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ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS COURSE  
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THE OPERATIONS OF TASK FORCE HEAVER  
(REINFORCED 90TH INFANTRY DIVISION)  
FROM ST HILAIRE DU HARGOSET TO LE  
MANS FRANCE, 5-9 AUGUST 1944  
(NORTHERN FRANCE CAMPAIGN)  
(Personal Experience of Task Force Provost Marshal)

Type of operation described: TASK FORCE IN THE ATTACK

Major Francis S. Kelly, Infantry  
ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS CLASS NO II

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE</u>
Index.....	1
Bibliography.....	2
Introduction.....	3
The General Situation.....	4
The Special Situation.....	5
The Attack on Mayenne.....	6
The Advance on Le Mans.....	9
Analysis and Criticism.....	15
Lessons.....	16
Appendix A - 90th Division Field Order #19	
Appendix B - Organization of Task Force Weaver	
Appendix C - St. Hilaire to Le Mans	
Appendix D - Mayenne	
Appendix E - Organization of Task Force Weaver	
Appendix F - Organization of Task Force Barth	

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INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operation of Task Force Weaver, a Reinforced Regimental Combat Team of the 357th Infantry, 90th U.S. Infantry Division, from St. Hilaire du Harcourt to Le Mans, France, 5-9 August 1944, during the Northern France Campaign.

In order that the reader be better oriented, a brief picture of the activities of this division will be given leading up to this action.

The U.S. 90th Infantry Division was activated at Camp Berkeley, Texas in March 1942. (1) Basic Training and unit training took care of the period up to January 1943, at which time the Division moved to the Louisiana maneuver area and participated in maneuvers against the 77th U.S. Division.

(2) April 1943 found the 90th back at Camp Berkeley going through a period of specialized training, such as attack against fortified areas, river crossing exercises and street fighting. In August 1943, the Division moved to the California-Arizona maneuver area at Camp Granite, California. (3)

From August to 20 December, the Division maneuvered against the 93rd U.S. Infantry Division. At this time, it was evidently felt by the War Department, that the Division was ready for combat against our enemies. On 20

December 1943, the Division was enroute by train to Ft. Dix, N.J. for final staging and preparation for a move to an overseas theater. (4) By the

middle of April, the Division had closed in seven widely separated camps in England and Wales. Senior Officers and their staffs were immediately

briefed on operation Neptune, which was the plan for the Invasion of France.

Some specialized training was undertaken during this period and the D-Day

~~landings of the Division in France.~~

~~and the 90th Division landed on Utah Beach on 6 June~~

~~1944, and by 7 June the 90th was completely ashore and was~~

~~(1-2-3-4) A-1~~

~~First mission.~~ (5)

After the completion of the Normandy Campaign and on 28 July 1944, the 90th Infantry Division was assigned to the recently activated U.S. Fifteenth Corps of 3rd Army, commanded by Lt. General George S. Patton. On 30 July 1944, the Division was assigned two new General Officers: Brig. General Raymond S. Holain, as Division Commander and Brig. General William G. Weaver, as assistant Division Commander. (6) This made the fourth General Officer to assume command of the Division since its activation.

Morale was low after a succession of grueling battles and very heavy losses during the Normandy Campaign. Another reason for lack of esprit de corps and morale was the holding of the 90th in obscurity and not releasing them to the press until late in the Normandy Campaign. (7) Generals Holain and Weaver immediately set about to raise the general morale of the Division. All officers and non-commissioned officers of the Division were assembled and given short talks and a forerunner of what to expect in the future. Both of these fine officers personified confidence and trust in the 90th and "caught on" with the officers and men at once.

At this point, the 90th was situated just south of Perriers, France, awaiting orders. Its first mission, under the Fifteenth Corps, was to move south to St. Hilaire du Harcouet, to seize and secure bridges over the Selune River and to protect the dam over the Selune. After fighting a stubborn German rear guard, in the vicinity of St. Hilaire, this was accomplished on 5 August 1944. (8) The 90th was then ordered into a defensive position to await further orders. This set the stage for the operation I am about to describe.

#### GENERAL SITUATION

At 2115 4 August, the Fifteenth Corps Commander received oral orders from General Patton to move without delay to the south and east and to seize and hold a bridgehead over the Mayenne River at Mayenne, until relieved by the 1st U.S. Army; to seize a bridgehead at Laval and to secure

(5-6) A-5 (7) Personal knowledge (8) A-3

the Mayenne River between these two points; 90th Infantry Division on the left, 79th Infantry Division on the right and 5th Armored Division echeloned to the right rear. (9)

At 0100 5 August 1944, the 90th received orders to move on Mayenne, in its zone, and to secure a bridghead across the Mayenne River and hold until relieved by elements of the 1st U.S. Army, then to advance and capture Le Mans, France. (See Appendix A)

3rd Army G-2 report 4 August: Enemy situation continues too fluid to define an established front line. Estimated Battalion of Infantry reported at Ernee. (10)

At this time, the Commanding General 90th Infantry Division felt he needed a hard hitting, mobile striking force, that could move with speed and still be large enough to take care of itself, if it ran into stiff German resistance. Le Mans was 90 odd miles behind the German lines. The decision was then made to form a Task Force. This force became the famous "Task Force Weaver" and was composed of the following units: (11)

Detch 90 Div Staff	Co. A 315th Med Bn
90th Gen Troop	Co. A 607th T.D. Bn (Towed)
712 Tank Battalion	Btry A 537th AAA Bn (AW)
357th Infantry	Detch 90 M.P.
343rd F.A. Bn	Detch 90 Sig Co.
Co. A 315th Ingr Bn	345th F.A. Bn (155)

(For organization of the Task Force see Appendix B)

#### SPECIAL SITUATION

For this operation 50 trucks each, from 5th Armored Division and 3rd U.S. Army, were made available for the Task Force. Reconnaissance elements were to cross the initial point in St. Hilaire at 0630 5 August, and the rest of the Division to follow by marching at 0600. (See Appendix A)

Task Force Weaver was responsible for its own flank security and orders were, "advance be pushed at all costs and resistance enroute be promptly by-passed." Task Force Weaver was also given a squadron of M-17's from

(9) A-3 (10) A-7 (11) Personnel knowledge

XIX Tactical Air Force for day light air cover. Reconnaissance elements of Task Force Weaver moved out promptly at 0630 and met little resistance, initially. (See Appendix C)

The rest of the Task Force was not so fortunate, as 50 of the allocated trucks failed to show up. The Division Commander ordered the kitchens of all three Regiments unloaded for the Task Force. The column finally got under way at about 0900. (12) In the interim, the covering screen met resistance in the form of road blocks at Fanner, Paille and Ernee. These were quickly reduced and the column turned to the east, on the main road running into Mayenne, the first big objective.

To the doughboy, this fast advance was almost too good to be true, for previous to this time, every inch of ground had been hotly contested and gains had been measured in yards and hedge rows, not in miles. French civilians lined the streets of towns and villages and cheered, threw flowers and proffered cider and wine. Morale was definitely rising to the sky, even as these few villages were liberated.

#### THE ATTACK ON MAYENNE

About 1115, the reconnaissance elements had reached the western outskirts of Mayenne. Here, about a mile and half from the city, two M-3 Armored cars were hit with high velocity shells and immediately caught fire. All crew members were casualties. About noon the advance guard, under Command of the 1st Battalion Commander, passed through the reconnaissance elements, detrucked and started deploying. The 1st Battalion Commander requested the 343rd P.A. Battalion go into position, and support the attack. He also knew, that it was essential to secure a bridge over the Mayenne River and that speed was paramount. (13) At this time, General Weaver ordered the remainder of the 357th under the Regimental Commander to cross the river to the south and to cut the south and south eastern approaches to the city. In order to more clearly portray this action, I will describe each attack separately.

~~See 13. Personal knowledge of the author. One western half~~  
~~(12) Personal knowledge. (13) Personal knowledge, Statement of Edward~~  
~~S. Hamilton, C.O. 1st Bn 357 Inf.~~

of Mayenne in face of small arms fire. (See Appendix C) B Co. led the attack with two platoons of tanks from Co. A, 712th Tank Battalion and a squad of Engineers from Co. A, 315th Engineer Battalion, attached. After house to house fighting, B Co. reached the western edge of the river at 1630 and reported one of the three bridges was still intact, but that they were receiving heavy mortar and artillery fire. During this period, several German vehicles entered the western half of Mayenne from the north and were promptly destroyed by the Anti-Tank Platoon of the 1st Battalion. The "Krauts" had no idea we were even close to Mayenne. (14)

Observation was now the main problem, as the eastern portion of the city was on the high ground. Mortar observers and the Battalion Artillery Liaison Officer located an observation post on top of a building facing the bridge. The tanks were now ordered up the side streets close to the river. The plan for assaulting the bridge was as follows; artillery was to fire a ten-minute preparation from 1750 to 1800, then shift fires to cover roads leading into Mayenne from the north east; mortars to cover the main road leading to the bridge from the east; tanks to support the attack from positions on the west bank and shoot at anything that moved; B Co.'s machine guns to support the attack from windows in buildings on west bank of the Mayenne River. The attack was to start at 1800, with the 1st Platoon of B Co. leading, followed by a squad of Engineers, that would sweep the bridge with mine detectors for the attached platoon of tanks, that would follow. The 2nd and 3rd Platoons, with tanks, to follow the 1st Platoon. The artillery preparation opened as scheduled, shortly, a very loud explosion was heard on eastern side of the river and a resulting blanket of smoke. The Battalion Commander immediately seized this opportunity to cross the bridge. He ordered the 1st Platoon across the bridge as soon as he could lift the artillery preparation. (15) Two minutes later, the 1st Platoon reached the bridge, led by the Company Commander. Several riflemen were killed, but the platoon advanced into eastern Mayenne just in time to kill the Germans, who were to blow the bridge. They were followed by a Squad

(14) Personal Knowledge (15) Personal Knowledge, Statement of Edward



of Engineers. Immediately, the Platoon of Tanks wheeled and followed the Engineers, their 76's belching hot lead as they advanced. Those, who saw this action, realized they had witnessed a classic example of coordination of Infantry, Tanks, Engineers and Artillery. B Co. fought their way through town to the east and made contact with 3rd Battalion of the main body, who had crossed the river from the south. Many houses, that had been prepared for defense, were by-passed by rushing tanks and accompanying riflemen passed them. These houses were mopped up by A Co. which followed and then turned to the north. C Co. stayed in western Mayenne and protected the northern approaches. ~~The bridge was ours!~~ Engineers immediately demined the bridge and found it had been prepared for demolition with eight 500 pound aerial bombs. (16) The attack had been so swift and carried out with such dispatch, that the Germans had not been able to blow the bridge.

While this action was taking place, the remainder of the Regiment was detrucked and marched to an assembly area to the south and west of the river. The Regimental Commander, 3rd Battalion Commander and part of their staffs worked their way down to the rivers edge. Only spasmodic rifle fire was coming from the other side, so the Regimental Commander ordered an immediate crossing. A skiff and an old leaky boat were pressed into service and a nearby picket fence was torn down for use as oars. The Regimental Commander accompanied the first boat load of Infantry across the river, as the men seemed somewhat dubious of the make-shift equipment. (17) By the time the engineer rubber boats arrived, I Co. was across the river and the rest of the crossing went very rapidly. By 2030, both the 3rd and 2nd Battalions were across and the 3rd Battalion had fought its way to the main road to the south east of the city. Many prisoners were taken as 1st Battalion was driving the Germans to the east into the 3rd Battalion. By 2200 the town had been completely mopped up and the Task Force Command Post had located in the south eastern part of the city. (18) General

(16-18) Personal knowledge (17) Personal knowledge, statement of Col. G. B. Barth, C.O. 357 Inf.

Weaver disposed the force in a perimeter defense and all roads leading into the city were blocked. All night long German vehicles approached the town from all directions, only to be blown to bits. (19)

On the morning of 6 August, the Division Commander visited the Command Post of Task Force Weaver and informed General Weaver that the 1st U.S. Infantry Division, of 1st U.S. Army, would arrive in Mayenne sometime during the day to relieve the Task Force, so it could proceed on Le Mans. (20)

General Weaver made the decision to split his forces, to save valuable time. The plan was for two columns along different routes. He directed that the Regimental Commander with 1st and 2nd Battalions, 357th Infantry, proceed to the south as soon as the troops could be assembled. (21) For purpose of clarity, I will refer to this column as Task Force Barth. The force, to stay in Mayenne, will be referred to as Task Force Weaver. (See Appendix 2 and 3 for organization of the columns) Task Force Barth was to proceed via Montsurs, St. Suzanne, L'Arche on Le Mans. Task Force Weaver would proceed via Aron, Evron, St. Suzanne, St. Dennis, L'Arche on Le Mans. This meant the columns would cross at St. Suzanne, but the timing would be such that the Barth column would clear St. Suzanne, if only slight opposition was encountered. If stiff resistance was met, the two columns would converge like pincers on St. Suzanne.

THE ADVANCE ON LE MANS  
Task Force Barth  
6-7 Aug

The column got under way at about 1400. The column was now on foot, as the attached vehicles had been released the previous afternoon. Additional trucks for the Task Force had been requested and these trucks reported to Task Force Barth, 6 miles south of Mayenne, at about 1600. At this time, Barth's column was again completely motorized. Slight resistance was encountered in Montsurs and was brushed aside and the column again turned east toward St. Suzanne and Le Mans. By 1930, the 1st Battalion and a platoon of tanks, the Advanced Guard, were in Viviers. Colonel Barth and the Command Group were in St. Suzanne awaiting the 2nd

(19-20-21) Personal knowledge

Battalion to close. At this time, Colonel Barth decided to stop for the night. (22) Through some misunderstanding, the 2nd Battalion was stopped just east of Montsurs and was being attacked by strong German Forces. Realizing that the columns had been cut, Colonel Barth ordered 2nd Battalion Commander to attack at day light and close up on St. Suzanne. (23) Shortly after dark, St. Suzanne was attacked from the south and south west. The Regimental Defense Platoon and the A.T. Platoon, which were with the Command Group, put up a gallant fight. Two houses were prepared for defense and withstood the German attacks. About 2400, it was evident, that the Germans were reforming to take the town, so the Regimental Commander made the decision to recall the 1st Battalion from Viviers. When 1st Battalion Commanding Officer received this message, he was engaged in a fire fight with the enemy who was attacking piece meal from the east, and he could not break contact immediately. His column, with tanks, finally moved into St. Suzanne about 0630 7 August, and none too soon, as they immediately opened fire on large numbers of attacking Germans and drove them to the west. This enemy was annihilated between the 1st and the oncoming 2nd Battalion, whose attack had started at day light. By 1000, the column was reunited and the advance again resumed. Soon after leaving St. Suzanne, a force of 15 to 20 tanks was spotted in the woods, to the south of the road. The 315th F.A. was placed in position and fired on them, driving them deeper into the woods. The road to the east was in plain sight of the woods, but the 315th, then displaced forward and finally the 2nd battery displaced, as fast as the tracks could go. (24) The next resistance was encountered in Bernay. The 1st Battalion attacked with tanks and a company of Infantry and drove the enemy to the north of town and held them there, while the rest of the column continued on to La Quinte. These Germans were surrounded and many were killed and 23 prisoners taken. (25) The column was again closed at La Quinte at 2300 and an all around defense was set up for the night.

(22-23) Personal knowledge, Statement of Col. G.B. Barth, U.S., 357 Inf.

(24-25) Personal knowledge

Task Force Weaver  
6-7 Aug 1944

Shortly after Task Force Barth departed Mayenne, elements of 1st U.S. Infantry Division started to arrive, to effect the relief. (26) At this time, Mayenne was being heavily shelled from the east and south east and reconnaissance reported German tanks in vicinity of Aron. Air reconnaissance reported enemy in the woods just north of Evron. General Weaver decided to attack Aron, while reconnaissance was probing to the north and south. The advance guard (1 company of Infantry) met stiff resistance at Aron, so 3rd Battalion (-) was ordered to by-pass Aron to the south. The by-passing force met such stiff resistance, that it eventually became an enveloping force. (27) Progress was steady, but slow and was hindered by enemy tank attacks. Prisoners that were captured, said that they were part of a force sent to recapture Mayenne. Task Force G-2 estimated the force to be 2 Battalions of Infantry with supporting weapons and tanks. The decision was now made to withdraw under cover of darkness and proceed south along the route Montsur, Vaiges, St. Dennis on Le Mans. The withdrawal was accomplished, but not without incident. The 16th Infantry of the 1st U.S. Division fired into the withdrawing troops and several casualties in both units were taken before the firing was stopped. The men were then rested for three hours, the column reformed and proceeded to vicinity of Vaiges by morning of 7 August. (28) Here Task Force Weaver met elements of the 359th Infantry Regiment, which was advancing by foot. The 359th was in contact just east of Vaiges and was waiting for their column to close. General Weaver decided to proceed to the north east through Chemmes and thence to St. Dennis on Le Mans. The advance guard company ran into very stiff resistance just to the west of Chemmes. Chemmes fell by mid-afternoon and the advance had again stalled in the heavily wooded area to the east. P-47's dive bombed and strafed these woods and the attack again got under way. Progress was steady, but very slow, as numerous tank-infantry attacks were beaten off. Captured prisoners stated that there was a Battalion of Infantry, three Companies of

Engineers and some tanks and self propelled weapons in the woods. It was felt that the attack had "bogged down", (29) so decision was made to again withdraw at darkness and double back through Vaiges and pass through the 359th Infantry, which had stopped for the night about four miles east of Vaiges. The same tactics were used, that had been employed the previous night and by 2200 the column had passed through the 359th Infantry Regiment. Token resistance was encountered at St. Jean and at St. Dennis and those towns were quickly secured. Here, the column stopped for the night to reorganize and replenish ammunition supply in preparation for the advance on Le Mans the next day. (30)

#### Task Force Barth

8 Aug 1944

Next day, Task Force Barth started their advance, from La Quinte about 0900. The plan for the operation was for the Advance Guard Battalion to turn to the west when it reached the main crossroad in L'Arche and block the road on which Task Force Weaver would be advancing, thereby squeezing any defending force in front of Task Force Weaver between the two forces. No resistance was encountered, until L'Arche was reached. Here, the Advance Guard ran into enemy coming from the west and trying to escape into Le Mans. This enemy turned out to be about 15 vehicles of an Anti-Aircraft Unit. The lead tanks immediately opened fire and destroyed all the vehicles as the Infantry riding on the tanks killed 30 Germans, who tried to escape. This action completely blocked the crossroad and the rest of the 1st Battalion was deployed to the west. At this time, the Regimental Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon and a Platoon of Tanks were detached from the 1st Battalion and attached to the 2nd Battalion who continued to the east in the direction of Le Mans. This Battalion was slowed by German delaying positions, that employed self propelled guns just over each rise on the way into Le Mans. (31) The column was also harrassed by our own 79th U.S. Division, which was coming up on our right. (32) The 79th evidently mistook us for Germans, fleeing to the east, and brought artillery down on our column. This fire was finally stopped and the remaining German

(29) Personal knowledge, statement of A. G. Weaver, Assistant Div. Commander, 90 Inf. Div. (30-32) Personal knowledge (31) Personal knowledge, statement of D. B. Barth, etc.

resistance was reduced and our forces entered the city of Le Mans.

Task Force Weaver  
8 Aug 1944

On the 8th, Task Force Weaver was destined to encounter a typical German delaying action. In Charnie they ran into a heavy road block in the vicinity of a mined bridge. Our Engineers demined this bridge under fire and then the Advance Guard pushed the enemy into the woods to the east. Up to this time I have said little about the cooperation of the P-47's, which were attached and in constant communication with Task Force Weaver by radio. As the column left Charnie, the Artillery Liaison Plane reported five Mark IV Tanks about two miles ahead of the column, traveling to the east. The P-47's were immediately given this information and came out of the skies on the tanks. A few minutes later, the planes reported mission accomplished. When the column arrived at the scene of the tanks, the lead tank was in a crater, that had been blown just in front of it. The snout of its long gun buried in the soft dirt of the bottom of the crater. The other four tanks were all afire and smoking. (33) Here were 5 tanks, the doughboys wouldn't have to bother with. It wasn't quite so simple for the Engineers as they had to fill the craters and repair the road.

Enemy resistance was met at both Brainas and Coillans, in the form of mined roads and road blocks covered by a few riflemen. The Advance Guard cleared those two points and then advanced on Chauffour de Notre Dame. Here, the Advance Guard was greeted by strong rifle fire and some mortar fire. The village was attacked frontally by the Advance Guard Company and enveloped from both the north and the south by the remaining two rifle companies. Just after dark, the village and its garrison fell and the Advance Guard continued to the east. At about 2200, the Advance Guard reported the link up with Task Force Barth. (34)

Our forces entered the city of Le Mans shortly after mid-night, on 7 August almost simultaneously with the 79th Infantry Division, which had entered from the south west. (35) At this time Task Force Weaver was

(33-34) personal knowledge

(35) ibid

occupying the northern portion of the town with one regiment disposed to the north and east. (36) Actually, we were on the right flank and to the rear of the German Seventh Army, poised to continue the advance to the east or to turn north and cut into the flank and rear of the Germans, which we later did.

During this operation, General Weaver's motto was "Hit them where they ain't." (37) This motto was followed and so many of the enemy were bypassed, that the columns were continually subjugated to high velocity and small arms fire from the flanks. This was off set by the air protecting our flanks and strafing anything they observed and by the use of the company of Tank Destroyers. The Tank Destroyers would push off the main routes and fire to the flanks and then advance by bounds after the tail of the column had cleared.

In summarizing this action of four days, we find that this Task Force advanced some ninety odd miles through enemy held territory, made a river crossing, captured the large city of Reyenne by street fighting tactics, established a bridgehead, fought a meeting engagement with a superior enemy force in the vicinity of Aron, made two successful night withdrawals to deceive the enemy and fought numerous small engagements. Pursuit was continuous and speedy and any captured position was considered just another line of departure. On many occasions, enemy vehicles were found standing with their motors still running. Communication between organic units was excellent and all subordinates were continually kept abreast of the situation and therefore could carry out their assignments with dispatch. Our main losses in this operation were in the Reconnaissance Troop and the Tank Battalion, but these material losses were compensated for by the relative small loss of men. The Task Force sustained less than 300 casualties of all types and no 90th soldiers were taken prisoners. To contrast this, the enemy lost an inestimable amount of material, such as trucks, tanks, artillery pieces and self propelled weapons. Prisoners taken, were over 3,000 and an estimated 350 were killed and wounded. (38) Mission Accomplished!

(36-37-38) Personal knowledge

## ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

In making a study of the Task Force Operation, it becomes immediately apparent, that the Division Commander of the 90th made a correct estimate of the situation on 5 August, when he made the decision to organize a Task Force. This Task Force contained all of the attached fire power of the Division and over half of the organic artillery fire power.

If the attack had started with the Division as a unit, it may not have been so successful, because it would have lacked the necessary mobility and have given the Germans additional time to organize the defenses of the River line. If a regimental combat team had been used, it would have lacked the necessary fire power to reduce the existing German defenses.

The principles of mass and surprise are very prominent in this operation. At all times the force was sufficient in strength to have the required mass at the decisive point. Surprise was attained throughout by mobility of the force and by excellent leadership in all echelons. In all operations, coordination is essential, but coordination is only attained by leadership from the top. The decision to place this Task Force under the able leadership of the Assistant Division Commander, brought about the coordination necessary for a successful operation.

Throughout this action, plans were very simple and orders clear and concise. At no time did plans or orders add to the confusion of combat as they some times do.

In all phases of this operation, security of the Task Force was not neglected. On several occasions, the Germans could have cut into the column and impeded our progress, had not flank security in the form of anti-tank weapons, tank destroyers and the air force been on the alert to protect the flanks. At night, security was particularly important and either a perimeter or all around defense was employed and found to be very effective.

Reconnaissance was continuous and so thorough, that in my opinion it

was the primary reason for the success of the operation. The  
the German of light tanks and the intelligence and



Reconnaissance Platoon of the 357th Infantry were continually probing to the right, left and in front of the column and as soon as resistance in strength was met, they would immediately initiate finding routes around the flank of the enemy. In many cases the reconnaissance echelon closed with fire on small delaying forces and neutralized them, thereby not delaying the column.

Points to be criticized are not as numerous as one would expect, ~~considering the magnitude of the operation.~~ Generally, staff cooperation was lacking, when fifty of the allocated trucks did not arrive in time to start the operation.

Communications broke down at an essential time, when the 2nd Battalion, 357th Infantry, stopped and was attacked outside of Montsare. But generally, radio played an heroic part in maintaining communication as it was impossible to lay wire in an operation of this sort.

On two different occasions, coordination with adjacent units was lacking. First, in the withdrawal from Aron to Mayenne, several lives would have been saved, if the correct coordination had been effected and disseminated down to the troops. Again, on the road from L'Arche into Le Mans, several casualties were taken because our troops were mistaken for Germans, by the 79th U.S. Division. On both occasions, Liaison Officers were used and were aware of the situation, but the break down seemed to be in the dissemination of information to the leading elements of the units, the individual doughboy. In situations such as these, time must be taken into consideration as a factor.

Supply was sometimes lacking, because of the extended supply lines. Gasoline was short on the morning of 3 August and was the reason Task Force North got such a late start, but generally, under the circumstances, supplies such as ammunition and food were prompt.

#### LESSONS

~~The lessons brought out in this operation were:~~

2. Adequate staff planning for an operation of this type is a necessity.
3. Communication is essential to gain the desired degree of coordination.
4. Reconnaissance and intelligence are two outstanding factors for successful operations.
5. Supply plans must be in conformance with the mission to be undertaken.
6. Leadership is the deciding factor in the success or failure of any operation.
7. Special organizations can be constituted from an Infantry Division to gain mobility and to perform specialized types of missions.

APPENDIX A

~~SECRET~~

SECRET

Auth: CG 90th Div

Date: 5 Aug 1944

Init: R.G.I.

90th INF DIV

VIC LAURIAY

050600Z AUG 44

~~NO #19~~

Maps: G305, 1/50,000.

1. a. See Intelligence Annex.

b. IV CORPS attacks 5 Aug to seize and secure crossing of MAYENNE R from LAVAL to MAYENNE, both inclusive. 79th Inf Div attacks on the right of the 90th Div, securing that part of the Corps ~~zone of operations at location~~ prepared to support either or both the 79th or 90th Div.

2. 90th Inf Div:

Attch: 173rd FA Gp  
 140 FA Gp  
 693rd FA Bn  
 712th TK Bn  
 537th AAA (AW) Bn (M)  
 607th TD Bn

Attacks 5 Aug to seize and secure crossings of the MAYENNE R within its zone extended to the E and N to MAYENNE inclusive, Routes, Objs, Div - See overlay.

3. a. Task Force Weaver - Brig Gen Wm. G. Weaver, Comdg.

Troops:	Det Div Staff	Co A, 315th Med Bn
	90th Recon Tr	1 Co, 607th TD Bn
	712 Tk Bn	Det 90th Sig Co
	357th Inf (Mtz)	Det 90th MP
	343rd FA Bn	345th FA Bn D/S
	Co A, 315th Engr Bn	

(1) Move by motor via route indicated on overlay. Seize, secure and bridgehead the crossings of the MAYENNE R from the Div right boundary to MAYENNE inclusive.

(2) Reconnaissance elements will cross IP (LA RICHARDIERE) at 050630. Inf elements will cross IP at 050800.

(3) Task Force Weaver will provide own flank security throughout its advance.

(4) 50 trucks each from 5th Armd Div and from Third Army are available for this move and will report to ST NILAIRE at 050630. The 50 trucks from 5th Armd Div will be released to that unit immediately 357th Inf detrucks.

b. CT 8:

(1) Will advance by marching within its zone via route

-1-

SECRET

indicated on overlay

(2) Will initiate movement by 050800 and will make such preliminary dispositions as necessary to insure that its columns will not interfere with the movement of Tank Force Weaver.

(3) For march obj and alternate - see overlay.

c. CT 9:

(1) Will advance by marching within its zone via route indicated on overlay.

(2) Will initiate movement by 050600.

(3) For march obj - See overlay.

d. Div Arty (less CT attachments):

Stand: 173rd FA Cp

10th FA Cp

693rd FA Bn

537th AA Bn (- 1 Btry)

607th TD Bn (- 1 Co)

(1) Arty Bns to be prepared to move by bounds in the zone of either CT 8 or CT 9 on orders this Hq.

(2) 1 Co 607th TD Bn will support the advance of CT 8 and CT 9 respectively.

e. 315th Engr Bn: (less attachments):

Be prepared to move on orders this Hq.

x. (1) Foot elements will not be delayed for the passage of motor elements through the columns.

(2) CIs are responsible for security to both flanks.

(3) Advance will be pushed at all costs; resistance on route will be promptly by-passed.

4. Adm O / 35.

5. a. (1) 301 Index - 01-10.

(2) Armored vehicles will display cerise fluorescent panels.

b. Div Adv Cf opens LA MICHAELERS (170025).

Time of opening - 050800.

March Cf's - Head of main body.

Av Sig Com - Route of advance.

HEALTH  
COMEG.

/s/ Stilwell

/t/ SPILLER

G-3

DISTRIBUTION: "I".

**TASK FORCE HEAVER  
ORGANIZATION OF COLUMN  
FOR MARCH ON MAYENNE  
(TOTALLY MOTORIZED)**

COMMUNICATIONS THROUGHOUT COLUMN AND TO DIV. BY RADIO (ALL TYPES), MOTOR MESSENGER, AND ARTY. CUB PLANE. WITH AIR SUPPORT BY RADIO-PLANE. ALL OPERATED UNDER DETCH. 90TH SIG. CO. (USE OF CUB PLANE NOT TO INTERFERE WITH ARTY. MISSION)

AIR SUPPORT  SQUADRON P-47's (DURING DAYLIGHT HOURS)

DISCOVER ENEMY TO FRONT AND FLANKS - REPORT - CLOSE IN ENEMY, ATTACK ON ORDERS IN CONJUNCTION WITH GROUND FORCES.

RECON ECHELON

90TH RECON TROOP  
ADVANCE ON ROUTE AND PARALLEL ROUTES, WHEN PRACTICABLE, OR OUT AND BACK AT ROAD INTERSECTIONS, ON MEETING RESISTANCE, CLOSE WITH FIKE, DISCOVER ENEMY POSITION. IMMEDIATELY FIND PASSAGES AROUND FLANKS. OPERATE ON FOOT AS NECESSARY.

CO D 712 TK BN

ROUTE MARKERS AND GUIDES, DETCH. 90TH M.P., IMPLEMENTED BY UNITS.

FORWARD COMMAND GROUP TASK FORCE

ADV. GD.

B CO 357 INF CO A 712 TK BN  
FOR DIRECT ASSAULT AGAINST ENEMY RESISTANCE.

DETCH. CO A 315 ENGR BN WITH BULLDOZERS

1ST BN 337 INF (-)  
ASSIST DIRECT ASSAULT - ENVELOP - INITIATE BY PASSING.

345 FA BN AND BTRY A 537 AAA BN

REMAINDER 357 INF (LESS ADV. GD.)

REMAINDER 712 TK BN

CO A 315 ENGR BN (-)

ASSAULT & RUBBER BOATS, BRIDGING MATERIAL ON CALL TO DIV. ON SHORT NOTICE.

MAIN BODY

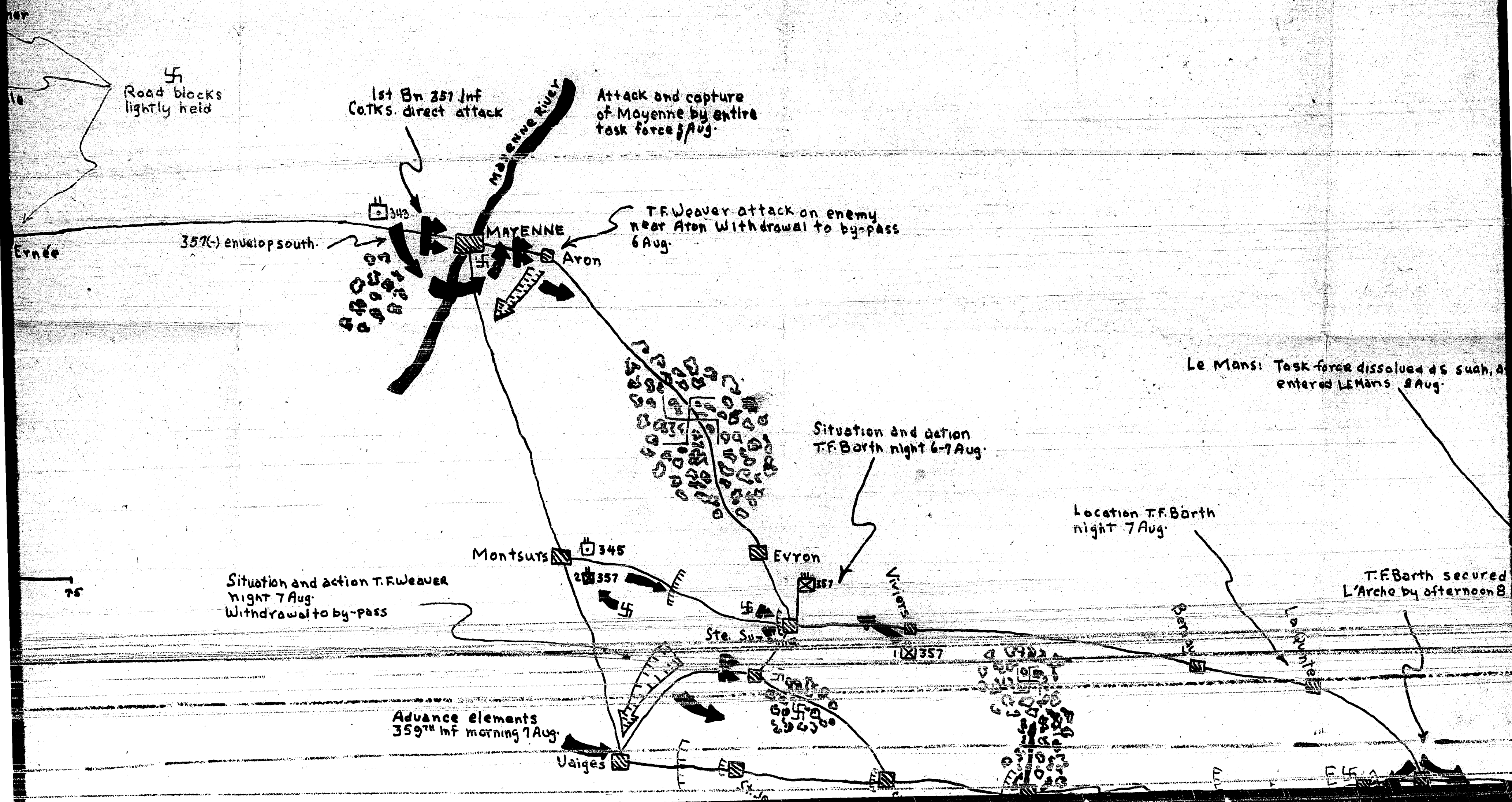
CO A 315 MED BN

345 FA BN  
FOLLOWED ROUTE & IN DIRECT SUPPORT

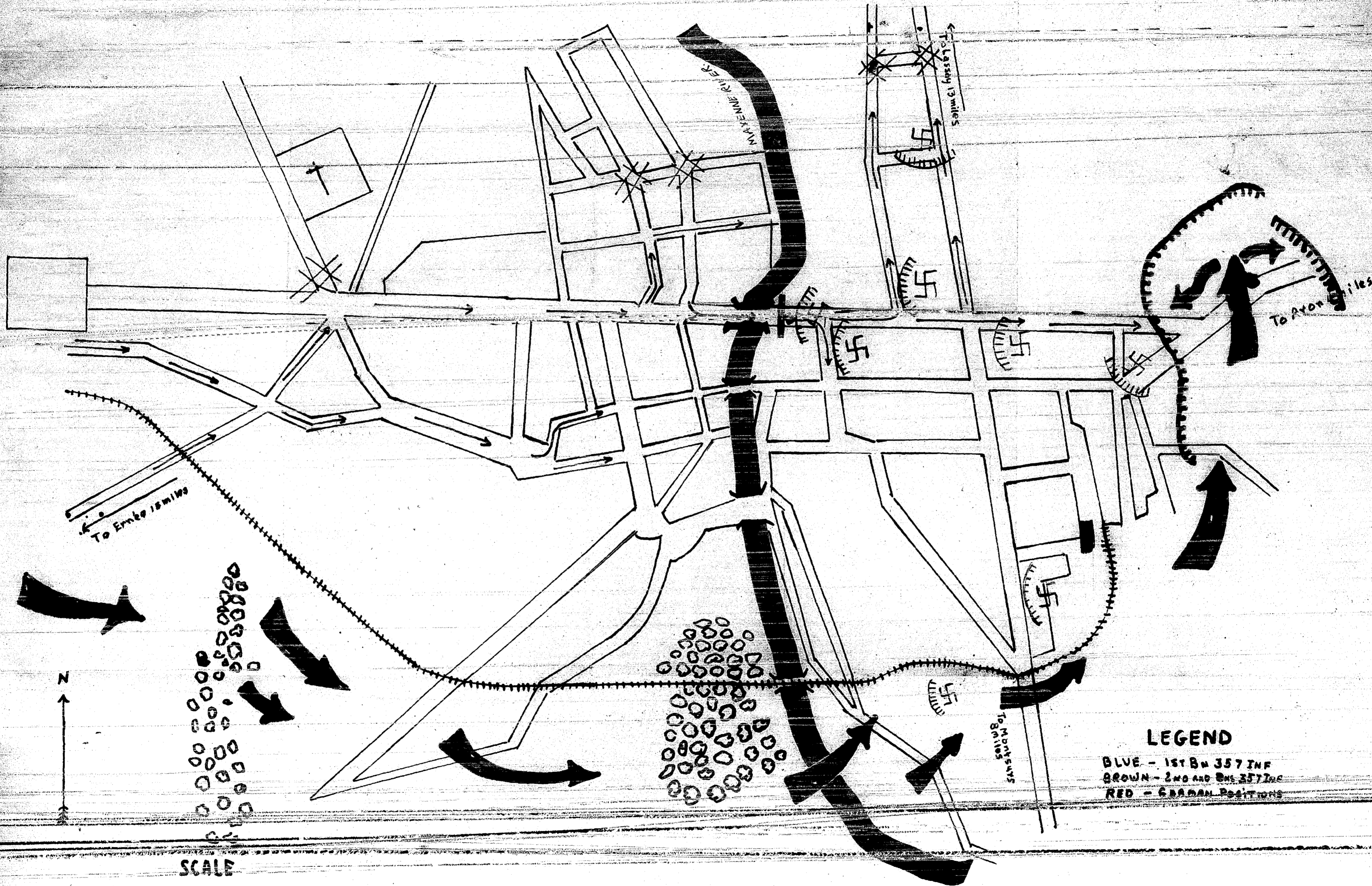
CO A 607 TD BN  
DISTRIBUTED THRU COLUMN. PRINCIPAL MISSION FLANK AND REAR PROTECTION OF ELEMENTS OF

1. ALL UNITS AND VEHICLES INSPECTED, EQUIPPED AND SERVICED, FOOD, WATER AND EXTRA AMMUNITION CARRIED ON VEHICLES.
2. RE-FUELING ACCOMPLISHED ENROUTE BY DIV.

# OPERATION of a TASK FORCE 90th INF DIV 5-9 AUG 1944



# TATENNE FRANCE AUGUST 1944



**LEGEND**  
BLUE - 1ST BN 357 INF  
BROWN - 2ND AND 3RD BNS 357 INF  
RED - GERMAN POSITIONS

**SCALE**  
0 500 1000 1500 2000 YARDS

# TASK FORCE WEAVER COLUMN MAYENNE TO LE MANS

COMMUNICATIONS AS BEFORE

AIR SUPPORT

- SQUADRON P-47'S  
COVER BOTH NORTH AND SOUTH COLUMNS  
ORDERS AS BEFORE

RECON ECHELON

- 90th RECON TROOP. ORDERS SAME AS BEFORE
- LT TK CO 712 TK BN

ADV. GU CO GUID  
LEADING CO 3RD  
BN 357 INF

- 1 CO OF INF RIDING ON MEDIUM TKS
- DETCH. CO A 315 ENG BN
- BTRY 343 FA BN
- COLUMN COMMAND GROUP

MAIN BODY

- 3RD BN 357 INF (-)
- REMAINDER 343 FA BN
- 712 TK BN (-)
- CO A 315 ENG BN (-)
- CO A 315 MED BN
- CO A 607 TD BN (-)

SUPPLY AS BEFORE



TASK FORCE BARTH COLUMN  
MAYENNE TO LE MANS

COMMUNICATIONS SIMILAR TO SOUTH USING REGT<sup>2</sup> NET

- AIR SUPPORT ■ SQUADRON P-47'S FURNISHED FROM SOUTH COLUMN
- RECON ECHELON ■ I & R PLAT.
  
- ADV. GD. { ■ CO. A 712 TK. BN.  
          { ■ 1 INF. BN.  
          { ■ COLUMN COMMAND GROUP
  
- MAIN BODY { ■ 1 INF. BN.  
          { ■ 1 CO. MED. TKS.  
          { ■ DETCH. 315 ENGR.  
          { ■ 1 PLAT. CO. A 607 TD BN.  
          { ■ 345 FA BN.

SUPPLY AS BEFORE