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FORET DE PARROY

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SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE (When Data Entered)

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE		READ INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE COMPLETING FORM
1. REPORT NUMBER	2. GOVT ACCESSION NO.	3. RECIPIENT'S CATALOG NUMBER
4. TITLE (and Subtitle)		5. TYPE OF REPORT & PERIOD COVERED
FORET de PARROY, OFFENSIVE DELIBERATE ATTACK.		STUDENT PAPER
		6. PERFORMING ORG. REPORT NUMBER
7. AUTHOR(s)		8. CONTRACT OR GRANT NUMBER(s)
STAFF GROUP C, SECTION 11, CGSC CLASS 83-84		
9. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME AND ADDRESS		10. PROGRAM ELEMENT, PROJECT, TASK AREA & WORK UNIT NUMBERS
COMBAT STUDIES INSTITUTE, USACGSC ATZL-SWI, FT. LEAVENWORTH, KS 66027		
11. CONTROLLING OFFICE NAME AND ADDRESS		12. REPORT DATE
SAME AS # 9		May 1984
		13. NUMBER OF PAGES
		88
14. MONITORING AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS (if different from Controlling Office)		15. SECURITY CLASS. (of this report)
		UNCLASSIFIED
		15a. DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE
16. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of this Report)		
APPROVED FOR PUBLIC RELEASE DISTRIBUTION UNLIMITED		
17. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of the abstract entered in Block 20, if different from Report)		
18. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES		
A BATTLEBOOK PREPARED BY STUDENTS OF THE US ARMY COMMAND AND GENERAL STAFF COLLEGE UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF THE COMBAT STUDIES INSTITUTE AS PART OF THE BATTLE ANALYSIS PROGRAM.		
19. KEY WORDS (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number)		
HISTORY, CASE STUDIES, MILITARY OPERATIONS, TACTICAL ANALYSIS, BATTLES, MILITARY TACTICS, TACTICAL WARFARE, WORLD WAR II, FORET de PARROY, FOREST, TEMPERATE CLIMATE, ARMOR, INFANTRY, TANKS, FALL-WINTER.		
20. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number)		
SEE BACK		

As part of Third US Army's attack in Lorraine, XV Corps had cleared the Foret de Mondon by 25 September 1944. XV Corps then was to size and cleat the Foret de Parroy (vic. LUNEVILLE). 79th Infantry Division was to make the main attack after a large scale bombing attack; 2d (Fr) Armored Division was to protect the Corps south flank and support 79th ID by fire. After two postponements, bombers finally hit the Forest in a poorly conducted strike on 28 September, and the 79th ID attacked with two regiments abreast. At 29 0001 Sept, XV Corps was reassigned to Seventh US Army, 6th Army Group, but its mission remained unchanged. Strong enemy resistance forced the 79th ID to employ all of its regiments on 1 October, and the Division attacked alternately with two or three regiments abreast until all division objectives were taken on 14 October. On 17 October, the new 44th (US) Infantry Division began to relieve the 79th ID in place and continued to clear the Forest. The Foret de Parroy was finally cleared of enemy forces on 21 October.

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FORET DE PARROY

OFFENSIVE, DELIBERATE ATTACK

79TH INFANTRY DIVISION

25 SEPTEMBER 1944 - 24 OCTOBER 1944

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Submitted to the Combat Studies Institute, U.S. Army  
Command and General Staff College, in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for subcourse P651, Battle Analysis.

Fort Leavenworth

May 1984

## ABSTRACT

COMMON REFERENCE: The Battle of the Foret de Parroy (24 September 1944 - 24 October 1944), Lorraine Campaign.

TYPE OPERATION: Offensive, Deliberate Attack.

OPPOSING FORCES:

### US/ALLIED

THIRD (US) ARMY, 12TH ARMY GROUP  
XV (US) CORPS  
79TH (US) DIVISION  
2D (FR) ARMOR DIVISION  
106TH (US) CAV GROUP  
SEVENTH (US) ARMY, 6TH ARMY GROUP

### ENEMY

ARMY GROUP G (GERMAN)  
5TH PANZER ARMY  
XLVII PANZER CORPS  
15TH PZ GR DIVISION  
11TH PZ DIVISION  
21TH PZ DIVISION

SYNOPSIS: Following the 18 September 1944 German counter attack by elements of the 5th Panzer Army, a salient developed in the 3d (US) Army zone between XV and XII Corps. The salient threatened the 3d (US) Army southern flank and could be used by the Germans for launching further counter attacks. As part of operations to reduce the salient, the 79th Infantry Division was ordered to attack and clear the FORET DE PARROY. The attack, originally scheduled for 25 September, finally began on 28 September. By 24 October the forest was secured and the 79th Division was relieved by the 44th Infantry Division.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION TO THE BATTLE OF THE FORET DE PARROY

#### I. SYNOPSIS OF THE BATTLE

As part of the 3d (US) ARMY's Lorraine Campaign, the XV CORPS, which consisted of the 79th (US) DIVISION, the 2nd (FR) ARMOR DIVISION and the 106th (US) CALVARY GROUP received orders to advance to the DONNELAY-BACCARAT Line. In order for this to be accomplished, the FORET DE PARROY (Vic LUNEVILLE) had to be cleared.(1) The forces opposing the XV CORPS were the 15th PANZER GRENADIER DIVISION supported by the 113th PANZER BRIGADE. They were in defensive positions south of the VEZOUSE River and throughout the forest.(2) The attack was scheduled for 25 September. The XV CORPS was aligned with the 106th CAV GROUP protecting the corps northern flank; the 79th DIVISION in the center conducting the main attack and the 2nd (FR) ARMOR DIVISION protecting the CORPS southern flank.(3)

The strongest part of the enemy's position in the XV CORPS sector was clearly in the FORET DE PARROY. The 79th DIVISION plan, therefore, called for large scale bombing before the attack.(4) The 313th, 314th and the 315th REGIMENTS

## CHAPTER I: Introduction

of the 79th DIVISION were positioned for the attack with the 315th REGIMENT located vicinity CRION-SIOVILLER, with the 313th REGIMENT on the right vicinity JOLIVET-CHANTEHEUX and the 314th REGIMENT in reserve vicinity CROISE-MARANVILLER.

Poor weather delayed the attack until 28 September. US units continued patrolling in the forest, however, during the interlude. On 28 September, at 1045 hours, 187 of the expected 288 B-26 medium bombers from the XIX TACTICAL AIR FORCE COMMAND (T AFC) flew over the forest. Of these, only thirty-seven dropped their bombs.(5) The results of the air strike were negligible.(6)

At 1400 hours, the 79th DIVISION attacked. It met immediate and strong resistance. The Germans conducted a determined defense, employing tanks, artillery, mortars, and mines throughout the battle.(7)

At 0001 hours on 29 September, XV CORPS was reassigned to 7th (US) ARMY, 6th ARMY GROUP, but there was no change in the corps mission.(8) By 1 October, the 79th DIVISION was about one-third the way through the forest. The 314th REGIMENT was committed into the southwest corner of the forest. On 7 Oct, elements of the 11th PANZER DIVISION were identified in the forest as the enemy continued to offer strong resistance

## CHAPTER I: Introduction

to the attack.(9) On 8 October, a large scale attack was mounted. On 9 October, the high ground within the forest was taken and the Germans, who considered the forest lost with the loss of this critical ground, initiated a general retreat. The savage German resistance was attributed to a direct order from Hitler that the forest was to be held at all cost. Hitler had fought in the FORET DE PARROY area during World War I and he attached great sentimental value to the area.(10)

On 13 October the 79th DIVISION resumed its attack to seize EMBERMENIL and a ridgeline to its east, the first defensible terrain east of the FORET DE PARROY. The fighting continued until 22 October when the 79th consolidated on its objectives. At that time, the 44th INFANTRY DIVISION (which had been attached to the 79th for support during the offensive) began relieving the 79th in place. Relief was completed on 24 October, ending the 79th DIVISION's participation in the battle of the FORET DE PARROY.

Both the 2nd (FR) ARMOR DIVISION and the 106th CAVALRY GROUP saw extensive action in their role in protecting the corps flanks. Their actions isolated the battle area, precluding the Germans from reinforcing their units in the forest.

## CHAPTER I: Introduction

### II. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BATTLE

The battle was characterized by poor weather, persistent enemy counterattacks, the use of tanks to support infantry in a heavily forested area, ineffective use of air power, and continuous combat for both antagonists.

Doctrinally, the battle of the FORET DE PARROY was significant in that it demonstrated the effectiveness of combined arms, even in restrictive terrain. The Germans employed tanks in a heavily forested environment.(12) This event gave an unexpected dimension to their defense. The Americans countered the German defenses by employing effective combined arms teams, consisting of infantry, anti-tank, tank, and engineer elements, supported by artillery. The battle also demonstrated the utility of infantry in modern battle.

Tactically the battle was significant in that its successful culmination resulted in the reduction of a German salient between THIRD ARMY and SEVENTH ARMY (which, prior to the "chop" of XV CORPS, had been PATTON's top priority). The conclusion of the 79th's attack led to the "October Lull" during which the focus of operations in Lorraine shifted to the reduction of METZ. German forces in ARMY GROUP G had been significantly attritted in the September and October battles

## CHAPTER I: Introduction

and were incapable of launching strong counterattacks, such as those that had preceded the 79th action in the FORET DE PARROY. They were, therefore, forced to relinquish the initiative and await the American drive to the WEST WALL which commenced in November.

### III. REVIEW OF SOURCES

The bibliography lists all the material used to study this battle. The unit histories contained both an overall perspective of the battle as well as a good chronology of the sequence of events. They tend to be written for the purpose of reminiscing and glorifying unit and individual exploits rather than as an analytical, historical tool from which to evaluate the battle. The official unit documents (ie After Action Reports, etc.) are more useful in studying the battle but they tend to be nonevaluative and provide only the American perspective of events. No blatant contradictions or inconsistencies were noted in the sources.

Conspicuous in its absence are the lack of sources from the 2nd (FR) ARMOR DIVISION and the 314th REGIMENT of the 79th DIVISION. These documents could not be obtained. There were only a limited amount of source materials on the German units

## CHAPTER I: Introduction

involved. In aggregate, however, the source material does give the reader sufficient information from which to reconstruct the battle.



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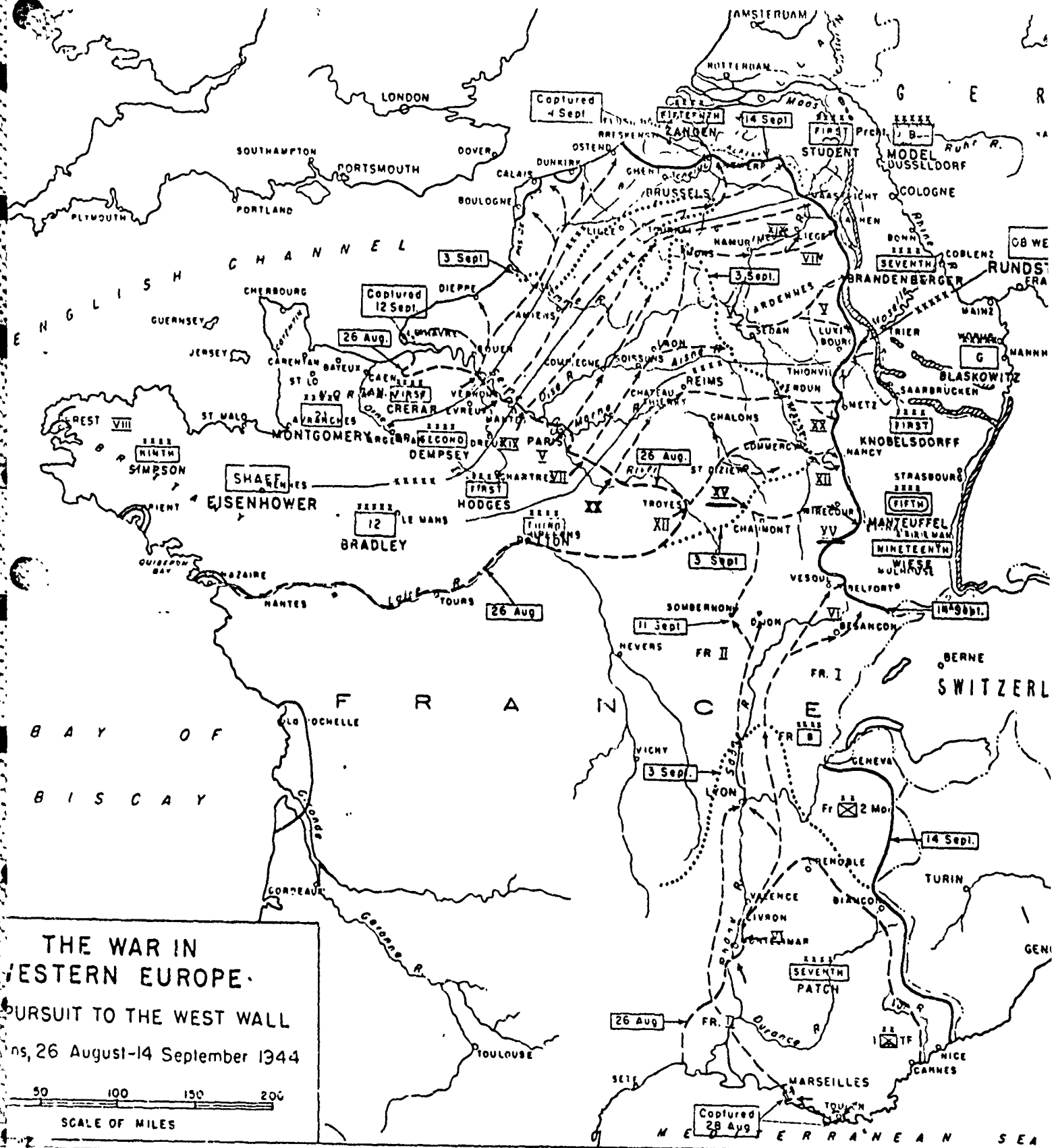
CHAPTER 2  
THE STRATEGIC SETTING

In an effort to end World War II, the Allies under the command of General Dwight D. EISENHOWER landed in France on the NORMANDY Coast. With the Russian army on the offensive in the east, a two front war would divide the German defensive effort. Germany had neither the manpower nor resources to adequately defend on both fronts. Following the break out from NORMANDY, EISENHOWER decided to advance on a broad front with the British and Canadian 21st ARMY GROUP consisting of the British 2nd ARMY and the Canadian 1st ARMY in the north, the US 6th ARMY GROUP consisting of the US 7th ARMY and the French 1st ARMY in the south and the US 12th ARMY GROUP consisting of the US 1st ARMY and the US 3rd ARMY in the center. This broad frontal attack was designed to keep constant pressure on the Germans, preventing them from regrouping and concentrating their defensive forces against a narrow front of Allied advance. Field Marshal Montgomery advocated a "rapier" type thrust from the north into the RUHR industrial heartland of Germany, and on to BERLIN. He had formed this plan to mass the allied forces, penetrate the German defenses, and advance

## CHAPTER II: The Strategic Setting

quickly through Germany to capture the capital. In theory this would have demoralized the German nation and forced a quick surrender. The plan had obvious shortcomings. First, the single salient would produce extensive flanks. Second, the German defensive problems would be made more simple. Their limited resources could be concentrated against the main effort. Third, problems of supplying a 500 mile long narrow salient congested with reinforcements, equipment, and refugees would be a logistical nightmare. Lastly, the German Army would remain largely intact with capable fighting units in the south. Unconditional surrender of Germany was the stated Allied objective. EISENHOWER believed that this could only be achieved by the total defeat of the German Army. Anything less would result in a possible stalemate and a negotiated settlement. Consequently, EISENHOWER adopted a Broad Front strategy and directed each of the Army Groups to advance in zone and destroy the German Army. The main efforts would be the British drive into the RUHR and US drive into the industrial complex of the SAAR.

MAP 2-1: The Allied Advance Across France (1)



## CHAPTER II: The Strategic Setting

In the center lay the plain of LORRAINE. Marked by rolling hills, lakes, dense forests, streams, fields, and towns, it is the historical gateway between France and Germany. In the north, lay the formidable ARDENNES and in the south, the VOSGES. The avenue of approach for the 3rd US ARMY, commanded by General George S. PATTON, was the Plain of LORRAINE.

Opposing PATTON's 3rd ARMY was the German 1st ARMY commanded by General Otto von KNOBELSDORFF and the 5th PANZER ARMY under command of Hasso von MANTEUFFEL. KNOBELSDORFF's forces consisted of three and one half divisions and would be later reinforced with the forward elements of two infantry divisions and one tank brigade. General von KNOBELSDORFF's mission was to defend the LORRAINE industrial area between LONGWAY and BIREY and the German industrial complex in the SAAR. MANTEUFFEL's orders were to counterattack PATTON's southern flank as soon as possible.(MAP 2-2) He adopted tactics which had proved successful on the Eastern Front, and massed his available armor, some 25 tanks from the 11th PANZER DIVISION, 15th PANZER GRENADIER DIVISION, and the 111th and 113th PANZER BRIGADES. MANTEUFFEL counterattacked on 18 September with elements of the FIFTH PANZER ARMY, threatening to drive a salient between XII and XV CORPS and jeopardizing PATTON's right flank. A tenacious defense by the 4th ARMORED DIVISION halted the counterattack in the vicinity of

## CHAPTER II: The Strategic Setting

LUNEVILLE. Although possessing superior forces, PATTON's problems were immense. Elsewhere in LORRAINE, he was stymied by the German defense of METZ. METZ, a key position in the German defenses, was protected by thirty-seven forts. Antiquated forts of similar construction had proven formidable obstacles in the battles for BREST.(2) In addition, EISENHOWER's broad front strategy severely strained US logistic capabilities. Gasoline and the means to transport it were in short supply, and competitively sought after by both MONTGOMERY in the north and PATTON for his drive toward the SAAR. Each regarded his mission as the main effort and vital to the successful defeat of Germany. Competition was fierce and personal, with both men determined to achieve success commensurate with their ambitions.

PATTON's course of action centered around a two pronged attack. Major General Manton EDDY, commander of XII CORPS was to attack NANCY on 5 September and drive north to the SAAR. Major General Walton WALKER, commanding the XX CORPS was to commence attack the following day and attempt to envelop METZ beginning the following day. The offensive operations against METZ bogged down due to fierce resistance from entrenched German forces at FORT DRIANT. METZ would continue to be a major obstacle to General PATTON's plans until 25 November

## CHAPTER II: The Strategic Setting

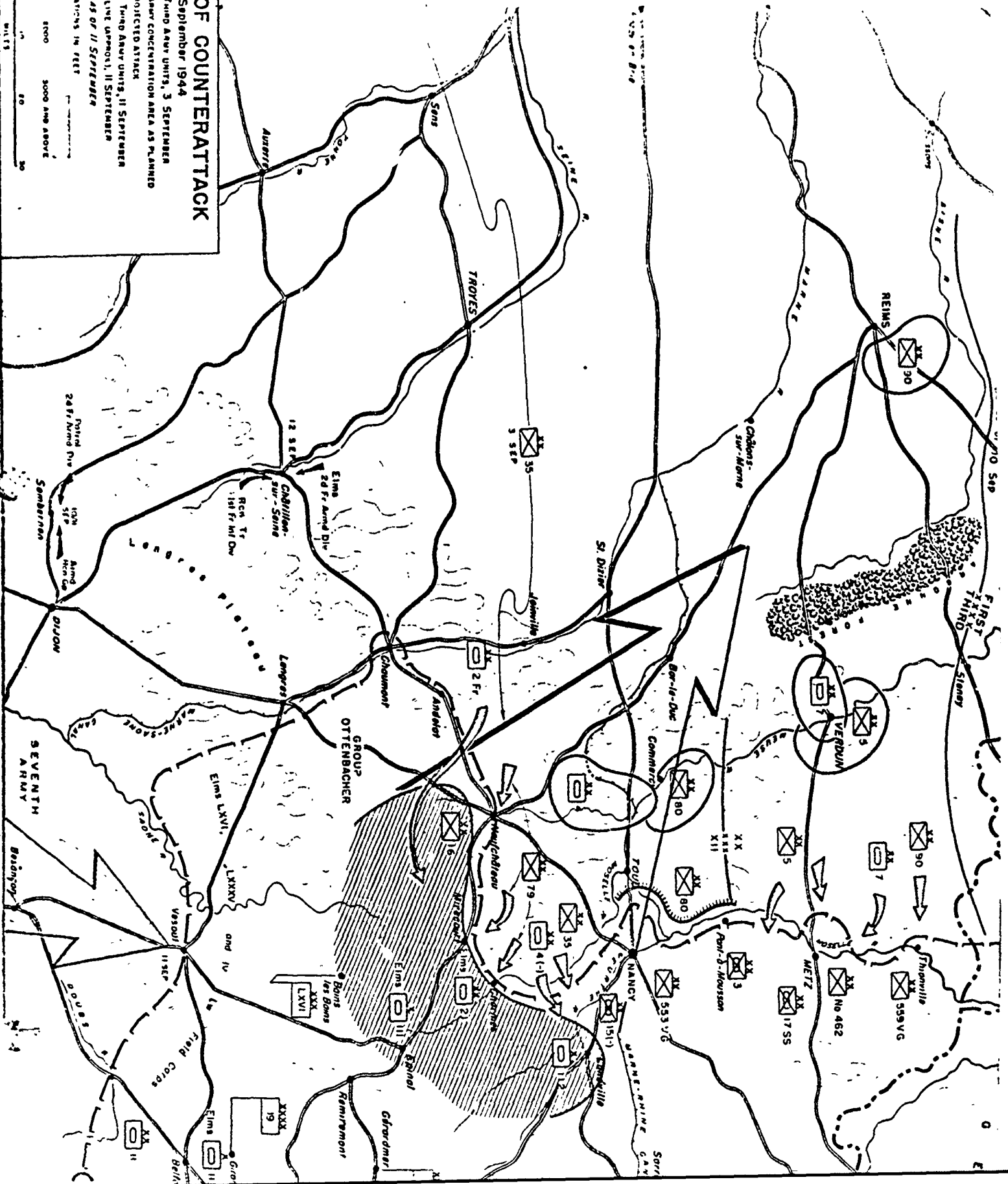
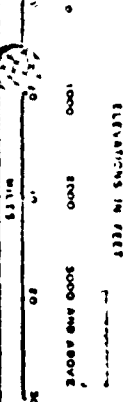
when Major General Stafford IRWIN's 5th INFANTRY DIVISION entered the city.(3)

In the south, General EDDY planned to cross the MOSELLE River near NANCY and secure the city. A diversionary attack by the 319th INFANTRY REGIMENT of the 80th DIVISION near JOUL would mask the main effort in the north by the 317th INFANTRY REGIMENT. The 317th was to establish a bridgehead at PONT-A-MOUSSON and allow portions of Major General John S. WOODS' 4th ARMORED DIVISION and a battalion of the 318th INFANTRY REGIMENT to pass through and envelop NANCY. The efforts to establish bridgeheads across the MOSELLE were frustrated by fierce resistance and counterattacks against the 317th bridgehead. The 317th lost 160 officers and men. The lack of success resulted in General EDDY altering his original plans to attempt a double envelopment with the 35th INFANTRY DIVISION in the south and the 80th INFANTRY DIVISION in the north. The 4th ARMORED DIVISION would follow whichever attack appeared likely to succeed.(4)

MAP 2-2: Counter Attack of 5th PZ ARMY (5)

GERMAN PLAN OF COUNTERATTACK

3-15 September 1944  
 Plan of 5th PZ Army Units, 3 September  
 Plan of 5th PZ Army Concentration Area as Planned  
 Plan of Projected Attack  
 Plan of 5th PZ Army Units, 11 September  
 German Front Line (approx), 11 September  
 German Units as of 11 September

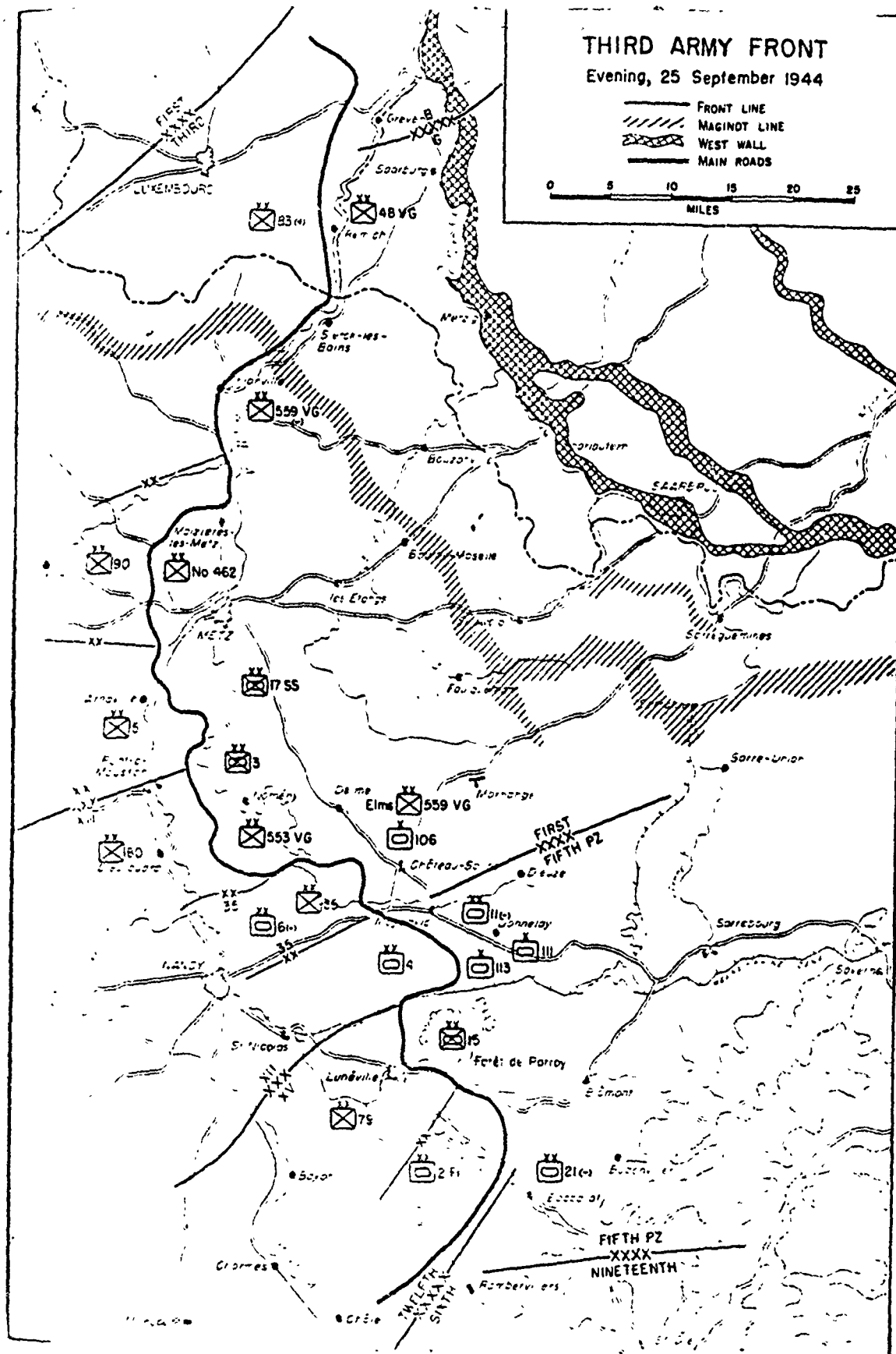




## CHAPTER II: The Strategic Setting

Early success of the 134th and 137th REGIMENTS of the 35th INFANTRY DIVISION brought increased German resistance from the 15th PANZER GRENADIER DIVISION. The 317th and 318th REGIMENTS of the 80th INFANTRY DIVISION seized the opportunity and established a bridgehead over the MOSELLE at DIEULOURD, south of the first attempted crossing. The 35th attack struck a thinly defended sector of the 3rd PANZER GRENADIER DIVISION. As the Germans sought to reinforce this sector, elements of the 4th ARMORED DIVISION were committed in an attempt to exploit the crossing. Lt Col Creighton ABRAMS, commander of the 37th TANK BATTALION drove 30 kilometers beyond the bridgehead capturing 354 prisoners, destroying 12 tanks, 85 other vehicles, and 5 large caliber guns. ABRAMS' losses were insignificant. Continuing the next day, ABRAMS' TASK FORCE ABE quickly confronted elements of the 15th PANZER GRENADIER DIVISION as they sought to reinforce German concentrations to the southeast. Again with insignificant losses, the armored task force inflicted considerable damage capturing or destroying 26 armored vehicles, 136 other vehicles, ten 88 millimeter guns, and taking 409 prisoners. The double envelopment was completed when elements of the 35th and 80th DIVISIONS joined to the east of NANCY a few days later.(6)

MAP 2-3: Situation, 25 September (7)



## CHAPTER II: The Strategic Setting

The battle was far from over. Continued resistance and counterattacks by German forces consisting of elements of the 3rd and 15th PANZER GRENADIER DIVISION threatened the continued success of the advance. Aided by P-47 aircraft in close air support and the commitment of the 6th ARMORED DIVISION under the command of Major General Robert W. GROW, the Germans were forced into a defensive pocket east of the MOSELLE in the vicinity of MONT d'AMANCE. The XV CORPS under the command Major General Wade Hampton HAISLIP was reassembled southeast of TROYES. The corps consisted of two divisions, the French 2nd ARMORED DIVISION, the US 79th INFANTRY DIVISION, and the 106th CAVALRY GROUP. The 79th DIVISION, commanded by Major General Ira T. WYCHE, would constitute the main effort in an overall XV CORPS plan to prevent the escape of the remaining regiments of the NANCY defenders, preclude counterattacks by advancing German reinforcements, and reduce the salient which had developed following the FIFTH PANZER ARMY's attack.(8)

XV CORPS, attacking to the northeast on the right flank of XII CORPS, was given the mission of reducing the German salient into the THIRD ARMY front. The salient, encompassing the densely wooded FORET DE PARROY, was occupied by elements of the 15th PANZER GRENADIER DIVISION. The 15TH was using the salient launch forays against XII CORPS elements around LUNEVILLE. As a prelude to operations in the FORET DE PARROY, XV CORPS first had to clear the FORET DE MONDON. MONDON lay

immediately south of the FORET DE PARROY and southeast of LUNEVILLE along the north bank of the MEURTHE River. The mission of clearing the forest was assigned to the 79th INFANTRY DIVISION. On 21 September, the 313th INFANTRY REGIMENT crossed the MEURTHE River on bridges held by the 4th ARMOR DIVISION at LUNEVILLE. The 313th detached one battalion to the armor to assist in securing the town. The remainder of the regiment swept to the east and began probing German positions on the west edge of the forest. Simultaneously, elements of the the 314th INFANTRY REGIMENT assaulted across the MEURTHE from the south. Resistance was bitter and the bridgehead could not be maintained. On 22 September the 314th again assaulted across the river, this time succeeding in maintaining a bridgehead on the north bank. Through a series of close engagements, some fought hand-to-hand, the 79th secured the forest by 23 September. The cost had been high. The 3rd BATTALION, 314th had suffered almost 200 casualties, among whom were most of the officers. The experience, however, would serve the 79th well in coming battles.

The stage was now set for the battle in the FORET DE PARROY.

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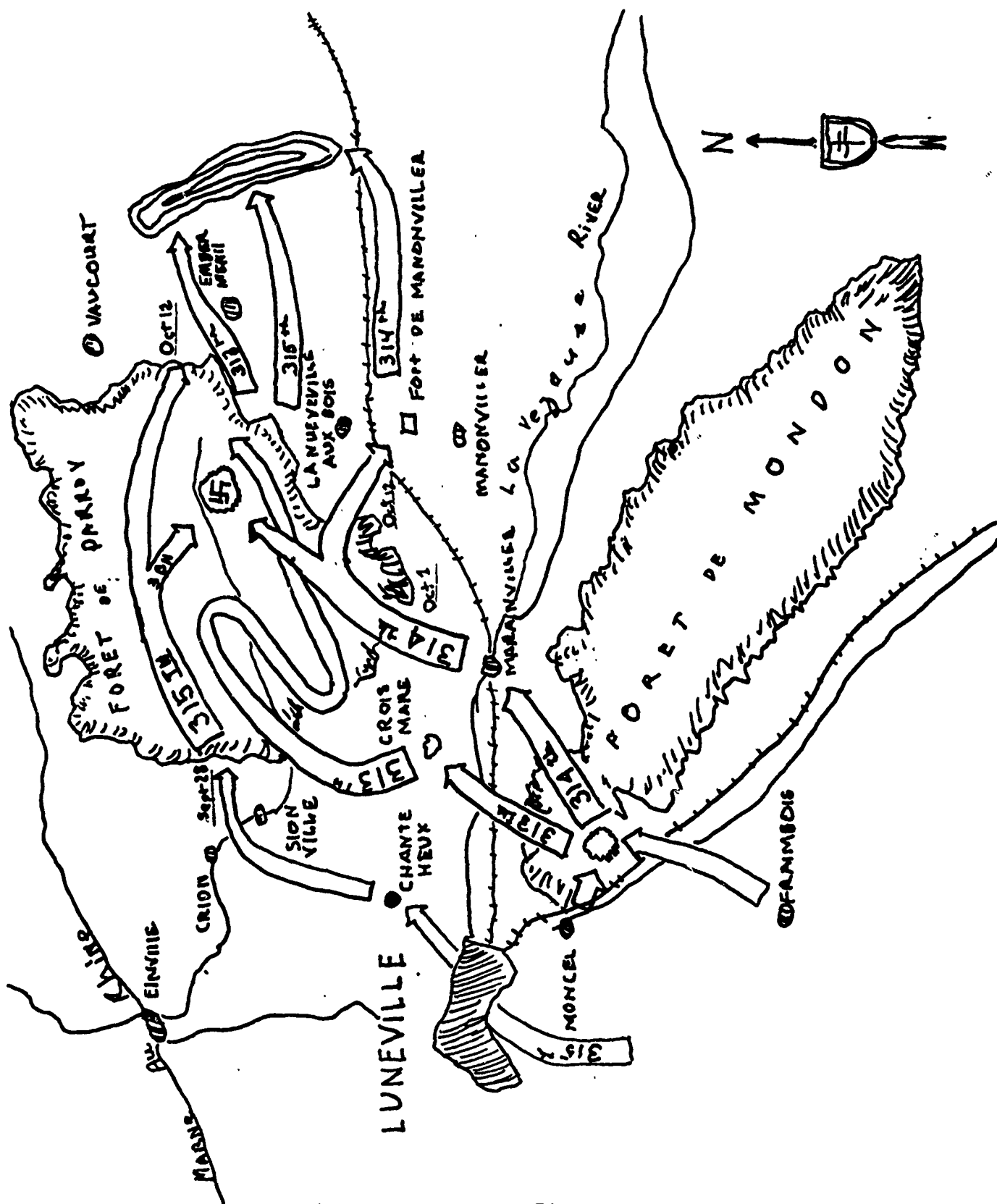
CHAPTER III  
TACTICAL SITUATION

I. IMMEDIATE MILITARY OBJECTIVES

As discussed in the previous chapter, the mission of the the 15th PANZER GRENADIER DIVISION was fixed. They were to defend the FORET DE PARROY at all cost. Hitler attached great significance to the the forest for sentimental reasons. He had fought there during World War I. In that conflict no allied force succeeded in penetrating through it.(14) On the tactical level, the defense of the forest was important because it anchored the German defensive line on defensible terrain from which counterattacks could be initiated toward the MOSELLE.

The XV CORPS had been assigned the mission of protecting the THIRD ARMY right flank and reducing the salient between XII CORPS and XV CORPS by attacking to the northeast in zone.

MAP 3-1: The Area of Operations



### CHAPTER III: The Tactical Situation

The 79th INFANTRY DIVISION, as part of the XV CORPS, was given the mission of clearing FORET DE PARROY and seizing high ground east of EMBERMENIL at the eastern edge of FORET DE PARROY.(15) Thus the 79th DIVISION was the corps main effort during the operation. The 106th CAVALRY GROUP screened the corps left flank between the 79th and XII CORPS. The 2d (FR) ARMOR DIVISION attacked in zone on the corps right flank.

The 315th INFANTRY REGIMENT, conducting the 79th DIVISION main attack in the south (right), was assigned objectives along the eastern edge of the FORET DE PARROY. The 313th INFANTRY REGIMENT was assigned the mission of conducting a supporting attack in the north (left). The 314th INFANTRY REGIMENT, which had been attritted during the fight in the FORET DE MONTON, was designated as divisional reserve and directed to initially follow the 313th.

The detail to which staff estimates were prepared within organizations involved in the fights around the FORET DE PARROY could not be determined during the research effort that supported this analysis. Likewise, the degree to which opposing commanders weighed alternative courses of action is unclear. What is clear is that each principal opposing force had a firm, finite mission. 15th PANZER GRENADIER DIVISION was to hold the forest. 79th INFANTRY DIVISION was to clear the



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forest. Commanders on both sides, in analyzing their mission, probably understood that the Americans possessed a clear advantage in strength of maneuver forces and fire support. Also, they probably understood that the terrain and weather favored the Germans. One can assume that the commanders, small unit leaders, and soldiers realized that days of hard fighting lay ahead. Chapter Four describes that fighting in detail.

#### II. DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA OF OPERATIONS

The FORET DE PARROY is located in the province of LORRAINE in the northeast corner of France, approximately 15 Kilometers east-northeast of LUNEVILLE. It is bordered on the north by the MARNE-RHINE CANAL, on the east by routes D19 and D89a, on the southeast by the RUISSEAU DES AMIS (Creek of Friends), on the southeast by the VEZOUZE RIVER, and on the west by routes D160 and D108.

The climate of the region is normally dominated by weather systems originating in the Atlantic Ocean, resulting in moderate temperatures, frequent cloudiness, and uniform precipitation year around.(1)

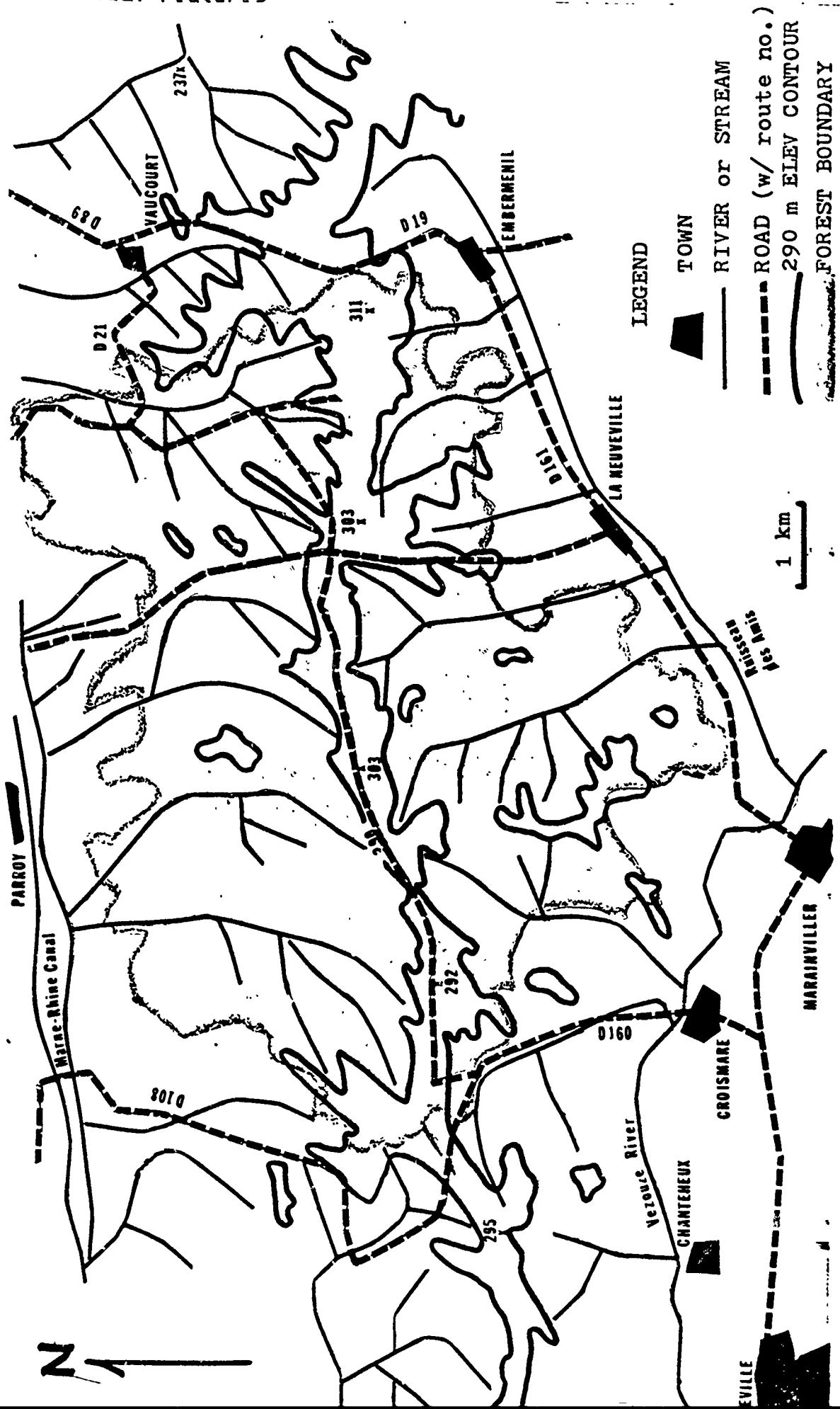
The mean temperature during September and October ranges

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from 51 to 67, and 43 to 56 degrees Fahrenheit respectively, with extreme recorded minimum temperatures of 32 and 21 degrees Fahrenheit. Precipitation averages 2.4 inches during September, and 3.0 inches during October. There are 8 to 9 days each month with significant rainfall (0.04 inches to 0.4 inches) and 1 to 2 days each month with heavy rainfall (0.4 inches to 1.0 inches). The maximum recorded rainfall during a 24 hour period is 1.8 inches during September and 2.0 inches during October. Restrictive cloud cover (greater than 65% cloud coverage, less than 3000 feet elevation) can be expected to occur in the morning on 10 days during September, and 12 days during October, and in the evening on 7 days each month. Visibility can be expected to be bad to poor (less than 2 1/2 miles) on 8 days in the morning and 6 days in the evening during October.(2)

The historical data suggests that from September to October, temperatures decline but remain relatively warm, and precipitation remains constant with significant rainfall occurring approximately every 3 to 4 days. Visibility and cloud cover conditions deteriorate slightly from October to November with unfavorable conditions occurring in the morning approximately 1 day in 3, and in the evening approximately 1 day in 5.

MAP 3-2: Physical Features



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The effect of the climatic conditions on personnel, equipment, supplies, and lines of communication (LOC) is generally neutral. While this temperature range and frequency of precipitation is somewhat uncomfortable, they are not so extreme as to cause difficulty to personnel, equipment, and supplies. In addition, the hard surface road network is relatively independent of climate. The major potential effects of rainfall and visibility on tactical operations are degradation of cross country mobility across intermittent streams and flat valley floors, and reduction in observation. This latter reduces the availability of reliable air support and the capability to engage targets with observed artillery fire.

The geography of the LORRAINE region consists generally of northward flowing rivers in flat valleys with clay soils, and north-south ridges with gradual west slopes and abrupt east slopes.(3) The terrain of the FORET DE PARROY is an anomaly in the region because it is dominated by an east-west ridge and two westward flowing bodies of water, the VEZOUZE River on the south and the MARNE-RHINE Canal on the north. The ridge which runs through the center of the FORET DE PARROY is virtually flat through its full 15 kilometer (km) length from south of VAUCOURT to north of LUNEVILLE. It is connected to a series of north-south ridgelines, approximately 2 km apart,

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sloping away from the central ridge at a 1% to 2% slope. The ridges are separated by a system of north and south draining intermittent streams with slopes of 10-12% toward the central ridge, and 4-7% toward the north-south ridges.

The FORET DE PARROY has two improved roads, one running east-west along the central ridge and one running north-south from PARROY to LA NEUVEILLE-AUX-BOIS. It also has a dense system of unimproved trails and footpaths which generally run parallel and perpendicular to the ridges. The vegetation in the forest is a mixture of hardwood and pine, while the fields surrounding the forest are generally used as pasture for cattle.

The effects of this terrain on the military operations are significant. Distances for observation and fire are reduced. The forest and terrain contour provide ample opportunity for cover and concealment. Each north-south ridge line, with a steeper slope on its western face, favors the defender and presents an obstacle to the attacker. While there is no single terrain feature which dominates the forest, the ridge system and the east-west improved road represent key terrain for the reasons previously discussed. The best avenue of approach through the forest is the central ridge. However, it is defensible and was occupied by the Germans. The

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remaining avenues within the forest are comprised of unimproved trails crossing between the ridges. They, despite trafficability problems during wet weather, are all generally equal in quality and present no clear avenue on which a defender can concentrate.

### III. COMPARISON OF OPPOSING FORCES

Friendly forces consisted of the XV (US) CORPS, headquartered in CHARMES. Principal units were 79th INFANTRY DIVISION, commanded by Maj General Ira T. WYCHE, the 106th CAVALRY GROUP, the 2nd (FR) ARMOR DIVISION and attached troops. The principal zone of action was in the 106th CAVALRY GROUP and the 79th INFANTRY DIVISION zone in the northern portion of the corps zone. The approximate troop strength of the XV CORPS was 48000 troops. For the purpose of this analysis, the 2 (FR) ARMORED DIVISION, approximately 15000 troops, may be discounted. Although they were in the XV CORPS sector they had been given the mission to protect the 3rd ARMY right flank. The 2nd (FR) ARMORED DIVISION, therefore, did not participate in the actual battle for the FORET DE PARROY.

The principal combat units of the 106th CAVALRY GROUP and the 79th INFANTRY DIVISION at the start of the battle were

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as follows:

#### 106th CAVALRY GROUP

- 106th CAVALRY SQUADRON
- 121th CAVALRY SQUADRON
- 813th TANK DESTROYER BATTALION (-)

#### 79th INFANTRY DIVISION

- 313th INFANTRY REGIMENT
- 314th INFANTRY REGIMENT
- 315th INFANTRY REGIMENT
- 79th INFANTRY DIV ARTY
- 79TH RECON TROOP MECH
- 304TH ENGINEER COMBAT BATTALION
- 749TH TANK BATTALION
- 463RD ANTI AIRCRAFT ARTILLERY, AUTOMATIC WPNS  
BATTALION

Sources indicate that the infantry regiments were habitually organized into combat teams which were made up of the three infantry battalions of the regiment plus two artillery battalions, a company from the tank battalion, a company from the tank destroyer battalion, an engineer company, and medical assets. Consequently when an infantry regiment met enemy machine gun and tank resistance, it could employ tanks and tank destroyers to destroy machine gun nests, pillboxes and infantry defenses supported by tanks. The fighting in the forest required close coordination and often demanded that individuals and units maintain visual contact to avoid being penetrated by enemy forces. The combined arms team task organization facilitated the slow deliberate movement of

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forces required in the thick forest.

The infantry were supported by extremely effective artillery fires from both divisional and corps artillery units. Because the attack of the FORET DE PARROY was the principal activity within the corps, it received priority of artillery fires and ammunition resupply. In addition to the normal three field artillery battalions which made up the DIVISION ARTILLERY, corps had attached to the division two additional 105 mm howitzer artillery battalions (242nd and the 693rd) for a total of five field artillery battalions in direct support of the division maneuver forces. The XV CORPS ARTILLERY task organization at the start of the battle was as given below.

#### XV CORPS ARTILLERY (4)

##### 3rd FA OBSERVATION BATTALION

##### 40th FIELD ARTILLERY GROUP

989th FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION (155G)

999th FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION (8IN)

##### 144th FIELD ARTILLERY GROUP

208th FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION (155 G)

265th FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION (240 M)

##### 173th FIELD ARTILLERY GROUP

182nd FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION (155 H)

961st FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION (155 H)

##### 208th FIELD ARTILLERY GROUP

202nd FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION (155 H)

772nd FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION (4.5 G)



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The XV CORPS attack plan was initiated by the XIX TACTICAL AIR COMMAND (TAC), which conducted large scale bombing of known, suspected, and likely enemy locations. This was to be followed by a general attack. It was later learned from prisoners of war that the bombing achieved few results. However the XIX and XII TACs flew continuous support during the twenty-three days of the battle with significant results, especially against traffic on lines of communications. The railroads which the enemy forces used to transport their supplies were severely damaged by air attacks when weather permitted air operations. This air support also limited the use of roads for transport of reinforcements during the day.

The engineers of the division proved invaluable during this period. They were employed to build roads, clear mines and assist in river crossing operations. Mine clearing and road construction were especially difficult because of extremely muddy terrain and enemy artillery fires. Also engineers were required to clear trees that had been felled across roads. The enemy would cut trees almost to their falling point, place explosives on them, and detonated the explosives when it best served their advantage. Significant obstacles were created in this manner. Because the forest impeded off-road traffic, road clearing became a critical engineer task.

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Perhaps the least likely weapon system to achieve distinction in dense forest fighting is the tank. However, because of the German's excellent utilization of the tanks in their defense system, the US tank and tank destroyer became a key element in clearing the forest. In addition to close combat and direct fire support, they were used to transport troops and supplies in areas where the mud did not allow wheeled vehicle movement. Units in this action quickly learned that tanks could be used effectively in close coordination with the infantry. This lesson contributed as much as any other single factor to the overall success of the Americans.

The opposing forces at the beginning of the operation were primarily from the XLVII PANZER CORPS. A captured administrative order of the XLVII PANZER CORPS dated 27 SEP 1944 provides the Task Organization as depicted below:(5)

#### 21st PANZER DIVISION (w /following units attached)

112th PANZER BRIGADE  
1st PANZER GRENADIER BATTALION (111 PZ BDE)  
120 mm MORTAR COMPANY, 111th BATTALION of REGT  
A/V  
835th SECURITY BATTALION  
COMBAT COMMANDANT BACCARRAT  
COMBAT COMMANDANT RAMBERVILLERS

#### 15th PANZER GRENADIER DIVISION (w/units attached)

HQ&I BATTALION of REGT A/V

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810th FORTRESS MACHINEGUN BATTALION (ENGR CO,  
AT CO, ALARM CO)  
47th FLAK BATTALION  
447th PZ MT COMPANY  
447th MOTOR REPAIR PLATOON

Initially the principal opposition to the American's attack on the forest was the 15th PANZER DIVISION. It was considered a seasoned combat unit by virtue of its participation in the Italian campaigns. It had been rushed north as part of Germany's effort to stop the Allied invasion. The division had suffered significant losses in equipment and men prior to this operation. When it was committed in LORRAINE, one regiment had been dissolved, two regiments were under strength, and its tank battalion had only one half of its tanks.(6) Few replacements were received because reinforcements were needed all along the front. It is difficult to accurately determine the exact assets available to the Wehrmacht for the battle in the forest. Prisoner of war reports compiled at XV CORPS HQ and documented in G2 Information Bulletins, indicated that the Germans frequently reorganized, combining two or more units into one unit. Engineers which arrived with a mission to construct defenses were employed as infantry. Finally, one prisoner of war report indicated that two Z.B.V (not further identified) BATTALIONS consisted of criminals from KARLSRUHE.(7) These reinforcements proved to be of limited use.

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The 112th PANZER BRIGADE had been dissolved and absorbed into the 21st PANZER DIVISION. It had been part of a German experiment to create a massed armor force for shock effect. According to the ARMY GROUP G Commander in his comments made after the War, it had proven too small and it had no power of recuperation once it began to sustain losses. Development of cohesion had also been a significant problem. Since the unit had never trained together, its subordinate elements fought more as separate organizations than as combined arms teams.

By 7 October, 10 days into the battle, the German's 11 PANZER DIVISION was identified by the 79th DIVISION Order of Battle team. The 11th PANZER DIVISION had been given the task of holding the 79th DIVISION in place and restricting its further advance to the east. The 11th PANZER DIVISION had been committed in total, which gave it a considerable fighting edge over the units that had been placed into the lines in a piecemeal manner.

Technology did not play a major role in the battle within the forest. From the ineffective bombing by the XIX TAC (other than LOC interdiction) to the ultimate victory by Americans, technology played a secondary role. The Germans had built their defense around a series of pillboxes, machinegun nests, and minefields and other obstacles. Infantry were

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supported by tanks in overwatch and artillery fires were planned along avenues of approach. Conditions dictated slow, methodical action instead to the mobile warfare of July and August. The mud within the forest limited trafficability and often forced the operations to unfold as if in slow motion creating an advantage for the defender.

Perhaps the greatest advantage to either antagonist was the American superiority in numbers of weapon systems. This was especially true in artillery, where corps assets were organized to closely support the operation. A forty-five minute preparation preceded the attack on 1 October and two battalion sized volleys were fired at fifteen enemy artillery positions, achieving significant success. The artillery fired on enemy positions were largely unobserved fires because of dense vegetation and poor visibility resulting from adverse weather conditions.

Logistical support of American forces was difficult. The supply lines reached some 500 miles to its rear. Although the entire supply line reached far to the rear, the truckheads within the corps were established well forward. At no time did the divisions have more than a fifty mile turn-around. However, roads had been weakened by frequent rains. Supply difficulties in XV CORPS had been further exacerbated by the

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transfer of the corps from 3d (US) ARMY to 7th (US) ARMY during the battle. This transfer caused the cancellation of some valid requirements for maintenance, normal daily supply requirements, and back orders of supplies.

Gasoline was in general short supply, affecting the entire corps. However the corps had been given ample gasoline to continue with operations in the FORET DE PARROY. However, there was no promise for resupply for subsequent operations.

The XV CORPS had been inspected by its chain of command and refitted, within the the available ordinance stocks, during the early part of September. According to XV CORPS after action reports, the only critical maintenance shortage was track for the tank destroyer battalion and calvary squadrons.(8) Ammunition resupply was governed by a controlled supply rate which had been established by the army commander. The rats was sufficient and requirements were generally satisfied.

The availability of ammo can be estimated by the amounts expended. On the first day of the battle, 28 September, XV CORPS ARTILLERY began firing counterbattery missions at 1145 hours. During the next two hours, thirteen enemy batteries were engaged. Eight additional batteries were engaged that

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night. In the counterbattery fire and additional harassing and interdiction missions, the XV CORPS ARTILLERY expended a total of 11,748 rounds. B COMPANY, 813th TD BATTALION, reinforcing the XV CORPS ARTILLERY, fired 1182 rounds of harassing fire at troop concentrations in the forest. B and A BATTERIES of the 115th ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUN BATTALION expended 352 rounds on ground targets in the forest during the same period.(9)

American troop replacements were handled by the 71st REPLACEMENT BATTALION which was assigned to the division just two weeks prior to the start of the operation. The replacement system was organized to effect a continuous flow of replacements to the division. Intensive training and reorganization within the 79th INFANTRY DIVISION was normally conducted when the division was pulled off line to rest. No significant personnel shortages were addressed by any source reviewed during research of subject. However, because the division had incurred heavy casualties during the fighting in the FORET DE MONDON, it can be assumed that many new replacements many not have been fully assimilated into their units.

The Germans found themselves in less accommodating circumstances with regard to supplies and personnel replacement. Numerous sources indicated that units had been

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organized (often by consolidating existing units), shipped to the battle area, and immediately placed on line. Replacements for depleted units often came from pools of stragglers and miscellaneous personnel. Frequently units had little opportunity to conduct individual training. Prisoners reported they had fired as few as five rounds from their individual weapons prior to their actual participation in combat.

A secret German document, dated 13 September 1944, was captured. Its subject was "Direction for Training of German-Civilian Auxiliary Forces in Occupied Areas and Allied Countries." It states:

This training is for all German male civilians and stresses: (1) practical exercise with weapons, (2) security and guard exercises and (3) combat training. The program is planned to take up five week-ends, thus not interfering with the regular work of the civilians. After the fifth week-end more advanced subjects are to be studied if time permits. Record will be kept of each individual's training record and some civilians will be given NCO status within their own squads or platoons. The object of this training is to give them sufficient knowledge of weapons for:

- a. Personal protection.
- b. Protection of Installation.
- c. Defense, especially of small areas.
- d. Reconnaissance, as required for the def.(10)

This document indicates the extent of the manpower shortage experienced by Germany during this period. It also provides insight concerning the scope of replacement training.



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The lines of communication in the immediate battle area, consisting of both road and rail networks, gave the Germans access to their major supply lines which reached back to Germany itself. Weather frequently aided German resupply activities by hindering US air interdiction efforts. When the weather was good the Germans were forced to transport supplies at night. The extent of the German defenses in the FORET DE PARROY indicate that quantities for supplies, while perhaps short, were adequate. The Americans found formidable defensive positions prepared by the Germans in the FORET DE PARROY. Their detailed preparation of obstacles with mines, concertina, pillboxes, and anti-tank trenches. Further, ammunition stocks were apparently ample, since avenues of approach and obstacles were continuously covered by artillery fire..

German units fighting in the FORET DE PARROY had, however, suffered significant casualties. Prisoner of war reports indicate that they were often fighting at half strength. Their tank availability was limited due to an army-wide demand for tanks, the result of the significant losses suffered during the Allied offensive. According to German documents, this need did not subside until after this operational period. It was only after the American front

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stabilized that the tank production and the repairing of tanks began to provide some tank replacements.(11)

Information obtained from patrols, which were conducted continuously prior to the XV CORPS attack, indicated that the Germans were continuing to improve already strong defenses in the forest and a 500 man garrison with anti-tank guns occupied RAMBERVILLERS. In view of this information, the 2d (FR) ARMORED DIVISION, whose mission was to protect the XV CORPS right flank, was given an additional mission. It was to be prepared to support the 79th DIVISION attack with artillery fire.

The 79th DIVISION organized its regiments into COMBAT TEAMS (CT) 3, 4, and 5. A typical combat team used during the operation consisted of the three infantry battalions of a regiment and the following units: (12)

#### COMBAT TEAM 4

- 314th INFANTRY REGIMENT
- 311th FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION
- 312th FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION
- B COMPANY, 304th ENGINEER BATTALION
- B COMPANY, 304th MEDICAL BATTALION
- B COMPANY, 749th TANK BATTALION
- B COMPANY, 813th TANK DESTROYER BATTALION

These teams were organized along combined arms principles and were supported by some thirteen battalions of

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various calibers of CORPS ARTILLERY. As previously noted, progress was slow and resistance was stubborn throughout the battle. The enemy was thoroughly entrenched in a forest, parts of which contained deep underbrush which made movement and observation difficult. The conditions approached those of jungle fighting. The battle in the FORET DE PARROY required small unit cohesion, tight control and, most of all, initiative on the part of small unit leaders.

Communications were enhanced by relatively short distances between units and the low rates of advance. Maximum use of wire and messenger were used for administration while FM radio was used primarily for control of the combat teams and to call for artillery fire support.

At the corps, artillery communications were kept simple and flexible to allow for the constant change in number of artillery battalions. Wire was the main form of communication. CORPS ARTILLERY would lay one line to each artillery group, division artillery, and observation battalion. The wire line to each group was simplexed to the switchboard in the S3 office while the wire line to the division artillery and the observation battalion was simplexed to a switchboard in the S2. That configuration facilitated direct communications between counterparts in different organizations. Also, the

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flow of fire missions and intelligence was expedited since switchboards were avoided. Radio communications consisted of an Artillery Intelligence Service (AIS) directed net that included all of the battalions, groups, division artillery and the tank destroyer (TD) battalion. The artillery battalions were on listening watch. Only groups, division artillery and TD battalion were allowed to transmit. Messenger service was not used because XV CORPS ARTILLERY did not have sufficient personnel. The communications system was simple, but effective. Because of the amounts of artillery used, and the effectiveness of the fire, the communications of the XV CORPS ARTILLERY is thought to have been a significant combat multiplier during the battle for the FORET DE PARROY.

The rapidity of the Allied advance had caused serious organizational problems within the German Army. The "chewing up" of their forces had caused the Germans to use anything and everything as a "stopgap." Once the pace of the Allied advance slowed, the Germans again started to use a system to construct battle groups of sizeable proportions. The principal forces facing the 79th INFANTRY DIVISION in the forest were elements of the 15th PANZER GRENADIER DIVISION, reinforced by the 113th PANZER GRENADIER REGIMENT.

The Germans organized around coordinated defensive

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strong points. They maintained reserves in sufficient strength to continuously conduct small counterattacks of short duration. Command and control was retained at the highest level possible with the 15th PANZER GRENADIER DIVISION having initial overall responsibility for the defense of the FORET DE PARROY. This centralized control was dictated primarily because of the number of untrained officer and NCO leaders. The division had been given an appropriate "defend" mission in very defensible terrain. However, the forest was a heavy drain on personnel, greatly limiting the amounts which could be maintained as reserves. This had an additional bad side effect. Germans habitually used the units in reserve as a training base for new personnel. In this situation, this practice was often impossible due to the small size of the reserve. Training was critical since the replacements were primarily stragglers, Air Force, or Naval personnel who had little or no infantry training prior to their employment in forest fighting.

The primary source of intelligence was aggressive patrolling by the units on the ground. The reconnaissance performed by the 106th CAVALRY GROUP, as well as the troop patrols of the units in contact, were instrumental in developing a picture of the extent of the enemy's defenses.

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The intelligence gathered by the patrols was enhanced by extensive information obtained from prisoners of war. Numerous reports from prisoners gave critical information such as Order of Battle, strengths of units, morale of troops, and even some suggestions on how best to defeat the German bunkers.(13) This information was enhanced by the tactical and photo reconnaissance performed by the Air Corps.

The aerial photos produced accurate targets for the artillery. Photo interpretation teams worked hard to get information down to the CORPS ARTILLERY via the Artillery Intelligence Service directed net. The targets were sent down to the groups and battalions to be fired as counter battery, harassing and interdicting, suppression, or finally, "on call" targets. This became important when trying to prioritize targets, especially during periods of ammunition shortages. These efforts were enhanced by the Sound/Flash units who were able to identify enemy firing unit locations.

The impact of intelligence on the conduct of the battle, other than those applications cited above, was minimal. Observation and movement were so limited that the battle was characterized by extremely close combat and advances were measured in yards. It was the work of infantry fighting in small units. They knew who their enemy was; where the enemy

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was; and that the enemy would fiercely defend this forest rather than allow the Americans to take it.

The Germans had the same forest conditions with which to contend. They were extremely adept at using the terrain to support their defensive line. They used observation/listening posts forward of their positions to call for artillery fires on advancing formations. The units in forward defensive positions would withdraw leaving only an observation post that would be linked to the artillery. When the Americans would initiate an assault, the observation post would be used to call artillery on the units. This proved very effective in the dense forest fighting. The Germans also used extensive patrolling and information from prisoners of war as sources of intelligence. There are no indications in source material that Germans used photo intelligence. However, we must assume they did have access to it. Perhaps the greatest source of intelligence was the traffic on US radio nets. The Germans were quite good at listening, and US units were quite good at talking.

The tactical doctrine used by the Americans in this operation was the classical US, "two up and one back" supported by heavy concentrations of air, artillery and tank destroyer fire. The battle was held up for several days

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because the weather would not permit the large scale bombing planned by the US. After the bombing, which proved ineffective anyway, the attack by the 79th INFANTRY DIVISION commenced, initially with two regiments abreast and one in reserve. This disposition remained in effect until later in the battle when the 79th fought with three regiments abreast.

When the battle started, the 79th was a seasoned, battle tested division. They had been in the front lines of combat for some 102 days. The division losses to this point had allowed the unit to maintain a sizable fighting force with a strong nucleus of experienced officers and NCOs.

The 15th PANZER GRENADIER DIVISION, as noted previously, had seen action in Italy and had been rushed north during the Allied invasion of France. Although replacements were lacking in combat experience and were often ill-trained, there was a hardened corps of cadre personnel which made the division an extremely effective fighting force. This effectiveness was enhanced by the character of combat in the forest. There was little maneuver required. Strong points and small arms teams could be given well defined sectors to defend. Under such circumstances, even relatively inexperienced soldiers could be extremely effective against seasoned troops.



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Though the Germans had been fighting a retrograde operation for some time, they were able to use pre-war fortifications as strong points. Their tactics called for the elaborate network of anti-tank ditches, trenches, machinegun nests, pillboxes and minefields covered by artillery fires. The most innovative tactic of the Germans during the battle was their extensive use of tanks in direct fire support of strong points. The Americans learned quickly that tanks could be used effectively in combat in the dense woods. The German combined arms formations were organized at the lowest level -- even at the company level. This required the Americans fighting in the forest to often halt their attack, bring up appropriate type tank destroyer weapons, and clear an obstacle covered by a tank. Engineer equipment was also often required to clear mines. This forced the Americans to aggressively use combined arms teams.

Considering the 79th INFANTRY DIVISION had been in combat for 102 consecutive days, morale was good. The men had hoped for some relief, but that relief would not to come after the battle of the FORET DE PARROY when the 44th INFANTRY DIVISION would relieve the 79th. The Americans had been making steady progress as they continually forced the Germans to conduct a retrograde. This "winning" history provided positive psychological support for the men of the 79th and the 106th

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#### CAVALRY GROUP.

The Germans had not recently been as fortunate as the Americans in regard to victories. Therefore, one can expect that this aspect of morale and esprit was lacking among German units in the FORET DE PARROY. In fact, the long series of defeats and resulting casualties suffered during the retrograde across France probably contributed to lower morale. Also contributing to the low morale were the number and caliber of replacements. The units were often below fifty percent strength and were receiving replacements that lacked training and did not want to be in the army, not to mention being on the front line. German prisoner of war reports indicated that SS officers and NCOs had been placed in regular uniforms and assigned to Wehrmacht units to stop desertions and increase discipline. Despite these problems, the Germans fighting in the forest put up considerable resistance.

The weather was a significant factor in determining the morale and condition of troops. During the battle there was a great deal of rain, heavy overcast skies, and dense ground fog which made the FORET DE PARROY a dreary, dreadful place. Fox holes were half filled with water, artillery shells made unusually loud noises as they impacted in the trees, and there were no shelters for either the Americans or the German combat

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forces. Environmental conditions definitely heightened the terror of battle.

Rumors had been wide-spread among American units that they were due to get a rest. Clearing the forest, it was hoped, would be the last combat for a while. The leadership and the discipline of the American soldiers was a key to the overall success of the soldiers of the 79th. They were fighting with experienced cadre who had been with their men since the division's arrival in France. Though the 79th had experienced numerous casualties since its first battle, the percentage of total strength was much lower than those of the enemy it fought in the forest.

#### IV. SUMMARY

From the comparison of opposing forces, one can discern that the Americans possessed a clear quantitative superiority, particularly in the elements of combat support. A case can also be made that the Allies enjoyed an advantage in the intangible dimension of power, morale, or "will to combat," as it is known. The Germans, however, were the beneficiaries of fortuitous circumstance. First, the terrain in the battle area precluded both massing of forces and rapid maneuver. Second,

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the weather negated overwhelming U.S. air superiority, an effect far beyond the capability of the Luftwaffe.

The fighting in the FORET DE PARROY digressed into a series of small, short, and sharp engagements. To the infantry teams, engaging similarly sized enemy elements with grenades, small arms, danger-close artillery, and direct tank fire, theater wide superiority was of little relevance.

## NOTES

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14. History of the 79th Infantry Division, p. 69.
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## CHAPTER IV

### THE FIGHT

When the 79th DIVISION received the order to attack and clear the FORET DE PARROY, it had just completed the capture of LUNEVILLE and had crossed the MEURTHE River. This next operation would be a new type of fighting for the division after the battles in the open fields of France.

Reconnaissance indicated that the enemy was holding the forest in strength, and had established defensive positions along the VEZOUSE River and throughout the forest utilizing extensive pre-war defensive fortifications. These positions had a commanding view of the terrain leading to the forest. The Germans defended the forest with the 15th PANZERGRENADIER DIVISION reinforced with the 113th PANZER BRIGADE. The tanks and assault guns were placed to fire in direct support of the prepared infantry positions.(1)

The attack by the 79th DIVISION was originally scheduled to start on 25 September and was to be preceded by a bombing

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attack on the forest by medium bombers from the XIX TACTICAL AIR COMMAND. On 24 September the regiments moved to attack positions. The 315th REGIMENT was located in the vicinity of CRION-SIONVILLER, the 313th REGIMENT on the right of the 315th in the vicinity of JOLIVET-CHANTEHEUX, and the 314th REGIMENT in reserve in the vicinity of GROISMARE and MARAINVILLER.(2) The 106th CAVALRY GROUP was located to the north of the division and the French 2d ARMOR DIVISION was to the south.(3)

The units waited several days in these positions as rain and fog forced postponement of the scheduled bombing attack on the forest. While the division waited for the weather to clear, extensive patrolling was conducted by the regiments. An effort was made to link up the lead elements of the 313th and 314th REGIMENTS with the 121st SQUADRON, 106th CAVALRY GROUP, but this was not successful. The patrols encountered strong enemy positions at the edge of the forest. The 312th FIELD ARTILLERY destroyed several enemy tanks and approximately thirty German artillery positions were located and engaged by the XV CORPS ARTILLERY.(4)

Because of a new corps order the division commander decided to change the positions of the regiments. The 315th REGIMENT moved to an assembly area north of LUNEVILLE, the 1st BATTALION 313th REGIMENT took over the VEZOUSE River line with

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one company garrisoning CHANTCHEUX. The 314th REGIMENT established outposts along the river and garrisons in CROISMARE and MARINVILLER. The 79th RECON TROOP set up observation posts in JULIVET, CROISMARE, and MARINVILLER.(5)

The bombing of the German positions in the forest finally began at about 1100 hours on 28 September. Approximately 300 medium bombers struck known and suspected German positions in an attack that lasted about ninety minutes. All US troops had been pulled back west of the VEZOUSE River, which was the designated boundary for the bombing. However the results of the bombing, as shown by the intensity of the subsequent fighting as well as prisoner of War reports, were negligible. This was because the Germans were seasoned troops in well prepared positions.(6)

Immediately after the bombing, both squadrons of the 106th CAVALRY GROUP were ordered to reconnoiter the west edge of the forest. They reported that the west edge was still strongly held by dug in infantry, and that an entry could not be made.(7) The 313th and 315th REGIMENTS crossed the Line of Departure (LD) at 1400 hours. The LD for the 313th was in the vicinity of CHAMPEL and the regiment attacked in column of battalions toward the entrance of the forest. The regiment encountered some harassing artillery fire on the movement up



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to and beyond the LD, and the lead battalion was under fire by two German batteries until it reached the edge of the forest. No other resistance was encountered until the edge of the forest was reached.(8) The 315th REGIMENT, with the main east-west road through the forest as the boundary with the 313th REGIMENT, also attacked in column of battalions. The regiment reached the western edge of the woods with little opposition, but upon reaching the woodline came under heavy machinegun and artillery fire. The division commander committed tanks and tank destroyers in support, and by 1630 hours the regiment had entered the the forest.(9) Meanwhile the lead battalion of the 313th came into contact with the German outpost line north of the HTE. RAPPE FARMS. The Germans had the avenues of approach well sighted in with mortars and well covered by machinegun fire. Many casualties were suffered before the regiment was able to drive in this outpost line. By the time darkness fell, the regiment had penetrated 1000 yards into the forest. At 1830 hours, the 13th COMPANY, 104th PANZERGRENADIER REGIMENT, reinforced by tanks, counterattacked the 313th REGIMENT. The tanks did not close but restricted their actions to direct fire support of the infantry. The counterattack failed. The 313th used bazooka teams and artillery fire to break up the advancing Germans.(10) There was no more contact except artillery fire for the remainder of the night. There was no contact in the 314th sector. The 2d

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BATTALION sent out patrols and discovered a ford near CROISMARE for possible future use.(11)

The 313th and 315th REGIMENTS resumed the attack at 0900 hours on 29 September. The 1st BATTALION, 313th made contact with a small group of German infantry directly in front of the lead elements. This resistance, and the difficulty of the terrain, made control difficult and both attacking regiments made slow progress during the morning. At noon, German resistance stiffened. At 1350 the 1st BATTALION, 313th was counterattacked by infantry supported by one tank. At 1600 the 3rd BATTALION 313th was committed to relieve the pressure on the 1st BATTALION. The remainder of the day saw increased German activity. Artillery fire increased, and at 2230 the 3rd BATTALION was counterattacked by tanks and infantry from the north. This counterattack hit the boundary between the 1st and 3rd BATTALIONS. The German tanks moved up and down the roads and trails firing into the US positions while the German infantry tried to infiltrate between the two battalions. Some groups did penetrate, causing confusion well into the morning of 30 September.(12) The 315th was greatly slowed by the heavy resistance and by continuous counterattacks. This caused a gap to develop between the two regiments. The 314th REGIMENT continued to receive artillery fire and to patrol to find crossings of the VEZOUSE River and enemy positions near the

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forest. Elements of the 106th CAVALRY GROUP attempted to occupy HENAMENIL and the high ground southwest of the town. This movement was stopped by German small arms and artillery fire.(13)

The infiltration on the night of the 29 September caused a delay in the reorganization to continue the attack. German artillery fire was heavy and added to the confusion. At about 1300 hours on the 30 September, the attack resumed and the lead battalion of the 313th was able to advance to a point south of the main road through the forest. This increased the gap between the 313th and 315th REGIMENTS. The 2d BATTALION, 313th was moved up to the rear of the 3d BATTALION, 313th to protect the regiment's left flank. At 1530 this flank was hit with a counterattack which was repulsed although the fighting continued until dark. Casualties, mostly from artillery fire, were heavy on both sides. The Germans moved reinforcements forward as quickly as they could. At 2300 patrols from the 313th and 315th made contact. The 315th had moved slowly due to the stubborn resistance, but the gap between the two regiments was narrowed.(14) Activity decreased throughout the remainder of the night, consisting mostly of artillery and mortar fire. The 314th had remained in reserve throughout the day and continued patrolling across the river. The patrols had reported increased German activity directly in front of the

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regiment. Early in the day the regiment was ordered to be ready to cross the river and join the attack. The regimental commander's plan called for the 2d BATTALION reinforced with B COMPANY, 749th TANK BATTALION and a platoon of tank destroyers to push into the woods facing CROISMARE, with the 3d BATTALION following initially and then moving to the right and on line with the 2d BATTALION, while the 1st BATTALION in MARAINVILLER laid down a smoke screen to its front and conducted a feint. Artillery support was planned at the 314th command post personally by both the division and corps artillery commanders. However, the progress of the other two regiments was slow and the attack of the 314th was postponed until the morning of 1 October.(15)

By the morning of 1 October the 313th and 315th REGIMENTS had fought their way through about a third of the forest. Patrols from the 313th discovered that the Germans had withdrawn a few hundred yards to new positions. Both regiments moved to the attack. Only scattered resistance was encountered until 1200, but movement was slow and confined mostly to roads and trails. The difficulty of the terrain caused difficulty in maintaining contact between the two regiments. At 1200 the 2d BATTALION, 313th was stopped by infantry supported by four heavy machineguns. The battalion called artillery on the German positions and by 1430 had

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overcome the resistance.(16) The 314th REGIMENT was given the mission of attacking through the southwest corner of the forest and linking up with the 315th.(17) At 0615 the 314th crossed the LD after a forty five minute artillery prep. The attack proceeded rapidly and the 2d BATTALION gained the woodline in an hour. The Germans reacted with heavy artillery fire, and the 3d BATTALION crossed the river at 0930 under this fire. The 2d BATTALION advanced slowly and had moved only approximately 2 kilometers by 1200 hours when it was halted to allow the 3d BATTALION to catch up. By 1430 the 3d BATTALION had pulled in line and it and the 2d BATTALION moved eastward against light resistance for two hours before stopping for the night. The regiment established contact with the 313th on the left at 1955 hours. Two companies of the 1st BATTALION moved into position on the regiment's right flank. That night all three regiments came under heavy artillery fire, but there were no German attacks.(18)

The division spent 2 October closing the gaps between the 313th and 315th, reorganizing and patrolling. During the morning the engineers cleared the roads of German mines. By 0930 the 313th patrols had moved 600 yards east with no enemy contact. However the Germans threw interdictory artillery fire on conspicuous terrain features such as trails and road junctions.(19) The 314th REGIMENT attacked at 0800, the

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objective a clearing 1500 meters to the east. The 3d BATTALION reached the clearing in forty minutes against little resistance. However when elements of the battalion tried to cross the clearing the battalion was stopped by heavy German fire. The 2d BATTALION also made good progress initially, moving north to pinch out the 313th REGIMENT, but as it turned to move east again it was stopped by a series of German machinegun positions. Since maneuver room was limited the battalion commander decided to send G COMPANY left through the 313th sector and slip E COMPANY through the gap between the two regiments. G COMPANY got as far as HILL 286 before its attack stalled, and E COMPANY was hit with a German attack just as it had moved east of the 313th lines and had to pull back to reorganize. At this point it appeared that the key to the German position was CROSSROADS 709 on the boundary with the 315th REGIMENT. Therefore the 3d BATTALION left a small force to engage the Germans guarding the clearing and moved north to reinforce the 2d BATTALION's attack on the crossroads. On the south, the 1st BATTALION ran into a German company in LE GRAND BOIS and was ordered to stop since the emphasis of the attack had now shifted to the crossroads. At 2230 hours E COMPANY was ordered to move north behind the 313th to plug a gap between the 313th and 315th REGIMENTS.(20)

The morning of 3 October dawned with rain and ground fog

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and temperatures in the 30's, a condition which had prevailed throughout the fight. The attack by the 2d BATTALION, 314th, scheduled for 0600, was delayed fifteen minutes by the fog. At 0615 E and F COMPANIES attacked north in a V formation, with G COMPANY in reserve. Their mission was to clear out an enemy pocket holding up the regiment and make contact with the 315th REGIMENT. After passing through the lead elements of the 313th the battalion turned east and caught the Germans in the flank. Now linked up with the 315th both regiments pushed east along the boundary road for 135 meters where they ran into a roadblock constructed of felled trees. This brought the attack to a halt. The 2d BATTALION 314th was able to move another 180 meters and push back a group of about 50 Germans. By 1700 the battalion had stopped for the night. The 3d BATTALION was hit by a German infantry company supported by tanks and lost ground before it could halt their attack.(21) Meanwhile the 313th action was limited to patrols to clear the rear area of the 314th of German infiltrators.(22)

The attack to seize the critical CROSSROADS 709 was scheduled for 4 October at 0700 hours. However a German attack by an infantry company and four Mark IV tanks hit 2d BATTALION, 314th and inflicted heavy casualties before it was halted. The rest of the morning was needed to reorganize so the LD time was changed to 1300. F COMPANY, 2d BATTALION,

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314th, reinforced by tanks, was to swing north and try to get behind the crossroads while the other two companies in the battalion supported by fire. Before the attack could begin the battalion was hit with mortar and tank fire. This was followed by an attack which hit the boundary between E and G COMPANIES and penetrated the battalion lines. The battalion reserve and men from the battalion headquarters and heavy weapons company managed to stop the penetration. The other two battalions and the 315th remained in position.(23)

On the morning of 5 October the 1st BATTALION, 315th moved into position to attack through and around the left flank of the 2d BATTALION. At 1300 the 1st BATTALION attacked in a column of companies. The battalion's general direction of movement was to the southeast.(24) The purpose of the 315th attack was to outflank the German positions at CROSSROADS 709. Also at 1300 the 2d BATTALION, 314th initiated an artillery barrage with all available fires to serve as a diversion from the 315th's main attack. At 1600 an enemy counterattack supported by four tanks forced the lead company of 1st BATTALION, 315th to withdraw north of the east-west road. The battalion brought an additional company on line and attacked and regained positions controlling the north-south road.(25) The 315th was supported by CORPS ARTILLERY.(26) The 313th REGIMENT released the 1st BATTALION to XV CORPS reserve and



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the remainder of the regiment patrolled behind the 314th. The 1st BATTALION received heavy mortar and artillery fire in the vicinity of MARAINVILLER from positions in the FORET DE MARAINVILLER. Patrols also determined that the woods north and east of MARAINVILLER and the high ground east of MARAINVILLER and north of the railroad tracks were also occupied by enemy forces.(27) The XIX TAC attacked canal locks and barges in the MARNE-RHINE Canal.(28) XIX TAC also attacked large German concentrations of troops and vehicles in NEUVEVILLE-AUX-BOIS.(29) The 106th CAVALRY GROUP conducted dismounted reconnaissance of the northwest sector of the forest, and covered the left flank and rear of XV CORPS while maintaining contact with XII CORPS to the north.(30)

Patrols were active along the entire 79th DIVISION front during the night of 5-6 October. Considerable movement of German track vehicles was heard but not seen. Sporadic artillery and mortar fire fell throughout the night and all day 6 October. The division did not resume the attack on the 6th nor was there any change in the dispositions of the units during the morning. Patrols were sent out to find likely spots to employ tanks and tank destroyers when the offensive was resumed.(31) At 1430 hours an attack on the 1st BATTALION, 315th by two tanks and infantry was repulsed. One enemy tank was destroyed by bazooka fire. Later that evening, under cover

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of darkness, the 1st BATTALION 315th was withdrawn to an assembly area in the rear.(32) The 313th sent out patrols in an effort to penetrate the woods north and east of MARAINVILLER, but they were stopped by German small arms, mortar, and artillery fire.(33) XV CORPS ARTILLERY fired missions on the road net in the vicinity of VAUCOURT, XOUSSE, REMONCOURT, and EMBERMENIL.(34) XIX TAC supported XV CORPS with two P-47 squadrons which attacked flak guns on the northeast edge of the forest and troops and supplies at LA NEUVEVILLE.(35) XII TAC attacked barges and tugs on the MARNE-RHINE Canal.(36)

The fighting became more vicious. The Germans began to throw more troops into the battle. These new troops were identified as elements of the 56th FORTRESS MACHINEGUN BATTALION and the 553d INFANTRY DIVISION.(37) The fortress machinegun units were formed in mid September from new draftees, overage men, and limited service personnel. A battalion consisted of three heavy machinegun companies and one heavy mortar company. The machinegun companies consisted of 100-150 men and 12-16 machineguns. They were employed on orders of the Army High Command and as a rule only on defense.(38) Elements of the 11th PANZER DIVISION were also identified in the 79th DIVISION sector. Prisoners of war reported that the FORET DE PARROY held Hitler's personal

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interest because he had fought there in World War I and consequently that he had ordered the forest held at all costs. The 15th PANZER DIVISION was withdrawn, and it was learned replaced with the entire 11th PANZER DIVISION. On 7 October the division continued its patrol activities. In the morning the 3d BATTALION, 315th on the division's left flank received a small attack by two tanks and infantry which was easily repulsed. The only element of the 313th in contact on the 7th was the 1st BATTALION which had continued to send out patrols in an effort to develop the positions north and east of MARAINVILLER.(40) XIX TAC flew forty missions in support of XV CORPS, hitting canal traffic, a bridge and approaches in the vicinity of LA CARDE, and the German supply depot at EMBERMENIL.(41) The 121st CAV SQUADRON patrolled the northern edge of the forest and cleared mines near ETANG DE BASSUPRE. The squadron also attacked and seized MOUACOURT.(42) The order for the attack on 9 October was received by all units.

Continuous patrolling and preparations for the attack took place all day on 8 October. Photo reconnaissance revealed the presence of numerous casements and pillboxes in the vicinity of LA NEUVEVILLE-AUX-BOIS. Prisoners of war reported that the 2d BATTALION, 104th PANZERGRENADIER REGIMENT had suffered 300 casualties since the 1 October and had only received 110 replacements.(43) The 313th prepared to attack on

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division order. This attack was to be a diversion for the main attack on the following day. The 314th was attacked by an infantry force supported by two tanks, but was quickly broken up by artillery fire. XIX TAC continued to support XV Corps by attacking rolling stock and EMBERMENIL. The 106th CAV GROUP continued to protect the left flank by patrolling along the north edge of the forest.

The division commander decided that a coordinated attack would, if successful, discourage the Germans from further attempts to defend the last remaining terrain within the forest itself, and force them to withdraw to a new defensive position. Field order #20 directed "The 79th DIVISION (reinforced) attacks 090630...315th in the north; 313th in the south; 2d BATTALION 314th to take limited objective between 313th and 315th." The attack was to be launched toward the high ground at the eastern edge of the forest, with the high ground itself as the objective.(44) 1st BATTALION, 313th was to create a diversion at MARAINVILLER while the 315th and 2d BATTALION 314th attacked in the forest. When enemy positions in the vicinity of CROSSROADS 709 were overcome, the 2d and 3d BATTALIONS, 313th would continue the attack through the 2d BATTALION, 314th.(45) At 0630 the 1st BATTALION, 313th with attached tanks and tank destroyers opened fire from positions near MARAINVILLER. Their mission was to fire at known and

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suspected targets, to create movement, but not to advance. At 0650 the actual attack began. The 313th with CO A, 749 TANK BATTALION and two platoons of the 773 TANK BATTALION attacked to seize its assigned objective.(46) The 313th attained its objective with little difficulty. Patrolling was begun immediately to the east and south of the objective and determined that the enemy had withdrawn.(47) The 315th and 2d BATTALION, 314th had tougher going. The 2d BATTALION, 314th moved the 200 yards to CROSSROADS 709 in a little over an hour. E COMPANY hit dug in infantry and tanks and could not take the crossroads. G COMPANY, which had been on the right of E COMPANY, swung left reversing its field in an enveloping move, while F COMPANY, further to the right, moved even further right to strike north and cut the road behind the Germans from the other direction. Both jaws of the pincer cut the objective road and at 1300 hours, F COMPANY started a platoon of tanks down the road to hit the Germans in the rear. At 1410 CROSSROADS 709 was taken. With its fall the whole defensive system in the forest seemed to collapse.(48) The 315th, on the left flank, with the 3d, 2d, and 1st BATTALIONS echeloned to the left rear, advanced slowly. Intense fire from both small arms and direct support weapons kept the advance slow, but the regiment advanced 1100 meters by noon, and secured its objective by nightfall.(49) 79th DIVISION losses were relatively light, but the Germans suffered heavily,

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mainly to US artillery fire. No air support was received because of rain and fog.

During the night the division completed the organization of its positions and patrolled under sporadic artillery fire. Patrols reached the southeast edge of the woods and met no resistance. Civilians reported that the enemy had evacuated MARAINVILLER and LA NEUVEVILLE. Later on 10 October patrols clashed with the Germans on the east edge of the forest near MONDON. The patrols also reported that the Germans appeared to be withdrawing from the forest. Mines and booby traps, unburied dead, and abandoned equipment were observed. Contact was made with the 106th CAV GROUP on the north.

Patrolling continued during the morning of the 11 October. At 1445 hours the 313th and 314th moved southeast to the east edge of the forest, meeting little opposition. Throughout the day the 315th maintained its position on the division left flank. It patrolled north and northeast, but encountered no Germans.

During the morning of 12 October the 79th DIVISION concentrated on consolidating its position within the FORET DE PARROY, receiving replacement personnel and equipment, and conducting aggressive patrolling to clean up small pockets of

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German soldiers. Reconnaissance elements patrolling southeast of the division position reached the outskirts of the town of DOMJEVIN, but small arms fire forced them to withdraw. The 315th REGIMENT, minus one battalion which covered the division left flank, moved into division reserve.(50)

On orders from the regimental commander, the 313th REGIMENT spent most of the 12 October patrolling east and northeast of LUNEVILLE to determine the strength and location of the withdrawing German forces. By the evening of the 12 October, it had been determined that the Germans had established strong defensive positions in EMBERMENIL and along the ridgeline to the east of EMBERMENIL. The division commander ordered preparations to begin to seize EMBERMENIL and the ridgeline with the attacks to commence on the 13th.(51)

From the German perspective, EMBERMENIL was critical to hold. A critical rail line extending from EMBERMENIL east to STRASBOURG and into Germany was the principal pipeline supporting German forces in the region. Additionally, the ridgeline east of EMBERMENIL presented the first defensible terrain east of the FORET DE PARROY. However, the overall condition German forces was poor due to weeks of constant fighting. Reinforcements had been scarce, consisting in large

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part of medical rejects, old men, and young boys originally destined to perform security roles along the German frontier. The prime fighting replacements were being sent to the north to participate in the upcoming ARDENNES offensive.

Despite these shortcomings the 5th PANZER ARMY was able to establish a formidable defensive network. German commanders had learned early in the battle of the overwhelming superiority of American artillery and airpower and adjusted their tactics accordingly. As indications mounted that the 79th DIVISION was preparing to launch a major offensive on 9 October, the main body of the German force withdrew from strongpoints within the forest, leaving security elements to oppose the Americans. The elements that withdrew began at once to develop a defensive belt east of the forest. By doing this the American artillery and air attacks struck mostly empty terrain within the forest and the stay behind security forces were able to slow the attack using economy of force tactics.

In the early morning hours of 13 October, the 79th DIVISION began final preparations for the attack against EMBERMENIL. The plan was for the 314th REGIMENT to attack to seize the high ground south of the town, with the 313th REGIMENT attacking to seize the town. The 315th REGIMENT was to remain in division reserve.



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At approximately 1330 hours on the 13 October, the division began its attack. The 314th moved forward with two battalions abreast against initially light resistance. The 313th also attacked with two battalions abreast but encountered moderate to heavy resistance as they attempted to move through the town. Both regiments continued to encounter stubborn resistance throughout the afternoon, but by 1700 the 313th had secured the town. By 1800 the 314th had captured the high ground, but continued to battle small pockets of resistance in the vicinity of the railroad station just outside the town.(52)

Plans were made to continue the attack during the evening of the 13th. However, the weather had begun to deteriorate during the afternoon, and by nightfall heavy rains severely hampered any further progress. By early evening the division halted the attack and concentrated on consolidating the objective and preparing to continue the attack the next day.

At 0900 on 14 October the 313th REGIMENT, supported by the 3d BATTALION, 314th, attacked the high ground to the east of EMBERMENIL. The regiment immediately encountered heavy enemy resistance, drawing heavy fire from wired and dug in

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enemy positions along the entire front, and only small gains were made. The 2d BATTALION, 313th continued the attack in mid afternoon but quickly suffered two tanks destroyed from mines and anti-tank fire. Heavy mortar and artillery fire forced the battalion to withdraw.(53)

Following this second attack the division commander directed the division to go on the defensive for a few days to give the men time to get some much needed rest and to conduct equipment maintenance. The 313th and 314th REGIMENTS remained deployed on line, and the 315th continued in division reserve with its 1st BATTALION providing security for the division's left flank. All three regiments maintained aggressive patrolling to their front, and the division was supported by CORPS ARTILLERY for harassing fire.

During the 15 and 16 October, German forces launched several limited counterattacks. In each case the German attack was broken up by artillery fire.

On 17 October two German prisoners revealed German plans to conduct a major attack against EMBERMENIL, and the railroad station in particular. At 0320 the Germans launched a strong attack with infantry and tanks preceded by an artillery barrage. The American artillery failed to stop the Germans and

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the division positions were penetrated. The 314th REGIMENT launched a counterattack which restored the lines. A second German attack was launched at 0330 against the 313th REGIMENT, but artillery and mortar fire forced the Germans to withdraw before reaching the 313th positions.

By 17 October, elements of the newly formed 44th DIVISION had moved into positions around LUNEVILLE and preparations were made for the successive relief of the 79th DIVISION units. Operations Instruction No. 26 was issued which directed the attachment of the 44th to the 79th to free 79th units for upcoming attacks.(54) Additionally, the 44th DIVISION ARTILLERY was attached to the 79th for the attack which was to commence on the 20th.(55)

During the same period the Germans were also involved in the relief of units. ARMY GROUP G headquarters had directed the withdrawal of the 15th PANZERGRENADIER DIVISION to the north, and reassignment to the LVIII PANZER CORPS to protect the SAARBURG avenue of approach.(56) To replace the 15th PANZERGRENADIER DIVISION, ARMY GROUP G assigned the 553d VOLKSGRENADIER DIVISION, which had suffered heavy losses in fighting on 4 October near METZ.(57) To build up their combat power the 553d was assigned several fortress infantry units and flak batteries.(58) These troops had been destined to hold

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security positions along the German border, and were not considered suitable for front line fighting. However quality replacements were not available due to the priority on preparations for the Ardennes offensive.

The relief was completed without incident during 15-18 October. To completely fill the gap left by a mechanized division, the 553d INFANTRY had to extend their lines to the north and south, eventually extending their frontage for 35 kilometers.(59) The division was further hampered by a total lack of self propelled assault guns and limited anti-tank defenses.(60)

During 18 and 19 October the 79th continued to maintain its positions and prepared to conduct an attack on the 21st to finally dislodge the Germans from the ridgeline. To further support this attack the 144th and 71st INFANTRY REGIMENTS of the 44th DIVISION were attached to the 79th DIVISION with the mission of occupying the 79th positions.(61) The Germans maintained light pressure on the 79th by conducting harassing attacks. These attacks were all broken up by artillery fire.(62) Adverse weather continued to preclude the use of friendly air support. By the evening of the 19th the last regiment of the 44th had closed with the 79th and preparations were near completion for the attack on the 21st.

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During the evening of 20 October the 315th REGIMENT moved on line with the other two regiments in preparation for the attack. The Germans made heavy use of artillery fire during the afternoon and evening, but with little result. The weather cleared sufficiently for the XIX TAC to provide air interdiction sorties against AMENCOURT. Bomb Damage Assessment indicated troops, vehicles, and supplies were hit.(63)

At 0636 hours on 21 October, the 79th launched its attack with three regiments abreast.(64) The division initially encountered moderate resistance consisting of small arms and heavy mortar fire, but by 0900 the 313th and 314th had reached their objectives.(65) The 315th was held up by determined resistance along the ridgeline, but achieved its objective at 1400 hours after committing its reserve battalion.(66) Adverse weather again prevented friendly air support.

On 22 October the 79th consolidated its positions and prepared for relief by the 44th DIVISION. German forces launched several counterattacks during the early morning hours but failed to achieve a penetration.(67)

During the 23d the division continued to improve its

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positions along the ridge and to fend off small enemy counterattacks. The Germans launched one large attack against the 315th REGIMENT. The attack was made by 100 infantry supported by four Mark IV tanks.(68) By 1500 this attack had been repulsed after stubborn fighting and heavy friendly artillery support. Once again bad weather precluded friendly air support. During the evening of the 23d the relief in place of the 79th DIVISION by the 44th DIVISION commenced.

The relief in place continued smoothly on the 24th until 0615 when the Germans commenced a strong artillery barrage, and tanks and infantry were observed preparing to attack.(69) US artillery fire stalled the German attack until 0815 when the Germans launched a strong attack against the 315th REGIMENT.(70) By 0845 two companies of the 315th had been driven from their positions, but a counterattack supported by tanks regained the ground.(71) Following these attacks the relief continued and at 1200 hours Major General R.L. SPRAGINS, CG 44th DIVISION, formally assumed responsibility for the sector.

The 79th DIVISION had completed three weeks of hard fighting against four German divisions in bad terrain and under abominable weather conditions. It had inflicted an indisputable defeat on the Germans. Many factors were

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responsible for the victory. The commanders displayed aggressive and competent leadership and the men displayed determination and tactical skills. The Americans showed tactical flexibility and good use of combined arms teams. Commanders made excellent use of reserves to influence the action, and were able to maintain excellent control of their units despite the terrain. But in the end the decisive factor was the overwhelming American artillery and the ability to mass fires.

## NOTES

1. History of the 79th Division, p. 6.
2. Ibid. p.6.
3. The 106th Cavalry Group in Europe, p. 60.
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## CHAPTER V

### SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BATTLE OF THE FORET DE PARROY

The victory in the FORET DE PARROY and the subsequent capture of the key terrain in the vicinity of EMBERMENIL by the 79th INFANTRY DIVISION deprived the Germans of a secure area from which to attack into the exposed right flank of the THIRD ARMY. The elimination of this threat allowed the THIRD ARMY to turn its full attention to preparations for continuing its drive to the RHINE. The reduction of the forest also stabilized the boundary between the THIRD and the SEVENTH ARMIES.

The clear victory by the 79th INFANTRY DIVISION was neither decisive nor momentous in operational or strategic terms. The victory relieved the THIRD ARMY of an annoying and potentially dangerous exposed flank caused by the series of German counterattacks and the salient driven into the German lines by the 4th ARMORED DIVISION. In the panorama of the Second World War this was a relatively minor action except to the participants with whom the horror of the fight would remain

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for life.

For the Germans the loss of the forest deprived them of a secure area from which to launch future operations. Without such an area to attack into the THIRD ARMY's flank, the chances for victory in LORRAINE and stemming the Allied march to the West Wall and the RHINE were few. The loss of the FORET DE PARROY effectively signaled the end of Germany's attempted September counter-offensive. Even had the Germans held the forest, their depleted strength, especially in armor, would have probably ruled out any major counter-attacks in the immediate future in this sector. Armor was already being husbanded for the Ardennes Offensive.

Both of the major protagonists, the US 79th INFANTRY DIVISION and the German 1st PANZER GRENADIER DIVISION, suffered substantial losses. Neither, however, was physically nor morally destroyed by the battle. Both divisions would soon return to combat.

If this battle was of relatively little importance, what can one gain from a study of it? To answer this question, one must examine the lessons of the battle at the tactical level. The 79th DIVISION applied sound tactical principles and displayed considerable moral courage. As opposed to events beginning to

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unfold in the HUERTGEN FOREST, the 79th INFANTRY DIVISION acquitted itself quite well in the tedious, slow, dirty forest fighting.

Infantry bore the major burden of the battle, but it was the utilization of combined arms that won it. The organization of combined arms teams at the lowest levels including infantry, engineers, tanks, and tank destroyers was the key to victory. Experience gained in the FORET DE MONDON no doubt assisted in the development of the 79th's appreciation of the value of combined arms. It is instructive to note that the 79th was not tied to preconceived notions of what was "tank country" or "engineer work." Instead, the division capitalized on the strengths of each arm and offset weaknesses with supporting strengths. From the beginning, combined arms teams were utilized. Through habitual associations, teamwork was developed and refined.

Good use was made of available intelligence assets. Aggressive patrolling, prompt interrogation of prisoners of war, and the rapid dissemination of aerial photography all greatly assisted the total effort.

Artillery and air power were used effectively despite severe weather and terrain constraints. The problems of target

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acquisition and adjustment of fires in the forest were generally overcome through simple communications techniques and good planning. The directed fire net of the artillery and the rapid dissemination of aerial photography enhanced indirect fire support. Airpower was an effective combat multiplier when properly utilized. Interdiction of supply lines, reinforcements, and photographic reconnaissance were effective uses of airpower. The attempts at massed, high level bombings early in the battle again showed the inappropriateness of this technique in close air support.

Command and control on the part of the 79th appears to have been more than adequate. No example of major problems has come to light. Leadership was obviously excellent for no instances of losses of unit cohesion are evident, despite the disjointed and isolated nature of the forest fight. Again it is perhaps appropriate to compare the 79th's success in the FORET DE PARROY with the experience of the 28th INFANTRY DIVISION in the HUERTGEN FOREST. In that battle numerous units were routed or became ineffective.

The immediate lessons of the FORET DE PARROY were the importance of combined arms, integrated fire support, intelligence, and leadership. The 79th effectively utilized its advantages in artillery, airpower, and other physical

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assets to overcome a well entrenched and fully battle capable enemy. These lessons were not immediately realized by American forces in the European Theater. Again during November in the HUERTGEN and later in the drive into Germany one can find instances of the failure to capitalize on combined arms and firepower in forest fighting.

The long term lesson which can be drawn from the battle in the FORET DE PARROY is essentially that sound tactical principles are universally applicable. Proper use of intelligence, fire support, combined arms, command and control coupled with good leadership, training, and experience are keys to success. Many of the concepts of airland battle doctrine are demonstrated in this minor battle. XV CORPS attempted to isolate the battle area through the use of airpower, artillery, and screening operations. US forces also relied upon timely and accurate intelligence to support their operations. These are aspects of a battle conducted in depth. Corps supporting assets were fully integrated into the Division's planning and execution, an aspect of synchronization. Although the battle cannot be considered mobile warfare, the 79th was able to effectively maneuver its units. They, given the circumstances, demonstrated agility. Perhaps, most importantly, the battle demonstrated the effects of good leadership on a unit's capabilities. The 79th DIVISION gained and maintained the

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initiative throughout the battle.

As the Army considers development of its Light Divisions, the experience of the FORET DE PARROY offers some insights. While on first glance fighting in heavy woods would dictate light infantry, the experience of the battle, from both sides, shows the utility of combined arms and large quantities of fire support.

No new innovations or enlightened tactics emerge from the FORET DE PARROY. The applicability of sound tactics and the Principles of War are again demonstrated.

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