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January 16, 1945

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NOTES ON BASTOGNE OPERATION

By December 10, 1944, the Saar Offensive of the 3rd Army, begun on November 8, had progressed to the point where the XX Corps had forced a crossing of the Saar at SAARLAUTERN, using the 90th and 95th Infantry Divisions, and had the 5th Infantry and 10th Armored Divisions prepared to exploit the impending break-through of the Siegfried Line in that town. The left of the Corps from REMICH to MERZIG was covered by a Task Force consisting of the 3rd Cavalry Group Reinforced, Colonel Polk commanding.

In the XII Corps zone the crossings over the Saar had been forced and the Corps was attacking in a northeasterly direction parallel to the BLIES River.

December 12, 1944

As a result of the meeting with General Spaatz, General Doolittle, General Vandenberg, General Weyland and myself, a definite scheme for the rupture of the Siegfried Line in the vicinity of ZWEIBRUCKEN-KAISERLAUTERN by a three day air blitz, followed immediately by a ground assault had been arranged, with target date the 19th of December.

In XII Corps, the 87th Division had relieved 26th Division east of SAAREGUEMINES, and the latter had assembled at METZ and taken over the training of 4,000 replacements secured through a 5% cut in the overhead of all Corps and Army troops in the 3rd Army.

The 5th and 80th Divisions were up to strength but the Army as a whole was 12,000 short. All divisions were ordered to cannibalize headquarters and anti-tank gun sections to provide infantry riflemen.

December 16, 1944

In the XX Corps, the 5th Infantry Division began to relieve the 95th Division in SAARLAUTERN, preparatory to the final assault for a break of the Siegfried Line. It was then to attack NE in the Corps zone supported by the 10th Armored Division.

Due to heavy enemy resistance, the date of the air blitz at ZWEIBRUCKEN was moved to December 21 to assure the arrival of ground troops within assaulting distance of the Siegfried Line in time for this date. The XII Corps started to place the 80th Infantry and 4th Armored in line abreast of the 87th Infantry Division.

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December 16, 1944(Cont'd)

The III Corps, consisting of the 26th and 6th Armored Divisions, which had become operational December 15, initiated a reconnaissance with a view to passing through the 35th Infantry Division, XII Corps, immediately subsequent to the blitz.

Orders were issued for movement of Headquarters 3rd Army to ST. AVOLD on December 19.

Orders were received from Twelfth Army Group directing the 10th Armored Division be temporarily attached to VIII Corps, First Army, to counter a serious attempt at a break-through on the part of the enemy, this movement to be initiated December 17.

December 18, 1944

At the direction of the Army Group Commander I reported to his Headquarters in Luxembourg, accompanied by G-2, G-3, and G-4 of the 3rd Army. The situation of the enemy break-through, as then known, was explained.

General Bradley asked when I could intervene. I stated I could do so with three divisions very shortly. I then telephoned the Chief of Staff 3rd Army and directed that the attack of the 4th Armored and 80th Infantry Divisions be halted and sufficient transportation to move the 80th Division anytime after dawn of the 19th be collected. That the 4th Armored Division be prepared to move the night 18-19 December. Also to notify the XIX Tactical Air Command that the blitz was off for the present.

General Bradley called at 2200 hours and stated that the situation was worse than it had been at noon and directed that the troops as per previous paragraph be moved as rapidly as possible. Also that General Milliken move forward echelon of his headquarters to the front. I suggested ARLON. This was approved. General Bradley further ordered that General Milliken report in person to the Chief of Staff Twelfth Army Group on the morning of the 19th; and that I, accompanied by one staff officer, meet General Bradley for a conference with General Eisenhower at VERDUN at 1100 the same date.

One Combat Command of the 4th Armored moved at midnight on LONGWY, followed by remainder of division at dawn. The 80th Infantry started to move on LUXEMBOURG at dawn December 19. The G-4 of the Twelfth Army Group facilitated these operations by a rapid collection of truck companies from Com. Z.

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December 19, 1944

Meeting of all Corps Commanders and the Commanding General of the XIX Tactical Air Command and the General Staff of the 3rd Army was called at 0800. The new situation was explained. I stated that the reputation of the 3rd Army and XIX Tactical Air Command for speed and effectiveness resulted from the efficiency of the officers present, and that I counted upon them for even greater successes.

On the assumption that the VIII Corps would be assigned to 3rd Army, a plan for the employment of III and VIII Corps was drawn up. Three possible lines of attack were envisaged: NEUFCHATEAU-ST. HUBERT; ARLON-BASTOGNE; SUXEMBOURG-DIEKIRCH-ST. VITH.

A brief telephone code between myself and the Chief of Staff 3rd Army was drawn up.

Left for VERDUN at 0930, arriving at 1045.

As a result of the conference, the Supreme Commander directed that the Sixth Army Group take over the southern front as far north as the southern boundary of the XX Corps, 3rd Army; the 6th Armored Division to stay in the SAARBUCKEN area until relieved by elements of the 7th Army. The 87th and 42nd Infantry Divisions of the 3rd Army to pass to the 7th Army.

At this moment, it seemed to me probable that the 3rd Army in its new role would be constituted as follows:

VIII Corps (Gen. Middleton) in vicinity of NEUFCHATEAU--101st Airborne Division, and elements of 28th Infantry, 9th and 10th Armored Divisions, and 106th Infantry Division, plus Corps troops. III Corps (Gen. Milliken) in vicinity of ARLON--26th Infantry, 80th Infantry, and 4th Armored Divisions. The XII Corps (Gen. Eddy) to be assembled in vicinity of LUXEMBOURG--consisting of 35th, 4th, and 5th Infantry Divisions, and elements of the 9th and 10th Armored Divisions. The XX Corps (Gen. Walker) in vicinity of THIONVILLE--90th and 95th Infantry Divisions, 6th Armored Division when relieved by 7th Army, and Task Force Polk.

In reply to a question from General Eisenhower as to when the 3rd Army could attack to the north, I stated it could attack with III Corps on the 23rd of December.

After meeting at VERDUN, I called Chief of Staff 3rd Army on phone and gave following instructions: 26th Infantry Division to be moved December 20 to vicinity of ARLON, advanced detachments to move at once. The XII Corps to disengage, and Corps Headquarters and artillery to move to vicinity of LUXEMBOURG 21st of December, leaving a working headquarters at old location until such time as it could be relieved by XV Corps, 7th Army. 35th Infantry Division to be withdrawn from line and assembled at METZ. Tactical Echelon 3rd Army Headquarters to move on LUXEMBOURG 20th of December. Forward Echelon III Corps to move in vicinity of ARLON at once.

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December 20, 1944

I visited Twelfth Army Group at LUXEMBOURG, then the Commanding Generals of the III and VIIIX Corps and 4th Armored Division at ARLON, later visited Headquarters 4th and 26th Infantry Divisions, 9th and 10th Armored Divisions, and the advanced echelon 80th Division which had just reached LUXEMBOURG.

As it was apparent that for the present the VIII Corps had no offensive power, it was directed to hold BASTOGNE with the 101st Airborne Division and following attachments: one CC of the 9th Armored and one CC of the 10th Armored Divisions; the 705th TD Bn., less one company; and some Corps Artillery. Remainder of the Corps to fall back, using delaying action and demolitions.

The III Corps is to attack with the purpose of relieving BASTOGNE on 22nd of December at 0600. The Commanding General 10th Armored Division was directed to take temporary command of XII Corps pending arrival of that Headquarters. Also to incorporate in his unit one CC of the 9th Armored Division in the vicinity of LUXEMBOURG. The Commanding General of the 9th Armored Division with his Headquarters was sent to VIII Corps to take over command of two combat commands of the 9th Armored and one combat command of the 10th Armored Division.

Through the Chief of Staff 3rd Army arranged for immediate movement to new theater of combat of all self-propelled tank destroyer battalions and separate tank battalions, necessary ammunition, engineers, and hospitals.

Also, that the 5th Division be disengaged at SAARLAUTERN and be moved on LUXEMBOURG at once. NOTE: The 10th Infantry of the 5th Division actually reached LUXEMBOURG at midnight this date, and one company of tank destroyers of the 818th TD Bn, which had been in combat east of the Saar River in the morning, opened fire on the enemy north of the Sauer River that night, having marched in the meantime 69 miles.

It is noteworthy that all the operations, including plans for attack executed on the 22nd of December, were done by personal conference or by telephone, and that the highly complicated road and supply movements were only made possible by the old and very experienced General Staff of the 3rd Army and the high discipline and devotion to duty of all the units involved.

December 21, 1944

U. S. losses during Saar Operation from November 8th to midnight December 21st amounted to 29,688 killed, wounded, and missing. During the same period, enemy opposed to the 3rd Army lost 40,265 prisoners of War or buried by our Graves Registration.

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December 22, 1944

The III Corps (4th Armored, 26th, and 80th Infantry Divisions) attacked at 0600. BASTOGNE was still holding out. The 10th Infantry Regiment of the 5th Division, XII Corps, attacked NE on ECHTERNACH, driving the enemy towards the river.

December 23, 1944

The weather fine. Seven fighter-bomber groups, eleven medium-bomber groups, and one division of the 8th Air Force and elements of the RAF were up in support of the 3rd Army.

The III Corps continued its attack. The XII Corps continued its limited attack. The XX Corps launched an attack in the direction of SAARBOURG as a diversion.

The 35th Infantry Division closed in METZ at 2400 hours.

December 24, 1944

The 6th Cavalry Group, reinforced with one company of engineers and one company of tank destroyers, moved, this date, to join the III Corps.

The III Corps continues attack. The XII Corps cleared Sauer River from DIEKIRCH inclusive to ECHTERNACH exclusive.

December 25, 1944

Clear and cold. All the air up. Visited all front line divisions. Where men were in contact and could not get hot Xmas dinner, they were served chicken sandwiches.

Exchanged the 6th Armored Division (XX Corps) with 10th Armored Division (XII Corps) effective tonight.

The 35th Infantry Division which closed at METZ on midnight the 23rd of December, absorbed 2000 replacements from the second 5% cut in Corps and Army troops of 3rd Army, all with less than a week's training. They will close north of ARLON at 1400 tomorrow, prepared to attack between the 26th Infantry and 4th Armored Divisions the morning of the 27th. The 80th Infantry Division passes to XII Corps at 1800, the 26th.

December 26, 1944

Combat Command "A", 9th Armored Division, serving with 10th Armored Division in XII Corps joined to 4th Armored Division this morning and attacks west of CC "R" (Col. Blanchard) 4th Armored Division.

Colonel Blanchard's CC "R" by a very daring attack entered BASTOGNE 1645 with one battalion of armored infantry and one battalion of tanks. We

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December 26, 1944 (Cont'd)

took in 40 truckloads of supplies that night, thus re-opening the supply route. Also, 22 ambulances with a total of 652 wounded were evacuated; the first night 224 went out and the remaining were evacuated the next morning.

The total time from the moment when the 4th Armored Division left the SAARBHUCKEN sector to the taking of BASTOGNE was seven days; the distance covered was 120 miles; the distances gained by combat during four days was 16 miles. In addition to the 4th Armored Division, the 318th Infantry (less 3rd battalion) of the 80th Division and Combat Command "A" of the 9th Armored Division should be given special credit for the penetration into BASTOGNE.

The 6th Armored Division closed on LUXEMBOURG. The 87th Infantry and 17th Airborne and 11th Armored Divisions are near REIMS in SHAEF Reserve. the 3rd Army requested their assignment.

December 28, 1944

General Bradley explained further operations for a future continuation of the Army Group offensive action.

The 11th Armored and 87th Infantry Divisions released to 3rd Army and assigned to the VIII Corps.

December 29, 1944

Started 11th Armored and 87th Infantry Divisions on NEUFCHATEAU. They should close by 2400 and will attack west of BASTOGNE on HOUFFALIZE at 0800 December 30th.

6th Armored Division closed north of ARLON, preparatory to attacking on the axis BASTOGNE-ST. VITH on the 31st.

December 30, 1944

The 11th Armored Division on the right and the 87th Infantry Division on the left jumped off at 0800 and ran into the flank of a German counterattack headed SE to cut off BASTOGNE. The German attack consisted of the 130th Panzer Lehr Division and the 26th Volksgrenadier Division. Our attack stopped them and turned them back. At the same time on the other flank of the BASTOGNE bulge, the 35th and 26th Infantry Divisions were attacked by the 1st SS Panzer Division and the 167th Volksgrenadier Division. The artillery of the 4th Armored Division came to the help of the 35th Infantry Division, and the enemy was repulsed with the loss of 55 tanks. This repulse was largely aided by the action of the XIX Tactical Air Command which was able to fly most of the day despite very bad weather. The 101st Airborne Division also repulsed a counterattack from the NW.

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December 30, 1944 (Cont'd)

Unquestionably, this was the critical day of the operation, as there was a concerted effort on the part of the Germans, using at least five divisions, to again isolate BASTOGNE.

Twenty-one Germans, wearing U. S. uniforms were killed in battle.

Army Commander entered BASTOGNE and decorated Brigadier General McAuliffe.

December 31, 1944

Very bad weather with snow and sleet. Tractors could not be used to pull guns. Necessary to use the diamond-six trucks.

Germans continued to counterattack strongly, but the 6th Armored Division attacked as planned and made 4 kilometers on its axis. The enemy counterattacked 17 times today--11 repulsed with heavy losses to the enemy. We also sustained casualties, particularly in the case of the 11th Armored Division which is very green.

The 17th Airborne Division was released to the 3rd Army and is being replaced at REIMS by the 28th Infantry Division less one regiment still with the First Army.

January 1, 1945

At 0001 all guns of 3rd Army fired a New Year's greeting on the enemy for twenty minutes--heavy casualties inflicted.

Germans have formed a definite pocket in woods SE of BASTOGNE from which they seriously threaten our line of supply and bring the principal road under machine gun and mortar fire. It will be necessary to evict them.

The 6th Armored Division continued to advance. All other units made little to no progress.

The VIII Corps, First Army, will initiate an attack on HOUFFALIZE from the north in the morning. This should take some pressure from the 3rd Army.

17th Airborne Division ordered to attack through 11th Armored Division at 1200, January 3.

January 3, 1945

87th Infantry Division gained on the left. The 11th Armored repulsed a strong counterattack in the center but is badly disorganized and needs a few days out of the line. Due to slippery conditions of the roads, the 17th Airborne Division was unable to attack through the 11th Armored Division as planned.

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January 4, 1945

The 17th Airborne Division attacked through 11th Armored Division and run into violent resistance, suffering heavy losses due to inexperience. The individual fighting of the men was excellent.

If the 94th Infantry Division is released to the 3rd Army, it will replace the 90th Infantry Division in the XX Corps, and the 90th Division will be sent to the III Corps for the purpose of cleaning pocket SE of BASTOGNE.

January 5, 1945

The 94th Infantry Division, less one Combat Team, was cleared to the 3rd Army at 1730. Moves to THIONVILLE at once.

January 6, 1945

Final details for employment of 90th Infantry Division settled. It will attack on January 9th through 26th Infantry Division in a northwesterly direction along ridge road, cutting base of salient. The 26th Infantry Division, 6th Cavalry Group Task Force, the 35th Infantry Division and 6th Armored Division are attacking concentrically along the perimeter of the pocket. One thousand guns are supporting the attack, some firing in prolongation and others at right angles to the main effort to insure dispersion both ways.

A deception detachment was left in XX Corps to keep up 90th Infantry Division radio net.

Enemy attacked three times today without success and in little force. I fear he is withdrawing. No flying due to bad weather.

January 7, 1945

The 319th Regiment of the 80th Infantry Division in a night attack secured the town of DAHL with surprisingly small casualties. This attack not only keep the enemy off balance but also protects right flank of the 26th Infantry Division.

Some rumors of an attack against the northern front of the XII Corps in direction of DIEKIRCH. Measures taken to establish road blocks and minefields.

January 8, 1945

I determined to renew attack on HOUFFALIZE on 9th by adding to the present stalled attack of the 87th Infantry and 17th Airborne Divisions, a new attack by the 101st Airborne and the 4th Armored Divisions.

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January 8, 1945 (Cont'd)

The attack in the morning will comprise eight divisions. The VIII Corps from left to right--87th Infantry, 17th and 101st Airborne Divisions, and 4th Armored Division. The III Corps--6th Armored, 35th Infantry, 90th Infantry, and 26th Infantry Divisions.

The 319th Regiment of the 80th Infantry Division repulsed a heavy counterattack of three battalions of Germans supported by tanks. We lost 9 men killed and 50 wounded. More than 300 German dead counted on the snow.

Due to severe fighting heretofore sustained, the attack of the 87th Infantry Division and the 17th Airborne Division will be of limited intensity but will retain the initiative.

Continued rumors of a German counter-offensive in the vicinity of SAARBRUCKEN.

January 9, 1945

Limited flying weather. The attack of the VIII and III Corps jumped off as planned. The 90th Infantry Division, making the main effort, received heavy casualties from artillery and rocket fire just after the jumpoff, but advanced $2\frac{1}{2}$ kilometers. The 101st Airborne and 4th Armored Divisions moved forward, the former securing the woods west of NOVILLE. The remaining units in the two corps made very limited progress.

The rumors about the German counter-offensive from the vicinity of SAARBRUCKEN continue.

January 10, 1945

Higher authority decided that an armored division should be withdrawn from the line as a precautionary measure against the possible German attack from SAARBRUCKEN.

The attack of the 101st Airborne and 4th Armored Divisions was therefore called off at noon, and the 4th Armored will withdraw during darkness. At the same time the 101st Airborne Division and the 6th Armored Division will link up. The entire VIII Corps will limit offensive operations to vigorous patrolling. III Corps continues attack. All the arrangements for this change were made by personal contact between the Army Commander and Corps and Divisions involved.

All elements of the III Corps, particularly the 90th Infantry Division, made fair progress. A column of German guns and armor, attempting to withdraw in front of the 90th Infantry Division, was brought under artillery fire and also attacked by fighter-bombers from the XIX Tactical Air Command with good results.

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January 10, 1945 (Cont'd)

General Bradley secured authority to advance the 9th Armored and 8th Armored Divisions, now on the Meuse, to the Moselle between FONT A MOUSSON and THIONVILLE. This, with the presence of the 4th Armored Division south of LUXEMBOURG, makes the situation, so far as a German attack from SAARBRUCKEN is concerned, very satisfactory.

January 11, 1945

III Corps making fair progress and securing a large number of prisoners.

Visited XII Corps to arrange plans for attacking Germans should they initiate offensive near SAARBRUCKEN. The key to this situation is ST. AVOLD. As long as we hold there and attack from there, the Germans cannot move effectively in any direction.

January 12, 1945

The VIII Corps resumes attack on HOUFFALIZE as follows from west to east: 87th Infantry, 17th Airborne, 11th Armored, and 101st Airborne Divisions.

The III Corps continues attack for the final mopping up of the salient, SE of BASTOGNE.

January 13, 1945

Attitude of troops completely changed. They now have full confidence that they are pursuing a defeated enemy. This in spite of the fact that the Germans north and northeast of BASTOGNE are resisting viciously in order to preserve their escape routes.

Plan to withdraw one RCT of the 87th Infantry Division from VIII Corps and assign it to XII Corps preparatory to attacking with XII Corps north from DIEKIRCH.

January 14, 1945

The VIII Corps attacked with great effectiveness and is very close to contact with First Army in the vicinity of HOUFFALIZE.

January 15, 1945

Moving remainder of the 87th Infantry Division and assigning both 87th Infantry and 4th Armored Divisions to XII Corps. This Corps will attack north from DIEKIRCH on ST. VITH on the 18th.

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January 16, 1945

At 0905, 41st Cavalry of the 11th Armored Division made contact with 41st Infantry of the 2nd Armored Division in HOUFFALIZE, thus terminating the BASTOGNE operation so far as the 3rd Army is concerned.

During the period of this operation, the 3rd Army utilized a total of 17 divisions and lost in killed, wounded, and missing, 24,598 men. In the same period the Germans utilized 20 divisions and lost a total of 18,051 in prisoners of war and enemy buried by us. Their estimated casualties, excluding non-battle, for this period amount to 103,900 as follows: 16,400 prisoners of war; 24,200 killed; 63,200 wounded. We believe that these figures are low.

On 18 December 1944 Army Engineer troops and supplies were massed behind the XII Corps prepared to support the main effort of the Third Army to breach the Siegfried Line in the SARREGUEMINES area. By 22 December 1944 these same Engineer troops were redispensed in an area extending from LUXEMBOURG on the east to VIRTON on the west, operating in close support of two Corps on offensive assignments and one Corps on defensive assignments, and thousands of tons of bridging and demolitions were moving north and west to new supply dumps in the ESCH - ARLON area. From 22 December 1944 to 16 January 1945 more than 2800 miles of roads were reconnoitered and maintained. Continuous dense traffic, combined with drifting snows, made this task a gigantic one. During this same period, the installation and dismantling of road blocks and tactical demolitions expended over 100,000 A.T. mines and 200,000 lbs of TNT. Bridging presented no problems in the initial phase of action, but toward the middle of January had again become a major function.

As of the 18th of December 1944, the major preponderance of 3rd Army ordnance troops, ammunition, and supplies, were concentrated on the TOUL-NANCY-SARREGUEMINES axis to support the projected attack of the XII Corps.

With the change of direction of the attack to the north, all incoming ammunition was diverted to existing ASP's in the LONGWY - ESCH area and new ASP's established. By rail and truck companies an average of 4,500 tons of ammunition was moved per day, truck companies traveling in one week 462,000 miles in the hauling of ammunition alone. During this period - December 22nd to January 16th - the average consumption of ammunition per day in the Army area averaged 3,500 tons.

Maintenance requirements were met by moving ordnance units in coordination with the movement of combat units they had previously serviced. Replacement, new issue, and other ordnance supply issues were handled generally in the same manner as the ammunition supply, necessitating the movement of 45,000 tons of replacement equipment and spare parts, with the issue to troops during this period of 1,940 general purpose vehicles, 814 combat vehicles and 152 artillery weapons as replacements.

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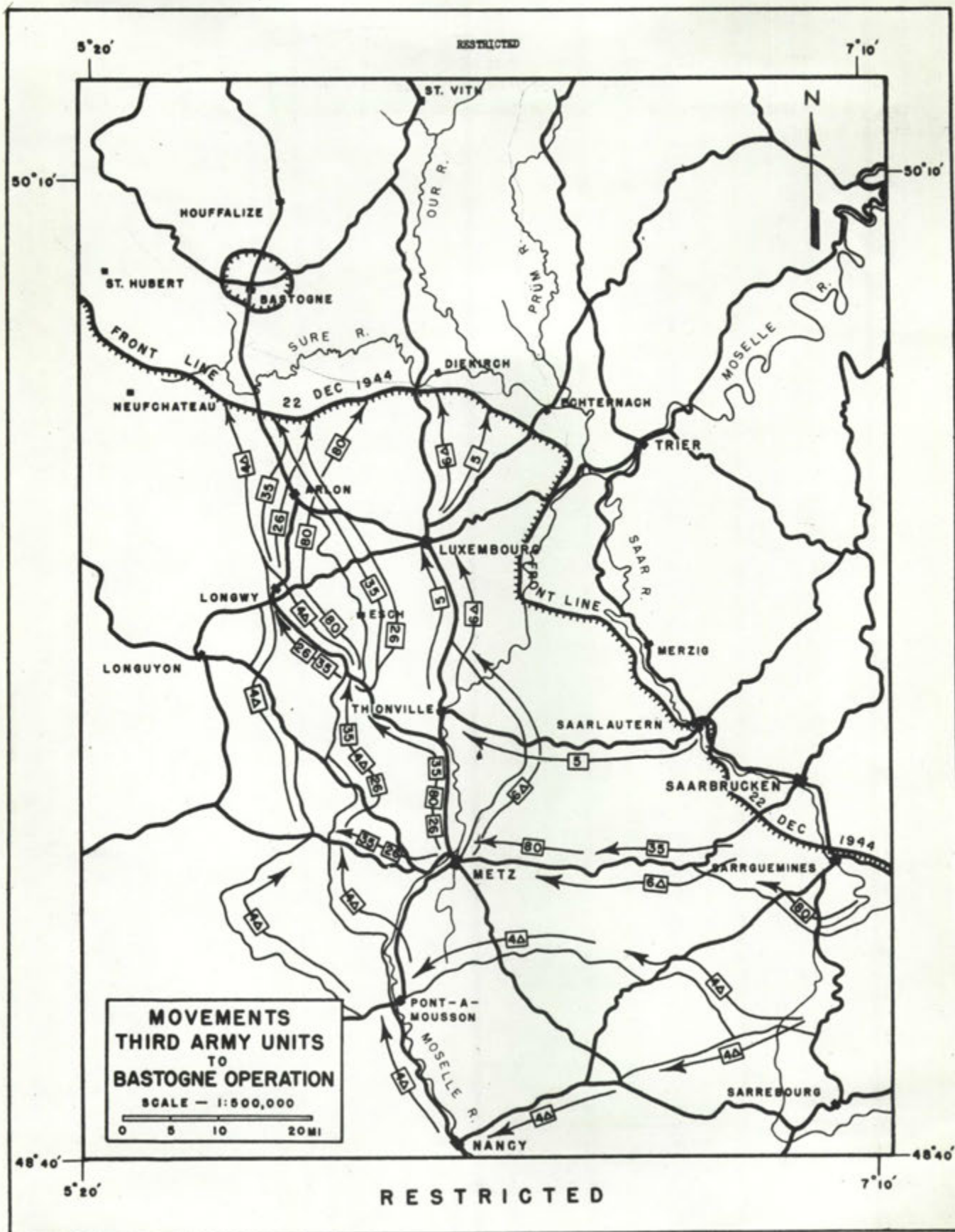
The fighting quality of American troops never reached a higher level than in this operation. Neither intolerable weather or the best troops in the possession of the Germans were able to stop them or prevent their supply.

(Sgd)

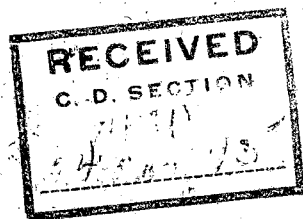
G. S. Patton, Jr.,
G. S. PATTON, JR.,
Lieut. General, U. S. Army,
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