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THE OPERATIONS OF THE 289TH INFANTRY REGIMENT,
(75TH INFANTRY DIVISION) IN THE GRANDMENIL-EREZEE,
BELGIUM SECTOR, 25 DECEMBER 1944 - 6 JANUARY 1945
(ARDENNES ALSACE CAMPAIGN)
(Personal Experience of a Regimental Communications Officer)

Type of operation described: AN ATTACK TO ESTABLISH
A MAIN LINE OF RESISTANCE

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ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS CLASS NO I

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ORIENTATION

INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operations of the 289th Regimental Combat Team, 75th Infantry Division, in the EREZEE-GRANDMENIL, BELGIUM sector, from 25 December 1944 to 6 January 1945.

A brief summary of major events leading up to this operation will help acquaint the reader with the situation and area where the action herein described took place.

In June and August the Allies made successful landings on the French Coast and by the middle of December were positioned generally along the West German border. (1)

On the morning of 16 December 1944, the enemy launched his all-out counteroffensive against the thinly held VIII Corps, US First Army, in the Ardennes Forest area. (2)

By 24 December, the German armies had not reached their objectives of BRUSSELS and ANTWERP but had created a dangerous salient in our lines, 35 miles wide at the base and 50 miles deep. (3)

On the above mentioned date, in the VII Corps, First US Army sector, seven miles from the approaching enemy, the 289th RCT was relieved of its outpost mission and alerted for immediate front line duty. (4) (See Map A)

- (1) A-3, p. 70, 71; A-1, p. 78
- (2) A-1, p. 105
- (3) A-2, p. 103, 117, 127
- (4) A-2, p. 118

GENERAL SITUATION

By 24 December it became apparent that the enemy had changed his direction of attack. Pressure was increasing all along the First Army front, especially in the VII Corps sector where the enemy had forced our lines back during the last three days. (5)

A German field order captured on this day indicated that the enemy was massing for a breakthrough by the II German Corps in the GRANDMENIL-MANHAY sector, which, if successful, would give the 1st Panzer Corps the needed road net to LIEGE. (6) This threat centered on the boundary between the 7th Armored Division, XVIII Airborne Corps, and the 3rd Armored Division, VII Corps. Another avenue of approach lay in the VII Corps sector: the highway running north-south through HOTTON. (7) (See Map A)

To block these avenues of enemy approach, the Commanding General VII Corps, Lieutenant General J. Lawton Collins, ordered the Commanding General, 3rd Armored Division, to establish a strong defensive line from GRANDMENIL on the east to MELREUX on the west and attached the 289th RCT to the 3rd Armored Division. (8) (See Map B)

Since the Commanding Officer and S-3, 289th Infantry, were present when this order was issued, Major General Maurice Rose, Commanding General, 3rd Armored Division, turned them over to Brigadier General Hickey, Combat Command A Commander, for instructions.

- (5) A-2, p. 117, 119, Map p. 120
- (6) A-2, p. 120, Map p. 120
- (7) A-2, Situation Map #10
- (8) A-6, p. 225

The General's orders were: "Move your RCT to vicinity of FANZEL, BELGIUM. We will send trucks to shuttle your foot troops en route. The Combat Command order will be issued at my Command Post in HEYD at 2000 hours." (9) (See Map B)

Although RCT 289 was now attached to CCA tactically, it remained under 75th Division control for supply and administration.

COMBAT COMMAND "A" SITUATION

At approximately 1400 hours 24 December, the first units of RCT 289 started their march to FANZEL. The foot elements had not marched five miles when trucks from the 3rd Armored Division met them. The trucks engaged in this shuttle movement varied in size from the well-known 2½ ton to the lesser known engineer Brockway truck. (10)

The remark was passed: "It must be hot where we are going, they are in too much of a hurry to get us there." This remark was a gross understatement for as late as 20 December 1944, three task forces from the 3rd Armored Division had moved far in advance of the newly proposed defense lines. In fact, Task Force ORR had progressed to SAMREE. (11) (See Map B) However, by 21 December, the situation had changed; the brave men of the 3rd Armored Division were learning a maneuver of war unfamiliar to them -- the retrograde movement.

By 24 December CCA had been forced back along the line AMONINES, LA FOSSE, and GRANDMENIL. (12)

(9) Personal statement, Major Donald Dunlop, 22 January 1950, then S-3, 289th Infantry

(10) Personal statement, Captain John Brady, 20 January 1950, then Platoon Leader, K Company; A-10

(11) A-6, p. 222, 223

(12) A-6, p. 222, 223; A-8

The Regiment closed in FANZEL soon after dark and bedded down. The Regimental Commander and his staff arrived at HEYD at 2000 hours to receive the combat command order.

The order was brief: "Attack at 0800 hours 25 December and seize the high ground north of the AISNE RIVER line between GRANDMENIL and EREZEE." (13)

The Regimental Commander was informed that no enemy contact was anticipated during the movement because a Combat Command covering force was operating to the front of the positions to be occupied. (14)

THE SITUATION OF RCT 289

After the Regimental Commander returned from the command post of Combat Command A, he issued an oral order for the Combat Team to move to the vicinity of BRISCOL. The regimental plan was to shuttle the foot troops to the vicinity of BRISCOL, in order 3rd, 2nd, and 1st Battalions. After receipt of the regimental order, which was to be issued at BRISCOL at 0200 hours, Christmas morning, the battalions would move out to assigned assembly areas, and attack three battalions abreast at 0800 hours. (See Map C) The final assembly area for the 3rd Battalion was in the woods west of GRANDMENIL; the 2nd Battalion near BRISCOL; and the 1st Battalion, in the vicinity of ERPIGNY.

The move was planned so that each battalion would only stay in the vicinity of BRISCOL long enough to regroup, with the exception of the 2nd Battalion, whose assembly area was in that vicinity. As the regimental order was issued, the last elements of the 3rd Battalion arrived in the vicinity of BRISCOL.

(13) A-4, p. 6

(14) Personal statement, Major Donald Dunlop, 22 January 1950, then S-3, 289th Infantry

The regimental order did not change, but merely amplified, the original plan. (15)

Morale was high at this time, and since the RCT was being committed to action for the first time, no shortages of equipment or personnel existed.

Since the terrain and weather play such a prominent part in this operation, a few descriptive sentences seem justified.

Deep ravines, narrow valleys, and steep hills covered the 1200 yard regimental front. Three-quarters of this area was covered with fir trees. High winds following each snowfall caused drifting, filling in the smaller ravines. The few roads that existed were poor and treacherous. Snow obliterated the trails. (16)

When the 3rd Battalion Commander returned to his assembly area, an officer from the 3rd Armored Division informed him that MANHAY had been taken by the Germans and that GRANDMENIL was under attack by tanks and infantry. (17)

The Regimental Commander was informed of the situation and he immediately reduced the size of the 3rd Battalion's sector and increased the sectors of the other two battalions. (18)

At 0300 hours the 3rd Battalion in a column of companies moved out in the direction of GRANDMENIL. Their route was illuminated for about 1000 yards by the almost incessant firing of 3rd Armored Division artillery deployed on the north side of

- (15) Personal statement, Major Donald Dunlop, 20 January 1950, then S-3, 289th Infantry
- (16) Personal knowledge
- (17) Personal knowledge
- (18) Personal statement, Major Donald Dunlop, 20 January 1950, then S-3, 289th Infantry

the GRANDMENIL-EREZEE road. This furious fire was probably supporting the defense of AMONINES which was attacked twelve times that evening. (19)

After the Battalion had moved about two miles, small groups of friendly armored vehicles, coming from the opposite direction, passed it post haste. Eventually one stopped long enough for its commander to inform the advancing 3rd Battalion that GRANDMENIL had fallen and that any more tanks coming in this direction would be enemy. (20) Word was passed down the battalion column to get off the road. A few rounds of artillery fell on the lead company causing a few casualties. It was the belief of the company commander that these rounds came from friendly territory.

It was now 0445 hours Christmas morning, the other elements of the RCT had closed into forward assembly areas except A Company 750th Tank Battalion and A Company 629th Tank Destroyer Battalion which closed in before 0800 hours. (21)

NARRATION (See Map C)

GRANDMENIL

Before the 3rd Battalion had cleared the road, eight enemy Mark VI (Tiger Royal) tanks preceded by a captured Sherman passed through the advance guard company. (22) As the enemy tanks approached the main body, the K Company Commander, thinking these tanks were from the 3rd Armored Division, attempted to stop the lead tank. He was going to request the tankers to notify

(19) A-6, p. 112

(20) Personal knowledge

(21) A-9

(22) A-9 plus Personal Statement Captain John Brady, then Platoon Leader, Company K, 289th Infantry, on 20 December 1949

the 3rd Armored Division artillery that they were firing on friendly troops. (23)

When the K Company Commander motioned the tank to stop, it started firing. The other tanks followed suit. Since the Battalion was marching in a column of two's on either side of the road, this attack split the Battalion into two disorganized groups. The tanks then moved to either side of the road spraying the woods with machine gun and 88mm fire. Urged on by their initial success, the tanks moved up and down the road spitting out a steady volume of fire. (24) A bazooka man from K Company scored a direct hit on one of the tanks setting it on fire. (25) Although he paid with his life, his heroic action probably saved the artillery positions, about a mile away, from suffering the same fate as the 3rd Battalion.

Forty-five men, mostly from K Company, regrouped on the north side of the road. In attempting to rejoin their unit, they guided on a firebreak, thinking it was the road they just left, and became hopelessly lost. (26) Needless to say, the Battalion was not reorganized until daylight.

The other two Battalions had no unusual occurrences during the night.

- (23) A-9 plus Personal Statement of Captain John Brady, then Platoon Leader, Company K, 289th Infantry, on 20 December 1949
- (24) A-9 plus Personal Statement Captain John Brady, then Platoon Leader, Company K, 289th Infantry, 20 December 1949
- (25) A-4, p. 6 plus Personal Statement Captain John Brady, then Platoon Leader, Company K, 289th Infantry, 20 December 1949
- (26) Personal Statement Captain John Brady, then Platoon Leader, Company K, 289th Infantry, 20 December 1949

The three battalions of the RCT 289 jumped off abreast at 0800 hours. During the morning favorable progress was made, and by noon all three battalions were on their intermediate objectives, the high ground 1500 yards north of the EREZEE-GRANDMENIL road.

(27)

Around 1400 hours six P-38 fighters bombed and strafed the 3rd Battalion column, killing four men, wounding twelve, and knocking out a 3/4 and a 2½ ton truck. The Regiment had received no information concerning air activity in the area. (28)

About 10 minutes after the air strike the elements of K and L Companies that had become separated from the 3rd Battalion during the tank attack rejoined their unit. (29)

Tanks from CCA, 3rd Armored Division, attacked GRANDMENIL at about 1600 hours but were repulsed. (30)

By 1800 hours the 3rd Battalion was on its new objective--the high ground southwest of GRANDMENIL. The 1st Battalion, except for its left flank, was on its objective--the AISNE RIVER line. The 2nd Battalion, however, encountered direction and contact difficulties. At 1725 hours this battalion reported being 1200 yards from its objective. However, in the heavy snow covered woods, as darkness approached, physical contact between the companies was lost. First E and G Companies lost contact; then most of F and H Companies wandered north in the direction of the 3rd Battalion. (31)

(27) A-9

(28) A-8

(29) Personal Statement of Captain John Brady, then Platoon Leader, Company K, 289th Infantry, 20 December 1949

(30) A-6, p. 226

(31) A-9

At 2000 hours TF McGeorge (CCB) consisting of a company of tanks, a company of armored infantry, and a platoon of engineers attacked GRANDMENIL. This attack had the same results that the previous one did. (32) The TF withdrew behind the high ground southwest of GRANDMENIL.

Slightly before midnight, the Executive Officer, 2nd Battalion, assumed command of that unit. Needless to say, the former Battalion Commander became an administrative casualty. After assembling the remaining troops that were still controllable by the 2nd Battalion, namely: 60 men from F Company, the new battalion commander moved this force south along the BRISCOL-LA FOSSE trail to reorganize the battalion. (33)

The I&R Platoon was ordered to guide the 2nd Battalion (minus) to LA FOSSE. A wire team from Regiment followed the Battalion Commander so that he could report his progress every 15 minutes. (34)

When the unit arrived in LA FOSSE, they found that G and E Companies had been in that town since 1800 hours. (35)

Since the two previously mentioned attempts by 3rd Armored Division to take GRANDMENIL failed, the Commanding General of that unit, at 0300 hours 26 December, alerted the 3rd Battalion 289th Infantry to furnish one company, to add more infantry strength to Task Force McGeorge, in the capture of that town. K Company was selected for the task. (36)

(32) A-6, p. 226

(33) A-9

(34) Personal knowledge

(35) A-9; A-8

(36) A-8

K Company, spearheading the attack, was in GRANDMENIL well before morning; however at daybreak, this company was forced to withdraw due to the heavy volume of machine gun and tank fire. Difficulty was experienced in knocking out the enemy emplacements in the town due to the lack of communication and coordination between the tanks and infantry. Both operated as separate task forces. During the early phases of the attack, a platoon leader from K Company saw a profitable target for a tank. He immediately contacted the nearest tank and requested that it engage the target. The tank commander said that he would not move his tank without orders from the Task Force Commander. (37)

Around 0600 hours the lost elements of F and H Companies wandered in the 3rd Battalion sector and were guided to the remainder of their Battalion. (38)

By 1400 hours the 2nd Battalion was regrouped and reorganized with F, G, and E Companies from left to right on their objective. (39)

At 1345 hours the 3rd Battalion, now attached to CCB, 3rd Armored Division, was ordered to attack GRANDMENIL by the Commanding General of that unit. The Commanding Officer, 3rd Battalion, protested the short notice, however, the attack jumped off at 1415 hours. By 1800 hours all elements of the 3rd Battalion were in GRANDMENIL. Mopping up continued throughout the night and by morning all houses had been cleared. This action is best

(37) Statement of Captain John Brady, then Platoon Leader, Company K, 289th Infantry, 20 January 1950

(38) A-8

(39) A-9

explained by the Battalion Commander the next morning when he said, "We didn't take this town last night we just shared it."

(40)

A captured prisoner of war identified the enemy unit defending the town as a reinforced battalion from the 2nd SS Panzer Division. Enemy losses included 100 killed, 91 prisoners, 11 Mark V tanks, 1 Mark III tank, two half tracks and two motorcycles.

(41)

The 3rd Battalion lost 130 enlisted men and 7 officers during the period 25-26 December. (42)

Because the 3rd Battalion now occupied GRANDMENIL, the sectors of the 1st and 2nd Battalions had to be extended. (See Map C) The 1st Battalion, however, could not extend its left flank due to heavy mortar and artillery fire in that sector. By midnight 26 December all units of the 289th Infantry were in contact with each other except the 1st and 2nd Battalions. (43)

During the early morning, the 1st Battalion's positions were heavily attacked. No ground was gained or lost. The bodies of 40 German dead were counted. (44)

Captured prisoners in that sector revealed that the 560 Volks Grenadier Division was being relieved that day by the 12 SS Panzer Division. (45)

In the morning of the 27th the elements of CCB in GRANDMENIL were relieved. (46) Later in the day that town was attacked by

- (40) A-9; A-8; Personal knowledge
- (41) A-11
- (42) A-10
- (43) A-9
- (44) A-7, p. 8
- (45) A-7, p. 8-9; Personal knowledge
- (46) A-8

a small enemy force, but the attack was repulsed at 1435 hours.

(47) An order was received to mine all roads and reorganize in depth. (48)

Sniping continued on the LA FOSSE - SADZOT trail, making it necessary for patrols to protect the wire teams and bulldozer working along that trail. (49)

B Company was ordered to attack the gap at 1915 hours to establish contact with the 2nd Battalion but made no progress against an estimated enemy company in the pocket. (50)

THE PENETRATION (See Map C)

The first few hours of 28 December 1944 provided the CP personnel of RCT 289 with their greatest thrill and perhaps their narrowest escape.

As previously stated a gap of undetermined size existed between the 1st and 2nd Battalions. The enemy soon found this hole and was prompt in exploiting same. At 0145 hours C Company, 87th Chemical Battalion, in SADZOT (1000 yards from Regimental CP) reported that an enemy force had penetrated the town. (51) At this time the Regiment had no reserve. Combat Command A was informed of the situation. Needless to say, the 289th Command Post was the scene of much activity. Messages, codes, and ciphers were burned and a defensive line was established with Communication and I&R personnel digging in around the front of the CP. An officer from the attached IPW team gathered a small

(47) A-8
(48) A-8
(49) A-8
(50) A-8
(51) A-8

patrol and combed the woods to the left of the CP. The Regimental Executive Officer organized the local defense and sent the Communication Officer to coordinate with the Field Artillery units in the immediate vicinity.

The Regimental Commander was not in the CP when the fire fight started in SADZOT. While returning, he was fired on by a burp gun about 1000 yards from the Regimental CP in the vicinity of BRISCOL. He and his driver promptly hit the nearest ditch and were rescued by a tank that was in the locality. A Regimental wire team attempting to restore wire communication to the 1st Battalion was pinned down until dawn on the ERPIGNY road, about half the distance from ERPIGNY. (52) As the Germans came in the back door of the building occupied by the Regimental Aid Station in BRISCOL, the medics left by the front. An enemy force of undetermined size occupied the south side of this town when a 57mm antitank gun fired from the north side. It was rumored that the tremendous muzzle blast of this weapon chased the Germans from BRISCOL. This fact was never proven, however, the Germans did leave after being fired on by that weapon. (53)

The situation seemed to be hopeless, sniper fire and small bands of Germans were reported everywhere. However, the situation cleared up somewhat when GCA committed the 509th Parachute Battalion which was assembled in the vicinity of EREZEE. The paratroopers entered the north end of SADZOT with one company and

(52) Personal knowledge

(53) Personal knowledge

the remaining companies executed a double envelopment. (54)
By 1100 hours the enveloping companies had joined south of the town. (55)

The enemy was identified as the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 25th Regiment of the 12 SS Panzer Division plus 40 paratroopers from the 10th Company, 1st Air Corps Paradivision. The mission of the two enemy Battalions was to cut the GRANDMENIL-EREZEE road. The mission of the German paratroopers was to bolster the morale of the attacking Battalions. When the enemy was driven out of SADZOT, the enemy paratroopers remained in the surrounding woods to snipe. (56)

Sniper fire continued that morning as far north as the GRANDMENIL-EREZEE road. The 509th Parachute Battalion and a small Task Force from CCA were given the mission of protecting the artillery positions by a defense line south of SADZOT. (57)

Since the new defense line established by the 509th Parachute Battalion only extended 500 yards south of SADZOT, the remaining enemy troops had direct observation on the Regimental CP and SADZOT. About 1000 hours heavy mortar fire fell in SADZOT, BRISCOL, and directly on the Regimental CP. The first shell landed about ten yards to the rear of the CP proper and killed four men. (58)

The cellar in the Regimental CP became quite popular at this time. In a room that was no larger than 12 by 15 feet, the

(54) A-6, p. 227

(55) A-6, p. 228

(56) A-11

(57) A-6, p. 228

(58) Personal knowledge

Regimental Commander and staff, communication personnel (with switchboard) and the usual complement of visiting firemen were trying to conduct operations. (59)

Due to the overcrowding inside, and the untenable conditions outside, the Commanding Officer decided at 1100 hours to move the CP to EREZEE. As the CP started to displace, the enemy shifted his fires to the GRANDMENIL-EREZEE highway.

About this time the 2nd Battalion was receiving small arms fire on its left flank. (60)

At 1255 hours the 2nd Battalion, 112th Infantry, 28th Division, was attached to the 289th Infantry and given the mission of closing the gap that existed between 1st and 2nd Battalions, 289th Infantry.

The regimental plan was for the newly attached unit to move to the rear of the 1st Battalion and then pass to the east tying in with the 1st Battalion's left flank. The movement got underway after dark and by 1925 hours had tied in with the 1st Battalion's left flank. (61)

Patrols were sent from the 2nd Battalion, 289th Infantry, to contact the 2nd Battalion, 112th, however they were stopped in their lateral movement due to enemy on the ridge in the gap.

At 1930 hours the 2nd Battalion, 289th Infantry, was troubled by harassing fires from the rear and right flank. The 3rd Battalion sector had been quiet all day. (62)

(59) Personal knowledge

(60) A-8

(61) A-8; A-6, p. 228

(62) A-8

At 0845 hours 29 December, the 2nd Battalion, 289th Infantry reported that their patrols had moved 1200 yards to the west with no contact with either the enemy or the 2nd Battalion, 112th Infantry.

A little later in the morning the Combat Command A Commander ordered the 509th Parachute Battalion to attack south along the trail to LA FOSSE. The attack progressed for 1200 yards and was stopped. The 509th was forced to withdraw. The enemy was believed to be the remaining two companies of the 25th Panzer Grenadier Regiment. (63)

At 1600 hours the RCT was informed that it had reverted to 75th Division control and that the XVIII Airborne Corps had taken over the sector. Combat Command A was attached to the 75th Division. General Hickey, CCA Commanding General, was to remain in command of the 289th Infantry sector. (64)

The 509th Parachute Battalion was ordered to resume the attack assisted by Company A 83rd Armored Reconnaissance Battalion. Resistance was eliminated. (65)

By 1800 hours, the 2nd Battalion's (112th Infantry) right flank was anchored on the 1st Battalion's left flank, but its left flank was in SADZOT. It had missed its direction. (66)

Through that day and night elements of the 25th and 26th Regiments infiltrated through our lines and at 1820 hours the 2nd Battalion 289th Infantry reported that the enemy was smoking the whole valley to its front.

(63) A-6, p. 228

(64) A-6, p. 228; A-9

(65) A-6, p. 228

(66) A-6, p. 228

At midnight the 2nd Battalion, 112th Infantry, was to move out again to close the gap, however, this time they were to guide on flares and illuminating mortar ammunition fired by the 2nd Battalion, 289th Infantry. (67)

At 0150 hours, 30 December, the 2nd Battalion, 112th Infantry, met a small pocket of enemy resistance and by 0620 hours reported that they were 200 yards from the objective. They requested the 2nd Battalion 289th Infantry to fire signal flares every five minutes to guide them on position. By 0700 the Commanding Officer, 2nd Battalion, 112th Infantry, reported the gap closed. When the Commanding Officer, 289th Infantry saw that the frontage was too great for the attached Battalion, he ordered the 1st Battalion 289th Infantry to extend their left boundary 600 yards to the left. Contact between the Battalions was complete by 1200 hours. (68)

During the morning, all elements of CCA were relieved to join their parent unit, the 3rd Armored Division. (69)

In the afternoon, the 2nd Battalion, 112th Infantry, found out that they did not have contact between all companies. The biggest gap seemed to be between G Company and the remainder of the Battalion. The enemy south of this Battalion was estimated to be of two company strength. By 2215 hours the gap was verified. (70)

The only enemy activity during the day and night of 31 December was a small attack against the 2nd Battalion, 112th

(67) A-9

(68) A-9; A-8

(69) A-6, p. 228

(70) A-9; A-8

Infantry, which they repulsed at 1640 hours, and a small fire fight in the B Company sector. However, the condition between the 2nd Battalion, 289th Infantry, and 2nd Battalion, 112th Infantry, remained unfavorable. The defense of the former was merely made up of islands of resistance. (71) At noon the Regimental Commander decided to move the Regimental Command Post to CLERHEID. Displacement was complete by 1515 hours. (72)

The remainder of the Regiment spent the day in reorganizing in depth which was completed prior to 2400 hours.

Two strong road blocks were established in the west of EREZEE on the EREZEE-GRANDMENIL road consisting of 3 57's, 5 tanks and 35 mines. The other antitank guns were distributed as follows: 6 in GRANDMENIL, 6 with the 2nd Battalion and 4 with the 1st Battalion. (73)

The US XVIII Airborne Corps gave the Germans a demonstration of a typical American New Years eve celebration. At 0001 hours, 1 January 1945, every gun in the 20 battalion, corps artillery, fired three rounds into enemy territory. (74)

Activity on New Years day was light. The 2nd Battalion Commander, 112th Infantry, reported that the gap was in the vicinity of VIEUX FORNEAU and that an estimated enemy company was in that area. (75)

Company F, 289th Infantry, was ordered to attack the gap, crossing the line of departure (the trail to LA FOSSE, 600 yards

(71) A-8; A-9

(72) A-10

(73) A-8

(74) A-4, p. 6

(75) A-8

north of CROIX ST JEHEME at 2330. For this operation the Regimental Commander sent along the Regimental Executive Officer, the Intelligence Officer, and the Communications Officer with a wire team. The company moved about 700 yards. When the enemy was heard digging in, the Regimental Executive Officer halted the company, instructing them to dig in. (76)

A prisoner captured the next day recognized the S-2 as one of the men that passed within 10 feet of his machine gun the night before. He did not fire because he thought a major attack was progressing and he planned to surrender in the morning, which he did. (77)

The Division reverted to VII Corps control on 2 January at 0900 hours.

K Company moved to Regimental reserve at 0400 hours in SADZOT.

Company F was again given the mission of closing the gap. The line of departure at CROIX ST JEHEME (their present position) was to be crossed at 1500 hours. After a stubborn fire fight Company F was forced to withdraw to its line of departure to enable Division artillery to fire on the enemy position. The artillery fire continued all that night. (78)

At 1800 hours 2 January, the Corps order for the resumption of the attack was received. The 2nd Armored was to spearhead the attack at 0830 hours, 3 January. The 83rd and 84th Infantry Division and the 3rd Armored Divisions were to support

(76) A-8; Personal knowledge

(77) Personal knowledge

(78) A-4, p. 7

the 2nd Armored. CCB was to attack through the GRANDMENIL-MANHAY sector while Combat Command A was to attack south through the EREZEE-SOY area. (79) RCT 289 prepared for the attack by removing antitank mines and AP mines in its sector. (80)

At 1330 hours on 3 January, Company F, 289th and Company G, 112th Infantry, initiated a coordinated attack on the enemy positions south of VIEUX FORNEAU. F Company made a frontal attack while G Company attempted an envelopment to the east flank of the enemy. One enemy pocket was eliminated but machine gun and heavy mortar fires kept the attacking companies from accomplishing their mission. (81)

K Company was moved up to a defensive position on the ridge line running southwest from CROIX ST JEHEME and established contact with the 1st Battalion on the right with patrols. (82)

On 4 January at 1030 hours, the 2nd Battalion, 112th Infantry attacked in the direction of VIEUX FORNEAU. By 1130 hours hostile positions were overrun. Mopping up and establishing contact was continued throughout the day. Two prisoners and 50 dead were the enemy losses. (83)

The 3rd Battalion was relieved at GRANDMENIL by the 291st Infantry, 75th Division, and replaced the positions formerly held by the 2nd Battalion, 112th Infantry by 1730 hours. The 2nd Battalion, 112th Infantry reverted to Corps control. (84)

On 5 January at 1420 hours Combat Command B, 2nd Armored Division, informed the 289th RCT that it was receiving fire from

(79) A-4, p. 7; A-2, p. 130

(80) A-8

(81) A-4, p. 7

(82) A-8

(83) A-4, p. 8; A-9

(84) A-4, p. 8

the north side of the junction between the AISNE RIVER and the RAU DIT SOUS L'EAU. (85) At 1615 hours the final phase of this operation was accomplished when Companies C, E, K and L pushed to the river line, eliminating the final resistance north of the river line. (86)

RCT 289 was relieved on 6 January 1945.

To summarize: The operation described in this monograph is typical of the "Battle of the Bulge." Faulty intelligence reports, units being committed piecemeal, and general confusion were the rule rather than the exception.

The rapidly changing enemy situation delayed the 289th RCT in the accomplishment of its mission. However, despite an inauspicious start, the newly committed RCT held the line against elements of three enemy divisions.

Losses in the Regiment during the period of this operation amounted to 313 casualties. Estimated enemy losses were 350 killed and 138 prisoners.

RCT 289 now considered itself a veteran outfit.

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

1. MOVEMENT TO DEFENSIVE POSITIONS

In the opinion of this author too much time was wasted in moving the elements of RCT 289 to their defensive positions. The unit was alerted on the morning of 24 December and spent most of the morning watching the Air Force on their way to their greatest aerial support mission.

(85) A-8

(86) A-9

GRANDMENIL fell to the enemy approximately 19 hours later. The distance from PALENCE to GRANDMENIL is not over 15 miles. Had a Battalion of the 289th RCT been shuttled directly to GRANDMENIL, they would have had time to "dig in" before the enemy arrived, instead of fighting for the town later.

Another close call was at AMONINES. During the night of 24-25 December, 12 separate attacks were made on that town. The Task Force commander said later, "If the enemy had had three more riflemen, he would have overrun our positions." This town didn't fall, but if it had, the high ground to the north provided direct observation on the GRANDMENIL-EREZEE road. The 1st Battalion 289th Infantry arrived on the left flank of this task force twelve hours after the enemy attacks started. However, they were alerted 12 hours prior to the first attack on AMONINES. On Christmas day, the 1st Battalion 289th Infantry fought bitterly to reach the left flank of AMONINES.

2. THE FORCE ATTACKS ON GRANDMENIL

On 25 December, tanks from CCA, 3rd Armored Division attempted to enter GRANDMENIL but were repulsed. During the evening of the same day CCB, 3rd Armored Division, gave Task Force McGeorge (one armored infantry and one tank company) the same mission. This attack fared no better than the first. Early the next morning, K Company 289th Infantry, was ordered to assist Task Force McGeorge in its second attempt to take GRANDMENIL. Although the attacking troops entered the town this time, within a few hours they were ejected. The fourth attempt to take GRANDMENIL was successful, however, it took the reinforced 3rd Battalion 289th Infantry and Task Force McGeorge to accomplish the mission.

These piecemeal attacks were both costly and unnecessary. The commitment of the reinforced 3rd Battalion could have been accomplished in conjunction with any of the three previous attacks.

The fact that the enemy took MAN HAY and GRANDMENIL from elements of two task forces (Kane and Richardson) and the presence of the eight tanks that rolled over the 3rd Battalion Christmas morning should have been strong enough indications that the enemy had hit the above mentioned towns with a sizable force. Captured German prisoners, taken after the fall of GRANDMENIL, revealed that the town had been defended by a reinforced battalion.

3. ATTACHMENTS

The 289th RCT went into combat with all its normal attachments except the attached Tank and Tank Destroyer Companies. These units joined the Regiment in time for the attack Christmas morning. However, had they been present earlier they could have assisted the 3rd Battalion. The normal attachment for a Battalion was at least a Platoon of Tanks and Tank Destroyers. Had it been possible to make these attachments prior to the 3rd Battalion's engagement, it is possible that the enemy tanks would have received the same surprise that the 3rd Battalion did.

4. CONTROL

On Christmas day, the attack of the 2nd Battalion 289th Infantry toward LA FOSSE was progressing favorably until darkness descended. Then the command group lost physical, and subsequently, radio contact with the assault elements. Too much reliance was placed on the SCR 300 to control the battalion. These radios failed because their range was reduced appreciably while operating

in the numerous defiles and the heavily forested terrain. As the troops lost physical contact, the operating range of the SCR 300's was overextended and the Battalion Commander lost control of his battalion.

5. MAP READING

Elements of the three Battalions of the 289th Infantry and the 2nd Battalion, 112th Infantry, showed a lack of knowledge of map reading.

Elements of the 3rd Battalion, 289th Infantry, were lost for 10 hours on 25 December. The 2nd Battalion, 289th Infantry, became scattered on the same day. The 1st Battalion, 289th Infantry, did not reach its left boundary until 5 January. The 2nd Battalion, 112th Infantry, completely lost its direction on the night of 28 December.

Poor map reading caused faulty position reports, loss of front line troops temporarily and placed the security of the whole command in jeopardy.

6. WIRE COMMUNICATION

The maintenance of the many regimental wire lines became a near impossibility during most of this operation. Instead of the usual "two battalions up and one back" formation, RCT 289 had four battalions on line during most of this operation. This fact necessitated the maintenance of four exceptionally long trunk lines. In addition, the numerous attachments frequently required the maintenance of lines that were longer than normal trunk lines. The constant movement of tracked vehicles from the 3rd Armored Division through this sector played havoc with the wire circuits. The heavy snowfall covered wire lines making it very difficult not only to find breaks in the line but to find

the wire line itself. Occasional sniping and enemy patrol activity were decided deterrents to quick maintenance of wire lines.

The above facts kept the wiremen busy day and night for 4 days. On the fifth night, prospects for a good night's sleep were in the offing. However, at 0200 hours, 28 December, the wiremen found themselves defending the Regimental CP.

Since the wire teams were now near the breaking point, the Regimental Communication Officer appealed to the Regimental Commander for some assistance. The Commanding Officer obligingly responded by issuing an order to all rifle companies to transfer 2 men each to the Regimental Communication Platoon. This manpower investment paid great dividends in control during the campaigns to follow.

7. THE I&R PLATOON

In addition to their normal missions of manning observation posts, patrolling to the front, etc., the I&R Platoon assisted many other units in the accomplishment of their mission.

(1) They guided the remnants of the 2nd Battalion to its objective on 26 December.

(2) When the only supply route to the 2nd Battalion was cut off by the enemy penetration on 28 December, the I&R platoon led supply convoys along the front lines from GRANDMENIL to LA FOSSE during the night.

(3) They protected wire crews on the LA FOSSE-SADZOT trail and on the GRANDMENIL-LA FOSSE ROAD.

8. DAYLIGHT RECONNAISSANCE

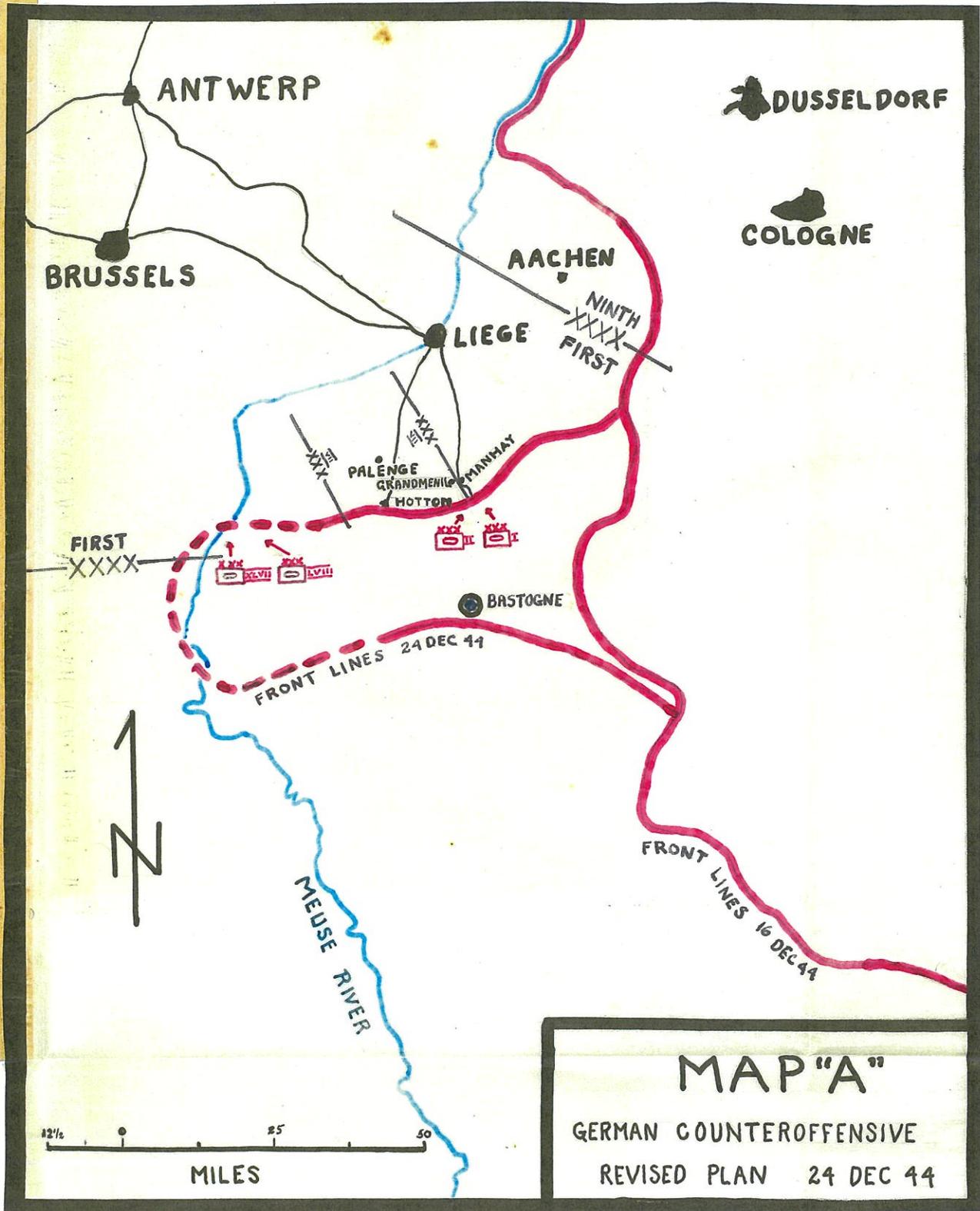
Sufficient time was not allocated for daylight reconnaissance. The 289th Infantry moved into assembly areas during the night

24-25 December 1944 and attacked at 0800 hours the next morning without the benefit of daylight reconnaissance. Had time been allocated for daylight reconnaissance on 24 December 1944, the 2nd Battalion, 289th Infantry, probably would not have lost direction and the 1st Battalion, 289th Infantry, may have been able to reach their left limiting point on 25 December 1944 instead of 5 January 1945.

LESSONS

1. When the decision is made to place troops in defensive positions, ^{troops} they should be dispatched to the possible avenues of enemy approach by the most expeditious means.
2. Piecemeal attacks are costly. Attacks should be made with the maximum number of troops available consistent the tactical situation.
3. The normal attachments to a combat team should travel with that team. These attachments must be available when needed.
4. In movements at night or in heavily forested areas, every available technique of control should be utilized including more than one means of signal communication.
5. A thorough knowledge of map reading is a prerequisite to control. Faulty map reading technique can spell failure in combat under the most ideal conditions.
6. When extreme deviations from normalcy in terrain, weather or frontage are experienced, wire personnel must be augmented if the additional work load imposed by these conditions is to be handled.
7. The specially trained personnel of the I&R platoon can assist other units of the command in the accomplishment of their mission. They are a valuable adjunct to the command.

8. Sufficient time should be allocated for daylight
reconnaissance. Night reconnaissance is a poor substitute.



ANTWERP
BRUSSELS

DUSSELDORF
COLOGNE

AACHEN

LIEGE

NINTH
XXXX
FIRST

PALENGE
GRANDMENIL
HOTTON

FIRST
XXXX

BASTOGNE

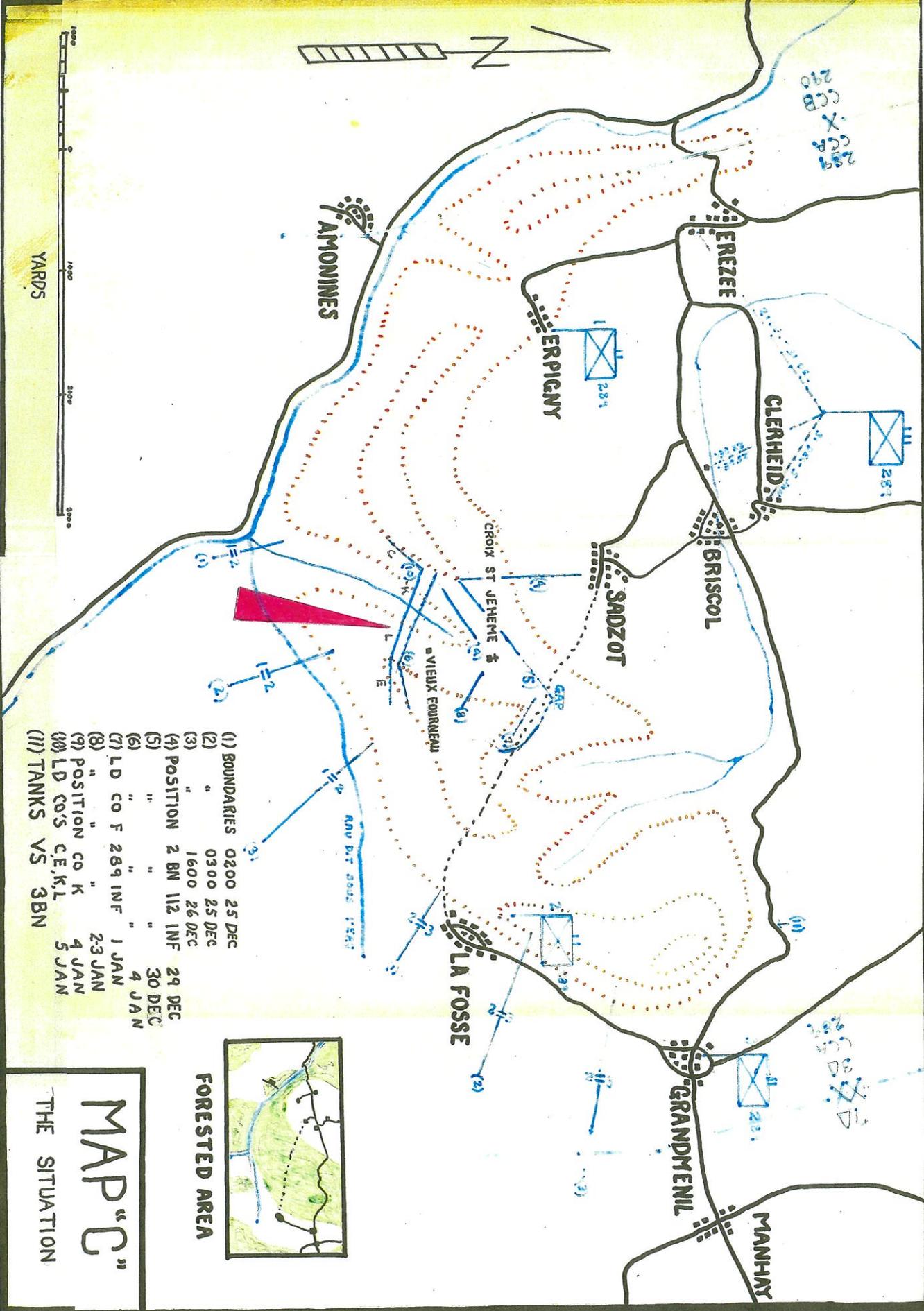
FRONT LINES 24 DEC 44

FRONT LINES 16 DEC 44

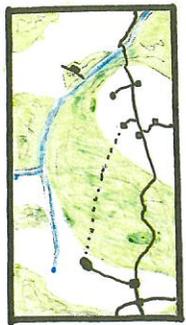
MEUSE RIVER

12 1/2 25 50
MILES

MAP "A"
GERMAN COUNTEROFFENSIVE
REVISED PLAN 24 DEC 44



- (1) BOUNDARIES 0200 25 DEC
- (2) " " 0300 25 DEC
- (3) " " 1600 26 DEC
- (4) POSITION 2 BN 112 INF 29 DEC
- (5) " " " 30 DEC
- (6) " " " 4 JAN
- (7) LD CO F 289 INF " 1 JAN
- (8) " " " 2-3 JAN
- (9) POSITION CO K " 4 JAN
- (10) LD COS CE, K, L " 5 JAN
- (11) TANKS VS 3BN



MAP "C"
THE SITUATION