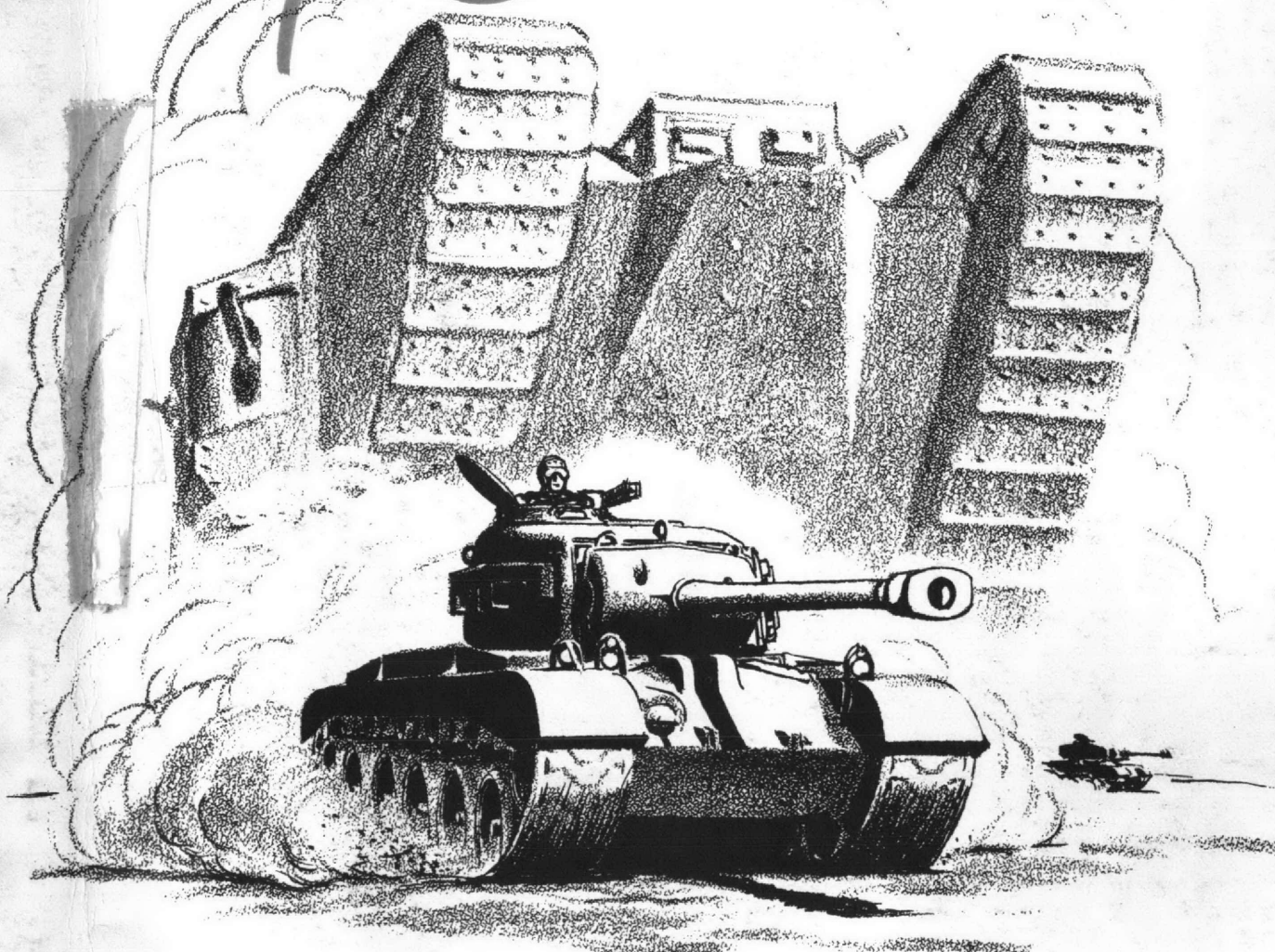




735th Tk Bn in the Reduction of METZ

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735TH TANK BATTALION IN THE REDUCTION OF METZ



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IN THE REDUCTION OF METZ

A RESEARCH REPORT PREPARED

BY

COMMITTEE 11, OFFICERS ADVANCED COURSE

THE ARMORED SCHOOL

1949 - 1950

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MAY 1950

PREFACE

The study of the 735th Tank Battalion in the reduction of METZ was selected by this group of officers as an example of the use of tanks in the support of infantry in an assault on a fortified area. An essentially infantry action was chosen as a typical example of this role in World War II in order to illustrate the different uses of the supporting tanks and their limitations.

The compilation of the forces engaged in this operation shows a large infantry force supported by many tanks. At first glance this indicates a fertile field for research in tank-infantry action, however close examination will disclose that relatively few examples of tank-infantry action in the reduction of METZ actually occur. Most of the tank units were utilized in the wide double envelopment, which though it contributed to the fall of METZ, was not an actual tactical assault against the fortresses. Detailed study of the records indicates that only the 735th Tank Battalion was utilized in this role of close support in the METZ area.

The committee wishes to emphasize that this report like most historical studies cannot hope to exhaust the subject, and that it is subject to errors of omission. The tremendous obstacle faced by all research workers was forcefully brought home to this committee. Men in the rush of preparations and the heat of battle have slight inclination and little time to record their unit's action; hence the dearth of information in unit histories

and after action reports. Veterans forget or lose interest as shown by the fact that of 25 questionnaires submitted to former members of the 735th only two answers were received.

A major contribution was made to this work by Major Max C. Tyler, who was stationed at Fort Knox during the period of research. During the METZ operation Major Tyler was the Executive Officer of the 735th Tank Battalion. Due to his diligence in keeping a detailed account of the day-by-day actions of all elements of his unit and his whole-hearted cooperation with this committee, we were able to make a permanent record of much detail which has not previously appeared in print.

Acknowledgement is also made to Mrs. Kermit R. Mason for her untiring efforts in doing the major part of the typographical work on this report.

The committee will feel that its efforts have been amply rewarded if this report contributes in some part to the study of combined arms teams.

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CHAPTER 1

PRELUDE TO ATTACK

Introduction

This is the story of the part that the 735th Tank Battalion played in the reduction of the historic fortresses in and surrounding the city of METZ during the period from 1 to 30 November 1944. This study embraces the employment of tanks with infantry in the attack of a fortified area to include the effects of weather and terrain, the technique of assaulting permanent fortifications, and the organization for combat of the tank-infantry team. Considerable time was spent in studying all available sources on a number of units which actively participated in the reduction of this fortified area to determine the unit which most clearly was illustrative of this situation. After due consideration it was decided that the 735th Tank Battalion which was attached to the 5th Infantry Division for the above period would serve as the most appropriate example for a study of this nature.

At the outset it became apparent that the inherent characteristics of firepower, shock action, and maneuver of armor could not be exploited to the maximum extent because of extremely adverse weather conditions, natural terrain obstacles, and strongly reinforced mutually supporting groups of fortifications which were organized in depth for all-around defense.

It is the intent of this report to examine in the light

of past experience, the logic of current doctrine regarding the employment of organic armor within the infantry division, thereby assisting future commanders in a clearer understanding and a more thorough appreciation of the special problems which may be encountered and the specific methods which may be utilized to assault and destroy what otherwise might be impregnable defenses.

History of Metz

Reeling back from the shattering blows of the XX Corps offensive, many disorganized units of the German Army were converging on METZ. Here was the rallying point which might stem the victorious American tide. Here was the dam which would surely stop the power from across the sea from invading the sacred soil of the Fatherland. To understand the esteem and faith of the Germans for METZ, one must look back into the history of this fortress.¹

METZ, one of the oldest cities in central Europe, dates back to Celtic times. It had been one of the main bastions of the Gallic portion of the Roman Empire. Finally in 451 AD the city was devastated and occupied by the Huns, whose feat remained unique for centuries. For despite the fact that through every major European war it was one of the strategic points around which the opposing forces flowed, never again was it to be taken by storm until one thousand, four hundred and ninety-three years later in 1944 AD. This includes attacks by the Germans in 1552,

in 1814 and 1815, and in 1870. In World War I it was not attacked although on the day of the Armistice in 1918, American Artillery was within range of the German-held forts surrounding the city. In the last war it was occupied by the Germans after the surrender of the French Government.

The Site

The city of METZ is virtually surrounded by the MOSELLE River, MOSELLE Canal, and the SEILLE River. The MOSELLE River forms one of the finest natural barriers in Europe. The swift flowing current of this ancient river has cut the LORRAINE Plateau for centuries forming a natural breastwork on the abrupt slope of its western banks. These banks are dominated by hills to the east that have been cut out of the land by the SEILLE and NIED rivers and other tributaries. Throughout the entire area, the hills and ridges formed by these rivers are steep and heavily wooded. Upon the dominating terrain formed by the convergence of these rivers stood the famous fortifications of METZ.

General Organization

Full defensive advantage of the dominating terrain was taken in the construction of the forts. An imposing double belt of forts and fortified groups ringed the naturally fortified city of METZ. These were carefully and cleverly emplaced. There were a total of 43 forts and fortified groups, with 128 artillery pieces of large caliber emplaced around METZ proper. The MAGINOT LINE fortifications, the forts around THIONVILLE, and the SIEGERIED

LINE all tie in with the METZ forts.

Outer Defense of METZ

The outer defense consisted of 15 forts and fortified groups forming a complete circle. Work on these fortifications commenced early in the 18th century under the direction of the celebrated French engineer, Bauban, and was not completed until 1866 under Napoleon III. All were designed to withstand any ordnance or infantry assault known up to that time. The French Army Engineers were of the opinion, which they still maintained in 1940, that these venerable forts were not capable of receiving the heavy concrete structure necessary for heavy guns. It was decided in 1939 by the French artillery commander that the first ring of forts was of no great military importance despite its natural position and that the forts would be useful only as observation posts for infantry.

However, in 1940 when the Germans took possession of the area they felt that the old forts were still useful and were worth improving. So with typical Teutonic thoroughness, they immediately put their TCDT Organization to work improving and modernizing.

Naturally as the Nazis swept over Europe and Africa, the need for strong defensive belts seemed over and work on the forts lagged; not, however, before old FORT ST. QUENTIN on the west banks of the MOSSELLE had been improved and modernized including the installation of a radio station as a military signal center. This area was further improved by work on its two supporting forts, GIRARDIN and DIOU built on adjacent hills, ingeniously

linking them with FORT ST. QUENTIN by a series of supporting bunkers, pillboxes, armored observation posts, heavily reinforced casemates, minefields and a trench system that extended completely around the military crest of the hill. Two 210 mm guns were brought to FORT ST. QUENTIN and installed complete with a protective, modern, revolving steel observation post. Caves were dug into the side of the hill and reinforced with concrete to protect these roving artillery pieces when not in use. The remaining twelve forts were made more useful by incorporating extensive, deliberate field fortifications into their defense plan.

Outer Belt of Forts

If METZ is envisioned as a hub, one can see the first ring of forts as a small diameter out from the hub. Beyond this is the second complete outer belt of 28 forts and fortified groups located on the rim of a wheel of hills with a radius of six miles from the hub, METZ. This belt was composed of permanent fortifications built by the Germans after 1871 and completed in the year 1912. These forts were primarily fortified artillery positions in contrast to the inner belt, whose forts were primarily infantry strongpoints, therefore the close defense of the forts was designed around external positions set up quite a distance from the forts for small arms and direct fire automatic weapons furnishing all around security. Deep moats surrounding each fort or fortified group were covered by interlocking fields of automatic

fire which effectively barred any infantry crossing.

To protect the gun emplacements from high velocity direct fire weapons the METZ forts were generally underground with their heavy caliber guns firing from dome-shaped, revolving steel turrets protruding slightly from the surface of the ground. The various forts in each group were linked together by underground passages to minimize losses from counter-battery artillery fire. It was estimated that nothing less than a direct hit by a 1000 pound aerial bomb would cause material damage. It was planned that in the event the surface of any position was overrun the German infantry would retire to the subterranean security of the forts while pre-registered heavy artillery concentrations made the position untenable for the attacker on the surface. Surprise was prevented by the deployment of the German infantry as far out as possible from the forts.

The forts had been left in good condition by the Germans in 1918 and had throughout the intervening years been kept in excellent repair by the French. Each one of the outer ring of forts was composed of a main fort in the center with two or three smaller reserve forts, batteries, or casemates. Each fort or group accommodated 2,000 to 3,000 men. Each battery required a crew of 150 to 200 men. The communications system of the entire belt was excellent. Each fort had either direct communications with other forts or indirect communications with all the others through a central exchange in METZ.

The string of seven minor forts, nicknamed "The Seven

Dwarfs" by XX Corps, connected the two fortified groups. JEANNE D'ARC and DRIANT. These seven minor forts were intended by the French only as infantry positions, however the Germans had placed one 150 mm howitzer in FORT MARIVAL and had numerous 88 mm anti-tanks batteries around and in them.

Another string of four forts protected the approaches southeast of METZ and east of the MOSELLE River. They had no occupied artillery emplacements but it was planned to use self propelled guns in them. These forts were reenforced by a bunker belt around the outer circuit facing toward the German border.

FORT GUENTRANGE, a part of the fortifications of TRIONVILLE, was northwest of that city and had as a part of its armament eight 100 mm French guns. It had been occupied by the 90th Infantry Division in its sweep east to the MOSELLE River in September. The Germans left it in good condition when they retired east of the MOSELLE.

Two fortified areas, resembling a fourleaf clover in design, commanded the banks of the MOSELLE from the controlling terrain east of the river about 20 miles north of METZ in the vicinity of the towns of KOENIGSMACHER and D'ILLANGE for which the forts were named.

19 fortified groups of the MAGINOT LINE extending into the METZ area were situated on a rugged ridge that extended diagonally southeast from KOENIGSMACHER toward BOULAY. The METRICH group, 1000 yards north of the old FORT KOENIGSMACHER with whose system of fire it was tied in, was the first and

northernmost fortified group in the MAGINOT LINE east of the MOSELLE.

This line of fortified groups was constructed with gun turrets capable of being revolved a full 360 degrees. Machine gun emplacements firing generally east and west defended the exposed sides of the casemates. The automatic weapons of each casemate were able to form interlocking bands of fire because of the width of traverse provided. This construction was designed to destroy small assault squads of infantry that might infiltrate on the flanks or to the rear of the gun positions.²

Strategic Picture

Assault landings were made on the NORMANDY coast at 0700 6 June 1944 by the First US and Second British Armies. The US forces were on the right (west) flank. After initial stiff opposition, the landings were linked into a secure beachhead. By pressure to the south, the bridgehead through the difficult hedge-row country was enlarged during the month, and the buildup of troops that were to comprise the Third Army on the continent was virtually completed by 25 July 1944. On that date, the First US Army launched the attack on ST LO which with the aid of strong air support, pierced the enemy defenses and paced by armored columns, reached the coast at GRANVILLE on 30 July 1944. The ring which had confined the Allies to the limits of the beachhead had been broken, and an opening made for the advance into BRITTANY and MAYENNE.

At noon on 1 August 1944, the 12th Army group became operational under the command of General Omar N. Bradley. General Courtney H. Hodges assumed command of the First Army. General George S. Patton commanded the Third Army, which also became operational on 1 August 1944 on the right (west) flank of the First Army. While the First Army drove the German left flank back against the line MORTAIN-VIRE, the Third Army struck southward with cavalry and armor, securing the BRITTANY ports and clearing the peninsula. The Third Army poured troops and supplies through the AVRANCHES gap to the west, southwest and south, while the First Army continued to widen this bottleneck by swinging the German line back to the southeast about CAEN as a pivot. Because of our air supremacy, a tremendous volume of traffic was flowing through this narrow corridor and our rapid advances continued.

On 3 August 1944, the Twelfth Army Group issued Letter of Instructions No. 2 which directed that the eastward advance be continued to secure a bridgehead over the SARTHE River in preparation for a drive to occupy the CHARTRES Plain. Despite a threat to its lifeline the Third Army continued its growth and advance and crossed the SARTHE south of LEMANS on 8 August 1944. With the supply line stretched to the breaking point, advance beyond the SEINE River could not be continued at the scale and pace maintained since 1 August 1944. On 25 August 1944, Letter of Instructions No. 6 ordered the First Army to cross the SEINE, encircle PARIS and continue the advance rapidly to the northeast. The Third Army was to cross the

SEINE, advance eastward to the MARNE, be prepared on order to continue the advance and seize a bridgehead over the RHINE between MANHEIM and KOBLENZ. While the Twenty-first Army Group advanced to the ALBERT Canal and fought to enlarge their hold on the SCHELDE River approaches to ANTWERP, the Twelfth Army Group continued the advance toward GERMANY. The Third Army reached the MOSELLE in strength on 6 September 1944, and secured two bridgeheads across the river on 8 September 1944, one north of NANCY and the other south of METZ.³

Operations of Third Army during September underwent an abrupt change as the history making pace of the Army's August advance was slowed, making necessary a type of warfare considerably different from that employed during the first 31 days of continental action.⁴ Third Army was not only extremely short of supplies as a partial result of the uninterrupted drive to its present location from the breakout at AVRANCHES, in western FRANCE, but had been ordered by SHAEF on the 23rd of September to take up an "offensive" defense as a part of the large-scale plan for the Allied Winter Offensive, which contemplated a main effort to the north.⁵

This general static tactical situation continued through October, with effort concentrated on the building up of supplies, the assembly and regrouping of troops, and the laying of plans in preparation for a new major offensive to drive the enemy behind the RHINE River. Planning activities

included the execution of certain limited objective operations to secure a favorable line of departure, to keep the enemy from becoming too aggressive, and to give specialized combat experience to combat units. XX Corps operations against various forts protecting METZ provided a basis for training of troops in assaults on fixed fortifications and served to determine the tactical plan for future operations against the fortress city of METZ.

Developments during November saw Third Army go back on the offensive. An operational Directive was issued by 12th Army Group on 3 November giving instructions for the resumption of the offensive. Third Army was ordered to envelop the METZ defensive works from the north and south and to destroy any enemy forces withdrawing from the METZ area; to advance northeast within the Army zone to seize the MAINZ-FRANKFURT-DARMSTADT area, and to be prepared for further offensive action to the northeast. The time of the attack was to be announced later.

The Army Commander issued the following plans for XII and XX Corps:

XII Corps was to advance northeast from the vicinity of PONT-A-MOUSSON with a minimum of one infantry and one armored division and seize the rail and road facilities in the vicinity of FALKENBERG. In conjunction with XX Corps, it was to destroy any enemy forces withdrawing from the METZ area. The Corps was to advance rapidly to the northeast to establish

a bridgehead east of the RHINE River within its zone, to seize the DARMSTADT area and to be prepared for further advance.

XX Corps was to contain the METZ defensive works west of the MOSELLE River. It was to cross the MOSELLE River in the vicinity of KOENIGSMACHER with a minimum of one infantry and one armored Division and seize rail and road facilities in the vicinity of BOULAY. The Corps was to advance rapidly to the north-east to establish a bridgehead east of the RHINE River within its zone, seize the MAINZ-FRANKFURT area and be prepared for further advance.⁶

NOTES FOR CHAPTER 1

¹After Action Report, XX Corps 1 Sept 44-30 Nov 44; passim

²"The Reduction of the Fortress METZ", XX Corps Operational Report 1 Sept 44-6 Dec 44; passim

³Report of Operations (Final After Action Report) Twelfth Army Group, Vol V, G-3 Section; passim

⁴After Action Report, Third Army, 1 Aug 44-9 May 45
p61

⁵"10th Armored Division in the SAAR-MOSELLE Triangle", Committee 15, Advanced Class 148-149, page 2

⁶Op. Cit., After Action Report, Third Army, p 99, 123, 124

CHAPTER 2

UNIT HISTORIES

The historical background of the 735th Tank Battalion and 5th Infantry Division are identical from the day the 735th Tank Battalion was attached to the 5th Infantry Division in NORMANDY on 13 July 1944.¹ This background therefore will be generally divided into two periods - the first consisting of the history of the 735th Tank Battalion from the date of activation to date of attachment to the 5th Infantry Division, and the second consisting of the history of the 5th Infantry Division, reinforced, from the date of its arrival in NORMANDY through the assault on METZ in November 1944.

History of 735th Tank Battalion

The 735th Tank Battalion was activated at Fort Lewis, Washington in March 1943. It was organized as a separate tank battalion consisting of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, a Light Tank Company, three Medium Tank Companies and a Service Company.² Training of the unit which commenced immediately after activation, was limited initially because of the restricted areas available for tank operation at Fort Lewis. This training consisted mainly of training of the individual and crews. Extensive training in driving and gunnery was limited due to lack of facilities at Fort Lewis.

In December 1943 the 735th Tank Battalion participated in maneuvers in the area of BEND, OREGON. These maneuvers

offered the opportunity for the first time of intensive training in cross country driving, field maintenance, and participation in realistic platoon, company and battalion exercises. On one occasion combined training as a part of a tank-infantry team was conducted. It is important to note that this one occasion was the only training with infantry that the 735th Tank Battalion had ever participated in prior to its commitment in battle.

Upon conclusion of the OREGON maneuvers the 735th Tank Battalion was able to fire its cannon at the artillery range at YAKIMA, WASHINGTON. This firing consisted of shooting seventy-seven rounds from each tank gun. This was the only occasion afforded for the battalion to fire its major tank armament prior to combat.³

In January 1944 the 735th Tank Battalion was alerted for overseas movement to the BRITISH ISLES. Prior to its actual departure it was subjected to the usual pre-embarkation inspection by the Inspector General. This inspection as far as the potential combat employment of the battalion was concerned, was cursory. It consisted of the observation of a field problem drawn up, rehearsed, and executed by the battalion. The inspection lacked the usual critical approach that is characteristic of such inspections. At no time were individuals, crews, sections or platoons surveyed to determine whether or not they were adequately trained for battle.⁴

In February 1944 the 735th Tank Battalion departed from BOSTON with GLASGOW as its destination. Upon arrival the battalion was sent to an area near COVENTRY, where it remained for the ensuing five months. New tanks were issued to the battalion upon its arrival in ENGLAND. Practically no training was accomplished in ENGLAND because of the non-availability of training areas. The exceptions were tactical drivers training for one company at a time for one week on the BAMBERRY golf course, and 37 mm firing (sub caliber for the 75 mm tank gun) in a rock quarry. During this period in ENGLAND the 735th Tank Battalion was instructed to effect liaison with the 5th Infantry Division because of its anticipated attachment to the 5th Infantry Division, after the cross channel assault. Consequently, one officer from each company was sent to effect this liaison while the 5th Infantry Division was training in NORTHERN IRELAND. The state of training of the 735th Tank Battalion on the eve of its commitment in NORMANDY was excellent, and the record shows it responded well in battle.

On 8 July 1944, the 735th Tank Battalion embarked in ENGLAND and disembarked in FRANCE on the following day. The battalion was immediately attached to the 1st Infantry Division in the vicinity of CAUMONT. Five days later on 13 July 1944, the 735th Tank Battalion was relieved from attachment to the 1st Infantry Division and reattached to the 5th Infantry Division.⁵ From that date on through the assault on METZ the

history of the 735th Tank Battalion was so closely associated with the history of the 5th Infantry Division, that it will be covered with the history of the 5th Infantry Division, reinforced.

History of the 5th Infantry Division, Reinforced

On 9 July 1944, just 33 days after D Day, the combat elements of the 5th Infantry Division disembarked in NORMANDY on UTAH SUGAR RED BEACH. That same day the division walked five miles to Transit Area B; and the following day marched twenty miles to the division concentration area near MONTEBOURG.

Upon landing the division has been assigned to the United States First Army; and on 11 July 1944 was further assigned to V Corps.

On 12 July 1944 the 5th Infantry Division saw its first action in relieving the 1st Infantry Division near CAUMONT, the left flank of the United States First Army. The ensuing battle was against some of the toughest units in the German Army - the 3rd and 5th Parachute Divisions. It was during this battle that the 5th Infantry Division, adequately reinforced with the 735th Tank Battalion (among others of its attachments) grew up to take its place among the first great American Divisions that fought in FRANCE.

On 23 July the British took over the CAUMONT sector preparatory to the ST LO breakthrough. On 26 July the 2d Infantry Regiment was committed in the attack to capture VIDOU-

VILLE. The attack jumped off with infantry advancing with medium tanks of Company A, 735th Tank Battalion. The objective was captured at 1330 on 27 July with a loss of two tanks and many personnel casualties. That night the 10th Infantry Regiment was committed on the right flank of the 2d Infantry Regiment and continued the attack. The following day the 11th Infantry Regiment was released from Corps reserve to join in the fight; and on the day following the 5th Infantry Division advanced, two regiments abreast, for 15 miles. This was the 5th Infantry Division contribution to the great ST LO breakthrough.

On 4 August 1944 the division was released from the First Army and assigned as part of the nucleus of the Third Army under Lt. Gen. George S. Patton. This association began the 5th Infantry Division's rapid advance across FRANCE. With its attached 735th Tank Battalion and 818th Tank Destroyer Battalion as its armored elements the division developed the mobility and striking power of an armored division. To retain this mobility of moving from 50 to 90 miles per day the infantry regiments dropped their kitchen trucks and all unnecessary impedimenta. Doughboys rode on everything that moved including captured transport. They packed eight to ten soldiers on a medium tank and and twelve to fourteen on an M-10 tank destroyer.

From 7 to 10 August 1944 the 5th Infantry Division was engaged in the fight for ANGERS. After a quick aggressive three-day battle the city of ANGERS with its two strategic bridges was

in American hands. This action was characterized by close cooperation between Infantry, Tanks and Artillery.

Having again proved its battle proficiency the division turned eastward towards CHARTRES. This city was liberated on 19 August after the 5th Infantry Division took over the assault from the 7th Armored Division because V Corps decided that the attack against a defended city was a more appropriate task for an infantry division.

FONTAINBLEAU and MONTEREAU were the following short, fierce battles for bridgeheads across the SEINE. The enemy defenses in these localities were characterized by aggressive infantry backed up by armor and both heavy and light artillery. These river crossings were made by infantry crossing the river in assault boats closely supported by tank and artillery fire during all phases of the crossing. The bridgeheads were indisputedly secured on 25 August.

RHEIMS was the next large city to be liberated. It fell on 30 August to the 5th Infantry Division. The resistance was slight, and was concentrated mostly on the high ground east of the city.

The division moved out again and on 31 August moved some sixty miles through the ARGONNE FOREST to arrive at VERDUN in the evening on the heels of the 7th Armored Division. The 11th Infantry Regiment immediately crossed the MEUSE River and passed through VERDUN encountering very little resistance.

As the division was concentrated in the MEUSE bridgehead the tragic gas failure occurred. This gas shortage and the lack of replacement tank tracks immobilized the 5th Infantry Division just east of VERDUN. Unfortunately this situation gave the GERMANS time to build defenses along the MOSELLE, and reinforce the existing defenses in the vicinity of METZ.

Resupply of gasoline finally caught up on 6 September and on the day following the 5th Infantry Division again moved east towards the fortress of METZ. The 2d Infantry Regiment moved out early with the mission of securing the high ground on the west bank of the MOSELLE River across from METZ. The 11th Infantry Regiment moved out at the same time with the mission of securing a bridgehead across the MOSELLE in the vicinity of CORNY, five miles south of METZ.

The mission of the 2d Infantry Regiment entailed capturing the town of AMANVILLERS. Four determined assaults were made on the town in the first five days, and twice the assault elements had infantry and tanks in the town, but each time enemy artillery from the METZ fortresses forced a withdrawal. The 90th Infantry Division relieved the 2d Infantry Regiment of this task on 14 September.

Concurrently with this action the 11th Infantry Regiment seized the high ground on the west bank of the MOSELLE near DORNOT by attacking through dense woods in parallel columns of infantry reinforced by tanks and tank destroyers. Plans were then

made for a river crossing of the MOSELLE at DORNOT with an optimistic objective being the VERDUN Group of forts. A crossing was made on 8 September and a toe hole was kept for sixty hours. Due to the terrific volume of artillery and mortar fire from the German fortified positions, and the numerous counter-attacks it was agreed that the bridgehead was untenable; and the troops were evacuated. In addition the American counter battery fire against the steel and concrete forts had absolutely no effect.⁶

While the bridgehead at DORNOT was being contested the 10th Infantry Regiment was making a crossing of the MOSELLE at ARNAVILLE, three thousand yards to the south. This crossing was made during the night of 9-10 September, and went undiscovered until the attacking troops were three hundred yards across the MOSELLE. The fighting that followed was perhaps the fiercest experienced by the 5th Infantry Division. The German defenders were just as determined to hold their ground as the Americans were to take it. It was only by sheer determination that the bridgehead was gained and held. Company B, 735th Tank Battalion, crossed the river by means of a ford on 11 September. The remainder of the battalion crossed on a bridgehead that was completed by noon, 12 September. This bridgehead was the first permanent crossing of the MOSELLE, and later proved to be the key to the successful attack on METZ.

FORT DRIANT, the kingpin of the METZ fortress system

west of the MOSELLE, was attacked on 3 October by a special tank company of the 735th Tank Battalion and a reinforced infantry battalion from the 5th Infantry Division. The assault involved fighting above ground and in the subterranean connecting tunnels. The troops above ground took a great pounding from artillery of surrounding forts which could fire on FORT DRIANT without hurting its structure. Third Army finally called the attack off on 12 October because of the inability to capture the fort without excessive losses.⁷

The 5th Infantry Division continued to hold the MOSELLE bridgehead in a sustained defense until relieved by the 95th Infantry Division on 21 October. The following ten days were spent near LUXEMBURG for training in the attack of fortified positions. On 1 November the division returned to its muddy bridgehead ready for a final assault on METZ. The 735th Tank Battalion was attached to the 95th Infantry Division during this interim period.

During the bloody fighting in September and October the 5th Infantry Division proved the practical impossibility of assaulting the forts frontally. As a matter of fact, the story of the fall of METZ, and the story of the fall of the surrounding forts are different, because METZ itself was taken by disregarding the forts, by passing them, and pushing in to capture the city.⁸

As can be seen from this brief history, the 735th Tank

Battalion and the 5th Infantry Division were adequately trained and sufficiently seasoned to undertake the assault against METZ. They performed gallantly together in battle. They were a team ready for the mission on hand.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER 2

¹ After-Action Report, 735th Tank Battalion, September 1944; passim.

² Major Max C. Tayler, interview. (Major Tyler was the Executive Officer, 735th Tank Battalion, during the action at METZ in November 1944.)

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Op Cit, After-Action Report; passim.

⁶ "The 5th Division in France", a booklet prepared by the PRO Section, 5th Infantry Division; published in METZ, December 1944; passim.

⁷ Ibid; passim.

⁸ Ibid; passim.

CHAPTER 3

ENEMY SITUATION

Many disorganized German units were falling back in confusion from the U. S. XX Corps offensive as the Germans hastily organized to defend METZ and the MOSELLE River line. The fortress system was to be used as the base of this defense. German generals had recommended that a delaying action be conducted from the MOSELLE to the SAAR conserving the Wehrmacht and concentrating them behind the West Wall. However, the Reich's soil lay between the SAAR and the MOSELLE and Hitler decreed that the enemy must pay dearly to reach the German border. The German High Command forcefully ordered that the MOSELLE River line would be defended at all costs and the capture of METZ prevented. METZ was to be used as a rallying point.¹

General Balck in charge of this defensive area, commanded German Army Group G. He was immediately concerned with stopping any further advance along U. S. Third Army front. His intelligence work and estimate showed a good understanding of the U. S. offensive plan, but he had neither the necessary troops nor supplies to stop the expected operation.²

LXXXII Corps commanded by General Lieutenant Hoernlein relieved XIII SS Corps in the right (northern) sector on 1 November 1944 and assumed responsibility for the sector from GRAVENSMACHER in the north along the MOSELLE including the METZ salient to a few kilometers south of METZ. His forces consisted

of approximately 30,000 troops including four divisions and miscellaneous corps organizations, including housekeeping and officer candidate units, which were organized as follows:

The 416th Infantry Division defended the northern portion from METRICH to GRAVENSMACHER. It consisted of 8,300 troops, averaging about 38 years of age and with little or no battle experience. It had been nicknamed the "Whipped Cream Division" by First Army Units and was rated a limited defensive unit.

The 19th Infantry Division was south of the 416th in the north center sector. It had approximately 5,000 officers and men, and although it was considered better than the 416th it was also rated a defensive division.³

The 462nd Volksgrenadier Division (also often referred to as the 462nd Mobilization Division) occupied METZ and the perimeter fortresses from HAUCONCOURT south through METZ to the vicinity of JOUY-AUX-ARCHES. General Lieutenant Kittel, an expert in fortress defense, had been brought from the Eastern Front to take command of this unit about 1 November 1944. His arrival was delayed and the U. S. XX Corps had already penetrated the outer shell of defenses before he was able to reorganize the division sector. However, he did what he could to better the German position by relocating the 9,000 men in his unit, including an officer candidate school and special fortress troops, to meet the assault which

was already under way against METZ.⁴

The 17th SS Panzer Grenadier Division consisted of approximately 6,000 men. It was assigned the defense of the zone southwest of METZ and astride the boundary between the U. S. XX and XII Corps. It was placed to meet the expected armored attack from the vicinity of PONT-A-MOUSSON.⁵

5th Division Front

The permanent German garrison in METZ was provided by the 462nd Volksgrenadier Division, which also occupied some of the perimeter fortresses as previously shown. Into this division were incorporated:

1. The Fahnenjunkerschule (Officer Candidate School), Regiment VI).
2. A number of battalions of the Stettung type incorporated into a regimental organization. The II Stettung Battalion, which had previously occupied a portion of the Siegfried Line, was sent to METZ to aid in the defense. It had a total strength of 300 men and 24 machine guns.
3. The 1010th Security Regiment consisted of remnants of the original regiment, which had fallen back after their previous stand on the SEINE River, and other straggler units.⁶

In addition the German garrison was reinforced by those available civilians in METZ whom the Gestapo considered fit for military service. The Gestapo commander in METZ, Anton Dunckern, Brigadier General SS Troops and Commandant of all police in the

SAAR Basin had orders to use any means necessary to carry out the defense of METZ and to insure the loyalty of the troops and civil populace. Just previous to the battle the Wehrmacht garrison of the city was supplemented with a Volksturm or people's militia of four companies with a total strength of between 400-500 men. In addition city police were armed with carbines and old rifles, as were the Volksturm. Both were committed in the trenches outside of the city.⁷

The 1462nd Heavy Anti-tank Battalion, which had been reduced to four skeleton companies with six 75 mm AT guns, had at one time been committed in the vicinity of MAGNY where the troops abandoned their guns and retreated to METZ. There they probably fought as infantry.⁸

Since the 17th SS Panzer Grenadier Division occupied the greater part of the area concerned in this study let us look at it more closely. As stated above it was assigned the defense of the zone southwest of METZ. The original division had fallen back from positions in the vicinity of ETAIN and it now was comprised of a strength of about 6,000. On the 9th and 10th of November 1944 it attempted to establish the switchline hinging on FORT L' AISNE and extending to SORBEY. A garrison of SS troops had been relieved in FORT L' AISNE by a fortress machine gun battalion.⁹

The main force of this "division" was the 37th SS Panzer Grenadier Regiment which had been reformed in September by amal-

gamating its remnants with the few remaining remnants of the 51st SS Panzer Grenadier Brigade. On the eighth of November it was reported that tank elements of the 17th and the 21st Panzer Divisions had been reformed and re-equipped and moved to mobile immediate reserve in the U. S. Third Army area.¹⁰

This, by and large, was the heterogeneous force which defended METZ and the MOSELLE River line. It was composed, it is true, of defeated units, civilians, and ERSATZ troops, but nevertheless, was holding a strong position with a seasoning of proven officers and hardy veterans in their midst. It is of interest to note that the city had been evacuated in September and an American cavalry reconnaissance troop had been in the city itself and found it cleared of troops. However, on orders from the German Army Headquarters, the unit commanders with the aid of the Gestapo had forced the retreating troops to retrace their footsteps and reoccupy the city defenses and forts.

The final order issued to the garrison commander of the city was to "hold METZ to the last!"¹¹

NOTES FOR CHAPTER 3

¹After Action Report, XX Corps, 1 Sept 44 - 30 Nov 44; passim

²"The 10th U. S. Armored Division in the SAAR-MOSELLE Triangle", Committee 15, Officers Advanced Course 148-149; passim

³Ibid; passim

⁴Op cit, After Action Report, XX Corps; passim

⁵Op cit, "The 10th U. S. Armored Division..."; passim

⁶Op cit, After Action Report, XX Corps; passim

⁷Op cit, "The 10th U. S. Armored Division..."; passim

⁸Pass in Review, 5th Infantry Division in ETO; passim

⁹Op cit, After Action Report, XX Corps; passim

¹⁰After action Report, Third Army, Vol II, Staff
Section Reports, 1 Aug 44-9 May 45; passim

¹¹Op cit, Pass in Review; passim

CHAPTER 4

THE PLAN FOR ATTACK

The XX Corps possessed a sizable force on the eve of the November offensive. It had been strengthened by the addition of two new divisions, the 10th Armored Division and the 95th Infantry Division, commanded by Major Generals W. H. H. Morris, and H. L. Twaddle, respectively. General Walker's force now comprised three infantry Divisions (5th, 90th, and 95th) and one armored Division (10th). In addition, General Walker had the promise of "operational control" over the 83rd Infantry Division (Major General R. C. Macon), although there were numerous strings tied to its use.

The Corps Artillery consisted of 19 battalions including: five light battalions, six medium battalions, and eight heavy battalions. This total was reenforced by two battalions of the 422nd Field Artillery Group which were attached to the 83rd Infantry Division. The allotment of other Corps troops had also been increased and included: five tank destroyer battalions, (plus two battalions attached to divisions); three separate tank battalions (attached to divisions); four anti-aircraft battalions (plus four more battalions attached to divisions); the 3rd Cavalry Group, consisting of two squadrons; and two engineer combat groups, totalling about eight battalions.

In sum, Major General Walker had at his disposal 30 battalions of infantry, nearly 500 tanks, and over 700 artillery pieces

when the long awaited offensive began.¹

XX Corps Plan

The plans for the coming operation were the result of not only weeks of exacting and detailed study, but also painful experience. General Walker was convinced by the costly and unsuccessful attack on FORT DRIANT that frontal assault of the METZ forts was too costly and that minutely detailed plans must be made for the operation.² For example, the air support plan included a map showing every building in the city of METZ known to be occupied by Germans.

General Walker's plan for the operation contemplated two distinct operations: (1) Elimination of the obstacle, FORTRESS METZ and (2) Continuation of the attack to the northeast.

On 3 November 1944, General Walker issued Field Order #12 to the key commanders outlining the broad scheme of maneuver. Previously, orders had indicated that the Corps would encircle and reduce the METZ fortifications as the initial phase in the resumption of the Third Army offensive toward the RHINE. However, this final Field Order stated "the primary mission of all troops" as the destruction or capture of the METZ garrison, "without the investiture or siege of the METZ forts". Following this plan the XX Corps was to attack, encircle, and destroy the enemy in the METZ fortified area; reconnoiter to the SAAR River; seize a bridgehead in the vicinity of SAARBURG; and finally, on orders from General Patton, to resume the attack toward the northeast.

General Walker planned that the initial envelopment of METZ would be accomplished by the 5th Infantry Division on the south and the 90th Infantry Division on the north. The 95th Infantry Division would contain the German salient west of the MOSELLE. As the concentric attack of the 5th and 90th closed on METZ, the 95th would drive in the enemy salient, cross the MOSELLE and capture the city proper. The 10th Armored Division was assigned the task of closing the pincers east of METZ. This mission practically eliminated it from participation in the reduction of the fortress. General Walker ordered it to cross the MOSELLE behind the 90th and advance parallel to and on the left of the 90th. After following the 10th across the river Lt. Col. J. W. Pelk's 3rd Cavalry Group had the mission of swinging northeast into the triangle formed by the MOSELLE and SAAR Rivers, from there probing toward SAARBURG and screening the flank and rear of the forces engaged farther south and east.³

General Walker directed the 5th Infantry Division, with 735th Tank Battalion attached, to attack on the south from the ARNSVILLE bridgehead; bypass the outer belt of fortresses; bridge the NIED River and attack north to seize the high ground southeast of BOULAY. This maneuver would protect the left flank of the XII Corps, attacking simultaneously on the south. The 5th Infantry Division would coordinate their attack with an armored task force from the 6th Armored Division, which would move through the divisional sector on request of the Commanding General, XII Corps, and take advantage of the main east-west highway located there. The

armored task force would precede the assault units of the 5th Infantry Division across the NIED River and reenter the XII Corps' zone there. After crossing the NIED River the infantry would regroup and move north on ~~XX~~ Corps' order to meet the unit moving toward the south.

General Walker directed the 90th Infantry Division to make a crossing over the MOSELLE River on the north in the vicinity of KOENIGSMACHER, execute a flanking attack along the trace of the MAGINOT LINE to join up with the 5th Infantry Division east of METZ in the vicinity of BOULAY, approximately 20 miles east of METZ. By making the attack along the ridge line containing the MAGINOT FORTS, these units would be able to hold the commanding ground and reduce the forts one at a time, if necessary, without having their assault echelons subjected to supporting crossfires of the fortified line.

The 10th Armored Division would pass through the KOENIGSMACHER BRIDGEHEAD, established by the 90th Infantry Division, and attack southeast to BOULAY on the left of the 90th Infantry Division. The 83rd Infantry Division was to have passed through the bridgehead at the same place, after the other two had completed their move, and continue its mission to the northeast. However, on 11 November 1944, it was released to U. S. First Army and was not available for the mission. After the 83rd Infantry Division left, the 3rd Cavalry Group was given the mission of seizing SAARBURG.

A battalion of the 95th Infantry Division was directed by Corps to make a demonstration in force at UCKANGE to distract the enemy's attention from the main effort of the 90th Infantry Division in KOENIGSMACHER. The 95th Infantry Division (- one battalion) would maintain constant pressure along the fortified salient west of METZ.

The plan was approved by General Patton. D-Day was set for 9 November 1944, allowing a two-week period to be utilized in training troops in assaulting fortified positions.⁴

5th Infantry Division Plan

Major General Walker, Commanding General XX Corps, directed Major General Irwin's 5th Infantry Division to relieve the 95th Infantry Division 31 October-1 November 1944. The 2nd, 10th, and 11th Infantry Regiments completed the relief of the 95th Infantry Division at 2205 hours on 1 November 1944. During the period 2 - 8 November 1944, the 5th Infantry Division carried on active patrolling preparatory to launching a coordinated attack on the fortified region of METZ.⁵

On 2 November 1944, General Walker directed the release of the 735th Tank Battalion from the 95th Infantry Division and attached it to the 5th Infantry Division. Companies A, B, C, and D of the 735th were performing maintenance in the vicinity of PONT-A-MOUSSON, approximately 30 miles south of METZ. Headquarters and Service Companies were at PAGNY-SUR-MOSELLE, approximately 20 miles south of METZ.⁶

Major General Irwin planned to launch a division coordinated attack with two regiments abreast (2nd and 10th - 2nd regiment on the right flank) at 0600 hours on 9 November 1944. The 11th Infantry Regiment was to contain the enemy in the vicinity of ARRY and SILLEGNY, to hold the division pivot, and to exploit any break-through that might be effected by the other regiments.⁷

He made further plans for the division to launch its attack to the east and northeast with the mission of encircling the city of METZ from the south and contacting the 90th Infantry Division at BOULAY. Companies A, C, and D, 735th Tank Battalion would support the 2nd Infantry Regiment; help seize LOUVIGNY; move east and support in the capture of VERNY, just west of PAGNY. Company B, 735th Tank Battalion, was attached to the 10th Infantry Regiment, which was to attack LA HAUTONNERIE and join the 2nd Infantry northeast of LOUVIGNY.

Summary

General Walker's plan envisaged two phases: (1) The destruction of the German forces in the METZ area, and (2) a quick shift in the axis of advance to the northeast with the objective of establishing a firm bridgehead across the SAAR River. This bridgehead was to form a base from which to continue the attack toward the RHINE along the METZ-SAARLAUTERN axis. It was expected that the speed and success of the concentric attacks at METZ and the timing of the disengagement and withdrawal from

the METZ bridgehead of the German First Army would equally affect the pattern of the subsequent advance.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER 4

¹"The November Battle for Metz, 8-19 Nov 44", Document Section, The Armored School; passim

²"The Reduction of Fortress Metz, XX Corps Operational Report 1 Sept 44 - 6 Dec 44"; passim

³Op cit., "The November Battle for Metz"; passim

⁴Op cit., "The Reduction of Fortress Metz"; passim

⁵G-3 Periodic Reports and Overlay, Hq. XX Corps; passim

⁶After Action Report, 735th Tank Battalion; passim

⁷History, 11th Infantry, 5th Infantry Division; passim

⁸Op cit., "G-3 Periodic Reports..."; passim

⁹Op cit., "The November Battle for Metz"; passim

CHAPTER 5

DEPLOYMENT AND INITIAL PHASES OF THE ATTACK

The 735th Tank Battalion was relieved from attachment to the 95th Infantry Division and attached to the 5th Division on 2 November 1944.¹ The 5th had relieved the 95th in the MOSELLE bridgehead just south of METZ at 2205 hours 1 November 1944.² At this time headquarters and Service Companies, 735th, were near PAGNY-SUR-MOSELLE. The remainder of the Battalion was performing maintenance in the vicinity of PONT-A-MOUSSON.³

On the 5th of November, Company B was attached to the 10th Infantry Regiment and the remainder of the battalion was attached to the 2nd Infantry Regiment. All companies were alerted for future operations.⁴ This was a part of the regrouping being carried out by the 5th Division in preparation for an offensive operation. During these preparations harassing fires were continued by the division and enemy fires were received intermittently on the bridgehead. Routine patrols obtained a great deal of information about the enemy and his defense along the division front during this period.⁵

On the 7th of November, 12 tanks from Company C, 735th moved to an area about one and one half miles north of PONT-A-MOUSSON where they were given an indirect fire mission in support of the 50th Field Artillery Battalion. Company C fired ten missions, including: seven missions on infantry resulting in at least ten casualties; one mission resulting in the destruction of a Nebel-

wurffer;⁶ one counterbattery mission; and one mission fired at a staff car, expending a total of 535 rounds. The tanks then rejoined their company which had received orders to be prepared to cross the SEILLE River from PONT-A-MOUSSON.⁷

The Problem

In order to capture successfully and hold the city of METZ it was necessary to cross the SEILLE River, to push the enemy back from the bridgehead obtained, and to surround the city before beginning the actual assault of the fortifications.

The SEILLE River was at this time swollen by constant rains from a normal width of 20 to 40 yards to a width of about 200 yards. The flood had destroyed or rendered unusable most of the few bridges left by the retreating Germans. A very few were left intact and usable. The division engineers were put to a stiff test to find the necessary suitable crossing sites.

In his order, General Irwin directed his 2nd Combat Team to attack and seize LOUVIGNY, then move east to a point just west of PAGNY and resume the attack at 0700 hours to take VERNY and the next objective. He ordered the 10th Combat Team to attack at 0600 hours on the 9th of November and assigned it objectives on the far side of the SEILLE River. These combined attacks of the 2nd and 10th were designed to fit strategically with the offensive operations of the 95th and 90th Divisions on the left of the 5th Division, and of the 80th Division of the XII Corps on the right flank. It was expected that all these attacks would facilitate the launch-

ing of the 6th Armored Division in its operation eastward out of the bridgehead established by the 5th Infantry Division.

Launching the Attack

The dawn of the 9th of November broke grey and misty as the men of the 2nd Battalion, 2nd Infantry, crossed the swollen SEILLE River in assault boats and stormed the town of CHEMINOT, which fell without opposition to Company G - a lone surviving German tottering out of a cellar waving a white flag. The 1st and 3rd Battalions followed the 2nd Battalion across, utilizing a footbridge erected between CHEMINOT and LESMENILS by the engineers. The close of the first day found the 2nd Infantry successful in taking all objectives assigned for the day; ready to jump off the next morning with the exception of the 735th Tank Battalion, for whom the bridges had not been constructed.⁸ At 0500 hours, Companies A, C, D, and assault guns, and the mortars of this battalion had moved to an area 1000 yards southwest of BAUXIERS to cross the bridges and assist in the operations; but the bridge was not constructed, so these units moved back to PONT-A-MOUSSON at 1600 hours.⁹

The 10th Combat Team executed their assault crossing of the SEILLE simultaneously with the attack of the 2nd. The 3rd Battalion crossed on three footbridges constructed by attached engineers south of the MOULIN NEUF. They were followed by the other two battalions.¹⁰ The regiment succeeded in establishing their sector of the bridgehead despite the fact that Company B

735th Tank Battalion, was unable to support the crossing as planned, because of the poor visibility.¹¹

The units of the 5th Division utilized the night of November 9th-10th for consolidation and patrolling. All units which had crossed were in position to resume the attack the following morning.¹²

NOTES FOR CHAPTER 5

¹After Action Report, 735th Tank Battalion, 1 Dec 1944, p 1

²Pass in Review, Fifth Infantry Division in ETO; passim

³Op cit, After Action Report; p 1

⁴Ibid, p 1

⁵Op cit, Pass in Review; passim

⁶A German multiple barrel rocket launcher

⁷Op cit, After Action Report, pp 1-2

⁸Op cit, Pass in Review; passim

⁹Op cit, After Action Report; p2

¹⁰Op cit, Pass in Review; passim

¹¹Op cit, After Action Report; p 2

¹²Op cit, Pass in Review; passim

CHAPTER 6

ADVANCE TO THE CITY

The actual attack through the outer ring of forts surrounding METZ began on 9 November and continued through 20 November. The account of the attack will be covered in a day-by-day account following one regiment at a time. The actions of the 2d Infantry Regimental Combat Team will be covered first, inasmuch as this unit commenced the attack, and saw the bulk of the action. In following this action it should be pointed out that normally the 735th Tank Battalion was broken down so that Company A supported the 2d Infantry Regiment; Company B supported the 10th Infantry Regiment; Company C supported the 11th Infantry Regiment; while Company D, the light tank company, and the battalion assault guns were employed when and where needed the most. When more than one company was attached to or in direct support of a single infantry regiment it was because the other regiments were not engaged sufficiently to require the use of their normal quota of attached tanks.¹ An example of this occurred when on the morning of 10 November the situation existed whereby Company A, 735th Tank Battalion, joined the 1st Battalion, 2d Infantry; Company C joined the 3d Battalion, 2d Infantry; and Company D and assault guns joined the 2d Battalion, 2d Infantry. Company B, 735th Tank Battalion remained attached to the 10th Infantry Regiment.²

Actions of the 2d Regimental Combat Team (9-20 November 1944)

During the evening of 9 November the 2d Infantry Regimental Combat Team moved into its attack positions. The morning of 10 Novem-

ber dawned cold and damp as the 2d Regimental Combat Team jumped off in attack with the 80th Infantry Division on its right. The 1st Battalion with Company A, 735th Tank Battalion, attached, attacked towards PAGNY-LES-GOINS and was met by heavy artillery, mortar and small arms fire. By 1330 hours the town was cleared of enemy resistance, and the attack was pushed towards SILLY-EN-SAULNOIS.

Simultaneously, the 2d Battalion with Company D and assault guns, 735th Tank Battalion, attached, jumped off for VIGNY. Light opposition consisting of long range small arms and some artillery fire was encountered enabling the battalion to seize the town by 1245 hours. The high ground to the north and east was immediately outposted.

ALEMONT, a town to the right of the regimental sector, held up initially the attack of the 3d Battalion. Heavy small arms fire from the village temporarily pinned down the right flank of the battalion. ALEMONT was soon taken however, and the attack was carried on to BUCHY, which was captured just prior to the ending of evening nautical twilight. Two tanks belonging to Company C were destroyed by anti-tank fire during this action. In the evening of 10 November all tank units returned to the vicinity of VIGNY for resupply and refueling.

On 11 November the tank attachments to the 1st and 2d Battalions were switched. This put Company A, 735th Tank Battalion with the 2d Battalion, 2d Infantry; and Company D and assault guns, 735th Tank Battalion, with the 1st Battalion, 2d Infantry. Other

attachments of elements of the 735th Tank Battalion were unchanged.³

Under cover of a 5th Infantry Division artillery preparation the 2d Regimental Combat Team jumped off in attack on the morning of 11 November. The 1st Battalion, mounted on tanks of Company D advanced on DAINEN SAULNOIS while the 2d Battalion moved on BEUX. Both battalions seized their objectives by noon of that day. The 3d Battalion in the meanwhile with Company C, 735th Tank Battalion, attached, attacked and captured the high ground just east of PONTOY, and continued the attack towards AUBE. After these objectives were taken Company C was reattached to the 2d Battalion, 2d Infantry. The 2d Battalion then moved eastward from BEUX to the high ground overlooking the NIED-FRANCAISE River. The battalion remained on the west side of the river in the BOIS DE FAY.

During the night of 11-12 November a patrol from the 6th Armored Division found the bridge west of SANDRY-SUR-NIED intact, and seized it. Before dawn the next day elements of the 2d Battalion moved out of this new objective, and by sunrise the battalion secured a bridgehead on the east side of the river.⁴

At 1330 hours on 12 November, the 2d Battalion was ordered to form a task group with its two tank companies and an infantry company with which to intercept an expected German evacuation from METZ to the east. The plan provided for this force to be in position near SOLGNE by 0600 hours on 13 November. The execution of this plan was delayed a day upon request of the Commanding Officer, 2d Infantry. As it turned out this plan was never executed due to

fierce German counterattacks in this bridgehead area.⁵

The Germans, recognizing the bridgehead as a direct threat to their supply and escape route, counterattacked on 13 November. At 1400 hours they launched the first of a series of vicious counterattacks. Enemy elements succeeded in advancing to a point outflanking the high ground held by Company E, 2d Infantry to the north. Intense machine gun and small arms fire forced the enemy to retire. A second counterattack developed almost immediately but was repulsed.

At 1900 hours, shortly after dark, a third enemy counterattack preceded by intense artillery and mortar fire was launched. Despite very heavy losses the enemy succeeded in reaching the outskirts of the town. To meet this threat the 2d Battalion withdrew all its troops to within the town limits and established the close-in defense of SANDRY-SUR-NIED. Tanks were placed close to the buildings with infantrymen armed with spare IMG's to protect them from underneath. Cannon of the tanks and tank-destroyers were systematically placed to cover the most likely avenues of approach.⁶

At approximately 2230 hours, the fourth enemy counterattack, preceded by intense mortar and artillery fire, was launched. The tanks fired ricochet fire off the streets into the oncoming enemy. Supporting friendly artillery fired emergency concentrations into the north end of town. Riflemen and grenadiers placed their fire into the streets between buildings from vantage points in windows and on roofs. The fury of this counterattack was such that the fight continued until approximately 0230 hours on 14 November.

before the enemy was cleared from the limits of the town.⁷

It was estimated by Captain West, Commanding Officer Company A, 735th Tank Battalion, that tank guns alone killed and wounded approximately 175 Germans during these counterattacks. As can be surmised, the enemy did not make a further attempt to retake the bridgehead. German prisoners told interrogators that more than two thirds of the attacking forces were casualties from this action. Company E, 2nd Infantry; 1st Platoon, Company A, 735th Tank Battalion; and a section of Company H, 2nd Infantry; were awarded the Distinguished Service Badge for this gallant defense.

On 13 November, Company C, 735th Tank Battalion was released from attachment to the 2nd Infantry, and attached to its' usually supported unit, the 11th Regimental Combat Team. Company D, 735th Tank Battalion was meanwhile released to Division reserve. Company B was still attached to the 10th Regimental Combat Team, which was uncommitted at this time. Company A, 735th Tank Battalion remained attached to the 2nd Regimental Combat Team, which continued to hold its' bridgehead during 15, 16, and 17 November.

The 3rd Battalion, 2nd Infantry, attacked again on the morning of 15 November; and by 1300 hours MECLEUVES was captured. After beating off a counterattack the 3rd Battalion consolidated its' position for the night.

After a day of reorganization, the 2nd Regimental Combat Team, less the 2nd Battalion, which was still defending the NIED River bridgehead, launched a coordinated attack on the SORBEY Forts.

Company D and one platoon, Company A, 735th Tank Battalion, supported the attack of the 1st Battalion. The 1st Battalion found the town of SORBET unoccupied, and sent Company B, 2d Infantry to occupy and defend it. At 0900 hours the 3d Battalion pushed its lines forward while the 1st Battalion launched its attack against the forts. Company A, 735th Tank Battalion, supported the attack of the 1st Battalion by providing fire from the flank. After an all day battle against the enemy's deliberate defenses, the objective was taken at 1600 hours. After dark, Company I, 2d Infantry, occupied the town of FRONTIGNY against light opposition, and Company B, 2d Infantry, cleared the town of COURCELLES-SUR-NIED.⁸

Having accomplished its mission of providing a bridgehead through which the 6th Armored Division could pass in its attack, to the east, the 2d Battalion was ordered to withdraw from the bridgehead and move to an assembly area in the vicinity of PONTROY, during the night of 17-18 November, where it reverted to regimental reserve. Company A, 735th Tank Battalion, moved to the same general area at the same time.

Against crumbling resistance the 2d Regimental Combat Team pushed on with the attack on 18 November. The 2d Battalion swung to the left through the 10th Infantry to take positions for an attack on MERCY-LA-METZ. Attacking at 1600 hours the 2d Battalion took its initial objective and continued the attack to capture, with light opposition, the MARNE Group of forts.

Concurrently with this action Company D, a platoon from

Company A, and assault guns, 735th Tank Battalion, supported the attack of the 1st Battalion against CHAMPEL FARM. The attack was continued with the clearing of the GRANDE BOIS DE CHAMPEL and the BOIS LEFEVRE.

During the hours of fighting on 18 November the remnants of many German units were captured. Prisoners from the 17th SS Panzer Grenadier Division reported that the 38th Panzer Grenadier Regiment had virtually been annihilated.

Attacking again at 0730 hours on 19 November the 2d Battalion supported by Company D, 735th Tank Battalion, advanced rapidly against light opposition. During this day 2d Lt. Barnes, the Assault Gun Platoon leader, 735th Tank Battalion, met Lt. Steinberg of the 90th Infantry Division Reconnaissance Company in the vicinity of VAUDREVILLE. This meeting completed the encirclement of METZ. Shortly afterwards this Assault Gun Platoon and a platoon of tanks from Company A destroyed a German convoy of two trucks, two staff cars, and two horse drawn wagons on the road fleeing from METZ.⁹

The results of this eleven day drive were gratifying. The combined arms teams of the 2d Regimental Combat Team had advanced 22,000 yards to the east and 24,000 yards to the north on a front of approximately 4,000 yards. In addition, it liberated 42 towns and villages, captured over 600 prisoners, and killed and wounded approximately 2,800 Germans. The total American casualties balanced against this were 52 killed and 286 wounded.¹⁰

Actions of the 10th Regimental Combat Team (13-20 November 1944)

While the 2d Regimental Combat Team was driving eastwards to seal off the METZ lines of supply and evacuation, the 10th Regimental Combat Team, adequately reinforced with Company B, 735th Tank Battalion, struck out at the enemy farther south. However, it did not become actively engaged until 13 November.

On 13 November the 1st and 2d Battalions, 10th Infantry, moved forward to occupy the ground to its front that it had been patrolling prior to this date. The great forts in the AINSE and YSER Groups were found to be undefended and unoccupied. These were the first of the twenty-two METZ forts to fall into American hands.

Enemy resistance stiffened on 14 November. The 1st Battalion, supported by Company B, 735th Tank Battalion, encountered a stonewall defense on the southern edge of the BOIS DE L'HOPITAL. On the same day the 2d Battalion fought its way into POUILLY and occupied the factory north of town. These two battalions consolidated their positions prior to dark having been cautioned that a German counterattack from METZ and from the northeast was probable. The expected counterattack did not materialize.

On 15 November the main effort to pierce the enemy defenses was to be made. The 10th Regimental Combat Team attacked successfully through the BOIS DE L'HOPITAL and continued northwards for approximately 2,000 yards. During an unsuccessful attack on OUVRAGE DE CHESNY NORD within the regimental sector one tank from Company B

was destroyed by anti-tank fire.

The advance towards METZ continued for the next four days; and on 19 November elements of the 10th Regimental Combat team made a junction with elements of the 95th Infantry Division. This completed the second encirclement of the city, and made ripe the time to begin the assault within the city of METZ itself. ¹¹

Actions of the 11th Regimental Combat Team (15-20 Nov. 1944)

The 11th Regimental Combat Team jumped into the attack against the METZ perimeter on 15 November. This regiment was supported by Company C, 735th Tank Battalion. The action began with the 1st Battalion plus Companies I and L supported by one platoon of tanks jumping off in the attack at 0730 hours in a direct assault on AUGNY. Heavy caliber fire from both FORT SOMMY and FORT ST. BLAISE pinned down elements of the battalion temporarily, but by 1800 hours the strong points were by-passed and forward elements dug in north of PRAYELLE FARM. At the same time the 2d Battalion, 11th Infantry with the remainder of Company C, 735th Tank Battalion, captured AUGNY. During this attack two tanks belonging to Company C were stuck in the mud about 100 yards southeast of AUGNY, and were under such heavy artillery fire that they could not be extricated until darkness.

This assault against the southern approaches to the city of METZ continued on 16 November with the 1st Battalion attacking along the western edge of FRESIATY AIRFIELD; and the 2d Battalion advancing towards MARLY.

The battle for METZ continued on 17 November as all three battalions of the 11th Infantry converged on the airfield and on the southern outskirts of the city. The VERDUN Group of forts (SOMMY and ST. BLAISE) shelled AUGNY regularly although completely surrounded by the 3d Battalion. The 1st Battalion with its attached tanks broke through the left flank of the German positions enabling it to move within a 100 yards of FORT ST. PRIVAT. During this day of action, Company C lost one tank from anti-tank fire.

At 0730 hours of the following day, 18 November, the 11th Regimental Combat Team started its drive for the city of METZ itself. Heavy artillery fire from FORT ST. PRIVAT slowed the advance. In an attempt to contain the fort the 1st Battalion swung to the left and the 2d Battalion enveloped it from the right, while the 3d Battalion moved into the southwest outskirts of METZ. FORT ST. PRIVAT was surrounded and contained, but kept up its devastating fire. Major Matzdorf, the commander of FORT ST. PRIVAT, should be complimented on his defense of the fort. He refused to surrender until he ran out of food. Company C lost one tank to anti-tank fire during this day of action.¹²

By 19 November METZ was surrounded, and elements of the 11th Regimental Combat Team engaged in house-to-house fighting. The advance of the 11th Regimental Combat Team was halted, and given the mission to continue the containment of FORT ST. PRIVAT.

During this period of action up to the final clearing of METZ itself Company C, 735th Tank Battalion, was issued the newly

modified forty-ton tank. This tank was simply a M-4 with additional armor welded on the sides, around the turret, and on the front slope plate. This additional protection proved to be effective against some types of anti-tank fire.¹³

This day-by-day account of the first 11 days in the assault against METZ demonstrate effectively the technique of tank-infantry operations through fortified areas. It should be noted that some tanks were almost universally assigned to assault infantry battalions when these battalions were attacking. It also should be noted that all tanks were engaged practically every day, so that when only one infantry regiment was engaged it had attached all the tanks available to the division.

For a clearer picture of the chronological events during this period it is suggested that the maps attached be studied; and for an interpretation of the action itself in the light of present day armored doctrine it is suggested that the reader refer to Chapter 8.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER 6

¹ Interview with Major Max C. Tyler (Major Tyler was the Executive Officer, 735th Tank Battalion, during November 1944)

² After Action Report, 735th Tank Battalion, 1 Dec 1944, P 2

³ Ibid., p 2

⁴ Ibid., p3

⁵ Cp cit., Interview with Major Max C. Tyler

⁶The Fifth Infantry Division in the ETO, 1945, prepared by the Fifth Division Historical Section.

⁷Letter from Captain Clarence L. Slaysman (Captain Slaysman was the Commanding Officer, Headquarters Company, 735th Tank Battalion during November 1944)

⁸Op cit., After Action Report, p 4

⁹Op cit., Interview with Major Max C. Tyler

¹⁰Op cit., After Action Report; passim

¹¹Ibid.; passim

¹²Op cit., Interview with Major Max C. Tyler

¹³Ibid

CHAPTER 7

FALL OF THE FORTS (20-30 November)

The 20th of November marked the final lunge into the city by the attacking regiments supported by tanks and tank destroyers and by the guns of the Division Artillery. The 11th Regimental Combat Team continued to attack the approaches to the main city from the south despite heavy losses incurred in reducing the southern group of forts. The 1st and 3rd Battalions remained to contain FORTS ST. PRIVAT, SOMMY and ST. BLAISE while the 2nd Battalion was being regrouped.

The 10th Regimental Combat Team, after taking BORNLY, smashed its way to the city from the east. The 1st Battalion mopped from house to house in the QUEULEU and PLANTIERES sector. On the afternoon of 19 November orders to cross the SEILLE River and clean out the heart of METZ all the way to the HINDENBURG STRASSE were received. At 0600 hours 20 November, the 3rd Battalion crossed and advanced to the HINDENBURG STRASSE. The 2nd Battalion crossed and advanced to the area south of the LOTHAR STRASSE and west of the railroad. Mopping up of the regimental area occupied the remainder of the 20th and 21st of November.

On 22 November the 11th Regimental Combat Team established a forward command post at Hotel Royal in the heart of METZ. Eight prisoners of war deserted FORT ST. PRIVAT during the night and all stated that the morale within the fort was low. Company

B returned to the 1st Battalion and joined in containing FORT ST. PRIVAT, while Company L reverted to the 3rd Battalion which was in position around the VERDUN forts. On Thanksgiving Day, the 2nd Battalion moved to Hotel Regina in METZ and was charged with providing security for the city via outpost and patrols. Meanwhile, both the 1st and 3rd Battalions continued to contain the forts. On 26 November the 3rd Battalion accepted the surrender of FORTS SOMMY and BLAISE. During the night of 24-25 November the 2nd Battalion combat patrols investigated and occupied the remaining forts of the "DWARFS" chain and cut overland communications between FORTS DRIANT and JEANNE D'ARC.

Prisoners reported that although morale within the unsundered forts was low, the commanders were determined to hold out as long as ammunition and rations lasted. Artillery and mortar fire from the forts fell sporadically in the regimental area but few casualties resulted.

When it became apparent that the forts could withstand every type of artillery fired at them, Psychological Warfare Teams began broadcasts to the holdouts.

Following a surrender appeal broadcast to FORT ST. PRIVAT on 29 November, Colonel Black, Commanding Officer of the 11th Infantry, held two conferences with Major Matsdorf, commander of the fort. After the second parley the commandant agreed to surrender the fort at 1600 hours. Prisoners included 22 officers and 488 enlisted men, 80 of whom were wounded.

As a result of one of the broadcasts a meeting was effected 30 November between an officer representative of the Commanding Officer of FORT JEANNE D'ARC and an officer representing the Commanding Officer of the 2nd Infantry. A demand of unconditional surrender was refused by the Germans who termed it "dishonorable and therefore unacceptable". A broadcast to FORT DRIANT requesting a meeting was ignored.¹

The action of the 735th Tank Battalion during the period from 20-30 November was characterized by the execution of direct and indirect fire missions in support of their respective combat teams. Company A supported the 2nd Regimental Combat Team by fire on FORT DRIANT and FORT JEANNE D'ARC; Company B supported the 10th Regimental Combat Team by fire on FORT DIOUX; and Company C supported the 11th Regimental Combat Team by fire on FORT PRIVAT. Captured French 75 mm White Phosphorus ammunition was fired primarily, several thousand rounds being expended.² Special firing pins improvised by Third Army Ordnance were required in order to fire this ammunition.³ Although no appreciable effects were noted prior to the surrender of the Forts, approximately 60 of the 488 prisoners taken at FORT PRIVAT were found to be suffering from white phosphorus burns.

Tanks were also utilized to escort small parties into forts to conduct surrender parleys. An initial attempt to induce FORT PRIVAT to surrender on 20 November failed, but was repeated on 29 November with complete success.

All units took maximum advantage of the relative quiet of this situation to perform much needed organizational maintenance, and to put flotation plates on tracks in preparation for future operations.⁴ The loss of one tank that had been pierced by a German 75 mm shell was prevented through an ingenious field expedient. The damage was repaired by driving a solid shell into the hole and welding it in place.⁵

Four forts, FORT JEANNE D'ARC, FORT DRIANT, FORT ST. QUENTIN, and FORT PLAPPEVILLE, were still stubbornly holding out on 30 November, with the 2nd and 11th Regimental Combat Teams alternating between broadcast and bombardment in an effort to take them with as few casualties as possible.

With the surrender at 1115 hours on 13 December, 1944 of FORT JEANNE D'ARC the last remaining stronghold of the hitherto impregnable METZ forts fell to the Third Army. The fall of the METZ forts marked the first time in modern history that "The Bastion of the East" had been captured by assault. The enemy's attempt to make a fortress stand, hinged upon the elaborate system of forts, was shattered between 15 and 20 November 1944. Pincers formed by the 5th Infantry Division from the south, and the 95th Infantry Division from the north, snapped shut east of the city trapping an estimated 4,000-5,000 troops. The fall of METZ to the XX Corps troops after a two months siege, handicapped by the worst floods in twenty years, and by weather which prevented maximum air support, opened a new route to the

east and removed the last important obstacle in front of the SIEGFRIED LINE. Thus the Third Army had driven the German Army back into its SIEGFRIED LINE defenses and had served notice that the Wehrmacht was to be granted no winter breathing spell.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER 7

¹"The 5th Infantry Division in the ETO" prepared by the 5th Infantry Division Historical Section

²After Action Report, 735th Tank Battalion

³Letter from 1st Lt. Robert E. Jirousek, former Battalion Liaison Officer, 735th Tank Battalion

⁴Op cit, After Action Report

⁵Personal interview with Major Max C. Tyler, former Battalion Executive Officer, 735th Tank Battalion

⁶After Action Report, Third US Army, 1 August 1944 - 9 May 1945

CHAPTER 8

SUMMARY

The account of the actions of the 735th Tank Battalion which supported the 5th Infantry Division proved the indispensability of armored support for infantry in offensive operations over unfavorable terrain against a determined enemy. Employed in a manner which violated armored doctrine of mass, mobility and shock action, the operations in this battle were justified by the results gained.

The METZ terrain and weather handicapped armor from the beginning. Cross country movement was hazardous at best. Observation and good fields of fire were available to the Germans from the many forts in the METZ area. As a result, tank and infantry movements were restricted throughout the campaign. Out of necessity, many of the strongly defended forts were by-passed at times, units passed so close to the occupied forts that the enemy were unable to depress their guns enough to fire on our elements. Notwithstanding, tanks did operate effectively in spite of the many obstacles presented by the terrain itself.

The mobility of tanks was limited, not only by the unfavorable terrain and weather, but also by the absence of personnel carriers for infantry. These two factors limited the rate of movement of tanks to that of the speed of foot troops. In utilizing the great fire power of which tanks are capable, it is presupposed that armor will be used in mass. This was not possible

in this operation because of the dispersion of tank units into small tank-infantry teams. The Germans were not subjected to the shock or psychological effect which comes to troops on the receiving end of a massed armored assault. Scattered, small armored units were never able to produce this effect. No deep column formations were possible when armor was dissipated in support of small infantry formations.

Under the restrictions, the use of tanks in the manner employed at METZ was entirely justified. As we have seen, terrain, weather, and enemy dispositions, coupled with the limited size of the tank force available, made the employment of tanks in mass virtually impossible. The desire and the necessity of all infantry units to have tanks supporting their movements must also be considered in the deviation from the principle of mass.

During this campaign, tanks performed most of the normal missions presently designated for organic tank battalions of the infantry division. Elements of the 735th Tank Battalion were used as artillery and to thicken supporting fire of the artillery battalions. Infantrymen accompanied tanks in several battles by riding on the tanks to the point of contact. At times tanks spearheaded the attack by preceding the infantry in attack and at other times by moving in conjunction with infantry. Tanks further aided the attack of infantry by supporting them from flank positions. In the closing days of the campaign the guns of the tanks of the 735th were used in the reduction of some of the METZ forts.

As a result of previous training and close work in prior combat operations, the technique of infantry-tank teamwork was put to good use in this campaign. Infantrymen and tankers had extreme confidence in one-another and knew each other's capabilities. One would not advance without the other. This was the direct result of prior training and use. The success of this operation indicates that all troops should include tank-infantry exercises in unit training in order to afford small unit infantry commanders an opportunity to become familiar with tank capabilities and limitations. The employment of armor in the capture of METZ emphasizes tank-infantry teamwork and the degree of cooperation and coordination between the 5th Infantry Division and the 735th Tank Battalion.

This campaign serves to emphasize the importance of having tanks available within the infantry division where factors of terrain and weather preclude the employment of armor as a weapon of mass and mobility. Tanks did not win the battle for METZ, but in their supporting role they assisted materially in their steady advance which shattered a determined defense and wrested this important city from the Germans.

APPENDIX I

ORDER OF BATTLE

UNITED STATES ORDER OF BATTLE

THIRD ARMY

XX CORPS.

5th Infantry Div.

2nd Infantry Regiment
10th Infantry Regiment
11th Infantry Regiment
735th Tank Battalion

95th Infantry Div.

90th Infantry Div.

10th Armored Div.

3rd Cavalry Group

XX Corps Artillery

5th F A Group
40th F A Group
195th F A Group
193rd F A Group
III Corps Artillery Hq.
203rd F A Group
204th F A Group
4th T D Group

XX Corps Engineers

1139th Engineer Combat Group
1103rd Engineer Combat Group

GERMAN ORDER OF BATTLE

ARMY GROUP G

First Army

462nd Volksgrenadier (Mobilization) Div.

The Fahnenjunkerschule (Off Candidate School Regt. VI)

Stettung type Bns. (no. unknown) incorp. into a
regt. organization.
1010th Security Regt.

559th Infantry Div.

1559th Artillery Regt.

416th Infantry Div. (THONVILLE area)

416th Artillery Regt. (10 batteries)

19th Infantry (Panzer Grenadier) Div.

37th SS Panzer Gren. Div.

Remnants 17 SS Pz. Gren. Div. and remnants 51 SS Pz.
Gren. Div.

11th Panzer Div.

106th Panzer Brigade (N. of FORET DE CREMERCY)
Remnants of 60 Pz. Div. & a replacement brigade.

1127th Grenadier Regt. (N. of FORET DE CREMERCY)

38th S S Panzer Grenadier Regt.

486th P. A. K. Battalion (40-50 AT guns)

1462nd Heavy Anti-Tank Bn.

45th Fortress Machine Gun Bn.

Elements of 53rd Fortress Bn.

4 Companies Volksturm

Miscellaneous Units

15th Panzer Grenadier Div.

33rd Engineer Bn.

111th Panzer Brigade

1216th Grenadier Regt.

Combat Group - 25th Panzer Gren. Div.

Elements of 119th Panzer Gren. Div.

Battle Group - 16th Infantry Regt.

2 Fortress Machine Gun Bns.

APPENDIX II

TERRAIN ANALYSIS OF METZ AREA

METZ is situated on the western leg of the SAAR-MOSELLE TRIANGLE at the convergence of the MOSELLE and SEILLE Rivers. The terrain is dominated by steep heavily wooded hills formed by the SEILLE, NIED, and other tributary streams of the MOSELLE River. The approach to the area is low gentle rolling terrain, affording little or no cover from the dominating terrain to the east.

The MOSELLE River is about one hundred to two hundred yards wide, with a current of about fifteen feet per second. It is unfordable with steep banks that form a natural breastwork dominated by the high hills to the east. Combined with the dominating terrain to the east, the MOSELLE River forms one of the finest natural barriers in Europe.

During rainy weather the rivers and streams in the area rise rapidly. The sandy loam of the top soil becomes soft and spongy, particularly in the lowlands. However, the area will support armor, except in very wet weather.

During the period 31 October to 30 November 1944, the weather was predominantly wet and cold, with rain and fog having the upper hand. The result of this weather coupled with the terrain was extremely disadvantageous to troops in the attack. The ground, open in nature, was soggy and covered with mines. Trafficability was poor for both armor and foot troops. All the streams in the area were flooded. The SEILLE River had risen and overflowed its banks until

it covered a width of two hundred yards. This flood destroyed most of the remaining bridges and added to the difficulty of the stream crossing, which was necessary to the whole military operation.

There were many factors affecting the action around METZ; however, nature affected it the most. Among the natural factors were the soggy ground, the miserable weather varying from rain, to sleet, to snow, and the daily haze hampering observation. All of these added immensely to the difficulties of capturing, or reducing, the many fortifications in the area.

APPENDIX III

APPENDIX NO. 13
FIELD ORDER NUMBER TWELVE

HQ XX CORPS
APO 340, US ARMY

3 Nov 44

FO 12

MAPS: 1/100,000 Map of FRANCE
Opns Overlay

1. a. Annex 1 -- Int.

- (1) Third US Army resumes offensive on D-Day at H Hour to seize the DARMSTADT--FRANKFURT area.
- (2) (a) XII Corps atks on the right (s) fl of XX Corps to seize that portion of Army obj within its Z, and to assist XX Corps to isolate and destroy the METZ garrison.
(b) 80 Inf Div (XII Corps) atks to cross SEILLE R and seize FAULQUEMONT (FALKENBERG)(Q170498)
(c) 6 Armd Div (XII Corps) passes through brhd of 80 Inf Div to atk FAULQUEMONT.
- (3) III Corps concentrates vic ETAIN
- (4) XIX TAC supports atk of XX Corps (see Annex 3--Air Support).

2. XX Corps atks on D-Day, to encircle and destroy the garrison of METZ fortified area, and to seize brhd over the SAAR R vic SAARBURG. To reconnoiter in force to seize crossings over the SAAR R intact. Prepared to resume the atk to the NE.
Trs: Annex 2, Tr List
D-Day: To be announced
Formation, bdries, and obj: Opns Overlay
LD: Existing line of con.

3. a. 5 Inf div (reinf -- Annex 2)

- (1) On Corps O, atk to seize high ground (overlay) making main effort on right (s) fl (overlay)
- (2) Within Z block all routes of withdrawal from METZ and prevent any en reinf of the METZ garrison
- (3) Establish and maintain con with 90 Inf Div & XII Corps
- (4) Protect brhd over MOSELLE R with minimum force, co-ordinating with 95 Inf Div for use of one mtz inf bn of that div for br protection purposes on Corps O.

b. 95 Inf Div (reinf -- Annex 2)

- (1) On Corps O, relieve elms of 10 Armd Div containing en brhd W of MOSELLE R.

- (2) In coordination with 90 Inf Div make vigorous demonstration of crossing MOSELLE R vic UCKANGE, commencing at 1500 hours on D-Day and continuing for minimum of fifteen hours. Trs will cross the MOSELLE R during this demonstration. Demonstration will build up, and not be permitted to taper off, until time of cessation.
 - (3) In conjunction with demonstration vic UCKANGE, reduce en pocket E of MAIZIERES to the MOSELLE R, both efforts to be so coordinated as to create the indication of a major atk.
 - (4) Vigorously contain en within Z. Maintain constant pressure on en, and rapidly follow-up any en withdrawal.
 - (5) On Corps O atk and seize the city of METZ.
 - (6) Be prepared on Corps O to assist 5 Inf Div in protection of brs over MOSELLE R with one inf bn, mtz from 95 Inf Div transportation.
- c. 90 Inf Div (reinf -- Annex 2)
- (1) Under cover of darkness, nt of D/D/1, pass through TF POLK and cross MOSELLE R in vic of KONIGSMACHER (overlay), coordinating with 95 Inf Div demonstration vic UCKANGE.
 - (2) Seize high ground (overlay) making main effort on left (E) fl.
 - (3) On Corps O pass 10 Armd Div, 83 Inf Div (-1 RCT) and 3 Cav Gp (reinf), (in O listed) through brhd over MOSELLE R.
 - (4) Within Z prevent en withdrawal from METZ area and in conjunction with 10 Armd Div, prevent en reinf of the METZ garrison.
 - (5) Establish and maintain con with 5 Inf Div, 10 Armd Div and 83 Inf Div.
- d. 10 Armd Div (reinf -- Annex 2) (initially less Div Arty)
- (1) Upon relief in Z containing en brhd, by 95 Inf Div, move to initial assembly area vic of MARS-La-TOUR (overlay). Displace to forward assembly area (to be designated) on Corps O.
 - (2) On Corps O atk through 90 Inf Div brhd to seize high ground (overlay), making main effort on left (E) fl.

(3) (a) Upon passage through 90 Inf Div brhd, reconnoiter to SAAR R with one C Comd, to seize intact, crossings over R, from MERZIG (vQ205935) (incl) to the S.

Priorities of reconnaissance:

1 MERZIG area

2 PACHTEN (vQ245845) -- DILLINGEN (vQ275838)

3 SAARLAUTERN (vQ285800) area

(b) Any brs seized intact will be protected and held at all costs.

(4) Prevent en reinf of METZ garrison from the E or NE, and in conjunction with 90 Inf Div, prevent en withdrawal from METZ area.

(5) Establish and maintain con with 90 Inf Div, 83 Inf Div, and elms of XII Corps.

(6) Protect E fl of Corps.

e. 83 Inf Div.

(1) With 1 RCT continue protect LUXEMBOURG and contain en in N of Z. Div (-1 RCT) initially remain present positions, concentrating with maximum secrecy in area to be designated on Corps O.

(2) TF POLK (3 Cav Gp reinf), atchd 83 Inf Div, on Corps O, to relieve 330 Inf Regt containing W bank of MOSELLE R.

(3) On Corps O, pass elms of Corps through SAARBURG brhd, as directed.

f. XX Corps Arty (Annex 2 -- Tr List).

(1) (a) 5 FA Gp
Gen support Z 90 Inf Div initially
Reinf 10 Armd Div when Div crosses MOSELLE R.

(b) 40 FA Gp
Reinf 90 Inf Div

(c) 195 FA Gp
Gen support Z 90 Inf Div and 10 Armd Div.

(d) 193 FA Gp
Reinf 95 Inf Div

- (e) III Corps Arty Hqs
 - (1) 203 FA Gp
Gen support Z 5 Inf Div.
 - (2) 204 FA Gp
Reinf 5 Inf Div.
 - (f) 10 Armd Div Arty.
Gen support Z 90 Inf Div under Corps control initially.
Revert to 10 Armd Div prior to Div crossing MOSELLE R.
 - (g) 4 TD Gp (Annex 2 --- Tr List)
Gen support Z 90 Inf Div
 - (h) Arty fire plans will be planned and coordinated with Div Arty Comdrs by Corps Arty Comdr.
- (2) Annex 4 --- FA
- g. XX Corps Engrs (Annex 2 --- Tr List)
- (1) (a) 1139 Engr C Gp: Direct support R crossings and assault opns 90 Inf Div, 10 Armd Div and 83 Inf Div
 - (b) 1103 Engr C Gp: Direct support 5 Inf Div.
 - (2) Annex 5 --- Engrs.
- h. 3 Cav GP (TF POLK) (Annex 2 --- Tr List)
- (1) Contain en in Z, securing LD of 90 Inf Div.
 - (2) Upon assault crossing of 90 Inf Div, assemble vic EVRANGE (VP885015) Atchd to 83 Inf Div on Corps O
- x. (1) Primary mission of all trs is the destruction or capture of the METZ garrison without the investiture or seige of the METZ Forts. All leaders are responsible for maint of aggressive, mbl attitude within their comds
- (2) After reaching their objs, all units XX Corps to be prepared for offensive action to the NE or E.
 - (3) After reaching their objs, all inf divs (except 83 Inf Div) to be prepared to furnish one mtz RCT for atchmt to the 10 Armd Div on Corps O.
 - (4) Utmost secrecy will be exerted prior to resumption of opns to prevent en knowledge of change in Corps dispositions or intentions.

(5) Local bomb line to be furnished by units requesting close air support.

(6) Upon con with German civilians, non-fraternization policy to be rigidly enforced. No civilians will be permitted to interfere with military opns. Passage of lines will be strictly prohibited to all civilians.

(7) Inf Divs to thoroughly mop up areas which they pass

4. Adm O No 10

5. Sig Com.

a. - Current SOI

b. Ax Sig Com

XX Corps: -- JARNY (vU650635) -- AUMETZ (vU700925) THIONVILLE
(vU860855) -- SAARBURG (wL140130)

95 Inf Div: -- MOYEUVRE GRANDE (vU770737) -- to be reported

90 Inf Div: -- ZOUFTGEN (vU838970) -- BOCKANGE (vQ045720)

5 Inf Div: -- VILLERS-SOUS-PRENY (vU730398) -- LOUVIGNY (vU865415)

10 Armd Div: -- MARS-1a-TOUR (vU650570) -- FREISTROFF (wQ097765)

83 Inf Div: -- BONNEVOIE (vP850111) -- SAARBURG (wL140130)

c. Cps

XX Corps: -- JARNY (vU650635)

95 Inf Div: -- MOYEUVRE GRANDE (vU770737)

90 Inf Div: -- ZOUFTGEN (vU838970)

5 Inf Div: -- VILLERS-SOUS-PRENY (vU730398)

10 Armd Div: -- MARS-1a-TOUR (vU650570)

83 Inf Div: -- VONNEVOIE (vP850111)

d. Rad Transmissions

(1) AAA units: W of MOSELLE transmit only when opnl
necessity exists

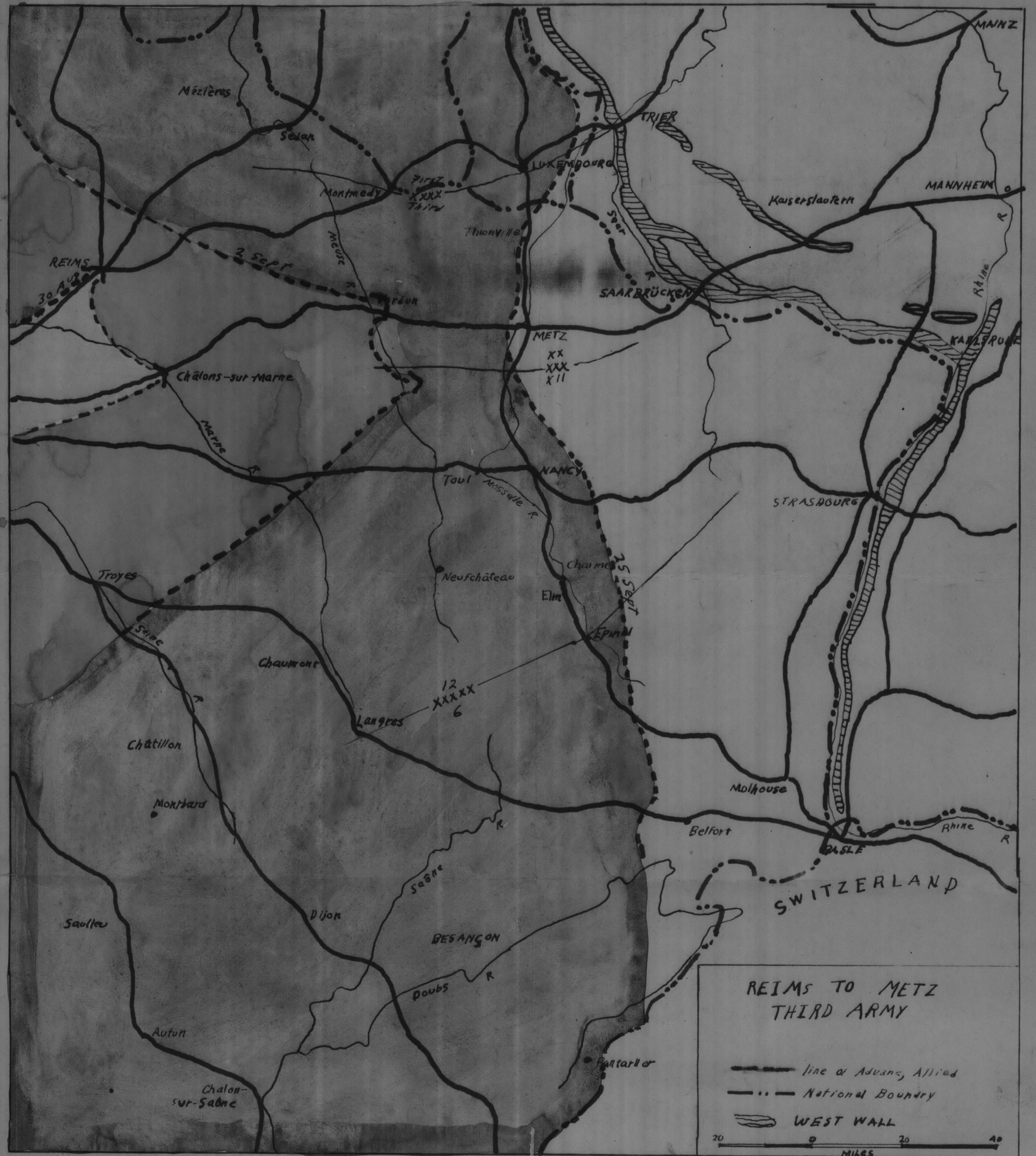
(2) 5 Inf Div and 95 Inf Div: Normal

- (3) 90 Inf Div: Rad silence W of MOSELLE; transmissions E of MOSELLE held to necessary minimum
- (4) 10 Armd Div: When relieved by 95 Inf Div rad silence W of MOSELLE; transmissions E of MOSELLE held to necessary minimum
- (5) 83 Inf Div: Rad silence for units W of MOSELLE not in con; lift silence E of R on en con or Corps O
- (6) Corps Trs: Rad silence, except Cav and Arty units remaining in old positions. Lift silence on en con or Corps O.
- (7) No adm traffic to interfere with tactical net opn.

e. Special attention to Sig Security

WALKER
CG
COLLIER
C/S

OFFICIAL
SNYDER
G-3



MA. #1



MAP 34

LIBRARY
THE ARMORED SCHOOL
FORT KNOX, KY