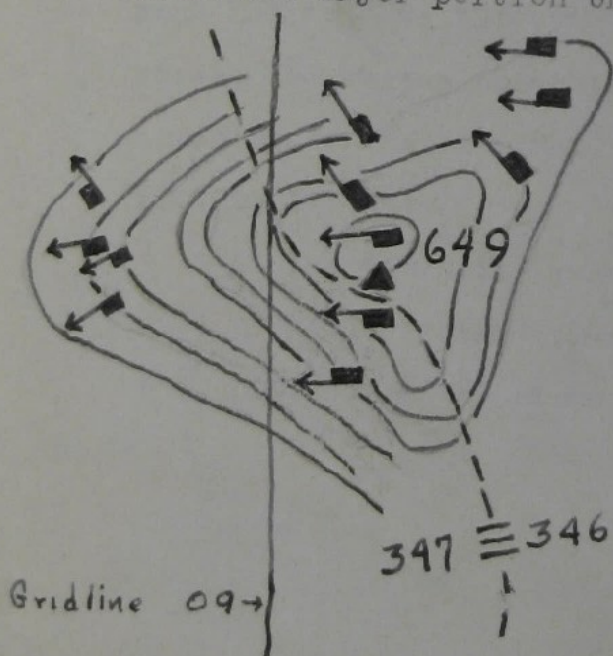
The attack on ORMONT began with an artillery preparation (see artillery notes) and the infantry attack jumped off at

011400 (by whistle signal from the commander of Company K.) By 011420 the Battalion Commander reported from his observation post that he could see troops entering the first building in ORMONT. The town was not fully cleared until that night when the Battalion command post moved into ORMONT at 012130. (37)

The 2nd of March was consumed by the regiment mopping up the draws and preparing for an anticipated counter-attack. On the 3rd of March, the attack was continued simultaneous with the 346th Infantry Regiment. During the 2nd of March the Battalion Commander had been wounded at (L084923). He later received the Silver Star. Most of the Battalion staff was recommended for the Bronze Star, and the Company Commanders for Silver Stars for this ORMONT action. (39)

HILL 649:

—Both Regiments (346th and 347th) attacked Hill 649. The summit and major portion of the hill lay in the zone of the 346th.



The north-south gap gridline "09" was the approximate boundary between regiments. Actually, the 347th swung east of this gridline, south of Hill 649, in order to take advantage of the concealment of the woods and avoid the more precipitous

terrain on the western slope of the hill. Each Regiment took six of the twelve pillboxes on Hill 649. Four of the six taken by the 347th Infantry Regiment were almost at the bottom of the hill. (see sketch, page 30) The peak and precipitous parts of the hill were captured by the 346th Infantry Regiment after three laborious days of preparation and thirty-five minutes of fighting. (22, 36)

Going back to 28 February we left the 3rd Battalion of the 346th Infantry Regiment struggling against the ORMONT roadblocks and the defensive positions on the southwest side of Hill "B". One road block at (L073914) had been eliminated on the west ORMONT road, but it had been impossible to get the necessary tanks into position to launch a coordinated infantry-armor attack on the main abatis. (13, 22)

At this point, the mission of the 346th Infantry Regiment had been changed, and the Regiment moved to the east and northeast to take their objective, Hill 649. To do this, the Regiment had to move through thick, heavily mined, and booby trapped woods, and across steep terrain between Hills "A" and "B". The crossing of the east ORMONT road was made at approximately (L079912). (22)

At the time this road was crossed, the west and southwest side of Hill "B" had numerous prepared defensive positions. From these positions the enemy fired almost continuously at the cross-

U. S. Army Infantry (numbered A. S. 101-102) covered the
... to rifle companies. (An earlier
ings. As late as 281500 February tanks reported that they could
not get in position to knock out the defensive installations on
the southwest side of Hill "B", until engineers had cleared the
roads. Engineers complained that they could not clear the roads
until the infantry had cleared the enemy firing from the defen-
sive positions, and the infantry waited for the tanks. (19, 22)

Finally, with some blasting by the Commanding General (1)
elements of the 3rd Battalion moved over to Hill "B" in small
groups under protection of fire from a couple of tanks which
were finally gotten into position in the draw at (L079912). A
little later Company I was stopped at approximately (L082913)
and elements of the 2nd Battalion, which had worked around to
the right in the vicinity of (L082908), moved north to relieve
the 3rd Battalion. (22)

The night of 28 February - 1 March was spent with most of
the 346th Infantry Regiment on Hill "B". The 2nd Battalion was
on the south side of Hill "B". Elements of the 1st Battalion
were on the southeast and east side of this hill. Companies
L and K had worked to a position on the north and west sides
where they tied in with the right flank of the 347th. (22)

Throughout the 1st of March, the progress through the woods
on Hill "B" was extremely slow. The steep terrain, the heavy
growth of fir trees with only narrow paths, and roads which were
heavily mined and booby trapped; these and other obstacles made

it impossible for the Regiment to get into position to attack. Efforts were made throughout the day to move the tanks and tank destroyers from Hill "B" to Hill "C" across the draw (L093924). Every effort failed.

Personal reconnaissance was made by Lt Col Abie Bock. (See notes on the 735th Tank Battalion.) He reported to Brigadier General Culin that tanks could not be gotten across the draw, that the only possible way for tanks to arrive for an attack on Hill 649 was back by way of the road junction. To use this road considerable clearing of roadblocks and mines had to be done. As the General's plan called for the use of supporting fires of tanks and tank destroyers for the infantry attack on Hill 649, work was begun to make possible passage of the tanks by the longer route. This also meant that the eastern road had to be fought for as it was held by the enemy. (1, 22, 40)

The 3rd Battalion which had advanced nearly to the eastern road on Hill "C" was pulled back to Hill "B" in order to prepare for the attack which they were to make on Hill 649. The 1st and 2nd Battalions moved east and secured this road which was needed for the passage of the tanks. The 1st Battalion held the northern and the 2nd Battalion held the southern parts of this road. (39)

The plan for the attack at 031330 March was for the three Battalions of the 346th Infantry Regiment to attack simultaneously. (This was the same hour that the 347th Infantry Regiment was to attack north from ORMONT.) The 1st Battalion of the 346th

Infantry Regiment was to go around to the east of Hill 649 and take the high ground to the north of it. The 2nd Battalion was to drive to the northeast and secure the high ground east of the 1st Battalion objective. The 3rd Battalion was to take Hill 649. (22)

Operational instructions #5, issued by the 346th Infantry Regiment at ROTH, Germany at 020300 March 1945, directed the 3rd Battalion to attack Hill 649 preceded at one hundred yards by the 3rd platoon of Company A, 735th Tank Battalion. (22)

It was planned that the cannon company would smoke the Hill from H to H plus twenty, but this was not done because the wind was not prevailing. (2) (Smoke which was observed to the north of the objective was believed to be the enemy using captured white phosphorous shells.) (27)

The artillery was to fire a twenty minute preparation on selected targets in the vicinity of the objective from H minus ten to H plus ten. The artillery was also to be prepared to fire time fire on the tanks on call from the Forward Observer. (See details in artillery notes.) The tanks and tank destroyers were to fire on the objective from H minus ten to H plus ten. (6, 22)

(The following material for the plans and action of Hill 649 are the result of conference interviews with 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33)

On the night of 2-3 March, the Battalion Commander of the 3rd Battalion 346th Infantry Regiment had taken his company commanders forward on reconnaissance to the edge of the woods (1095931)

and had given them their missions: Company K was to attack on the left, and Company I on the right. Both companies were to use the edge of the woods as their lines of departure. Company L was directed to move forward that night to complete securing the northern part of Hill "C". 1st Lt Glenn J. Doman returned to his company command post in a pillbox at (L093923) and oriented his men. (This same pillbox served as the battalion command and observation post during the next day's attack.) The next morning Lt Doman and Capt John A. Swanson, commanding Company I, started moving their companies from Hill "B" to Hill "C" at 030730. Both companies moved forward to Company L's position on Hill "C" where they ran into a small counter-attack which had been made against Company L as they defended the road the tanks and tank destroyers were to come down. Most of the morning was consumed getting across the draw between Hills "B" and "C" and helping Company L beat off this counter-attack. About 031130 the two company commanders each sent a platoon to the edge of the woods to secure the line of departure over which the troops were to pass.

At 031330 the attack jumped off supported by artillery, tank, tank destroyers, and small arms fire. The infantry companies moved out of the woods in skirmish lines with three platoons abreast. The infantry began assault fire when they were twenty five yards from the woods. The five tanks came down the road and moved out of the woods as the attack started. One by

one they passed through the skirmish line and fanned out forward of the infantry to lead the attack. Just as the attack was well under way, the lead tank stopped abruptly, moved in reverse back towards the concealment of the woods. Other tanks started to follow. The infantry slowed its pace, as Lt Col Travis, the 3rd Battalion Commander, jumped on one of the tanks, pounded furiously ^{on} the turret top and ordered it forward. The tanks moved forward and the attack moved on. (See note D)

The infantry and tanks moved rapidly towards Hill 649, which was approximately eight hundred yards distant from the line of departure. The men had little knowledge of the exact location or number of the enemy. One pillbox was in fairly clear view at the summit of the Hill. The surrounding hills were known to be held by the Germans. The advance was made under a rain of German artillery fire.

The fast walk which was used at first became a trot. The advancing infantry emptied magazine after magazine into the hill. The route across the narrow plateau leading to Hill 649 seemed more exposed as the men neared the last rise of ground to the top of the hill. At this point the tanks turned off to the right in order to follow the orders of Col Travis that they attack the right (east) side of Hill 649. The infantry completed the distance laboriously at a run. Not a single casualty had occurred during the assault. Hill 649 was taken at 031405.

At the top of the hill a German stood at the rear entrance to the highest pillbox. In his left hand was a rifle held high

with a white piece of cloth on it. In the palm of his extended right hand was a little pistol - a gift for Lt Doman and a suggestion that he be taken prisoner and not harmed.

The German was told to order the others out of the box. Twenty two came out and were taken prisoner. Just as Lt Doman turned to leave, the telephone inside the pillbox rang. For fear of informing the Germans at artillery positions that the box had been captured, he did not answer it. However, not answering it caused the same results. German artillery began to fall on the men as they began reorganizing their positions on captured Hill 649.

3 to 8 MARCH:

With the taking of Hill 649, the German resistance on the SCHNEIFEL began to crumble. The turning point had begun two days before with the fall of ORMONT. From 1 to 3 March, the Germans had begun to pull out, but with the fall of Hill 649, the withdrawal movement was more pronounced and tied in with a general withdrawal all along the VIII U. S. Corps front. (1)

The night of 3 March was spent improving positions gained during the day.

On 4 March, the 346th Infantry Regiment swung northeast and took KERSCHENBRACK (L1295). This town was practically surrounded by the enemy, but five hours after the infantry action had ceased,

the town was filled with high ranking personnel including the Regimental Commanding Officer, the Division G-4, the Battalion Commanding Officer, the Tank Destroyer Commanding Officer, G-5 and CIC. Artillery continued to fall on the town.

The Division closed to the Kyll River, Completed its mission, and was finally pinched out as the 346th Infantry Regiment took KROENBURGERHUTTE and STADTHYLL. The 347th Infantry Regiment was south of the 346th on the Kyll and the 345th Infantry Regiment was on the Division right flank.

SUPPORTING FIRES - ARTILLERY (14, 15)

Considerable artillery was fired during the taking of OR-MONT and Hill 649. Even more was planned. In addition to the four Field Artillery Battalions of the Division (334th, 335th, 336th and 912th) the order for the attack on 26 February assigned three additional battalions in general support of the Division: 81st, 687th and 174th.

In addition to these fires, the 11th Armored Division fired on the SCHNEID area and participated in occasional Time of Target's on Hill 649. During 3 March, the 11th Armored Division fired two hundred and ninety rounds.

Day to day records on artillery for 1-3 March showed that a Time on Target was fired on ORMONT at 011025. Two coordinate locations of these fires were (LO8039302) and (LO8029220). At

that time seven battalions fired three volleys. This was followed by ^{fire on} twenty four pinpointed enemy locations between 011035 and 011040. Throughout the rest of that day, artillery fired sporadically on call. At 1330 five battalions fired one volley of sixty rounds prior to Company K's attack on ORMONT.

Plans were made on 2 March for preparation fires on Hill 649 as the artillery was informed that the final attack on the Hill would be made some time that day. Because tanks had been reported, defensive artillery fires were also planned. The battalions were divided so that they took care of group areas. These groups reported fire by areas. For example, groups three and four were in the vicinity of (L09209370) which was on Hill 649. These group areas had been set up in response to infantry requests for artillery fire.

The actual artillery fire on the 2nd of March was negligible. The artillery was waiting for the tanks to get into position so that the infantry could attack. Brigadier General W. W. Ford, Artillery Commander, ordered the battalions to clean out the draws north of ORMONT and also north of Hill 649.

The largest artillery concentration of the three day period was on 3 March with Time on Target from H minus ten to H plus ten.

From 1320 to 1340 there were twenty minutes of sustained artillery fire. One round per two minutes for the medium battalions and one round per minute for light battalions were fired.

^{not} DURING this period a total of nine hundred and sixty rounds were fired.

SUPPORTING FIRES - 735TH TANK BATTALION (40)

The use of tanks to support infantry in mountainous terrain caused considerable controversy during this action. Col Bock, Commanding Officer, 735th Tank Battalion, had previously made a visual reconnaissance from his command post (L088297) and with the advice of his tank commanders had learned that tanks could not be moved from Hill "B" to Hill "C" without moving to the rear a considerable distance and going by way of the road junction. Col Bock had talked to Col Renfro, Regimental Commander, 346th Infantry Regiment, whose first plan for the attack on Hill 649 had not contemplated the use of tanks to lead the infantry. Both colonels believed that the terrain was not suitable for tanks and that the job was capable of successful completion by the infantry.

But General Culin ordered Col Bock to make a personal reconnaissance of the ground and if at all possible to advise him that tanks could be moved onto Hill 649 from the southwest. The ground which General Culin desired the tanks to be brought over was through the draw to approach Hill 649 from the southwest. Col Bock made reconnaissance of this ground and had further talks with his unit commanders. These men said it was absolutely impossible to move the tanks through the dense woods and ~~over~~ over the precipitous terrain.

The plan submitted by tank commanders was to support the attack by fire from positions on the west side of the draws at

(L092926)

approximately position (██████). Tanks could have been brought to that position in sufficient time to enable the attack on Hill 649 to get underway on 2 March as had been planned. Reconnaissance with two tanks was made to that position on the morning of 2 March.

No plan met the General's approval except the one to attack Hill 649 with tanks leading the infantry. The General had made an air reconnaissance of the terrain in the vicinity and he believed that the terrain in this vicinity permitted such an approach if a real effort were made for their use.

The problem was then one of finding routes to maneuver to position on Hill 649. At first, efforts were made to move the tanks across the draw. When this failed, a second attempt was made to move tanks through a clearing at (L094921), but this was also unsuccessful due to the fact that the stream running through the lower draw was too high at that point. A third attempt was made at (L096924), but still with no success. Every way the tanks turned, the ground, though grassy in appearance, was found to have no bottom and the tanks were "hung up." Lt Weisser, tank commander, 1st platoon Company C, stated that movement across the draw might have been possible in dry weather but in the wet weather and mud, his tanks "bellied down" in making the attempted crossing.

It was finally decided that the route which had been avoided during the 1st and 2nd of March must be used. In spite of the

time it would take to clear abatises and numerous mines, the route back to the road junction would have to be used. Also, it was necessary to clear the enemy from the east road leading from the road junction to Hill 649.

The tank commander of the 735th Tank Battalion reported the tanks could move into position as soon as the engineers and infantry had cleared the road.

There was some question as to whether the tanks or tank destroyers came down the road first to Hill 649. It was known that the tank destroyers had gotten into position ahead of the tanks and it was believed that the tank destroyers led the way to Hill 649. When everything was ready, a full platoon (5) of Sherman (M-4) tanks moved down the road.

When Col Bock was asked about the use of tanks at the start of the attack, he said that he had heard about the incident of the tanks backing up after they had moved forward about a hundred yards. The only reason he gave for this was that he had heard that the tanks were unable to depress their muzzles due to the elevation of the ground over which they were traveling. Col Bock also commented on the action of the infantry battalion commander who moved his tanks onto Hill 649 after it was taken. He said the original plan was for the tanks to move off the hill after the accomplishment of their mission but they were not permitted to leave. The Col added, "All infantry commanders want to use tanks on the defensive as well as the offensive."

When questioned as to when the tanks left the hill, the Col admitted they had left soon after it had been taken. This was because they had to resupply. He pointed out that it requires thirty five cans of gasoline and fifty to seventy rounds of 75mm ammunition to resupply a tank, and that the infantry doesn't realize that tanks cannot resupply by hand carrying. A tank truck was moved to (L098927) where the tanks were resupplied and where, according to the infantry, they spent the night.

Another common criticism made by the infantry about tanks is, "Why can't tankers get out of their tanks and help engineers remove mines. " According to Col Bozk, it is not usually advisable for tankers to leave their tanks when roads are covered by mines and fire.

SUPPORTING FIRES - 607TH TANK DESTROYER BATTALION (41)

Col H. S. Sundt, Commanding Officer, 607th Tank Destroyer Battalion, said the whole trouble involving the delay of tanks and tank destroyers in the attack of 1-3 March, was a lack of appreciation of terrain suitable for tanks and tank destroyers. Reconnaissance was not made by infantry leaders to find suitable routes for tanks and tank destroyers. The scheme of maneuver for the attack on Hill 649 and ORMONT should have been based on the capabilities of armor and not solely upon the capabilities of the dismounted soldier.

The ORMONT terrain was better suited to armor. In the draw and terrain surrounding Hill 649 "not even a jeep could make it without a winch."

Col Sundt and his tank destroyer commanders made continuous reconnaissance of the terrain and advised the infantry commanders that armor could not be moved over parts of the terrain. Such observation later proved to be true. (L098920) was one particular case in point.

Other criticisms made by Col Sundt of the use of armor by infantry commanders was that in many cases not sufficient armor was used to do the job. The reason why Col Tucker of the 347th Infantry Regiment was able to do a good job of clearing ORMONT as quickly as he did was because he had relied upon the advice of the tank commanders as well as tank destroyer commanders, and had made reconnaissance and plans for getting enough armor to critical points where the infantry needed its support in the action. At ORMONT the armor was not committed piecemeal.

Col Sundt stressed the importance (as do so many of the infantry commanders) of using armor as a psychological weapon even in cases where it was impossible for tanks to fire. He cited an example of the 346th Infantry Regiment and their failure to use tanks south of ORMONT because it was found impossible to get them into ~~fighting~~ ^{firing} position. On the other hand, when the 347th Infantry Regiment moved against the road block, they used tanks not only to fire but as a psychological weapon.

Unit leaders stressed this psychological factor and its effect on our own troops as well as the enemy. Our own troops had less hesitation about advancing when they felt they were being supported by armor, and the enemy's tendency was to give ground faster when they saw tanks approaching.

Col Sundt said that General Culin was very interested in using tanks in the Ormont-Hill 649 action because of the previous success he had had with such infantry attacks coordinated with tanks. The Col also said that he didn't think armor was needed during some parts of that action.

The use of tank destroyers depended primarily on planning, courage, and luck, and Col Sundt complimented the 347th Infantry Regiment for its well planned action south of ORMONT.

2nd Lt Weisser, 3rd platoon, Company B, 607th Tank Battalion, said that all the armor, tanks and tank destroyers, were assembled at the regimental command post (pillbox at (L094918)) on the night of 2-3 March. This Lt made a quick reconnaissance to the edge of the woods which his destroyers were to use as a Line of Departure (2095931). He reported that tank destroyers could be brought forward the last several hundred yards and be gotten into firing position to accomplish their mission of firing on Hill 649. He returned to his command post at 0900. The destroyers moved out at 031000 to the forward assembly area along the road, vicinity (L102923). The route was taken by way of the road junction. On the move forward they ran into a counter-

attack which was being made on Company L at a point two hundred yards down the road from the Line of Departure. The armor was held up by the counter-attack and by the terrain. At one point the ground was especially wet and the road ran over a rise which reached its steepest point on Hill "B" and descended abruptly, making several turns through the densest part of the trees. At this point the tank platoon leader, Lt Jones, said he believed it was impossible to move the armor further. Lt Weisser took the chance of "hanging up" one of his destroyers in this area and moved on ahead, after which the rest of the armor followed.

The tank destroyers were put into position. Two were on the left side of the road at (L095931) and fired on the right side of Hill 649. Two (including Lt Weisser's) were at (L099932) and fired on the left side of the target. From these positions the tank destroyers fired from H minus ten for about twenty minutes. Fire was continued until masked by the advancing troops. During this period of approximately twenty minutes two thousand rounds of .50 caliber shells were fired with seventy-eight rounds of 90mm, including thirty-nine high explosive and thirty nine armor piercing.

ENGINEERS: (13)

Engineers were used through the action. No outstanding use

was made of them, but they were used constantly in their regular mission of blowing pillboxes and clearing mines.

The roadblock south of ORMONT was, according to Col G. S. Pirrung, Division Engineer, one ~~of~~ of the best examples of a perfectly placed and perfectly defended roadblock that he had ever seen. This roadblock held the Division for a considerable period of time, primarily because it prevented the forward movement of armor. The engineers made it possible for tanks to approach the block by sending squads under cover of darkness along the sides of the road to spread prima cord netting across the road. This cord was ignited to ~~detonate~~ detonate the mines. With the mines detonated, it was possible for the tanks to approach within twenty-three yards of the roadblock. The infantry, under protecting fire of the tanks, moved forward and took out the riflemen protecting the roadblock. With the rifle fire cleared, the engineers removed the roadblock, after cautiously setting off a number of ^boby traps on the block. This permitted the armor and infantry to advance on ORMONT.

In addition to the removal of the blocks on the west-east ORMONT road, considerable engineer work was done to remove abatis and mines on the route which was finally used to bring the armor in position to attack Hill 649.

FOOTNOTES:

(A) "Tiger Patrols" - In order to save the limited facilities of the Intelligence and Reconnaissance platoon, the 346th Infantry Regiment used battalion "tiger patrols." (21) These patrols were usually composed of one officer and fifteen enlisted men. Three of the enlisted men were non-commissioned officers although there was no T/O organization for the patrol. The men in these units did little but patrol work and on rare occasions, when the going was tough, they were used to carry supplies

Each battalion was given a patrolling zone when the battalion was in action. The regimental S-2 gave each battalion patrol its mission and it arranged its own patrolling to accomplish this mission. Patrol members carried various weapons which were determined by the mission. Automatic rifles, 60mm mortars, and bazookas were often used. The patrols have been found to work better at night or in the woods in the daytime. The men were originally volunteers, but later were drafted. The 347th Infantry Regiment had disbanded their "tiger patrols" and did practically the same work in the same manner with out the name. (35) The 346th Infantry Regiment had great confidence in the "tiger patrols" per se.

(B) Reinforcements - New men assigned to the Division were first assigned to a reinforcement training center which was made up of the old antitank company personnel.

On 13 February per verbal order of the Commanding General VIII U. S. Corps, the 37th Infantry Division reorganized its old antitank company and platoons to meet the demand for a training center for new men assigned to the Division.

On about 1 January 1945, a letter was received from Corps to convert service troops to rifle units. On 22 January a Third U. S. Army letter (numbered A. G. 220.01 GNMCA - 2) covered the subject of transferring men to rifle companies. (An earlier letter on this same subject had been recalled.) This letter of 22 January gave authority to dissolve the antitank company.

Verbal authority from Corps had been obtained to convert the antitank companies into bazooka teams and upon this authority and the letter mentioned above, the antitank company was not dissolved, but was converted into a reinforcement training unit.

The morning report of the company ~~was continued~~ and a skeleton organization was continued. This consisted of a lieutenant, 1st Sgt, Mess Sgt, Supply Sgt, three platoon leaders, four cooks, clerk and two drivers. The plan was to rotate battalion commanding officers as reinforcement training center commanders, but battalion commanders were found to be so scarce that an extra colonel in the Division was given the job. (Col Walker R. Gardrick)

The policy of the Division had always been that no rifleman would be put in the line until he had been with the Division for

48 hours. Under the training program of the antitank company this period was extended to a week.

The training program of the antitank company included a number of subjects adapted to orient and fit the new men to the exacting demands of front line duty.

Assignment of reinforcements was made direct to the antitank company and from there they were assigned to regiments on the basis of company strength.

Responsibility for the antitank company reinforcement training program was between the Company Commander and the Division Chief of Staff.

(C) Infantry-armor teams - The 347th Infantry Regiment had specialized in the close coordination of infantry and armor. Small infantry-armor teams had been organized. These teams usually operated under the direct command of the infantry unit leader, who had been trained to appreciate and properly use tanks over compatible tank terrain and with reasonable tank tactics. Each team was composed of one medium tank and at least one infantry assault squad. The squad was armed with two bazookas, two automatic rifles, and M1 rifles. Control of these teams was by means of SCR 300's.

(D) Tank Action - No one seemed to know for sure why the tanks stopped and backed up once the attack had started. ^{at 011330 March on Hill 649.} The tank commanders gave two reasons. One was because they were jammed together too close and one tank had hit another. Another reason was that the tanks could not depress their guns on the steep slopes. (40)

Observation of the ground showed that the congestion was caused by the tanks backing up and that the ground was level where the backing occurred. (46)

It was known that the enemy was dropping a large amount of artillery into the vicinity of the attack and that heavy direct fire weapons had been and later were fired in the vicinity of where these tanks were in action. (42). The 3rd Battalion was quite impressed with the incident. (23) General Culin had not heard of it. (1) It was also known that the infantry had been ordered to continue the attack regardless of the amount of enemy artillery fire. (27)

SOURCES:

(One or more interviews were held with each of the following men, either individually or in groups. Asterisk indicates records were used with the interviews.)

- | | | |
|------|---------------------------------|--|
| (1) | Commanding General | - Brigadier General Frank L. Culin Jr. |
| (2) | Assistant Commanding General | - Brigadier General John L. McKee |
| (3) | Chief of Staff | - Colonel Grant Lyang |
| (4) | * G-1 | - Major Edwin O'Connor |
| (5) | * G-2 | - Lieutenant Colonel John F. T. Murray |
| (6) | G-3 | - Lieutenant Colonel Arthur L. Gayle |
| (7) | * Assistant G-3 | - Captain Harter |
| (8) | * Assistant G-3 | - Captain Motor |
| (9) | * Assistant G-3 | |
| | (After Action Report) | |
| (10) | Assistant G-4 | - 1st Lieutenant T. Derries |
| | | - Major Robert B. Humphreys |
| (11) | I & E Officer | - Captain Gaspari |
| (12) | Public Relations Officer | - 1st Lieutenant Davenport |
| (13) | Division Engineer | - Lieutenant Colonel G. S. Pirrung |
| (14) | * Division Artillery (2) | - Major E. H. Burch |
| (15) | * Division Artillery (3) | - Major John H. Lynch |
| | <u>345th Infantry Regiment</u> | |
| (16) | * Commanding Officer | - Colonel Douglas Sugg |
| (17) | Assistant S-1 | - WO Elmer R. Schultz |
| (18) | * S-3 | - Major Thomas Bonner |
| | <u>346th Infantry Regiment</u> | |
| (19) | Executive Officer | |
| (20) | * S-1 | - Lieutenant Colonel R. J. Russ |
| (21) | * S-2 | - Captain Raymond A. Menashe |
| (22) | * S-3 | - Major Maurice R. Schuh |
| | | - Major Vincent Usera |
| (23) | 3rd Battalion (Group Interview) | |
| (24) | Commanding Officer | - Lieutenant Colonel Travis |
| (25) | Executive Officer | - Major William E. Bentley |
| (26) | S-3 | - Captain E. L. Hale |
| | Artillery Forward Observer | |
| (27) | * Commanding Officer | - Captain Frank C. Napier |
| | Company K | |
| (28) | Commanding Officer | - 1st Lieutenant Glenn J. Doman |
| | Company I | - Captain John A. Swanson |

- (29) Commanding Officer
Company L
- (30) Platoon leader
- (31) " "
- (32) " "
- (33) " "
- Captain John A. Mac Cambridge
- * 1st Lieutenant William E. Lawson
- 1st Lieutenant A. T. Schwartz
- 2nd Lieutenant J. E. Morrow
- T/Sergeant S. E. Lutterman
- 347th Infantry Regiment
- (34) * Commanding Officer
- (35) * S-2
- (36) * S-3
- Colonel Sevier E. Tupper
- Major William E. Griffith
- * Major William G. Lundy
- 3rd Battalion
- (37) Commanding Officer
- (38) * S-1
- (39) * S-3
- Lieutenant Colonel Pickhardt
- Captain John Edward O'Neil
- * Captain C. G. Collins
- 735th Tank Battalion
- (40) Commanding Officer
- Lieutenant Colonel Abe Bock
- 607th Tank Destroyer Battalion
- (41) Commanding Officer
- (42) Platoon Leader, 3rd Platoon, Company B
- Lieutenant Colonel H. S. Sundt
- 2nd Lieutenant Seymour T. Weisser
- (43) Third U. S. Army G-2 and Engineer reports
- (44) Twelfth Army Group G-3 Periodic Reports
- (45) VIII U. S. Corps sources
- (46) Observer and Interviewer - Captain William J. Dunkerley

INTERVIEWER: Captain Wm. J. Dunkerley

DATES OF INTERVIEWS: 9-15 March 1945

DATES OF WRITING: 16-22 March 1945

MAP REFERENCE: GSGS 4414 - Sheet 5604