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TITLE: The First Armored Division Breakthrough at Anzio.

SCOPE The attack of the 1st Armored Division out of The Anzio Beachhead with special emphasis on the extensive training program, prior planning, reconnaissance, infantry-tank cooperation, and the development and use of special equipment such as the "Snake", prior to the actual attack. A short account of the attack from 23 May to 4 June 1944 with conclusions and lessons learned.

41-138

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THE FIRST ARMORED DIVISION BREAKTHROUGH AT ANZIO

It is not the purpose of this writing to go into the why and wherefore of the Anzio Beachhead. It is the purpose here to show how a successful attack was planned, coordinated, and executed as seen through the eyes of a Lieutenant of a tank battalion.

On the first of April 1944, the 1st Battalion, 1st Armored Regiment, 1st Armored Division was located in a bivouac area approximately 6 miles from the port of Anzio, Italy. The battalion had occupied this same area since it landed on the beachhead in January. The area afforded good concealment since it was a planted pine forest in which the trees formed a solid canopy overhead. Cover was furnished by digging both men and vehicles underground. Personnel lived in dugouts ranging in capacity from one man to complete tank crews. A description of a more elaborate dugout of Company "A" 1st Armored Regiment, is best given by the late Ernie Pyle.

"But the finest dugout I've seen belongs to four officers of a tank company. This dugout is as big as the average living room back home. You can stand up in it, and it has a rough wooden floor. It has a drawing table in the center, and numerous chairs. The four officers sleep on cots around the walls. Books and magazines and pipes and pictures are scattered on tables all over the place, just like home. They have a radio, and on the table is a sign listing the bets of various people on when the invasion of Western Europe will come.

The officers brew hot tea ~~or~~ or chocolate every afternoon and evening. The dugout is heated to the baking point by one of these funny Italian stoves, which for some reason are always painted pink. The officers chop their own wood for the stove. To go with the pink stove, the boys dug up from somewhere a huge overstuffed chair covered in old-rose upholstery. They have named their dugout 'The Rose Room.'

They have several electric lights, and the crowning luxury of this palatial establishment is a Rube Goldberg arrangement of ropes and pulleys, whereby one of the lieutenants can switch off the light after he gets in bed. They even have a big white dog, slightly shell-shocked, to lie on the hearth." *

Vehicles such as tanks were dug in so that only the turrets remained above ground. Peeps and trucks were in most cases dug in so that the beds of the trucks were at ground level and the motors completely protected. These elaborate precautions were necessary because the entire beachhead was under enemy observation and because all enemy artillery entering the area had to come through the canopy of trees and was therefore in the form of tree bursts.

Although well dug in, the battalion was ready on a very few minutes notice to move from the area to any section of the front to support other units or act as a counterattacking force to restore defensive positions.

The 1st Armored Division as a whole was located in the same general area and living under the same conditions as those just described.

The mission of the division was one of corp reserve and counterattacking force. To carry out this mission plans were made covering every sector of the front. Division artillery maintained continuous firing positions reinforced by companies of tanks in indirect firing positions and by the assault guns of the division. The 16th Armored Engineer Battalion maintained routes of approach to the front line positions. The 6th Armored Infantry Regiment and the 81st Reconnaissance Battalion

occupied front line positions periodically to relieve other units. The 1st Armored Regiment supported other units of the division and acted as the counterattacking force for any threatened area of the beachhead.

On the 18th of April VI Corp issued three plans known as "Buffalo", "Turtle" and "Grasshopper" for a major attack to break through the German defenses at Anzio. Plan "Turtle" called for a major attack from astride the Anzio-Albano highway north towards Albano. Plan "Grasshopper" called for a major attack from the vicinity of Mussolini Canal towards Littoria, with the aim of joining units coming up from the main 5th Army front. Plan "Buffalo" called for an attack east and west of Cisterna north towards Cori and Valmontone.

(Fig. No. 1)

Immediately upon receipt of the corp plans the division began planning to carry out the missions assigned.

Reconnaissance was conducted by all units of the areas involved in each plan. In the 1st Armored Regiment a large 1/25,000 map of the area was prepared and each night for several weeks officers and key N.C.O.'s went forward to the units of the infantry divisions occupying the main line of resistance and made a detailed study of the terrain. These officers and men would go

forward at night and walk over the terrain in the sector, studying it with the view of tank employment. They would then occupy positions with the forward rifle platoons during the day and study the terrain in front of the main line of resistance. At night these men would be replaced by others who would follow the same procedure. All information gathered by these observers was posted on the large map at regiment until a complete terrain map was prepared showing the various conditions of the ground and all the known minefields. Since much of the terrain was marshy it was necessary many times to send a tank forward to actually maneuver over the ground and check its suitability for tank employment.

To further assist the tanks in crossing soft ground and to help overcome a deficiency characteristic of American armor of 1944, the tracks were widened by welding a flat piece of armor plate on to the grousers and then placing the grousers on the tank with the added plate to the outside. (Fig. No. 2) This was a crude beginning but a step in the right direction and undoubtedly led to the present day track extension. To further assist the tanks over difficult terrain, each tank carried two logs, 3 to 5 inches in diameter, on each side of the tank which along with the logs of the other tanks of a platoon could be dropped to give the tanks a firm platform over a soft spot of ground.

In addition to reconnaissance by officers, N.C.O.'s and by commanders using the artillery liaison airplanes, a detailed study of aerial photographs was made by commanders and staffs. Forward assembly areas were selected for all elements of the division and for many nights prior to the attack details were sent forward to prepare CP's, ~~and~~ firing positions for artillery, and to stock ammunition dumps. This work was all carried out during the hours of darkness, completed and camouflaged before daylight, to hide it from the eyes of the enemy. Since at this time it was still unknown which plan would be put into effect it was necessary to prepare positions and dumps to carry out any one of the plans.

A large terrain table of the areas over which it was contemplated the division would attack was prepared by the division engineer battalion. The table was approximately 30 feet square and showed in great detail the contour and character of the ground now held by the enemy over which the division would have to attack.

To further prepare for future operations an extensive training program was carried out. For several months training had been conducted in the 1st Armored Regiment bivouac area but this training was mostly in the form of individual training and crew drill. Also, during the months of comparative quiet on the beachhead almost

every officer and tank commander of the 1st Armored Regiment had been trained in the correct procedure for calling and adjusting artillery fire. Now, with plans laid for a major attack, training was conducted more on the platoon, company, and battalion level.

Several large training areas were selected on the right flank of the beachhead. Almost daily for weeks tank companies ran a series of tactical problems with battalions of the 6th Armored Infantry, 1st Armored Division; 135th Infantry, 34th Infantry Division; and with battalions of the Canadian-American, 1st Special Service Force. These tactical problems stressed infantry technique, infantry-tank coordination, technique of crossing obstacles, complications in communications, and mutual problems of infantry and tanks. To the present day soldier this type of training may seem commonplace but to the tankers of the 1st Armored Regiment this was definitely something new as evidenced by the following quotation from the After Action Report of Lt. Col. William R. Tuck, commanding the 1st Battalion, 1st Armored Regiment, 1st Armored Division; an officer of a battalion and division which had been fighting the German Army since November 8, 1942: "For the first time in the history of this battalion extensive training with the infantry was conducted".

During these problems, training was conducted with the view to employment of the force in combat as follows; for the medium tanks to lead the infantry, destroy with their heavier guns the main defenses, direct artillery fire, breach any obstacles such as wire and personnel mine fields and to generally over run the enemy positions thus providing the necessary shock action. Naturally, during this action it was foreseen that many isolated groups of enemy strong points would be left behind. The removal of these strong points would be the job of the infantry-light tank team which was to follow close behind the medium tanks. In this infantry-light tank team the infantry would lead followed closely by the light tanks. As the infantry moved forward and met the enemy strong points, which had been by-passed by the medium tanks, they would either remove the enemy or contain him and call for the support of a light tank. To procure the support of a light tank, if none were immediately present, the infantry merely fired a green smoke grenade which meant "light tank help wanted here" and the nearest light tank immediately moved to the spot from which the green smoke appeared. When the tank or tanks arrived at the desired location the infantry designated the target by voice, pointing, firing tracer ammunition or by any combination of these. The light tanks would then engage the enemy position with machine guns and 37mm fire and move into the enemy position, followed closely by the infantry.

Another significant first of the training program was the practice of carrying infantry on the backs of tanks. This had never been attempted in the division on a large scale.

During these infantry-tank problems the troop arrangement was generally as follows; one company of medium tanks, one battalion of infantry, and one company of light tanks. All tanks were attached to the infantry battalion. The medium tank company was employed as a unit under the direct command of its company commander. The light tank platoons were attached one to each infantry assault company with the mission of furnishing fast, close, and direct support to the infantry. The light tank company commander coordinated the movement of his light tank platoons.

In addition to this basic tank-infantry employment technique which was practiced during these training problems, the infantry was taught the limitations of the tanks and how they as infantry could assist in overcoming these limitations. The greatest limitation was the crossing of terrain obstacles such as ditches and streams. To assist here, the infantry was taught to recognize tank obstacles, to seek a possible crossing, if necessary to improve the crossing site with picks and shovels available on the tanks, and to secure the crossing site while the tanks crossed. In the case of obstacles with very steep banks; the tanks would fire a round or two of 75mm AP into the opposite bank and the infantry would obtain a bangalore torpedo from a tank of the support platoon, insert it into the hole made by the round of AP and blow out part of the bank - the tanks could then cross.

For larger obstacles which could not be handled in in the above manner another device was used. This device consisted of a section of treadway bridge which was hinged at one end to the front of a tank recovery vehicle T-2 and hoisted into the air at the other end by the "A" frame and winch on the vehicle. The employment of this equipment consisted of merely selecting the crossing site, guiding the vehicle into position and lowering the treadway bridge into place over the obstacle. Also during these problems a great deal of emphasis was placed on the use of the tank dozer in preparing crossing sites.

Since it was not tactically effecient and since communications between tanks and infantry were very poor, the infantry could not assist the tanks to any large degree in crossing major obstacles requiring the use of a treadway bridge or a tank-dozer. For this reason the reconnaissance platoons of the tank battalions were used to employ the recovery vehicle and the tank dozer. These platoons were already an organic unit with the necessary personnel, vehicles, and radios; and with the necessary experience and training in tank employment. With only the addition of special equipment they were of great help in assisting the tanks get forward.

The problem of communications, probably the biggest single obstacle in the employment of tanks and infantry together, was partially solved during these training exercises by simply exchanging extra radio sets between the tank and infantry units. The tank units furnished SCR-509 or 510 radios to the infantry units with the necessary operators. The infantry furnished SCR-300's to the tank units. This provided two means of radio communication between the tanks and infantry. The SCR-300 was used as the primary means of radio communication. To employ this radio it was necessary for the tank unit commander to have it either inside his tank or strapped to the outside of the tank turret, in either case the radio was monitored by the loader in the tank.

The best means of communication between the tanks and infantry was for the infantry unit commander - platoon, company, or battalion - to ride on or in the tank of the tank unit commander. This, of course, would not always be possible but was to be used whenever the situation permitted. By the infantry commander riding with the tank unit commander the infantry could have access to the many radio channels available in the tanks and both tanks and infantry could operate over the same radio frequency.

A difficulty that arose during these training exercises was the one of keeping the infantry up close with the tanks. It was soon noticed that if the lead tanks moved too fast they would out-distance their supporting infantry with the strong possibility of the enemy separating the tanks and infantry and destroying them individually. To combat this it was first thought that large sleds could be towed behind the tanks on which could ride a number of infantrymen - this did not prove feasible and was discarded. The solution adopted was for the infantry to ride the backs of the tanks as far as possible into battle, dismount and deploy when forced to by enemy action. If the situation permitted, the infantry would remount the tanks and continue the advance. This, of course, worked fine in the training exercises but it was felt by most commanders that it would only work in combat from the assembly position to the line of departure. It remained to be seen whether the tanks could prove to the infantryman that they both were stronger when operating close together.

A problem which faced the infantry was the one of resupply of ammunition and other equipment to assist in organizing the initial objectives and holding them against the expected enemy counterattacks. This was solved by using the support platoon of the tank companies to haul forward the infantry anti-tank guns and to carry loads of ammunition, wire, and other supplies necessary in organizing a strong defensive position.

A big problem facing the tanks was the known minefields which had to be penetrated. It was estimated that the enemy minefields in front of the allied positions were approximately 300 yards deep and in addition there were many allied minefields which had been placed during the early days of the beachhead and never accurately plotted, if plotted at all.

To clear a path through the enemy minefield the division engineer battalion went to work on the use and construction of a "Snake".* This weapon had never been used before in the war and very little was known about it. After much experimentation the engineers arrived at what they believed was the answer to the problem and enough "Snakes" were built to clear four paths of over 300 yards each. Two paths in each combat command sector. The "Snakes" that were built and later used were capable of blasting a crater and clearing a path approximately 320 feet long, 15 feet wide, and 3 feet deep. By using three snakes in each lane it would be possible to clear a lane of approximately 960 feet or slightly over 300 yards.

*War Department, Land Mines and Booby Traps, FM 5-31,
par.46.02 - Passage of Obstacles Other Than Mine Fields,
TM 5-220, par. 23.01

It was foreseen by all tank commanders that the tank losses in the initial stages of the attack would be extremely heavy and the replacements for the division would number only about 24 medium tanks and 4 light tanks for the first day. Therefore, it was imperative that every tank capable of repair be recovered and repaired almost as soon as it was knocked out. To speed the recovery of tanks from minefields a procedure was worked out wherein each tank carried its tow cable fastened at both ends in the two towing shackles on the rear of the tank with the cable fashioned into a large circle and secured with baling wire just above the exhaust on the rear deck of the tank. The T-2 recovery vehicles were equipped with an "A" frame type tow bar with a large hook at the pointed end, fastened to the front towing shackles of the vehicle and raised and lowered by means of a cable from the assistant drivers seat. In this way a recovery vehicle could drive up to the rear of a disabled tank, insert the tow bar hook into the circle formed by the disabled tanks tow cable, engage the tow cable and as the recovery vehicle moved to the rear the tow cable would snap the baling wire holding it in position, take up the slack and begin to pull the disabled tank to the rear. The advantage of this type recovery was; the recovery vehicle could enter and leave the minefield in the same tracks used by the disabled tank, and at no time was it necessary for the men of the recovery vehicle to leave the safety of their vehicle.

At the same time that this training and special equipment was being perfected unit commanders and their staffs were continually meeting and planning in the most minute detail the actual conduct of the attack. Hours and days were spent by the tank unit commanders with the infantry commanders, exchanging information and ideas, studying the terrain, and virtually planning the movement of each tank and infantry squad from the line of departure to the objectives. The attack which was to eventually be launched seemed as if it would be the main performance of a stage play, rehearsed and practiced to perfection.

On May 20, VI Corp issued the order which designated plan "Buffalo" as the one to be executed and 0630 on the 23rd May as H-hour and D-day.

A cover plan had already been put into effect which tended to lead the enemy into believing the major attack would be along the Anzio-Albano road. Numerous reconnaissance parties were operating in the British sector wearing 1st Armored Division patches. Dummy radio stations were set up in an attempt to mislead the enemy as to the location of the planned offensive. Air OP's increased their activity in the vicinity of the Anzio-Albano road. Each morning for several weeks corp and division artillery fired a twenty minute "Sunrise serenade" which led the enemy troops to view the morning barrage as an American waste of ammunition. On one morning this routine "serenade" would be followed by a full scale attack much to the surprise of the German soldier.

For the next three days after Corp issued the order for the attack, hours were spent by tank and infantry commanders and staffs in a series of conferences in which every detail and maneuver in the plan was studied, discussed, and decided prior to the attack. On the afternoon of the 22 May a meeting was held in an underground theater which had been built by the 1st Battalion, 1st Armored Regiment; the building of this theater is a story in itself. At this meeting, which was attended by all officers and key NCO's of the assault units in the CCA sector, the plan and conduct of the attack was gone over for the last time. Each officer and NCO was told and shown on the map exactly what his unit was to do during the operation. Following this meeting, the officers and NCO's held meetings in their respective companies and told all the men the final plan and details of the operation. In this way every man in the assaulting units knew the complete plan of action.

On the night 21 May the friendly minefields were gapped. Also on the nights 21 - 22 May and 22 - 23 May, assault elements moved to forward assembly positions without incident. Dummy tanks were placed in the positions vacated by 13th Armored Regiment tanks.

Old artillery positions were left camouflaged when the units moved forward to the new positions which had been prepared and stocked weeks earlier. Artillery ammunition allowances stocked in the initial positions were 800 rpg for each light battalion and 600 rpg for each medium battalion. Limitations on ammunition D to D / 4 inclusive were 1150 rpg for 105's and 950 rpg for 155's. The artillery fire plan for the attack consisted of virtually indexing the entire enemy terrain in the sector of advance. The preparatory barrage, fired prior to H-hour, was to be on all known and suspected installations and along the line of the railroad. This preparatory barrage was to last for twenty minutes, raise for ten minutes while the air force took over, then resume and last for another twenty minutes. During the last twenty minutes assault troop would be moving to the line of departure. Following the preparatory barrages the artillery would fire call missions and in addition three rounds of colored smoke every twenty minutes in each combat command sector to guide the advance of the assault troops.

Air support for the operation was:

- 72 Light Dive bombers at H-hour on the line of the railroad.
- 24 Light bombers on Cori.
- 1 Heavy Bomber Group on Velletri and Sezze.
- 12 Fighter bombers every twenty minutes all day long.

The scheme of maneuver for the 1st Armored Division

Was:

Phase I. Division attack with combat commands abreast, each employing one regiment infantry (-1 bn) supported by one battalion of medium tanks and one battalion of light tanks (-) in the assault echelon, to seize the line of the railroad in order that following engineers could gap minefields and prepare crossings for tanks.

Phase II. Combat commands attack with tanks supported by infantry and TD's to seize successive objectives and establish infantry of 34th Division on line. Units attached from 34th Infantry Division to revert to parent organization at this time.

Phase III. Combat commands with one battalion each of 1st Armd. Div. infantry to seize successive objectives.

Combat Command "A" was on the left and CCB on the right. Combat Command "A" consisted of the following troops:

Hq. CCA
 1st Armd Regt (-B&D Companies)
 135th Inf (-3rd Bn), (34th Inf Div)
 81st Recon Bn (-A Co)
 "D" Co 16th Armd Eng Bn (✓)
 "B" Co 109th Eng Bn (34th Inf Div)
 "A" Co 801st Tank Destroyer Bn
 "A" Co 83rd Chemical Mortar Bn
 1 platoon 1st Armd Div MP's

Direct Support:

27th Armd FA Bn
 125th FA Bn, (34th Inf Div)

General Support:

634th, 185th, and
 175th FA Bns
 434th AAA AW Bn

Combat Command "B" was organized essentially the same as CCA except that the regiment of infantry was not attached from the 34th Infantry Division but was the 6th Armored Infantry Regiment of the 1st Armored Division.

The 1st Armored Division was to attack through the 34th Infantry Division, which was holding the MLR. In the CCA sector the 135th Infantry of the 34th Infantry Division was occupying the MLR. This regiment, attached to the 1st Armored Division and CCA, moved forward following the tanks at H-hour. In CCA sector the tank units were subordinate to the infantry regiment during the initial penetration of the enemy defenses, Phase I. During Phase II and III the infantry units were subordinate to the tank regiment.

It can be seen from the organization of the combat commands that each was extremely strong, virtually a small division heavy in tanks. For this attack a man was sent to do a mans' job, which was not always possible in the Mediterreanan Theater.....

The Allied and German Divisions in contact on 22-23 May were as shown in Fig. 1 . It can be seen from the dispositions of the German troops that the enemy actually was strongest along the Anzio-Albano road and that the offensive was launched at his weakest points.

It should be noted here that although this writing primarily concerns the 1st Armored Division; the offensive was launched by all divisions with the 1st Armored Division and the 3rd Infantry Division making the main effort, the 1st Special Service Force, the 45th Infantry Division and the 1st and 5th Infantry Divisions (British) making strong feints to contain the enemy troops in their respective sectors. Also, it should be noted that on the 12th of May the major 5th Army front from Cassino west to the sea had moved forward in the attack and was rapidly approaching a junction with the beachhead forces.

At H-20 minutes on 23rd May 1944, the breakout of the "largest German prison camp of the war", the Anzio Beachhead, began. The attack began with the most terrific artillery barrage ever witnessed by this writer. To say that it sounded as if the whole beachhead was exploding would be an understatement. For twenty minutes this barrage continued and then, as if someone had pulled a switch, it ceased. For the next ten minutes the stage belonged to the air corp. As the last shell exploded on the enemy the first bombers appeared to begin their reign of destruction. For ten full minutes the bombers blasted the enemy positions. As the last bomber cleared the target area the artillery began the final twenty minutes of the preparatory barrage.

During the air attacks, in the CCA sector, the six snakes were moved forward and detonated to clear two lanes through the enemy minefields. Snakes were not used in the CCB sector, initially.

During the final artillery barrage the assault units began moving forward to begin their attack. The employment and disposition of the assault units were as previously planned and practiced during the training problems for this offensive. In CCA sector the medium tank battalion led the attack with the special platoon, "Red Raiders", of the 135th Infantry riding the tanks. This platoon was made up of volunteers who had been trained as raiders and for special patrol work. Following the medium tanks were the two battalions of infantry. Supporting the infantry, and moving with the infantry, were the two companies of light tanks. Immediately supporting the assault troops were the organic support units of the infantry regiment and tank battalions, such as the assault gun platoons, mortar platoons and heavy weapons companies. Additional support was rendered by the company of tank destroyers and the company of 4.2 chemical mortars.

Less than two hours after the attack was launched the "Red Raiders" returned with approximately 150 to 200 prisoners taken from enemy outpost positions. Most of these first prisoners were in a shocked and dazed condition, bleeding at the nose, ears and mouth as a result of the terrific concussion of the six "Snakes". These prisoners truly believed the Americans had a "secret weapon".

All day on the 23rd the attack progressed in the CCA sector, it was slow due to the many minefields but it was consistent. By 1900 hours the line of the railroad had been seized and secured and by dark the high ground northeast of the railroad was occupied. In all, the combat command had moved forward about six thousand yards. Combat Command "B" had not been ~~not been~~ as fortunate as CCA, mainly because the "Snake" was not used until late in the afternoon. By dark on the 23rd May, CCB had cleared a path through the minefields and was approaching the line of the railroad. (Fig.No. 5.)

The personnel casualties for the day were phenomenally low in view of the immensity of the operation. In the division sector the infantry suffered only 92 casualties of which only 9 were in the CCA sector. The tank casualties were high, as had been expected, a total of 116 for the division with over 70 percent suffered in the CCB sector.

The success of the first days attack can best be given by the following quotation from the German operation report: " 362nd Infantry Division lost 50 percent of its fighting power".* The German army commander issued the following order as a result of the first days operation: " On 24 May, it is of prime importance, to concentrate all forces to prevent an enemy breakthrough. All heavy anti-tank guns, assault guns and tanks will be committed at the points where the enemy concentrates his tanks, by ruthlessly depleting all sectors not affected by the attack".*

On the 24th May the attack was resumed with CCA and CCB both advancing slowly under very heavy anti-tank fire. By dark the division had succeeded in crossing the Via Appia north of Cisterna. This cut the main German route to Cisterna and materially assisted the 3rd Infantry Division in its capture of Cisterna on the 25th May. The Germans report that by dark on the 24th " -- the artillery batteries of the 362nd Infantry Division were in close combat with enemy tanks and infantry".*

* War Department, Military Intelligence Division. The German Operation at Anzio. pp. 106-107.

The attack was continued on the 25th May after the left flank of the 1st Armored Division sector and attached troops of the 34th Division, had passed to the command of the 34th Infantry Division, as previously planned. In the CCA sector the terrain restricted the tanks and the enemy reacted strongly to our advance. As a result, by dark the combat command was still short of its objective. Seventeen tanks were lost by CCA in this days attack. In the CCB sector, resistance was light and the terrain favorable. By 1300 hours the combat command had secured its objective and by dark elements had cut the Velletri-Cori road in several places.

After dark on the 25th May, VI Corp ordered a task force detached 1st Armored Division and attached to 3rd Infantry Division to continue the attack on Artena. This force, "Task Force Howze", consisted of the following troops:

13th Armd Regt less Recon Co and 2 Bns
 1st Bn 6th Armd Inf
 1 Co 701st Tank Destroyer Bn
 1 Co 81st Recon Bn
 1 Co 16th Armd Eng Bn
 91st Armd FA Bn
 1 Battery 434th AAA AW Bn
 1 Co 47th Armd Medical Bn

The loss of these troops materially affected the striking power of the 1st Armored Division. VI Corp also ordered the 1st Armored Division sector and axis of attack shifted along Highway #7.

On the 26th May the division continued the attack at 1100 hours after considerable regrouping of forces. The attack met with heavy resistance and bad terrain. Although progress was made during the day, by night the division was still short of its objective, Velletri.

On the 27th May, the division was relieved and returned to its original positions, of the 23rd May, for badly needed maintenance and reorganization. The 1st Armored Division was ordered to attack on 29th May in the sector of the 45th Division generally northwest along the axis of the railroad. (Fig. No. 5 Situation Map)

The attack in this new sector was launched on the 29th May and continued until the night of 31st May. In that time less than 5,000 yards was gained with very heavy losses in men and material. Seventy-nine tanks were lost in these three days of fighting.

Many factors contributed to the small gain made in these three days of the hardest fighting since the breakout began, on the 23rd May. A few of these factors were:

1. The enemy had been expecting this attack since 23rd May and was ready for it.

2. If the enemy was penetrated in this sector and the allies allowed to seize Albano, enemy troops retreating from the southern front through Rome would be cut off - this the Germans could not allow.

3. Coordination between tanks and infantry of the 1st Armored and 45th Infantry Divisions was very poor.

4. The 1st Armored Division was materially reduced in combat efficiency through casualties to officers and key NCO's, and through the loss of a large portion of its troop to another Division (Task Force Howze).

5. Tank strength was low since most tanks were knocked out by anti-tank fire and completely destroyed.

6. The enemy had brought in reinforcements and was firmly entrenched in a prepared defensive position with the mission of holding at all costs.

Extracts from the German Army order on the 27th May, one day before our attack in the new sector, are quoted here.

"The army considers the following to be the intentions of the enemy: First, to make a breakthrough in the area between Aprilia and the Albanese Mountains, in a northwesterly direction; second, to make a breakthrough towards Valmontone with the bulk of its forces in order to surround the southern flank of the Tenth Army, and to cut off their communications to the rear.. The I Parachute Corp will hold its present position. In the sectors of the 4th Parachute Division, the 65 Infantry Division, and 3^d Panzer Grenadier Division, a gradual withdrawal to the C-line is probably^e, and must be prepared for. In the sector of the 362d Infantry Division, which is already in the C-line, the position will be held at all costs. The enemy must be brought to a final halt in front of the line. This order pertains to the entire C-line, it has been issued by Hitler—". *

On the 1st and 2nd of June the bulk of the division was out of the line for reorganization. Commanders conducted reconnaissance for an attack along the Anzio-Albano road.

At 1330 hours on 3rd June the division attacked northwest towards Albano. The attack met resistance mainly in the form of mines, demolitions, and scattered strong points. It was apparent that the enemy was withdrawing the bulk of his forces.

* War Department, Military Intelligence Division. The German Operation at Anzio. p.113

At 0345 hours during the night of 3-4 June the attack was continued. Late in the afternoon of 4th June the division had occupied the city of Rome within its sector.

The welcome received by American troops in the city of Rome was on a scale never before or after witnessed by this writer. Our reception by the populace was the wildest and most enthusiastic imaginable. Every American soldier must have felt like a conquering hero riding down 5th Avenue. With the capture of the city of Rome the breakout of the Anzio beachhead was complete and the pursuit phase of the operation began.

There are many lessons to be learned from a study of operation "Buffalo"; the most important of which is the soundness of our military teachings. Our military manuals devote much space to such subjects as; thorough reconnaissance prior to attack, prior planning, complete coordination between troops and commands, communications and liaison, training for the attack, adequate time for lower unit commanders to perfect their plans, sound maneuver and fire plans. In almost every way the attack out of the Anzio Beachhead conformed to established doctrine and teaching.

It is seldom, in time of combat, that adequate time is available for thorough planning and training before an operation. During World War II the times when this was possible were usually before a major amphibious operation on a hostile shore and even then, for security reasons, lower unit commanders and troops were not able to know or adequately study the terrain over which the operation was to take place. At Anzio time was not only available for planning and training but in addition troops which were to conduct the operation were able to study the terrain and the enemy to such an extent that each and every man knew exactly what he was to do, how, when and where he was to do it.

Although, as stated before, seldom in time of combat is it possible to devote the necessary time to completely prepare for an operation; the success of this one attack at Anzio should be sufficient to prove to the most skeptical individual, that our military teachings are sound and that the more thorough the planning, training, and preparation before an attack, the more successful will be that attack and the lower the number of casualties necessary to obtain the objective.

3. This operation proved conclusively the value of the tank-infantry team when properly trained and employed. The first three days of the attack were so successful that even now it is hard to believe. The success was primarily due to the cooperation that existed between the tanks and infantry; each recognizing the capabilities and limitations of the other and working to assist one another. An example of the tank-infantry cooperation that existed during this operation can be shown by the following quotations:

From a tank company commander. "...suddenly an enemy self-propelled 88 or 75mm gun cleverly camouflaged in the many orchards and vineyards in the rolling country, opened up and knocked out one of the leading medium tanks. The disposition of this SP gun was clearly a job for the infantry. They realized this, also, and they went ahead quickly, quietly and efficiently. They outflanked it in a way all the authors of the pertinent FM's would be proud of, and knocked it out with bazookas and grenades." *

* After Action Report, Company A, 1st Armored Regiment, 1st Armored Division, May 1944.

Many other lessons can be obtained from the Anzio breakthrough. Some of these are:

1. The "Snake" which was never before or again used in the past war, is a valuable weapon for special situations. It, of course, cannot be used on a minutes notice but takes a great deal of time and planning for its employment. Smaller and more mobile versions of the "Snake" are now available and should prove valuable in many situations of any future ground combat operations.

2. The value of an adequate vehicle recovery system for an armored organization cannot be overstressed. During the Anzio breakthrough, from the 23rd to 31st of May, the 1st Armored Division lost 161 M4 medium tanks and 48 M5 light tanks, by enemy action. Of this number 117 M4's and 25 M5's were recovered and of those recovered 100 M4's and 12 M5's were returned to duty within an average of 48 hours. Without a superior recovery and maintenance system it would have been impossible for the 1st Armored Division to continue the attack to its successful completion.

From a private in the infantry raider platoon upon being asked how he liked fighting with tanks. "You know Lieutenant, I figured that those big cans would make it plenty rough on us by attracting so much attention so I decided I'd ride on the back till Jerry fired the first shot then I was getting the hell away from that tank. But you know this morning (23rd May) when we were just moving in, a Jerry machine gun opened up on one of the other tanks and I was just getting ready to tell my tank 'Goodbye' when my Sargeant tapped the guy in the tank on the shoulder and pointed to the machine gun. Boy! do you know that tank just swung that big old gun right around and wham, he knocked that machine gun out with one shot. After that I just figured I'd stay around pretty close to that tank if he could knock out machine guns as fast as that."

From an officer of the 135th Infantry Regiment. "My men are really sold on those tanks. They are really enthusiastic about the way those tanks worked right along with them, especially the light tanks. They are still talking about the way those light tanks darted around like a bunch of bees and every time a doughboy called, a light tank would come from no-where and help him out. We'll fight with 1st Armored tanks any day."

4. Another lesson, as a result of this operation, which must of necessity be expressed only as an opinion of this writer but one which is also expressed in the 1st Armored Division Operations Report is that a definite mistake was made on the night of 25th May. On the night 25th May the 1st Armored Division was ordered to halt and release a large portion of its troops to another division. This order came at a time when CCB was advancing with very little resistance and every indication was that a complete breakthrough was imminent. Instead of exploiting the success of CCB with the entire division, a large portion of the fighting power of the division was given to an infantry division. The 1st Armored Division was ordered to pass command of the CCB sector to another infantry division and shift its axis of advance to the CCA sector which had already shown itself as strongly defended and unsuitable for tanks. Instead of the 1st Armored Division exploiting through the mountain gap in the CCB sector; the division found itself trying to advance headlong into the city of Velletri and the mountains to the northwest.

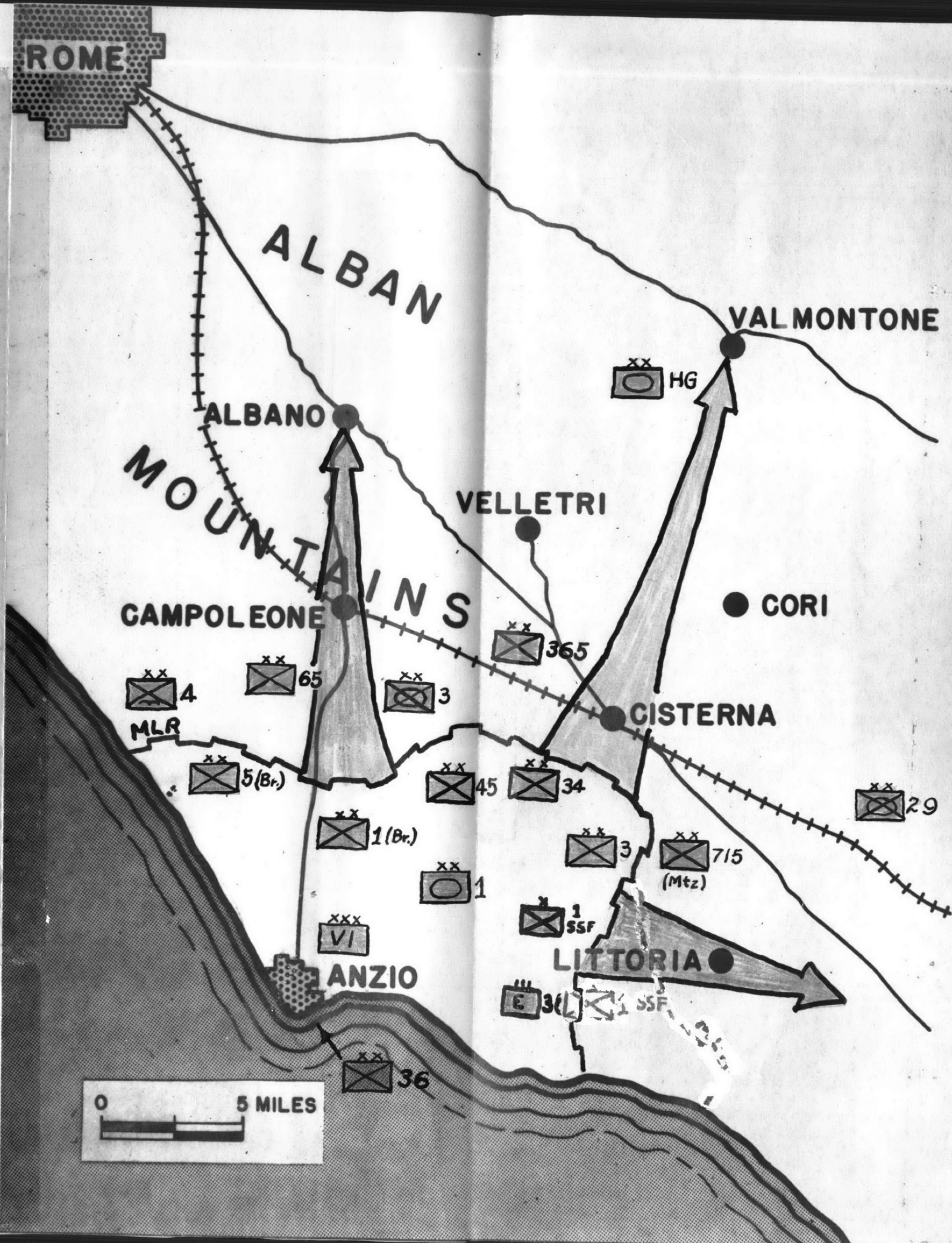
If the success of the 1st Armored Division in the attack at Anzio could be laid to any one reason that reason would undoubtedly be the thorough planning, training, and coordination between tanks and infantry as developed during the training exercises prior to the major offensive.

The operation of the 1st Armored Division at Anzio is notable not because it was such an abnormal operation but because it more nearly conforms to the normal employment as depicted in our military teachings - the attack of an armored division through friendly infantry to penetrate an enemy defense and secure objectives in the enemy rear.

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Figure 1. Units in contact on 23 May 1944 and general directions of attack for plans "Buffalo", "Turtle", and "Grasshopper".



5a



Figure 2. A tank of Co. "A", 1st Armd. Regt. in bivouac area at Anzio, showing; the method of widening the tracks by welding extensions on the grousers, the chains on the sides of the hull for carrying logs and the stowage container welded on to the rear of the turret.



Figure 3. Tanks and infantry training on the Anzio Beachhead for the coming attack. Beachhead front lines about six miles on the distant horizon.

24a

Figure 5. General front lines 23 May to 2 June 1944 and general axis of attack of 1st Armored Division troops.

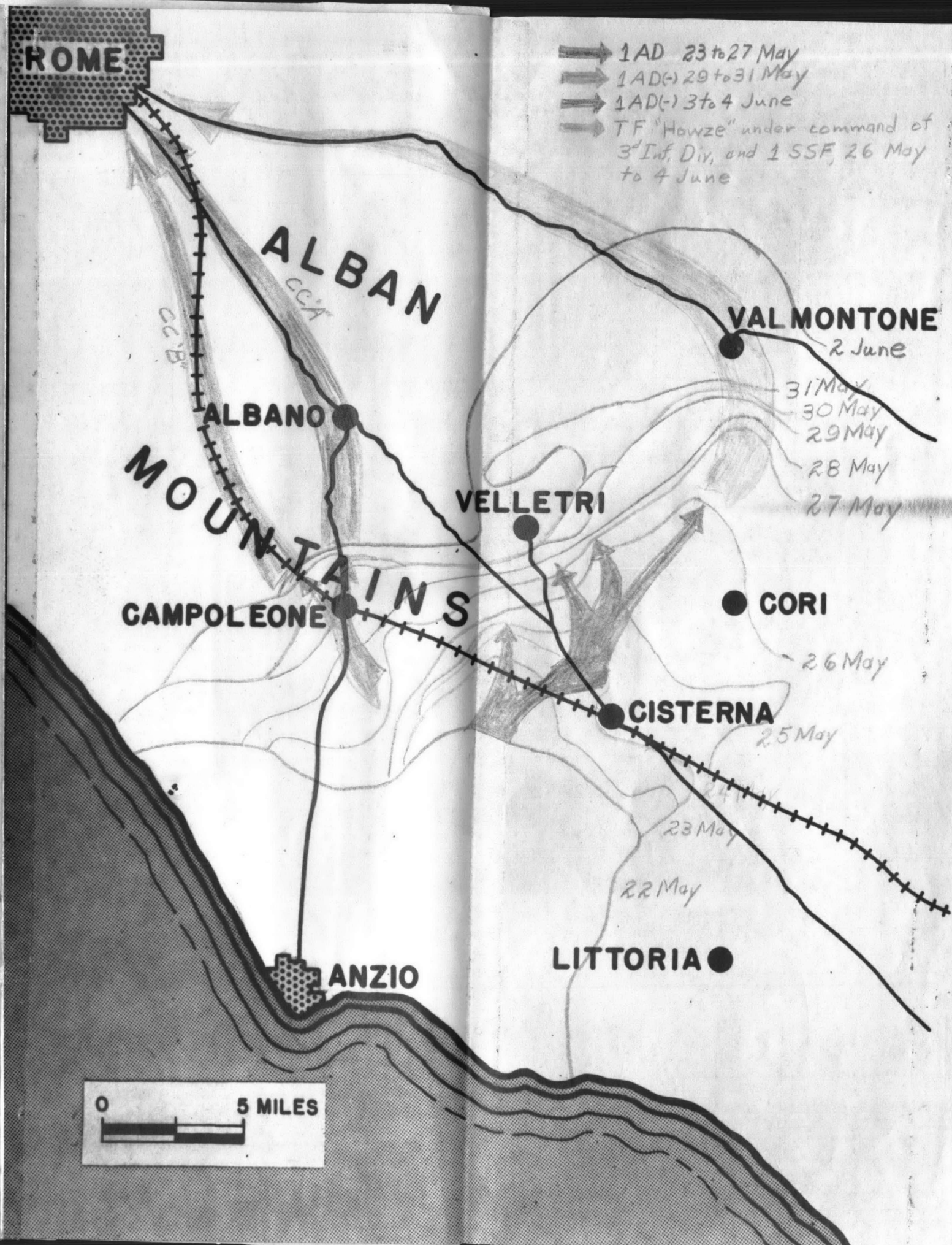




Figure 6. Remains of a German "Tiger" tank near Cori, Italy. This tank was knocked out, during the breakthrough from Anzio, by heavy artillery or air forces. (Signal Corp. photo.)