

MONOGRAPH

DISPLACEMENT OF A CORPS COMMAND POST

SCOPE: This paper contains in brief some of the more important aspects of the mechanics of command post selection and movement. While it is written on a corps level, the basic principles involved are applicable to all headquarters regardless of size or composition.

41-88

ADVANCED OFFICERS COURSE NO. 1

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## DISPLACEMENT OF A CORPS COMMAND POST

Sit back in your chair, close your eyes for a moment and imagine yourself as a member of a staff section in a corps headquarters. You pick up a piece of paper from your desk, glance at it and note the subject: Movement Order, par 1, Forward Echelon will displace beginning 0930 19 November 44.<sup>1</sup> You will undoubtedly call your chief clerk and give him all the details, and outside of a possible thought of how you will fare as to office space and a billet, you promptly forget about the whole matter and get back to work. You know from past experience that the move will be made with a minimum of effort on your part and that you will be doing the same old business in a new stand before long.

How did all this come about, was it only necessary to cut a stencil and run it off on a mimeograph machine, or was there some prior planning involved? Yes, there was prior planning, planning and experience based on knowledge gained in previous moves that made it possible for you to pass off this move so easily. You know that there are individuals in the headquarters whose business it is to make the move so smooth that there is little or no interruption in your section operation. You have often wondered just how they did some of the things that are so necessary to a successful move. Well stop wondering, stop imagining, open your eyes and look at a few of the important items that go into the well managed displacement of a corps command post.

1. Annex 1.

In the discussion that follows regarding the displacement of a corps command post, several factors are to be kept in mind:

1. We are dealing only with the Forward Echelon of a particular corps.
2. No attempt has been made to tie-in the movements of this command post with any other similar organization.
3. We shall deal only with the mechanics of command post selection and movement and not the tactical aspects that directed the locations and movements.
4. The facts as set forth are a solution that worked well in both tactical and administrative moves.

The factors that influence the selection of a command post may be summed up in the following statement: "Headquarters are so located as to facilitate command and control of subordinate units, with due regard to signal communication, routes of communication, cover, facilities, and accommodations for personnel."<sup>1</sup>

Since the tactical situation directs the displacement of the command post, the headquarters commandant must be kept informed of the probable axis of advance so that constant reconnaissance for suitable locations along the probable axis of advance can be conducted. This is of utmost importance, especially in a rapidly moving situation, if the commander is to keep his superior and subordinate commanders informed of his contemplated location.

1. Par 653B, FM 100-10.

It is not always possible to follow the projected axis of advance to the letter. The locations picked may not have the facilities to accommodate the unit, the mission of the unit may be changed by higher headquarters, or the tactical situation may dictate deviation from pre-selected locations.

This can best be brought out by the following example: In paragraph 5b, Field Order 10, Headquarters Seventh United States Army, dated 1200 11 March 1945,<sup>1</sup> the axis of advance for the XV Corps United States Army is shown as FENETRANGE - HERBITZHEIM - HORNBACK - HOMBURG - LANDSTUHL - ENKENBACH - GRUNSTADT - BENSHEIM - FRANKFURT. The actual axis of advance was FENETRANGE - OERMINGEN - GUISSING - NIED-AUERBACH - EISENBERG - WORMS-BENSHEIM - GROSS UMSTADT.

From this it can be seen that in only one case did the projected axis of advance and the actual axis coincide. If for no other reason than this, and there are others equally important, prior and adequate reconnaissance is of utmost importance.

The problem of signal communication in a headquarters of this size, increases the necessity for prior reconnaissance, in order to give the signal officer maximum time for planning. The time required for the signal battalion to carry lines forward and install the communications facilities within the new location must also be considered. It must be remembered that without adequate communications to both higher and lower, as well as to adjacent units, the name command post is a misnomer.

1. See Annex No. 2.

The space required by the command post, and the organic and attached troops, necessary for efficient operation is a definite consideration that precludes a hasty choice of location. These units, when broken down to their operating sections to form the command post, require an amount of space for offices and facilities that in some situations seem impossible to satisfy. No matter what choice of location is made, it is always a compromise. However, one compromise should never be made; that is, increased space and facilities for operations and comfort at the sacrifice of security.

In a previous paragraph the headquarters commandant was briefly mentioned. In all Field Manuals the headquarters commandant is also briefly noted when the location or movement of the command post is mentioned. The usual statement runs something like this: The selection of the command post, its arrangement and movement are supervised by the G-1. Headquarters Standing Operating Procedure will normally charge the headquarters commandant with carrying out these functions. This is an over simplification of the facts. The headquarters commandant is the operator in these matters. He will in many cases have a representative of the G-1 Section in the advance party, but the pick and shovel work falls within the scope of his duties. He has the headquarters company to assist him in this work, but he is the individual charged with the responsibility.

The G-1 through staff coordination can generally anticipate the movement of the command post; and, since the headquarters commandant works closely with the G-1, he is kept informed in this way.

It is normal for the headquarters commandant to make preliminary reconnaissance in the general areas desired for command post location.

Usually in any given area there are several specific locations that could house the unit, but in just as many cases there is one that has more advantages than disadvantages. The study of aerial photographs prior to the reconnaissance is very helpful. This preliminary reconnaissance will narrow down the field and at the same time save invaluable hours for other members of the advance party. It is also quite possible that the general area selected does not have a location where buildings can be utilized. A map and aerial photograph reconnaissance will not show this, only hours spent checking the terrain will give the answer. It is far better for the headquarters commandant to determine the conditions as they exist on the ground by preliminary reconnaissance, prior to moving out with the entire advance party. Experience is the best teacher in the choice of command post location. It does not take too long to become familiar with the floor plans of certain types of buildings. The practiced eye could look at a structure in a Kaserne in Germany and tell the type of installation. The shape of a barracks building would give a clue to the floor plan, and at a glance it would be possible to tell how many men it would accommodate. This was the great value of preliminary reconnaissance. It permitted a small group to pick specific locations in advance to be checked over in detail by the advance party.

The normal composition of the advance party in most cases consisted of the following:

- A representative of the G-1
- The headquarters commandant
- A representative of headquarters company
- The signal officer
- A representative of the signal battalion
- The commanding officer of guard company
- A representative of military police platoon
- The engineer technical intelligence team
- A detail from infantry guard company.

At first glance one might get the impression that too many people are included in this detail, but each has his place, and each place is necessary. The above list is quoted as the minimum; for instance, on many occasions the signal officer will have not only his battalion commander, but also the company commanders of the signal battalion. The number of representatives from headquarters company might be increased to include the mess officer or motor officer in addition to the utilities officer. There can be no slip ups, so the more personal reconnaissance that is made by the people responsible for certain operations, the smoother the move will be.

Upon arrival at a pre-selected location, the actual layout of the command post begins. Once again the factor of experience enters the picture. The signal officer is concerned with location of his signal

center, wire lines, and radio link. The headquarters commandant and representative of the G-1 has the responsibility of allocation of office space and billeting. The guard company commander will concern himself with the security measures to be taken. The engineer technical intelligence team will start its search for booby traps. The representatives of headquarters company will start their planning for messes, motor pool, installation of generators, latrines, and facilities in general. This is all concurrent, interspersed with numerous informal conferences to coordinate the entire operation. The layout is a process of give and take of the available space to the agreement of all concerned. It is at this time that the areas are allotted to the units, a portion to the signal battalion, a part to headquarters company, and an area for the guard company.

While all this has been going on a member of the headquarters commandant's section, the draftsman, has been busy. He will have by this time a rough sketch showing the outline of the area to include all buildings to be used, along with a floor plan of the building that is to be the command post proper. On this floor plan will be shown the rooms to be allotted to each section for office space as decided by the headquarters commandant and the G-1 representative.

The representative of the military police platoon will have by this time selected a dismount point, information tent location, picked posts for interior guard, and formulated a plan for traffic circulation and visitors parking. His entire plan must have the concurrence of the headquarters commandant.



The success of this operation depends largely on the experience of the members of the advance party and the amount of cooperation that is effected. No one section can be selfish in its demands. Today's command post might give you the least desirable location; but, you can rest assured that in the next, your willingness to go along and make the best of the situation will reward you with more desirable facilities. There usually just aren't enough rooms with bath to go around.

In the actual movement of the command post it is logical that first it must be determined how we are to get from here to there. The headquarters company does not have enough organic vehicles to accomplish this even with the augmentation of the attached quartermaster car platoon to assist in the carrying of personnel. The organic vehicles will be split between the forward and rear echelons, which further reduces the mobility, so we find that we are dependent upon the quartermaster truck company that is controlled by the G-4. The next problem is the allotment of vehicles to the sections; no one ever has enough transportation and this is no exception. The cargo vehicles have not only to carry the impedimenta necessary to carry on the work of the section, but also the personnel, their baggage and equipment. There is no hard fast rule about this, it can best be determined by experience gained in several moves. The following breakdown of trucks and trailers per section that proved satisfactory is recommended as a solution:

Headquarters Section

Chief of Staff and Deputy Chief of Staff. . . . .	1
G-1 . . . . .	1
G-2 w/ attached teams . . . . .	3
G-3 . . . . .	2
G-4 . . . . .	2
Artillery . . . . .	1
Liaison and Chemical . . . . .	2
Signal . . . . .	2
Engineer . . . . .	2
Air and Anti-tank . . . . .	1
Ordnance, Quartermaster, Surgeon . . . . .	1
Provost Marshal . . . . .	1
Headquarters Commandant . . . . .	<u>1</u>
	20

Headquarters Company Sections

Company Headquarters . . . . .	1
Supply . . . . .	2
Officers Mess . . . . .	4
Enlisted Men's Mess . . . . .	4
Dispensary . . . . .	1
Military Police Platoon . . . . .	2
Utilities . . . . .	2
Guard Company . . . . .	<u>3 - 5</u>
	19 -21

The loading of these vehicles was checked and rechecked in an effort to reduce the number required but this seemed to be the minimum. In as many cases as possible, small sections were grouped and loaded on the same truck. In any case, the truck requirements had to be kept below forty-two as experience proved that this was the maximum number of trucks that could be expected of the Truck Company on any one day. The three  $2\frac{1}{2}$ -ton trucks of the headquarters company's forward echelon could not be used on these moves as they were kept busy with the administrative functions that had to be carried out regardless of the move, the transporting of rations, water, Class III, II, and IV supply.

It should be the rule to receive the quartermaster trucks the night before the move if at all possible, and to have them spotted in accordance with a loading plan issued by the headquarters commandant.<sup>1</sup> This can be accomplished by having a member of each section report to the headquarters company motor officer, who will turn over to this section guide the proper number of trucks. As each section guide receives his vehicles he will move them to the designated points.

Immediately upon receipt of the trucks the sections will start the loading of those items of equipment that will not be in use through the night. The remaining equipment will be loaded in the morning. This allows for a minimum of confusion during the last few minutes prior to the move.

1. See Annex 3.

The most difficult part of the move is that of feeding, a phase which can be difficult if it is not handled properly. There is no reason whatever why three hot meals a day should not be fed to all the personnel in the command post. It can be accomplished by splitting kitchens and sending forward to the new location one-half of the equipment and personnel of both the officers and enlisted messes. For a move scheduled for 0830 the mess officer should have one-half of his trucks loaded after supper the night before, so that he can move these out promptly at 0600. Upon arrival at the new location his mess personnel should immediately go about cleaning and setting up their kitchens and mess halls, and be ready to serve the noon meal on schedule at the new location. The half remaining should prepare and serve breakfast and move forward with the headquarters company sections in the convoy. In order to make this possible it is necessary to supplement the organic equipment of the headquarters company. The addition of five field ranges will permit this breaking down of the messes. These additional ranges are necessary not only for feeding on moves, but also in order to function efficiently at any time. It must be remembered that the kitchen equipment given the headquarters company by TO/E has been split between forward and rear echelons, also there is no provision in the TO/E for the operation of the commanding general's mess. Because of this, the necessity for additional equipment can be realized.

Next to be considered in the movement is that of lighting. The equipment available for this purpose are gasoline lanterns which, while satisfactory, leave much to be desired. This difficulty was overcome by the use of two 3 KVA and one 15 KVA gasoline generators and one 25 KVA Diesel generator. This was all additional equipment that was drawn on special authorization. The two 3KVAs were mounted on one improvised trailer. The 15 and 25KVAs were mounted respectively in captured vehicles. A utilities section should be formed in the headquarters company to install, maintain, and operate the lighting system. This can best be accomplished by planning the layout of the main lines from the generators to the various parts of the command post. A central panel board should be built so that the combined output of the generators can be fed out over the main lines. This is also useful in case of failure of one of the generators so that power can be directed to the necessary sections while the standby is being put into operation, or repairs effected to the inoperative generator.

Each section should be responsible for tying into the main lines. There are several reasons for this. First, a definite shortage of light fixtures and lamp bulbs; and second, a lack of personnel to make all the installations. In this way each section is responsible for its own lead lines, fixtures, and bulbs, reducing the load on the utilities section.

The number of outlets per section must be regulated by the headquarters commandant in order to eliminate the possibility of overload.

A periodic check should be made to insure that this is being carried out, not only as to the number of outlets but also as to the wattage of the lamps used.

As soon as practicable upon the receipt of a movement order, the utilities section will start to pull out its main lines. One section of generators will go forward with the utilities officer in order to get the main lines in operation prior to the arrival of the sections at the new location. The other section will remain in place furnishing light until the command post is closed out or is no longer needed.

There are a few other administrative remarks that could well be mentioned at this time. Blackout precautions should be made the responsibility of each section, and the results of their efforts checked by the headquarters commandant. Tentage, even if used rarely, should be carried by each section, to be loaded on their own trucks. Each section should be charged with the police of its own assigned area. This to be true not only of the initial clean-up, but also the final police prior to leaving an area. This final police will be checked by a representative of the headquarters commandant to insure compliance with headquarters Standing Operating Procedure.

After all the above items have been planned for and completed, the handling of the move itself is fairly simple. Prior to the movement of the sections the headquarters commandant and the section guides, accompanied by a detail from the military police platoon, will depart for the new location. The military police detail will mark the route

with route signs and as an additional precaution leave a guide at critical points where it might be possible to go astray. The section guides, upon arrival at the new location, will be given a floor plan of the command post to show the exact location of the rooms allotted to their section and the doors or door to be used. They will be briefed as to the priority of unloading if the entrances are limited. Under any consideration upon arrival of a truck its load should be dropped to make room for the next truck rather than to unload the trucks directly to the section locations. By the time the guides have checked the rooms and entrances and are thoroughly familiar with the unloading plan, they will be ready to receive their vehicles and guide them to the place of unloading. The headquarters commandant will supervise the entire operation, having a hundred places to go and a thousand questions to answer at each move. The use of the command post layout assists the headquarters commandant in answering questions and for this reason is distributed to each section upon arrival.

The headquarters is habitually moved by infiltration of sections; and, for this reason, it was deemed advisable to place an officer in the cab of each vehicle to insure that none wandered from the route. Each section column will contain the personnel vehicles as well as the cargo vehicles of the section, with the section chief or his representative as march unit commander. The headquarters company commander will remain at the old location to see that the sections move out on time, and to make a final check of the location as to state of police.

The primary reason for this being to check for papers, maps, and equipment that might be left by the sections. When all personnel have cleared he will leave for the new area, taking with him a detail from the military police platoon to pick up the guides and route markers.

The actual arrangement of the command post followed the general pattern that can be found in Field Manual 101-10 and other publications. The grouping of sections is accomplished to satisfy the desires of the commander and the location at hand. There is no rule of thumb for this, and the proximity of sections will depend largely on the personalities involved. If at all possible, buildings should be used so that the men can devote more time to their work rather than to their own comfort. Military posts, schools, and office buildings make excellent locations. In smaller towns the taking over of a whole street proved satisfactory. This would allow the sections to set up office space on the ground floor and permit billets for the troops on the upper floors. On a few occasions a combination of buildings and tentage was used. There is no limit to the variations of arrangement, the layout being dependent only upon the desires of the commander, the locations available, and the imagination of the headquarters commandant.

The problem of transportation of personnel in order to carry out their assigned duties can be handled in several ways. Two methods were used: The first was that of assigning particular vehicles and drivers to specific sections; and the second that of having on call for each section a specific number of vehicles of a certain type. In the first



method the obvious advantage is that the drivers become familiar with the personnel of the sections, their wants and desires, and in this way can individually serve them. The disadvantage being a lack of control of the driver and vehicle by the motor officer, as well as the fact that some drivers worked night and day while others had little to do. The only place where the system worked well and was continued was in the case of the liaison officers to Army headquarters and adjacent corps. The second method permitted the drivers to become familiar with all the sections and their needs, and further centralized control of the vehicles and permitted the dispatcher to better serve the unit. For instance, if one section needed more vehicles than their allotment called for, the dispatcher could contact other sections and get releases on vehicles not being used in order to give more transportation to the sections in need. This system also permitted the rotation of drivers on the more difficult runs thus distributing the work load. This method of handling the transportation is by far the best. It was also found expedient to pool the vehicles and men of both the headquarters company and the quartermaster car platoon under the control of the commanding officer of the quartermaster car platoon for operations. The platoon commander worked under the commanding officer, headquarters company. Not only did this reduce friction between the two units, but it also reduced operating overhead. A common motor pool and shop was maintained and for all intents and purposes the quartermaster car platoon lost its identity.

The displacement of the command post is a very difficult operation that may result in many dissatisfied and unhappy people. It should be a move that results in a new location with little time and no temper lost. The decision lies in prior planning, prior reconnaissance, an appreciation of the other man's problems, and last but not least, the experience gained in previous moves.

There is little the headquarters commandant can do in the location of the command post as to routes of communication, or signal communication, but he does enter the picture as regards facilities and accommodations. In this, time being the essence, the command post may be either a stock model or a tailored fit, the time available making the difference. By experience, the headquarters commandant knows the minimum requirements of space per section, this layout is the stock model. If the area is suitable and he has the time you will get a tailored fit in increased space for comfort and accommodations. It requires but little effort to move from austerity to comfort and the comfort will pay off with increased efficiency. The headquarters commandant and headquarters company can and will, time permitting, do this for you. The well managed move is handled so smoothly that the people in the sections just go along for the ride. Here is a target to shoot for, so raise your sights. The important thing to remember is time, give the headquarters commandant as much as possible.

ANNEX ONE

SECRET

HEADQUARTERS  
XV CORPS UNITED STATES ARMY  
Office of the Headquarters Commandant

APO 436-US Army  
18 November 1944.

MOVEMENT ORDER:

TO : All Sections, Forward Echelon.

1. Forward Echelon will displace beginning at 0930, 19 November 1944.

2. Movement: Infiltration - Fifteen (15) minutes between sections. Section Guides will report to the Orderly Room promptly at 0830. Trucks will be spotted at 1530, 18 November 1944. Section Motor Guides will report to the Orderly Room 1515, 18 November 1944.

3. Route: N-4 to OGEVILLER.

4. IP: Municipal Theatre.

5. Loading Plan: See Inclosure No. 1.

Officers billeted in hotels will bring their equipment to the sections by passenger vehicles dispatched to hotels at 0700, 19 November 1944.

6. Cross IP:	G-2 w/attached teams	0930
	G-3	0945
	CG C/S & DC/S	1000
	Air & AT	1015
	G-4	1030
	G-1	1045
	Sig & Arty	1100
	Engr	1115
	Cml & Ln	1130
	Hq Co	1145

7. Sections will carry their own stoves and in addition will carry sufficient coal and wood for twenty-four (24) hours.)

8. Sections will clean billets and office space on arrival. Hq Co will clean CG & C/S Section space.

9. An inspection of all the rooms occupied will be made by a representative of the Headquarters Commandant and a report rendered as to the condition in which they were left.

10. Breakfast will be served from 0700 to 0815 only, Sunday, 19 November 1944.

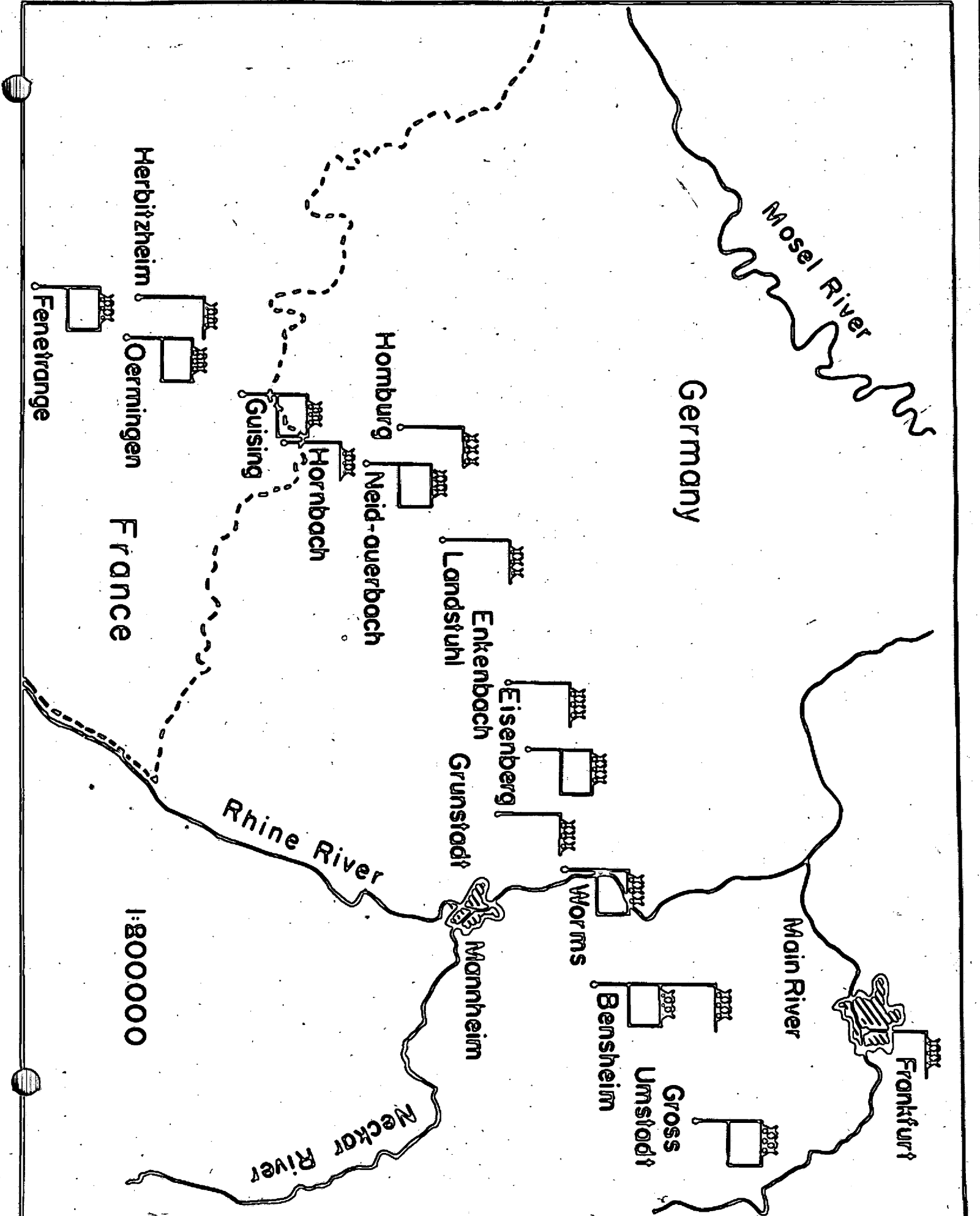
F. VICTOR NISSEN,  
Lt Col, Infantry,  
Headquarters Commandant.

DISTRIBUTION:

"A"

SECRET

ANNEX TWO



Mosel River

Germany

France

Rhine River

Main River

1:800000

Neckar River

Herbitzheim  
Oermingen  
Feneirange

Guising  
Hornbach

Homburg  
Neid-querbach

Landstuhl  
Enkenbach

Eisenberg  
Grunstadt

Worms

Benschheim  
Gross Umstadt

Frankfurt

ANNEX THREE

QM & ORD  
PERSONNEL  
VEHICLES

ARTILLERY  
PERSONNEL  
VEHICLES

SIGNAL  
PERSONNEL  
VEHICLES

G-4  
PERSONNEL  
VEHICLES

CG C/S  
AND G-1  
PERS VEHICLES

■ ORD  
■ QM  
■ G-4  
■ SIG

ENGRS OFF  
MESS

ENGR  
PERS  
VEHICLES

G-2 G-3  
PERSONNEL  
VEHICLES

G-3 G-2 LN

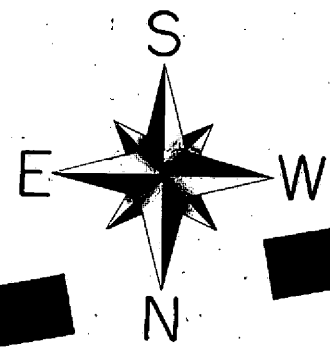
■ AIRBAT ■ HQ HQ PM DISP &  
OFF CO COMDT SURG  
MESS

■■■  
INFANTRY  
PLATOON

EMESS  
■■■

MPPLAT  
■

LIAISON  
PERSONNEL  
VEHICLES



# LOADING PLAN