

SECOND LOOK AT ST. VITH: THE 106th INFANTRY DIVISION AT THE
BATTLE OF THE BULGE, 16 TO 23 DECEMBER 1944

THESIS

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by

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DEDICATION

This thesis is posthumously dedicated to my father Theodore William McWhorter. As a member of the 101st Airborne Division my father served with distinction in the Vietnam War. After returning to the United States my father began his college education, married my mother, and began his family. My father always wanted me to earn a college degree. With the completion of this thesis I have now done so twice and I know he would be proud of me as I prepare to begin work on my doctorate.

This thesis is also dedicated to the men of the 106th Infantry Division. To those veterans who have assisted me in learning more about their incredible story and to those who never came home from the Ardennes I say, thank you for your service to your country.

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The completion of this thesis represents over two years of research and countless late nights typing away in room seven of Taylor Murphy Hall at Texas State University-San Marcos. Roughly three years ago a great friend of mine, Phil Filardi, told me a story about the Ghost Division of World War II. As an avid amateur military historian I of course wanted to know more. As I researched the subject I learned that the Ghost Division was in fact the Golden Lion Division, the 106th Infantry Division. Phil's story and my desire to learn more about the 106th Infantry Division's story were with me from the beginning of graduate school. From day one I knew I wanted to write a thesis about the 106th Infantry Division; all I needed to do was figure out how to accomplish it.

I would therefore like to thank several people who helped me turn an idea into a thesis. First, I would like to thank my parents without whom I could never have been able to accomplish all that I have. As a child my father instilled in me a work ethic that I have been able to tap whenever a large project has presented itself before me. My mother has given me the patience I have needed to use throughout the last two years when so many obstacles had to be surmounted.

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INTRODUCTION

As you take the time to walk through the winter/fall woods and you hear the slight rustling of the leaves behind you or the little swirls of snow that rise and fall on puffs of air along side of you.

Pause!

They are spirits of our forever young friends and comrades wondering through the woods looking to be welcomed home. Take the time and call their names for you will warm them in your love and regard so that they can proceed on their quest, renewed.

Helmuts Andris Feifs¹

This is the story of a desperate attack. By the fall of 1944, Germany was engaged in a defensive action across much of Europe. In the East, the German Army was consistently giving ground to the Soviet summer offensive while in the south Allied forces had managed to push German resistance on the Italian peninsula deep into the northern hills. On the western front, however, the Allied amphibious invasion at Normandy and the following offensive actions across northern Europe had drastically altered the face of the once expansive Third Reich.

At best the German Army in the West by winter of 1944 was holding its defensive positions with difficulty. Casualties mounted at an ever escalating rate and for the Wehrmacht, therefore man power and to a greater extent material were everywhere in short supply. Nevertheless, many German troops, although exhausted still were willing and aggressive.² By December of 1944, for Germany its vaunted mobile warfare was a

distant memory. What German forces could do and what they needed to do were two entirely different things. Yet, “the Germans defended according to the principle of, ‘Halten, was zu halten ist,’ meaning ‘Hold on to whatever can be held.’”³

The Allied gains in Europe came at a heavy price in American man power. Many new American units trained during 1943 and 1944, were shipped to the European Theater of Operations to offset losses incurred from battle in Normandy to the Hürtgen Forest. Even before the 106th Infantry Division left the confines of the United States in the fall of 1944, it had been systematically weakened by the United States War Department. Wholesale raids of qualified personnel transferred away nearly two-thirds of its experienced non-commissioned officers and riflemen. Secondary sources such as Peter Mansoor’s, *The G.I. Offensive in Europe* and John S.D. Eisenhower’s *The Bitter Woods*, state that the U.S. War Department faced with the mounting casualties of a two-front war in Europe and Asia, consistently raided newly forming state-side combat divisions for replacements.

The 106th Infantry Division, The Golden Lions, was created to be a cohesive 15,000 plus ground combat force from conception; however, in the year-and-half prior to its overseas deployment, the division lost nearly 11,000 of its initial members to the War Department’s personnel raids. The 106th was not the only unit to be reduced, but it certainly was affected. The purpose for these raids was to provide trained officers, non-commissioned officers, and riflemen, as replacements. These new replacements would assist in restoring the tactical integrity of overseas units already committed to combat action. The majority of personnel raids that the 106th suffered occurred in late 1943 and early 1944. Since the 106th was scheduled to ship out to Europe by October of 1944, this

left a few hasty months to train up the new personnel assigned to the division as its own replacements. The 106th received the majority of its replacements from previous non-combat units such as, surplus Army Air Corps cadets, coastal battery troops, special services, and the recently curtailed Army Specialized Training Program. The majority loss of trained personnel for the division, coupled with the lack of time to train effectively new divisional replacements, led to large scale inexperience throughout the division and a lack of unit cohesion through much of its training. The resulting disadvantage of prepared unit cohesion has been earmarked by historians as reason for the division's presumed poor combat record. The 106th's performance during the Battle of the Bulge produced "controversy, recrimination, and inconclusive investigations." Either unable or unwilling to dig further, very few historical works have produced a detailed account of the 106th's role in helping to stem the German offensive of December 1944.⁴

When the proposal for this thesis was developed, the concept for the work was geared towards a better understanding of a series of fatal flaws. These flaws included the loss of trained 106th personnel to U.S. War Department requisition, the division's over-extension, and possible mistakes made by the division during the first days of the Battle of the Bulge. In addition, the less than effective deployment, astride the Losheim Gap, of the 14th Cavalry Group attached to 106th prior to the battle.

Historians have fenced on the subject of the 106th's role in the Battle of the Bulge for decades. The historiography of the 106th is at best incomplete, and at worst unfair or lightly substantiated. Often a secondary work on the battle mentions the 106th as--the division, that was destroyed or clogged the road-way leading east to west between St. Vith and Vieslem, Belgium. In some instances military professional-courtesy has

replaced a well developed look into the unit's performance at the battles of the Schnee Eifel and St. Vith by anomalously referring to the 106th.

Moreover, a broad generalization is often made to describe the delaying and retreating movements of the 106th and the 14th Cavalry Group. Once the backdrop of a fierce German breakthrough has been established, most secondary works focus on the heroic actions of the 7th Armored Division at the Battle of St. Vith, the 101st Airborne Division at Bastogne, or even more so the charge of Lt. General Patton's Third Army against the southern shoulder of the Bulge. Previous books such as, Bruce Quarrie's *Order of Battle 9, The Ardennes Offensive: US VII and VIII Corps and British XXX Corps, Central Sector* briefly cover the 106th's response to the German breakthrough. Other works offer more inflammatory suggestions about the division at the Battle of the Bulge. Garrulous with their descriptions, books such as Charles Whiting's, *Ardennes: The Secret War* and *Death of a Division* both make defaming accusations that the 106th, its commanding officer Major General Alan W. Jones, and the division as a whole were a disorganized rabble and in some cases guilty of cowardice before the enemy. An exception to the generally negative trend about the 106th Infantry Division's role during the Battle of the Bulge is Ernest R. Dupuy's *St. Vith: Lion in the Way, The 106th Infantry Division in World War II* written in 1949. While often taking a defending stance for the division's role during the battle, Dupuy's book also covers the less than flattering images of the 106th. However, Dupuy does not spend any great length of time on these issues; instead the division's historian creditably looks to document the division's contributions.⁵

This thesis drew from a healthy selection of primary sources to substantiate its claims. When primary sources were unavailable, secondary sources were used to obtain

a fuller understanding of the 106th Infantry Division during the Battle of the Bulge and add to the work's analysis. The chapters of this work will address the key stigma that traditional historiography has suggested about the 106th. Did the U.S. Army's wholesale stripping of the 106th create a division that was under-trained and a danger to itself? Second, how did the Germans amass a considerable assault force opposite First U.S. Army, without American commanders reacting? Could this build up have been detected by the 106th before the German counteroffensive began on 16 December 1944? In addition, did the division's deployment add to its ultimate mauling during the Battle of the Bulge? Finally, did the 106th break and run, as the majority of traditional Battle of the Bulge historiographies suggest or did it stand and fight until all of its positions were rendered inadequate? Finally, was St. Vith truly an essential town that had to be held until the last to prevent German use of the city to spur on their counteroffensive? There is a need, therefore, to answer these questions and to determine what, if any, impact the 106th had in assisting in the delay of the German assault on St. Vith during the Battle of the Bulge.⁶

In order to fulfill later scholarship on the 106th Infantry Division this author will take into consideration the 106th Infantry Division Association. This work's revisionist look at the tactical history of the 106th during the early days of the Battle of the Bulge will be addressed to a further degree, where possible. The main thrust of a future dissertation will revolve around the concept of memory. How have the memories of the veterans of the 106th Infantry Division Association kept alive the Battle of the Bulge and their roles as participants? Both the private and public conceptions of the Battle of the Bulge have been formed by a multitude of sources that range from books and movies to

the veterans' oral transference to families and strangers alike. This author's future dissertation plans to research, and if possible answer how have the 106th Infantry Division's veterans remembered their role in the battle? In confluence with the role of the Division as a whole, how has the memories remained parallel? Additionally how have the memories of the veterans' actions in the battle withstood the pass of time?

Once these parameters have been established, a future dissertation will focus on how these veteran's private memories have influenced public memory? How has the transfer of history from one generation to the next accomplished the goal of keeping alive the actions of the veterans of the 106th Infantry Division during the Battle of the Bulge? To offer added depth to the author's planned dissertation, the study will compare the 106th Infantry Division to similar American World War II units that have established their own associations.

Through the use of questionnaires to be prepared specifically for this project; the 106th Infantry Division Association members, both veterans and their relatives alike, will hopefully be polled to provide empirical data. Next, associations similar to the 106th Infantry Division Association, such as the 14th Cavalry Group, and the 99th Infantry Division will be polled as well because of their name sake unit's immediate location to the 106th Infantry Division during the Battle of the Bulge. In addition, associations with large and intimate memberships, such as the 509th Composite Group's Manhattan Project Heritage Preservation Association, will be sought out.¹ A future dissertation will make use of additional primary resources from the National Archives II at College Park, Maryland. In addition, the author has been awarded the General and Mrs. Matthew B.

¹ The 509th Composite Group was established in late 1944 to assist in the final assembly of atomic bombs for the American war effort during World War II

Ridgeway Research Grant and plans to use the monetary award to further the development of a future thesis and possible publication. Finally, recorded oral histories from veteran organizations located at the Nimitz Museum in Fredericksburg, Texas, and the D-Day Museum in New Orleans, Louisiana, will be researched for relevant value. This future dissertation proposal involves “thinking big,” therefore, in order to answer its questions a mix of specific tactical-military and social-cultural histories of American World War II units and their veteran associations will be used.

CHAPTER I

106th HISTORIOGRAPHY AND THE SITUATION IN EUROPE

The historiography of the Battle of the Bulge has been developed over the past sixty years since the opening of the counteroffensive. Historian Milton Shulman stated in his book *Defeat in the West*,

The historian of the future will have an unprecedented opportunity. Not only will he have very complete documentation of the Second World War on the Allied side, but he will have the entire political and military archives of Germany to study, since these have fallen intact into our [Allies] hands. But the ground to be covered in writing a comprehensive history of the war is so extensive that many years must elapse before definitive volumes can be presented to the public. In the meanwhile the world does not stand still, and it is most desirable that interim studies of the great events of the past few years should appear and that in this way some of the lessons that are there to be learnt should be revealed before it is too late to make use of them.⁷

In the last two decades historians have benefited from an increasing collection of materials written on the Battle of the Bulge. Both Allied and German authors have compiled works that detail the planning, execution, and evaluation of the German offensive and the Allied response. Combined with the declassification of American intelligence files, Ultra decrypts, and the opening of German archives after the Cold War, historians of the future have been able to draw more precise conclusions as to the history of the Battle of the Bugle.

The historiography of the 106th Infantry Division during the Battle of the Bulge is a continuous stream of under representation, generalization, and less than fully developed evaluations of the unit's effectiveness during its initial eight days in combat. Often, for one reason or another, in books such as historian Danny S. Parker's, *Hitler's Ardennes Offensive*, the units around the 106th are mentioned extensively, yet the 106th receives slightly more than a brief note. This author's assumption is that the division is remembered as having partaken in the battle for only a few days. If the 106th is mentioned more than in passing, its role often is relegated to a broad generalization, briefly mentioned by authors until their points can be made about other units involved. Quarrie, who has written several books on the Second World War, is a prime example. In his book *Order of Battle 9, The Ardennes Offensive: US VII and VIII Corps and British XXX Corps, Central Sector* Quarrie states, that "the 106th failed to rapidly respond to the challenge what happened was very simple." According to Quarrie, the German 18th Volks-grenadier Division smashed through the 14th Cavalry Group, just north of the 106th, simultaneously the 62 Volks-grenadier Division moved northwards against the southern end of the 106th, thereby encircling the division from the north and south. This double envelopment led to the division's defeat.⁸

Another point that historians like Quarrie state is that "to add insult to injury, the attack on the Schnee Eifel and the subsequent assault on St. Vith were almost afterthoughts in German planning." This contention could not be further from the truth; both the American and Germans knew the significance of St. Vith. For the German offensive to succeed; among many previously planned objectives, the seven-point multi-

directional road and rail net of St. Vith had to fall to the Germans; and it had to fall abruptly. St. Vith lay less than 25 miles west of the West Wall. An Allied assault to the east or a German counteroffensive to the west would need to utilize the interior lines of the northern Ardennes, the road and railway junction of St. Vith. As an efficient facilitator for avenues of approach whomever controlled St. Vith controlled the northern Ardennes region. A prerequisite for a tactical breakthrough's success is that the opposition's lines must be pierced and held open. "Not until the enemy position is tactically overrun is it possible to begin strategic exploitation of the situation." Furthermore the line of departure must be of a significant width in order to prevent the enemy from covering the line of assault with his available artillery or reserves. For the German assault to succeed, it had to be of significant width. To sustain logistical support alone, road nets such as St. Vith and Bastogne had to be taken, to facilitate the German Main Supply Route.⁹

A early notable exception to the historiography of the 106th was a *New York Times* article from 22 January 1945. Entitled "106th Division, in a 'Quiet' Sector, Took Shock of Nazi Break-Through," the article illustrates that as early as 1945, the U.S. Army had disseminated information that stated the 106th did not fold, but was in fact hit by overwhelming force. This is an interesting point because before many family members learned of their loved ones whereabouts, the U.S. Army after having reviewed the After Action Reports of the 106th Infantry Division and the 14th Cavalry Group, allowed reporting on the division's tragic yet accurate action. The *New York Times* article states that on December 16th, 1944 the division's "two regiments were engulfed by the overwhelming weight of Field Marshal Karl von Rundstedt's breakthrough spearhead

They went down fighting.” The 424th regiment and the other remaining elements of the division were given credit for “... gallant delaying stands, before and behind St. Vith.”¹⁰

As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, Ernest R. Dupuy’s *St. Vith: Lion in the Way, The 106th Infantry Division in World War II* expands on the 106th’s participation in detail. After researching further, this author located two sources that were produced by the United States Army’s Center of Military History. These documentary sources are: Charles B. MacDonald’s *U.S. Army in World War II: The European Theater of Operations, The Siegfried Line Campaign*, written in 1963 and Hugh M. Cole’s *U.S. Army in World War II: European Theater of Operations, The Ardennes: Battle of the Bulge*, written in 1994. In email conversations, 106th veterans have commented on these two works as well balanced and fair account of all units involved during the Battle of the Bulge.

The general American historiography of the Battle of the Bulge revolves mainly around American will and tenaciousness verses German cunning and brute force. American authors tend to focus on the big four: Eisenhower, Bradley, Patton, and Bastogne. Yet, the Battle of the Bulge was in fact a series of smaller battles for key positions, with time and fuel serving as the pivotal points of interest for the Germans. American decision making revolved around dogged defenses and the excruciating wait for better weather and the return of Allied air power. Nevertheless, American culture loves a winner and consequently the majority of scholarship about the Battle of the Bulge has revolved around American victories, not honorable mentions.

The Situation in Europe in Late 1944

From the North Sea southward along a front approximately 500 miles long to the Vosges Mountains, three great army groups, nearly 70 divisions, were hammering at the gateways to Germany. In the north was the 21st Army Group a composite of British and Canadian forces led by Field Marshall Bernard Montgomery. In the center was the 12th Army Group, the largest of the army groups, an all American force led by Lt. General Omar Bradley. To the south of 12th Army Group was the 6th Army Group a composite of American and free French forces led by General Jacob L. Devers. Lt. General Bradley's 12th Army Group, running north to south, was composed of the U.S. Ninth, First, and Third Armies. Lt. General William H. Simpson Commanded the Ninth Army, Lt. General Courtney H. Hodges the First, and Lt. General George Patton led the Third. 12th Army Group constituted the largest group of armies the U.S. had ever put in the field.¹¹

In the middle of 12th Army Group lay the Ardennes. The Ardennes, a heavily wooded region of conifer forest, lay between Germany in the East and Belgium in the West. In charge of this section of the western front was Lt. General Courtney H. Hodges's First U.S. Army. Within the First U.S. Army were V, VII, and VIII Corps. Major General Troy H. Middleton commanded VIII Corps at the Battle of the Bulge. Within VIII Corps was the 106th Infantry Division. To offer up units for planned offensives, on more suitable terrain than the Ardennes, 12th Army Group had intentionally weakened First U.S. Army's sector of responsibility. Within First U.S. Army's sector the VIII Corps was further thinned to send units to the north and south for planned offensives. The porous defensive line created in VIII Corps was a calculated risk

on behalf of 12th Army Group and Lt. General Bradley, but after all, to paraphrase an unknown American company commander, “this was the old folk’s home, the nursery,” the quite sector.¹²

Within the confines of First U.S. Army lay “the Losheim Gap ... the classic gateway from east to west through Belgium.” This gap had served as the access point for German Army invasions in 1870, 1914, and as recently as 1940; however, Allied intelligence dismissed the likelihood of a fourth German assault. By December of 1944, Germany had been rolled back on all fronts, allied air power had obliterated much of Germany, losses were ever increasing, and all accounts pointed at a German defensive war from now until the conclusion of hostilities.¹³

In fact, the opposite would prove true. The German Ardennes Offensive of December 1944 would take the Americans by tactical surprise, producing a month long battle that cost over 50, 000 American casualties. The 106th would pay the heaviest price for Germany’s last shot, “no other American division in the war was hit by a greater concentration of enemy strength. By December 22nd, 70 percent of the division’s combat effectiveness were either dead, wounded, or captured.” In the process the 106th, in its first fire fight and with support of several other units, produced a holding action around St. Vith that delayed von Rundstedt’s timetable for five days.¹⁴

Perhaps historian Hanson Baldwin was correct in 1966 when he stated that “the history of all these units will never be written; some of these leaders will remain forever unsung, for the canvas is too vast to detail each ... encounter ... many ... overwhelmed beneath the flood of Nazi might, fought unhonored ... unreported ... until the end.” In the subsequent chapters this work will establish, the often, overlooked and underplayed

efforts of the 106th Infantry Division. The immediately following chapter will initiate this exercise by discussing the U.S. Army man power issues in 1943 and 1944, and how the 106th was directly affected.¹⁵

The three Allied Army Groups had run up against the German west border's defensive network known as the West Wall. To the north 21st Army Group met stiff resistance as the German forces north of the Ardennes region solidified Germany's northern approach. In the center, 12th Army Group had three major armies; but each was awaiting the establishment of the port of Antwerp and improved logistical trains to continue their forward movement against the Germans. To the south was the smallest of the three army groups, 6th Army Group. General Dever's 6th Army Group had been slowed by stiffening German resistance and the loss of logistical efficiency combined with the formidable natural obstacle the Vosges Mountains. From the French side of the Vosges Mountains, Marshal Turenne had conducted his Winter Campaign of 1674-1675, in which the French general crossed the Vosges and flanked the German forces positioned beyond the Rhine River. Such a surprise attack would not be possible for General Dever, as German resistance prepared for 6th Army Group's potential flanking maneuver.

Since the Normandy landing the Allies had moved so rapidly that the D plus 330 line was reached on D plus 97 (11 September 1944). Almost the entire distance, nearly 200 miles beyond the Seine River, was covered in the last 48 days of the Allied advance. Thus the situation in late 1944, with contact established on the West Wall, was one of regrouping and re-supplying for both the Allies and the Germans.¹⁶ The next chapter will discuss how the U.S. War Department created the army it needed to be able to be in the

above mentioned position in late 1944. In addition, the chapter will discuss the effects a two-front war had on the U.S. Army, and conversely on the 106th Infantry Division, as the division was formed and trained for their eventual deployment against the Germans in late 1944.

CHAPTER II

THE U.S. ARMY'S NEED FOR GROUND FORCES AND REPLACEMENTS IN 1943 TO 1944 AND THE EFFECT ON THE 106th INFANTRY DIVISION

To win World War II, the U.S. War Department needed boots on the ground. To achieve this goal, the government collected millions of men through volunteer drives, conscription, and reserve units to form the ground force needed to defeat the Axis powers. Of the new 15,000-man divisions formed during the war, the 106th was one of the last to be created and placed into active duty. In March of 1943, the 106th was activated and throughout late 1943 and early 1944, it was shaped into a fighting force designed to defeat the Axis. After the United States Senate drafted an official Declaration of War upon the Axis Nations, the War Department produced an organizational initiative for the activation of three to four combat divisions to be formed per month, beginning in March 1942, proceeding until the number of divisions reached one hundred by the end of 1943. On 2 March 1942, the War Department instructed Army Ground Forces, via Circular 59, "to provide ground force units properly organized, trained, and equipped for combat operations." The U.S. Army came up short in meeting this charge laid down to it by the War Department, due in large part, to the constant meddling by the War Department to meet the strategic needs of a two-front war.¹⁷

The U.S. War Department created a 12,000,000 man, combined armed services. From this pool of man power, the War Department increased the Navy and Army Air

Corps significantly. The Army and the Marines combined to form a total of 95 ground combat divisions. Although this was a significant fighting force, these totals would prove to be insufficient during the peak years of the war (1943-1944). The resulting situation would create a taxing and at times harmful strain on the U.S. Army, as it strove to produce ground combat forces for a two-front war. Overseas ground force operations were limited by many factors. The military might produced by the United States during World War II was generated from federal government spending equivalent to 25 to 42 percent of the U.S. Gross National Product.¹¹ To train, supply, transport, and field these large masses of soldiers U.S. resources were applied toward the elimination of logistical obstacles presented by a two-front war. Just as all materials could not go to the ground forces, neither could all of the available man power. Men and material were needed to control the sea and air routes to various theaters of operation. Personnel were needed to facilitate the expansion of the strategic bombardment campaign against the Axis. Finally, troops were needed to staff the Navy to maintain oceanic supply lines of endless convoys of personnel and equipment transited over immense distances. Since full military mobilization did not take place within the U.S., and only 25 percent of the GNP was put toward the war effort, the resulting pull of available man power for the separate branches of the military meant a smaller available pool for the U.S. Army. From a 12,000,000 man armed force, the Army constituted just under 7,000,000 men including the Army Air Corps, from this only 3,500,000 were ground combat forces.¹⁸

¹¹ http://www.davidrhenderson.com/articles/1101_economicsofwar.html, *The Economics of War*, first accessed on 28 March 2005; http://www.60wwii.mil/Presentation/Education/FS_industrial2.cfm, *World War II Industrial Mobilization*, first accessed on 28 March 2005.

To facilitate the organization of the new ground combat divisions, the War Department followed the cadre system, whereby a group of experienced officers and enlisted men were withdrawn from a parent division, and became the organizing and training element of the new division. This new division was to draw the majority of its officers from officer candidate schools and service schools, as well as the overwhelming mass of its enlisted men directly from reception centers. This method laid a difficult burden on the chosen cadres.

Chief of Staff of the Army General Headquarters (GHQ) General Leslie McNair's leading idea in tactical organization was “a simple and definite one: to concentrate a maximum of men and materials in offensive striking units capable of destroying the enemy's capacity for resistance.”¹⁹ On 20 December 1941, General McNair submitted to General of the Army George Marshall a plan for the training of cadres. He proposed that.

- 1) The commanding general and the two brigadiers of each division be appointed two and a half months before the date set for activation of the division.
- 2) That they report immediately to GHQ for instruction in the training program.
- 3) That GHQ assist the division commander in the selection of his general and special staff.
- 4) The commander and his staff take refresher courses at the Command and General Staff School, and the officers and enlisted men of the cadre report to service schools and replacement Training Centers respectively for special instruction.²⁰

Building on the Cadre System, the War Department issued on 17 January 1942, the charter “Building an Infantry Triangular Division.” From this directive the Army Ground Forces proceeded to establish new divisions after the United States' entrance into the war. The key point of this directive was that it called for a period of “ten to twelve months as the time required to fully prepare a newly activated division for combat.” Newly activated divisions were to conduct unit training that “focused primarily on

regimental size exercises, followed up by combined unit training operations that were to include at least one maneuver of a division against a division.” The Army Ground Forces stressed that field maneuvers be free exercises, repeated when necessary until “a level of proficiency was established.” Also tests and critiques should be administered that trained infantry divisions in the tactics of air and anti-mechanized security measures on a continuous basis. As training progressed, combat conditions were to be simulated with ever escalating realism, evident in a proposal handed down by the Chief of Infantry for the “liberalization” of safety precautions that called for increased use of live fire.²¹

The GHQ emphasized thorough training of the soldier and his unit via the following fundamentals. First, there was to be a marked progression in training through a multi-level sequence of individual basic training, small-unit training, combined training, and large-unit maneuvers. Second, the next higher headquarters to each level were to administer tests to the soldiers and units to determine their competence. Third, if unsatisfactory results were observed there was to be an emphasis and re-emphasis on elementary training, accompanied by frequent reviews. Fourth, there were to be “Free” maneuvers, as opposed to controlled, with realistic officiating. The ever increasing realism in maneuvers was to be followed up by on the spot, critiques of performance in maneuvers. An exercise that would later symbolize the 106th’s fatal flawing, before overseas deployment, was that instruction was to be administered in troop schools, as opposed to the detachment of officers or enlisted men from their units for instruction elsewhere. “Integrity of the tactical unit” was emphasized. Commanding officers were responsible at all echelons of planning, conducting, and the training of their units. These key principles were brought over from GHQ to the administration of the Army Ground

Forces, as General McNair continued to apply them towards the training of the millions of men assigned to ground combat during World War II.²²

During World War II, the Allies decided on a Germany first strategy. This strategy labeled the defeat of Germany as priority over the defeats of Fascist Italy and Imperial Japan. Germany's extensive control of Europe, minus neutral nations, made invasions plans difficult for the Allies. Until the middle of July 1942, strategic planning by the War Department called for a planned invasion of Western Europe in juxtaposition with British forces sometime between the fall of that year and the spring of 1943. Logistical complications, enemy tenacity, and strategic concerns altered invasion plans from a European to a ground invasion of North Africa by the late fall of 1942. This invasion, Operation Torch, combined with a concentrated and escalating air assault on German industrial targets postponed the invasion of Western Europe until mid 1944. Because forces were not needed to invade Western Europe as early as had been envisioned by prewar and early mobilization, new ground combat forces were shipped to England and the Mediterranean theaters rather slowly during 1943. As reserves accumulated state-side the U.S. Armed Forces increased in both efficiency and overall size. When combined with Soviet advances against Wehrmacht forces on the eastern front, the War Department faced with a two-front war, meant "there was no certainty" that United States ground forces would be needed in large numbers in northern Europe and must consider deployment of trained combat personnel to the Pacific.²³

Toward the end of 1943, the major difficulty facing the U.S. Army was to maintain the eighty-nine divisions already created for ground combat roles. Needed replacements for overseas units suffering from the attritional effects of war, meant that

the U.S. Army by 1943 had to fulfill its needs, from not only replacement centers, but from newly formed combat units stateside. The lack of man power was specific, infantrymen were needed everywhere. To meet the hemorrhaging, actions by the U.S. Army became so chronic that according to the *United States Army in World War II: The Army Ground Forces, The Organization of Ground Combat Troops*, some divisions virtually went out of existence as combat organizations. Boots on the ground is how an army holds territory, and in order to fulfill the strategic goals of the United States, the U.S. Army needed men, many more men, and they needed them now. By mid to late 1943, infantry components of divisions, by which virtually all infantry fighting was done, numbered about 700,000 officers and men, well under a tenth of the strength of the fully mobilized Army.²⁴

Operation Husky, the Allied invasion of Sicily in July 1943, drastically increased the demand of committed ground forces in Europe. Infantry replacement training centers were pushed to their limits to meet the demand of infantry divisions as the American armies continued their push and suffered ever mounting casualties. Replacements were sent to the Mediterranean region and by January 1944 approximately “25,000 men had been taken from infantry divisions in the Army Ground Forces not earmarked for early ship to England.”²⁵

Early 1944 proved to be a taxing time on replacement planning. On 4 January General McNair feared that one or more divisions might have to be broken up. “On 12 January of that same year the War Department in anticipation of the coming Allied invasion of France, announced that within two months the European Theater of Operations (ETO) would require fifty thousand more infantry and field artillery

replacements than replacement training centers could produce.” On 19 January the Army Ground Forces were directed to submit a plan by which overseas combat replacements would be met by troops with “at least nine months training, taken from all units of the Army Ground Forces not due for early shipment.” In here lies the beginning of the weakening of the 106th.²⁶

On 25 January, General McNair, conveyed to the War Department that the U.S. Army would not be able to continue nine months of training for state side replacements, while keeping pace with overseas deployment of troops already scheduled for action in 1944. Nearly 80 percent of troop strength was designated as infantry replacements. To facilitate a nine month training regiment, proposed by the War Department, about a quarter of state-side infantry divisions would be relegated to the status of replacement training organizations.

To meet ground combat replacement needs, Army Air Corps recruiting was curtailed, and overabundant coastal battery units and a litany of other personnel sources were combed for replacements. To facilitate the man power shortage, General Marshall in February 1944, proposed to the Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson, that the Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP) be terminated. Termination of the program would provide men for units to be shipped after 31 August 1944, while meeting the need for satisfactory men already basically trained to meet the demand of units that would ship out before 31 August 1944 and be used after the pending invasion of Northern Europe via France. General Marshall’s proposal was a choice, between considerably reducing the ASTP, or suspension of ten divisions and certain non-divisional units. Understandably the War Department chose to reduce the ASTP without delay.²⁷

Since aggregate numbers were not met by early 1944, the War Department discarded the nine-month training regime. The War Department did remain absolute about pooling replacements from newly forming divisions rather than fresh or green recruits from replacement training centers. “On 26 February 1944 the War Department directed the Army Ground Forces to obtain overseas replacements in all the combat arms by stripping units.”²⁸ Those replacements chosen were to have had at least six months of service. Consequently, units not earmarked for immediate overseas deployment were systematically stripped and mainly infantry units lost their men. The 106th was one of many divisions that were ordered to continuously relinquish a percentage of its privates and noncommissioned officers until about four months prior to overseas deployment. Thus the divisions which entered combat in the latter part of 1944 were divisions which had been in training for periods averaging two years but were composed in large part of men new to the division, new to the infantry, or even new to the Army. “Unit spirit and training, carefully built up in the preceding years, and generally admitted to be vital in combat, had to be recaptured at the last moment.”²⁹

The War Department levied another blow to the 106th on 24 June 1944 when it ordered that no eighteen-year-old be sent overseas as an infantry man replacement. In place of these younger soldiers, divisions such as, the 106th, were stripped of “older men, men that were both older in numerical age and experience gained from months of training.”³⁰ General Marshall believed that the Army could be increased to more than 10,000,000 men by the end of 1943; however, the United States Congress did not want to run the risk of jeopardizing critical war production by depleting war industry man power. Consequently, the Army’s size was set at about 7,700,000. According to historian Louis

Keefer, in *Scholars in Foxholes*, had Marshall's wish prevailed, the Army's 1943-1944 "man power crisis" might never had developed.³¹

When comparison is made, between the actual number of American ground combat forces in World War I and World War II, a stark realization emerges. By the time of the surrender of Germany in 1945, the U.S. Army consisted of over 8,000,000 men, however only about one-fourth were combatant ground soldiers. Excluding the 500,000 troops in replacement centers, which were not totally specified for ground combat, of the Army Air Corps that totaled 2,300,000, the strength of combat units was about 37 percent of the total strength of the Army. Juxtaposed to World War I figures, it is clear just how few actual "close-in fighters" constituted the army, compared to the "behemoth being constructed to defeat the Axis." In World War I, excluding the Army's air power, that numbered 190,000 in 1918, nearly half the forces sent to Europe were ground combat forces. Regardless of the massive use of air power and mechanization by the U.S. Army in Europe ground forces were still in demand to deal with a German enemy that was not lying over to the roar of American industrial might.³²

From bottom up, the U.S. infantry division was generally composed in the following order. The rifle squad consisted of a twelve man team armed with ten M1 (Garand) rifles, one automatic rifle, and one M1A3 (Springfield) rifle. Three squads combined to form a rifle platoon. Three rifle platoons were grouped together with a weapons platoon to form a rifle company. A weapons platoon was a modified rifle platoon, issued two .30-caliber machine guns and three 60-mm mortars produced an offensive capability for a company. In place of two automatic rifles, a weapons platoon was also issued three antitank rocket launchers or bazookas, and one .50-caliber machine

gun. Twenty seven rifle companies were grouped into nine battalions that composed three infantry regiments, making up an infantry division. “Each infantry division retained [a] strength of 5,184 of these close-in fighters around whom the rest of the division was built.” The War Department designed this format to conduct “open warfare” via the use of motorization, artillery, and auxiliary support. This formation became the fundament, permanently fixed, combined arms formation for the U.S. Army.³³

The 106th Infantry Division came into existence in early 1943. Prior to its constitution, on 21 January 1943, Brigadier General Alan W. Jones left his temporary duty assignment at the Command and General Staff School in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Major General Jones had been promoted from his former position as assistant division commander of 90th Motorized Division. He was assigned to command the new 106th Infantry Division, Golden Lions, forming at Fort Jackson, South Carolina. According to historian John Toland in his book, *The Story of the Bulge*, “Major General Alan W. Jones, was the exact opposite of the General Patton brand of generals. Many of his own troops had never seen him before, because he was often situated in the background of the 106th I.D. running the show in a quiet and unspectacular manner.” General Herbert T. Perrin was appointed as the assistant division commander.³⁴

The 80th Infantry Division supplied the cadre for the 106th. New recruits’ average age was twenty two; they came from every state in the union. At the activation ceremony at Ft. Jackson, S.C., on 15 March 1943, Sgt. Major Jay G. Brower, a veteran of World War I, a cadre man from the 80th division, and ranking non-com of the division presented the colors to the new 106th Infantry Division. On behalf of the division, the colors were

accepted by eighteen-year-old and new inductee Private Francis Albert Younkin, a soldier of the newly formed 422nd Infantry Regiment.³⁵

The 106th divisional shoulder patch was a golden lion's face on a blue circular background encircled by white, with a red border. The blue represents the three infantry regiments of the division; the 422nd, 423rd, and 424th. The red on the patch signifies the supporting artillery units; the 589th, 590th, 591st, and 592nd. The lion's face constitutes strength and power. In addition to the organic units mentioned above, the 106th was comprised of the 81st Engineers Combat Battalion, 106th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop, 331st Medical Battalion, 106th Quarter Master Company, 106th Signal Company, 806th Ordnance Company, Headquarters Company, Military Police, and the division's band. The Golden Lions' motto was "To Make History is Our Aim."³⁶

In his address to the newly formed division, General Alan W. Jones said, "We are a division new to the Army, without tradition or history. We are unhampered by the past. In your hands is held the opportunity ... be proud of your assignment, of the fact that you have been selected for a combat division, that upon your shoulders rests the responsibility for the victory we have to win. Never forget that your individual part is of first importance to the success of the division."³⁷

The prophetic address by XII Corps commander Major General William H. Simpson stressed the grave responsibility of the division, "let us face the facts, we are up against the toughest and most relentless enemies in the world Enemies who are battle-hardened and well disciplined What you do and accomplish during your coming period of training, will depend the success or failure of this division as a fighting unit." The wholesale stripping of replacements from the division, by the War Department, later

proved Major General Simpson's words true, when the 106th was attacked at the Battle of the Bulge.³⁸

Over four years later, speaking at the first annual convention of the 106th Infantry Division, retired Major General Jones stated the following in his speech to his former division. Upon activation the division received 16,009 troops, an over-strength division by 10 percent of War Department standards. In August [1943,] Jones stated "the first blow fell," to meet the need for overseas replacements the War Department transferred out of the 106th 3,000 trained infantrymen to the 28th and the 31st Infantry Divisions. "This was followed by a continuous drain on us for more and more officers and men, infantry, artillery and signal, until we felt the effects of acute anemia. By late September, in spite of replacements, we were down to less than twelve thousand persons." Regardless, the 106th trained for the business of war.³⁹

When the 106th Infantry Division was formed, the U.S. Army was aware of what it needed to do to make sturdy soldiers. The new recruits underwent training that was physically demanding and heavily influenced by previous American battlefield experiences. The stamina and skill of the soldier was emphasized so that American Army personnel could outfight their enemy. The 106th went through maneuvers at the Carolina Maneuver Area in central South Carolina outside of Ft. Jackson from 13 December to mid January 1944, under the direction of XII Corps. At these maneuvers the division began to function in regimental and divisional field problems. By means of these maneuvers the division learned to deal with mud and freezing rain.⁴⁰

A 1943 article in the *New York Times*, "Tough Training Given to Soldiers In Modern Camp at Fort Jackson" states "Fort Jackson and the units stationed here are

symbolic of the new Army of the United States—tougher, harder, more self reliant than a year ago with better equipment and trained in battle-tested tactics.” This article, written early in the division’s conception is helpful in the realization that the War Department and the division’s commanding officer were working to prepare the division for the eventual fight it would meet in the Ardennes. The article stated, “Night fighting has been stressed ... physical fitness insisted upon.” From the article it is clear that the 106th Infantry Division was training for the conditions it would eventually see.

Following divisional maneuvers in South Carolina, from 22 January until 29 March 1944, the 106th Infantry was sent to Tennessee for advanced training, known as the Tennessee Maneuvers. Red on Blue realistic exercises helped to hone the skills of the new divisions at attack, defense, and river crossing problems. Maneuvers lasted until the end of March 1944. The 106th saw weather that would resemble what it would see in the Ardennes.

After the Tennessee Maneuvers in the spring of 1944 unit cohesion was virtually destroyed and much of the combat capability lost through personnel turbulence. Starting in April to August more than 7,000 men were drafted out or 60 percent of enlisted strength. Six thousand went to Ft. Meade as individual replacements for badly mauled overseas forces. This turbulence broke the training bond and destroyed unit cohesion as well as taking those best prepared for combat. One source points out that the division was asked to give up enlisted personnel on fourteen separate occasions with the number of troops being transferred ranging from groups as small as 25 to as large as 2125. “This was training which welded the Division into a fighting, aggressive unit [early on].”⁴¹

The division then proceeded on to Camp Atterbury Indiana in August of 1944.⁴² Training was followed up at Camp Atterbury in April 1944 where the War Department came looking again for replacements, a total of 2,800 infantrymen and 800 artillerymen were sent to replacement centers. According to Major General Jones replacements sent to the 106th came to Camp Atterbury at a slow rate, with only eight months until combat. Yet the wholesale removal of troops from the division was not over. During the last few weeks before overseas deployment the 106th lost “practically all of our infantry lieutenants, privates first class and privates a total of 500 officers and 3,000 men.” Combined with the losses in April, a total of 600 officers and 6,600 men had been transferred out of the division, after advance combat training, and a mere eight months before overseas deployment. In a U.S. Army Service Experiences Questionnaire prepared by the U.S. Army Military History Institute at Carlisle Barracks, PA, one former 106th soldier stated, “all these fighting men, the front-line soldiers who are the heart and soul of the army, were needed as individual replacements for divisions already in combat and whose losses had been high.”⁴³

Replacements for the 106th came from a multitude of sources; 1,100 from former Army Air Corps cadets, 1,500 from divisions that were later disbanded, 2,800 from miscellaneous sources, such as, disbanded military police units, special training battalions and various service commands, and finally the 1,200 from the greatly curtailed Army Specialized Training Program. A description of the ASTP program is now offered.⁴⁴

In a letter dated 1 April, 1943, General Marshall stated, “ASTP was established to supply the needs of the Army Successful graduates will be immediately available to attend Officer Candidate Schools and technical schools of all the arms and services.”⁴⁵

General McNair, in 1943 stated that, “the speed of modern warfare demands leadership that can accelerate our operations by rapidity of thought and by the application of the most expeditious means”⁴⁶

The Army Specialized Training Program, had hundreds of thousands of enlistees, of which Henry A. Kissinger, future U.S. Secretary of State, was a member. New soldiers were instructed to take the Army General Classification test that was designed to “measure the individual’s ability to learn.”⁴⁷ The ability to learn was the most important eligibility requirement, only above-average soldiers were accepted. In doing so, the program planned to supply a continuous and accelerated flow of ASTP personnel to technical training in colleges.⁴⁸

In a U. S. Army Military History Institute, Army Service Experiences Questionnaire, Weldon Lane of the 423rd regiment, stated,

the combat losses in Europe were so great that an urgent need for replacements arose. The ASTP program was radically curtailed. The participants represented a large pool of GI’s with Basic Infantry Training. The majority of them were assigned to organizations with advanced combat training, releasing the more highly trained personnel for combat duty. The summer of 1944 was spent in unit training trying to assimilate the relatively green ex-ASTP students with the skeleton cadre of the original 106th Infantry Division.⁴⁹ (See Figure 1)

By 1944, the number of potential draftees was seriously depleted. Selective Service had missed its quota for man power requisitions in 1943 by 200,000 to 500,000. By mid-January 1944, General McNair advised General Marshall that the European theater would require 50,000 more troops, over the course of the next two months. This was over the amount of infantry and artillery troops that replacement training centers could produce. “Both Marshall and McNair recognized all too clearly that, even were more draftees obtained, they could not be trained quickly enough to meet combat needs

for the coming summer and fall. The needed man power had to be found within existing Army units.”⁵⁰

The military man power crises of the summer and fall of 1943 curtailed the ASTP program sending tens of thousands of replacements to state-side divisions that had already given up their trained riflemen to fulfill the needs of mounting overseas combat casualties. On 10 February 1944, General Marshall asked Secretary of War Stimson to liquidate the ASTP program to take advantage of the potential pool of 140,000 men. After the program was curtailed many ASTP personnel had not participated in Army exercise in months, since basic training, and many wondered if they would be up to the challenge. Could they take it?” Many ASTP men would have good reason to wonder if they would perform well in combat, and not simply because of their own actions. John Emerich of 102nd Infantry Division, formed around the same time as the 106th stated, “I was astounded by the random manner by which the Army assigned my ASTP unit. Cadets with the last name A through O were ordered to pack and were entrained to Camp Swift, Texas as replacements for the 102nd, P through Z were sent to ordnance school and OCS. It was obvious the Army classification system ruled by a numbers game rather than an efficient use of personnel.” Former ASTP personnel with language training were often incorrectly assigned as well, with soldiers fluent in German assigned to the Pacific, those fluent in Chinese sent to Europe, and so forth. Regardless of specialty by mid-1944 the War Department dispersed ASTP personnel, as well as some 30,000 air cadets, no longer needed, to ground and service forces.⁵¹

The 106th was one of many division that received ASTP personnel. Roger Rutland from the 106th said he saw these new replacements provided by the ASTP as intelligent

and well trained men.⁵² For months the 106th had acted as a framework in which successive installments of infantry men were trained for service overseas as individual replacements. Combat-ready men shipped out as fast as new recruits shipped in. When these divisions were finally scheduled to move overseas as complete units, they were “to a regrettable extent crazy-quilt conglomerations hastily assembled from sundry sources [such as ASTP], given a smattering of training, and loaded on transports.”⁵³

Of the last nine divisions sent to the European Theater of Operations,

on average twenty six percent of their enlisted men had been in the division since at least January 1944; twenty three percent had been assigned from infantry replacement training centers within only thirty days of embarkation; eighteen percent were former ASTP or Army Air Corps students with approximately five month’s training in the divisions; and thirty three percent were transfers from other branches with about four months’ training in the division. If the Army preferred twelve months of infantry and artillery combat training, and nine months were acceptable, ‘by the Army’s standards (at least a year required for the development of the divisional team it could be said that many ASTP personnel were sent overseas without adequate training.’ Thus by the Army’s standards (at least a year required for the development of the divisional team it could be said that many ASTPers were sent overseas without adequate training.⁵⁴

The 106th worked to train their new replacements as best they could over the next couple of months. In September 1944, they were ordered to Camp Myles Standish at Taunton, MS. At Camp Myles Standish the 106th moved to the embarkation point of New York City, and in October 1944 the 106th shipped off on several troop carriers for the war in Europe. The division’s infantry regiments arrived separately between 21 & 28 October, and due to a delay their artillery arrived on 17 November. The early days of December 1944 witnessed the 106th traveling across England to their next embarkation point at Southampton, where the division was transported across the English Channel to LeHavre, France.⁵⁵

When the 106th went overseas, it did not possess the storied history or geographical integration from which some American outfits drew their high morale. In addition, any special esprit de corps it might have had was disrupted by the steady drain on it for replacements. In the months preceding embarkation, 95 percent of its riflemen were assigned to other units.⁵⁶ “The examination of personnel turbulence in the 106th reveals that army personnel policies driven by combat losses was instrumental in negating the value of an extensive training period and destroyed the basis of unit cohesions among the enlisted and officer corps.”⁵⁷

From the information provided it is clear that the War Department had man power issues in 1943 and well into 1944 with the invasion of northern Europe at Normandy. As the U.S. Army worked to provide combat replacements to its overseas divisions, suffering from the attritional effects of a two-front war, many stateside units were stripped of personnel. The 106th was one of many units that had to surrender, on multiple occasions, trained troops to the U.S. Army’s call for replacements. The quality of troops sent to the 106th in place of its conscripted seasoned veterans is not germane to this discussion. To answer one of the established parameters of this work is the degree to which the U.S. Army’s replacement methods affected unit cohesion later when the 106th was engaged in the fight of its young life. The next chapter will discuss the German perspective to the Battle of the Bulge, focusing on the preparations for the campaign and how those preparations directly affect the 106th at the Schnee Eifel and later at St. Vith. After the German perspective has been established, chapters five and six will discuss what effects, if any, can be deduced from primary documentation about the Battles of the Schnee Eifel and St. Vith.

CHAPTER III

THE GERMAN PERSPECTIVE

In December 1944, the German Wehrmacht had been pushed back to its borders, however, the enemy facing First U.S. Army was still an undefeated force and its leaders knew it. By late 1944, the consistent Wehrmacht defeats from the Allies had done little to “harm the professionalism with which staff members planned operations.”⁵⁸ To stem Germany’s need for troops. The Ersatz or replacement training army was alerted to defend Germany in the west. “Consequently, battle-tested, but exhausted soldiers were now standing shoulder to shoulder with men who had not ... previously been called to the front.”⁵⁹

Germany, pinned down on so many fronts, had neither sufficient men nor materiel to withstand attritional warfare. While the German West Wall had not yet been solidified the Allies surprise assault, Operation Market Garden, of 17 September 1944, on the bridges coordinated with armored attacks on the highway crossing the Albert Canal leading to Arnhem threatened to rip the German’s West defense wide open. “This move placed all the German forces near the Maas and Rhine deltas as well as those in western Holland in danger of being cut off.” In completing what British General Montgomery called “a ninety percent success,” the Allies nonetheless had created a significant strategic threat to the German army, that looked to solidify its position on the western front.⁶⁰

Regardless of an overall lack of sufficient weapons and troops needed in modern mobile warfare by September 1944, Germany had begun to solidify its western border as the massive Allied Armies raced toward Germany's west flank. German armies were able to anchor their flanks with the support of "strong natural barriers, on the right by rivers and canals, on the left by the Vosges Mountains." In between was a nearly continuous line of pill boxes, bunkers, defensive positions, dragon's teeth, and strong points collectively named the Siegfried Line or West Wall. A defensive barrier in the past, many of the West Wall's fortifications had been dismantled in the years following the German invasion of France in 1940 and the Axis occupation of the Continent. However, as the Germans fell back towards their homeland the Siegfried Line or West Wall, was quickly fortified again. This stalling defense and eventually slowing of the Allies, primarily because of a lack of logistical foresight and the speed with which the allies took back Northern Europe, was called the Miracle of the West Wall in Germany. From September 1944 onward, a "reorganization and regrouping of the entire West Wall took place, which every week brought a little further strengthening to the line."⁶¹

According to historian Milton Shulman the West Wall was,

instrumental in saving the German armies in the West in the fall of 1944 The defensive network of tank obstacles, pill box, and redoubts followed the 1939 German frontier line, which extended 'approximately three hundred and fifty miles from the Swiss border near Basle to the confluence of the Belgian, Dutch and German borders at Munchen-Gladbach.' From this point the Siegfried line proceeded north to Cleve. The Siegfried Line varied in depth, strength and effectiveness from installation to defensive network along its entire length. The Allies first reached the Siegfried Line near Aachen, the defenses there consisted of a belt of fortifications manned by either machine-gun or anti-tank gun crews which were sited to produce a closely interlocked zone of fire.⁶²

Shulman's book, written in 1948, most likely meant that he would have had a first hand experiences with these fortifications for his research, "The roofs and walls were built of cement some five feet thick, and their average size was about thirty-five feet by forty-five feet. The normal complement of men for such forts was about ten." As winter approached every able-bodied man was rushed to the West Wall, which was "Germany's last hope." As a historian of the subject, Baldwin reaffirms the idea of the West Wall Miracle, that few felt the Germans had a Sunday punch left, yet he quotes Clausewitz, "with no limitation of our own to ensure us safety from catastrophe ... he who is hard pressed ... will regard the greatest daring."⁶³

U.S. offensive action eastward had stalled, as logistical strains proved too much for the pace of advancing American armies. As the Allied advance slowed down on all fronts, Hitler decided that measures had to be taken in the west to reverse Germany's fortunes. Hitler decided to counterattack in the west, with the port city of Antwerp as the goal. According to Shulman, in his book, *Defeat in the West*, the Allied offensive of September and October "took on the aspect of a series of alternating, jerking jabs up and down the front, wherever sufficient material had been assembled to ensure a reasonable tactical advance." To counter these attacks, and give the German Army time to solidify a stout resistance in the West along the West Wall, the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (OKW) or High Command of the Armed Forces rushed its available reserves to each of these outbreaks, which had the effect of preventing the Allies in the Autumn of 1944 from achieving more than limited success after the lightning quick advances of the summer months. The Allied war effort on the ground and the air had crippled much of the resources that Germany had once pulled from occupied Europe to sustain its war

effort. Interior lines within the country still existed, but Germany realized it could no longer sustain its war effort unless drastic measures were taken.⁶⁴

“If the enemy leaves a door open, you must rush in For it is precisely when a force has fallen into harm’s way that it is capable of striking a blow for victory,” Sun Tzu⁶⁵ As the Allies pushed east towards Germany, Hitler looked for options. As early as September 1944, Hitler had decided to mount a counteroffensive in the west through the Ardennes region. He wanted to exploit a “seam” between the Allies, to split them, when accomplished the seizure of the port of Antwerp would most likely cripple the logistical supply train for the Allies in the West. With the threat of collapse delayed at the least, or defeated at best Hitler could focus on the advancing and numerically overwhelming Soviet Armies in the East.⁶⁶ The OKW realized that the Allies could not be strong all along the western front. Consequently, German armored units, in October of 1944, began to be taken off the front line for refit and reassignment.⁶⁷

OKW estimated that the American Army alone had “48 infantry and 18 armored divisions available.” The Germans knew that the Americans would be able to maintain their forces at full strength as well as bring up reserves. The opposite was true for the German army in the West. With needs on two fronts German replacements would arrive less frequently and in less quantity than their American opponents. Germany was aware that it would be impossible for the German Army to hold the Western Front for an indefinite period with the forces available to them. Commitment of each division down to each engineer had to be weight and measured carefully.⁶⁸

Since the Allied invasion at Normandy the Germans continually lost large amounts of men, machines, and territory. By 29 September 1944, OB West (German

command in the west) estimated that they had lost 516,900 men to the Allied advance, along with the estimated 95,000 German soldiers employed for the occupation of coastal fortresses, in an attempt to prevent the use of such ports, in northern France at Calais and Boulogne. In addition to mounting losses the Germans were aware that a steady stream, of fresh American troops, was crossing the Atlantic now that the German Submarine (U-Boat) menace had been reversed. German U-Boats no longer had the free seas that they experienced early in the war. U.S. and Allied naval patrols, air supremacy, and the loss of western French ports, to Allied advances, meant that U-Boats were affecting Allied troop convoys in fewer and fewer numbers. OB West computed “that sixty German units were opposing about fifty four Allied units in September of 1944, a number that would grow in the Allies favor as the bloody autumn months drug on.” As the Americans pushed eastward their mechanization helped to lessen the strains that war places on the human body. However, for the Germans, the retreat eastward, the loss of heavy weapons, the stream of defeats, the fear of all planes in the air, and the increasing cold meant that the Germans were becoming more and more exhausted.⁶⁹

From the West the German city of Aachen near the West Wall had grown into the most threatening portion of the western front for Germany. Allied forces already near the town of Aachen, an old German city, formed a prominent salient jutting into the German line. The Allied produced a double envelopment of Aachen, German efforts to bring relief failed, and on 21 October Aachen fell to the Allies. The psychological effect on Germany grew as its soldiers realized that the first major German city had fallen to the Allies. From Aachen the Allies had access to and planned for a further assault into Germany. In the East the Soviet summer offensive of 1944 had begun to wear down by

the late fall; with the exception of the southern sector, the German High Command expected a less intense time until the start of the Soviet winter offensive. North of Germany in Finland the German Army there was not harassed as was its cousins on mainland Europe and had been moving steadily west towards Norway. It was hoped that these “good divisions, particularly mountain divisions” could soon be redistributed to defend Germany proper on either its western or eastern front. Meanwhile Germany’s southern front, consisting of forces fighting in Northern Italy had managed by the fall of 1944 to stabilize their fronts in front of the Apennine Ridge. Again “a readjustment and reorganization of German forces was becoming possible.” The Southeastern Front was also in flux due to developments in Romania and the Mediterranean where German forces in the Balkans were in the process of withdrawing to establish contact with the southern sector of the Eastern Front. For Germany there were no signs of any critical developments in the immediate future. From the Dnieper River to the outskirts of Warsaw in Poland, within reach of the German homeland, the long Soviet advance had out run its supply lines. The Germans in Italy had been pressed back on their heels to the Gothic Line a trans-peninsular defense line.⁷⁰

In the three months from D-Day (6 June 1944) to mid-September the German Wehrmacht had lost fifty divisions in the east and an additional twenty-eight in the west for a net loss of one and half million men. Geographical losses to the Third Reich during the same period constituted an area several times the size of Germany. Although Germany was far from beaten, German officers realized that they could not win. They could, however, get what Hitler and his inner circle most desired--a lengthening of the conflict. On the Home Front and in the face of ever escalating allied bombing attacks

over all of Germany, the armament industry succeeded not only in maintaining production rates, but also in some cases, such as the production of guns, planes, and tanks increased them. In addition more and more Germans regardless of age and ability were called up to defend the Reich. The Volkssturm, as it was named, consisted of the employment of hundreds of thousands of civilians in the building of a defense.⁷¹

Germany approached critical man power conditions in late 1944. Allied intelligence indicated that the average daily capture in the West (since 28 October) for the whole campaign was just over 4,000 German soldiers per day. After taking into consideration other casualties, it is estimated that,

each week the enemy is losing the equivalent of five divisions. That he should be able to maintain, and even increase, the number of divisions in the field, is the more remarkable in view of these figures. However, should such losses continue through the winter, they will more than compensate for Volks-grenadier production.⁷²

German options in late 1944 were limited. Hitler recognized that victory on the battlefield was the only means of accomplishing an end to the war. He refused to accept a prolonged defense of the Reich as an acceptable strategy for the war effort. Prussian military tradition imbued the Army to outlast its opponents and “manipulate the bonds that united allies.”⁷³

As the Allies pushed on all sides of the Reich, Field Marshall von Rundstedt stressed to his Wehrmacht manning Germany’s western defenses of their historic duty to resist. The following order from Field Marshall von Rundstedt to his men captures the finality and importance of Germany’s defense against the approaching Allies.

Commander-in-Chief West.
Headquarters, 1 October 1944.

SOLDIERS OF THE WESTERN FRONT!

You have brought the enemy to a halt at the gates of the Reich. But he will shortly go over to new super attacks. I expect you to defend Germany's sacred soil with all your strength and to the very last. The homeland will thank you through untiring efforts and will be proud of you. New soldiers will arrive at the Western front. Instill into them your will to victory and your battle experience. All officers and N.C.O.s are responsible for all troops being at all times conscious of their great responsibility as defenders of the Western approaches. Soldiers of the Western Front! Every attempt of the enemy to break into our Fatherland will fail because of your unshakeable bearing. Heil the Fuhrer!

VON RUNDSTEDT. Field Marshall⁷⁴

The failed assassination attempt on Hitler in the summer of 1944 had “no way depressed him; on the contrary, it kindled the flame of his energies.”⁷⁵ Once Hitler had decided that Germany would go on the offensive, and since Germany did not possess the logistical capacities of the Allies, the question had to be asked, where it would take place. A possibility would be to launch the offensive against the Soviet Front in hopes of preventing the entire Eastern Front from collapsing and endangering the eastern agricultural and industrial regions of Germany. Hitler was aware that such an attack against the colossal Soviet forces would at best destroy only 20 to 30 Soviet divisions, garner limited territorial gains, and hardly dent the man power pool that the Soviet had brought to bear against Germany. The Italian theater was unsuitable for such an operation, because of its lengthy stretches of fair weather and the logistical nightmare of maneuvering in secret men and material across the Alps. Finally, the German forces in the North and the Southeast were in the process of being withdrawn.⁷⁶

This evaluation of possibilities pointed to only one effective solution, the use of the offensive force against the Western Front, the most likely candidate to produce strategic gains for Germany. In the West conditions were favorable for a large-scale offensive operation, due in large part to the Allied victory in the Battle for France early in the year. According to a German estimate of enemy forces made on 27 September 1944, “the American and British strength in France was now equivalent to sixty to sixty one full divisions. The strength of the German forces on the West Wall was assumed to be equivalent to twenty seven to twenty eight.”⁷⁷

Nearly 20 divisions were assumed by the OKW to be in England with roughly 39 more divisions in the United States. The Germans realized that while the Allies did not have a large scale strategic reserve on the continent, it would most certainly have one by the opening of the spring offensives of 1945 planned against Germany itself. To OKW the grouping of the Canadian and British forces on the Allied left wing, that resulted from the penetration into Holland, created by Operation Market Garden, meant a concentration of force for the offensive. It was considered that the right wing, Third and Seventh US Armies, in the battle near Nancy and on the southern German front, temporarily held at bay the Vosges mountain range, all were nonetheless considerable strong. The Germans saw the weak point of the Allied line to be the center and the First U.S. Army.⁷⁸

This would be a great gamble for the Germans who knew the region’s historical significance. Scholars of military history cite the Ardennes as the classic invasion route southward, from Germany, to the Sedan Gap and the road to Paris and the Channel ports. For the offensive of December 1944 the Germans would need to succeed in reaching the great Meuse River and its key bridges that would have to be captured, intact, and quickly.

Beyond the Meuse lay the Allied supply dumps and communication centers housed in Liège, and the final objective the port of Antwerp.⁷⁹

To relieve this growing situation in the West, the German aim of the offensive was to create a breakthrough in the Allied lines and again imposing mobile warfare upon the enemy in hopes of delaying the inescapable Allied assault on Germany proper. The German assault would rely on speed accomplished by bypassing enemy strong points that could not be overrun. The attacking German armies would seize key road nets such as, Malmedy, St. Vith, Houffalize, and Bastogne, if not on 16 December then no later than 17 December. Failure to do so would mean that controlled access to the roads feeding these towns would throw off the German timetable and distort the offensive. In addition, the Germans would lose the weather advantage, as the skies over the Ardennes would not remain cloudy indefinitely.⁸⁰

The German OKW concluded beyond seizing towns and ports a successful assault against the Allies would entail the destruction of 20 to 30 divisions. A number that could be far more easily absorbed by the Soviets than the Americans who were committed in other portions of Europe, the Mediterranean, and the Pacific. In addition, such a loss would be completely devastating to the British and Canadian Armies thereby drastically changing the war in the West, lending perhaps to a stabilization of the front, and a negotiated peace. The choices of attack in the west were limited to the two that had the highest probability of succeeding. Operation Holland consisting of a single thrust attack to be launched toward Antwerp, and Operation Liège-Aachen, also known as the small solution.⁸¹ (See Figure 2)

Hitler ordered that the counter offensive have essential prerequisites if it were to succeed. First, the Wehrmacht must hold the West Wall against all Allied breakthroughs without using the assault forces being built up; second, achieve complete tactical surprise; third, a period of inclement weather to cover German ground forces from Allied air superiority; fourth accelerated exploitation of the breakthrough to meet the objectives set; and lastly a relatively quiet time on all fronts, especially the east. The time was soon, since the Soviets had out run their supply lines. Pulling troops from the Northern, Southern, and Southeastern fronts would not be enough, since the Eastern front demanded the lion's share of German ground forces. To muster the units need for the attack, the western front was weakened of its units including panzer to meet the counteroffensives needs. Additionally the majority of the newly organized volks-grenadier divisions, which were badly needed both on the Eastern and Western Front to reinforce the battle-weary infantry divisions, would no longer be available for this purpose and would go to building up Hitler's vengeance wave. "Furthermore, the reorganization of the panzer forces would absorb a considerable portion of the current output of tanks." This had the affect of significantly depleting the volume of available tanks that could be rushed to meet the urgent needs of the Eastern Front. In 1944, oil more specifically petroleum, was the blood of the German Wehrmacht. In Parker's, *Hitler's Ardennes Offensive: The German view of the Battle of the Bulge*, Field Marshal von Manteuffel states, "Before the war it was taught that motor fuel is merely a means of transportation. During the course of the late war it has been proved that it has actually become a weapon with which to fight." Significant fuel restrictions were made on German forces on all fronts. To paraphrase Napoleon Bonaparte, if "an army marches on

its stomach,” then the German stomach consumed petroleum and the 106th would assist other Allied units in producing the eventual German famine.⁸²

Weighing into these considerations was the very real threat that the Allies might begin their offensive operations during the winter without waiting for the spring, much less for the Germans to prepare themselves. For this offensive to work, Germany would need more than it could produce, it would need help from nature. Due to the near absolute air supremacy of the Allies over the skies of Europe, bad weather and plenty of it would be needed. The Battle for Kursk in mid-1943, should have proved as a warning to the Germans, but by now tactical doctrine was in the hand of Hitler, who would bet Germany’s existence on this offensive. For Germany to succeed, as it had in the past, where it had failed to do so at Kursk, was to establish a rapid breakthrough.⁸³

Regardless, the state of the German Army by 1944, meant that any hope of a sustained breakthrough, much less the marshalling of troops to perform such an offensive would require the need of both secrecy and surprise. The German Army had to find the subtle means to solidify its offensive counter punch without the allies prematurely detecting any concentrations of troops and materials. If the Allies could determine such a build up, they would have more time to bring their giant logistical might forward in the form of ground reinforcements and airpower. First US Army which had been committed on this front, had according to available Germany intelligence, only 8 infantry and 3 armored divisions at its disposal. “Its point of main effort was in the area on both sides of Aachen. Four infantry and one armored divisions had been committed in the Monschau-Echternach sector which extended over about one hundred kilometers.” Because of the terrain that lay just beyond the First U.S. Army’s thinly spread line, Hitler

felt it was the most suitable to give room for the German Panzer divisions to rapidly maneuver west. Additionally the Eifel region consisting of thick trees and hilly terrain would offer considerable “camouflage” for German offensive assembly areas from Allied aerial patrols. The final objective of the German offensive would be the port city of Antwerp.⁸⁴

By September the Allies captured Antwerp, but the port had not started producing as a logistical front until December. The Germans realized the potential to stemming the flow of logistics to the Allied Armies if Antwerp could be taken back. “If this thrust reached its objective, the prerequisites for a battle for the annihilation of the enemy forces, which were cut off from their supply lines, would have been established.” On the way to seizing Antwerp the German forces would be in position to inflict a devastating strategic blow to the Allied war effort in the west since all along their axis of attack, the bulk of at least twenty to thirty Allied divisions could be engaged and hopefully destroyed.⁸⁵

Hitler and OKW believed that for the offensive to work the Germans must somehow field, without Allied detection, a minimum force of thirty divisions, of which ten must be panzer divisions. To meet the needs of an offensive force Hitler ordered that all Western Front forces suitable for supplying adequate forces for the attack, and sustaining its flanks, should be stripped. According to Parker, in his book *The Battle of the Bulge: The German View, Perspectives From Hitler's High Command*, Hitler

was prepared to take this risk because he believed, that, with the beginning of the offensive, the enemy would immediately relinquish any intended attacks of his own, and would take up the defensive on all sectors of the front in order to assemble the forces needed for commitment in the breakthrough area.⁸⁶

Massive amounts of artillery and rock artillery were to be assembled as well to assist the initial shock of the breakthrough and support panzer and infantry units as they progress westward. To support the flanks blocking units were increased by heavy *panzerjager* (antitank) battalions brought up to build the most effective defense. Hitler wanted petroleum and ammunition quantities hoarded to build up what was necessary for constant attack, until Allied fuel could be captured and the western front stabilized. Finally the Luftwaffe (Germany's Air force) was ordered to concentrate a dense number of fighters to offer support over the three main zones of penetration. This buildup was also kept secret and measures were taken to reequip and reorganize fighter formations on the western front to offer up the needed pilots and planes.⁸⁷

Germany mobilized efforts to "comb-out" the remaining man power in Germany, and use it to rebuild divisions destroyed on both the Eastern and Western fronts. In addition, the comb-out was used to form 20 and 25 new divisions, called Volks-grenadier (People's Infantry) divisions. According to Shulman, Volks-grenadier divisions contained about eight thousand men, which made them approximately half the size of a pre-World War II German infantry division.⁸⁸

The Wehrmacht was also strengthened by replacements from the German Luftwaffe. The Luftwaffe was ordered to give up thousands of "able-bodied young men" that it no longer had planes for. In addition the mass of the Luftwaffe training schools were emptied of potential trainees and sent to Wehrmacht infantry training, and then to the front. Courage and zeal made up for a lack of lengthy and in many cases proper training, according to Shulman. The Kriegsmarine contributed men to the

Wehrmacht, mostly from garrison personnel that were no longer needed in Channel ports due to Allied control of the seas.⁸⁹

Oberkommando der Wehrmacht No. 28/44, 5 November 1944, laid out Hitler's deception plan for the planned offensive and elaborate details to keep it a secret. Hitler envisioned a large solution, the destruction of numerous Allied division, the seizure of Antwerp and a defeat of the Allies in the west. His generals tried to convince him that even under the most suitable of circumstances the assault would take at least seven days, and that counted on all American forces before the German counter offensive crumbling, running, or being destroyed. Well outside of the control of the Wehrmacht was the weather, should the skies clear before Antwerp could be reached, the Allies would rain death from the skies on the advancing panzer columns and destroy what remained of Germany's offensive capabilities.⁹⁰

Secrecy had to remain paramount for the offensive to work. The Germans realized that at the "first signs" of an attack in the Ardennes, the Allies could bring their major offensives on the shoulders to a terminus and direct strong forces against the endangered area. The German deception goals had to be accomplished to prevent the Allies from reinforcing in the Ardennes sector, so that Germany could take advantage of the weak forces therein to exploit a breakthrough. The Germans selected the name Wacht am Rhein (Watch on the Rhein) to create the impression of a defensive force in the area and nothing more. "The alternative name of Abwehrschlacht in Westen (Defensive Battle in the West) was used commonly during the planning phase."⁹¹

To add to the cover story, tactical deception activities were implemented by the German High Command. A directive was published by the OKW on 12 October 1944.

Field Marshall Wilhelm Keitel informed German commanders on the Western Front that “it was not possible to mount an offensive at this time.” The directive went on to say that reserve forces should be assembled in such a way as to guarantee complete success in the defense of the West Wall. Strategic reserves were to be assembled behind the front and considered OKW reserves. What the directive kept concealed was its true purpose, to inform only the highest commanders with the knowledge of movement orders for units and instruction for a logistic buildup in the Ardennes. On 5 November, the OKW followed up its previous misdirection tactics by adding to the deception story. This directive informed German units that a large-scale Allied offensive action, with the goal of securing a line along the Rhine between Cologne and Bonn, Germany was to be expected. To respond to this planned offensive the OKW had ordered that two reserve forces be assembled. The first of these forces was to be located northwest of Cologne to be in position to counterattack enemy penetration into northern Germany. The second counterattack force was to be located in the Eifel to deal with the possibility of Allied forces attacking Germany from the south. To pull further attention away from any forces in the Ardennes the force near Cologne was played-up as the more crucial of the two defensive forces. The force in the Eifel concealed its true intent by way of misdirection and secrecy. Under Hitler’s direction, the OKW prepared three massive attack armies. The weight of these three forces would be unleashed on First U.S. Army in the middle of 12th Army Group’s sector.⁹²

Near the vicinity of Cologne the Sixth Panzer Army was methodically assembled as the strike force designated for the northern Ardennes. To throw off American counterintelligence OKW sent orders that simulated the assembly of Sixth Panzer Army

northwest of Cologne, “instructions were issued to [German] Army headquarters to send out corresponding radio traffic, in order to intensify this impression.” To keep the Allies guessing, on 7 December, OKW ordered the German Fifth Panzer Army to circulate a rumor “to the effect ... a German offensive was to take place near the city of Trier in January or February of 1945.” This preparation constituted a time table that called for an offensive one to two months after the secretly building offensive in December.

Meanwhile, in the Eifel the Fifth Panzer Army was brought up and position to strike through the center of the counterattack. The third force was the German Seventh Panzer Army, currently ordered to hold its defensive assignment south of the Ardennes and Eifel. Once the assault began the Seventh German Army would proceed westward to perform a southern flank protection force of the two northern Panzer Armies. With poor weather the Allied advantage of air supremacy would not be a factor. The Germans would therefore have a three to one advantage in the assault through First U.S. Army’s sector.⁹³

Hitler wanted complete security; therefore the release of information was disseminated at a staggered rate. The OKW knew that unless they were able to achieve total or near total surprise through their deception and counter intelligence methods they would not be able to succeed and the Allies would destroy whatever forces they encountered in this breakthrough. The OKW therefore only informed people as the need arose to do so. This was a difficult task at best since many commanders needed to be informed so that they could carry out their duties that would help make the offensive materialize. On 11 October, officers of OKW were required to give an oath of secrecy in writing.⁹⁴

Telephone and teletype were not used to communicate the organization and preparation of the offensive, radio traffic was measured so as not to increase from normal levels, and German officers, sworn to secrecy were used as couriers. OKW used one code name for preparations that was changed at the Army level and then again at the Corps level to subordinate units. The attack date was designated as X-Day and depending on the weather was set for mid December. OKW informed Army Commanders of the planned offensive of 3 November. In early December, Corps commanders were notified followed by Divisions commanders at intervals throughout the following days. Regimental commanders were informed three to four days prior followed by Battalion commanders on 13 and 14 December. Many non-commissioned officers and soldiers learned of the planned assault the night prior to the attack or the morning of 16 December 1944.⁹⁵

Hundreds of thousands of troops were being built up together with colossal amounts of supplies and vehicles. In order to achieve surprise and prevent destruction, by Allied air power, the assembly of troops in the Eifel was done with great secrecy. Operations Security (OPSEC) measures were used widely to move forces up to within miles of the front as Germany constituted its offensive in the Ardennes. To aid in the assembly of troops and vehicles movement was conducted at night, while during the day the use of camouflage was strictly enforced. Tummeister or Tarnmeister (camouflage commanders) were appointed for each assembly area. The officers kept after noise and light discipline through a variety of means that ranged from prevention of German field fires for cooking and warmth, without charcoal, to road security.⁹⁶

To continue the deception of the build up artillery forces that were assigned for the assault were not allowed to cross predetermined lines in a western direction. Any German officer that was authorized to reconnoiter the front lines for his unit, had to wear the uniforms of the units committed along the corresponding sector, in addition their names were listed and they were bound to secrecy punishable by death if violated. Troops from Alsace, Lorraine or Luxembourg were kept in reserve and not committed along the front to reduce the likelihood of desertion and tipping off the Allies to the secret offensive build up. Several primary sources have reported that low-flying German aircraft were used to assist in masking the noise of vehicles moving into assembly areas, and the jump off positions for the attack. Additionally horse-drawn vehicles were used to haul artillery pieces in position, a practice normally used by the Germans, but also used to pull mechanized vehicles forward in many cases. All road traffic whether motorized or by foot was carried out only at night. As late as 10 December, German artillery was not allowed to move closer to the front than six kilometers. If an Allied night patrol was suspected, German Military Police would ensure that all German troop movements came to a complete standstill. "Near positions in the proximity of the front line, the wheels were covered with rags, straw, and similar devices." German soldiers' lamps were not to be fully lit, and not a word was to be spoken, but rarely was that proved true. Civilian telephone traffic behind the front was stopped or monitored, wherever it continued. The essential prerequisite of the counteroffensive, the element of surprise, was being attained. The Germans focused on forest fighting with their assault troops, not to open fire "whenever he likes and not to pump lead haphazard into the trees

without seeing a target.” This discipline made it difficult on American patrols sent out to access enemy fire.⁹⁷

Veteran Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt at OB West, had under his command four weakened army groups of which three assault armies were forged. The strongest was under Field Marshal Walter Model. Model’s Army Group B was given the last of German armored reserves, the Sixth Panzer Army under SS Oberstgruppenfuhrer (Colonel General) Josef “Sepp” Dietrich and Fifth Panzer Army under General Hasso-Eccard von Manteuffel. General Manteuffel was to support General Dietrich as his Sixth Panzer Army maneuvered to encircle the British 21st Army Group, and as much of the American 12th Army Group as possible.⁹⁸

Germany had amassed 24 divisions for its planned counterattack. Ten of them were armored divisions. The bulk of the infantry divisions were comprised of Volksgrenadier divisions comprised for the defense of the Reich and would therefore fight with a tenacious zeal. The northern side of the attack force was made up of the recently constituted 6th Panzer Army (S.S.) led by Oberstgruppenfuhrer Sepp Dietrich. The southern portion of the assault force consisted of the rebuilt 5th Panzer Army which, like the 6th Panzer Army, was composed of five of the panzer divisions. The German 7th Panzer Army was to follow the 5th Panzer Army through its forced opening of the American lines, then deploy as an army sized southern blocking force, tasked with keeping the Third U.S. Army and whatever reserves the Allies could throw into the fight from destroying the salient. The center of gravity of the German offensive was the 6th Panzer Army, which was to be the first to reach the Meuse, cross the river between Huy and Liege and push the offensive forward towards its objective of Antwerp.⁹⁹

The 106th Infantry Division was chiefly confronted by the 5th Panzer Army under Von Manteuffel. Von Manteuffel commanded front line troops in Russia and had distinguished himself in an offensive drive that nearly reached Moscow in 1941. Afterwards he commanded a division in North Africa, before returning to the eastern front for a second tour of duty as the commander of the elite Grossdeutschland Panzer Division. His continued successes together with the admiration of the Fuehrer, led to his being promoted directly from division commander to leadership of the Fifth Panzer Army by Hitler.¹⁰⁰

Von Manteuffel was assigned the task of defeating the Americans troops positioned on the Schnee Eifel heights. A few days before the battle of the Bulge the Germans became aware, through patrolling, that the VIII Corps moved in fresh troops on its northern flank, the division was the 106th. Afterwards St. Vith lay in the direction to Antwerp. A stubborn American defense of St. Vith would delay critically the German time table, as well as prevent access to the town's crucial road net. According to the military historian's collection, the Robert Hasbrock Papers, obtained from the U.S. Army Military History Institute, the:

main axis of advance planned by the Germans was northwest through the vital junction of St. Vith toward Liege. The Germans were depending heavily on surprise and speed Bastogne ... we learned later from captured German documents was [an] ... effort to block the southern shoulder of the penetration.¹⁰¹

On the night of 14 December, panzer divisions were permitted to move up to within fifteen kilometers of the front, while infantry divisions were permitted to close to within five to eight kilometers. This process would continue through the night of 15 December until they had advanced closer to the front to assault positions that were to serve a few

hours later as assembly points to launch the offensive. The Battle of the Bulge was in fact a series of smaller battles that melded together. Each victory and loss was paramount to the success or failure of Allied or German strategy. The German preparations thus far discussed give scope and dimension to the overall attack.¹⁰²

At this point one must focus on the specific German objectives that brought the counteroffensive to the front lines of the 106th. In December of 1944, St. Vith was comprised of roughly 2,000 citizens and the headquarters of the 106th Infantry Division. St. Vith is an Ardennes town that sits across a low hill on the southern edge of a plateau which borders the Ableve Valley to the North, the Our River to the south and southeast, and the Salm River in the west. To the east of St. Vith is the Our River and the Schnee Eifel. In December of 1944, St. Vith was a crucial road junction that facilitated seven roads in and out. In clockwise order from the north these roads are: the Malmedy, Ambleve Schonberg, Winterspelt, Burg-Reuland, Beho, and Viesalm. This road junction offered the possibility of carrying out major lateral movements between the Fifth and Sixth Panzer Armies. The railway tracks running from Prum split St. Vith in two and proceed towards Malmedy in the north and Liege in the west. Control of train lines and junctions in enemy territory would speed up the process of logistics and would allow the German advance to continue to be supplied in a manner that would facilitate success against the Allies. The terrain around St. Vith is relatively open for a distance of about five kilometers to the west and southwest of the town. These features made St. Vith, once captured, an excellent staging ground for German armored advances westward during the planned offensive. To the east of St. Vith are forests and waterways that represent major obstacles to an advancing army, even when all roads are held. The

climate around St. Vith in the winter months consists of icy rain and snow storms that produce muddy roads and make even hard covered roads slippery.¹⁰³

In the grandiose scheme of the German offensive, that of encircling and destroying large numbers of Allied units, St. Vith was selected as the convergence point for the first planned German encirclement, the Schnee Eifel. Once German troops held St. Vith all roads leading into the town from the east would be controlled by the Wehrmacht and thus would isolate completely all American units located east of the town towards the West Wall. If the Germans were to take advantage of these before-mentioned intentions, St. Vith had to fall fast, on the first day, but no later than the second. On the flip side, the failure to successfully take and hold St. Vith by the Germans meant that the Americans could use St. Vith's terrain advantage to marshal forces in such a manner as to destroy the German offensive before it made any further westward penetrations.¹⁰⁴

The German LXVI Corps was led by Walther Lucht. The objective of this Corps was to send its two Volks-grenadier Divisions (VGD) the 18th and 62nd forward to encircle the American units occupying the Schnee Eifel, which consisted of the 106th's 422nd and 423rd infantry regiments and supporting artillery and engineers. After encircling these units and destroying their tactical integrity, the 18th and 62nd VGD were to proceed westward and aid in the assault and capture of St. Vith by the first day. Afterwards Lucht's LXVI Corps was to push on beyond the Meuse River.¹⁰⁵

The 62nd VGD was to deliver the main axis of its assault on the right side of its front (the American left) thereby accomplishing its breakthrough near the town of Roth, then advance towards St. Vith along the Andler-Schonberg road. On the left (the

American right) the reinforced 293rd Regiment, supported by a self-propelled battalion, was to breakthrough near Bleialf and advance towards St. Vith via Steinbrück. In the center one battalion of the 62nd VGD would fix the American forces in place. All these plans made equal by poor weather that ground U.S. air power, gave the German 62nd VGD the three to one advantage necessary, for the before mentioned units maneuvered on the U.S. 422nd and 423rd infantry regiments in the Schnee Eifel. The 62nd's advance would break through the small town of Grosslangenfeld and block the southern and western exits to St. Vith. To assist this breakthrough the LXVI Corps' artillery was established southwest of Prüm to give fire support to the 62nd VGD and the 18th VGD. Major General Gunther Hoffmann-Schonborn commanded the 18th VGD, on 16 December, the division's 294th infantry regiment was ordered to regroup around Auw and to the south the 295th infantry regiment in the area of Roth-Kobscheid with the 293rd infantry advanced on Bleialf.¹⁰⁶

Three factors needed to synchronize for the Germans to stand a chance with their Ardennes counteroffensive. They were the Allies missing the clues, the lasting poor weather, and the skill of the German deception. The American system of intelligence gathering in late 1944 lacked a system of standard operation procedures. When abstractly compared to the clockwork efficiency and power of the American industrial system that managed massive assembly lines and defined production standardization, ignorance of the German strategy, meant that "the failure of the Allies to detect the Ardennes offensive remains one of the unresolved questions of American intelligence historiography."¹⁰⁷

Logistics is for the professional, and strategy is for the amateur. Hitler planned the offensive, but OKW garnered the resources to make the offensive a reality. However,

if the slightest resistance occurred where it was not expected, the entire German offensive would fail. If German preparations could not be concealed, the German Command needed to find means of concealing their true purpose by means of deception and ruses so as to not betray their true offensive nature. The Germans maintained perfect quiet and all but perfect deception. If it worked the Germans knew they would enjoy surprise, the weather, and the advantage in the initial days of the attack, in some case as high as six to one.¹⁰⁸

In an estimate by the G-2 of the U.S. VIII Corps, under the First U.S. Army on 1 December 1944, it is clear that at the Corps level downward, American command had no thought of the possibility of a German offensive. The G-2 stated, “assuming no major breakthrough in the present Allied offensives the British War Cabinet’s Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee in a current report estimates that at the end of 1944 the German armed Forces, including all arms will consists of (excluding Volkssturm) approximately 7,620,000 men, with just under 6,000,000 in the army of which 1,250,000 are fit German men between nineteen and forty five years of age.” The Allies saw only declining military potential, not the Germans counteroffensive that had been skillfully created and was merely days from being unleashed on First U.S. Army and the 106th. The German Army won the battle of secrecy even before the shooting began. In the Ardennes Sector, the Germans had been able to get there first with the most. Through strategic European troop transfers, the weakening of western defensive units, and determination, Hitler had amassed an assault force that represented--the cocked fist of German military might in 1944.¹⁰⁹

The Germans had been successful in alerting the Allies to the presence in the Ardennes. What significant reserves were left within the Wehrmacht and the Luftwaffe were positioned to unleash a devastating attack upon the Allies, and specifically against the First U.S. Army in the Ardennes sector. The deception tactics of the Germans had been successful, but the Allies had missed several clues. What the Allies missed and how the loss of this information was so devastating to the 106th will soon be examined? The deployment of the 12th Army Group down to the individual units of the 106th including the “man for man” order given for its relief of the 2nd Infantry Division will provide insight as to the additional disadvantage the 106th encountered before the German counteroffensive.

CHAPTER IV

DEPLOYMENT TO THE CONTINENT

From a U. S. Army Military History Institute Army Service Experiences
Questionnaire:

The plan in Washington was that we would be sent to a 'quiet sector' on the German front where we, would be left for two or three months to learn to work as a team [again] before going into serious combat against the German army. This was later termed General Bradley's 'calculated Risk.' There was simply not enough man power to meet all the pressing military demands of those days as we were trying to defeat both Germany and Japan simultaneously on opposite sides of the world. My point here is that the U.S. man power barrel was stretched to the absolute limit. We won World War Two, but at a margin that was so narrow it was almost miraculous. Few Americans today realize by what a hairs breath we came out on top. But the history of the 106th Division is an illustration of my point. General Bradley's 'Calculated Risk' exploded in his face, for instead of our two or three months to learn at the front what our trained soldiers had learned in months of hazardous training in Indiana, the Germans launched the Battle of the Bulge the Von Rundstedt's Western Offensive, right around us on 16 December 1944, just five days after we had moved into the frontlines on the Belgian-German border just a few miles north of Luxembourg!¹¹⁰

While easy to define for a historian, the offensive culminating point is difficult to predict for a field commander. As offensive operations increase, the demand and distance for both troop and material resources grow as the offensive culminating point is approached. Simultaneously a defending army can implement less effort to the defense, while husbanding resources for a counter attack as the opposing offensive force outruns its logistics. At the "offensive culminating point the offensive army yields the operation advantage to the defender ... it is [at this] point in time and location when the attacker's

combat power no longer exceeds that of the defender.” For Hitler and Germany the target time for his planned offensive would come when the Allied armies exceeded their logistical range and became vulnerable to a massed and surprise attack.¹¹¹

Clausewitz stated that the defense has strength. As the Allies advanced on Germany’s western border, within Germany the Wehrmacht had several strengths from which to pull. By using natural terrain, the Wehrmacht was able to camouflage the build up of elements for the counteroffensive. Second, Germany maintained shorter lines of communications and interior lines. Third, Germany had the advantage of the indigenous population, the German people, to assist in its war effort. Lastly, the Germans had advantage of timing, because of the logistical strain on the Allied armies, consequently “the operational advantage on the western front in late 1944 belonged to the German Army in the defense.”¹¹²

American forces had reached the German West Wall defenses on Germany’s western border in the fall of 1944. As stated earlier, Lt. General George S. Patton’s Third U.S. Army reached the region near Saarbrücken, just to the north was General Hodges’s First U.S. Army, stationed from Aachen southward. With Ninth U.S. Army north of General Hodge’s position. American forces were planning on initiating a winter offensive towards the end of 1944, both in the north and south of the Ardennes region. All three armies were assembled as 12th Army Group under the command of Lt. General Omar Bradley approached the West Wall. British General Montgomery’s forces combined with American units toward the north, and Lt. General Patton’s forces in the south were hammering out the difficult dilemma of logistics. There was simply not enough to go around for continued attack on all fronts. As a result, the American and

British drives east had petered out along a nearly five hundred mile front from the North Sea south to Switzerland. Once the logistical convoys built up the much needed implements of war: gas, ammunition, food, and spare parts; the Allied forces under Field Marshal Montgomery in the north and Lt. General Patton in the south prepared to serve the coup de grace to Germany via a massive pincer movement towards the industrial cities of the Ruhr region.¹¹³ Coalition warfare, therefore, weakened the First U.S. Army. Resources, earmarked for the First U.S. Army were sent to northern and southern U.S. Armies and the 21st Army Group. By 1944, so was the situation that grew out of the failure to get the port of Antwerp fully functioning, an aggravating three months since its capture.^{III}

Petroleum and water were not the only shortages that the Allied armies faced by the winter of 1944. Troops were needed to mount these massive offensives, as discussed in chapter two, replacements from the U.S. were not arriving as quickly as they were needed. In order to accomplish the build up of personnel to facilitate the Allied planned offensives in the north and south of the Ardennes, troops already on the continent would need to be re-assigned. The overstretched logistical lines leading back to the U.S. meant; that weakness would have to be created within the Allies own strategic and tactical disposition, that weakness came at the expense of First U.S. Army and most notably VIII Corps. The war in Europe meant that the Allies and the Germans alike had to make the most out of economies of force due to the breadth of the front under contention.¹¹⁴

^{III} Christopher B. Bean, James Earl Rudder: A Lesson in Leadership. M.A. Thesis, (University of North Texas, 2003), 97, citing Charles B. MacDonald, *A time for Trumpets: The Untold Story of the Battle of the Bulge* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1985), 83. An Army Group consisted of 500,000 men in two or more Armies; an Army consisted of 100,000 men in two or more Corps; Corps consisted of 50,000 men in two or more Divisions; a Division consisted of 10,000-20,000 men in three or more Regiments/Brigades; a Regiment/Brigades consisted of 1,800-3,000 men in two or more Battalions; a Battalion consisted of 600-1,000 men in four to six Companies; a Company consisted of 100-200 men in five platoons; a Platoon consisted of 20-50 men.

By the late fall of 1944, the German soldier was able to fight on despite tremendous disadvantages. The problem may be seen by the geographical position the Wehrmacht found itself in. Years earlier the German armies enjoyed success after success in Poland, France, North Africa, and the Soviet Union. However, by the winter of 1944 the common German soldier found himself backed up against his Fatherland, his home, with invasion a very real possibility. The German soldier would fight even harder now until the end of hostiles, and the Allies knew this. In addition the German soldier had consistently outperformed, on average, the British and American soldier by a margin of 20 percent. If looked at in aggregate numbers the combat equivalency of 120 Americans was equal to roughly 100 German Soldiers. Consequently, once the German offensive began, those Allied units caught in its wake would experience an aggressive German soldier that did not yet believe he was beaten.¹¹⁵

VIII Corps of First U.S. Army defended the regions known as the Ardennes and the Schnee Eifel in December 1944. As detailed in Chapter three, this region was winding and full of blind turns that dipped abruptly and rose suddenly, before squeezing through the narrow streets of the region's villages. As difficult as this terrain was, the German forces preparing for the assault had the advantage of the area, gleaned from their 1940 invasion, of the region. An advantage in information that the 106th would not possess in detail when the German offensive began on 16 December.¹¹⁶

The Ardennes hilly terrain was crisscrossed by three main road systems running north to south. These three roadways consisted of the Eupen-Malmédy-St. Vith-Arlon road, Liège-Aywaille-Houffalize, and Aywaille-Hotton-Marche-Jemelle. The loss of control of these roads would severely hurt the Allies' logistical and strategic position

within the Ardennes and would greatly assist the westward movement of German forces.¹¹⁷

The First U.S. Army's VIII Corps was assigned two fresh divisions from the War Department in the winter of 1944. First to arrive was the 99th followed by the 106th Infantry Division. These new divisions had been brought to what countless historians have called "the quiet sector." This procedure was conducted in the hope of getting at least a few weeks and at most a couple of months of acclimatize to ground combat in Europe for the new divisions. A chance to "cut their teeth" on "light" fighting before assisting in the big push against the German homeland in the planned Allied 1945 offensive would serve these units well.

Discussed in length in chapter two, the 106th was one of the "higher-numbered" divisions in the U.S. Army formed during 1942-1943. It therefore was a prime candidate to aid man power pools, once trained many of its men had been fed into other front-line divisions as casualty replacements. Patched up with non-traditional riflemen prior to overseas deployment, meant that the 106th arrived on the continent under-trained, by Army Ground Force standards.

In addition to inexperienced divisions in the First U.S. Army, in December 1944, VIII Corps also had divisions weakened by savage attritional warfare with the Germans for control of the Hürtgen Forest. The G-2 report for First U.S. Army mentions both Lt. Generals Bradley and Hodges were aware of and had discussed the lack of available replacements. Lt. General Bradley was informed that his divisions were increasingly becoming under manned and when asked by General Kean if American units would have to fight under strength, Lt. General Bradley responded, "Yes, I am afraid that is so."

What Lt. General Bradley wanted was “M-1 carrying replacements,” and some thought was put into breaking up the new divisions that had arrived in Europe in late 1944 to fill out existing units. However this process was not used since it was seen as “not very economical” to break up trained cohesive fighting units now deployed in the European theater.¹¹⁸

Staffed with new and exhausted troops the sector to be covered by Major General Middleton’s VIII Corps was no small endeavor. VIII Corps’ responsibility extended from Losheim on the German-Belgian border at the north end to central Luxembourg in the south. According to Major General Middleton, commanding officer of VIII Corps, in his biography, “VIII Corps’s assigned mission was to defend in place, in order to attempt to deceive the Germans by active patrolling, and to prepare for an eventual attack to[ward] the Rhine River,” following up attacks on its shoulders. VIII Corps approximately eighty-eight mile front was more than three times the length of a normal defensive assignment for a U.S. Army Corps. Middleton stated further that he was diligent about the whereabouts and welfare of his subordinate commanders, their troop dispositions, and plans for dealing with the possibility of an unexpected German offensive of considerable size. The peripheral units near the 106th consisted of the 99th Infantry Division of V Corps to the north. Then running north to south Major General Middleton’s VIII Corps consisted of: the 106th Infantry Division, the 28th Infantry Division, towards the rear the 9th Armored Division, and the 4th Infantry Division. Major General Middleton unaware of the massive force build up against his Corps placed the 9th Armored Division as Corps reserve, to facilitate an elastic defense. Major General Middleton’s theory was to minimize the degradation of the 9th Armored Division, should

he find that it would need to be split into its separate combat commands to respond to multiple breakthroughs. The multiple pronged salient^{IV} into Germany created by the distribution of VIII Corps posed a threat for the Americans. Should the Germans mount a sustained offensive of size, his forward units very possible could find themselves vulnerable to encirclement. If forces in a salient continue offensive operations, they run the risk of having their supply lines cut. Options become limited as encircled units must either disengage and attack the enemy in their rear, or sit and wait for their supplies to waste away if assistance could not be brought to bear in a steadfast manner.¹¹⁹

American intelligence was aware that the three enemy divisions normally opposed to VIII Corps had been increased to six. In response, Lt. General Middleton asked for more troops, but there simply were none, in sufficient quantity to be spared, because of the build up of Allied forces on the left and right of First U.S. Army. Major General Middleton feared that an attack was very likely in his sector, yet 12th Army Group commander Lt. General Bradley played off his concerns and told Major General Middleton “not to worry.” Twelfth Army Group’s attention had been successfully diverted by the German deception tactics, as the verification of the location of 6th Panzer Army, rumored somewhere near Cologne, became a pressing issue at group headquarters.¹²⁰

Major General Middleton continued to prepare for the worst. On 11 November 1944, he ordered the 2nd Infantry Division to create a ‘demonstration by fire’ to trick the German’s into revealing their positions; however, there was no measurable response by the Germans. German discipline won out, and the secret build up continued. In early

^{IV} A salient occurs when an offensive fails to penetrate the defender’s lines and instead pushes a large bulge into the defender’s position.

December 1944, First U.S. Army Headquarters ordered VIII Corps to try another tactic to get the Germans to reveal themselves. VIII Corps was ordered to have the 23rd Special Troops imitate a buildup that would indicate the new 75th Infantry Division had arrived to take position on the front line. To carry out the ruse the 23rd Special Troops wore the 75th division's shoulder patches and marked their vehicles appropriately, but again German discipline did not take the bait.¹²¹

On the third anniversary of the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor, General Middleton's former World War I unit, the 4th Infantry Division, relieved the 83rd, which pulled out for further deployment. The 28th and the 4th Infantry Divisions had been "assaulted" in the battles of earlier months for the Hürtgen Forest and needed many replacements, but they had cut their teeth on combat and knew what to do. Four days later the 2nd Infantry Division pulled out to join the attack on the Roer River dams and the 106th Infantry Division replaced it. Eighth Corps sector was again weakened when a combat command of the 9th Armored Division was sent north to V Corps to provide it with a reserve. While VIII Corps area of concentration was provided a Combat Command of their own should units within VIII Corps need reserves, it was going to be hard pressed to find them in time should the Germans launch a concentrated attack in mass; but after all, this was the "quiet sector."¹²²

In order to properly contextualize the U.S. Army's decision to weaken First U.S. Army in order to strengthen the Ninth and Third U.S. Armies for a planned offensive, one must start by mapping the development of the First U.S. Army's sector. According to the Leavenworth Papers study of defense, the principle of an elastic defense meant that when a force does not possess the numerical strength of a defense in depth it should never

surrender the initiative to the attacker. Instead a weak linear defense should rely on firepower when large numbers of troops are not available. In addition, the defender must not hold ground at all costs but delay until a suitable counterattack can be mounted to deal with an enemy penetration. For the 106th defense in depth in VIII Corps sector was out of the question. The attritional aspects of war and the logistical strains of keeping up with the broad front advance of the Allies meant that the 106th would have to disperse its troops thinly. This porous deployment of American forces in VIII Corps would have a tremendous cost on the 106th. Eighth Corps' order to relieve the 2nd Infantry Division man for man, gun for gun^V handicapped the Golden Lion Division as it fought to delay the speed of the German counteroffensive and the efficiency of its breakthrough.¹²³

In Price's biography of Middleton, the Major General stated that, "On the Schnee Eifel, I wanted soldiers to know that I was interested in their welfare and that I was aware of their exposed position. I regularly visited regimental headquarters, occasionally making a suggestion about defensive alignments. There was plenty to do on a front so long." However, Middleton does not specifically mention that he conversed with the commander of the 106th, Major General Alan W. Jones, nor does he specify by name any of the three regimental commanders of the 106th. The most logical reason for these discrepancies is either cognizant omission by Major General Middleton to leave the conversation out of his biography or that he never had the chance to speak to these commanders directly due to the timing of the German counteroffensive. This thesis looks

^V VIII Corps' order, to the 106th, of a man for man, gun for gun replacement of the 2nd Infantry Division was initiated to hopefully prevent the Germans from discovering the troops shift. As history would show the Germans were aware of the troop replacement, and had had the chance to zero in key artillery and infantry positions in the weeks leading up to the attack. To this date it has not been determined if the author will develop the tactical correctness of this order for a later work. For the time being; the intelligence of the "man for man, gun for gun" order and whether or not it should have been given lies outside the scope of this work.

to develop that the 106th had next to no time to prepare before it was hit by the German counteroffensive.¹²⁴

The bulk of the 106th was shipped from the United States to Europe on 10 November of 1944. The division was stationed in England while it awaited the arrival of the remaining units. The troops spent four seasick days on their ships across the English Channel. When they arrived at Le Havre, France they traveled by river up to Paris. When they arrived, there was no transportation ready so they had to spend their first night in the rain. Because there were no covered trucks available, the 106th endured a miserable truck ride across northern Europe and arrived at VIII Corps sector on 6 December. As the 106th waited for the 2nd to pull out, they had to spend another 36 hours in the cold and wet. On 7 December, the 106th was given "Letter of Instruction" to proceed to St. Vith and relieve the 2nd. Between 7 -10 December, the division arrived at St. Vith piece meal. There the division waited another day to two for the 423rd and 424th regiments and the 106th Reconnaissance Troop to catch up. The 589th Field Artillery (FA) relieved the 15th FA of the 2nd gun for gun, 592nd FA relieved the 12th FA, while the 422nd relieved the 9th regiment. On 11 December, the 591st FA relieved the 37th FA and the 590th FA relieved the 38th FA, as the 423rd regiment relieved the 38th regiment. Second Battalion of 423rd regiment was sent to Born to serve as a division reserve. Within a few days, a large number of trench foot was reported. As a result the division's effectiveness and cohesion were affected by the loss of personnel when, five days later, the German counter offensive began.¹²⁵ (See Figure 3)

According to the VIII Corps G-3 report for the second week of December 1944, the 106th was ordered to conduct a relief of the 2nd Infantry Division, man for man. The

106th deployed its forces in the following manner, the 422nd regiment defended to the right flank of the 14th Cavalry Group, that was strung across the Losheim Gap and connected, by patrol, to the 394th infantry regiment of the 99th Infantry Division, of V Corps, that defended the left or northern flank of VIII Corps. The 106th's orders were to defend, maintain, and improve positions. According to the historian John Toland, V Corps commander Leonard Gerow was aware the boundary between his V Corps and Major General Middleton's VIII Corps was inherently a weak position. "While two soldiers could easily shake hands, their orders came from command posts that were often separated by a hundred miles."¹²⁶

As the 106th Infantry Division relieved the 2nd Infantry Division 'man for man,' the 2nd Infantry Division's commander, briefed Major General Jones on his defensive scheme when the 106th Infantry Division took the 2nd Infantry Divisions' place on the West Wall. "General Robertson had looked upon the Losheim Gap as particularly sensitive, and the 2nd Division['s] defensive and counterattack plans laid special emphasis on support for troops in that sector."¹²⁷ Major General Middleton, was ordered by First U.S. Army to maintain the Schnee Eifel salient and the existing dispositions of the two regiments that occupied its heights. "There were plans afoot for an attack toward Bonn, as part of the forthcoming Allied offensive, and the gap in the West Wall represented by this salient would be extremely useful in any sortie against Bonn."¹²⁸ A thin linear defense, such as "that inherited in the Schnee Eifel required an extraordinary number of automatic weapons." The 106th Infantry Division upon taking over the 2nd Infantry Division's positions, was in a state where it still had its regulation issued number and

type of weapons for a U.S. infantry division, “fewer than what was need to successfully hold a twenty-one mile front.”¹²⁹

After having been relieved man for man and gun for gun, the 2nd Infantry Division had been deployed north of the 99th Infantry Division's sector. It was to proceed as part of a major attack through the 99th's lines within a narrow two-mile corridor. It had tried for two days to smash a hole in the West Wall. After breaking through, the 99th Infantry Division moved north towards the Roer Dams. The dams, if not controlled by the allies, menaced the entire Allied advance into the Roer Valley, and thus, they had to be secured before the main assault began or risk flooding and the cutting off of an entire advancing army.¹³⁰

Major General Jones had not had the time, enjoyed by the other divisions in VIII Corps, to lay down a co-ordinate plan for defending in conjunction with the neighboring units of the 106th. New to the continent, the 106th's inexperience was apparent, as it only carried the standard number of light and heavy machine guns. The 106th nevertheless looked to reconnoiter what enemy positions or presences lay east beyond the trees and hills of its new position. Major General Jones disliked and distrusted his Schnee Eifel positions from the first. In a U.S. Army Military History Institute Army Service Experiences Questionnaire Paul Bottenfield, of Cannon Company, 1st battalion, 423rd regiment, located at the center of the 106th's line, stated that his division worked hard in the days before the offensive to better reconnoiter their sector, sending patrols as big as 200 men out to reconnoiter the depth and width of their front and locate the enemy.¹³¹

Another example of Major General Jones's uneasiness is stated by author John Toland in his book, *Battle: The Story Of The Bulge*. The following incident has also been

stated in many secondary works. Major General Jones had been worried about his division's positions after reviewing a situation map. The 106th was exposed along a twenty-one mile front forming a salient into the West Wall that extended from the east to the west approximately six miles. In a conversation with his son 1st Lt. Alan Jones, the Major General remarked after his son openly admired the general's .32 pistol, that "he should perhaps keep it for himself," Toland believes this encounter represents eerie foresight of the impending German onslaught that would take a heavy toll on the new division, the Major General, and his son.¹³²

As the few nights between taking over the 2nd's sector and the beginning of the offensive elapsed, members of the 423rd regiment reported hearing motor noises in the darkness of the forest before them, as well as lights on nearby mountain tops. After taking responsibility for the 2nd's sector the 106th experienced sporadic artillery shelling, scattered small arms fire, and limited patrols. By 12 December, all primary organic and attached units of the 106th were in position. The division's After Action Report is full of the following entries over the next four days; enemy activity during period consisted of artillery fire and minor patrol activity. Then on 16 December, the 106th's G-3 Lt. Colonel Charlie A. Brock, reported, "division front line elements subjected to heavy artillery and mortar fire from 0530 to 0615." The offensive had begun.¹³³

Screening the gap between the 106th and the most southern unit of V Corps, the 99th Infantry Division, was a relatively small unit, the 14th Cavalry Group. The 14th Cavalry Group consisted of approximately 450 men assigned to two squadrons of reconnaissance units. By definition this unit was not designed for a defensive holding action.¹³⁴ According to historian Shelby Stanton's *The Order of Battle* "the cavalry

mission of World War II was concentrated at squadron level ... these were designed to perform reconnaissance missions employing infiltration tactics, fire, and maneuver, and engage in combat only to the extent necessary to accomplish their missions.”¹³⁵

During World War II, mechanized cavalry squadrons performed distant reconnaissance and could cover a wider front than that of an infantry division; they were not designed to hold a front. The 14th Cavalry Group was attached the 820th Tank Destroyer battalion's Company A at Lanzeroth, with Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoons (I & R). In addition a mobile antiaircraft artillery unit gave the cavalry group the capability of rapid concentration at any point along a wide front, but not for a static defense. The 14th Cavalry Group's characteristics lent it to employment case of a mass attack however, due to VIII Corps' orders to replace man for man, the 14th Cavalry Group was ordered to dismount from their vehicles and dig in. This characteristic is not the trait of light reconnaissance units, a problem made even more difficult by the wide front the group was assigned, the five mile wide Losheim Gap.¹³⁶

The U.S Army had realized since fighting was initiated in North Africa in late 1942 and early 1943 that U.S. tank destroyers firing from concealed positions, maneuvered too freely during combat in the face of tanks and suffered severe losses because of their virtual lack of armor. “Because of the novelty of the tank destroyer and insufficiency of combined training at home, and because some commanders were unsympathetic to the tank destroyer idea, battalions were assigned missions for which they were unsuited.”¹³⁷

The general understanding of the War Department was that “a mechanized attack invariably would be concentrated, calling for a multitude of antitank weapons.

Therefore, the smaller the number of antitank guns in a particular sector the greater is the need of holding them as a mobile reserve, ready instantly to rush to the point of mechanized attack.” This principle was not in place when German armored units began to pour through the Losheim Gap. The already light reconnaissance troop had been ordered by VIII Corps to enact a man for man, gun for gun replacement similar to the 106th position to their immediate southeast. Without the doctrine of maneuver, these anti-tank units became immobile artillery pieces stationed within the small Ardennes villages in which they were housed.¹³⁸

Colonel Mark Devine commanded the 14th Cavalry Group on 15 December. His Group Headquarters was located at Manderfeld, east of St. Vith near the front. Colonel Devine’s Cavalry Group was broken into two squadrons, the 18th and 32nd, each was made up of three cavalry troops. The 18th Squadron was placed in forward positions on both sides of the 106th and the 32nd Squadron was placed in Vielsalm, 20 miles to the rear, serving as a Group reserve while it was refitted.¹³⁹

During World War I, the Germans advanced their cavalry units through the Losheim Gap to quickly attain their objective of the Meuse River. During 1940 the action was repeated, but this time by Field Marshal (General) Erwin Rommel’s tanks. The third time the Germans flooded the Losheim Gap the 14th Cavalry Group, Task Force X sector, bore the brunt of their weight.¹⁴⁰

To the north of the 106th Infantry Division and the 14th Cavalry Group was the 99th Infantry Division commanded by Major General Leonard Gerow. The 99th was deployed to V Corps’ right shoulder on the left flank of VIII Corps. During the Battle of the Bulge, the 99th, a relatively green division, also would be hit hard by the German

Sixth Panzer Army, “but fortunately the 1st and 2nd Infantry Divisions were close at hand.” The presence of these two infantry units; gave the 99th a reserve of experienced and tempered infantry combat soldiers, that the 106th would not ordinarily have had the luxury or good fortune to call upon. On the right flank of the 106th Infantry Division the 28th Infantry Division was deployed. To the right of the 28th Infantry Division, VIII Corps deployed a combat command of the 9th Armored Division, flanked by the 4th Infantry Division, the southernmost unit in Major General Middleton’s command.¹⁴¹

On 16 December, VIII Corps consisted of approximately 68,822 soldiers. Directly opposing VIII Corps, the Germans had amassed nearly 200,000 soldiers. Eighth Corps of First U.S. Army would bear the lion’s share of this offensive, and upfront and center were the 422nd and 423rd regiments of the 106th Infantry Division and the 14th Cavalry Group. “The second-string troops which had faded back had been replaced by new divisions making up the Sixth SS Panzer Army, the Firth Panzer Army, and the Seventh Panzer Army” now the Americans would have to defend.¹⁴²

To the Americans the Ardennes did not register as a strategic crossroads, the only long range purpose that would serve a German assault through this wooded, winding region would be to cross the Meuse River. The Meuse River lay a long 50 miles away and would be contested by the Americans for the entire distance. Only a counter attack of significant strength could possibly cause an alarm in this region, and as will be stated, the Americans did not see such an incident brewing. After all this was the “quiet sector.”¹⁴³

In a study of combat intelligence created by the War Department Observers Board in January 1945 regarding 12th Army Group’s role in the Battle of the Bulge, the

following selection of statements was made about intelligence collection, its shortcomings, and corrective measures. The American army [in late 1944] relied on the following sources of combat intelligence. Front line units that would scout, set up outposts, and make immediate contact with the enemy. First, the limitation to this method was that a “lack of orientation” can create the inability for troops to properly identify enemy tanks and equipment as well as properly report their findings. Further limitations to this process were darkness, rain, natural barriers. Second, air observations provided direct reconnaissance through Cub airplanes. Limitations were darkness, poor visibility, and poor weather. Third, listening posts, such as observation posts (OPs), scouts, and patrols, all gave some warning of the enemy. Under critical conditions they are effective especially in determining when tanks were coming. Limitations are the training in identification and location of military noises, the enemy moving quietly, and the enemy covering up noises. Fourth, proper interrogation of Prisoners of War (PWs), provide identification of enemy location, supply, training, morale, and intentions. The limitations to this method were the knowledge of a PW and when there were no PWs to be had. Lastly, captured documents properly deciphered by German speaking personnel could determine the enemy’s order of battle. The limitations were knowledge of enemy commands and enough warning of large force movements.¹⁴⁴

In addition, the study of operations of the 12th Army Group took into consideration the enabling factor of the Germans to produce their offensive. This factor was Germany’s advantage of interior lines.

Enemy movements are made direct from Germany or in such a way that we have no warning from local friendly agents. Second, movements are made by an excellent railroad net ... the time required for movement is relatively short. Third, we have no adequate knowledge of the number or location of

newly formed units, especially VGD units, formed in Germany. Fourth, we have little opportunity to detect movements made at night or in bad weather.¹⁴⁵

The study of intelligence gathering by 12th Army Group in late 1944, leaned towards the idea that military intelligence had been inadequately presented and disseminated by Army Group, in a timely manner, to divisional levels.¹⁴⁶

When discussing the German OPSEC (Operations Secret), historian Hobar traces the historiography of the subject that follows a round about approach that assigns blame to the Allied command, then takes it away, then puts it back again. Hugh M. Cole in *The Ardennes: Battle of the Bulge*, states, “the prelude to the Ardennes counteroffensive ... can only be reckoned as a gross failure by Allied ground and air intelligence.” While Robert M. Merriman, author of *Dark December*, in 1947, states that “... the cunning German cover-plan ‘Wacht am Rhein’ ... threw us completely off guard.” Later in his book he concludes that Allied intelligence should have seen it coming. While John S. D. Eisenhower, in 1969, in his book *The Bitter Woods*, states, “Despite the almost unanimous condemnation of Allied intelligence for those days, ... one has to sympathize: little, it would seem, of a concrete nature could be gleaned from the evidence that was presented.”¹⁴⁷

Without the explicit knowledge of Ultra, historians analyzed the war for thirty years with incomplete evidence. Based predominantly on memoirs and reminiscences, a murky reconstruction of the situation produced accounts that largely damned intelligence staffs for failing to recognize German intentions. Memoirs further damned complacent commanders for losing the combat edge in the field and maintaining less than positive control on their staffs. Recollections came in two genres: those who possessed the Ultra secret and were forced to write a history of the war without explicitly defining the source of intelligence failure and those not aware of Ultra discussing the war with incomplete evidence.¹⁴⁸

After declassification by the U.S. War Department, in the 1980s, the majority of Ultra decrypts became available for historians to gather a fuller understanding of the Allied intelligence picture on the Western Front during the fall and winter of 1944.¹⁴⁹

Although Ultra represented a small proportion of the overall intelligence picture, it did allow Allied commanders to exploit German weaknesses and counter their initiatives. Some authors contend that in late 1944 Allied intelligence became over reliant on Ultra. Simply put, if there was no evidence from Ultra there was no evidence at all.^{VI} Once the Americans reached the West Wall, the Germans switched from radio to telephone lines and Ultra intelligence dried up. The reason for this switch was that the Germans now defending their own borders could take advantage of secure interior lines and no longer had to relay on radio transmission to convey information. Without the steady stream of information, the Allies lacked the intelligence gathering tools to effectively decipher what very few signs the Germans had let slip about the offensive. Case in point, The G-2 Period Report of VIII Corps, from 15 December still had the German Sixth Panzer Army preparing to lead an assault north of Aachen, when in fact it was miles to the south.¹⁵⁰

Regardless of over reliance on Ultra, the Allied intelligence system:

Lacked unity Systematic deficiencies, not a lack of information, produced varying interpretation up and down the chain of command. Lack of standardization allowed gross discrepancies in intelligence reporting. Intelligence staffs de-emphasized alternative intelligence sources, such as human and aerial intelligence. Despite information that suggested a German offensive, a deficient intelligence system created a varied and incomplete picture of German intentions. The result of the deficient intelligence system was non-uniform assessment of German capabilities and intentions.¹⁵¹

^{VI} Regarding whether or not information was available from Ultra, this thesis has discovered that little if any was available to Allied High Command in the days leading up to the Battle of the Bulge. This point will be further research and hopefully developed when this thesis is incorporated into a dissertation or book.

At the time of their memoirs both Bradley and Eisenhower could not speak of Ultra due to its classification as top secret. However, when looking at the history of the German deception and the Allied failure to detect the build up the following is true.

The sources available do not provide any answers as to Ultra's role in the Battle of the Bulge. However, from the accounts a conclusion can be drawn. If Ultra disclosed the forth[-]coming offensive it never was filtered down to the commander in the field.¹⁵²

Failure to determine the presence of a German buildup and the offensive nature of that force does not belong to one individual, but rather, the entire Allied High Command. The situation can best be summed up by an historian and a participant in the battle, Robert E. Merriam, "They fooled us, and we might as well admit it."¹⁵³

Allied assumption before the Battle of the Bulge was overconfidence they felt the Germans were on the brink of collapse. The Allies knew von Rundstedt was the new western commander of German forces, and that he was not big on risky offensives. The Allies became careless and dismissive with evidence that indicated the possibility of a counterattack: increased traffic and vehicular noise throughout the days before the attack and intercepts of German commanders complaining about fuel issues. Before Hitler was desperate and the allies did not see it clearly.¹⁵⁴

The G-2 report for First U.S. Army stated that as early as 9 December, it was aware that the Sixth Panzer Army was forming opposite the First U.S. Army, that morale was good within the unit, and that further reports from prisoners that the Army would soon be ready for an "all-out counter-offensive."¹⁵⁵ Allied intelligence was aware of several warnings that significant enemy troop movements were occurring opposing the

First U.S. Army. The 106th sent in reports that its observation posts had heard the noises of motor vehicles in front of their line of defense as early as 12 December. In addition German reconnaissance planes had been spotted flying over 106th units on the evening of 15 December. Hal Richard Taylor, a member of the 106th infantry division years after the battle wrote *A Teen's War: Training, Combat, and Capture*.¹⁵⁶ In his book, Taylor stated:

it seemed strange that people in the rear wouldn't believe us. They also discounted much troop information as rumors, never admitting that part of a rumor could be true. They never could understand that front line troops often had rather accurate knowledge of what was going on across the area.¹⁵⁷

According to Shulman, in *Defeat in the West*, evidence that, "something was up behind the screen of the Siegfried Line had been evident for some time." Allied air patrols had seen evidence that increased rail and road activity along the Rhine valley had occurred during the previous week leading up to the attack on 16 December. Also, previously unoccupied artillery positions were beginning to be manned once again. "A German resident of Bitburg in the Eifel reported that she had seen an unusually large number of pontoons and small boats moving westwards and that these new troops had arrived from Italy on 10 December." Freshly netted PWs showed signs of increased morale and many spoke of a coming attack between 17 and 25 December. "Reports had also been received of other infantry and armored formations, last heard of in Normandy, reappearing behind the Siegfried Line." A glance at the Liaison Report of the 12th Army Group from 1 December 1944 shows increased activity in First U.S. Army's VII Corps and V Corps, yet VIII Corps reads "No action on Corps Front. Rotating Bns in 2 Div zone," the Germans were lulling the Americans to sleep in the "quiet sector."¹⁵⁸

G-2 of 1st Army Colonel Benjamin “Monk” Dickson[,] saw the warning signs. He stated, “during the past month there has been a definite pattern for the seasoning of newly formed divisions in the comparatively quiet sector opposite VIII Corps prior to their dispatch to more active fronts.”¹⁵⁹ Colonel Dickson saw a problem brewing in the Ardennes in his G-2 Intelligence Estimate No. 37. By 12 December 1944, Colonel Dickson knew that the threat would be in the Ardennes. A few days before the actual offensive began Dickson’s report stated that an all-out counterattack was being prepared by the Germans. It was predicted that the operation would include large armored formations, that it would take place between the Roer and the Erft rivers, and that the enemy would support it by “every weapon he can bring to bear.” Colonel Dickson’s report stated that by 10 December, the enemy is capable of defense, surrender, or “a concentrated counterattack with air, armor, infantry, and secret weapon at a selected focal point at a time of his own choosing.”¹⁶⁰

Due to the success of the air war against Germany and the losses sustained on all fronts, the Allies believed the best Germany could offer up in December of 1944 were spoiling attacks towards planned Allied offensives that winter. With the offensive a few days away, it appears that Colonel Dickson’s report did not have enough time to create levels of interest within First U.S. Army’s command.¹⁶¹

In the days leading up to 16 December, aerial photo reconnaissance detected some gun emplacements, troop concentrations, rail and road movements, and some aircraft concentrations just beyond VIII Corps’ sector. However, all of what lay on the other side of the Ardennes and Eifel could not be patrolled by air because of increasingly poor visibility and similar to the logistical dispersion to the north and the south of the

Ardennes, the First U.S. Army lacked significant aerial coverage. Lt. General Bradley took a risk, a calculated risk, and was proven wrong. The Germans constituted 24 assault divisions along a nearly 100 mile front. The German deception and the Allied intelligence failure were so extensive that not one senior Allied commander committed forces to prepare countermeasures in First U.S. Army's sector.¹⁶²

The need to cover far more miles of territory, when the book calls for five miles, had the effect of placing Major General Jones in the uncomfortable position of having his three regiments widely spaced. Robert M O'Neill served in Company G of the 422nd regiment. His first action began when "artillery rounds started about 5:30AM ... we confirmed with our outpost that we were under attack ... moved another squad of men to the outpost with me ... remained there all day ... until the Bulge started we were in a static position observing enemy activity and preparing to go into the offensive in a few days." The quiet front introduced war to the 106th through the roar of German artillery. Shortly, infantry supported by tanks would be pouring down upon the green division, maneuvering towards St. Vith, the German's day one objective.¹⁶³

Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*, today is a widely read and revered military theory book. Written long ago in China, it was not widely followed before or during World War II, nevertheless Sun Tzu's comments on how war should be fought have been studied by countless military professionals around the world. Sun Tzu says "a good battle plan must always take the enemy into account. While every commander must have confidence in himself and in his army, overconfidence leads all too often to defeat."¹⁶⁴

The 106th had been on the line for five days leading up to the German assault on 16 December. VIII Corps' orders had called for a man for man, gun for gun replacement

of the 2nd Infantry Division that is exactly what had occurred. During those five days, between taking over the 2nd's sector and the German assault, the 106th had conducted patrols and looked to solidify its extremely overextended lines. Primary documentation clearly states that the 106th had reported all enemy movements to high command, yet the “green” division was not taken seriously. On the morning of 16 December, the Germans would launch their attack. The following two chapters have made extensive use of primary documentation to record the role the 106th assumed in the Battles of the Schnee Eifel and St. Vith. In addition, the primary documentation was thoroughly checked to see what, if any truth lay in the charges that the 106th and the 14th Cavalry Group as units, crumbled and ran away in the face of the enemy.

CHAPTER V

16 DECEMBER, THE COUNTERATTACK BEGINS

German military history is full of gambles, (i.e. the Schlieffen Plan) and now in December of 1944, with the Allies banging at Germany's borders, the dice were rolled again. The following quote is from the GREIF Plan, captured German documentation of the Ardennes offensive, procured by a 106th Infantry Division member and submitted to divisional headquarters on the first day of the German offensive:

Soldiers of the West Front!! Your great hour has arrived.
large attacking armies have started against the Anglo-Americans.
I do not have to tell you anything more than that. You feel it
yourself.

WE GAMBLE EVERYTHING

You carry with you the holy obligation to give everything to achieve
things beyond human possibilities for our Fatherland and our Fuhrer!

von Rundstedt
C in C West
Generalfeldmarshall^{VII}

The 106th had captured German documents from a dead 116 Panzer Division officer that spoke of the "GREIF" plan that gave the scope and dimensions of German intentions, as well as German intentions to use captured American equipment against the Americans.¹⁶⁵ According to Clausewitz, "war is nothing but a duel on an extensive scale ... if we would conceive as a unit the countless number of duels which make up a war

^{VII} Translation of the Grief plan from, *Capture of the "GREIF" plan*, G-2 Robert P. Stout, 106th Infantry Division

....” With this idea as a basis, the Battle of the Bulge can be viewed as a series of smaller battles, where both the Germans and the Allies grappled with one another to impose their will upon the other.¹⁶⁶

The Losheim Gap

Since the 106th Infantry Division was ordered to relieve the 2nd Infantry Division man for man and gun for gun, the 106th was overextended as it worked to cover the twenty-one mile front it had been assigned by breaking the front down into four sub-sectors. The most northern sector consisted of the Losheim Gap where the 14th Cavalry Group, attached to the 106th, was ordered to dismount from their vehicles and deploy in such a manner as to best cover their portion of the overextended sector. Since the 14th Cavalry group was a reconnaissance unit, they were not equipped or trained to stand and fight; instead they were trained to sound the alarm and maneuver to the most advantageous position for their deployment by division or corps command. However, in holding the Ardennes sector, it was deemed by both First U.S. Army and VIII Corps that the 14th Cavalry Group should deploy in defensive positions in the small villages that dotted the Losheim Gap. Because of the man for man, gun for gun order of replacement, these positions offered poor observation characteristics and fields of fire for the dismounted cavalry. The poor observational points and fields of fire were created by the undulating terrain around the small villages of the Losheim Gap. This deployment across a five-mile front caused a two-mile gap to materialize between the 14th Cavalry Group and the 99th Infantry Division to the north with a corresponding one-and-half mile gap between the 14th Cavalry Group and the 422nd regiment, the most northern regiment of the 106th Infantry Division. Again, due to the very short length of time between the

106th's assuming command of the 2nd's former positions and the opening of the German Offensive, there were only preliminary discussions of coordination between the 106th division and 14th Cavalry Group. Veterans' interviews state that "the book" recommended a total of five miles of front per division to hold the line adequately and provide a defense. The German patrols had probed the sector and were aware of this gap.¹⁶⁷

A defensive assignment rarely offers cavalry the opportunity to excel. According to Colonel D. J. Judge in "Cavalry in the Gap," if information is located about the 14th Cavalry Group during the Battle of the Bulge it is usually negative. Did they withdraw under enemy pressure or run in panic? Colonel Judge believes that the majority of the men of 14th Cavalry Group fought it out until they had no other choice but to fall back.¹⁶⁸

The 14th Cavalry Group was responsible for a line of about seven-thousand yards across; actual driving distance was nine-thousand yards. This expanse was covered by the 18th Cavalry Squadron, minus one troop, and one company of the 820th Tank Destroyer Battalion (TD). The second group's cavalry squadron, the 32nd, was in Vielsalm for repairs and designated as Group reserve. The 14th Cavalry Group's system of defense, on the morning of 16 December, was occupation of the small towns of Lanzerath, Hulscheid, Bertrath, Merlscheid, Krewinkel, Wereth, Roth, and Kobsheid. From the time of taking responsibility for the sector until 16 December, Colonel Devine was "energetic in reconnaissance and inspection to improve his sector, and in calling the attention of the Division to means by which it could be improved. Patrolling was actively carried on, and no intentions were received of an imminent German attack." The staff of the 14th Cavalry Group was familiar with the defensive plan worked out earlier by the 2nd

Infantry Division which, “in the Losheim area, called for an initial withdrawal to the Manderfeld Ridge and an American counterattack by forces taken from the Schnee Eifel.”¹⁶⁹

Lt. Colonel Bill Damon commanded the 18th Cavalry Squadron which had to cover two main armor avenues of approach. “To defend his sector he placed his units in a series of strong-points about 1,000 yards apart along the 9,000 yard front.” A Troop was at Kobsheid and Roth. C Troop went into Krewinkel, with Nash’s 820th TD (3” guns) sprinkled between the two ordered to take positions man for man, while B Troop was deployed to the south of the 106th.¹⁷⁰

The War Department looked for the most effective way to knock out enemy tanks as the war progressed. Should troops use tanks or guns to stop enemy tanks? Regardless of the choice, the question was how heavy of a gun was needed. Followed by the mobility of such anti-tank guns, should they be self-propelled guns or should they be towed? “After an engagement began with an enemy should anti-tank forces position themselves in ambush or should they actively seek out and destroy enemy tank forces?” In World War II 76mm TDs had a range of 5,500 yards, unless the distance between the tank destroyer crew and enemy tank was covered without detection by the Germans, “a catastrophic kill was hardly likely.” What the 14th Cavalry could do was hope for a disabling shot if its troops were positioned in the correct vantage points, flank or rear shots. The gun weighed five-thousand pounds and had to be manhandled by a crew of ten when not pulled by a prime mover, the M3 halftrack “a dangerous time consuming operation to perform,” especially in combat.¹⁷¹

The German counterattack had to be delivered at the correct time for the time for an effective counterattack was short-lived. With the skies darkening over Europe, the build up of German troops was complete, their assault troops moved forward to their assembly points. After roughly a twenty minute barrage German assault forces switched on searchlights and pointed them skyward towards the low-hanging clouds. The effect of the high-powered beams was an eerily lit night sky. As the cavalry troopers braced themselves, the Germans, many in white camouflaged snow suits, poured out of the woods in front of their OPs screaming. On 16 December, the 18th Cavalry Squadron put up a determined stand, but the pressure of the enemy at the Manderfeld-Auw line had become too much for the unit as it slowly started to be surrounded. The 32nd Squadron was ordered out of Vielsalm to aid in the defense at Manderfeld. It arrived at 1200 hours and took up position on the high ground to the northwest and south of the town. The 32nd Squadron's 37mm guns had no effect on enemy tanks as they pushed forward. Colonel Devine "secured the permission of the division commander [Major General Jones] to withdraw the Group from forward positions and take up a defensive position along the general line of Wereth to Andle." By this time, it had been determined that the weight of the German thrust in this area was on the axis Auw-Schonberg to the south of the 14th Cavalry Group and to the north in the 99th Infantry Division's sector. On the morning of 17 December, Colonel Devine ordered the Group to withdraw to line Born-Wallerode. The 32nd Squadron reported seeing tanks moving up from Auw. "This withdraw[al] was without permission or knowledge of Division HQ [106th] and exposed the northern flank of the division to the enemy infiltration." The 18th Squadron took up positions in Born and the 32nd Squadron in Wallerode. From this position the 14th Cavalry Group relayed a

message to the 106th Headquarters that this was a “final delaying position, Wallerode-Born.” On 17 December at 1220 hours division ordered the 14th Cavalry to “stay on the line where you are!” However, at 1400 hours Colonel Devine issued orders for the 14th Cavalry Group to withdraw further to a line south from Recht, a withdrawal ordered without Major General Jones’s knowledge or consent. The reason for the withdrawal is not clear, since the 14th Cavalry Group had not reported enemy contact on the Born-Wallerode line. Colonel Devine would later testify that he had had permission from the 106th for the unauthorized withdrawal.¹⁷² (See Figure 4)

Contemporary to U.S. Army regulations of the time, Major General Jones received permission to relieve Colonel Devine from VIII Corps on the afternoon of 17 December. But due to unexplained radio relay mix ups, Colonel Devine received Major General Jones’s order to retake Born before the order relieving him of his command. Colonel Devine responded to the first message, to retake Born, by informing his staff he was “physically unable to do so.” He then turned over command of the 14th Cavalry Group to Lt. Colonel William F. Damon, Jr. Shortly thereafter the 106th ordered the “commanding officer of 14th Cavalry Group” to report to VIII Corps headquarters. Lt. Colonel Damon left and Lt. Colonel Ridge assumed command at 0130 on 18 December; meanwhile, Colonel Devine was medical evacuated. When Colonel Dugan, the group executive officer, arrived at 14th Cavalry Group headquarters, he assumed command. Colonel Dugan then ordered two task forces formed. The first under Major Mayes of the 32nd Squadron, assembled at Poteau and moved on to Recht but was forced back. The second task force remained in position. The following day Colonel Dugan was relieved by VIII Corps, and the 14th Cavalry Group was attached to 7th Armored Division. Losses

in three days of fighting for the light reconnaissance group were 28 percent of personnel and 35 percent of vehicles. The overall interpretation of the 14th Cavalry Group's performance in the face of overwhelming German troops and armor is that they performed well, when they were not withdrawing.¹⁷³

The 14th Cavalry Group was highly outgunned by the advancing German armor. It is therefore understandable that the lightly armed reconnaissance group had to withdraw more than fight. Hindsight being twenty-twenty, "the Born-Wallerode position was an excellent one, and had a determined resistance been made in this position ... as no enemy pressure was felt in this position, and there were no apparent enemy threats, the only reason that can be ascribed for considering a withdrawal there from, is confusion in the mind of the Group Commander." By nightfall of 16 December, a deep penetration had been made between V and VIII Corps and both the 99th and the 106th were hard-pressed, as the Germans poured through the gap.¹⁷⁴ (See Figure 5)

The Schnee Eifel

On the Schnee Eifel the 422nd and 423rd regiments had taken control of pill boxes that were former German positions of the West Wall. To the south of the two regiments of the Schnee Eifel and the 424th regiment was a three-mile spread that was covered by B Troop of the 18th Reconnaissance Squadron of the 14th Cavalry Group to the north and by the 106th Reconnaissance Troop (RT) towards the south. B Troop of the 18th Reconnaissance Squadron consisted of approximately 145 men supported by towed 37mm tank destroyers. The 106th RT had roughly 155 men with 37mm cannons mounted on their M8 armored cars. The 106th Infantry Division reserve was the 2nd Battalion of the 423rd regiment under the command of Lt. Colonel Joseph F. Pruett.¹⁷⁵

On 16 December, the Germans unleashed their counteroffensive against the Allies. First U.S. Army's 106th Infantry Division over the course of the next eight days would bear witness to the brunt of the converging force levied by the 5th and 6th Panzer Armies. Combined with the Seventh Panzer Army, the attacking German forces consisted of nearly 250,000 soldiers, 1,900 pieces of artillery, and 970 tanks for the entire counteroffensive. The Germans directly sent against the 106th Infantry Division the 18th VGD, the 62nd VGD, and the 116th Panzer Division. A U.S. Army Military History Institute service questionnaire, referencing the initial German artillery barrage on the 106th states, "the Germans had carefully kept records of the position of the Second Division Artillery pieces, month after month, and our folly of replacing that division, gun for gun, without changing the location of our own weapons, became fully apparent only after our artillery had been destroyed."¹⁷⁶ From the beginning of the offensive, the Germans seized "maximum tactical surprise."¹⁷⁷

The 106th's G-2 Journal for Friday, 15 December 1944, runs a multitude of entries that report everything the forward units witnessed and reported back to divisional headquarters. For the entire day there is no evidence to support that a major assault was less than twenty-four hours away. As referenced in chapter four, the G-2 journal has many reports that confirm forward units were hearing enemy truck noises in front of their positions. Sporadic machine gun and artillery fire were reported, along with the occasional entry about unidentified planes flying low and slow over forward 106th positions. One entry of particular interest is Entry 286, at 0300 from VIII Corps that states that one "civilian reports considerable trucks, horse-drawn arty, pontoons, small boats and other river crossing material moving west On 10 December same source

reported SS troops in Bitburg whose conversation indicated it took three weeks for them to come into this area from Italy.” This entry clearly states that five days had elapsed since the intelligence had been submitted to VIII Corps by its subordinate units, and no defensive alarm had been sounded. The Corps’ error made it impossible for American higher command to see this assault brewing.¹⁷⁸

According to Hugh Cole in *U.S. Army in World War II: European Theater of Operations, The Ardennes: Battle of the Bulge*, by 1944 the Germans lacked the airborne equivalent of the blitzkrieg, dive bombers. Therefore, Hitler reminiscent to World War I assaults called for a massive artillery assault on the American lines. The 106th felt the brunt of this assault as the division’s G-2 journal documents. Entries continue throughout the day and into the night of 15 December. The abrupt interruption occurs with Entry 432 on 16 December 1944, at 0550: “14th Cav reports heavy arty barrage all along sector.” Entry 443, at 0645 states, “275th FA Bn front intact, wire and radio knocked out, heavy amount of SA [saturation fire].” Entry 448, at 0715 from the 424th regiment reports, “heavy arty barrage.” Entry 457, at 0815, from the 14th Cavalry Group’s headquarters alerted division that “75 Germans in white suits moving against Krewinkle ... 3 tanks with a column at Roth.” The attack was underway and the 106th divisional headquarters was inundated with dozens of similar messages as the scope of the German offensive grew with every passing hour.¹⁷⁹

The point to remember is that the German plan called for destroying and bypassing these units from the beginning: St. Vith had to be captured on day one, and not past day two for the counteroffensive to work. The 106th’s G-2 journal for 16 December is full of prodigious reports, all day long, as the forward units and division command

fought back against the German onslaught. These entries would continue to come in the first day, contrary to the German OKW plans. In fact the 106th would fight on in its Schnee Eifel positions for another three days and an additional four at St. Vith meant the Golden Lions were not running.¹⁸⁰

VIII Corps HQ could not determine until the night of 16 and the early morning of 17 December what the Germans were trying to do with their attack on the 14th Cavalry Group and the 106th Infantry Division's forward units on the Schnee Eifel.

It was assumed [by VIII Corps] that the enemy would direct his efforts toward securing the primary roads and the defensive plan selected was designed to block him in this attempt The defensive plan consisted of two distinct phases. The first phase was to defend in place along the original defensive line of VIII Corps in accordance with the directive received from First Army when the sector was first taken over. It was realized that any action against a sizeable force would not be for long. The second phase was to deny the vital road nets to the enemy by building strong defenses in front of St. Vith, Houffalize, Bastogne, and Luxembourg as rapidly as possible.¹⁸¹

The 106th was following the game plan and defending its sector as best as it could against the weight of three German divisions. Just before 0700 on 16 December, VIII Corps reported to First U.S. Army that an attack was underway in its sector. Germany infantry supported by tanks had broken through American lines and recaptured the town of Roth. By 1100 hours First U.S. Army was aware that the Germans were throwing their entire measure against the 106th Infantry Division in order to drive a wedge between V and VIII Corps.¹⁸²

On the night of 16 December Major Generals Middleton and Jones discussed the two 106th regiments on the Schnee Eifel. In case the Germans had tapped the communication lines Major General Jones spoke in riddles over the telephone. "He thought it would be wise to withdraw his 'two keys [regiments] from the where they are

because they are very lonely.” Jones continued that he would have, “two big friends [combat commands] to rescue them in the morning ... [he wanted to] prevent a scissors [from] working on them.” It is speculated that an army telephone operated disconnected the two generals momentarily, when Major General Middleton gave Major General Jones the order to withdraw his regiments before they were encircled. Nevertheless, Major General Jones believed at the time he had no orders to withdraw his men, and the 106th would hold for now at the Schnee Eifel.¹⁸³

According to Major General Middleton, the commanding officer of VIII Corps, he communicated to Lt. General Bradley, his Army Group Commander, early on 16 December that the Germans had thrown at least eight infantry and five armored divisions against his Corps, with the focus of these [German] units pitched against his 106th and the 28th Infantry Divisions and the 14th Cavalry Group.¹⁸⁴

Lt. General Hodges, First U.S. Army commander, on 16 December, called back to Strategic Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) at Versailles to inform Lt. General Bradley that he did not have reserves to meet these growing threats to his sector. Lt. General Hodges requested the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions be sent to the aid of VIII Corps’ sector.¹⁸⁵

The supply routes for the two regiments on the Schnee Eifel ran along the Auw-Andler-Schönenberg and Auw-Bleialf-Schönenberg road system back to division headquarters in St. Vith. Skyline drive was the principal means of lateral road communications in the 106th sector.¹⁸⁶ Both of these roadways would soon be fiercely contested by the German Army looking to advance westward and the 106th trying desperately to impede their process.¹⁸⁷

The battle plans for the attacking German divisions referred to in chapter three called for a sudden and over-powering assault on the American units in order to neutralize them as a threat to the success of the offensive. German assault troops moved into their pre-designated line of departure on the night of 15 December. The Germans had been experiencing nightly harassing fire over the preceding days from Allied field artillery batteries. According to von Maunteuffel, “we could rightfully assume that assembly and shifting of our forces had not been noticed by the enemy,” because the Germans had attracted such regular attention from the American artillery. The 18th VGD was to breakthrough at Roth and advance to St. Vith via Andler and Schonberg. The 62nd VGD was to take Grosslangenfeld and move northwest to St. Vith. The 18th VGD was commanded by General Major Günther Hoffman-Schönborn. He was ordered to carry out a double envelope of the 106th’s units on the Schnee Eifel. In order to accomplish this task, 18th VGD left one battalion of the division to fix the 422nd and 423rd in front of them, while two regiments to the left and one to the right (south) maneuvered to outflank and surround the two 106th regiments.¹⁸⁸

The German 18th VGD’s 294 grenadier regiment drove through the American forces in the Losheim Gap. The regiment fought towards Roth and Auw, which were where the left and rear flanks of Colonel George Deschenaux’s 422nd regiment of the 106th were located. The 422nd swung its 2nd Battalion in a northern direction to create a front against the German forces working to outflank the Golden Lions, while runs were made to the regimental ammo dump. Simultaneously, the German 293 Grenadier Regiment exploited the thinly held boundary between the lines of Colonel Charles Cavender’s 423rd regiment, the center of the 106th’s lines, and Colonel Alexander Reid’s

424th on the right flank. As one American soldier in the Battle of the Bulge said, “there was a German behind every tree.”¹⁸⁹ (See Figure 6)

In between, the 423rd and 424th regiments the 62nd VGD commanded by Oberst Friedrich Kittel exploited a successful penetration through the American lines, creating an artificial flank. The 62nd VGD’s orders were to create a breakthrough, then use speed to drive northwest towards St. Vith, where both the 62nd and the 18th VGD would link up, having encircled the two regiments on the Schnee Eifel, their artillery, and logistical troops in between the Schnee Eifel and St. Vith. This style of maneuver was reminiscent, in miniature, of the great feats of encirclement which brought swift and effective victory to the German Army during the early years of World War II. After the 62nd inflicted this breakthrough between the two 106th regiments, Colonel Cavender ordered his 423rd regiment to form a three-sided defense.¹⁹⁰

To the right of the 424th regiment, the German 116th Panzer Division combined with elements of the 560th VGD to constitute the right wing of General Lucht’s LXVI Corps in order to flood a breakthrough between the last organic units of the 106th and their neighboring division to the south the 28th Infantry Division. Similar to the assaults performed on the 106th the attack towards the right flank of the 106th, was supported by artillery and a barrage of German Screaming Meemies.¹⁹¹ (See Figure 7)

The 106th did not lie down and capitulate on the first hours of the assault as von Maunteuffel had hoped:

Due to enemy resistance the road over Roth was not available ... the first reports of enemy counteraction against the advancing troops came from a northern direction east of Auw ... resistance increased with the approach by the attacking troops to Bleialf ... not until dusk did we succeed in taking Bleialf ... our time schedule fell behind but I hoped to make it up

by continuing our attacks through the night...although the success of the corps in the early morning led to the assumption that the delay in the time schedule could still be made up, the course of events during the day proved otherwise. In spite of exemplary tactics from the troops and their leaders, we were unable to carry the attack with the necessary vigor by capturing St. Vith, which would also have decisive influence on the engagements of the left wing of the 6 Panzer Army. For the 6 Panzer Army breaking the resistance in the St. Vith sector was of great importance [for the Germans] because these units [6th Panzer Army] of the Army had advanced little beyond the initial front lines.¹⁹²

Second Battalion of 423rd regiment, the divisional reserve, commanded by Lt. Colonel Pruett, arrived near Schönberg shortly after 1200 on 16 December, and was ordered by Brigadier General McMahan, 106th Division Artillery Commander, to help extract artillery battalions and then move in to the left flank of the 422nd to help meet the flanking German 18th VGD. The 423rd's right-hand battalion fought extremely well in the Bleialf area. Everyone, even the cooks, fought as riflemen. John M. Roberts of C Company of the 592nd Field Artillery Battalion had the 155mm howitzer. Throughout the fight the battery displaced its four artillery pieces from position to position to keep up with the fluid battle environment.¹⁹³

On 16 December, in the entire 106th sector German infantry units were attacking that ranged in size from 30 to 200 men at a time. German tanks were employed generally along the entire division's sector. The enemy was taking high casualties for attempting to siege this ground. A German officer and prisoner of war (POW) estimated his unit suffered 30 to 40 percent casualties, while many more were taken prisoner by the 106th. Another German POW officer stated, "he knew that a new unit was in this sector and that he had not expected such stiff resistance."¹⁹⁴

At 0036 on 17 December, the 106th received the following from VIII Corps HQ: "Troops will be withdrawn from present position only if positions become completely

untenable. In no event will enemy be allowed to penetrate west of line Holzheim, Setz, Lommersweiler, Maspelt, Leiler, Bockholz which will be held at all cost.”¹⁹⁵

Colonel Riggs and the 81st Engineer Battalion along with mixed units of 106th soldiers and 14th Cavalry troops put up a delaying action two-thousand yards east of St. Vith. At 0935 he became Defense Commander of St. Vith, with the 168th and what was left of 81st Engineers, one platoon from the 820th Tank Destroyer Battalion, and the Defense Platoon of Division HQ Company. He checked the enemy advance and led counter attacks to keep them off guard. Colonel Riggs and the 81st engineers would continue to fight and hold a delaying action for five days with assistance of new American units. On 17 and 18 December, two Combat Commands from the 7th and 9th Armored Divisions arrived, followed by the rest of 7th Armored Division the next day. This blocking action by the 81st Engineers, an organic unit of the 106th, delayed long enough for American armor to roll into position for the pitched battle of St. Vith, thus delaying the German offensive for two days. In addition, Lt. Colonel Earle Williams the division signal officer heroically held the St. Vith road and Lt. Colonel W.M. Siagden (assistant VIII Corps G-2) reconnoitered the enemy and continued delaying tactics with the various stragglers both commanders somehow pulled together. The 168th Engineer Combat Battalion, part of VIII Corps’ reserve, was attached to the 106th where it was ordered to create a perimeter defense on all roads leading west into St. Vith. Led by Lt. Colonel W.L. Nungesser, the 358 men of 168th knew St. Vith well. By 2000 hours the 168th had security patrols established on the roads leading into St. Vith.¹⁹⁶

The 424th regiment’s seven-thousand yard front was held by the 3rd Battalion on the left (north), with its regimental reserve at Steinbruck. First Battalion was connected

by Cannon Company to 2nd Battalion and the 106th Reconnaissance Troop. The division's organic cavalry unit, the 106th Reconnaissance Troop, fought around the area of Grosslangenfeld a short distance southwest of the Schnee Eifel. The German forces breakthrough of the 423rd and 424th regiments caused severe casualties on the light reconnaissance troop. The Germans broke through at Winterspelt during the night 16-17 December, and by 0830 on 17 December, had completely occupied this town. This offensive action on behalf of the Germans pushed the 1st Battalion of the 424th regiment out of Winterspelt northwest towards Steinebrück. When this happened the 106th Reconnaissance Troop and Troop B of the 18th Cavalry Group were cut off in Mutzenich.¹⁹⁷

On 17 December, the 424th was still fighting to hold Steinbrück against heavy enemy action. The 9th Armored Division was committed as a counterattack by Major General Jones towards the endangered southern flank of the 106th. The 9th Armored Division engaged the Germans southeast of St. Vith in the vicinity of Winterspelt near Steinbrück. The assistance of the 9th Armored Division combined with the infantry, engineers, and cavalry of the 106th delayed the German advance for the rest of the day. The 591st FA Battalion had assisted the 424th during the assault, but was by now running low on artillery shells. German advances were pushing east, and the possibility of the southern blocking forces becoming encircled, similar to the Schnee Eifel positions, existed. As the skies over the Schnee Eifel began to darken, and the German offensive poured even more troops against this delaying action, Major General Jones ordered CCB 9th Armored Division back across the Our River to a defensive position just north of the

river. The 424th regiment was ordered across the river to defend from the west on the south of the 9th's CCB.¹⁹⁸

German tank and infantry advances toward St. Vith on 17 and 18 December, had been delayed, but not stopped. The 112th regiment from the 28th Infantry Division had been severed from its sister regiments and began to fall back with the 106th towards defensive lines east of St. Vith. The 424th regiment established contact with the 112th regiment and maintained a defensive line. Supported by C Company of the 81st Engineer Battalion, the regiment fell back past the Our River. The engineers helped winch across the Our River 23 vehicles, as the regiment prepared for the next wave of German assaults. Three days into the battle the 106th had neither run nor been destroyed. The dogged delaying action of these regiments from two different divisions bought the most precious of all gifts for First U.S. Army--time.¹⁹⁹

The 331st Medical Battalion, the organic divisional medical unit of the 106th, consisted of three collecting companies. Companies A, B, and C, were aligned in direct support of the 106th's three regiments, the 422nd, 423rd, and 424th, Company D served as the divisional clearing station. Of the four companies, only Company B was largely lost with the surrounded 423rd regiment that it supported. These units were supposed to function only as a collecting station, but due to the massive German assault and the encirclement of the Schnee Eifel forces, they operated without rest for seventy-two hours as an emergency field hospital. Their role recorded here is to state that isolated and under constant attack, the medical clearing stations lost only six men of all the wounded they treated.²⁰⁰

Early on 16 December, General Hodges of First U.S. Army requested and received permission from Lt. General Bradley for the 7th Armored Division from the Ninth U.S. Army and the 10th armed division of the Third U.S. Army to reinforce the First U.S. Army sector and assist in defeating the German penetrations located within.²⁰¹

At 1730 hours on 16 December 1944, the 7th Armored Division was alerted to proceed from their positions in Holland, south towards VIII Corps' sector. The armored force was ordered to take two separate routes southward to offer both force protection and smooth access to the limited road system it would soon encounter. The west convoy rolled out around 0330 on 17 December, and by 1200 hours traffic began to build up on the road. The east route had its own share of difficulty arriving at VIII Corps' sector, enemy forces hit the convoy near Malmedy. The enemy force was so intense that the eastern convoy had to detour to the west route heading north through Spa and Aywaille.²⁰²

The 7th Armored Division ran into American vehicles lined bumper to bumper moving westward from the Losheim Gap. Many traditional historians have stated that, "fear happened, emotion happened," that a large number of 106th troops were running west from the front and clogged the road ways preventing the 7th Armored Division from arriving on time to save the 106th regiments on the Schnee Eifel. Opponents to this theory state that the CCB of 7th Armored Division, meet American traffic that consisted to a limited degree of 106th personnel, but nevertheless made it to St. Vith in time to assist the two regiments on the Schnee Eifel by moving quickly east from St. Vith towards Schonberg. Reports have stated that there were a limited number of German tanks and mainly infantry in Schonberg and that a coordinated attack could have opened

the road east to evacuate the two regiments from the Schnee Eifel.^{VIII} Regardless of what American outfit was moving west, the reason for its withdrawal was clear: German tanks and armored cars led by German armored commander Jochen Peiper were behind them and moving westward.²⁰³

Major General Jones had been assured that the combat commands of two armored divisions were on their way to assist him; therefore he transmitted a radio message to his two regiments to hold their position. On 17 December, General Bruce Clarke arrived at VIII Corps headquarters at Bastogne. When General Clarke's CCB of the 7th Armored Division arrived in St. Vith at 1520 hours on 17 December, delayed by "friendly traffic" and enemy action Major General Jones ordered an immediate attack east towards Schoenberg. Jones wanted to use Clarke's CCB to attack the Germans at Schonberg and relieve the encirclement of his two regiments on the Schnee Eifel. Due to the time it would take to get his armor into position Clarke did not know when he could mount such a counter attack.²⁰⁴

Plans were made for committing CCB of the 9th Armored Division towards Schonberg-Auw to relieve the situation east of St. Vith, but after receiving a telephone call from Major General Middleton that the 7th Armored Division would arrive in St. Vith by 0700 on 17 December, Major General Jones ordered CCB 9th Armored Division south to assist the 424th and the 106th units fighting near the Our River in the vicinity of Steinebruck and Winterspelt. This news meant that General Hoge's tanks of CCB 9th

^{VIII} The blame game scenario lies beyond the scope of this work. This thesis has been created to prove the point that the 106th Infantry Division the Golden Lions as a whole did not run; moreover, they stood and fought and assisted in delaying the German offensive in their sector. Time bought by the 106th would pay dividends later for the Allies once the skies cleared and troops were maneuvered on the north and south shoulders of the bulge.

Armored Division would fight and later withdraw forming the southern edge of the defensive horseshoe around St. Vith.²⁰⁵

Instead of attacking east towards Schonberg, the CCB of 7th Armored was charged to “defend and hold the vital road junction of St. Vith.”²⁰⁶ To assist in the perimeter defense of St. Vith, the 7th Armored Division ordered the consolidation of what was left of the 14th Cavalry Group into a single cavalry squadron. The 18th Cavalry Reconnaissance squadron was to absorb what was left of the 32nd Cavalry Squadron for the purpose of creating a cavalry reconnaissance squadron.²⁰⁷

On 17 December, the German 294th grenadier regiment captured Schönberg and its bridge over the Our River, in doing so, the final blocking position was laid by the German advance. The two 106th regiments’ line of retreat towards St. Vith was cut off after the 293rd grenadier regiment captured Bleialf and move on to Schönberg. However, the Golden Lions were not yet finished the German Army had managed to pull off their planned encirclement, albeit with overwhelming force and a day late. When Schönberg fell the 106th had a considerable amount of its forces surrounded: the 422nd and 423rd regiments; 590th FA, Battery D; 634th AAA Battalion, Company C; 820th Tank Destroyer Battalion, Battery D; and one company of the 331st Medical Battalion. The German Army’s advance west would continue to be slowed down for another two days by the 106th because the Germans knew they could not fully proceed on St. Vith when over seven-thousand American soldiers were a few miles behind them. If the skies cleared, the German Army would find itself on the wrong side of a three angled assault.²⁰⁸ (See Figure 8)

Supply of the encircled units became a major problem for the 106th divisional headquarters that came to realize the Schnee Eifel had become an untenable position. By 18 December, the division's units had been fighting constantly without supply for three days. The following was taken from a radio message transcript from the 106th headquarters on 17 December 1944, radio message No. 12: "To CO [commanding officer] 423rd regiment: withdraw to line river Our." The next radio message, No. 13, ordered the 422nd to conduct the same movement. Radio message No. 16 on 17 December 1944 informed the CO of the 422nd that "supplies [are] to be dropped tonight; arrangements [have been] made with VIII Corps air officer for supplies to be dropped." The weather never cleared, and the two regiments ordered out of their West Wall defenses were running low on options.²⁰⁹

Because of the jamming of American radio transmissions by the Germans, the 106th divisional headquarters was unable to directly converse with its regiments. Delays meant that as late as 19 December the regiments were receiving radio messages stating the likelihood of an air drop. Radio message No. 1 to the CO of the 423rd regiment ordered "display fifty[-]foot square orange panels ... make every attempt to establish physical contact with 422nd in regard to the dropped supplies."²¹⁰ Arrangements had been made with the VIII Corps Air Officer for supplies to be dropped to the units surrounded; however, weather and the length of the logistical flight plan negated the operation.²¹¹

With the failure to gain suitable weather for the air drop and with supplies running low, Major General Jones on 18 December ordered the 422nd and the 423rd in a dual coordinated attack against the Germans who now held the road junction of Schönberg. The regiments were to follow up this attack westward and toward what Major General

Jones hoped would be the advance positions of the 7th Armored Division, which was defending St. Vith. However, radio jamming by the Germans prevented the regiments from receiving these orders for several hours. Also, only Colonel Cavender was able to continue radio contact with division. To inform the 422nd under Colonel Deschenaux, messages had to be relayed by hand.²¹² (See Figure 9)

When it became clear that an air drop would not come in time, the 106th divisional headquarters ordered Colonels Cavender and Deschenaux to fight their way out of the Schnee Eifel. The assault was led by the 422nd regiment's 1st and 2nd Battalions, which would seize the hill that commanded the view over Schönberg. Meanwhile, the 3rd Battalion was to follow in the rear and toward the left.²¹³

On 19 December, the two regiments attacked toward Schönberg. The undulating terrain and the thick woods made it difficult at best to stay together. As the men of the 423rd engaged the Germans, the men of the 423rd soon realized that their rifles and squad machine guns were not enough to dislodge the German infantry and their tanks from the path west to freedom. Small arms and artillery fire crashed into the two regiments from multiple directions. First Battalion of the 422nd regiment also was attacked by German tanks from the Fuhrer-Begleit Brigade together with infantry from the 18th VGD. These German units commanded the Auw-Bleialf road that lay in between Schönberg and the Schnee Eifel. For the Americans it was infantry vs. armor! The 1st Battalion, cut off from its sister battalions, eventually was captured by the Germans.²¹⁴

The two regiments' tactical integrity broke apart as the Germans poured artillery and small arms fire down the long axis of their lines. Unable to produce the simultaneous effort for the simultaneous effect, the 422nd and 423rd would soon have no choice but to

surrender or die in the snowy defiles around Schönberg. Once the assault appeared doomed, Colonel Descheneaux ordered his 423rd regiment to destroy their weapons. The wounded were treated with sulfanilamide powder while the rumor mill quickly informed the troops to discard any German money or souvenirs they might have picked up. Subdued, they then were marched off to Auw, later Prum, and finally east into Germany.²¹⁵

Historian Ralph G. Hill has written extensively on the 106th during the Battle of the Bulge. Many of his papers are housed at the U.S. Army Military History Institute in Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. He is an accredited author on the subject and has made many passionate statements about the division's performance. In regard to whether or not the regiments could have sat out the German assault inside the Schnee Eifel, his position is solid. In 1988, he wrote about the two regiments' chances had they stayed put. Had the two regiments stayed on the West Wall, Hill contests, they would have "lasted for perhaps a few more days ... [had] terrible casualties and made no meaningful contribution to the Allied cause." He believes that had the two regiments broken into smaller groups, the lack of supplies and the friction of the war zone would have claimed an even higher death toll. He maintains in his letter, written in 1984, that over 1,000 men are alive today because Colonels Descheneaux and Cavender were wise enough to surrender.²¹⁶

In his address to the 106th at the division's first reunion, now retired Major General Jones praised the conduct of his two lost regiments. When the 422nd and 423rd regiments fell on 19 December, they had held the German seizure and use of the necessary road point of St. Vith. This delay had the effect of "slowing the flow of

German armor into the communications routes of the division, Corps, and Army.”²¹⁷ It is clear from the primary documentation obtained from the Army War College and the National Archives II that the forward units of the 106th, in mass, did not run away. The reverse is true. The primary documentation clearly details that the 106th fought until their positions were unattainable all along their original West Wall positions. Those 106th units lucky enough to be met by the advancing combat commands of the 9th and 7th Armored Divisions were in fact able to do more than be rescued. The following chapter will discuss how the 106th units that managed to pull back from the West Wall in the face of increasingly stiff German attack fought along side their armored brethren for an additional three days. Combined, these units continued to delay the German timetable and prevented access to enemy units until St. Vith became a lost cause on the night of 22 December. Nevertheless the 106th succeeded in doing the damage necessary, for the German army needed St. Vith and needed it two days earlier. The urgent German timetable was unalterably disrupted.

CHAPTER VI

ST. VITH

At the height of the battle to save the two regiments on the Schnee Eifel and solidify the next battle for the defense of St. Vith, Major General Middleton wrote to VIII Corps on 19 December, concerning the service of his badly mauled Corps, “... [T]he constant arrival of reinforcements improves our position each day ... the enemy becomes weaker each day ... we can make the battle a decisive victory.” The 106th had lost two regiments, over seven thousand men, the Germans still came; and the Golden Lions were ordered to fight one more battle, the Battle for St. Vith.²¹⁸ (See Figure 10)

Four days! Four days and the Germans had yet to take St. Vith. Von Rundstedt's orders had been to take St. Vith on the first day and certainly no later than the second, and yet there it stood--the multi-directional road and railway center in the middle of First U.S. Army's sector. German forces had battered up and down the 106th's line and managed to forge two major breakthroughs, yet St. Vith still lay in the hands of the Americans. With his three regiments positioned forward of St. Vith, Major General Jones had been unable to reach the 422nd or the 423rd regiments in the four days it had been since the assault began. The 7th Armored Division had arrived, and only then could American tanks confront the German tanks which had pushed through the 14th Cavalry Group's sector. Running clockwise the 7th Armored Division was in position to the north and north east of St. Vith. General Clarke of the 7th Armored Division, ordered Lt. Col.

Fuller of the 38th Armored Infantry Battalion (AIB) of the 7th Armored Division's CCR (Combat Command R), to coordinate the defenses of St. Vith with the commanding officers of 81st and 168th Engineer Battalions. These two under-strength engineer battalions, fighting as infantry, had been holding the approach to St. Vith about 2400 east of the town, in the woods to the right of the Schonberg road, for nearly two days.²¹⁹

With the assistance of the 81st and 168th Engineers and the 14th Cavalry Group, now reduced to a single squadron, the Americans managed to keep the Schönberg to St. Vith highway east of St. Vith. To the south the 424th regiment, the CCB of 9th Armored, and the organic reconnaissance troop of the 106th, held the southern approach. To the left (west) of these units sat the 112th regiment, cut off from its parent division the 28th, now finding itself attached to the 106th. It was not pretty, and it was not solid but these defenses had held off the German advance and would continue to deprive St. Vith from the enemy for yet another three days. In the process, the Americans had inflicted many enemy casualties and cost the Germans the two things they could least afford to squander, time and fuel. "All units continued to repulse enemy attacks ... thereby limiting exploitations of penetrations by the enemy."²²⁰

By 19 December, the soldiers of V Corps, under the command of Major General Leonard Gerow, had been pushed back to the Elsenborn Ridge. But a determined fight along this defensive line meant that instead of a breakthrough by 6th Panzer Army on the boundary between V and VIII Corps, the lead attacking German SS Corps encountered, unexpectedly stiff, resistance. According to the First U.S. Army After Action Report, resistance from V Corps stalled the 6th Panzer Army's assault. This stubborn refusal to back down had the effect of shifting the center of gravity of the 6th Panzer Army assault

to a more southern approach. Meanwhile, German forces managed to push past Houffalize ten miles to the south and rear of St. Vith. Farther north the Germans had pushed past north of St. Vith, but south of Malmedy, the resulting effect on American lines meant that an oval shaped defensive line formed around St. Vith, extending all the way back towards Vielsalm. Later as St. Vith would become unattainable the 82nd Airborne Division, would hold open a conduit for the disparate holding units at St. Vith to escape.²²¹

Von Manteuffel knew that besides for the logistical benefit his Army would receive from the capture of St. Vith, the town would serve as a tactical blocking position should the Allies manage to muster an assault northward and through the blocking screen set up by 7th Panzer Army. Therefore, von Manteuffel ordered General Lucht's LXVI Corps to continue the assault on St. Vith, even after 19 December had come,^{IX} "despite the general dictum [from OKW] that defended towns would be bypassed if unattainable in a timely manner."²²²

Charged with taking St. Vith on the first day, it was now three days later and the German 6th and 5th Armies had yet to take St. Vith. No gas dumps had fallen into the enemy hands because the dogged resistance made by the men of VIII Corps of which the 106th had played a major role. As the following days played out, the remaining division's regiment would stand and deliver its finest hour. By 21 December, the Germans had launched several attacks by infantry, artillery, both supported with tanks. All were repulsed.²²³

^{IX} Field Marshall von Manteuffel's reasoning for continuing the assault of St. Vith, in violation of OKW's orders to bypass stiffly held enemy positions lies outside the scope of this thesis.

As the 106th's remaining units pulled back from their front line positions on the Schnee Eifel, they left the Germans with a stinging Parthian shot. The 106th had not been destroyed in the first day, nor did it run away; it did not win any great victory, but it had assisted in toppling the timetable of two German panzer armies. Its efforts at St. Vith bought enough time for American forces further west to reinforce the Monschau area along the northern edge of the German penetration. According to Shulman in *Defeat in the West*, "in those first few days the remnants of the badly-hit American divisions clung tenaciously to their ground and completely upset the blitzkrieg plan of the Supreme Command."²²⁴

The German 5th Panzer Army under von Manteuffel was suffering delays along the Auw to Schönberg to St. Vith roadway. Now it was the Germans turn to deal with serious traffic situations. The buildup of German forces trying to stream west hit a bottle neck around Schönberg because St. Vith had yet to fall to the Wehrmacht. On the evening of 19 December, von Manteuffel had no alternative but to postpone his major assault against St. Vith. Dealing with the American forces on the Schnee Eifel and the stubborn defense of the St. Vith highway by the 81st Engineers, 14th Cavalry Group, and the tanks of 7th Armored Division had created a log jam of German vehicles along the entire roadway. These same German vehicles would become easy prey to allied fighter bombers once the clouds cleared. Combined with the German confused traffic issue, the defenders of St. Vith managed to lay down heavy barrages of fire on advancing and reconnoitering German patrols. Although several organic 106th artillery units were surrounded including the two regiments on the Schnee Eifel, two field artillery battalions did manage to pull back to assist with the perimeter defense at St. Vith. The 591st FA

Battalion had pulled back with the 424th regiment from Winterspelt and took up a defensive position near Gruflange. On 19 December, the 589th FA Battalion fought from Baraque de Fraiture to defend the sector's crossroads that were held through 22 December until finally overrun on 23 December. To break the stalemate at St. Vith, von Manteuffel would have to use, earlier than anticipated, the Fuhrer-Begleit Brigade, 5th Panzer Army's reserve. However, the units were delayed in organizing in Schöenberg, and heavy American tank and artillery fire covered the roadway into St. Vith near Prümberg. These two factors resulted in delaying the German coup de grace of St. Vith by another day.²²⁵ (See Figure 11)

Von Manteuffel, quoted in Danny Parker's, *Hitler's Ardennes Offensive, The German View of the Battle*, stated

in retrospect moving up of the divisions into the assembly areas...for the attack proved to us that in the Schnee-Eifel it would take twice as long for the attack as was estimated ... the enemy had tied down more forces than anticipated ... by delaying actions in the area of St. Vith the enemy gained time for bringing up forces for the defense of the Salm Sector and to stop the penetration at the northern flank.²²⁶

Roger Rutland a First Sergeant in the 106th at the battle of St. Vith, witnessed the Germans pushed back repeatedly until the 62nd VGD, and its powerful satellite units eventually forced the Americans to withdraw.²²⁷

It had not been the original intention of von Manteuffel to use the Fuhrer-Begleit Brigade in the vicinity of St. Vith. Nonetheless, the center of gravity of the 6th and 5th Panzer Armies had been forcibly shifted towards the St. Vith sector as well as to the north because of American resistance all down the front line. The very nature of initiating his army's reserve east of St. Vith meant that von Manteuffel was "giving up the idea to use this armored mobile unit later." This reaction would have an unfavorable

effect on the planned German main assault. For the moment, the immediate goal for the 6th Panzer Army was the destruction of American forces in and around St. Vith. To accomplish this goal the Fuhrer-Begleit Brigade was used, rather than saved for its original purpose, the exploitation of open terrain west of St. Vith and the success of the counteroffensive. Von Manteuffel stated that “we planned, in case of rapid capture of St. Vith, to employ portions of the 6th Panzer Army or the Fuhrer-Begleit Brigade itself from the St. Vith area to the north in order to outflank the enemy who was stubbornly defending himself.” Von Manteuffel had hoped that the well trained and equipped force could assist LXVI Corps and bring about a quick decision at St. Vith.²²⁸

Major General Middleton remarked that the German timetable stipulated that they must take Malmedy, St. Vith, Houffalize, and Bastogne; all crucial road junctions and supply centers, by the end of the second day, and no later than the third day of the offensive; however, none of these objectives had been secured by the Germans. Nor had the Germans been able to capture the rich stores of gasoline, food, and ammunition. Major General Middleton said, “it really was a poor boy’s front.”²²⁹

By 21 and 22 December, the American forces around St. Vith had been able to withstand repeated assaults; however, the Germans next massed the Fuhrer-Begleit Brigade, as well as LXVI Corps’ 18th VGD and artillery, the 116th Panzer division, and the 62nd VGD for the final push. Inside St. Vith, food and ammunition were running critically low. Re-supply by plane had been hampered by the weather, and re-supply by truck had been harassed and distorted by German forces dressed both in Wehrmacht and American uniforms. The Germans had pushed on past St. Vith to the south and were threatening the rear lines of the 106th, 112th regiment, and the 7th and 9th armored forces.

Below St. Vith “lay a vague no-man’s land. In short, the entire St. Vith-Vielsalm sector was completely open to attack from the south” American supply routes had been interrupted, ammunition was dwindling, all the while casualties mounted.²³⁰

St. Vith could not be held past 22 December. Under First U.S. Army’s orders, the gallant defense of St. Vith by 7th Armored Division, the 106th, 14th Cavalry Group, 81st and 168th Engineers, CCB 9th armored, and the 112th regiments were ordered to withdraw west of St. Vith between five to ten miles from the town. The follow up orders required the units to cross the Salm River through the 82nd Airborne Division’s positions, which had propped up the edges of the German pincer around St. Vith. The 106th had paid the heaviest price, according to the division’s After Action Report which estimated losses for the Golden Lions totaling 8,490. Four-hundred and fifteen were killed in action, 1,254 wounded, and 6,831 missing.²³¹

Cleometricians have debated the exact losses for First U.S. Army, VIII Corps, and those combined with the Germans during the Battle of the Bulge. The figures for the 106th casualties are known, and they are immense. The 106th efforts to aid and assist in the defense of St. Vith shattered the division as a combat infantry forces. On 27 December, First U.S. Army stated that the 106th consisted of 409 officers, 30 warrant officers, 6,130 enlisted-men for a total strength of 6569. Moreover as medical evacuations and combat continued the unit’s numbers decreased further. By 31 December, the actual strength of the 106th was down to 5,534. When compared to the division’s constituted strength of 16,009 in March of 1943 when it was activated, a large discrepancy is visible. On a final note, the already depleted 106th Division’s 424th

regiment continued in combat through Christmas Day as a Regimental Combat team attached to the 7th Armored Division.²³²

The defense of VIII Corps' sector had delayed the German schedule for many days; 21,000 American had held off 87,000 Germans. Brave men used "Daisy Chains, dropped grenades down turrets ... bazookas fired at point-blank range had exacted high casualties from the enemy's Panzer forces"²³³ By 22 December, the final American forces on the ground fighting near St. Vith, as well as the hundreds of thousands engaged all long the Bulge, saw the layers of mist and cloud recede and the outline of hundreds of contrails in the sky as the American Army Air Corps began to strike back at the German counteroffensive. Fighter-bombers swarmed, roads, bridges, and any moving vehicle not properly identified as an Allied piece of hardware. The staunch Allied defense against the German counteroffensive began to pay dividends, when combined with Allied air power. On 24 December, von Rundstedt recognized that the Ardennes offensive was a wash out; however, Hitler continued to press the attack onward and the continuing Battle of the Bulge would last another month.²³⁴ (See Figure 12)

To this point this work has discussed the historiography of the Battle of the Bulge and how it relates to the 106th Infantry Division's role. The situation in Europe in late 1944 was one of success for the Allies, for the Germans it was one of desperation. On 16 December 1944, the Germans mounted a surprise counteroffensive; an attack that this work has stated was made possible by both German deception and Allied failure in obtaining and utilizing information. Allied logistical strains in December 1944, had put a tremendous burden on the U.S. Army. It was a matter of where to weaken and where to strengthen until more replacements could arrive from the United States. The decision by

the U.S. Army to weaken the First U.S. Army group's sector synergized by the German counteroffensive in this sector took a severe toll on the 106th. In the course of eight days the divisions had been shattered, but the Germans unquestionably had been delayed. The next chapter will conclude this work's established aims and this paper.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

First U.S. Army's battle field casualty report was produced after the Battle of the Bulge, Table 1 of the report lists the casualties figures for all major units involved. What is painfully clear is that the 99th and 106th Infantry Division suffered the greatest numbers of casualties, which includes over seven thousand, missing in action for the 106th at the date of the reports publication. Many writers such as Charles Whiting, Bruce Quarrie, and John S. D. Eisenhower have suggested this is the case solely due to the inexperience of the two units. While lack of combat experience did exist in both divisions, the true reason for the massive casualties suffered was because the main thrust of two German panzer armies was violently shot forward precisely between these two division. In the process, the 14th Cavalry Group was effectively knocked out of the front line and the two green infantry divisions found themselves involved in one of the fiercest land battles American forces have every been a party to.²³⁵

It was the planning of the War Department to make the U.S. infantry division the "fundamental permanent combined-arms team, intended to have the right amount of organic artillery and auxiliary elements to enable its infantry riflemen to move forward against average resistance;" however, what the 106th experienced in the early days of the battle was hardly average. By nightfall on 16 December, First U.S. Army had identified that the 18th, 62nd, and 352nd VGD, the 116th Panzer Division, and units from the 276th,

560th, and 212th VGD had hit VIII Corps' sector. As established earlier, VIII Corps' sector was held by four divisions, two of which the 9th Armored Division and the 106th were new and inexperienced. The other two divisions were the 28th and 4th Infantry Divisions both had been worn down from a previous battle for the Hürtgen Forest. The odds were in the favor of the Germans as they tore into First U.S. Army via VIII Corps. As a result the 106th experienced the heavy hand of this attack.²³⁶

By the morning of 17 December, the German forces in the Ardennes sector produced significant penetrations in the American lines; however, the thrusts did not have depth. Von Manteuffel needed to be in St. Vith by the end of 16, but certainly no later than 17 December, if the Germans were going to take advantage of the tactical surprise they had achieved. St. Vith was not the end of 5th Panzer Army's responsibility. After the critical road and railway junction had been secured, the 5th Panzer Army was ordered to swing north up good roads leading to Liège. By 16 December, Liège was First U.S. Army's communications center and supply base. Once the Germans secured St. Vith and Liège, the final objective of Antwerp could be obtained. Because of the Allied efforts to strengthen their northern and southern armies, First U.S. Army had been weakened. On 17 December, the nearest American reserves were roughly 90 miles away. In the Ardennes sector, all that stood between 5th Panzer Army and the Meuse River for over a day and half was the 106th and the 14th Cavalry Group.²³⁷

Citing First U.S. Army's Report of Operations, Major General Jones stated that the failure of the Germans to exploit their breakthrough coincided with the same time it took to reduce "the island of resistance" at St. Vith.

Without the communications center of St. Vith, focal point of five highways and three rail lines, the enemy's armored infantry and supply columns were all practically immobilized The salient at St. Vith not only threatened the whole of Fifth Panzer Army's north flank, but continued to hold and prevent the westward movement of Sixth SS Panzer Army. This afforded First U.S. Army sufficient time to bring up reinforcements to a new defensive line.²³⁸

As direct as his statement was, Major General Jones knew that the defense of St. Vith was not accomplished by his division alone. Addressing veterans of the 106th Infantry Division at the unit's first annual convention, Major General Jones stated that he made no claims that their division accomplished the defense of St. Vith alone. What he did tell his men was that "in the first forty-eight hours, the 106th Infantry Division, and you alone and unaided decided Hitler's last bid for Europe." Multiple U.S. Army Military History Service Experiences Questionnaires serve as a sounding board to Major General Jones's statements, that his "units displayed courage under impossibly overwhelming circumstances." From the evidence put forward thus far, it is logical to assume that the wholesale stripping of the 106th Infantry Division, before overseas deployment did have an adverse effect on the division, however, the effect was varied depending on the unit. What can be said for certain is that the soldiers who made up the 106th at the battles of the Schnee Eifel and St. Vith accomplished a significant and important delaying action against the German counteroffensive.²³⁹

With no malice or lack of appreciation for other American fighting units that fought during the Battle of the Bulge, many secondary works have a tendency to overlook the significance of the American defense of St. Vith. Following traditional historiography of the Battle of the Bulge, Shulman in *Defeat in the West* gives much credit to the holding action performed by the 101st Airborne at Bastogne, but very little is

mentioned of the 106th or the other units that held St. Vith for eight days and delayed the German offensive. The single most discussed characteristic of the American units at St. Vith is the traffic jam caused in the first days of the battle by American soldiers headed westward away from the German assault.

In 1966 Hanson Baldwin wrote *Battles Lost and Won: Great Campaigns of World War II*, in it he states,

The road to St. Vith was chocked, with streaming men and vehicles many of them wearing the shoulder patch of a new division-a rampant lion's head. They did not stop for shouted command or personal treat; they blocked the road and moved in endless columns westward, out of the path of Armageddon. Frightened colonels rushing to the rear, a screaming major used his tanks as battering rams to smash a way toward the front through the snarled traffic.²⁴⁰

Although there was a traffic jam, that delayed the arrival of the 7th Armored Division to St. Vith, traditional historiography has leaned towards an amalgamation of the units involved. In other words, if one Golden Lion Division shoulder patch was seen then that meant those units were involved. What is most incorrect is the labeling of the 106th as the unit that ran. True there were members of the 106th who fled west towards St. Vith and beyond, but the majority of that traffic came from the 14th Cavalry Group. Primary documentation submitted in the previous chapters was recorded shortly after the battle, and it cites that the 106th was to the east and south of 7th Armored Division's forward units as they met the west bound traffic jam. Furthermore the same primary documentation supports the fact that it was the 14th Cavalry Group that was pulling back, in the face of varied enemy armor and infantry resistance, towards the west, and was the main unit which ran into the southeast bound 7th Armored. The 106th did not have the

luxury of falling back. Early on 16 December, the first day of the offensive, the 106th found itself being torn apart by two German pincer movements.²⁴¹

While this work does not look to blame the 14th Cavalry Group in any way for its withdrawal, it does look to cite that the majority of the 106th stood and fought from the beginning of the German advance. In a report to the First U.S. Army's neuro-psychiatric consultant, it was made clear that during the opening hours of the German offensive 14th Cavalry Group's commanding officer Colonel Devine was thrown to the ground by the blast of a mortar or shell explosion. That afternoon he became "groogy" when a shell fragment came through the window of his command post. The conclusion of First U.S. Army's neuro-psychiatric consultant was that Colonel Devine suffered from a reaction to "combat exhaustion," not cowardice before the enemy.²⁴²

Regardless of Colonel Devine's injury, bad blood existed between the Colonel and Major General Jones after the battle. During the initial days of the German counteroffensive, Colonel Devine had reported to the 106th's headquarters for briefings. After the battle, when interviewed by the Army Inspector General, Colonel Devine said that the 106th's headquarters was disorganized. According to the Army Inspector General, "thorough inquiry was made into this allegation, and it was established that the reverse was true." During the same interview sessions, the psychiatrist who examined Colonel Devine on 20 January 1945, stated that the officer's reactions may have been due to "an extraordinary (and in this case overwhelming) set of circumstances encountered by an individual who quickly reached his psychic and physical limit of tolerance."²⁴³

In the same report, and referencing Colonel Devine's accusations, in a statement labeled Exhibit B, when asked by the Army Inspector General of First U.S. Army,

assistant division commander General Perrine, now commanding general of the 106th, stated that the 106th's headquarters''

Appeared to be functioning normally during the first days of the battle. General Jones informed me that the Corps Commander [Middleton] had told him that he was sending a combat command of the 9th Armored Division to assist him, and General Jones appeared to be satisfied relative to the situation. General Jones informed me that he had been in telephone communication with the Corps Commander and the Corps Commander had directed him to hold in place. In my opinion the Division staff was performing normally and with considerably more control than might have been expected from their initial combat experience. When asked if ... things were well in hand, Perrine responded with Definitely ... The Div HQ did not at any time impress me as being a madhouse, but quite to the contrary; and that Colonel Devine was the only one present who appeared excited.²⁴⁴

Regardless of the physical state of the cavalry commander, the unit was hit by an overwhelming German force. Compelled to withdraw or be destroyed, the 14th Cavalry Group unintentionally opened the Losheim Gap; and German Armor units supported by infantry advanced on the Schnee Eifel and St. Vith. Predicting where the center of gravity of the attack would hit cannot be laid on any one commander in the early hours of intense fighting. The German deception plans were detailed and effective. The Allied dependence on Ultra and other numerous examples stated in this work, concerning the under appreciation and discarding of physical intelligence means that the assault was missed all the way up and down the chain of command. As a result, the outcome was not unpredictable, tactical surprise for the Germans and a bloody battle for the American defenders of the Ardennes sector.²⁴⁵

Some historians such as Charles Whiting and Peter Elstob have suggested that Major General Jones and the 106th did not perform well because they were slow and

lacked aggression. An example of such comment is made by Elstob, in *Hitler's Last Offensive* who contends that the 106th division HQ was slow and lacked aggression. Further more, when the 106th's positions on the Schnee Eifel became unattainable, the commanding officer waited too long. Elstob believes Major General Jones's training and instilled tradition were against withdrawal under attack, and that was the general's reason for not withdrawing the two regiments on the Schnee Eifel at the beginning of hostility. Whiting believes the 106th was green and in the face of the enemy committed multiple acts of unauthorized withdrawal. What both authors have failed to take into account is that the presence of the 106th on the Schnee Eifel was a joint decision between Major Generals Middleton and Jones. Furthermore, the 106th withdrew only after its positions were unattainable. Not before.²⁴⁶

The more balanced view, is to examine the self-debilitating "man for man, gun for gun" order given to the 106th as it replaced the 2nd Infantry Division five days before the assault. This order limited Major General Jones's prerogatives and initiative in assessing and changing his positions and installations, when he assumed responsibility for the division's place in the line. Eighth Corps' order to relieve man for man, gun for gun meant that the 106th was deployed in accordance with "the previous division commander's concept of tactical operation and not as envisioned by the new division commander [Jones]," who lacked the authority to improve any perceived deficiency. This order "restricted and deprived [Jones] the latitude to initiate improvements to the existing tactical deployment."²⁴⁷

In Major General Jones's opinion, the sector that the 106th was ordered to maintain, put his unit in a tactically impossible position should a force of two, three, or

more German divisions attack his command. In fulfilling its orders, the 106th assumed a front line position that was well in excess of four times the U.S. Army regulation for a measurable safe divisional front. To place into perspective the overextension of the 106th, one can look at the planned assaults that Allied command had organized for the pending few days. By 15 December, 12th Army Group had deployed a total of 12 divisions on a similarly narrow front under the Ninth U.S. Army and VII Corps of First U.S. Army to conduct an offensive against the Rhine River. Farther to the south Lt. General Patton had positioned for a similar attack scheduled for 19 December, but with another 10 divisions. The 106th on its own held a front comparable in width to these two battle groups.

After nearly a full day of combat, at 1236 hours on 17 December, Major General Jones received VIII Corps' orders. Major General Middleton ordered that "troops will be withdrawn from present positions only if position becomes completely untenable. In no event will enemy be allowed to penetrate west of Our River, which will be held at all costs." The Schnee Eifel lay east of the Our River, while St. Vith was positioned to the west. By the time Major General Jones had received this command from VIII Corps, he was aware that two combat commands from the 7th and 9th Armored Divisions were on their way to St. Vith. His two regiments on the Schnee Eifel had held through the day and into the morning. Upon arrival of American tanks, he had planned to clear out the roads west of the Schnee Eifel to extract his two regiments, in which his son Lt. Alan Jones Jr. served.²⁴⁸

Major General Middleton knew, of course, that some of his units had been overrun. He knew as well that the German attack had opened a great gap in his lines.

But nearly all his communications with his forward elements were out, and he had no knowledge of where his forces were, nor where the Germans were, nor where they might strike next. The Germans recognized St. Vith as the decisive point of the engagement, and when the thrust came, time simultaneously began to run out for the American regiments on the Schnee Eifel.²⁴⁹

Major General Jones and Major General Middleton discussed their concerns for the two regiments, the 422nd and 423rd on the Schnee Eifel on the night of 16 December. A phone call was placed between the two commands. Major General Jones's reported the building pressures and suggested that his two regiments be pulled back. Middleton approved and assumed that the pullback would be carried out. It has been debated by historians for nearly six decades now as to whether it was poor communications or a bad misunderstanding. The result in any case, was that the two regiments on the Schnee Eifel were left in place by Major General Jones.²⁵⁰

Throughout the next day, the two regiments worked to restore their communication lines with the 106th divisional headquarters (HQ). Corporal Dean T. Redmond of Headquarters Company, 3rd Bn of the 422nd regiment worked throughout the day "servicing the lines, repairing them when they were cut or shot out." If the replacements to the division had been inexperienced, according to Redmond and other veterans of the Schnee Eifel, "camaraderie and cohesion, even if not visible beforehand, develop quickly in combat."²⁵¹

Besides the ordinary telephone difficulties, the Germans worsened the matter by jamming radio transmissions throughout the Battle of the Schnee Eifel. The 106th HQ had a terrible time with radio communication; often it took hours to transmit and to

receive messages with the two encircled regiments. Toward the south, the jamming was more severe as divisional HQ frantically searched for the whereabouts of the 424th regiment. Sneaking up and down the St. Vith to Winterspelt road a radio team transmitted at night in a truck to throw off the Germans and keep in contact with the 424th regiment.²⁵²

By Sunday, 18 December, Major General Jones advised the 422nd and 423rd that he expected reinforcements in minutes and intended to "... clear out the areas west of you this afternoon with reinforcements ..." This message was sent at 0945 hours but German radio jamming caused it to arrive at the 422nd regiment six hours later. This lengthy delay meant that as quickly as Major General Jones and the command staff of the 106th were working to protect their two regiments, the delay in communication deprived the regimental commanders of updates on the changing details of the fluid battle.²⁵³

As early as 17 December, Major General Jones and his regimental commanders made it clear that they wanted an air drop of ammunition and medical supplies before they fought their way out of the Schnee Eifel. Most of the efforts made by the 106th to structure the supply drop for the two regiments was conducted by telephone and were not recorded.^x The IX Tactical Air Command normally would have referred the request to First U.S. Army for clearance. The G-4 report for First U.S. Army stated that by 17 December, the realization of the two regiment's situation on the Schnee Eifel was conferred by telephone and preparations for supply by air were ordered. The carrier planes would have to come from England but poor weather over their routes to Belgium

^x To date this thesis has not discovered any information that states whether or not the 106th Infantry Division's telephone messages requesting an air drop for the two encircled regiments on the Schnee Eifel were ever recorded.

prevented their departure for hours; they then were forced to land in France and wait out the inclement weather.²⁵⁴

Major General Jones called the VIII Corps' air officer who agreed that supplies should be parachuted immediately and relayed the information to the IX Tactical Air Command. At no time did Major General Jones give up on his two regiments. There is no question, however, that the terrible situation his division found itself in and the strain of losing his men, of which his son was part, took its toll on the major general.²⁵⁵

The man for man, gun for gun order before the assault followed by Major General Middleton's order to hold positions east of the Our River on 16 December were carried out by Major General Jones. In the process, the German assault combined with the bad weather made relief of the units on the Schnee Eifel unattainable. Up until 22 December 1944, when he was relieved of duty and suffered a heart attack, Major General Jones had worked and hoped for the best for his two regiments. After Jones's evacuation, deputy division commander Brigadier General Herbert T. Perrin was placed in command of the 106th after Major General Jones was evacuated because of his illness.²⁵⁶

Not only American and Allied accounts state the merit of the 106th's effort in delaying the German counteroffensive through the Ardennes. Von Manteuffel commented on the performance of the Americans who fought in the St. Vith sector, which includes the Schnee Eifel. The American defenders fought "the battle of little me," in which undersized and cut off units bravely delayed the counter offensive. Head of OKW in late 1944, Generaloberst Jodel, after the war stated "the discovery of the 106th beginning green was no change to the plan, the attack was coming and it was coming through there." St. Vith was an important railroad junction and the defense of St. Vith

“did handicap the German push.” In addition, Jodel believed the offensive failed because of the poor road network in the Ardennes that made passage by German armor difficult at best and “tougher resistance of U.S. troops than expected, especially at St. Vith.”²⁵⁷

The American resistance at St. Vith formed a salient of its own, that the German counteroffensive had yet to squash. This American presence in the path of the German counteroffensive threatened the whole of the 5th Panzer Army’s Northern Flank and continued to prevent the westward movement of the 6th Panzer Army. The 106th held its position until it had lost all tactical importance when Allied forces withdrew on both sides of the northern Ardennes to defensive positions along the Meuse River. “The initial phase of the German winter offensive ended on 22 December, after six hard days of fighting The success of the entire German operation depended upon the enemy’s ability to maintain the impetus of the offensive.” The defense of St. Vith caused the loss of German resources, both human and equipment, that accelerated their final defeat and caused an early end to the long war in Europe.²⁵⁸

From the Battle of the Bulge, specifically the Battles of the Schnee Eifel and St. Vith, the U.S. Army concluded that improvements in a mobile defense were needed to prevent future deep enemy penetrations. Due to the logistical issues of supplying three massive Army Groups in Europe a defense in depth was not possible for the Allies in every sector. Therefore, an elastic defense was needed to assist forward elements when overrun. Although they tried, due to the road conditions, distance of travel, and enemy resistance the 7th Armored Division was hard pressed to arrive at St. Vith in a timely manner. What was seen as a positive was the team work between the American units that held St. Vith until 23 December.

The defense of St. Vith was only possible due to coordination and cooperation between the CCB [7th Armored] and the elements on the flanks. Because of the ever changing tactical situation. All units worked together smoothly, under the most adverse conditions.

The 424th regiment was therefore credited, by fellow American soldiers, with assisting in the delaying action of German forces at St. Vith. The 424th was an identical regiment to the 422nd and 423rd. The question thus arises, if given the same opportunity not to be encircled, would the two regiments on the Schnee Eifel have performed in a similar manner to the 424th, the answer would certainly seem to be yes. Did the division run--no. It stood and fought and in several cases earned post battle distinction for its action.²⁵⁹

The end result of the delaying action performed at St. Vith was one of several key dominoes in the Battle of the Bulge that marked the last massive German counteroffensive of the war. The failure of the offensive cost Germany more than simply the battle. The cost in German man power was staggering; 50,000 prisoners-of-war were lost to the Allies with a total of 120,000 German soldiers lost during the battle. In addition almost 600 German tanks and assault guns were destroyed, and countless motor vehicles. The cost to the Luftwaffe meant the German air force was never able to mount a serious presence in the skies over Germany for the remainder of the war. There proved no profitable outcome for the Germany Army that might excuse these losses. The Bulge created by the German salient was repulsed by the end of January 1945, and, consequently, the Germans gained no ground from this offensive, much less the prize of Antwerp. "By depriving themselves of the resources in men and material consumed in the Ardennes, the Wehrmacht had so weakened themselves for the battles both east and west of the Rhine that, in the long run, they had shortened the eventual duration of the war by many months." With the defeat at the Battle of the Bulge, despair in full measure

flooded in upon the German armies in the West. The next campaigns would see the Allies gaining bridgeheads over the Rhine, followed by the wholesale invasion of Germany itself. The attack to the west “invited disaster in the east and hastened the final and inevitable defeat of Germany.”²⁶⁰

In a *New York Times* article from October 1945, “Bulge Battle Division Is to Be Dissolved,” the 106th Infantry Division was credited in American newspapers for having assisted in a holding action of the Germans during the Battle of the Bulge in December 1944. Over the next six decades, barring the minor exception, historiography would shroud the 106th in the image of ineffectiveness to cowardliness. Thanks to the efforts of the 106th Infantry Division Association members combined with primary documentation from the U.S. Army War College and the National Archives II, the full scope of the division’s role in the Battle of the Bulge is finally beginning to be appreciated.²⁶¹

EPILOGUE

Donald J. Young is a former member of the 106th Infantry Division and the author of *The Lion's Share*, a fictional account of his experiences during the Battle of the Bulge. Young was stationed east of Schönberg on 16 December 1944. Fighting in the Battle of the Schnee Eifel, his regiment was surrounded by the German double envelopment.

While on the Schnee Eifel, Young was wounded. A German Tiger Tank shell exploded in the trees above him, and shrapnel from the round tore through the air. Young happened to be wearing his field pack with his bayonet secured on the outside sleeve. Shrapnel from the exploding tree bursts tore through Young's bayonet and struck him in the shoulder. His wounds were treated, and Young went on to fight only to be taken later as a prisoner of war. The bayonet, meanwhile, stayed behind.

More than fifty years passed when Young was contacted by Hans Schuster from Malberg, Germany. Schuster explored battle sites throughout the Ardennes and Eifel for remains of World War II aircraft and pilots missing in action. On one trip, he discovered a pair of U.S. army dog tags. Schuster wrote to Young about his findings, and Young wrote back telling Schuster about his days in the Schnee Eifel.

To Young's surprise, Schuster wrote back claiming to have found a split bayonet. A few weeks later a package arrived in the mail from Germany. Inside the package was a World War II era U.S. bayonet severed in two at the same forward point as Young's bayonet over fifty years earlier. According to Young in his article "A Blessed Bayonet,"

“I keep the bayonet on a stand in my study. It is a piece of my past, unearthed by chance, preserving the memory of a fateful, life-saving event in my life.”²⁶²

END NOTES

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³ Timothy T. Lupfer, *Leavenworth Papers The Dynamics of Doctrine The Changes in German Tactical Doctrine During the First World War* No. 4, (Fort Leavenworth, KA: Combat Studies Institute, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1981), 3.

⁴ Scott C. Blanchette, *Re-Examining the Battle of the Bulge Assessing the Role of Strategic Intelligence and Coalition Warfare Against the 1944 Wehrmacht* M.A. Thesis, (Denton: University of North Texas, 1998), 14; William K. Goolrick and Ogden Tanner, *Battle of the Bulge*, (Alexandria, Virginia: Time-Life Books, 1979), 90.

⁵ Bruce Quarrie, *Order of Battle 9, The Ardennes Offensive US VII and VIII Corps and British XXX Corps, Central Sector*, (London: Osprey Publishing Co., 2001), 65, 66; Charles Whiting, *Death of a Division*, (London: F. Warne, 1980); Ernest R. Dupuy, *St Vith Lion in the Way, The 106th Infantry Division in World War II*, (Washington D.C.: Infantry Journal Press, 1949); Hal Richard Taylor, *A Teen's War. Training, Combat, Capture*, (Bloomington, Illinois: 1st Books Library, 1999), v; Gerald Astor, *A Blood Dimmed Tide: The Battle of the Bulge by the men who fought it*, (New York, Harper & Row, 1966), 15, 489, Astor book quotes several 106th Infantry Division veterans who object to Charles Whiting's criticism of their division's role during the Battle of the Bulge.

⁶ Mike, Tolhurst, *Battle of the Bulge: St Vith-18 Volks-Grenadier Division vs. US 106 Division*, (South Yorkshire, England: Pen & Sword Books, 1999), 6, 7; Taylor, *A Teen's War*, v.

⁷ Milton Shulman, *Defeat in the West*, (Greenwood Press, Publishers, Westport, Connecticut: 1948), v.

⁸ Quarrie, *Order of Battle 9, The Ardennes Offensive*, 66.

⁹ Parker, ed., *Hitler's Ardennes Offensive*, 245; Quarrie, *Order of Battle 9, The Ardennes Offensive*, 58; Special to the New York Times, "Bulge Battle Division Is to Be Dissolved," *New York Times*, 10 October 1945, this article provides an broad overview of how the 106th infantry division fit into the strategic situation in Europe in December 1944.

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¹¹ Hugh M. Cole, *U.S. Army in World War II: European Theater of Operations, The Ardennes: Battle of the Bulge*, (United States Army, Center of Military History, Washington. D.C.: 1944), 4, 5; Charles B. MacDonald, *U.S. Army in World War II: European Theater of Operations, The Siegfried Line Campaign*, (United States Army, Office of the Chief of Military History, Washington, D.C.: 1963), 3-14; Hanson Baldwin, *Battles Lost and Won: Great Campaigns of World War II*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 317.

¹² Roger Cirillo, *Ardennes – Alsace*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1995), 6,7; Cole, *U.S. Army in World War II: European Theater of Operations*, 4, 5; MacDonald, *U.S. Army in World War II: European Theater of Operations, The Siegfried Line Campaign*, 3-14; Stanley Frank, *The Glorious Collapse of the 106th*, MacDonald Papers, Box 1, Folder 1, (U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, PA), 3; S.L.A. Marshall, *Bastogne: The Story of the First Eight Days*, (Washington, D.C.: Infantry Journal Press, 1946), 4.

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¹⁵ Baldwin, *Battles Lost and Won*, 341.

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¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 257; Shelby L. Novato Stanton, *Order of Battle*, U.S. Army, World War, (California: Presidio, 1984.), 3.

¹⁹ Greenfield, Palmer, and Wiley, *United States Army in World War II: The Army Ground Forces*, 273.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 53.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 54.

²² *Ibid.*, 55.

²³ *Ibid.*, 252.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 245.

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²⁷ *Ibid.*, 247.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 248.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

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³¹ Louis E. Keefer, *Scholars in Foxholes: The Story of the Army Specialized Training Program in World War II*, (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 1988), 7, 8.

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⁴⁰ Information Section, Analysis Branch, Headquarters Army Ground Forces. *Fact Sheet on the 106th Infantry Division*, 2; Sgt. Leo R. Leisse, *Diary of an EX-POW*, Charles MacDonald Collection, Box 1, Folder 1, (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army Military History Institute), 2.

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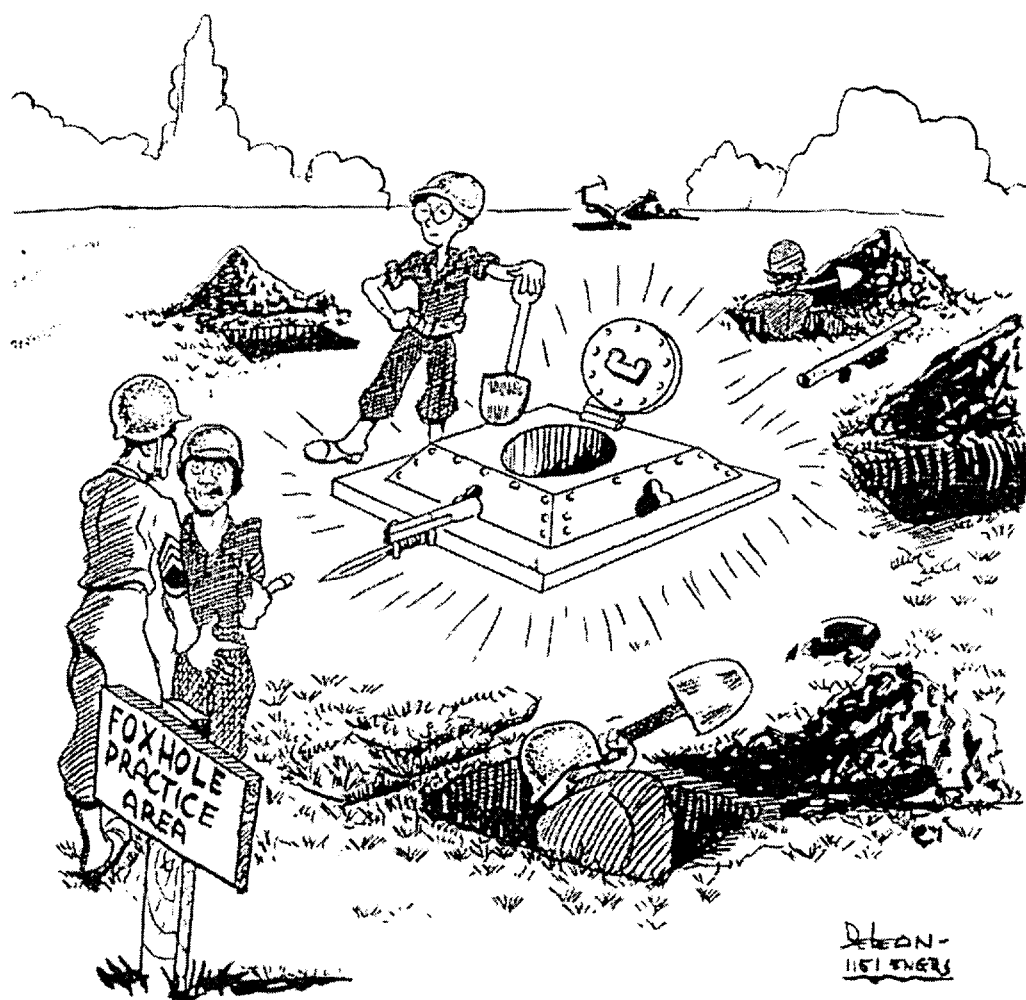
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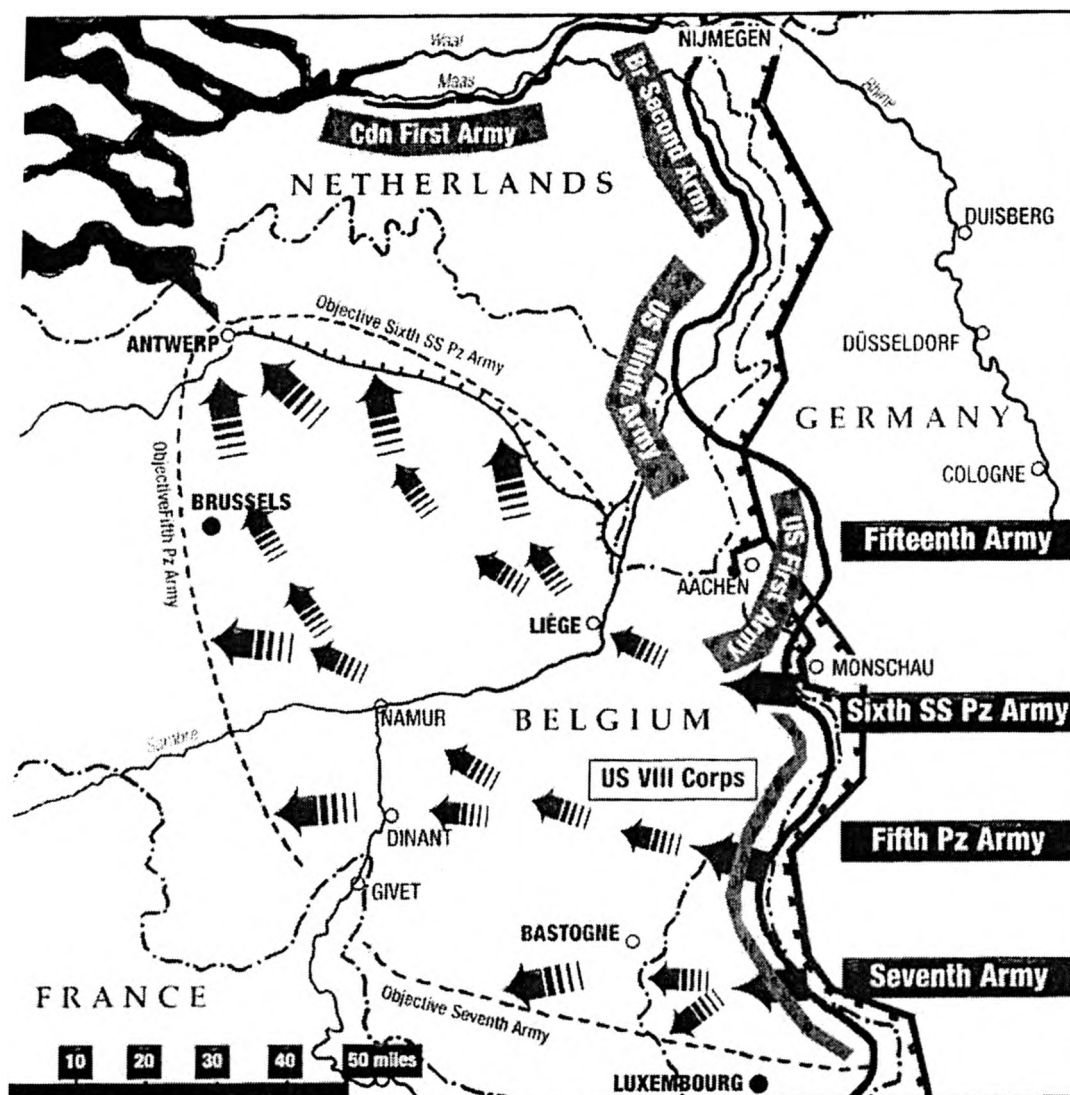
APPENDIX



THAT'S THE NEW MAN FROM ASTP!

Figure 1:
Army Specialized Training Program Cartoon¹

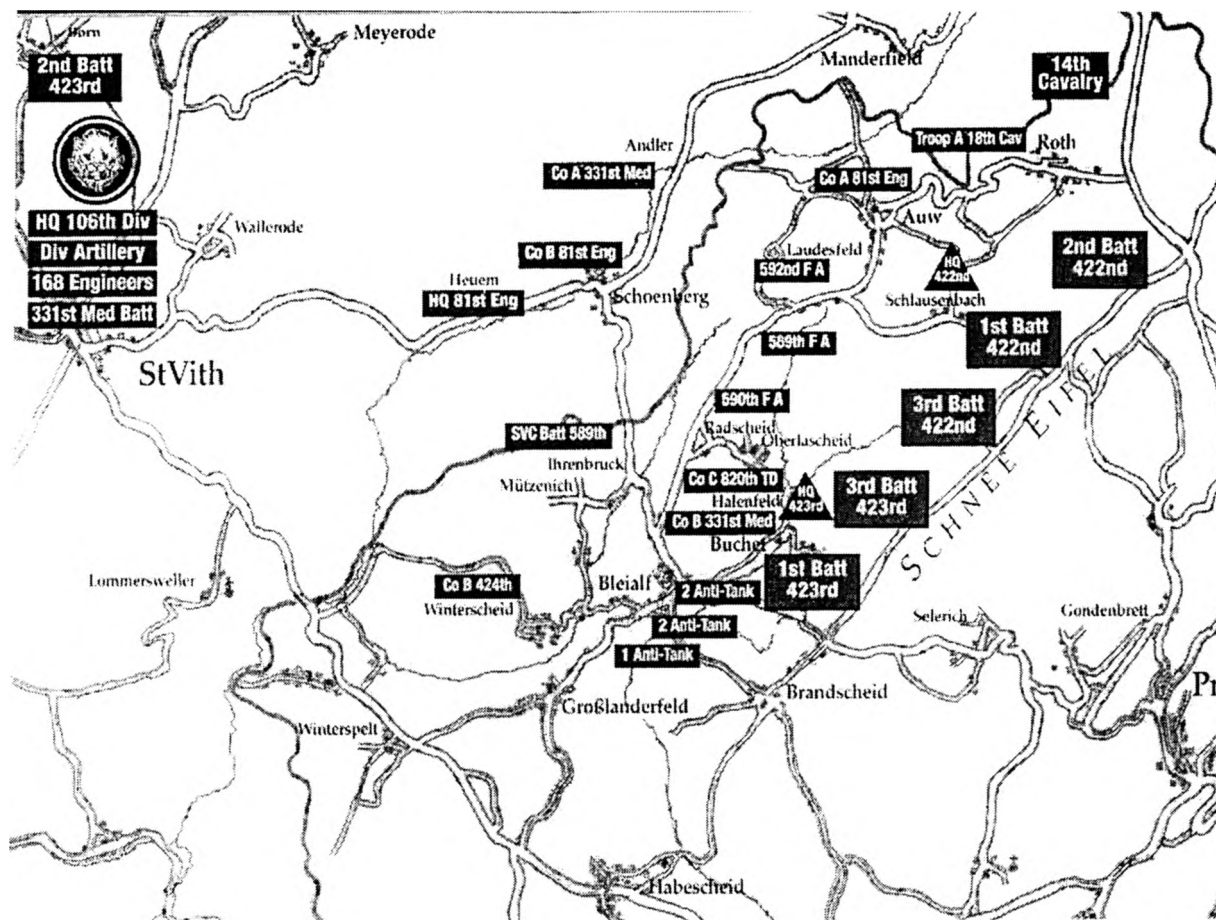
¹ Louis E. Keefer, *Scholars in Foxholes: The Story of the Army Specialized Training Program in World War II*. Jefferson, (North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 1988), 174



The German plan

Figure 2:
Map of the German Big Solution¹

¹ Mike Tolhurst, *Battle of the Bulge: St Vith-18 Volks-Grenadier Division vs. US 106 Division*, (South Yorkshire, England :Pen & Sword Books, 1999), 54



Disposition of main units on the Schnee Eifel and rear areas.

Figure 3:
Map of the disposition of the 106th on the Schnee Eifel¹

¹ Mike Tolhurst, *Battle of the Bulge: St Vith-18 Volks-Grenadier Division vs. US 106 Division*, (South Yorkshire, England :Pen & Sword Books, 1999), 42

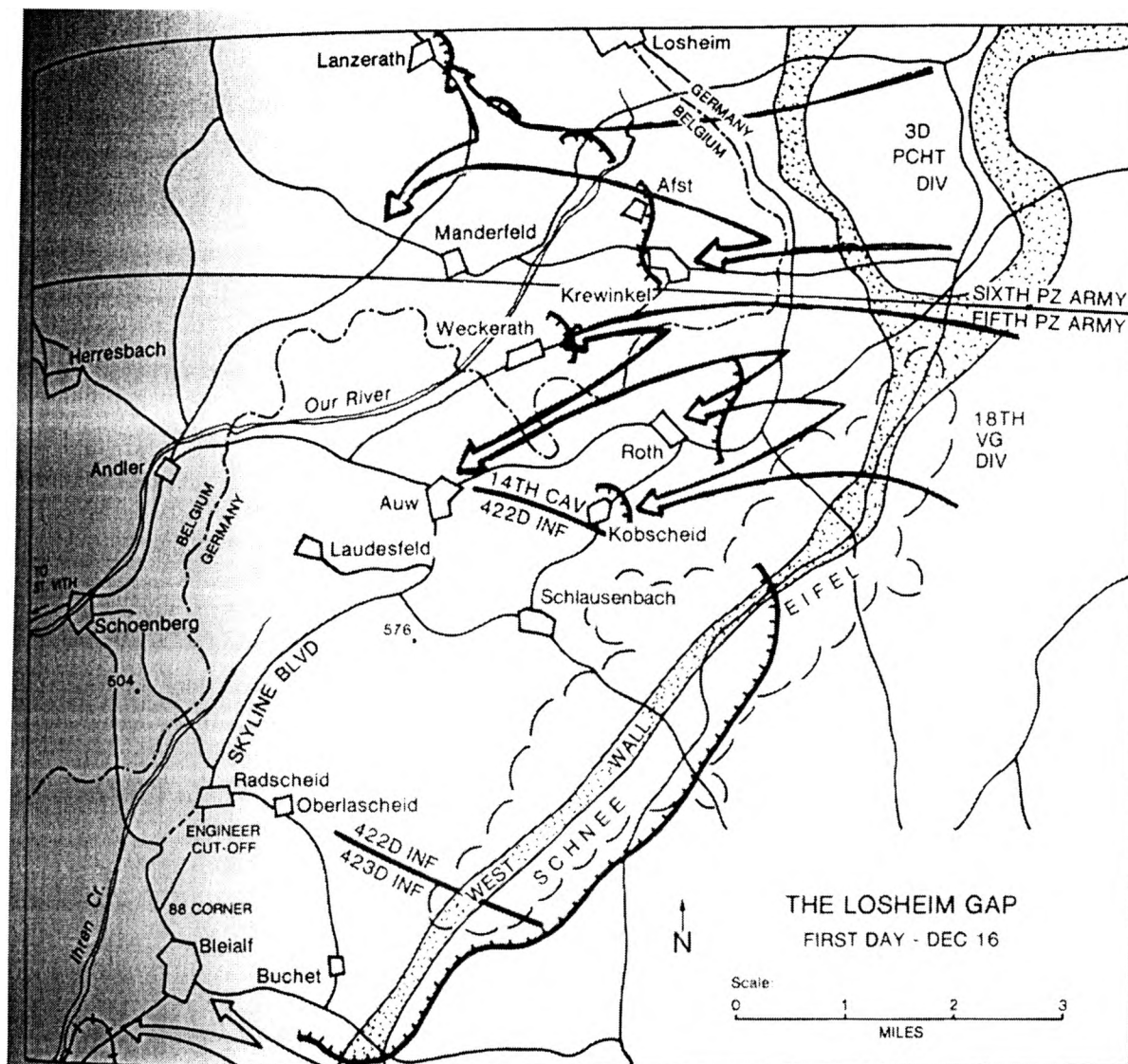


Figure 4:
Map of German Attack in 14th Cavalry Group Sector¹

¹ Charles B. MacDonald, *A Time for Trumpets*, (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1985), 103



Figure 5:
Picture of an American M8 Armored Car¹

¹ Mike Tolhurst, *Battle of the Bulge: St Vith-18 Volks-Grenadier Division vs. US 106 Division*, (South Yorkshire, England :Pen & Sword Books, 1999), 15



Figure 6:
Picture of German infantry advancing in the Schnee Eifel¹

¹ Mike Tolhurst, *Battle of the Bulge: St Vith-18 Volks-Grenadier Division vs. US 106 Division*, (South Yorkshire, England :Pen & Sword Books, 1999), 62

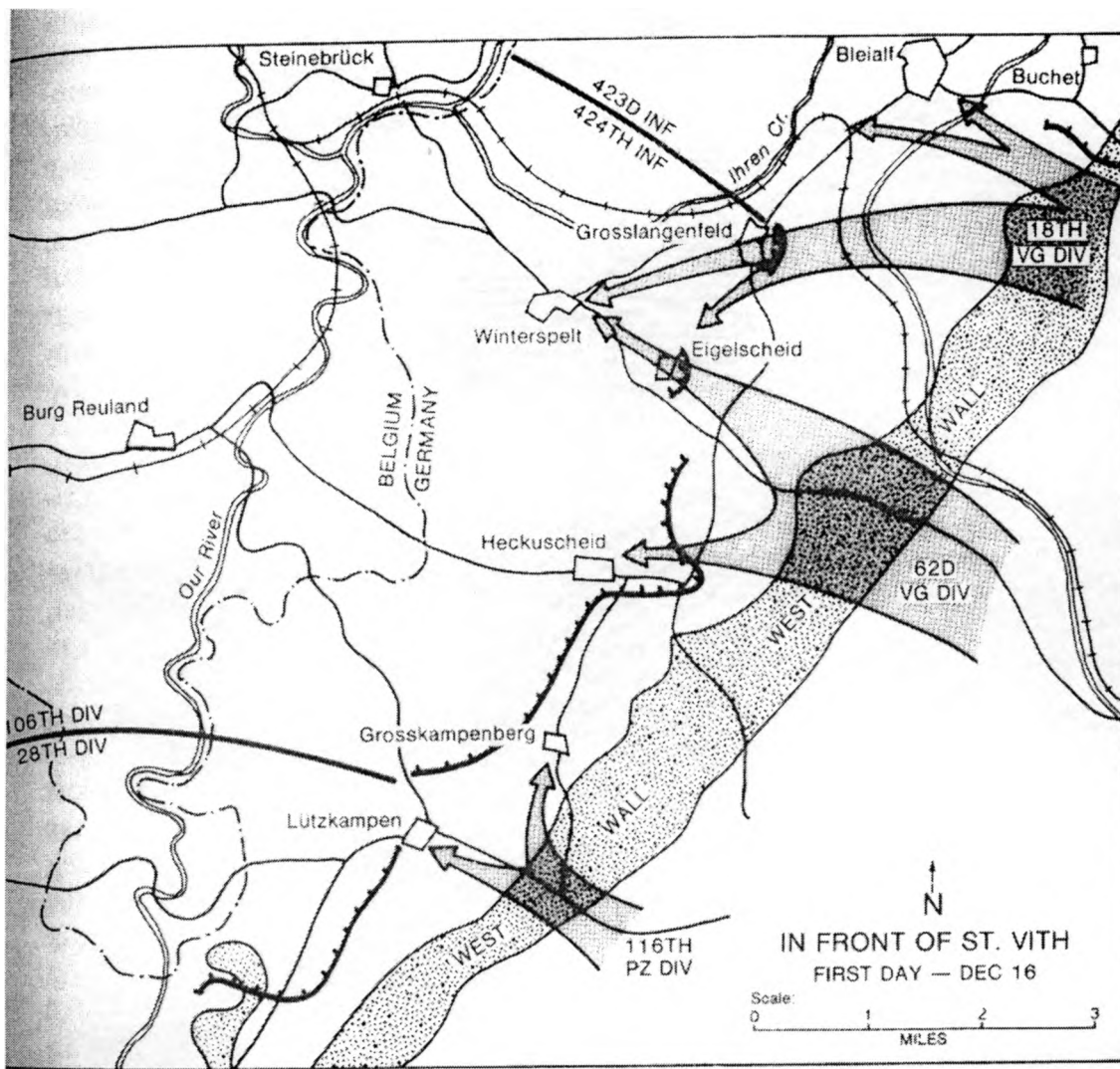


Figure 7:
Map of German Attack in 424th Regiment's Sector¹

¹ Charles B. MacDonald, *A Time for Trumpets*, (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1985), 113

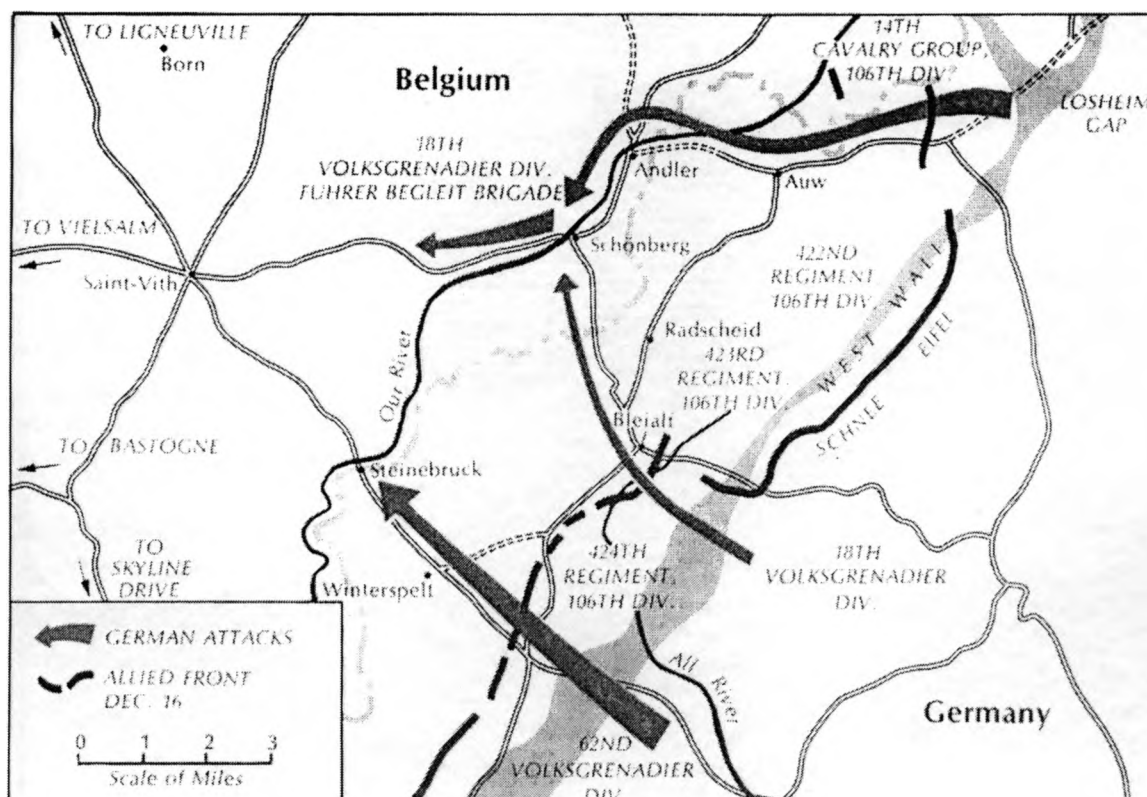


Figure 8:
Map of German double envelopment of the Schnee Eifel¹

¹ William K. Goolrick and Ogden Tanner, *Battle of the Bulge*, (Alexandria, Virginia: Time-Life Books, 1979), 92

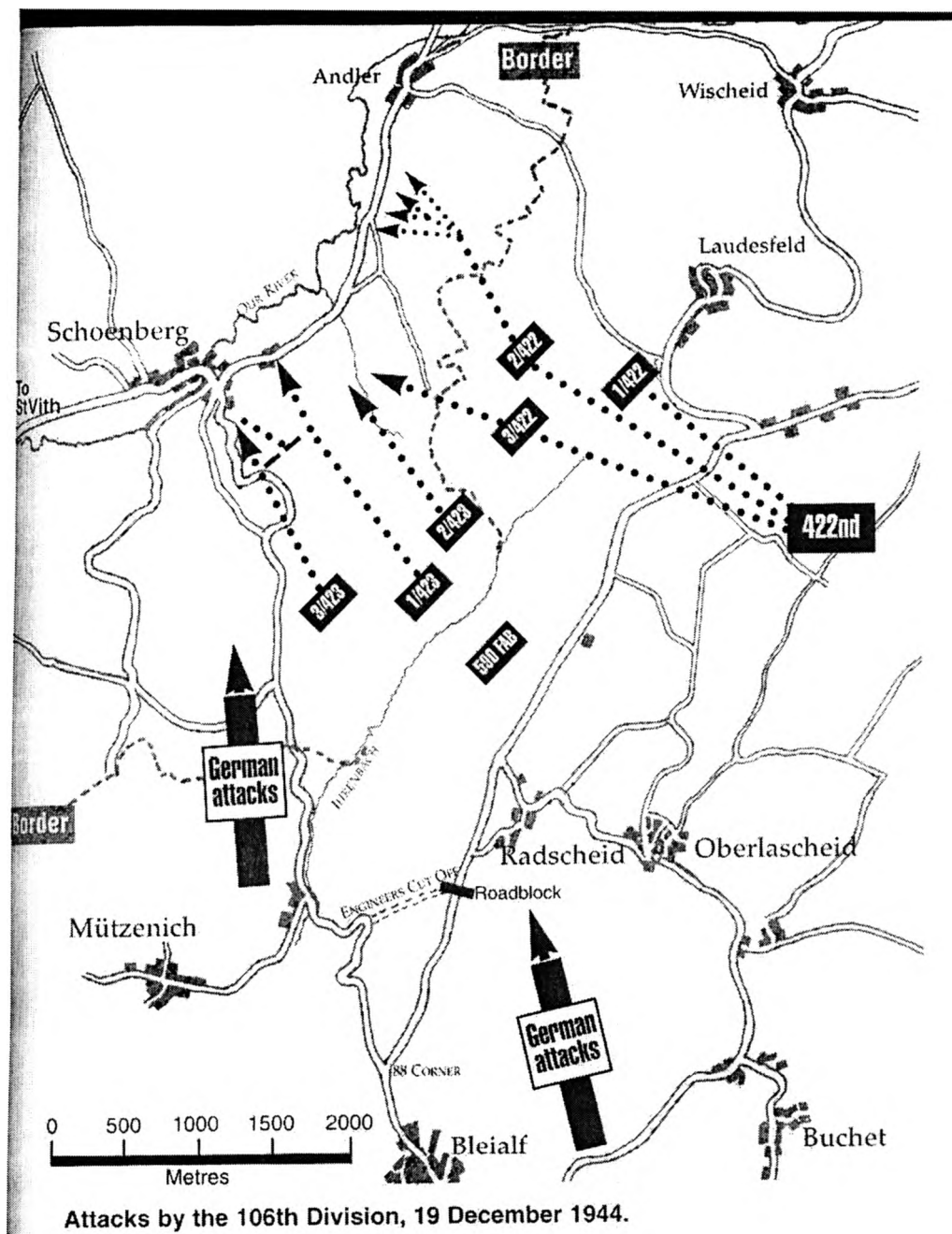


Figure 9:
Map of the 422nd and 423rd assault on Schönberg¹

¹ Mike Tolhurst, *Battle of the Bulge: St Vith-18 Volks-Grenadier Division vs. US 106 Division*, (South Yorkshire, England :Pen & Sword Books, 1999), 111

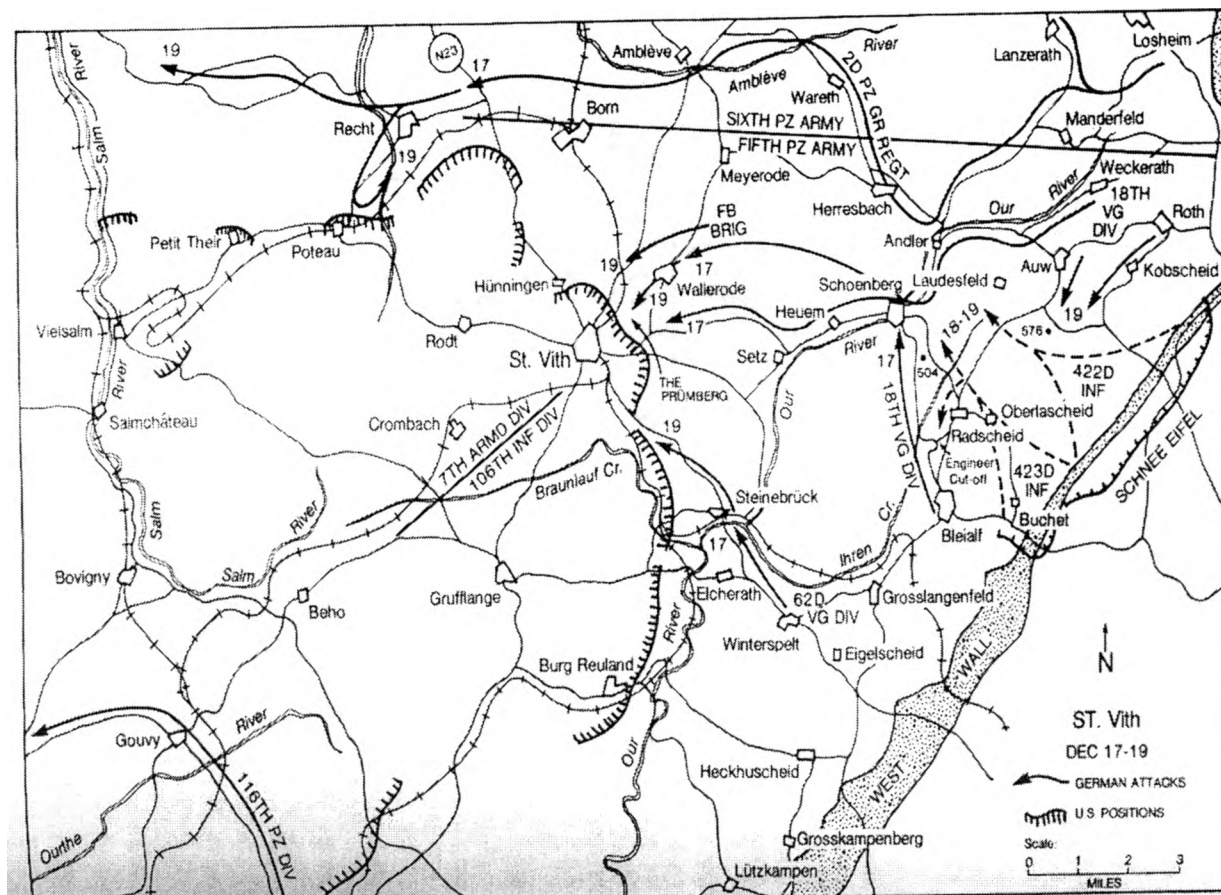
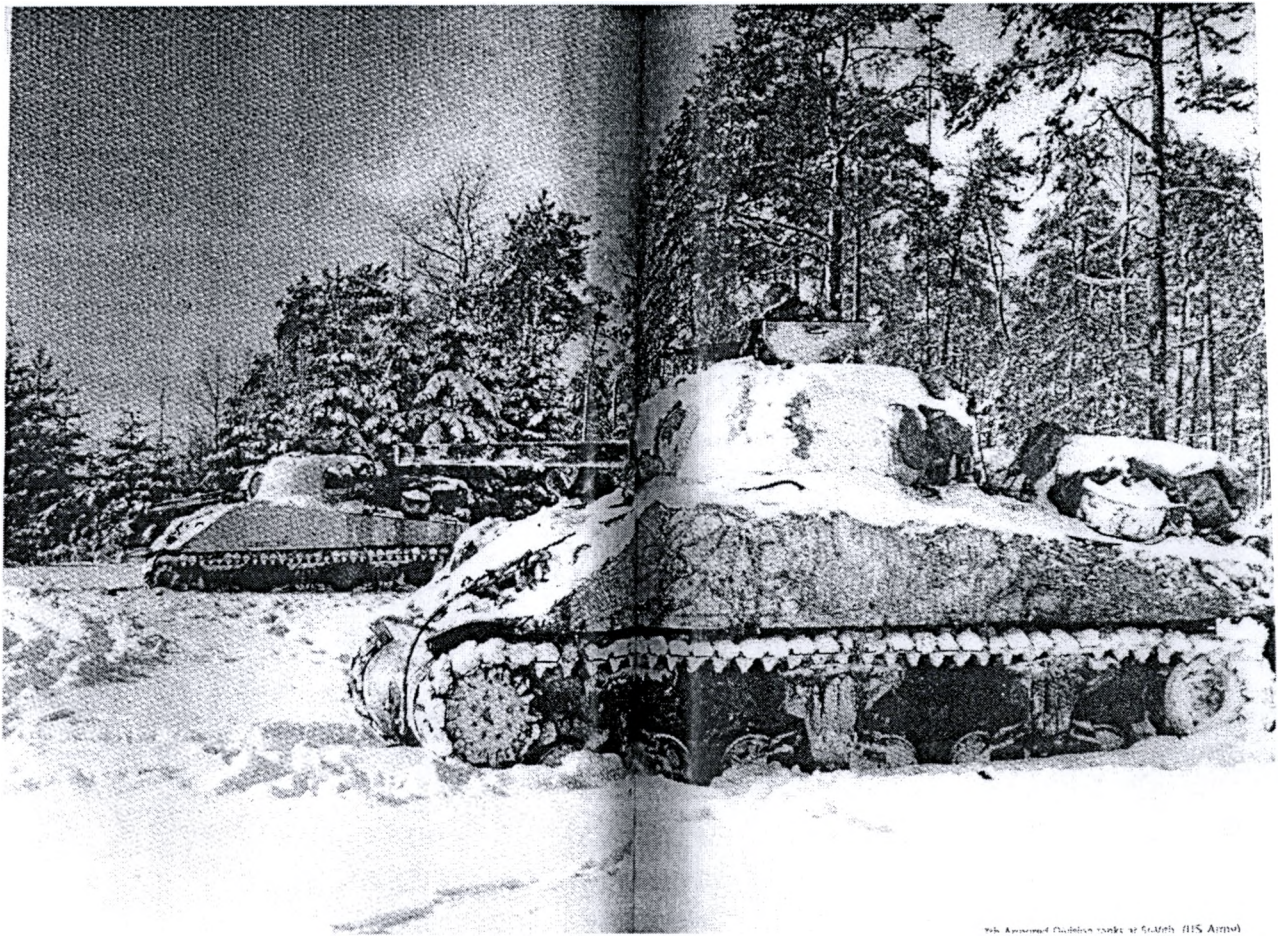


Figure 10:
Map of the Battle of St. Vith¹

¹ Charles B. MacDonald, *A Time for Trumpets*, (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1985), 312



With American M4 Sherman tanks at St. Vith. (U.S. Army)

Figure 11:
Picture of American tanks outside of St. Vith¹

¹ George Forty, *The Reich's Last Gamble: The Ardennes Offensive, December 1944*, (London: Cassell, 2000), 224

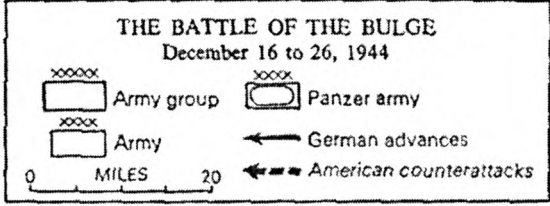


Figure 12:
Map of the Battle of the Bulge¹

¹ Hanson W. Baldwin, *Battles Lost and Won: Great Campaigns of World War II*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 333

GLOSSARY

Division.....	Div
Battalion.....	Bn
Field Artillery.....	FA
Company.....	Co
Command Post.....	CP
Observation Post.....	OP
Tank Destroyer.....	TD
Prisoner of War.....	PW
Headquarters.....	HQ
Volks-Grenadier Division.....	VGD
Oberstgruppenfuhrer.....	Colonel General
Oberkommando der Wehrmacht.....	OKW
Oberkommando West.....	OB West
G-1.....	personnel
G-2.....	intelligence
G-3.....	plans, training, and operations
G-4.....	supply
West Wall.....	Western German Defensive Border
St. Vith.....	Belgium Town
Bastogne.....	Belgium Town
Schnee Eifel.....	literal English translation “Snow Mountains”
Ardennes.....	Heavy Forest Region
OPSEC.....	German Operations Secret
SHAEF.....	Strategic Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces
Organic Unit.....	formed with and as a permanent member of a division
Ultra.....	Code Name for Allied Intelligence Program
Red on Blue.....	U.S. Army training colors to distinguish forces
Dragoon’s Teeth.....	Concrete Anti-tank obstacles

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