CHANGING AN ARMY

AN ORAL HISTORY OF GENERAL WILLIAM E. DePUY, USA RETIRED

UNITED STATES MILITARY HISTORY INSTITUTE
AND
UNITED STATES ARMY CENTER OF MILITARY HISTORY

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ROMIE L. BROWNLEE
AND
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UNITED STATES MILITARY HISTORY INSTITUTE, PENNSYLVANIA
AND
UNITED STATES ARMY CENTER OF MILITARY HISTORY, WASHINGTON, D.C.

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MAJOR GENERAL WILLIAM E. DePUY
Commanding General, 1st Infantry Division (March 1966 — February 1967)

FOREWORD

The U.S. Army Military History Institute at Carlisle Barracks originally published General William E. DePuy's oral history as a convincing example of this relatively new technique in the historian's arsenal. It soon became apparent, however, that the audience recognized in this interview a larger, more enduring value and utility. Here was an Army leader, a fighter, trainer, and thinker, imparting his wisdom and experience to the officer and NCO corps in his own words. The overwhelming demand from the Army's senior leaders and its school system for copies of the DePuy oral history quickly exhausted the original printing. It gives me great pleasure to publish the first Center of Military History edition of this important document.

The DePuy interview easily fulfilled the Military History Institute's criteria for oral history publications. It concerned a figure immediately recognizable to a large number of Army officers, one who had made a major impact on the development of the Army since World War II, and one whose career had spanned a period of significant change within the service.

While these considerations remain valid, it seems to me that another element has emerged during the two years that Army leaders have read and discussed the DePuy oral history. Simply put, General DePuy's career demonstrates that one man can make a huge difference in our Army.

General DePuy was commissioned from ROTC in 1941 and joined the 20th Infantry in time for the famous Louisiana Maneuvers. Subsequently assigned to the 90th Infantry Division, he trained and prepared with the division for its role in the liberation of Europe. In particular, the division's fight through the hedgerows of Normandy in June and July 1944 provided then Captain DePuy with a profound lesson. He saw soldiers suffer and die because of poor leadership or insufficient training. As a consequence he dedicated himself to the goal of leader development.

His subsequent military career bore eloquent testimony to this dedication. Service on the postwar Army Staff involved him in decisions that dramatically affected training, doctrine, force-structure, and policy development. Later service in Vietnam allowed him to apply his years of planning and training in a combat situation. Finally, his assignment as the first commander of TRADOC gave him the opportunity to directly transform the Army in the post-Vietnam era.

It takes brains, hard work, dedication, and probably a bit of luck for one man to directly influence a great military institution. DePuy blended these ingredients to the fullest, and in doing so left us a profoundly important legacy. My hope is that today's young officers, our Army's future leaders, will read and profit from General DePuy's words.

I wish to thank the officers who conducted the interviews—Brigadier General William J. Mullen III and Colonel Romie L. Brownlee. My appreciation also goes to

Colonel Rod Paschall, director of the Military History Institute, and his staff for preparing the original publication and their cooperation in facilitating the Center's new edition. The views expressed by General DePuy are, of course, his own. His freely expressed opinions do not necessarily represent or reflect approved statements of policy or recognized positions of the U.S. Army or those of the Department of Defense.

WILLIAM A. STOFFT
Brigadier General, USA
Chief of Military History

ABOUT THE INTERVIEWERS



COLONEL
ROMIE L. BROWNLEE



BRIGADIER GENERAL
WILLIAM J. MULLEN III

Conducted as part of the Academic Year 1979 Senior Officer Oral History Program, these interviews with General William E. DePuy, US Army, Retired, were conducted at the General's home in Highfield, Virginia, by Lieutenant Colonels Romie L. Brownlee and William J. Mullen III. The two interviewers, both students at the Army War College, had served previously with General DePuy and conducted extensive research on the General's background and professional career prior to conducting the three interview sessions. Their pre-interview research included a review of pertinent unit histories, annual historical summaries, the official World War II Army histories ("Green Books"), pertaining to the General's service in the 90th Infantry Division, monographs that addressed programs with which General DePuy was involved, interviews with personalities familiar with the General, and a review of other US Army Military History Institute senior officer oral histories that touched on the DePuy era. Additionally, news accounts, professional periodicals, and the Military History Institute's archives were also consulted. Finally, both interviewers participated in an oral history workshop prior to conducting the interviews with General DePuy.

A native Texan, Les Brownlee graduated from the University of Wyoming and was selected as the Distinguished Honor Graduate of the US Army Ranger School after he was commissioned in the Infantry in 1962. After serving as an airborne infantry company commander in Vietnam during 1965, Colonel Brownlee returned to combat in 1969 as a battalion advisor with the South Vietnamese Airborne Division. Colonel Brownlee served as General DePuy's aide in 1973 while assigned to the US Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC). Following his promotion to lieutenant colonel, Colonel Brownlee was selected for battalion command in Germany in 1978. Colonel Brownlee holds a Masters Degree in Business Administration from the University of Alabama. His decorations include the Silver Star with Oak Leaf Cluster, the Legion of Merit, the Bronze Star, and the Purple Heart. He retired from the Army in 1983, and presently lives with his wife, Nancy, and two children, Tracy and John, in Fairfax, Virginia. Colonel Brownlee is currently the National Security Assistant to John W. Warner, United States Senator from the State of Virginia.

Brigadier General William J. Mullen III is the son of a distinguished Army family and was born at Plattsburg Barracks, New York. A 1959 graduate of West Point, he was commissioned in the Infantry and was an early participant in the Vietnam War first serving there in 1962. Returning to that country again in 1966, General Mullen commanded an infantry company in the 1st Infantry Division then commanded by General DePuy. Promoted to lieutenant colonel in 1972, General Mullen was selected for battalion command in 1975, and subsequently commanded the 1st Brigade, 1st Infantry Division. General Mullen holds a Masters Degree in International Affairs from George Washington University. His decorations include the Distinguished Service Cross, the Legion of Merit, the Bronze Star, the Soldier's Medal, and the Purple Heart. General Mullen presently is the Assistant Division Commander for Support, 5th Infantry Division (Mechanized), stationed at Fort Polk, Louisiana.

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CHAPTER I

From North Dakota to Normandy

INTERVIEWER: General DePuy, we will begin by asking about your childhood years, and attempt to get some information to fill in the void in the historical records. We know that you were born in Jamestown, North Dakota. Could you tell us about your boyhood? What were some of your hobbies and your favorite subjects in school, even before high school?*

GEN DEPUY: I was an only child as was my father. My closest friend was my paternal grandfather who lived with us and was a Victorian romantic, golfer and hunter. My other companions were books. My father was of French Huguenot descent and my mother's family were Scotch-Irish from Canada. They were splendid parents in every respect. My family ended up in North Dakota because my grandfather was a doctor, and while he and his brother were on their way to the west coast, someone asked them to get off the train to treat an epidemic of some sort in Bismarck, and they never got back on the train. I might add that my grandfather was, among other things, "Sitting Bull's" personal physician. Those must have been pretty exciting days. I have always regretted that I wasn't there. But, anyway, my father was a country banker. When I was a young man, Jamestown was a very small town of about 5,000, on the prairie of North Dakota, down in a little valley out of the wind. It was populated almost entirely by Germans and Scandinavians, a few English, and an odd Frenchman; a very conservative kind of a community. It was also a very interesting area. It was a high-risk area plagued by drought, grasshoppers, and occasionally blessed with good crops — mostly wheat. Some people made a lot of money, but most did not. In some respects, it still had a rather frontier atmosphere. Other than that, most of us grew up during the Depression, the onset of which out there was in about 1926-27.

The agricultural depression came first, and then the crash of '29, so nobody had a lot of money. It's cold where we lived in North Dakota, with short summers and long winters. There was a nearby river where we did a lot of skating. I was never particularly fond of school — the academic part. I have no way of comparing the quality of the schools up there to the quality of the schools elsewhere, but suspect that they were probably pretty good. The literacy rate in the Upper Plains States is perennially the highest in the nation. There was more of a European-type atmosphere there compared to other parts of the country. We did a lot of skating, a little bit of skiing, and a lot of game bird hunting, because there were literally millions of birds up there on the midcontinent flyway.

INTERVIEWER: Did anyone in your family at that time, have a military background? Had you given any thought toward a military career or toward the Army? Was your reading slanted in that direction?

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*This interview with General William E. DePuy, US Army, Retired, was conducted by Lieutenant Colonels William J. Mullen and Romie L. Brownlee on 19 March 1979, at General DePuy's home in Highfield, Virginia, as part of the U.S. Army War College/U.S. Army Military History Institute's Senior Officer Oral History Program.

GEN DEPUY: Well, my father was a lieutenant in World War I. He did not go to France. My grandfather never participated in any war. His father, my great grandfather, was killed in the Civil War. He was a captain of Michigan Infantry, and was killed at Cold Harbor in Virginia, on the peninsula. They were citizen soldiers, not career professionals. But, as a child, I was interested in the history of World War I. I read the whole set of books my father had, which was called, *The Literary Digest History of World War I.** It was about 20 volumes and covered the war in great detail. I really enjoyed them. The nearest military influence was Company "H" of the 165th Infantry, of the National Guard, in Jamestown.



Corporal William E. DePuy
Squad Leader, Company "B"
109th Engineer Battalion
34th Infantry Division

INTERVIEWER: You attended college at South Dakota State. What was your college major and what were your aspirations at that time?

GEN DEPUY: Well, what I might do is pick up that military thread a little bit. I moved down to South Dakota in 1935, when I was a junior in high school, and then, went to college, South Dakota State College, which is right there in Brookings. My father had moved from the bank of Jamestown to the bank in Brookings, and I joined the National Guard, as did all my friends in those days. We needed the money. It wasn't much money by today's standards, but any money was important in those days. Also, when I entered College, ROTC was mandatory. Everybody was in it. The first two years you had to be in it, and then, the second two years were optional. So, you automatically became a private in the ROTC regiment when you started college, and then, I was in

*Francis W. Halsey, comp., *The Literary Digest History of the World War* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Co., 1919).

the Guard at the same time. Then, when the choice came to move into senior ROTC in the junior year, I made that choice, and I liked it very much. And then, to carry the story on to the end, when the draft started in 1940, we had to choose between the Guard and the ROTC. Most of us dropped out of the Guard and stayed with the ROTC for obvious reasons. It's better to be a lieutenant. At that time I was a corporal, a squad leader, in Company "B", 109th Engineers, 34th Infantry Division. So, the choice between the two was easy to make.

I didn't distinguish myself academically in any way. I didn't do very well in math. I was going to be a banker, and follow in the footsteps of my father, which is, I guess, not an unusual thing to do. So, I took whatever courses I could find in that little college that applied, and there weren't very many. I also took some engineering courses. But, anyway, I graduated with a BS in economics, which was the closest thing I could find to the banking business. If it hadn't been for the war, I'd probably have ended up in the banking business. During college the only sport that I got involved in was hockey. I played a lot of hockey, and we eventually had a little semipro hockey team. We made a little pocket money out of that by playing around in a league that was located mostly in southern Minnesota and eastern South Dakota. We had a lot of fun doing that. In high school I played football even though I only weighed 128 pounds. But, I played. I had the unusual job of quarterbacking my high school football team from the tailback position. So, I had fun there. I would run the ball — could call the signals that let me run. That's hard to beat.

INTERVIEWER: Could you tell us something about what ROTC was like in those days at South Dakota State? For example, was there anyone there who may have influenced you, like the Professor of Military Science? You mentioned that you really liked ROTC.

GEN DEPUY: Yes, I really did like it. We had some very interesting chaps there from the Regular Army. One was a Major Ed Piburn. Ed Piburn was at least half-Indian, and a fine officer; he was married to a full-blooded Cherokee — a marvelous looking woman. He later became a brigadier general and assistant division commander of the 10th Armored Division. We also had a man named Ray Harris who was quite portly but kind of ferocious and inspiring. He used to crawl around on the floor of the auditorium teaching us how to crawl. He would turn very red in the face because he really was beyond that. But, the man who inspired everybody was a colonel named James P. Murphy. Murphy was a fatherly kind of fellow with a very entertaining and wide ranging vocabulary with all sorts of little figures of speech that made him amusing to all of us simple chaps out there on the reservation. We loved him, and he inspired us all toward the Army. There's no question that he was a great recruiter and wanted us all to be in the Army.

I might say that I almost entered the Marine Corps instead of the Army, because every year we had only one officer who was taken into the Regular Army. But, we usually had two who went into the Marine Corps. Now, that was rather typical up in the Plains. The Marine Corps recruited very heavily in the Upper Middle West, North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa, etc. I wanted to get the Regular Army commission, but I lost out to an individual by the name of Bob Barthell, later a colonel in the Signal Corps. Then, two of us tried for the Marine Corps. The Marines usually selected two except for that particular year when there was only one commission available. Colonel, now retired, Stan Nelson of the Marine Corps got it. We had to go on duty first with the Army, and we were on the Louisiana Maneuvers when the telegram came through saying that he

had been picked, and that I hadn't been. Well, I was heartbroken, but, in retrospect, it's the best thing that ever happened. Anyway, as you can see, I was very enthusiastic by that time. I really had been swept up with enthusiasm for the military.

INTERVIEWER: Did you select the Infantry as your branch?

GEN DEPUY: No, everybody at South Dakota State was in the Infantry. There was no choice. Everybody, even the engineering graduates, went into the Infantry. Barthell went in and later changed to the Signal Corps. Chuck Wilson, who retired as a major general, was an engineer graduate, a brilliant engineer, but he went into the Infantry and stayed in the Infantry. He would have been a magnificent engineer. But, no, there was no choice.

INTERVIEWER: Is there anything else that happened during those years, or any other person that you can think of, who influenced you later?

GEN DEPUY: Not really. The officers in the cadet regiment were the colonel and the battalion commanders; I was the regimental adjutant in my senior year. I was the captain of the Scabbard and Blade, which included a little social hazing. But, anyway, all of the military things appealed to me, and I liked them better than I did economics and other things. So, it was easy for me to decide to stay in the Army after the war. Furthermore, the pay was better.



ROTC Cadet William E. DePuy
South Dakota State College



General DePuy as a newly
commissioned second lieutenant.

INTERVIEWER: Your initial assignment, I believe, was to Fort Leonard Wood with the 20th Infantry Regiment. But, other than the ROTC, did you have any kind of officer training before you reported there?

GEN DEPUY: No. There wasn't any in those days. It was assumed that we were trained in ROTC, and relative to everybody else in the World War II Army, I guess we were. But, by any objective standard, we were untrained.

INTERVIEWER: So, after being commissioned following your graduation in '41, you reported to Fort Leonard Wood as a new second lieutenant and a platoon leader?

GEN DEPUY: Yes. There were 25 to 30 of us, I think, and we all went to the 20th Infantry, the 63rd Infantry, and the 1st Infantry Regiments. We were divided between the three regiments and we all immediately went, almost without exception, to rifle platoons.

INTERVIEWER: Then you went to Communications School at Fort Benning?

GEN DEPUY: Yes. I reported in to the 20th Infantry on June 25th, 1941. That fall we went on the Louisiana Maneuvers.* I was a rifle platoon leader. Incidentally, we walked all the way to Louisiana and back — five hundred miles down, and five hundred miles back. We prided ourselves on never losing a man. There were some good things about that Army. Tactically, it was not proficient, but in many soldierly things, it was good. And, I'd say that I learned more about just plain soldiering from six months in the 20th Infantry than I learned in all the rest of my service. Colonel Milburn was the regimental commander. He later became a corps commander, Lieutenant General "Shrimp" Milburn. The battalion commanders of the 20th Infantry were World War I integrated officers who, generally speaking, were tough and hazing kinds of men. But, they made you do things that are good, liking taking care of the men, and demanding that "nobody drops out," and so, nobody did. The soldiers were sufficiently terrified, so that nobody ever dropped out of that 1,000 mile march unless he went to the hospital. Tactics consisted of getting on line and advancing in rushes — it was called extended-order drill.

When I came back from Louisiana, I went to Communications School because I had been selected to become the battalion adjutant. In those days, the battalion adjutant was quite a guy because he commanded the headquarters detachment, which was the same as the headquarters company. He was the adjutant, he was the communications officer, he was the pioneer officer, and he had the battalion sergeant major in his detachment, plus a battalion supply sergeant. The first lieutenant did all of that. In fact, he was the battalion staff. There was the battalion commander, the battalion executive officer, a battalion adjutant, and the companies, and that's it. Oh, incidentally, the adjutant was also the intelligence officer, and the S-1, the S-2 and the S-4. I could be mistaken about this, there might have been an S-3, but I don't think so. Incidentally, that is the way Soviet battalions are still organized — no staff for operations. But, he certainly was everything else, to include the headquarters company commander. So, the battalion commander

*For a discussion of the 1941 Louisiana Maneuvers see Jean R. Moenk, *A History of Large-Scale Maneuvers in the United States, 1935-1964* (Fort Monroe: USACONARC, 1964), 47-62.



A machine gun company from the 20th Infantry Regiment going into action while "under fire" as part of the 1941 Louisiana Maneuvers.



The "old" 2d Cavalry and the "new" 92nd Reconnaissance Company joining forces during the 1941 Louisiana Maneuvers

wanted me to take over that job from a Lieutenant Humphrey — a very fine officer. So, the one thing he thought I really ought to learn was communications. All the rest was thought to be simple — or perhaps unimportant.

INTERVIEWER: Now, you joined the 357th Infantry Regiment of the 90th Division, at Camp Barkley, Texas, and you trained with that unit for over two years before it deployed to Europe and the European theater in March of '44.* We'd like to know what those two years were like in terms of the effectiveness of the training that the division received. What were the major training problems? Were they similar to those we face today? We have asked ourselves, "What would it be like to have a unit for two years and then take that unit into combat?"

GEN DEPUY: I joined the 357th Infantry as a communications officer out of the school at Benning. I joined the headquarters company of the regiment which was still in the process of forming up. In those days the regimental communications section had a first lieutenant communications officer and three second lieutenant battalion communications officers, each having little sections which worked with the battalions but belonged to the regiment. Later, the battalions got their own. But, in any event, I started out being the communications officer for the 1st Battalion, but I belonged to the regiment. After a very short period of time, I became the regimental communications officer. And then, I became what they called the liaison officer, but I was really the assistant regimental S-3, one of several. I think by that time I was a first lieutenant. Then I became the S-3 of the 1st Battalion. I went back and forth once or twice as people came in who were senior to me and so on, but, generally, I spent my time either as a communications officer during those two years, or in the regimental S-3 section, or as the 1st Battalion S-3. So, that was my viewpoint.

I really have to say something about the officers who were assigned to the regiment. I'll say a lot more about them later, but there was no apparent expertise on tactics anywhere in the regiment, including the Regular officers, which included the regimental commander, one of the battalion commanders, and maybe two, three, or four others, out of some 135 officers. No one had any experience in war. The regimental commander may have been in France, but in those days my impression was that the name of the game was to "soldier," meaning that there were a lot of little rules — a lot of them good rules such as how to take care of your men, and "officers eat last," and such.

There also was a lot of "rank hath its privileges" (RHIP), another name for hazing for which today you would be court-martialed. In my opinion, RHIP was an excuse for mediocre officers to take advantage of those junior in rank. At one time RHIP may have made some sense, but by the time it spread out into an expansion army, it was just a license to steal. So, there was a lot of hazing.

There wasn't much conviction about the tactics. The regimental commander, for example, when he talked to us, didn't talk about tactics, he talked about movements. I have a theory about that. We were motorized by that time, and all the energy and imagination in the division was

*U.S. Army, *A History of the 90th Division in World War II* (Baton Rouge: Army and Navy Publishing Company, 1946).
George Von Roeden, *Regimental History of the 357th Infantry* (Weiden, Bavaria: Ferdinand N. Buchdruckerei, 1945).

totally absorbed in how we could get a regiment mounted up in trucks, move down the road, not get lost, and get there on time. We spent months just learning how to do that, whereas, we should have spent months learning how to fight. Perhaps the reason for that was that the division commander, the regimental commander, and the battalion commander were comfortable with a truck movement, but they weren't comfortable with training for combat. In both cases the training was procedural-mechanical.

With the advantage of hindsight it is clear to me now at least part of what was wrong. We followed the Army Training Program. The so-called ATP was a time-oriented process. A unit spent so many hours or days on each subject. For example, 30 hours of field firing, 6 hours on first aid, and 2 weeks on platoon in the attack. The goal or object was to complete the training — get it done! Never mind whether or not the troops learned anything. The process completely obscured the product. If a soldier missed first aid training he must make it up so that 100 percent of the unit went through the prescribed ATP. Performance-oriented training was not introduced into the Army until TRADOC did so in the mid-70s. The learning function was obscured and secondary to the scheduling function. Few took training very seriously.

We trained around Camp Barkley, Texas. We went to the Louisiana Maneuvers. We went out to the desert near Blythe, California — Camp Granite. We exercised in the desert, then went to Fort Dix, and then, on to England. When we were in England, before the Normandy invasion, we were in terrain not unlike that of Normandy, certainly more like Normandy than the desert was like Normandy. But, for some reason or other, we did not take advantage of that. It never seemed to occur to us that we were going to be confronted in Normandy with very poor visibility, and that this would create a control problem and a firepower problem. I don't remember any of that being discussed at all. My guess is that that was not really unusual in the expansion army of World War II.

INTERVIEWER: I would like to hear your assessment of how good you thought the unit was when it deployed?

GEN DEPUY: Well, I had no way of knowing how good it was. I was loyal to it, and by that time, I had a lot of friends in it. My fellow officers and good friends were wonderfully young, bright, eager fellows trying to do their best. They were wonderful material from which to make an army. But, for some reason, we didn't take full advantage of that. One thing about the 90th Division was that its enlisted soldiers were older. In those days the draft used to go in cycles, and when we were filled, we were filled with older soldiers. They were around 25 years old. We had a lot of them 25 to 30, while some units were filled with soldiers 19 and 20 years old. That was regarded later, as a problem by some people. I don't know if it was or not.

INTERVIEWER: Were there any specific events or incidents that occurred during your training that happened to stick in your mind as particularly good or particularly bad, that you retained through the years, other than what you have already mentioned?

GEN DEPUY: Well, again, the emphasis was always on things that we could understand. For example, we made a lot of 25-mile marches, because everybody understood how to make a

25-mile march. You either made it, or you didn't. You either had stragglers, or you didn't. And again, we had truck movements and written orders and communications — all of the stuff that goes on above the fighting. Incidentally, this is not unknown in today's Army or anybody's army at any time. But, I think it was worse there. I don't think it was anybody's particular fault; it was the fact that it was the blind leading the blind.





Typical English countryside training scenes as Americans prepare for the upcoming invasion of the European Continent.

When we went to war that part of the division which was really well-trained on the combat side was the artillery. The artillery is easier to train because it's very mechanical and mathematical, and they do very well. But, the artillery was good, and although it was an infantry division, it was the infantry battalions, companies, platoons, and squads that I thought were poorly trained.*

INTERVIEWER: I've got some voids that I'd like to fill in — background material. Was there any attempt to obtain feedback from the fighting that had been going on? It would seem that the British and French experience in France prior to Dunkirk, should have been available to the United States Army. Combat in the Pacific was characterized by small unit actions that would seem to have had some value in terms of lessons that could be taught. And, I would suppose that by the time you were in England, there would have been some feedback from the North African campaigns. Was there any attempt to get any of that type of information to you at all?

GEN DEPUY: Well, there were after action reports and lessons learned, but not very many, and they didn't seem to be emphasized too much. I do remember one thing though, that was brought back from the battlefront, and that was marching fire. That became somewhat of a fad, and marching fire, as you probably recall, was, if you analyze it, an effort to maintain fire superiority during the assault. It's not a bad idea, assuming that you put it in the right context. They used marching fire as a method of attack — as the sole method of attack. What they should have done, of course, was position the heavy machine guns and light machine guns and even rifle companies, so as to gain total fire superiority with small arms as well as mortars and artillery, and then, during the assault, use marching fire, which would have maintained the fire superiority. It reminds me a great deal of the experiments at the Combat Developments Experimentation Command (CDEC), in 1976.

At the time we were doing the Parapet Foxhole or PARFOX experiment we discovered that the platoon that attacked with one squad and a light machine gun in the overwatch and two squads attacking, was about forty percent as effective as a platoon that had two squads and a machine gun suppressing and only one moving. The reason was that the fire superiority, as they called it in World War II, we now call it suppression, was maintained. As you know, the problem with infantry is that while you may get fire superiority through suppression, just at the time when you need it the most, during the assault, when the troops all rise up out of their foxholes or from behind a hedgerow and move forward, you lose it. So, the enemy then comes up out of his holes and starts to fire at you, and you lose the suppression.

So, marching fire obviously was designed to overcome that problem, but somewhere in the transmission between the lessons learned and our unit, marching fire became the tactic through which you attacked. In other words, we lined up two battalions with two companies up and they went across the line of departure, using marching fire. It might have worked if the enemy was not well dug in, not well camouflaged, and very weak; but, if the enemy was professional, as the Germans usually were, was well-hidden, and was in very good positions, marching fire as often as not, just wasn't sufficient. We marched into their killing zones. We didn't learn about overwatch suppression until later in the war.

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*For a discussion of pre-invasion training or lack thereof, see G.A. Harrison, *United States Army in World War II: Cross-Channel Attack* (Washington: USGPO, 1951), 158-197.

INTERVIEWER: Did the training programs include live fire?

GEN DEPUY: They included infiltration courses, live fire exercises, and overhead fire, all against fixed targets. The enemy doesn't shoot back, and so, you don't learn a whole lot, and of course, they were normally not done above maybe, platoon level, or company level at the most. Then, once in awhile we would fire the "mad minute" to impress us with our own firepower. However, the M-1 rifle, coupled with the rifle marksmanship program, worked to discourage active firing in combat by the average soldier. He was trained to shoot at and hit a target, but in combat, in the attack, he rarely ever saw a target. So, he was indisposed to shoot. The Germans, on the other hand, used machine pistols which were area weapons. That is, they sprayed the area ahead of them and achieved fire superiority which we now call suppression.

INTERVIEWER: In the training program, did there seem to be a master plan that indicated when you would deploy, or did you just train up to a point and then realize that you weren't going to Europe right away after all, and then drop back?*

GEN DEPUY: That's right. What happened was that we went through the training program, the ATP, once at Camp Barkley, which was culminated by a trip to the Louisiana Maneuvers. And, at the end of that, some people came to test us during division exercises. I remember they came from a corps commanded by General Daniel I. Sultan. They were supposed to pronounce whether we were ready or not. They rendered the typical Army report of the time, which said that the troops didn't use cover and concealment that they bunched up too much, and that our discipline on the march was only fair, and things like that. In other words, they said what every report has always said about exercises. Well, then what happened was that we were motorized. So, then we zealously went after movement by truck. Concurrently, we went through some more ATP training and then we went to the Desert Training Center. So, we went through another ATP cycle at the Desert Training Center. So, I would say that we went through two and a half or three ATP cycles.**

Now, there also was a lot of cadreing. We sent several cadres to other divisions which sliced right through our command structure. I might add about cadreing that we never sent our best people, but we also never sent our worst people. People who were cadred were, almost without exception, from the middle — not bad enough to embarrass us, but not good enough to destroy us. That was the game.

INTERVIEWER: During this training were you equipped with the same weapons and gear that you had when you finally went to war?

GEN DEPUY: Yes, essentially we had M-1s and Browning Automatic Rifles (BARs), and that light machine gun that we had until very recently, with the aerated barrel, the air-cooled light

*For an explanation of the Mobilization Training Program, and its revision during World War II, see Robert R. Palmer, Bell I. Wiley and William R. Keast, *United States Army in World War II: The Procurement and Training of Ground Combat Troops* (Washington, USGPO, 1948), 442-455.

**90th Division training at the Desert Training Center is discussed in Moenk, Large Scale Maneuvers, 104-105.

machine gun. We had eight heavy water-cooled machine guns. We had 105 millimeter infantry howitzers in a cannon company. The antitank company changed from 37 to 57 millimeter towed guns, and the mortars were always 60mms and 81mms, so we really didn't change weapons during that whole time. However, we did pick up tanks in England, and tank destroyers in France.

INTERVIEWER: I'm curious about the troops. By now you had been with them for two years. You must have had a lot of problems caring for the soldiers and their dependents. Apparently you were not in a "we're going to war tomorrow" posture. Were people able to go home or were they all kept on base until just before you reported to Fort Dix? Were they allowed to go home on leave?

GEN DEPUY: Nobody knew when we were going to go to war. So, the atmosphere was one in which the troops were being continuously told that when they finished their training, they were going to war. Now, mind you, the soldiers didn't have any dependents anywhere nearby. You know, the soldiers came from all over, and so did the officers. Unless the soldier happened to have lived in the neighborhood, his dependents, if he had any — his mother and father in most cases, his wife if he had one — were back in New England, or California, or wherever, so they were not a problem. And, we gave leaves. Not too many, but I suspect that everybody got a couple of weeks a year, and some of the officers, because they made a little more money, had their wives nearby. But, the government paid no attention to them and there were absolutely no provisions made for families. It was all business, 24 hours a day. You lived in the unit. If your wife was nearby, and you were an officer, maybe you could sneak out from time to time. There were some short periods of time in which you were permitted to go on weekends if you had your family nearby. So, taking care of families was not regarded as a problem. It was wartime, and all of the so-called people problems and programs that we have now, were unheard of back then.

INTERVIEWER: Were you living in tents at that time, or did you live in wooden buildings?

GEN DEPUY: At Leonard Wood, we went into buildings, into barracks, wooden barracks. At Camp Barkley, Texas, we went into tents, which were then converted into hutments, which were tents with plyboard walls.

INTERVIEWER: Did the battalion adjutant work with the communications people who came down from regiment?

GEN DEPUY: No. The Army reorganized between the time I was with the 20th Infantry and the time I was with the 357th Infantry. The 20th Infantry and the 1st Infantry had been brought down to Leonard Wood from Fort Warren at Cheyenne, Wyoming, where they had been stationed for a long time. Then there was the 63rd which had been cadred out of the 3rd Infantry at Fort Snelling, Minnesota. They were still in the old organization which was very light on staff and very high on command. But, when I got down to the 357th Infantry, it was in its World War II organization and had a staff at battalion and regiment. However, if I'm not mistaken, the headquarters company commander was also the S-1. There was an S-2, S-3, and S-4, and a separate communications officer by that time. At first the communications officer belonged to the regimental headquarters

company, but later, he became part of the battalion's permanent staff. I can't remember when those little changes took place. (See Figures 1 and 2)*

INTERVIEWER: The 90th Division deployed to England between March and April of '44. The division's unit history said that there was a training program and that some of that training included attacking fortified positions, and fighting in hedgerows. That suggests to me that someone had thought about what you were going to encounter. Yet, the account that you just gave us contradicts that and implies that the training wasn't carefully thought out.

GEN DEPUY: Attacking fortified positions — we did that. We also did that back in the desert. Attacking fortified positions was a rather set piece type of thing. By the way, it wasn't bad training. It was very practical. You buttoned them up with small arms fire and then some very brave young men went up there with a satchel charge on the end of a pole — they called it a pole charge — stuck it against the embrasure or in the embrasure, pulled the fuse, and it went off. Normally, that would take care of it; in fact, in war, it did take care of it. But, it required a good young man. Our tactical training in England was perfunctory. I do not remember ever hearing about hedgerows and their effects on tactics.

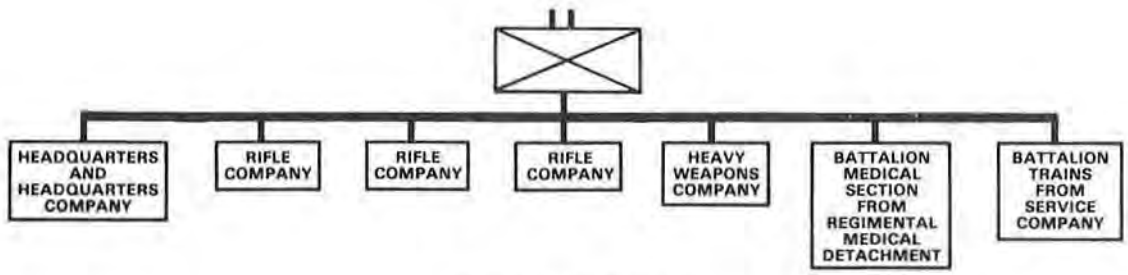


Figure 1. Infantry battalion

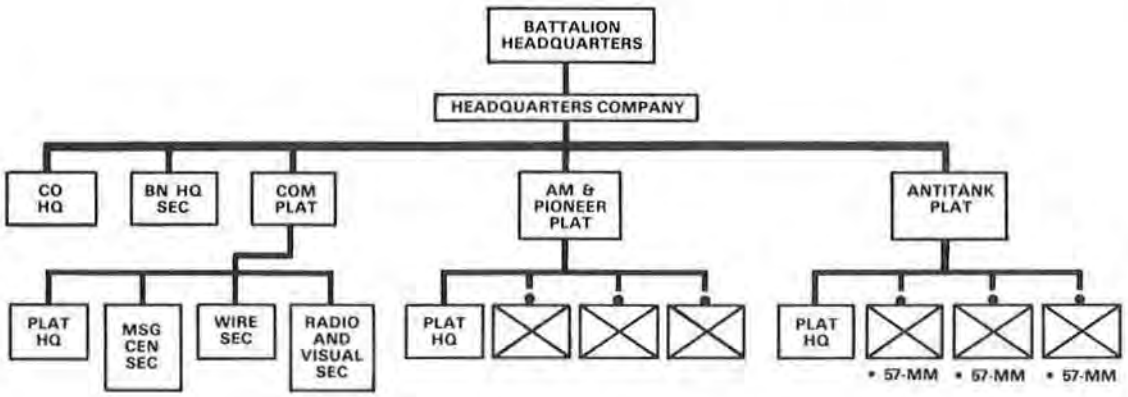


Figure 2. Headquarters and Headquarters company, Infantry battalion.

*See Field Manual 7-20, *Infantry Battalion* (Washington: USGPO, 1944).

INTERVIEWER: The difference may, in fact, be made clear by the rest of the paragraph on training which states that not only did the division work on attacking fortified positions and fighting in hedgerows, but it also worked on road marches and obstacle courses. So, if the latter two are included on the same scale as the former two, one gets an idea of what was happening.

GEN DEPUY: My memory of training in England was that we did a lot of road marches to stay in physical conditioning. We had a lot of trouble finding small arms ranges and grenade ranges. So, we tried to maintain our weapons proficiency and physical condition and do a little bit of tactical training, but in England that was very, very difficult because there wasn't any room. England was ready to sink with American troops. We did go over into Wales and found a training area where we were able to do a little bit of tactical training at about company level. That's the only place we conceivably could have done any work against hedgerows. I do remember that the hedgerows, when we got in them in France, were a great surprise to us, and a great problem. They were to everybody.

INTERVIEWER: How were the Americans received by the British in 1944?

GEN DEPUY: I believe that the British were beginning at about that time, to get the V-1s, or had already been getting them for awhile. The V-2s hadn't started. They had been through the Battle of Britain, and they had had some successes in the desert. Except for the V-1s, I thought that British morale was pretty good, I mean the general civilian morale, was pretty good. They were clearly dumbfounded by being inundated with so many Americans. Remember, they had that marvelous old saying about "overpaid, oversexed and over here". Our guys only made $50.00 a month, I think. I think it went from $30.00 to $50.00. That was a lot of money, especially if they spent it all at one time. They might spend up to three months' pay at one time. So, they could be kind of rowdy and, being a mix of everybody that you could find in America, some of them were rougher than others. Now, the British weren't too keen about that. But, they were very keen about having us over there to help in getting the war over with. So, on balance, they tolerated us as individuals and welcomed us as an idea.

INTERVIEWER: This question has to do with the turbulence in the unit. Earlier, you referred to the requirement to cadre other units, and you talked about the massive shakeup that the division underwent in England. What is your assessment of the impact on the division of the cadreing and the other shakeups that occurred just before you went into battle?

GEN DEPUY: We went through approximately three training cycles, and the cadres were insignificant compared to wartime losses. So, if you can't take cadreing, you can't go to war. My main retrospective thought about all of that is, that because we didn't have any officers in positions of responsibility who had confidence in their war fighting role, their tactical role, we didn't have any quality control. Nobody ever got fired for anything. No one! So, we kept the hopeless people side-by-side with the good people. And, it never changed. Everybody got to know one another. We really knew every officer in the regiment by the time we got to England. But, we also knew that there was a lot of deadwood in the unit, including two out of three



Marching, marching, and more marching. A typical scene throughout the English countryside as Americans prepared for the upcoming invasion.



Half-tracks lined up awaiting the invasion of the European Continent. Some felt England was about to sink under the weight of American troops and equipment.

battalion commanders. So, my problem was that there was no tough thinning out of the officers who should have been eliminated before they got a lot of people killed. And, that can only happen, I guess, if you have experienced officers who have standards and who know what it is they expect. Unfortunately, we didn't have such people.

INTERVIEWER: With regard to the leadership failures, the two that you referred to, were they due to a lack of technical competence or of courage?

GEN DEPUY: As you know, the 90th Division was studied for years at Fort Leavenworth as an example of the impact of leadership on unit performance. In this respect the 90th was unusually weak going into the war. It recovered, but in the process, thousands of good men were lost. When General McLain took over after about six or seven weeks of combat he told us that the soldiers of the 90th were just as good as the soldiers in any other division but that they had been poorly led. That was an understatement of monumental proportions.

In the first six weeks of the battle in Normandy, the 90th lost 100 percent of its soldiers and 150 percent of its officers. In the rifle companies that translates to losses of between 200 and 400 percent. Those losses compare with the worst of World War I.

In this same period two division commanders were relieved. In my regiment one regimental commander was relieved in England and another in Normandy. The one relieved in England returned to the regiment and was killed within two days. Two battalion commanders also were relieved, and one ran away and was then relieved.

The consequences of all this leadership failure could be predicted. My regiment simply did not perform notwithstanding the heroic efforts and tragic losses among the lower ranking officers and the bewildered troops. Much the same picture applied to the whole division in terms of performance.

INTERVIEWER: Where did the Army get these officers, from the National Guard or the Reserves?

GEN DEPUY: The division and regimental commanders were regular officers. They were clearly unqualified for command in battle. The commander who took the regiment to Normandy was as close to being totally incompetent as it is possible to be. He knew nothing about an infantry regiment. He was erratic to the extreme. Three or four times he ordered the regiment straight ahead into a repeat performance of a failed attack. He will never be forgotten by the survivors. Of the three battalion commanders, one was a graduate of the Military Academy — he was brave but had a personal problem; one was a Reserve officer who had insufficient inner strength to lead troops and face battle; and the third one was a despicable punk from the Illinois National Guard — he had given ample evidence of his character continuously during the two years before Normandy. Upon issuing his order for the first attack of the war he went to the aid station, turned himself in and was evacuated. He was pursued by the authorities and reduced to enlisted rank.

The value system in the 90th Division did not identify and eliminate these officers before they had done their grisly work.*

INTERVIEWER: In Vietnam I know that you always had an idea about who was ready to step into any spot, be it a vacancy caused by a casualty or by something else. When these battalion commanders were changed, apparently within a short period of time, did the regimental commander have any idea of who to put in, or did it just sort of happen? Did he just sort of reach down and get lucky? How did he handle the replacement of battalion commanders?

GEN DEPUY: We had severe problems with the regimental commander at the same time. But, better people were picked — we were desperate for good men. The 1st Battalion was taken over by a lieutenant colonel named Ed Hamilton who is still in the Washington area. He was very good and very brave. He lost an eye at Metz. The 2nd Battalion was taken over by a good man named Ward who was wounded and replaced by a school teacher from Sioux Falls, South Dakota, named Ben Rossow, who was also a good man. The 3rd Battalion was taken over by John Mason who later commanded the regiment. He was the regimental S-3 when we went to England and to France, and a very good man. So, we went from three disasters to three good, but relatively untrained, men. They learned on the job. From then on, things began to look up. Then we brought in a good regimental commander as well. Colonel, later General Bittman Barth took over the regiment after having been the 9th Division's Chief of Staff. He was a lifesaver.

INTERVIEWER: What part did you play in the planning for Normandy?

GEN DEPUY: Obviously not much since I was only a captain. But, I do have one story perhaps worth telling. In April of 1944, I was a regimental assistant S-3. The 90th Division headquarters borrowed me to go to London with "Hanging Sam" Williams and Major Ed Hamilton, the Assistant G-3, on a "secret" mission. It turned out that we were to make the arrangements for all of the shipping to take the 90th Division to Normandy. The 90th was the follow-up division on Utah Beach behind the 4th Division, which made the assault landing. Anyhow, we arrived in London, stayed at the Grosvenor House, and went to the Selfridge Department Store on the edge of Mayfair, by Marble Arch, where Headquarters, European Theater of Operations, US Army (ETOUSA), was located. The store had been moved out and hundreds of desks, telephones, and US Army people had moved in. In April of 1944, it was sheer pandemonium. We started at the top with a major general and after two frustrating days, had worked our way down to an elderly major of the transportation section of the Quartermaster Corps. His desk was right smack in the middle of the five acres of floor space and indistinguishable from all the rest except for one thing — this major, whose name I believe was Button, seemed to be the only one who knew anything about where all the ships were, and which ones we might have. I say "might" advisedly. As you would expect, "Hanging Sam" lost interest at this point. He wasn't about to deal with a minor player like Button. So, he went off on his own business. We met at night at the Grosvenor. Ed Hamilton then went back to Birmingham, and I was left alone at the working level.

*The general quality of field grade officers, and battalion commanders in particular, during this period, is discussed in Palmer, Wiley and Keast, *The Procurement and Training of Ground Combat Troops,* 466-469.



20 Grosvenor Square, London
U.S. Headquarters for the European Theater of Operations

The first step was to select the ships, then prepare the unit loading lists and lastly, match the load lists with the ships. Sounds easy? To my amazement, Button said to me, "Here are all the ships that will be in English waters in late May. Which ones do you want?" I said I didn't have a clue and asked for his recommendations. He said that some ships were much larger and better than others and that because I had arrived before the representative of the 2nd Division, I might as well take my pick. So I did. I picked large ships. The 90th had about nine ships in all. The poor old 2nd Division had about 30 because all the big ships had been taken by the 90th — by me. What a system!

The last step was the most interesting. I was taken to see a brigadier of QM-7 in Whitehall. He was the mastermind behind all of the transportation planning. In peacetime he was an executive of Cunard lines. He sent me to see a group of Merchant Marine captains who had been commissioned in the British Army to prepare loading plans. They worked in a basement a block away from Selfridge. For five days I joined them around a huge round table on which they had the blueprints of the ships' decks and cargo spaces. For each piece of American equipment they had a wooden block prepared to scale — length, width, and height — which they would place on the drawings and number. It was my job to advise them on the sequence of debarkation and to make sure that a howitzer also had a prime mover, etcetera. Mind you, we only had five days and I had only the most general knowledge about the division's plans at the Normandy end. In short, we transloaded from the ships to landing craft off the beach. To end this story — it worked! These same merchant captains, there were about eight that I remember, were the selfsame chaps who had done the loading plans for North Africa, and, I believe, for Sicily, but on that point I'm not so certain.

There is something classical about this story. After all the grand plans are drawn and the generals have had their say, it devolves upon some half-trained, half-baked captain to "do it". It's a small miracle that anything "works".

INTERVIEWER: On what day did the regiment actually land in Normandy?

GEN DEPUY: We landed at noon on the 8th of June. One of the regiments, the one that General Talbott was in, was sunk — their ship was sunk. Fortunately, the troops were able to get away safely. They were supposed to be the first regiment in. They were going to come in on the afternoon of D-Day, and we were to come in the next day or two, which is what we did. [See Maps 1 and 2, pages 20 and 21]

INTERVIEWER: What were the conditions on the beach?

GEN DEPUY: The 4th Division had cleared the beach. They landed partly on the wrong part of the beach, so everything was a little off kilter, but we came in nevertheless. There was no fire on the beach or bombing. We went across the causeways. We were to go into an attack position just across the Merderet River. Well, when an advanced recon party got up to the Merderet River, the 82nd had a part of a regiment already across. There was a bridge across the Merderet at the middle of a long causeway. It was a very difficult place to get across, particularly in the daytime. The Germans had some high velocity guns which were sighted on that bridge. I was the S-3 of the 1st Battalion. Later in the afternoon of 8 June, I went up with one or two other people to pick out the attack position across the river. We got across this bridge and picked out an area on the edge of a little cluster of houses by the name of le Motey. Then we took the troops up and across the causeway and into this attack position. We launched our first attack early on the morning of 9 June. By the way, the troops were jittery and opened fire on imaginary snipers while in the attack position. [See map 3, page 23]

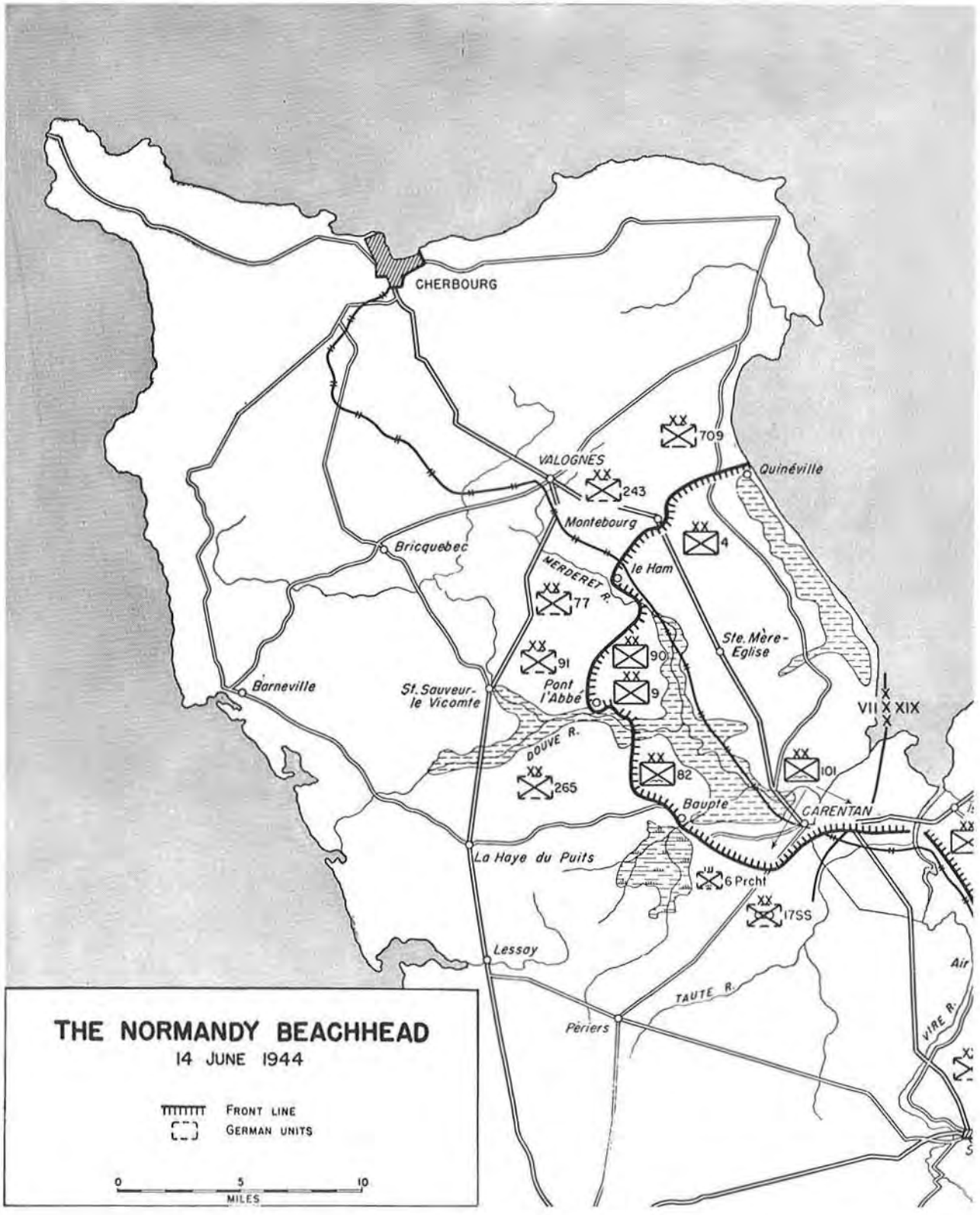
INTERVIEWER: Were you motorized at this time?

GEN DEPUY: No, but it didn't make any difference — Normandy was a foot war.*

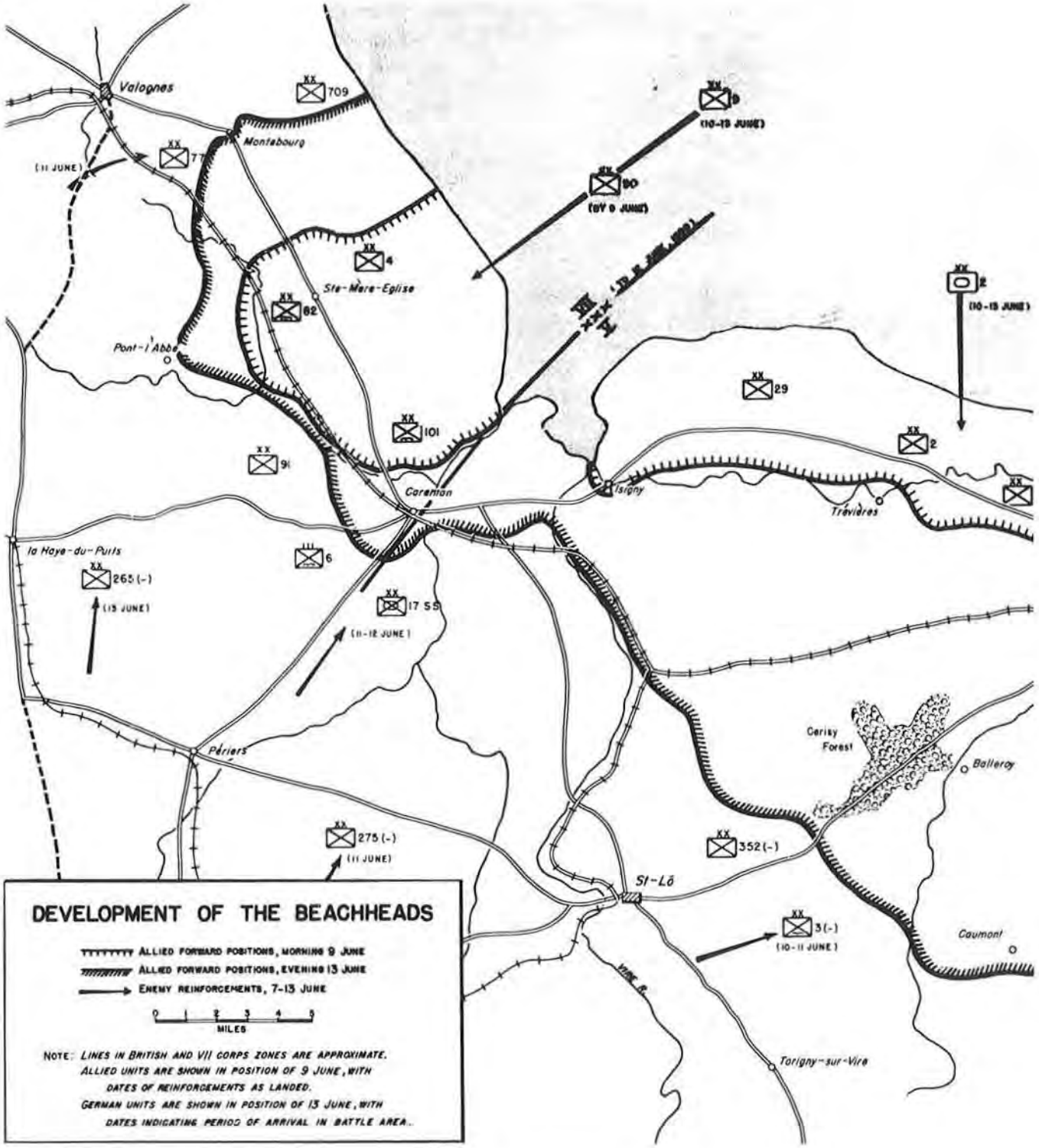
INTERVIEWER: What did the troops have on their backs? What was the basic load for an infantryman?

GEN DEPUY: The first thing we had were fatigues that were impregnated against chemical attack. These fatigues were fixed up so that if the enemy used mustard gas it wouldn't penetrate. Also, you couldn't sweat through them. So, they were really awful hot and, God, after a few days, you could smell soldiers a mile away. Finally, they decided that there wouldn't be a chemical attack, and we got out of the impregnated clothing — it was the greatest relief. It was almost the greatest relief in the war. They carried a blanket and a shelter half, which they didn't need,

*For the situation on Omaha Beach, see U.S. War Department, Historical Division, *American Forces in Action Series: Omaha Beachhead (6 June-13 June 1944)* Washington: USGPO, 1945). Reprinted by the Battery Press, Inc., 1984.



Map 1 — The Normandy Beachhead



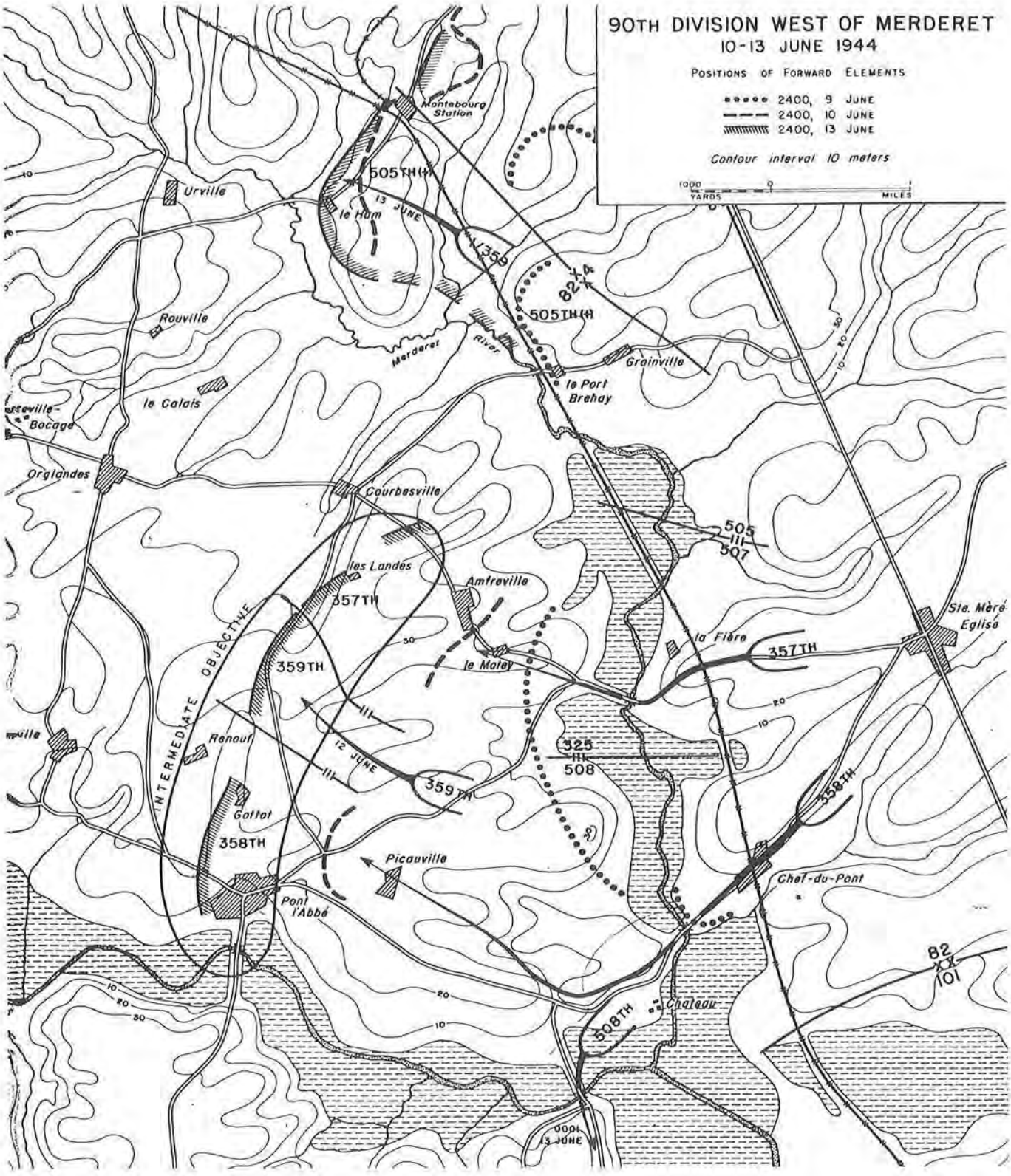
Map 2 — Development of the Beachhead







Landing at Normandy Beach, 6 June 1944



Map 3 — 90th Division's drive across the Merderet River

ammunition, grenades and pyrotechnics, extra bazooka ammunition, and lots of extra machine gun ammunition. Every rifleman came in with a little extra which they dropped in the assembly area, plus mortar ammunition. When they got off the ships, they were loaded because they weren't expected to go directly into an assault, and they didn't. So, we brought a lot of stuff when we came in, which we dropped in the final assembly area. It became sort of the first reserve of ammunition. I might add that I think we still had some of that ammunition when the war was over because, as you know, the infantry in World War II didn't shoot much small arms ammuniton, except the machine guns. So, that was about it.

INTERVIEWER: Did they carry rations?

GEN DEPUY: They had K-rations in those days, which looked like a brick, but not the C-rations. C-rations in those days were the next step up. The assault ration was a candy bar. It was a chocolate bar. The artillery ate B-rations. Most of us also carried an escape and evasion kit, and a little map, which everybody later wore as a scarf. They were marvelous silk scarves with a map of the Cotentin Peninsula on them. We also had some other survival equipment. I have forgotten everything the kit contained, but there were some halizone tablets, a small compass, a fishhook, and a couple of other things like that, which, of course, nobody used. So, that was what we went in with.

INTERVIEWER: And, I assume you had gas masks?

GEN DEPUY: And gas masks.

INTERVIEWER: How long did the gas masks last. Did the soldiers keep them all through the war or did they dump them along the way?

GEN DEPUY: They kept them during the first month and then the assumption was made that there wouldn't be a gas attack so they turned in the gas masks and the impregnated clothing. There were a few gas scares in Normandy. Sure, it was just smoke, white phosphorus or something like that, but there were several occasions when the troops thought that they were being gassed and yelled "gas," and then ran away.

INTERVIEWER: Did the soldiers have entrenching tools?

GEN DEPUY: Yes, they had entrenching tools.

INTERVIEWER: Once you crossed the river and got into your attack position, and the division started to fight, did you run into the hedgerows right away?

GEN DEPUY: Yes. Most of Normandy consists of small fields — pastures and gardens — surrounded by sunken roads and divided by hedgerows. Let me say something about our first attack. We were astride the road to Gourbesville near Amfreville. The regimental plan was to

attack with one battalion on each side of the road, and one battalion, the 2nd Battalion, in reserve. The 1st Battalion was on the left. We attacked straight ahead with two companies up and one in reserve to follow in center of sector. Each of the forward companies lined up two platoons abreast with two squads on line in the most classic formation out of the book. The artillery preparation was fired with the 105mms in fairly close along the hedgrows and the 155mms a little deeper. The mortars fired at the first hedgerow.

After about 10 minutes of fire the battalion moved forward. When the lead companies crossed the second or third hedgerow they came under very heavy small arms fire and were caught in an open field. I do not believe that *any* of our troops fired their weapons after the first few minutes. When the attack stopped the Germans threw a heavy barrage of mortar fire into the first and second small fields between the Line of Departure and the forward line of troops. Casualties were very heavy. We had walked into his killing ground. After 30 minutes the lead companies came back to the second hedgerow and that was it. The other battalion had only slightly more success but was also repulsed. An effort to move the reserve company around the left flank resulted in a single file movement up a sunken road into some German machine gun fire which terminated the first attack of the 1st Battalion, 357th Infantry — all in all, a dismal affair.

For five more days the regiment continued its attack toward Gourbesville. On the 14th of June, at 2020 hours, elements of the 3rd Battalion worked around the right (north) flank and entered the town, but were forced out the next day. By 2240 on the 15th, the 3rd Battalion had recaptured Gourbesville. This was the first substantial objective seized by the regiment. But, it cost the lives of hundreds of brave junior officers and soldiers. This was a great bloodletting without much to show in return. Consideration was given to the idea of breaking up the division and using it as replacements but fortunately, that course was rejected and the division eventually pulled itself together through on-the-job training and the slow emergence of fighters and leaders through a process of seasoning and natural selection.

INTERVIEWER: What tactic finally evolved to advance through the hedgerows?

GEN DEPUY: A lot of work was done on trying to analyze the way the Germans defended. We finally did figure it out. The Germans would assign a squad to a terrain compartment. In other words, one series of hedgerowed fields like checkerboards. The Germans would put about two men on the first hedgerow, usually near the corners. The next hedgerow back would be their main position, and the third hedgerow back would be their reserve position. So, when you started the attack, the first two guys would knock off one or two of the attackers and slow things down. Then you had to go over the top of that hedgerow in the face of the main position. You suffered more casualties, and normally, that ended the attack. [See Diagram, page 28]

The troops would straggle back, and you would end up taking just one hedgerow. That was typical. Now, if you happened to carry the second hedgerow, the whole German squad would drop back to the third one. As far as we were concerned, we rarely ever took the third hedgerow. Eventually, what we tried to do was to figure out how to suppress this system with indirect fire. We put the 60mms on the first hedgerow, the 81mms on the second hedgerow, the 105mms on the third hedgerow and the 155mms back on the roads and reserve areas — and then we tried to

ensure that the attack would have enough impetus to simply carry through the whole thing. Toward the end of the campaign, we made one or two such attacks successfully.*

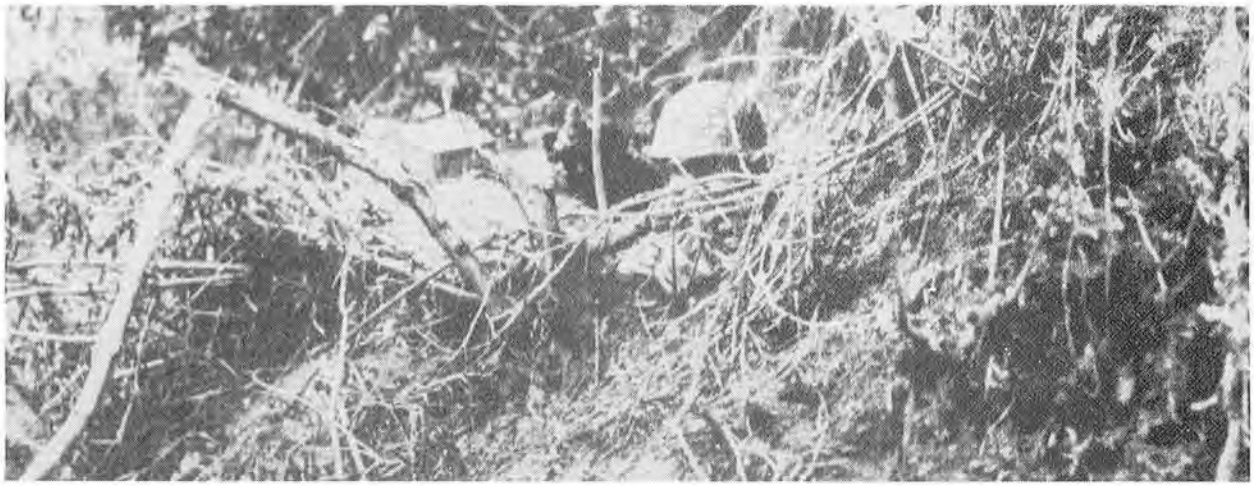
But, what we finally learned, which is what all seasoned soldiers finally learn, is not to attack them where they are. The way we cracked those positions was simply by finding a hole somewhere around the flank. Find a hole, get through that hole and get in their rear, and then the whole bloody thing would collapse. Then you'd have them in the open. That's the kind of thing I wished we had learned during the two years we were training in the United States and during the three months we were training in England.

I wish someone had told us that simple fact — don't attack them where they are strong, but try to find a weak spot and go through the weak spot. Of course all of this was in the field manuals, but for whatever reason, it wasn't transmitted to us, or perhaps more honestly, it didn't sink in. We learned it the hard way and from then on, until the end of the war, all of the good commanders fought their battles by looking for a way around the enemy; they practically never went straight forward. Every time we had to go straight forward, we took high casualties as, indeed, we will in our Army today, if we train our people to take the hill straight on. The thing to do is to go around and behind the enemy, and then they will have to come out.



A typical hedgerow scene

*For a description of this campaign see U.S. War Department, Historical Division, *American Forces in Action Series: St-Lo (7 July-19 July 1944)* Washington: USGPO, 1946. Reprinted by the Battery Press, Inc., 1984.







Hedgerow country clearly favored the defender.
One never knew for sure just what was on the other side.



Typical German hedgerow defensive positions were always mutually supporting and organized in depth.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have tanks with improvised clearing blades on the front?

GEN DEPUY: The rhinoceros. Yes, we had some, but they were only marginally successful simply because the hedgerows were often too thick even for those devices. A lot of the hedgerows were very high; some of them were six, seven, and eight feet high. They even had trees growing on top of them, and if you went down inside of them you would find that it was a mass of roots, great huge roots of great huge trees. No tank was able to get through the big ones. The tanks could get through only the little ones. If the hedgerow was only two or three feet high, then those tanks could go through. The idea was to break through that second and third defensive line. I would say that we had some success in doing that, but it's awfully difficult terrain for tanks.



M4A1 Medium Tank equipped with a hedgerow cutter
was used for breaking through hedgerows.

INTERVIEWER: But, for the trooper, it must have been like scaling a wall. Every time he wanted to move into the field on the other side of the hedgerow, he would have to climb up and over a six to eight foot hedgerow.

GEN DEPUY: Yes, and you can imagine how the trooper must have felt going over a hedgerow and coming down onto a stage out in the complete open, with the enemy just behind the next hedgerow. Now, they didn't want to go across the middle of that field — that's the last thing they wanted to do. So, what the troops tried to do, almost always, and almost always with bad results, was to work along the hedgerows that were perpendicular to our front. And, time after time, we would get a platoon caught with all of the soldiers lying head-to-toe along the side of a hedgerow.

INTERVIEWER: Could they crawl through the middle?

GEN DEPUY: You mean through the middle of the field?

INTERVIEWER: I don't mean through the middle of the field, but through the middle of this wall, the hedgerow?

GEN DEPUY: No. What I'm trying to say is that instead of going over this hedgerow and then going through the middle of the field, they would go over the hedgerows at the corners, and then try to go right up along the perpendicular hedgerows. It's human nature to want to be next to something and not to be exposed in the open. So, the Germans would dig right through the hedgerow and have a little hole that they could see and shoot through, and then, they would just fire right down the hedgerow and catch a whole column of soldiers crawling forward.

INTERVIEWER: Did they use mortars effectively in support of those tactics?

GEN DEPUY: They did. They used mortars very, very well. The minute we would cross that first hedgerow, the field would be filled with mortar fire, and if you ever got past that one, the next field also would be filled with mortar fire, as well.

INTERVIEWER: Could you overwatch from your hedgerow?

GEN DEPUY: We didn't do that very well. You see, one of our training deficiencies was that almost all suppression was done by indirect fire weapons. Very little suppression was done by small arms. Occasionally, we would use our heavy machine guns. People thought first about mortars and artillery, then heavy machine guns, and finally, light machine guns. Really, they didn't think much about using riflemen for suppression. They just thought of using riflemen for maneuvering and sharpshooting. The M-1 rifle was a precision weapon but there were no precision targets. This problem was not confined to the 90th Division. You have read SLAM Marshall and know that even in the 101st only 25 percent of the troopers fired.* And, we only had eight heavy machine guns in a battalion. So, it didn't work very well. We didn't do direct fire suppression very well in my outfit until the latter part of the war.

INTERVIEWER: Didn't you shoot the bazookas at these things?

*For a discussion of this problem see S.L.A. Marshall, *Men Against Fire* (New York: William Morrow, 1947).

GEN DEPUY: They did occasionally. They did shoot the rocket launchers at the corners once we found out that the corners were where they'd be. And, sometimes that worked. Then, of course, the Germans would try to position themselves so that they were not quite in the corner.

INTERVIEWER: Did you run into mines? Did the Germans mine the hedgerows?

GEN DEPUY: They would put booby traps out in front of the hedgerows, and then they'd mark the gaps. They didn't mark them so that we could find the gaps, but they'd know where they were. So, there were mines, and there were booby traps. We would lose a lot of people just trying to go over a hedgerow.

INTERVIEWER: Having discussed the hedgerow fighting, I'd now like to get your version of the relief of Major General Landrum, who commanded the division during the first few days of the Normandy campaign.

GEN DEPUY: General Landrum was the second division commander in Normandy and the second to be relieved. You know, I really was at a very low level so I don't know all of the things that happened, but I think his relief stemmed from the fact that the division didn't perform very well. The regiment that I was in certainly contributed to that by not performing well. Under the circumstances I've described, I think you can see why. I think the other regiments did a little better than ours, but I don't think they did a whole lot better. That may be unfair for me to say, because I wasn't there. So, let me just say that the division certainly didn't achieve its objectives, and it didn't contribute a lot to the winning of the battle in Normandy during the first few weeks. Landrum was not visible to the fighting troops; certainly at battalion level and below, he wasn't felt. The man who was felt was "Hanging" Sam Williams. And, that's a tragic story because "Hanging" Sam was fired. They got the wrong man. "Hanging" Sam Williams was the assistant division commander, and he was with us all the time. He was very helpful and a very brave, and powerful man, as everybody found out later. He had been with the division while it trained in the United States and really was the only man who ever impressed me as being a soldier with experience. He was with my regiment at Beau Coudray where we did very poorly and took a lot of casualties. Apparently, when he went back to the division command post, he was accused of siding with the troops against the division commander. So, he was relieved.

INTERVIEWER: Who relieved him?

GEN DEPUY: Landrum. And then Landrum was relieved shortly thereafter.

INTERVIEWER: So, the relief of General Landrum took place around the 30th of July; yet, he had only taken command of the division around the 12th of June.

GEN DEPUY: Was it on 30 July? Was it that late?

INTERVIEWER: That's when McLain took over, the 30th of July, but I'm not sure if Landrum had been relieved earlier than that.

GEN DEPUY: All right.

INTERVIEWER: In that fighting around Beau Coudray — and again, these are more questions about the relief of Landrum. Actually, what I want to determine are the differences between McLain and Landrum. So, just to review the record, there was very fierce fighting in the hedgerows and past the hedgerows. The 1st Battalion of the 357th, was sort of a lost battalion for a couple of days around Beau Coudray and the fighting had reached the point where the engineers were fighting as infantry, and the cooks and drivers were being used as individual replacements. From all accounts, it would seem that the other divisions were having to do the same thing. The 82nd, the 79th, and the 83rd Divisions weren't making much more progress than was the 90th. The fighting went on around the clock. It was just attack, and be attacked, then attack, and be attacked again. I think one of the regiments, the 358th, suffered 52 percent casualties in just one attack, the attack on the island. The fighting seems to have been very, very tough. I would guess that the attack on the island led to the relief of Landrum. It was about then that somebody must have made the decision to relieve him. But, here's a man who came down, took command of the division and had about six very bad weeks. Point blank, the question would be, did Landrum have a chance to impose himself on the division; did he really have a chance to take charge or was the train going so fast that it was perhaps beyond any man's ability to grab hold of it and do much with it? [See Maps 4 and 5, pages 33 and 34]

GEN DEPUY: Well, I suppose all of that is somewhat true. The division didn't distinguish itself at all during that period. I think that Landrum's chief participation in the campaign was simply to take the plans drawn up by the division G-3, Dick Stilwell (one of the finest soldiers in the Army), and just order the regiments to implement them. It was "don't tell me your troubles, just follow orders." There wasn't any active battlefield leadership. He didn't come around and visit the regiments or the battalions, or talk to people and find out what the problems were. So, the division didn't do very well. As a result, they got rid of him and brought in McLain. They did have some good generals around, McLain being one, and Van Fleet being another.



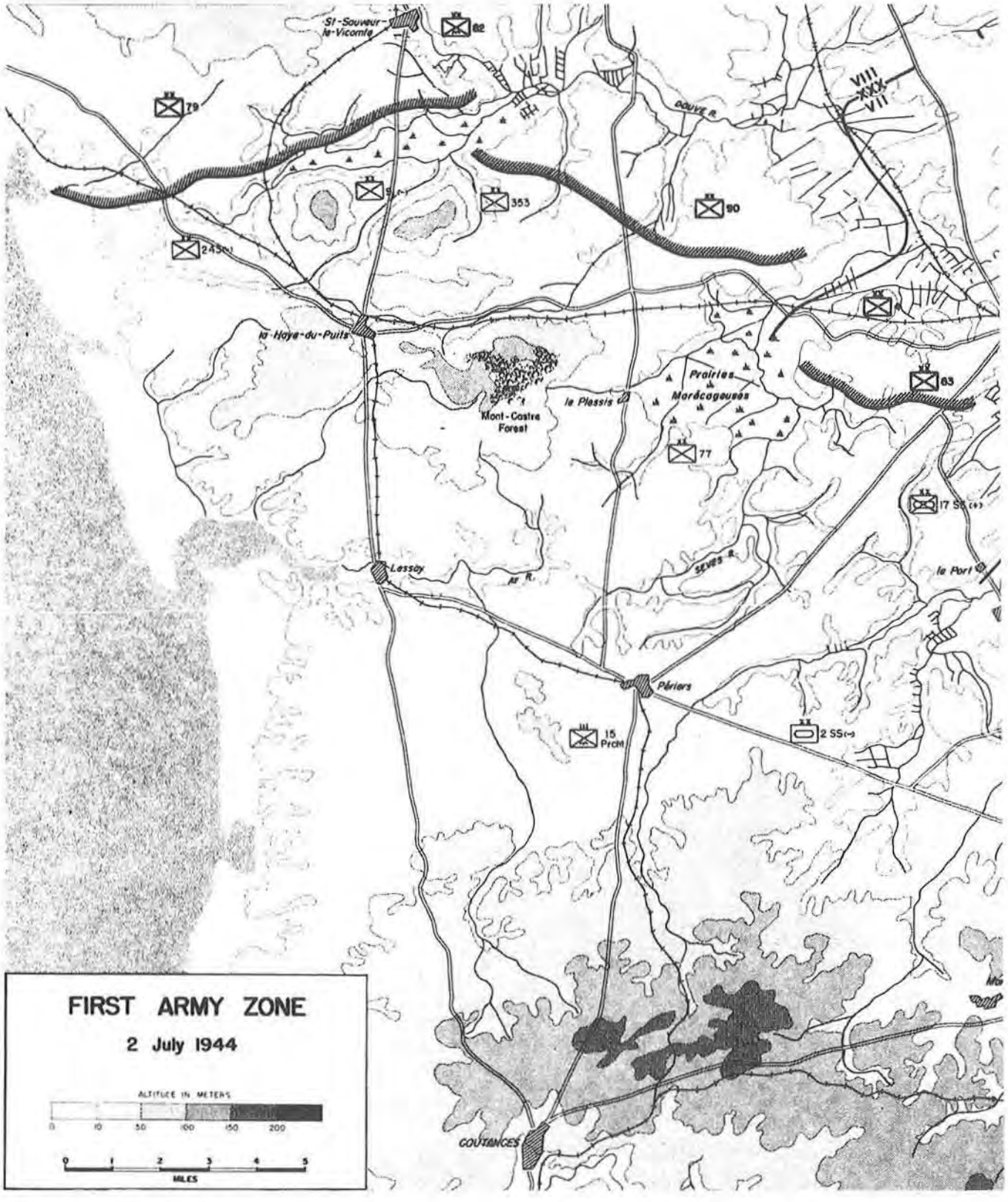
Major General
Samuel T. Williams



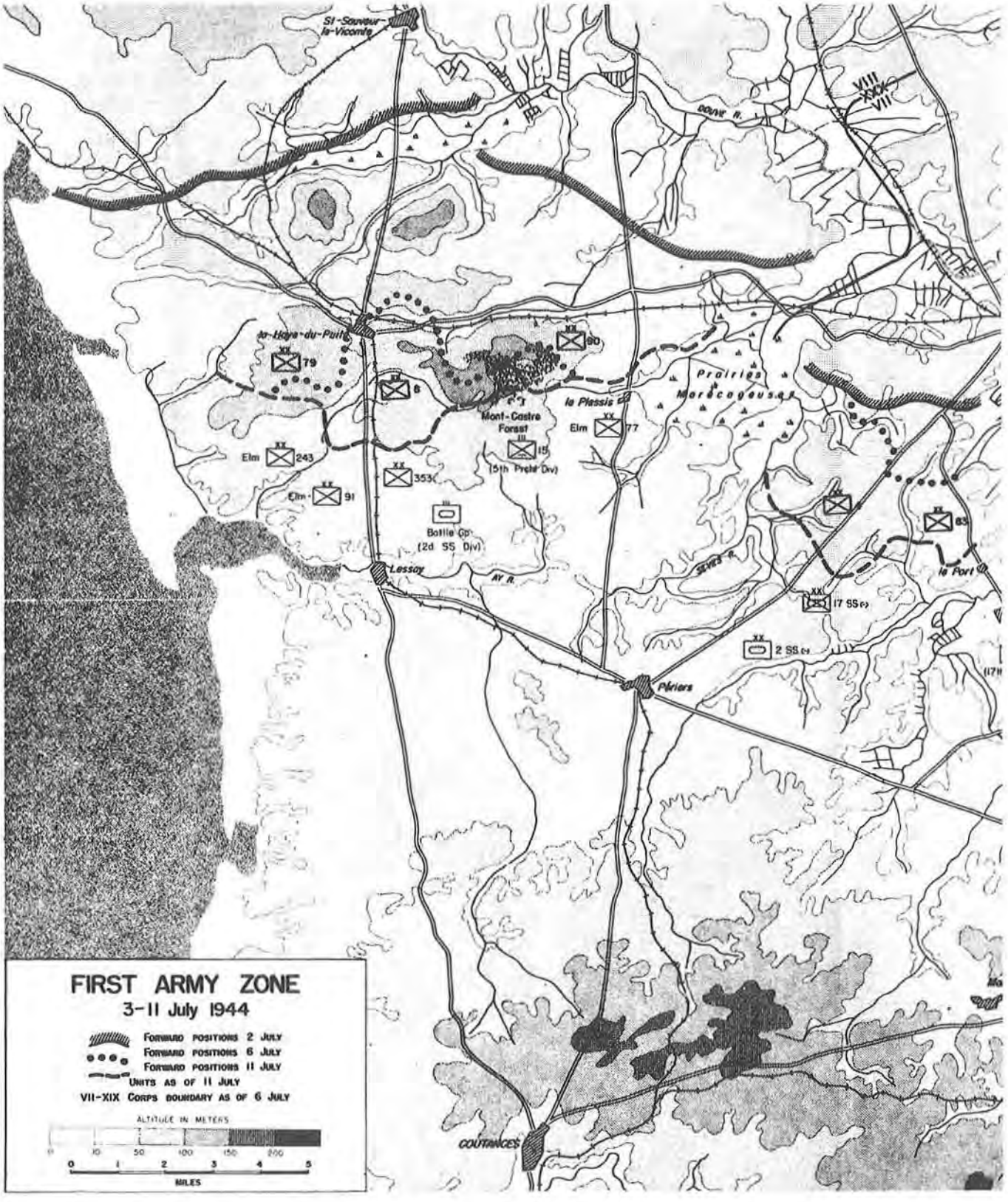
Major General
Raymond S. McLain



Major General
James A. Van Fleet



Map 4 — 90th Division prepared to attack Le Plessis



Map 5 — 90th Division drive on the Mont-Castre Forest

INTERVIEWER: I believe that Teddy Roosevelt, Jr., was selected over McLain to command the division but he died of a heart attack before he could be put in.

GEN DEPUY: Yes. I guess Bradley finally said that they didn't want to break up the division and I'm glad they didn't. It would have been a terrible thing considering the sacrifice of the soldiers and junior officers. It's bad to break up a unit. What you want to do is make it well. Give it leaders. The soldiers are always the same.

INTERVIEWER: At the same time that this was going on, you changed regimental commanders on about the 16th of June, when Colonel Barth took command.

GEN DEPUY: Well, we changed commanders twice. What happened was that when John Sheehy was relieved in England, he then became the spare colonel. Every division carried a spare colonel. That was interesting because all three regimental commanders knew that there was a guy sitting there waiting. That colonel's job was to just mosey around, stay current, and be ready. So, Sheehy, who had been the regimental commander for a couple of years, was shunted aside by the colonel who then was relieved after a terrifying week of almost total failure. They then sent Sheehy back down to take over his old regiment again. Well, can you imagine anything worse than that? When he came back down to look at his regiment it was decimated.

By then I was the S-3 of the regiment, because Mason had gone down to take over 3rd Battalion. Colonel Sheehy was in a daze. He just couldn't believe what he found. We were being ordered to make another attack. Colonel Sheehy, with a glazed look in his eye, just walked out of the CP, found his driver, and said, "Drive down the road to Gourbesville." Somebody said, "You can't." But, he told his driver, "Go." To this day, we don't know whether he did that because he was desperate and couldn't stand it any longer, or if he didn't know the situation, or if he was out of his mind, or just what drove him. They just drove down the road right into the Germans. Then Barth arrived. I don't remember the exact dates; it all happened very rapidly, within a matter of a couple of weeks.

INTERVIEWER: Colonel Sheehy was only there three days before he was killed. He came in on the 13th of June, and was killed on the 16th.

GEN DEPUY: Right. You see, he got down there just long enough to find out what the conditions were and issue a couple of orders, and then he drove off into the enemy lines.

INTERVIEWER: After Colonel Barth took over, the battle of Beau Coudray took place. That seemed to be a very intense action with a lot of casualties. You were the regimental S-3 at that time. I'd be very interested in your recounting that particular battle.

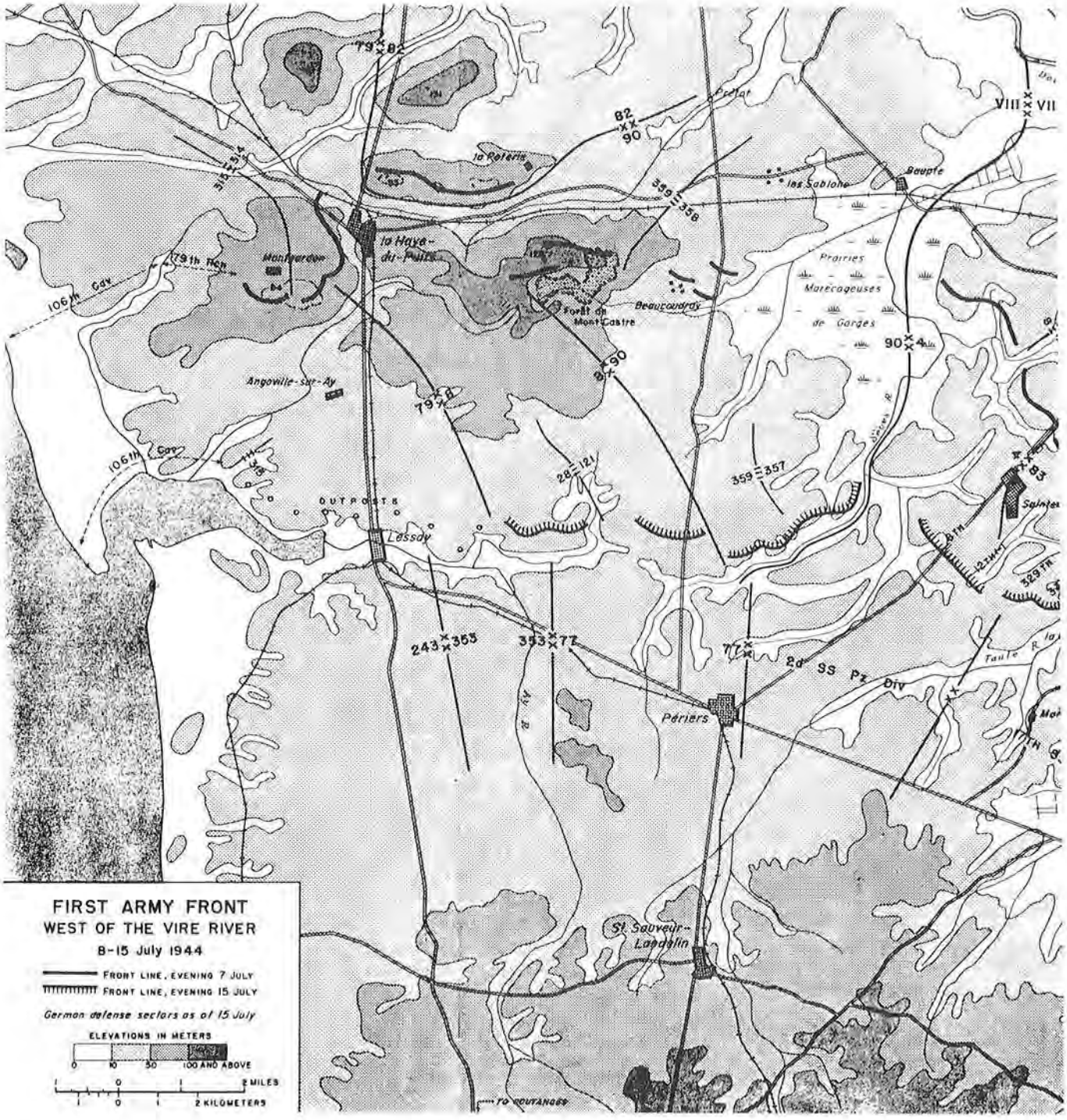
GEN DEPUY: Well, first of all, if you could look at a 1:5,000 or 1:10,000, or even 1:2,500 map, and we had some of those, you would see that the road that led straight south into Periers from St. Jores, went between a swampy area on the east and the Foret de Mont Castre on the west. Between the high hill and the swamp was the village of Beau Coudray, in the vicinity of le Plessis.

So, there was a very narrow bottleneck. You couldn't go through the swamp, and our boundary didn't let us go through Foret de Mont Castre. What we tried to do was go straight ahead through the town and make a shallow envelopment across a shoulder of the Mont Castre. And, for however many days it took, we fought to get through the bottleneck on the road to Periers. In all my comments you must understand that I was removed two echelons from the company battles. It was a good vantage point but I was not personally a part of the endless, bitter, grinding combat at the fighting edge. Had I been, I would surely not be reporting as I am today. [See Map 6, page 37]

Anyway, we went on down into that battle with the 3rd Battalion on the right and the 1st Battalion on the left. The 3rd Battalion managed to get into the town and "K" Company actually got across the main transverse road that went through the town and off to the right, and up to the top of Foret de Mont Castre. The Germans counterattacked; they brought up a bicycle battalion among other things, and brought up some parachute troops, and one of the companies of the 3rd Battalion disappeared. The 1st Battalion was on the left and there wasn't much room. The 2nd Battalion was in reserve. Pretty soon we committed the 2nd Battalion around through the adjacent regiment on our right and tried to get it up on the slope of the Foret in order to have the unit come down on Beau Coudray from the west. The battalion got down into this thing we called the "ladder," which was an open terraced area, and was stopped maybe 500 yards from the edge of Beau Coudray. The Germans received additional reinforcements and launched another counterattack and this time the 1st Battalion was chopped up. That's when we threw in a battalion of cooks and bakers over on the extreme left. I can't remember one day from the next, but the record will show how long the battle lasted. But, the regiment was in very bad shape at the end. It really lost its integrity, and the 1st and 3rd Battalions didn't have the kind of cohesion it took to mount a meaningful attack.



The fierce fighting took a heavy toll on Normandy villages



Map 6 — 90th Division's sector of First Army's front

At this point I must say something on behalf of the junior officers and soldiers of my regiment. These poor devils were sent to us through the replacement system and often went into combat without a chance even to meet, much less know, the men with whom they fought. Many died never knowing what it was all about. These are the men to whom we professional soldiers owe a great debt. They were the real heroes. But, we don't even know their names. What a tragedy. The brutality and stupidity of those days have affected all the rest of my professional life.

INTERVIEWER: The unit history states that in six days of fighting there were 851 casualties, with 166 killed.

GEN DEPUY: That's right, about three hundred casualties per battalion.

INTERVIEWER: And, I believe it also indicated that this is when there were 13 straight days of battle with almost no rest or sleep of any kind. In line with that, General Patton once remarked that soldiers can attack for three days with no sleep. However, it appears that you certainly exceeded that. Based on your impressions, was that about the most that the soldiers could take?

GEN DEPUY: Well, I don't know when they went past the breaking point, but I can tell you for sure that the regiment lost its ability to mount an offensive action after just a few days of battle. After that, orders may have been issued to attack, but no attacks took place. They may have been leaning forward in the foxhole but the disorganization was sufficiently high and morale was sufficiently low, so that nothing really happened. Infantry leaders were totally exhausted and in a daze. There was a pervasive feeling of hopelessness. The troops withstood some counterattacks but as far as movement forward, there wasn't any. Once the attack of the 2nd Battalion coming down from the right flank bogged down, that was the end of the unit's offensive capability.

I do remember vividly how that whole battle ended. We made the terrible mistake of putting the regimental CP in a little town called St. Jores. We were right at a main road junction and on the night just before the Germans withdrew, they fired up their stockpiled ammunition. They had a couple of large caliber guns; I don't know how big they were, 150 to 203 millimeters, but anyway, they dumped everything they had on that road junction. We were there all night long, and all night they did it. We were feeling very sorry for ourselves, but the next morning, when we woke up, we discovered the enemy had withdrawn from our front. Typical German doctrine by the way — very methodical.

INTERVIEWER: In that fight, the regimental history indicates that "Charlie" and "King" Companies repulsed 14 counterattacks accompanied by tanks during the day. Can you describe the kind of tempo that we are talking about in such fights?

GEN DEPUY: Well, I wasn't there with "K" or "C" Company, but my guess is that what they were talking about was maybe, two or three assault guns. We are not talking about what you would visualize as a large tank attack. There might have been a Mark IV tank or two, but in all probability, what happened was that the Germans used some self-propelled 76 millimeter assault guns combined with their airborne infantry. They were better trained and they maneuvered. They

were professionals. They simply suppressed and moved, suppressed and moved. They gained fire superiority, and then gobbled up chunks of those companies up there, which, by that time, probably were not returning fire.

INTERVIEWER: Now, if there were 14 attacks, and again, I'm looking at the unit history, that would indicate that the Germans came in and hit, and then perhaps, went back to figure out another place to come in and hit again, as opposed to coming in and actually biting off a big piece of ground and trying to hang on to it.

GEN DEPUY: I think that when reports are coming in from company level, which is what we are talking about, you have to realize what kind of a report you'll get. All probes are considered to be attacks. So, my guess is that of the 14 attacks, five, six, or seven of them were merely the Germans looking for a hole. They were probing for the flanks. And, they were pretty good at that. They probably also ran their assault guns up a little bit from time to time, and fired while probing. There were probably only two or three rather large attacks. When I say large attacks, by the way, let me tell you, I'm only talking about 200 or 300 people at the most. Some of those large attacks might have been as few as 50 to 100 men.

INTERVIEWER: Did they usually include artillery?

GEN DEPUY: Some artillery, but nothing like we had. Some mortars, some assault guns, and a lot of small arms fire by the Germans. A lot of machine pistol fire, a lot of maneuver, and some hand grenades or potato mashers.

INTERVIEWER: Was this a standard German tactic? If they were driven from a piece of ground, or if they had people attacking them would they very quickly mount a counterattack of some weight and try to stop you, or drive you back?

GEN DEPUY: Yes. The reason they were counterattacking at Beau Coudray is that they wanted to hold that little cork in a bottle. If you ever saw it on a map, you'll see that it is just an incredible bottleneck.

INTERVIEWER: Now, was this part of the Falaise Gap?

GEN DEPUY: No. If you look at this map, there is the Foret de Mont Castre, and we were right there, right across the base of the Cotentin Peninsula, facing straight south, and we were attacking straight south. But, if you looked across there, there was a river that went across most of the way, there was a hill or two, and there were these huge, swampy, inundated kinds of areas. When you looked at the terrain there was just one way through. So, the Germans kept counterattacking to hold that bottleneck. The Germans were very doctrinaire about other things, too. They always counterattacked before they withdrew. They fired a lot of artillery. They hit you very hard and then they would withdraw. You could count on that.

CHAPTER II

Education of a Battle Leader

INTERVIEWER: I imagine that the regiment, and probably the division, were at a pretty low ebb following that fight. What occurred to get the units back on their feet?

GEN DEPUY: Well, let's see, first we went through Beau Coudray, then south. The 358th had that episode on the island and then the breakout took place at St. Lo after the carpet bombing. The people on our left made the breakout. We were on the west side and the 1st Division and others in the V and XIX Corps made the breakthrough near St. Lo. Soon, the whole front collapsed in front of us and we were given orders to move.

We were part of the new Third Army. Suddenly, we were moving and we were taking a few prisoners. We didn't have to fight much, and we moved down behind an armored division to Avranches. We did a little fighting near St. Hilaire-du-Harcouet. Then, we broke out with the mission of going first to Mayenne, then to Le Mans, and then north, toward Argentan.* That was the breakout and, of course, by that time, General McLain was in command. We had confidence in McLain. And, he visited the troops. We saw him often. He knew what troops could do, and he told them that they were okay, but that the division's leadership had been bad. And, he was right!



Major General Eugene M. Landrum addressing the officers of the 357th Infantry Regiment during a lull in the activity.

*For a thorough discussion of the breakthrough see Martin Blumenson, *United States Army in World War II: Breakout and Pursuit* (Washington: USGPO, 1961).

So, what happened? We had some successes. Sure, they were easy successes, but everybody needs success. Human beings, individually or collectively, need success. And, success feeds on itself. It breeds confidence, and confidence breeds more success, until by the time we got to Le Mans and turned and started up toward the Falaise Gap, toward Argentan and Alencon, we were beginning to feel that we were soldiers. In Normandy the division lacked pride because it had had no successes of which to be proud. Certainly my regiment didn't. The only thing we were proud of was that we somehow had stuck it out. That's a negative thing, but, you know, we took a perverse pride in the fact that we were still there. But, that's not enough. So, McLain loosened things up and then circumstances provided victories; the victories provided confidence, and the confidence made for a good division. I think that probably happened to dozens of divisions, but we needed it more than most. [See Map 7, page 42]

INTERVIEWER: You mentioned earlier that General Bradley's staff at one time had recommended that he consider breaking up the division. Instead, he put McLain in. Supposedly, there were 16 field grade officers relieved after McLain came in. However, Colonel Barth indicated that to his knowledge, no regimental commanders were relieved, nor were any battalion commanders in his regiment. In fact, he only knew of three battalion commanders being relieved in the entire division. Were you aware of anything happening at that time?

GEN DEPUY: The only thing that happened in our regiment was that our regimental executive officer was transferred. He was a very nice guy, but the rule that McLain had was, "No executive officers who aren't fully capable of taking over." So, he made an assessment and got rid of those who couldn't take over. And, you are right, by that time we had good men commanding the battalions. Major Ed Hamilton, a real fighter, was commanding the 1st Battalion; Major Ward, a cool, tough customer, led the 2nd Battalion; and John Mason, the best commander in the regiment during the war, had the 3rd Battalion. And, our regimental commander was super. So, you see, we had the makings of a good regiment even before McLain got there.

INTERVIEWER: By this time you were the regimental S-3. How did you do your job as the S-3 given these changes of battalion and regimental commanders? Were you required to stay in the CP when the regimental commander was out?

GEN DEPUY: Well, it varied. I was brought up to the regiment about one day before Sheehy came back. Then Barth came in. Now, he was an artilleryman. He had never commanded an infantry regiment before, so he really wasn't sure of things. Buddy Ryder was the S-2. By the way, he is still a major general I believe, over in Europe. Barth just told us, "I'm going to have to rely very heavily on you on technical matters. I'll take care of the command, but you're going to have to keep me straight." And, that was a wonderful thing. That made us feel good. He was a great leader, and he understood people very well. But, from a technical and tactical standpoint, from then on I did the planning, the drawing of objectives, determining boundaries, coordinating with the artillery, and talking to battalion commanders to get their views before we put out orders. I had, in other words, a very marvelous opportunity to be an operations officer for a man who wasn't an operations officer.


BREAKTHROUGH
25-27 July 1944
FRONT LINE, EVENING 24 JULY
LIMIT OF SATURATION BOMBING AREA
POSITIONS REACHED BY FORWARD INFANTRY UNITS:
25 JULY, 26 JULY, 27 JULY
HEADS OF ARMORED COLUMNS:
26 JULY, 27 JULY
GERMAN FRONT LINE, EVENING 27 JULY
All positions are approximate
Elevations in meters
4 MILES
4 KILOMETERS
OUTPOSTS 35TH INF
243d Div
91st Div
2d SS Pr Div
17th SS Pz Gr Div
353d Div
Elms 5th Prcht Div
Elms 2d SS Pz and 17th SS Pz Gr Divs
276th Div
Elms 2d Armd
Elms 3 Armd
Elms 2 Armd
Elms 3 Armd
Elms 2 Armd
Elms 5th Prcht Div
Elms GCB
Elms 2d SS Pz and 17th SS Pz Gr Divs
Elms Lehr and 276th Div
Elms 3 Armd
Elms 2 Armd
Elms 5th Prcht Div
Elms 2 Armd

INTERVIEWER: Were there things that the Germans did during these particular operations that you haven't mentioned already that stuck with you? Are there some things they did that led you to adopt some of your philosophies on defense?

GEN DEPUY: I was impressed with several things. First, I was impressed with the positions that the German infantry soldiers constructed. I was impressed with the skill and the care that they took in finding positions which had cover and natural concealment. They were almost impossible to see and yet, they afforded fields of fires exactly where they needed them in order to stop us. In other words, their fieldcraft was super, and you may remember that in the 1st Division, I spent a lot of time on that. My favorite battalion in the 1st Division really was the 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry, because they did more of that than anybody else. George Joulwan and Jim Madden really put in imaginative positions wherever they went. That idea caught fire with the soldiers of that battalion more than it did with the others. They were doing precisely what I think infantry should do. I took that lesson with me to the 8th Infantry, the 30th Infantry, and the 1st Division, to the dismay of some people, but, nonetheless, that was a pet pigeon of mine. And, that's where I got it.



German individual firing positions were well constructed and very difficult to locate, even when practically right on top of them.



Typical German machine gun position. At the far right is the entrance to a shelter with a heavy log roof for protection against artillery fire.

The second thing that I learned was about the depth of German positions. We just had one line. The Germans had a little zone defense so that they had elasticity and resilience. You could not punch through it very easily. They didn't do things in a linear way. They took pieces of terrain and knit them together into a position from which they were able to fire in all sorts of directions. They used the terrain, they used cover and concealment, and they used imagination. In Normandy our people always lined right up on one hedgerow and then down another hedgerow. You know, one line. And, if you observe many units in the American Army today, you will find that that still is

exactly what we do. The linear mentality in the defense. Now, hopefully, we're getting better, but it's a natural thing to do. It's the way a layman imagines a war — a line. So, I learned that from the Germans.

I guess I was impressed with their use of just one, two or three mechanized vehicles like assault guns or tanks. Only two or three times did I see them use a lot of tanks in what we would call a tank attack. But, most of the time, when you ran into German positions, you would run into a mixture of infantry and some kind of tracked fighting vehicles. Sometimes they were only little vehicles with 20 millimeter cannons, often 20 millimeter antiaircraft guns. Whatever they could find, a self-propelled 88mm, a self-propelled 76mm, or a self-propelled 57mm, they integrated into their defenses. And, they moved them around a lot. They wouldn't just sit in one place. We'd hear them moving; they'd be over here firing at us, and then, the next time, they would be over there firing at us.



German 20mm antitank gun



German 75mm, high velocity, self-propelled antitank gun

The fourth thing that I was absolutely convinced of was suppression. The Germans were masters of suppression using machine pistols. They'd spray our front, drive our soldiers to the ground, and then, they'd come in on us. And, the more they shot, the less our people shot, and the more dangerous it got, until finally, when all of our people had stopped shooting, we knew that the Germans were either going to overrun us, or capture some of our people, or kill our people, by getting right on top of us and throwing hand grenades. So, I guess I came out of Normandy having learned those four things.

INTERVIEWER: Was there anything in particular that you learned about our soldiers, other than what you've already mentioned, in terms of what you could or could not expect of them?

GEN DEPUY: Well, I certainly came away with a feeling that only a small percentage of the soldiers did almost all of the fighting.* If you just left them alone then some 10 percent of the soldiers were the ones who actually took the initiative, moved, fired their rifles, threw hand grenades, and so on. The other 90 percent would defend themselves if they had to, but would not do the other things unless an officer or a sergeant directly ordered them to do it, in which case they usually would do it. I learned that you couldn't depend on them doing things simply because there was a plan to do it, or because of some generalized order to do it, and this included the junior officers. You had to say, "do this," "do that," "now fire there," "now do this," and "now move there." You would always end up with a good sergeant or a good officer and three or four men doing all of the work. Unfortunately, the rest of them contributed to the casualties. And, to this very day, I'd rather have a 40-man company than a 220-man company, if I could pick the 40 men. I'd pick sergeants and officers and a few natural fighters if I could. So, what I'm saying is that I came away absolutely impressed with the fact that the average man, like nine out of ten, or eight out of ten, does not have an instinct for the battlefield, doesn't relish it, and will not act independently except under direct orders. If they are in a crew they are better. If they are in a tank or with a machine gun, they are better because there is teamwork involved. If an officer orders them to do something eyeball-to-eyeball, most men, even the ones who don't want to do it, have no initiative, and are scared to death, normally will do exactly what he tells them to do. Once, during the Battle of the Bulge, we moved into an attack at night (early morning). We got behind the Germans and prepared to jump off from the edge of some woods across an open, snowy field to seize the little village of Berle, Luxembourg. I had "B" Company in the overwatch and "A" Company doing the attack. Just before we were ready to go, a machine gun opened up on us from the rear, back in the woods. You see, we had gone past the Germans. We had slipped through them at night. And, some of them had turned around, came back, and spotted us milling around in the woodline. So, they set up a machine gun and started firing at our backs. I didn't want to stop the attack because I had the artillery just about ready to go. So, I grabbed the first two soldiers I could find, I didn't know who they were, and I said, "You and you, I want you to go back and knock out the machine gun right now, because we are going to attack that town. Now, get going." And, they did! They were scared to death, but they did it. They would never have done it if I hadn't said, "We have to do it, you have got to do it — now go do it!" This means that effectiveness varies directly with leadership actively applied.

INTERVIEWER: During this time did you start to develop the ideas that later became the "eleven men-one mind" or "follow me and do as I do" concept, or did that come later?

GEN DEPUY: "Eleven men-one mind" was the articulation of the overwatch concept. The idea was to provide a conceptual framework for the operation of a squad. Of course the goal was to get more soldiers involved in the fighting and to reduce the necessity of stopping to explain how the two fire teams were to provide "fire and movement." That came after the war, but the impetus came from the generally poor performance of wartime squads. Often a platoon leader would give

*See S.L.A. Marshall, *Men Against Fire,* 36-43 and 50-63.

up on squads and run a whole platoon as one mob or as a bunch of individuals. Of course that was an act of desperation.

Once the idea of operating two mutually supporting teams has taken hold then the question of how to control a fire team arises. The answer is that the team leader leads. He is in front and his team follows on each side in a "V" formation. That is where the "follow me and do as I do" came from. By the way, Gideon said the same thing — "Observe me and do likewise."*

INTERVIEWER: That's what you were telling us in Vietnam during September of '66, when you came around to each battalion and led a platoon with all of the officers following you. You moved that platoon through the brush and showed us the cloverleaf, and how to maintain control through the use of specific instructions.

GEN DEPUY: Yes, how to move a platoon in the jungle without getting zapped. But, it required very specific instructions, right!

INTERVIEWER: When you broke out of Normandy there was an organization that became known as Task Force Weaver, which included the 357th. Was there anything about that organization that was particularly noteworthy? I know it made quite an advance all the way to the Mayenne River.**

GEN DEPUY: Yes, to the Mayenne River and on to Le Mans. As I recall, Task Force Weaver consisted of my regiment, the 357th, plus a tank battalion, the 712th, and in addition, to the direct support artillery battalion, the 343rd Field Artillery Battalion (105mms), we had the 345th Field Artillery Battalion (155mms) in general support. There were two elements — the 3rd Battalion plus the tanks on a southern route, and the regiment (—) on the northern route. Brigadier General Weaver was in command. This was the *only* time in World War II when we had close air support. We had Air Force officers with radios at the head of each column. At Mayenne some engineers did some very brave things and pulled the detonating cords off of the charges on the bridge. In the meantime, we found some fishing boats, some little rafts, and logs, and crossed the river. That was really about the second victory that the regiment had, and it made everyone feel good. There wasn't much to it, frankly, but it made them feel good. Then we moved on toward Le Mans. Our regiment plus the division tank battalion (Task Force Weaver), was the left element of XV Corps. There were no friendly units on our left — just Germans. The regimental headquarters had one exciting night when the 1st Battalion under Ed Hamilton, which was leading, went way on ahead. The 3rd Battalion was on a parallel road, and we had the 2nd Battalion in the rear, and I mean really in the rear, further in the rear than they should have been. The regimental headquarters, consisting of about ten people along with Frank Norris who commanded the 155mm battalion, Bob Salisbury, his S-3, the regimental antitank platoon, and about three jeeps, set up in a little town known as Ste. Suzanne. We stopped there and were trying to communicate with the 3rd

*DePuy, William E. "Eleven Men-One Mind," *Army,* 8 (March 1958), 22-24, 54-60.

**For a discussion on the activities of Task Force Weaver see Blumenson, *Breakout and Pursuit,* 434-437 and 497-498.

Battalion, which was down south moving towards Le Mans. The 1st Battalion was in a fight up ahead of us, and the 2nd Battalion was nowhere to be seen when a German corps headquarters, together with odds and ends, drove down from the north into the town. [See Maps 8A and 8B, page 48]

The road from the north was a route that the Germans were trying to use to get out of the Falaise Pocket. They didn't know that we had moved as far east as Ste. Suzanne. We positioned the antitank platoon on that road and it shot all night long. Before the night was over, infantry, tanks, and much more came down that road and surrounded little Ste. Suzanne. They put tanks up on top of a hill that looked right down into the town square. By morning we had consolidated our little band in one or two houses in Ste. Suzanne. To our chagrin and embarrassment, we had to call the 1st Battalion back and send back to get the 2nd Battalion moved up. That was one of the regimental experiences. Then, about 20 miles further, toward Le Mans, the 3rd Battalion was pushing a German column ahead of it and approached a point where two roads merged. The 1st Battalion was halfway past the fork when the Germans came up on them from the rear. The 2nd Battalion then came along, so we had a big melee there. This happened to every unit going across France. They all remember those engagements with relish because they were all easy victories and made the troops feel competent and brave. But, each time they had one of those experiences they gained a little more confidence, lost their awe of the Germans, and became better soldiers. Next, we went to Le Mans, turned north and went up to Alencon, then on to Argentan, and attacked into the southern flank of the Germans trying to get out of the Falaise Pocket.*

INTERVIEWER: Were you mounted then?

GEN DEPUY: Yes, we were mounted on trucks.

INTERVIEWER: How did you normally communicate with the battalions, by radio?

GEN DEPUY: Radio and visits.

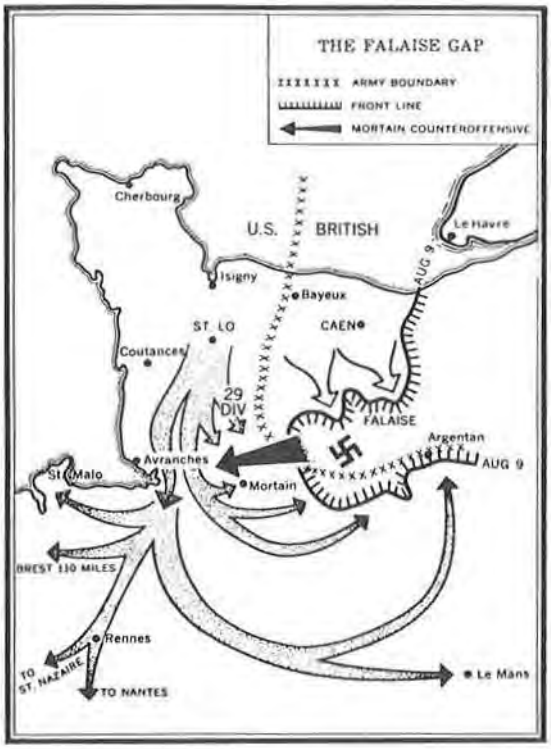
INTERVIEWER: Did the radios work pretty well with you mounted and moving?

GEN DEPUY: Frankly, the infantry radios weren't very good, but we could almost always communicate through our artillery radios which were vehicular radios drawing power from the vehicle — as are tank radios. The infantry radios were mostly battery powered.

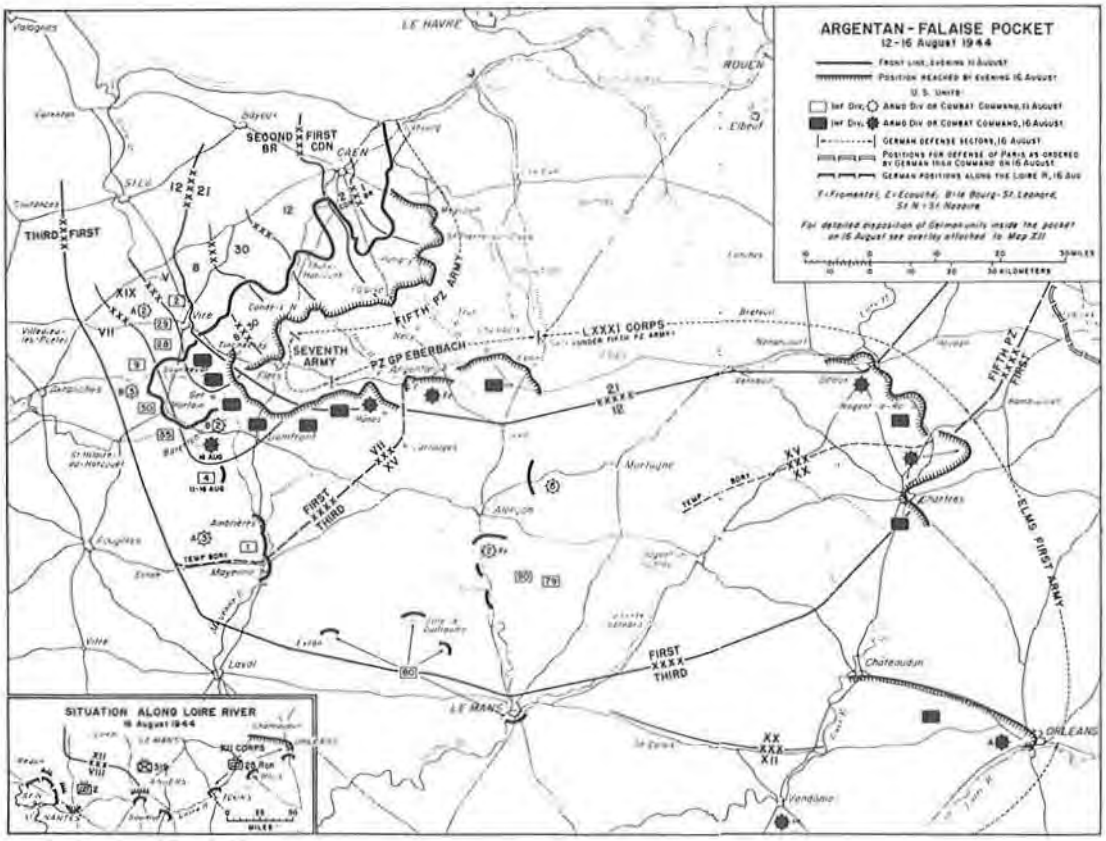
INTERVIEWER: You moved on the southern flank of the Falaise Gap and were part of a major victory, one which resulted in the destruction of German mechanized equipment such as tanks and self-propelled gear. I'm curious as to how you achieved your tank kills?

GEN DEPUY: Most of the kills in the Falaise Pocket, including tanks, were caused by air and artillery because the Germans were trying to get out and there were very few roads. Columns

*For an overall view and discussion of this aspect of the campaign see Blumenson, *Breakout and Pursuit,* 425-429.



Map 8A — The Falaise Gap



Map 8B — Argentan-Falaise Pocket, 12 - 16 August 1944

would get caught on the road by artillery fire because, you see, for several days, we had been sitting on the high ground looking down on the German columns. We weren't permitted to go into the Pocket because of that boundary dispute between the British and the Americans. But, our observers were on the high ground shooting into a bowl.

The final bottleneck in the Falaise Pocket was at a little town called Chambois. The 358th Infantry finally put a battalion right in there and absolutely stopped the escape of the German forces. Our tanks and tank destroyers knocked out some tanks at the head of the columns, but the real slaughter, and it was an incredible inferno, was done by the artillery. Oh, and by the fighters. I guess it's wrong to say that it was all done by the artillery. P-47s and the British rocket firing Typhoons were also in there all of the time. In fact, they shot at us some too, but they were very effective in destroying columns. [See Map 9, page 51]

There was a main east-west road that was blocked at Chambois. There were two or three parallel columns all headed to the east, right on the road where they tried to pass one another. Then, on each side of the road, in the fields, were clearly discernible additional columns, about ten on each side of the road, so there were about 20 to 25 parallel columns as far as the eye could see. By that I mean miles of destroyed vehicles, horses, tanks, and trucks. It was just an incredible sight. And, indeed, if we fight again, and if the Seventh Army and V Corps can hold and prevent a breakthrough, and the Russians get jammed up coming in, and if the Air Force can get at them, there is no doubt in my mind that that's where the killing will occur. Killing comes from heavy firepower.

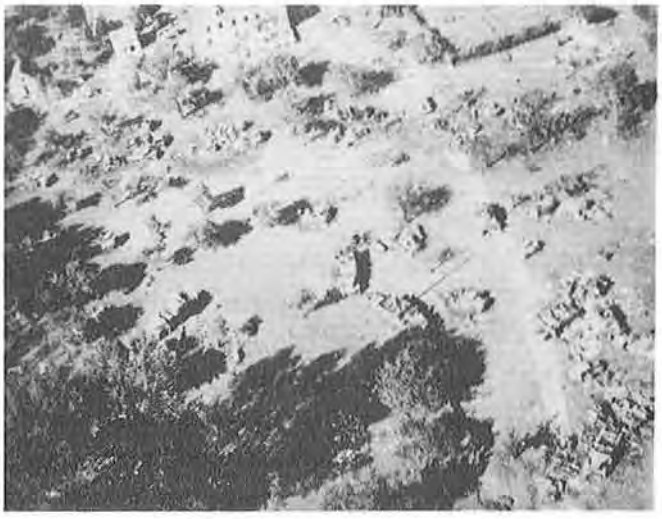
INTERVIEWER: You mentioned that you thought our artillery was pretty good. It appears that there was a lot more artillery at your beck and call than what we have today.

GEN DEPUY: That's right, the artillery was good. It was technically very sound; more so than the Germans. It could mass more quickly and had better communications. I think the command and control and the fire direction techniques of the American Army were superior to the German Army. I think they are superior today, by the way. The Germans still make an artillery battalion organic to a brigade. It's not a part of the Division Artillery. That's not a good system. Yes, we had a lot of artillery. It was very good and we could always get lots of it. At the Saar and afterwards, it was not unusual for me as a battalion commander to be supported by five or six battalions of artillery anytime I really needed it. If I had a problem I could get it. Now, I didn't use it all the time, but if I really had an emergency and I really wanted a lot of firepower, it was there. They could mass it and I could get all of it through my direct support battalion.

INTERVIEWER: What day did you become a battalion commander?

GEN DEPUY: I can't remember what the date was. It was two days before we crossed the Saar, so it must have been about 4 December 1944.

INTERVIEWER: Would you describe the circumstances surrounding your assumption of command? Was there a wounded battalion commander?



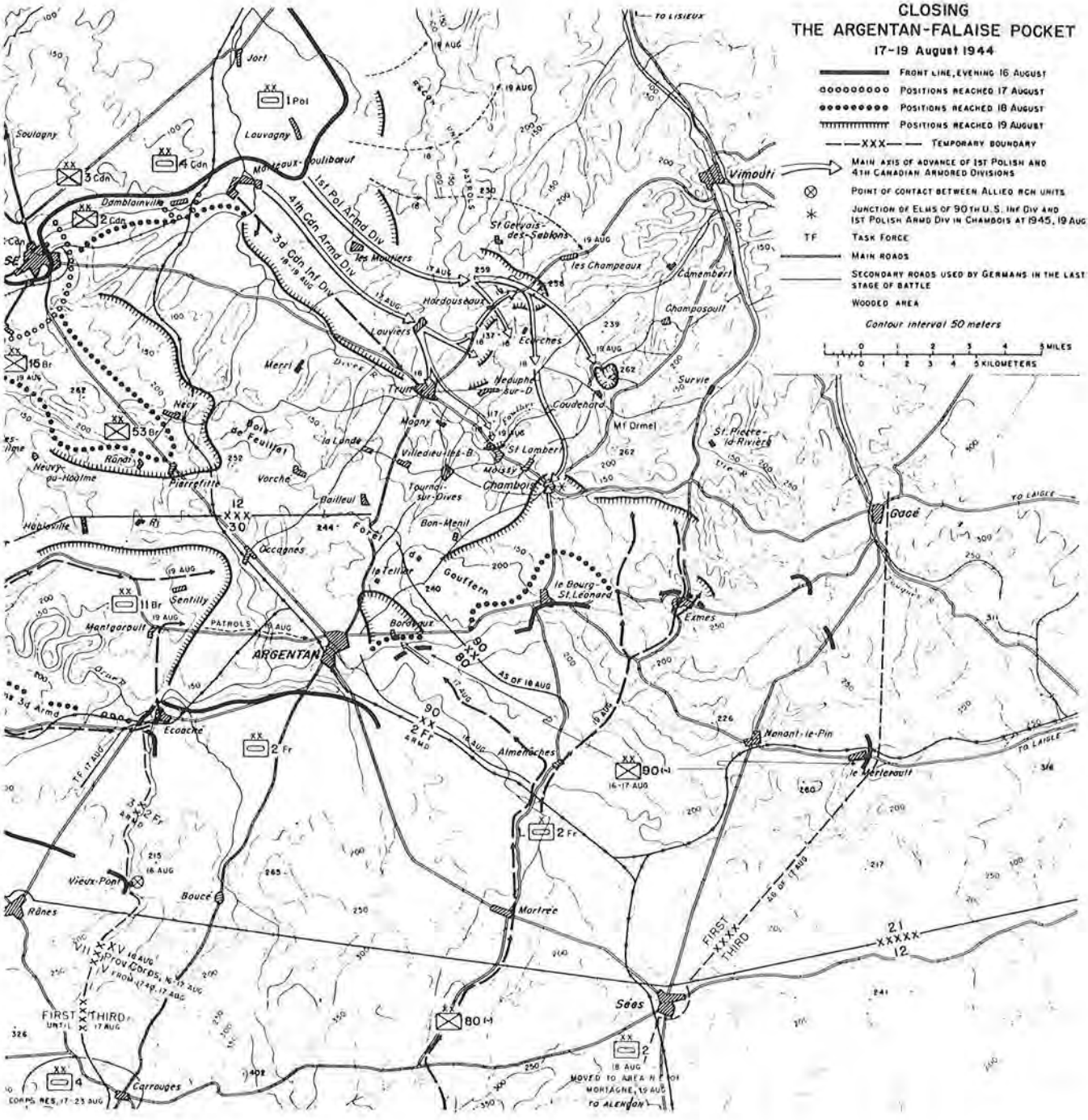
Aerial view of the massive destruction at Falaise Gap.



German men, animals and vehicles were caught and destroyed by American artillery within the Falaise Gap.



The rain of destruction left German vehicles in an unrecognizable mass.


CLOSING
THE ARGENTAN-FALAISE POCKET
17–19 August 1944
FRONT LINE, EVENING 16 AUGUST
POSITIONS REACHED 17 AUGUST
POSITIONS REACHED 18 AUGUST
POSITIONS REACHED 19 AUGUST
TEMPORARY BOUNDARY
MAIN AXIS OF ADVANCE OF 1ST POLISH AND 4TH CANADIAN ARMORED DIVISIONS
POINT OF CONTACT BETWEEN ALLIED RCN UNITS
JUNCTION OF ELMS OF 90TH U.S. INF DIV AND 1ST POLISH ARMD DIV IN CHAMBOIS AT 1945, 19 AUG
TF TASK FORCE
MAIN ROADS
SECONDARY ROADS USED BY GERMANS IN THE LAST STAGE OF BATTLE
WOODED AREA
Contour interval 50 meters
MILES
KILOMETERS
ARGENTAN
Chambois
Trun
Vimoutiers
Gacé
Exmes
Nonant-le-Pin
Sées
Mortrée
Ecouché
Montgaroult
Sentilly
Occagnes
Bailleul
Vorche
Pierrefitte
Neauphe-sur-D
Coudehard
Mt Ormel
St Lambert
Survie
St Pierre-la-Rivière
Champosoult
Camembert
Les Champeaux
St Gervais-des-Sablons
Les Moutiers
Hardouseaux
Louviers
Ecorches
Merri
Moulins
Moigny
Villedieu-les-B
Tournai-sur-Dives
Bon-Menil
Le Tellier
Gouffern
Le Bourg-St Léonard
Bordeaux
Almenêches
Le Merlerault
Vieux-Pont
Boucé
Rânes
Carrouges
Jort
Louvagny
Soulagny
Damblainville
Merlerault
Heloville
Neuvy-au-Houlme
Rânes
Orne R.
Dives R.
Foret de Gouffern
Bois de Feuillet
la Lande
Foulbec
Foulbec
Survie
Gacé
Exmes
Nonant-le-Pin
Sées
Mortrée
Ecouché
Argentan
Chambois
Trun
Vimoutiers
Jort
Louvagny
Soulagny
Damblainville
Merlerault
Heloville
Neuvy-au-Houlme
Rânes
Carrouges
Boucé
Vieux-Pont
Montgaroult
Sentilly
Occagnes
Bailleul
Vorche
Pierrefitte
Neauphe-sur-D
Coudehard
Mt Ormel
St Lambert
Survie
St Pierre-la-Rivière
Champosoult
Camembert
Les Champeaux
St Gervais-des-Sablons
Les Moutiers
Hardouseaux
Louviers
Ecorches
Merri

GEN DEPUY: No. As we came up to the Moselle River north of Metz, Colonel Hamilton was wounded and was replaced for a little while by a Lieutenant Colonel Strickler. Next, a lieutenant colonel from the 101st Airborne Division took command and was in command during the crossing of the Moselle at Koenigsmacker, and the fighting between the Moselle and the Saar. Just as the regiment came up to the Saar, just south of Merzig and north of Dillingen, there was some fighting to get to the bank of the river. There were a couple of big hills there. One had a huge cave with a lot of refugees in it. The battalion commander found it difficult to lead his battalion during that fighting. I remember that the regimental CP was in a little village about a mile and a half short of the river, behind one of these big hills. He simply walked in one night and told the regimental commander that he couldn't take it anymore. Then, as soon as he walked out, the colonel waved his finger at me and said, "Go to the 1st Battalion," And, to this day, I don't know exactly what he wanted me to do — whether he wanted me to go down and take command or just what he wanted me to do. But, in any event, I went down and sent a message back that I had taken command of the battalion. They already had orders to cross the river in a day and half or two days. So, I had a day and a half to get ready to take the battalion across the river. And, it was a battalion that was not full of confidence because the former battalion commander was the sort who said, "Well, we have orders to take that hill. I know it will be tough so we'll try it first with "A" Company. If they don't make it, we'll try "B" Company." Now, you know that no "A" Company in the Army would ever take a hill that way. [See Map 10, page 53]

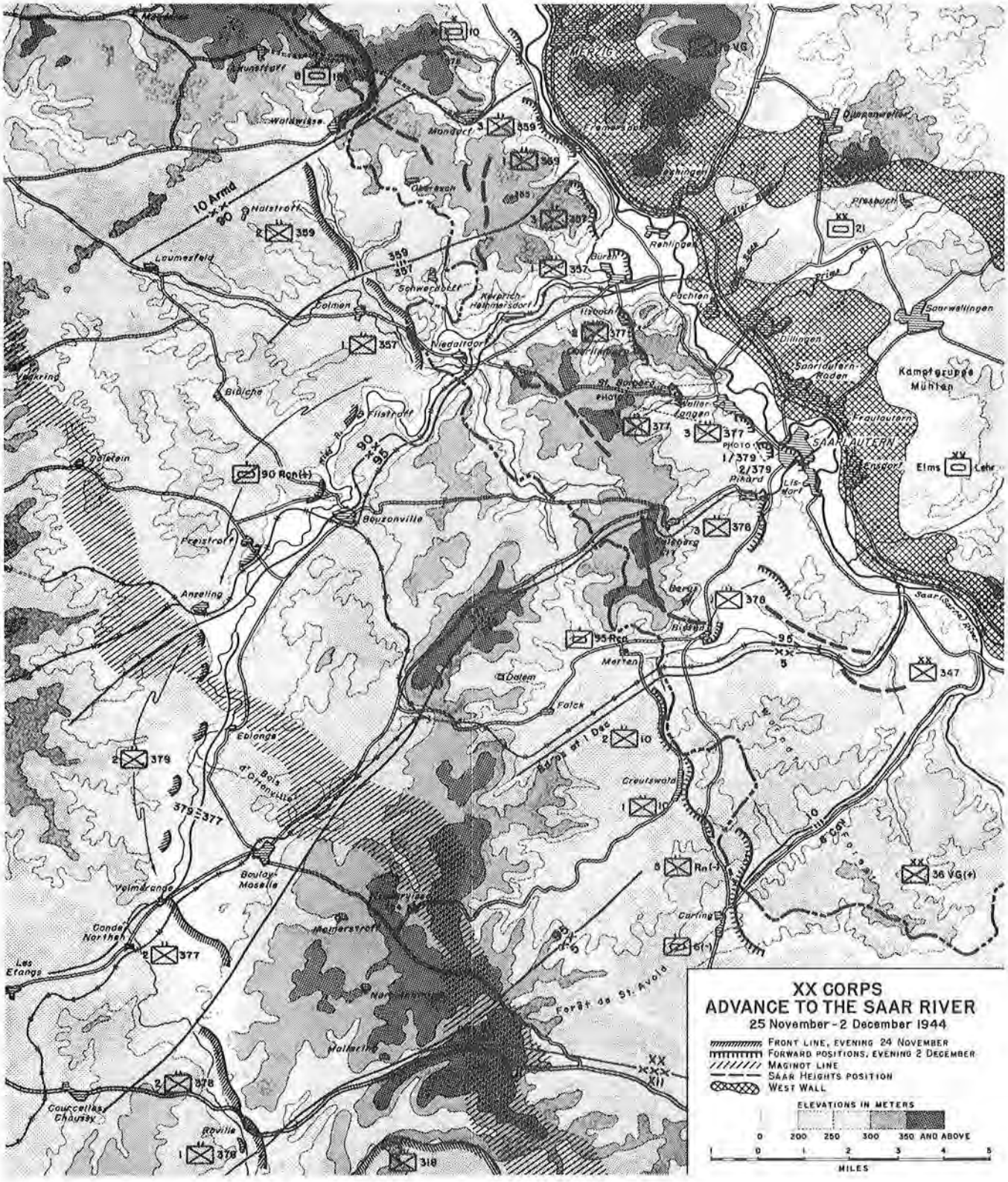
INTERVIEWER: So, this occurred after Colonel Barth had been wounded and Colonel "X" had taken over. He was with the regiment from about the end of October through mid-February, then he departed. What happened to him?

GEN DEPUY: Well, he was relieved and John Mason took over.

INTERVIEWER: So, you had some of your command under Colonel "X" and the rest of it under Colonel Mason.

GEN DEPUY: Yes. The story of the 90th Division is a story of leadership — both good and bad. During the whole time from June to the following May, we had five regimental commanders. By the way, we had six division commanders during the same period. Of the regimental commanders, two, Bittman Barth and John Mason, were superb — Barth an old regular and Mason a born leader. Sheehy was killed after three days. We have already said enough about the first man who led us into Normandy. Colonel "X" was a strange case. He seldom ventured outside the command post. On operational matters he was simply not involved. He left that entirely up to me and I always talked to the battalion commanders before orders were issued. Colonel "X" spent considerable time standing before the map board coloring the forests green, the rivers blue, the towns black, and the fields brown. The operations sergeant kept him supplied with crayons. Eventually he was relieved. The regiment barely noticed his presence.

INTERVIEWER: When you arrived to take command of the 1st Battalion, what was your impression of the company commanders? Were they competent?



Map 10 — 90th Division's advance to the Saar River

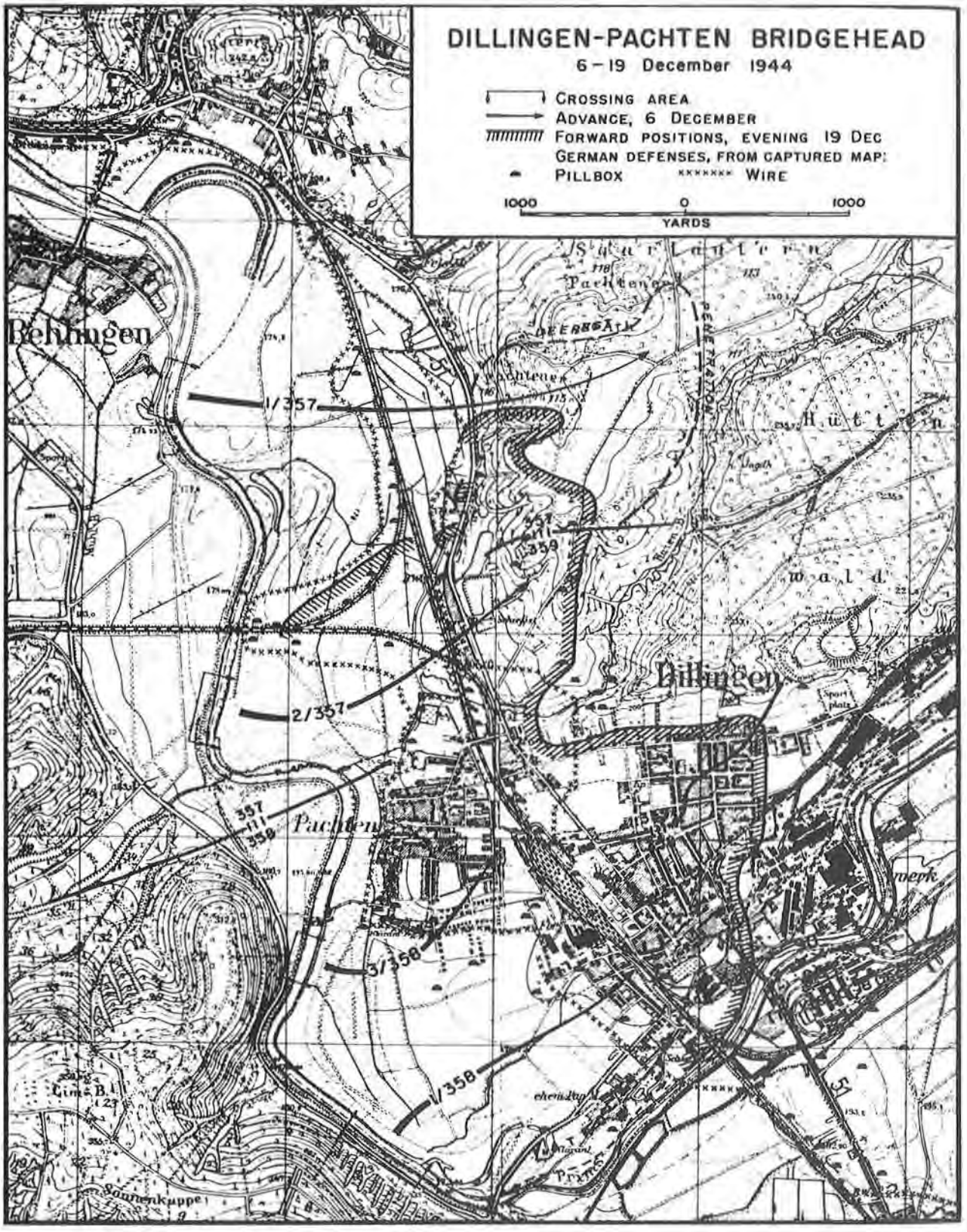
GEN DEPUY: I knew them all. The company commanders were fine, but they had been spoiled by a very weak battalion commander. One of them was a fellow named George Spaith who I took all the way through the rest of the war. Another was a captain named Reckavik, who was killed. In any event, "C" Company was Reckavik's and "A" Company was Spaith's. The "B" Company commander's name was Horner. He later became my S-3. Well, the first thing I told them was that they were great guys but that times were going to change and that they were going to do exactly what they were told to do, and that we were going to start functioning as a battalion. I said, "You know, I've been aware of what has been going on in this battalion and you know as well as I do, that that's not going to work. You know that everybody is going to get killed if we pussyfoot around like that. So, now we are going to go ahead and get to work."

Well, we did! Now, it turned out that the Saar operation was a very tough operation — one of the toughest of all. But, they all did what they were told to do, and as a battalion, we did what we were told to do. In fact, we were the only battalion in the regiment that did exactly what it was told to do at the time of the crossing. I had the left flank battalion in the division with nothing on my left. You see, the 90th and the 95th were side by side when we went across. There was nothing on the left flank of the 90th. We were going to make a corps bridgehead, XX Corps I think it was — Sam Walker's daddy commanded it — and then, we were going to break out and go to Mainz. They were going to shoot an armored division through us. The Siegfried Line ran along the river with some of the pillboxes right at the water's edge. And, halfway across the flood plain was a railroad track up on an embankment; under that embankment there were more pillboxes. Then the flood plain extended further to the woodline and hills beyond. I guess from the river to the hills it was a half mile, a quarter of a mile to the railway embankment, and a quarter of a mile to the road at the foot of the wooded hills. At the road there was another line of pillboxes and back up in the woods there were still more pillboxes and concrete shelters.* [See Map 11, page 55]

So, there were three lines of pillboxes, plus some scattered ones up in the woods. Up on top of the hill, on the left flank, there was a highway intersection, not really a major one but an important one for that area. Well, anyway, my job was to cross the river, get on that hill and block that major road junction on the left flank of the division's bridgehead.

My concept of crossing that river is one that reflects my view to this day on how to do things. I felt that if we stopped to fight at the river, or at the railroad track, or at the road, then we would never get to where we were going. So, I felt that the only way we could ever get through that maze of pillboxes and up on top of that hill was to totally decentralize things down to individual squads. So, in the day and a half that I had, I personally talked to every company commander and then I had the company commanders bring in every platoon leader and squad leader and I gave them all the same orders — "Get in the boats and cross the river. If you are shot at from the pillbox, go to one side or the other of it. Don't stop and don't go back. Go to the right or go to the left, but go inland and cross the railroad track. Don't stop to fight anybody. When you get to the road, turn right and move south until you come to the end of the woodline. When you get to the end of the woodline wait until at least a platoon is there and then go up the hill to the road junction and wait. Get yourself set up for defense and wait until we all get there. Then we'll organize. If you

*For an overview of the operation and photographic details concerning the German defenses, see Hugh M. Cole, *United States Army in World War II: The Lorraine Campaign* (Washington: USGPO, 1950, 558-592.



Map 11 — The 357th Infantry Regiment's attack across the Saar

are the only one who gets there, the mission is to block that road. If we all get there, we'll all block that road. If only one company gets there, fine. But, block that road junction!"

Well, we all got there. I think we might have lost two men out of 500. The crossing really was hairy because I initially made a horrible mistake. In the little town of Rehlingen, which was right on the near riverbank, I infiltrated in a platoon of quad 50s mounted on the back of half-tracks. I wanted them there just in case we got stopped in the middle of the river by pillbox fire and weren't able to get across. Well, my mistake was that I gave the antiaircraft lieutenant in command of that

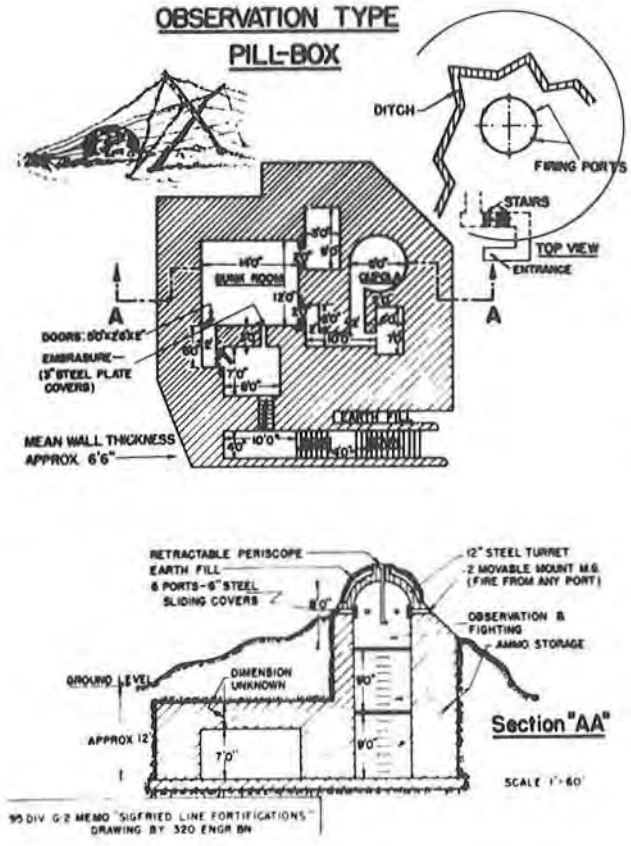


Diagram of a typical German observation type pillbox.



The massive steel and concrete pillboxes were difficult to overcome.

platoon, responsibility for deciding when to open fire. I actually thought I had given that responsibility to the commander of the tanks; I also had a tank platoon and a tank destroyer platoon in there, and some .50 caliber machine guns from the battalion trains. In other words, I had that town loaded with firepower, but what I didn't have, was clear responsibility as to whom would decide when to use it. You see my orders were, "Don't open fire unless we're getting heavy fire from the pillboxes on the river." Well, it turned out that heavy fire to me and heavy fire to that lieutenant from the antiaircraft platoon, who never had been on the front-line in his life, was quite different.

What happened is that we had the boats lined up about 100 yards from the river. The engineers had put them there and we had engineer tape leading from the assembly areas to the boats. After they picked up a boat, each squad was to go straight to the river, get in, and go and do all of those good things that I talked about. Well, just about the time the first two companies got to the boats and were picking them up, about two machine pistols fired from the other side of the river and the whole goddamned town of Rehlingen lit up. All the .50 calibers, all the tanks and all the tank destroyers were firing tracers. It lit up the whole Saar River Valley and it woke up every defender for 25 miles. So, it really was a very inauspicious initiation as a battalion commander. Once we got them shut down and the enemy fire died down a little bit, my S-3, a guy named McAlister, and I, walked along and went to every boat and every squad. A few of them we had to put into the boats at pistol point. I suppose that is not an approved leadership technique.

INTERVIEWER: What time of the day was this?

GEN DEPUY: Two o'clock in the morning. It was dark and raining; just awful weather. You know, typical German November and December weather. Just as ugly as you can imagine. But, when all was said and done, they all got there. Everybody got there. They had gone around, over, and between pillboxes. I went to the rendezvous place and there were, oh, maybe 50 or 60 guys milling around. I found out who they were and said, "Let's go." Now, by the time I got up to the road junction, half of the battalion already was there, and within another hour the whole bloody works was there.

I had every man carry a mine, an antitank mine. We had about 300 antitank mines, and they saved us. We made a big circle around the road junction, and sort of tried to fit the terrain as best we could in the dark, especially on the two roads that came from the enemy's direction. We put minefields across the roads from tree line to tree line and then, even amongst the trees. We also left some mines exposed as a deterrent. There were five or ten occasions when the Germans tried to come down those roads with armored vehicles of all different kinds, but they never went past the minefield.

We were surrounded. (The map on page 55 is misleading.) The 2nd Battalion didn't come up on our right until later because they became involved in a fight amongst the pillboxes. Soon, the troopers began complaining that they couldn't feel their toes anymore. We had a lot of cold weather injuries. The foxholes were filled with water. It rained incessantly and we had four or five sharp engagements every day when the Germans tried to pry us off that road junction. This kept the soldiers in their water-filled holes. We'd take the soldiers out occasionally, and try to rotate them through a couple of German storage bunkers that were inside our perimeter. We put all the wounded in the biggest bunker. We had our doc with us, Dr. DeLeo. In those days you always took your doc with you. He ran this little aid station right in the middle of the perimeter and it finally got loaded with wounded, people with immersion foot, and other people who were sick. We had several pneumonia cases.

The fighting there was interesting. Several times the Germans managed to get a few troops inside our perimeter but we were able to take care of that. Once, two German machine gunners slipped through and set up about 10 yards from the battalion command post, which was a four-man bunker. No armored vehicles penetrated. We were able to strip away their infantry and they stopped at the mines. We used a lot of artillery. We could get three or four battalions of artillery

through our direct support battalion. The Air Corps' XIX Tactical Air Command (TAC), dropped us some ammo and medical supplies in wing tanks. One pilot couldn't get his tank to drop so when he came in for the third time he brushed it off on a tall pine tree. He flew a P-47 out of Etain, and we sent him a silver star.

Finally, we were given orders to come back across the river. We didn't know it but the Battle of the Bulge had started. Our attack never went further east than that. I could have gone forward, but the rest of the attack got all tangled up in the pillboxes behind us and then the river flooded; the Germans had the high ground to the north, and the engineers could never keep a bridge in. Anyway, I finally got orders to pull back. I got those orders about five o'clock in the afternoon stating that I was to pull back that night — I was to pull back to the town of Dillingen, get on the ferries, cross the Saar, and then be refitted and reconstituted. Well, that was quite a challenge. I had a whole bloody pillbox full of wounded people and guys who couldn't walk, and I had another bunker with, oh, maybe 10 or 15 dead in it.

Anyway, I decided that I would use the same technique to get out of there that I had used to get in. We started pulling out at midnight; it was as black as the inside of a goat. It was raining which was good. So, the orders were that each squad was to come to the aid station and pick up one wounded or sick man and take him with them. Their orders were, "Go downhill toward the river. When you get to the road, then turn left, but don't cross it, and stay in the ditches. Don't fight anybody. If they shoot at you, go around them. Don't stop and fight. Go to the road, turn left and keep going. No matter what happens, keep going until you see a lot of houses, then go right in amongst them and stop. Where the road goes into the town, stop. We'll all get together there and figure out how to get down to the ferry." And, by golly, we did it. We got every wounded man and every man with trench foot out. Never lost a single soul and didn't have a single casualty. There was shooting all over the place and it was as scarey as the devil, but it was so dark that nobody could see enough to engage. It was 2000 meters back to where the buildings were. And, all these fellows, this gaggle of soldiers, went down in the dark and did exactly what they were told to do. And, they all got back again. *It was a central idea and totally decentralized execution.* So, I felt I learned another principle which is — be very specific as to what you want them to do and if you are, they'll do it. Keep it simple!

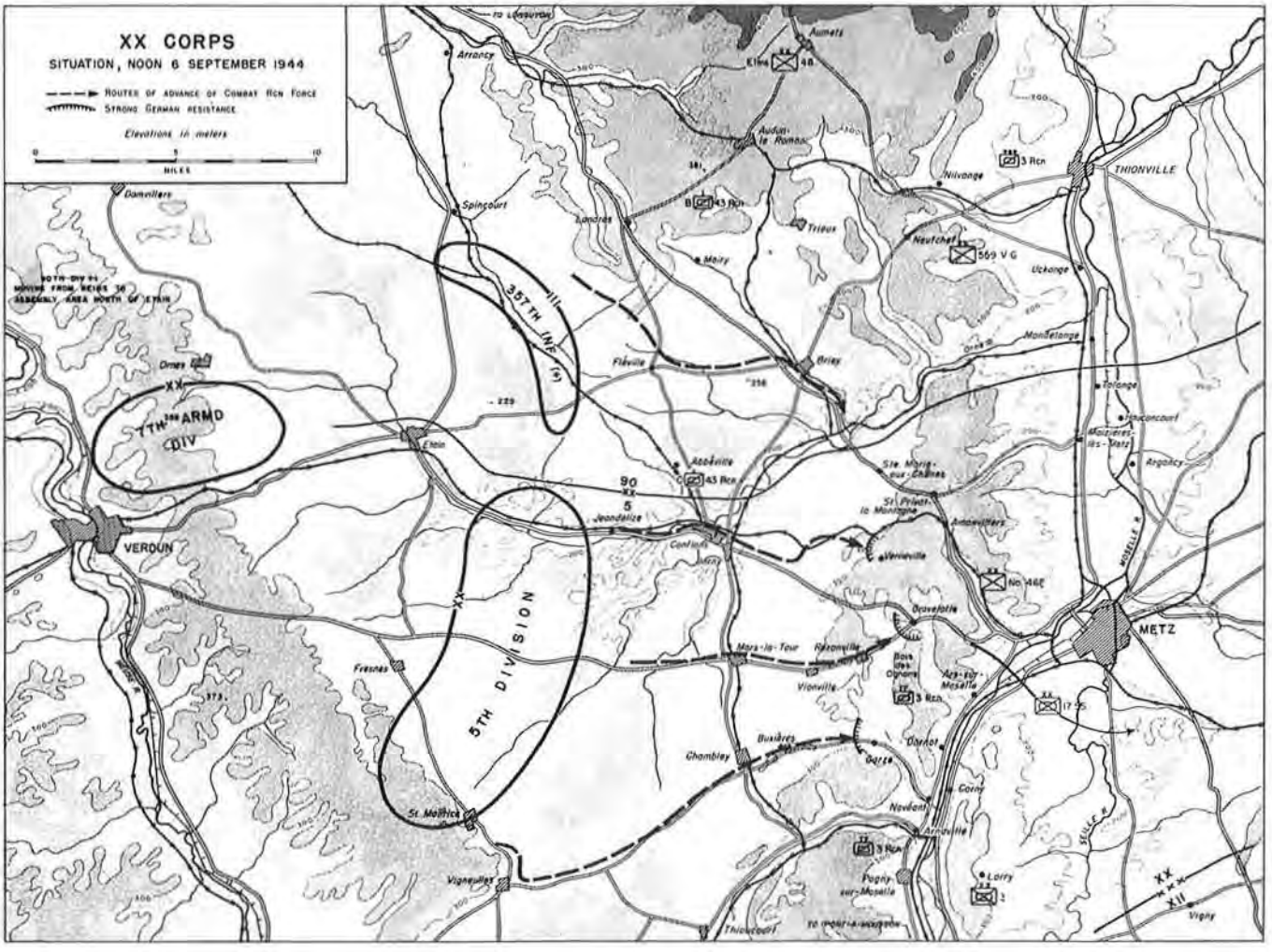
INTERVIEWER: So, each squad was briefed in the battalion headquarters?

GEN DEPUY: No, at the company. I might just give you one other example of this kind of thing. The town of Maizieres-les-Metz, six miles north of Metz, was a place where we fought a lot.* General Patton got so fed up with reading about it in the *Stars and Stripes* that he ordered us to take it once and for all. He just didn't want to read about it anymore. So, we put two battalions in there, the 3rd Battalion, commanded by Colonel Mason, assigned a house to each squad — he actually assigned a squad to each house. He gave them a full day to figure out how they were going to get to their assigned house and what they were going to do once they got there. Well, some of them had it all figured out — "Well, Mullen is going to throw a hand grenade in that window, then Brownlee is going to jump in that window." That was okay; that was good. But, some of the squads hadn't figured out who was going to do what. The companies made them

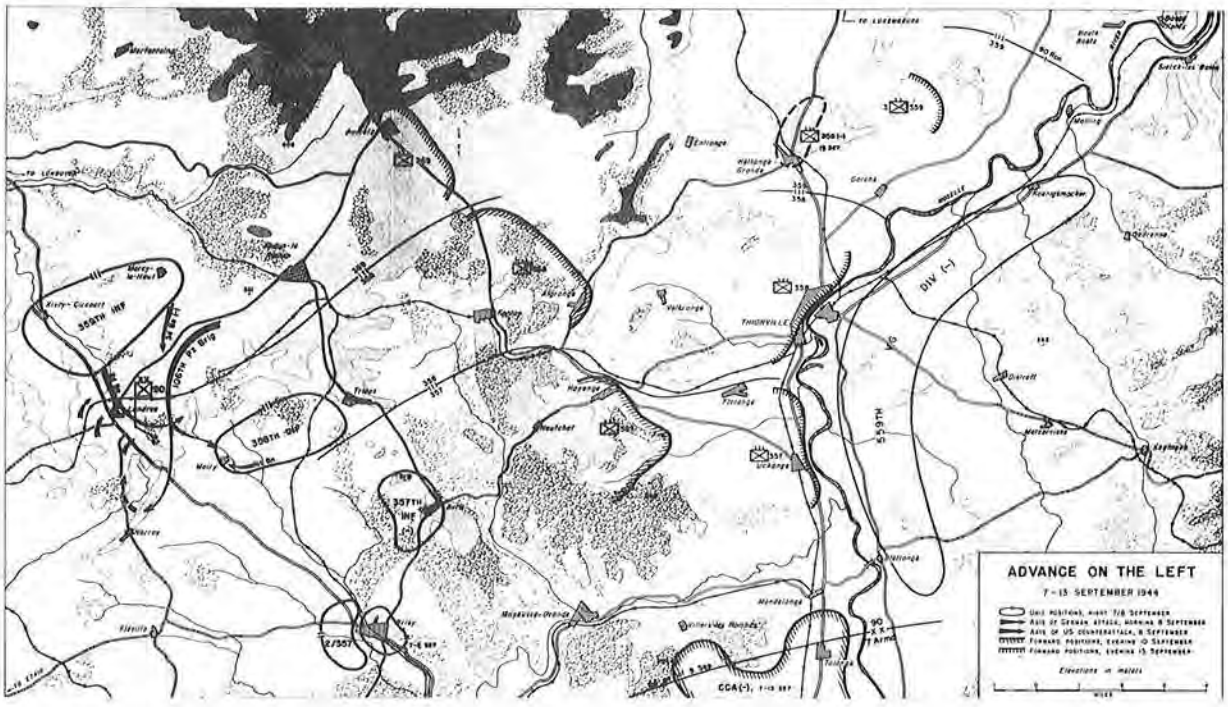
*For the 90th Division Headquarters' perspective, see Cole, *The Lorraine Campaign,* 276-280.

plan it all out and build a little sand table or mockup and tell them, "Who goes first, who runs where, who shoots, and who throws?" Well, this attack jumped off at three o'clock in the morning. In five to ten minutes the battle was over. In five minutes the whole thing was finished. We had, oh, I don't know, 200 prisoners — a small battalion. We lost maybe, two or three men. [See Map 12 below and Maps 13 and 14, page 60]

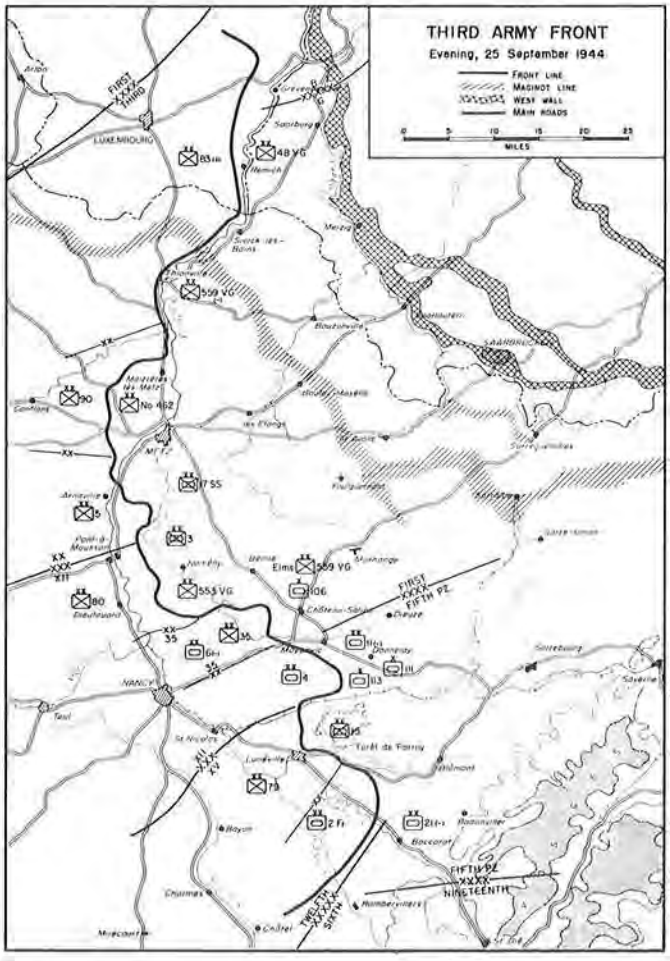
INTERVIEWER: The unit history states that that attack was made by the 2nd Battalion, 357th.



Map 12 — The 357th Infantry Regiment poised for its advance on Maizieres-les-Metz



Map 13 — 90th Division's advance to the Moselle River



Map 14 —
Third Army's Front
on the evening of
25 September 1944

GEN DEPUY: The attack was made by the 2nd and 3rd Battalions. I was the regimental S-3 at the time. That's when Colonel Barth was wounded. In fact, just before the attack Barth was hit by a mortar fragment while standing under a concrete ramp which ran up to the Bessemer converter of the Herman Goering Reichwerk. [See Photo Map 15, page 62]

INTERVIEWER: When I read the history, I made a note which states: "2-357 fight for town of Maizieres-les-Metz included new tactics, limited objectives, calculated, each officer and each enlisted man knew his job and his objectives, four groups of ten each went after the City Hall." Then I've got, "above smacks of General DePuy on control and specific guidance."

GEN DEPUY: We had the two battalions. We had the 2nd that attacked from the north against the city hall and business district, and the 3rd which attacked from Herman Goering Reichwerk on the west, into the southern two-thirds of the town. And, it was marvelous. We had fought in there for weeks and had all sorts of casualties trying to get that damn city hall, or school building, or whatever it was. And, we just fiddled and fiddled and took casualties. John Mason, the 3rd Battalion commander, later the regimental commander, was the genius who figured it all out. He was going to grab that thing the way it ought to be grabbed, and it was a howling success. But, it was the instructions at the squad level that made the difference. *It was totally decentralized in execution and totally centralized in planning.* Now, there has got to be a lesson in that somewhere, right?





By the evening of 30 October 1944, the 357th Infantry Regiment controlled what was left of Maizieres-les-Metz.



Map 15 — The fight for Maizieres-les-Metz

INTERVIEWER: Right. Now, with regard to combat service support, is there anything exciting or significant about what occurred to keep you going?

GEN DEPUY: No, I don't think so. The war was so linear in nature that we didn't have any serious problems. I am sure that the maintenance and supply people did a good job but we didn't see much of it. We had all we needed.

INTERVIEWER: In September, when the Third Army really ran out of supplies, where was the 90th located?

GEN DEPUY: Well, when the Third Army really ran out, we were at Metz.

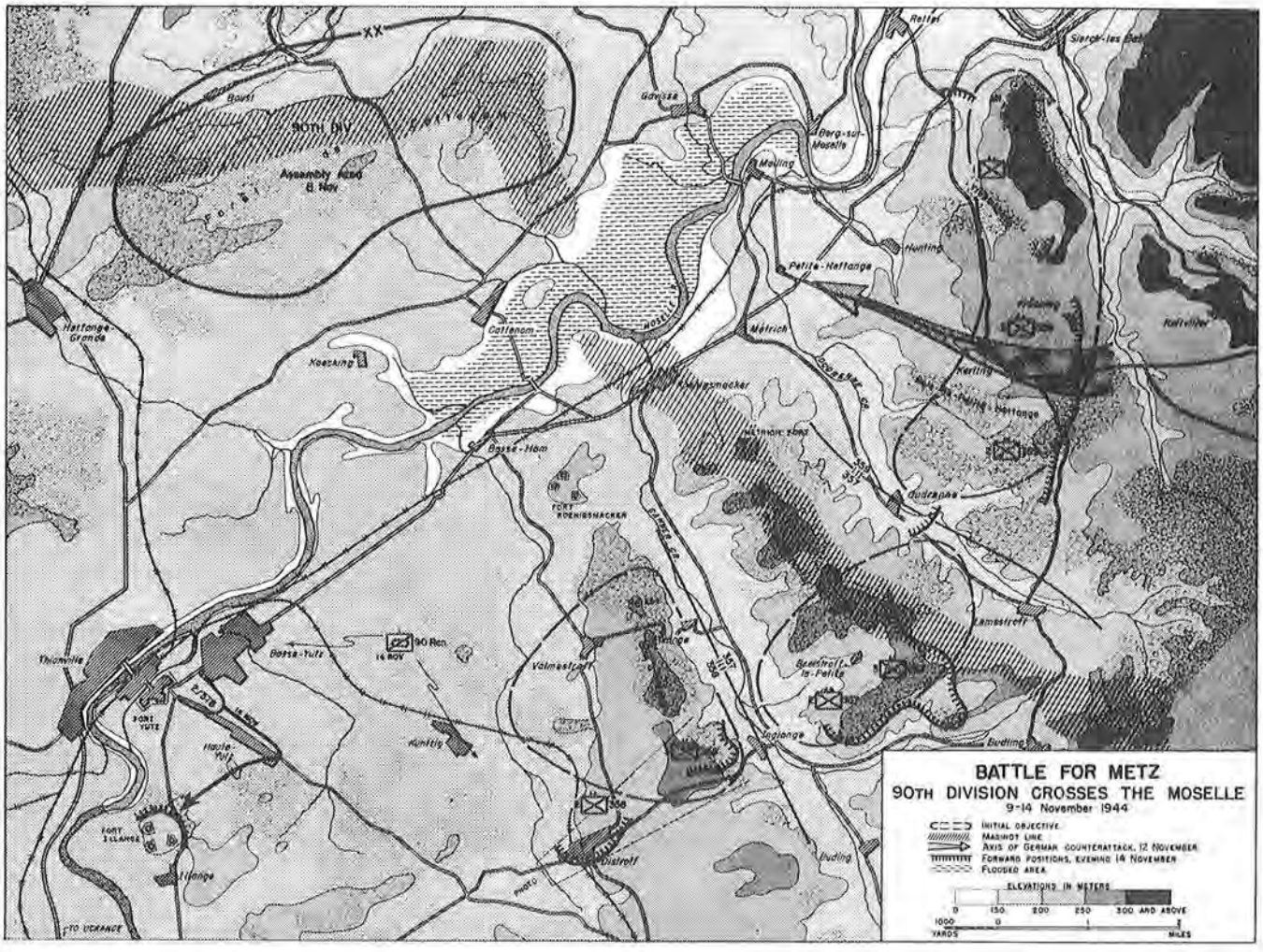
INTERVIEWER: How did that happen? Did the S-4 just come in one day and say that there was no more gas?

GEN DEPUY: Well, what really happened was that the 7th Armored Division had gotten out in front and actually had gotten into Metz just at the time when we ran out of gas. They couldn't get enough strength into Metz to hold it. So, 7th Division came back out, and we, the 90th and the 5th, slid up to the river. There wasn't enough POL for the tanks to go any further. There hardly was enough to move the artillery pieces. So, the Third Army simply had to stop for awhile and let things catch up. The supplies were coming all the way from Normandy. Ammunition and gasoline were being flown into Etain, between Verdun and Metz, by C-47 troop-carrier aircraft. So, we bellied up to the Moselle and stopped. Now, there were still infantry actions on the front, but the Army as a whole, was no longer attempting a big offensive. When it did try, it had two big offensives, one that Abe Abrams and the 4th Armored Division were in down south, east of Nancy, and the one where we went across the Moselle at Koenigsmacker, and then went on to the Saar.* We went north and the 5th went south, and we met behind Metz. The 95th came in and took over at Metz proper. That was in November, but we first came up to the Moselle in early September. [See Maps 16 and 17, pages 64 and 65]

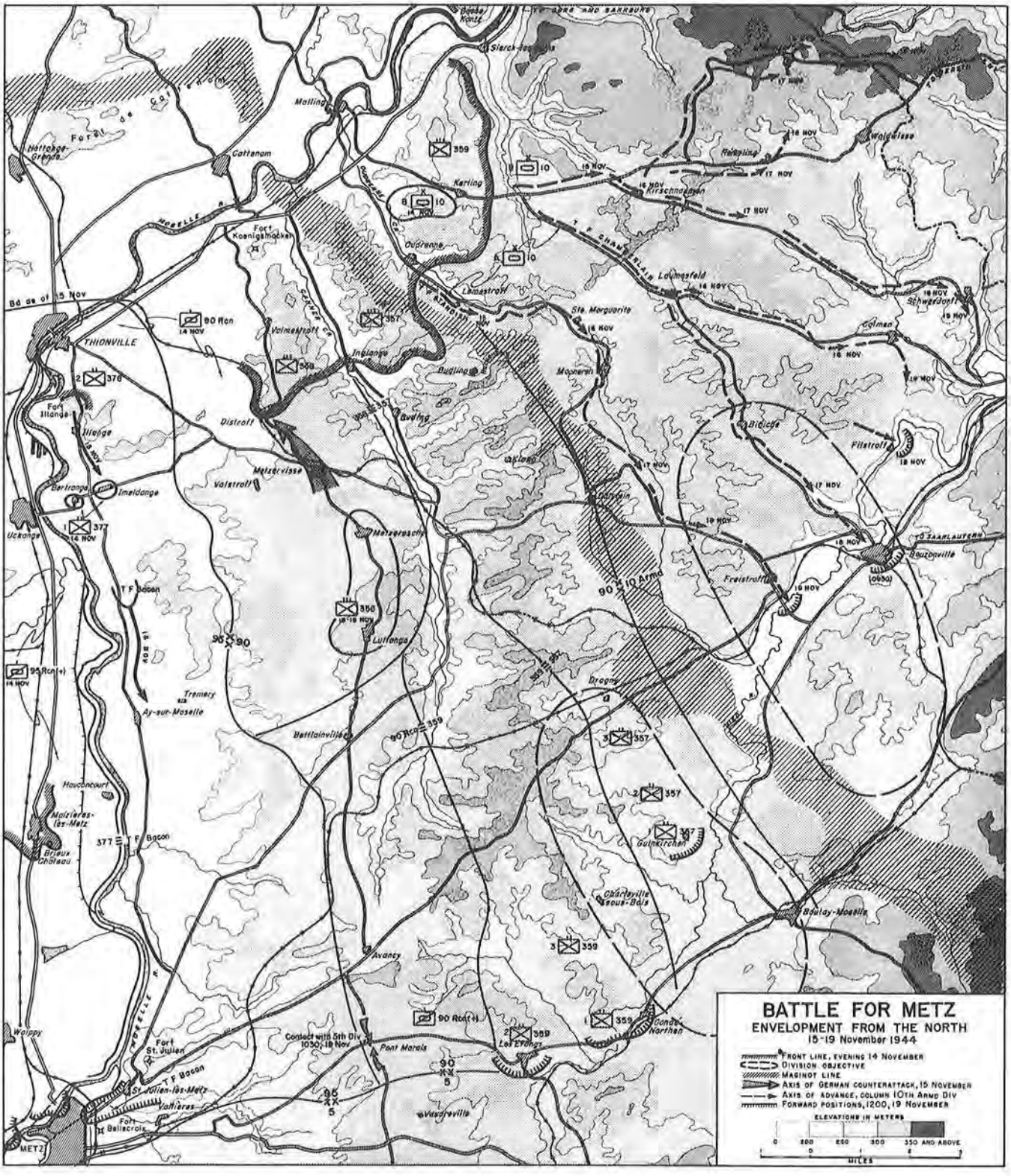
INTERVIEWER: As the Third Army rolled across France, the Germans seemed to be able to stymie the advance of the division in this sector from time to time. From reading the division's history, it looks like it was the sort of thing that you were talking about earlier, where they almost seemed to be fighting by using what you later called the active defense. They had all these little positions and they'd move from position to position launching brief counterattacks, and that kind of thing. Is that a correct description of what the Germans were doing?

GEN DEPUY: Well, across France we just ran into little groups that were pretty much incoherent insofar as a general defense was concerned. But, being good German soldiers, they fought well. So, we would run into a company here, a Kampfgruppe there, a couple tanks here, and an assault

*At this time, *Lieutenant Colonel Creighton William Abrams, Jr.*, commanded the 37th Tank Battalion, 4th Armored Division. General Abrams, a celebrated World War II Armor officer, later served as the Commander, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (1968-72), and as Chief of Staff of the Army (1972-74).



Map 16 — 90th Division crosses the Moselle River



Map 17 — The Battle of Metz

gun or two there. But, whatever it was that they used, it meant that we would have a little fight. Normally we could either overrun it or outflank it. It just took a little bit of time, but there was very little serious fighting. We didn't have a serious fight until we turned north and got up to Argentan. There was a serious fight there between Alencon and Argentan. The 2nd French Armored Division was involved in that. And then, we had another big fight in the town of Le Bourg-St. Leonard with, I think it was the 2nd Panzer Division that was coming out. But, there were some fair, small fights right up there on the southern flank of the pocket, mostly with German units that were trying to move to the west. But, there weren't any large battles. You know, there weren't any real linear, coherent battles across France. There was always an open flank so you could always just move around whatever you ran into.

INTERVIEWER: You mentioned that the Germans were pretty good at using all of their vehicles but that they really didn't employ big tank assaults like we might visualize. Was there anything you learned during this period that you could apply today in fighting armor, things that would be meaningful?

GEN DEPUY: Well, I think the first thing that impressed everybody at the time was how a handful of Germans could hold up a regiment by sighting their weapons properly. If they had two assault guns and 25 men, they put one assault gun on one side of the road, perhaps on the reverse slope firing through a saddle, and put another one behind a stone house, firing across the road. They protected them with some infantry and had a couple of guys with Panzerfausts up on the road itself, or just off the road in pits or behind houses. Now, here comes the point of an American unit roaring down the road, a couple of jeeps or maybe a tank, and bang, you lost a tank or two. The company commander then decides to maneuver a platoon around and boom, he loses another tank. So, the commander decides to wait for the battalion commander to come up. And, the battalion commander, if he is very imaginative, might say, "All right, while I'm trying to solve this thing, "C" Company go wide around to the right and come up behind this town." Those were the tactics which kept the thing moving. But, sometimes a unit would stay there and fight all day against 25 men and two assault guns. And, that happened all too often.

Commanders would too often attack the enemy head-on, whereas if they could just screen that position, just block it with something and find another way around, then they could keep going. Eventually, that is what almost always happened. They found their way around. Some units would find their way around in a matter of minutes and hours; other units couldn't find their way around except after having lost a whole day fiddling with one of these little things. Now, what one learned from fighting a lot of these things, is an understanding of tactics. The big lesson is not to take him head-on. Anything is better than that. And, you get an understanding of sighting weapons. The Germans were just superior at that. And, to this day, they are very good at it.

INTERVIEWER: About the middle of October, General Van Fleet came in and took over command of the division from General McLain. I assume that there was no change in the quality of leadership in the division, but I'm sure that there was a personality change.



The German 88mm tank destroyer known as the Rhinoceros, was able to engage tanks at long ranges.



Panzerfaust 60 — one of four different models of a highly effective German recoilless antitank grenade launcher.

GEN DEPUY: Yes. By that time the division was quite confident, and General Van Fleet was a very seasoned soldier. We hated to see McLain go but Van Fleet was recognized as a fine fellow, and he was. Van Fleet got around and talked to people; he wasn't a command post general. He was not as articulate as McLain. He was a massive man; and, he knew what he was doing. There wasn't a ripple when he came in. He didn't change anything. He expected success and he got it!*

**Major General Raymond Stallings McLain,* later promoted to lieutenant general, was originally an Oklahoma National Guard officer. He first saw action in World War I as a machine gun officer in the Champagne and Meuse-Argonne offensives. General McLain left the 90th Division and assumed command of XIX corps. Following World War II, General McLain, National Guard, was commissioned as a brigadier general, Regular Army, by Presidental appointment, the first National Guard officer to be so honored. *General James Alvard Van Fleet* later served as Commander, III Corps (1945), and as Commander, Eighth Army, Korea (1951-53). Since his retirement in 1953, General Van Fleet occasionally has been recalled to active duty to serve as a special advisor to the President or to the Department of Defense.

CHAPTER III

Across the Moselle And Into Germany

INTERVIEWER: So, the division crossed the Moselle and the Saar Rivers, and then had to pull back in order to participate in the Battle of the Bulge?

GEN DEPUY: That's right. We went to Metz, and then went up and crossed the Moselle north of Thionville, or Diedenhofen as the Germans called it. Then we crossed the Saar and conducted that operation which I talked about earlier. Next, because of the Battle of the Bulge, we pulled back just before Christmas. It took several days to pull ourselves together, get some replacements and conduct some training, and then we took off and headed north, toward the Bulge.*[See Maps 18 and 19, page 69 and 70]

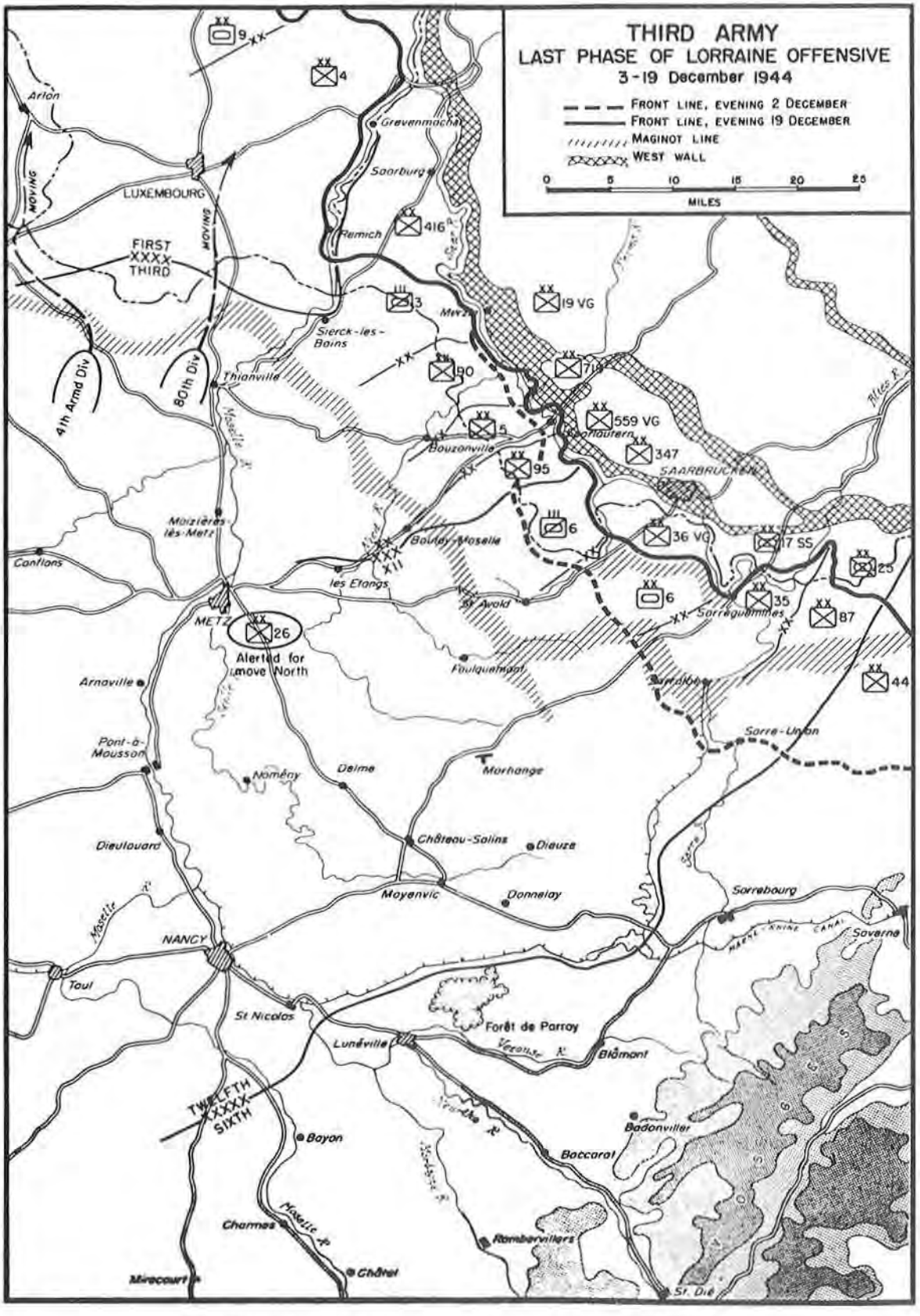
INTERVIEWER: Did you actually go into Bastogne?

GEN DEPUY: No, we didn't go into Bastogne, we went just between Bastogne and Wiltz, in order to cut the highway between Bastogne and St. Vith, up near the little town of Trois Vierges, or the Three Virgins. As a matter of fact, General Patton gave General Van Fleet a very unusual option. He said, "Here is the southern edge of the Bulge. The 4th Armored has just gotten into Bastogne and here are the divisions on-line." The 26th was in one place, the 4th was way over there, and the 80th was somewhere along there. He said, "You pick the area that you want to attack in. There was a ridge that ran north just to the west of Wiltz, which incidentally had been the location of the 28th Division headquarters in the early fighting. And so, we came up from the south, and attacked with two regiments abreast, the 359th on the right and the 357th on the left, through the 26th Division. Our objective was to destroy German forces in the salient which protruded south and east between Bastogne and Wiltz. Our attack began about four o'clock in the morning. It was mid-winter in that part of Europe, so the days were very short.

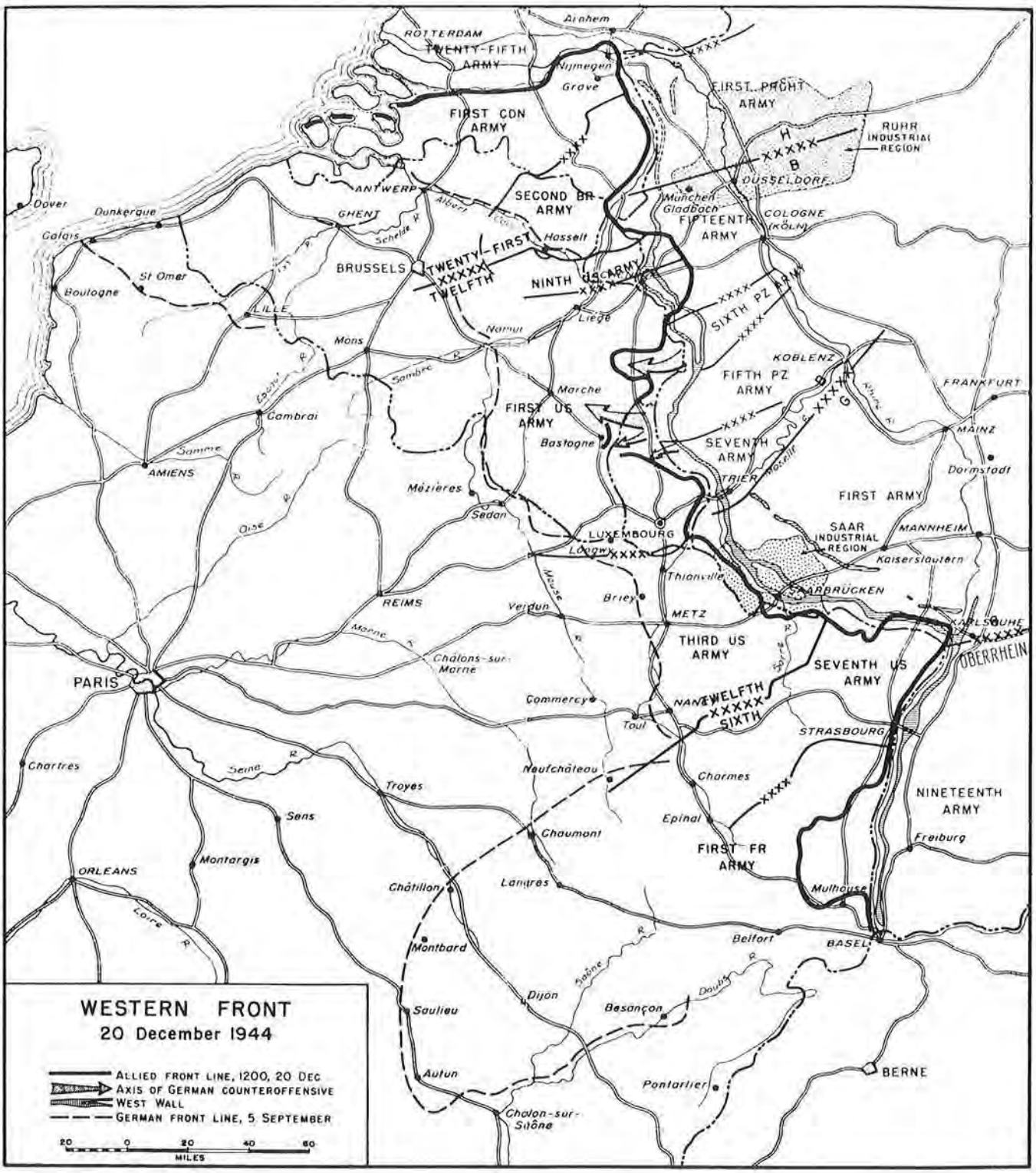
Anyway, I attacked in the dark and got through. I had a theory which, I think, worked every time. The Germans always defended on the tops of the hills and in the valleys. If you went to the top of the hill, you would find a German position; if you went to the bottom, you would find a German position. But, there was never a defensive position on the hillsides. Every time we made an attack in that area of high forested hills, the whole battalion would go single file. We'd go around the side of the hill and right through the German positions and get behind them. We never had to fire a shot. The Germans would be down on the bottom, or up on the top, so they couldn't see us. There was snow and it was quiet. We'd go right through. We did that three times in that particular fight. So, we didn't have to fight to penetrate. It was something we learned in Normandy — don't fight them head-on; find out where they are and go someplace else. Of course, it was even easier at night.

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*For a discussion on the Battle of the Bulge, see Hugh M. Cole, *United States Army in World War II: The Ardennes: Battle of the Bulge* (Washington: USGPO, 1965), and Charles B. MacDonald, *A Time for Trumpets: The Untold Story of the Battle of the Bulge* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1985).



Map 18 — 90th Division prepares to crack the "West Wall"



Map 19 — The German Counteroffensive in the Ardennes

INTERVIEWER: That reminds me of something else. It may or may not be directly related but it pertains to being located on the forward slope. They obviously were not. As you said, they were either on the top or down at the base, and yet, when I entered the Army, we were being taught to defend on what was called the military crest of the hill, which is, in fact, the forward slope. Maybe that was a result of the Korean War.

GEN DEPUY: That was the Korean syndrome.

INTERVIEWER: And, I think it still affects us today.

GEN DEPUY: And badly, particularly if you are putting infantry there; they can only get killed.

INTERVIEWER: Right. I think you once mentioned that an incident like that happened in Europe.

GEN DEPUY: Yes. After the Bulge had collapsed and we started back to the east, we crossed a series of rivers. When we got up between the Prum and the Kyll Rivers, we encountered a very high open ridge. One of my company commanders put his "C" Company out in the snow on a bare forward slope. They dug in and everyplace they dug they made dark doughnuts in the snow. On the other side of the river there was another ridge. On top of that ridge were some German assault guns, and they waited until the company commander had all of his troopers scattered around in their foxholes on the forward slope, and then, they just started firing with their two assault guns. It was murder. Finally, after they killed and wounded maybe 20 men in that company, the rest of them just got up and bolted out of there and went over to the reverse slope, which is where they belonged in the first place. So, being on a forward slope when the enemy has direct fire weapons, high velocity direct fire weapons, is suicide. And, every time I went to Germany, I tried to convince Blanchard and the 1st Armored Division, the 3rd Armored Division, and the 3rd Division, at Hohenfels, of that. But, time after time, I'd find them all lined up in exposed, uncamouflaged, half-finished positions right within the sights of a Russian T-62 tank. It's suicide unless they have frontal cover and are camouflaged. A trench is better. You see, a trench is a superior solution to that. And, a lot of people, the North Koreans, the South Koreans, the North Vietnamese, the Russians, and some Germans, use trenches. The Arabs, the Egyptians, the Syrians and the Israelis, sometimes use trenches. Why? Because you don't know where they are when they're in the trenches. When you are trying to shoot at people in a trench line, you have to ask yourself, "What part of a trench line do I shoot at?" You can waste a lot of ammunition trying to suppress a trench. But, trying to suppress clearly visible American foxholes or bunkers with high velocity weapons is a cakewalk. It's suicide to go into battle like that. But, our Army as a whole, doesn't know that.

INTERVIEWER: I'm afraid that we still are doing what people like myself were taught right after the Korean War. Apparently that's how it was done on the hills of Korea. That's how people dug in and fought.

GEN DEPUY: They were mostly dug in against mass Chinese infantry assaults. There weren't any large direct fire weapons, or only a very few. They weren't using tanks to snipe. So, you could say that that approach was partially justified, but, even then, they should have had frontal cover and have been totally invisible from the front. They should have been firing at angles, covered from the front, and totally camouflaged. If they had done all of that, then it would have been all right.

INTERVIEWER: But, in fact, they were in bunkers, which I imagine were very obvious.

GEN DEPUY: Yes. They were little forts like the Special Forces forts in Vietnam. Or, like the positions I didn't like in Europe. People always were trying to build a fort. But, they would only get it half done, and a half finished fort is an easy target for a tank gun. So, that's not very good.

INTERVIEWER: Please compare for us the Saar River crossing with your first crossing of the Moselle conducted in mid-November shortly after General Van Fleet assumed command of the division. I believe you were confronted not only by the enemy, but also by the elements.*

GEN DEPUY: Yes. The XX Corps wisely decided to forgo a direct assault into the fortifications of Metz and instead envelop from both north and south. The 5th Division crossed south and the 90th north of Metz with the object of meeting about 10 miles or more east of Metz while the 95th Division held the sector around the fortifications themselves.

The 90th Division crossed north of Thionville near Cattenom, with the 358th Regiment on the right and the 359th on the left. The 357th then came across the center at the village of Koenigsmacker, which was located just where the Maginot line crossed the Moselle from the northwest to southeast. Thus, the 90th had a single division bridgehead.

Unfortunately, the river was at flood stage. Worse yet, the flooding grew progressively worse as time went on. At the time of the assault crossing, the river was flowing at seven to ten miles an hour but was generally within its banks. Two days later it was over one half mile wide and a raging torrent.

The plan, as usual, was to put in a bridge and bring over the armor. But the engineers were unable to keep a bridge in place and the approaches were so far under water that 2½ ton trucks flooded out. Jeeps were submerged.

To make the whole thing even more interesting General Hermann Balck, the German Army Group commander, seeing our difficulties, sent a heavy tank battalion, the 555th I recall, consisting of King Tiger tanks, against the bridgehead through the 359th Infantry. As part of a Kampfgruppe, the Germans penetrated to the river in the center of the sector and shot up the engineer ferries and partial bridge segments. Through substantial heroics the 359th finally ejected the Kampfgruppe.

The 358th finally captured Fort Koenigsmacker which loomed over the bridgehead. A second armored thrust against the bridgehead was also defeated at Distroff by a spirited counterattack by

*For a thorough discussion of this river crossing see Cole, *Lorraine Campaign*, 380-416.

the 358th Infantry. The 357th fought its way down the ridge in the center which was heavily combed with the Maginot forts and tunnels and infested with Germans.

All three regiments and the engineers were hard pressed in this operation. But each crisis was met. Somebody or some group rose to the occasion. The division had matured. It was no longer awed by the Germans.

General Patton called this operation one of the epic river crossings of all time. Ever afterwards the 90th was one of his favorite divisions.

Just three months earlier the 90th was a candidate for inactivation and disgrace. Under the leadership of McLain and Van Fleet it had found its company and battalion commanders from its own ranks. It had learned how to fight through on-the-job training. That process was long and bloody, but in the last analysis, it was a tribute to the American spirit. It was not a triumph of the "system".

In any event, the 90th meet the 5th behind Metz and together, we proceeded east to the Saar and another adventure.



Company L, 357th Infantry Regiment, shown in assault boats crossing the Moselle River.







The flooded Moselle River presented many difficulties for the 90th Division during its crossing operations.

INTERVIEWER: Now, the Germans didn't have very many Tigers, but I guess what they did have they used well. Could an infantryman knock out a Tiger, or did it take a tank or a tank destroyer to do that?

GEN DEPUY: The 2.36-inch Bazooka could defeat a King Tiger only by a shot into the engine compartment from the rear, which was a difficult thing to do. The 75mm tank gun and 3-inch gun on the tank destroyers could not penetrate the turret or the front of the King Tiger. At short ranges they could penetrate the side armor.





The 2.36-inch Antitank Rocket Launcher or "Bazooka"

INTERVIEWER: Another problem that you faced during this particular time of the year was inadequate clothing. Could you comment on that?

GEN DEPUY: Well, the main thing that we really missed were the shoe packs. I received several hundred replacements in my battalion just after the Saar River operation, but before we went up to the Bulge. I think they were all from the 65th Infantry Division, which was located somewhere down in the Vosges Mountains. They were all equipped with shoe packs. But, none of our people were, and we had been in that water over across the Saar. We had disastrous losses due to what we called trench foot; later, they called it immersion foot. We got some of those men back, but not many. A lot of them lost toes and others probably had trouble for the rest of their lives. By the time I brought our "B" Company back across the Saar and put it into a rest camp, I think there were only about ten men left in it. All of the rest were either wounded or killed, or had immersion foot. That's why I got hundreds of replacements in one day. We had good raincoats. In fact, I had one of those raincoats until very recently — a marvelous, rubberized coat that was kind of a grey-brown. We wore those over a lot of clothes, over a lot of field jackets, and so on. During November and December that was the typical garb of fighting infantrymen.

INTERVIEWER: You mentioned earlier about moving the battalion along that hillside. How did you normally move a battalion? Would you normally be leading it like you did on that occasion?

GEN DEPUY: In that particular case I simply put them in a column of companies, a column of platoons, and a column of squads, in a long line, and told them what to do in case we got all scrambled up. The rendezvous was always the objective. The rendezvous shouldn't be back where you started. That way, if something goes all flooey, then everybody proceeds to the objective independently; but, if it doesn't all go flooey, then the best way to go is to move a battalion single file. The company commander of the first company and the platoon leader of the lead platoon would be with me, plus the scouts.

INTERVIEWER: Did you move primarily at night?

GEN DEPUY: Yes, and that's one of the reasons. You see, that way, if we got lost, we were all lost together.

INTERVIEWER: And, you didn't have people stumbling around trying to find each other.

GEN DEPUY: Right. We didn't have any, "Where's 'A' Company," or "Where's 'B' Company?" On one occasion, while going through the Siegfried Line at the end of the Bulge, the line broke. I got up on the objective with only one and a half companies. I was standing there watching the guys come by in the middle of the night; it was kind of a bright night with a lot of snow around, so I could see pretty well. All of a sudden, there wasn't anybody else going by. There was just the first platoon of "B" Company, and that was it. The rest of the battalion was back about two miles at the very point where we had started. So, I left the S-3 up there on the objective, and went back with my radio operator and my little man, "Friday," and found them. They had turned back and were right back where we had started. A lieutenant had broken the line, turned around, and went back. Then, he got scared and disappeared into the aid stations; we never caught that son-of-a-bitch. So, I grabbed part of that bunch and started for the objective again; but, by this time, it was getting light. Anyway, we started out and it got very light and we came under fire. I realized then that we were never going to make it to the objective in the daylight. At night we had just gone right across the open fields. So, there I was, I had a company and a half on the objective, and myself and a company and a half back at the starting point. Well, the next night we all got back together.

Still, the column is a good night control measure. I never have agreed with the doctrine for night attacks that calls for all of those release points and getting on line and attacking. I feel you have to do one of two things in a night attack. You either infiltrate to the objective, and for that you have to have control, and single file provides the best control that you can get. Everybody holds on to the guy in front. And, you go in the darkest, worst part of the place, and get there by sneaking. Or, you do what we did in the middle of the night at Maizieres-les-Metz, where every squad knew what the objective was. So, you have the two extremes. One is when you don't want to fight at all, you are just trying to gain a piece of high ground. Then the enemy has a problem because you



Typical view of the Dragon's Teeth positioned along the Siegfried Line.

have gotten behind him. Or, if you have to fight, then you have to have centralized planning and decentralized execution. And, every squad leader must look in daylight at what he is going to traverse and seize at night. That means that you are never going to go more than a couple of hundred yards, maybe 1,000 yards at most. So, again, a set piece night attack should be of short range; if you try to do it the way the manual used to prescribe, it's hopeless.

INTERVIEWER: But, there still are people who remember that kind of stuff.

GEN DEPUY: I know, but I think it's all out of the manual, now. I think the manual now says what I just said — at least, I hope it does.*

INTERVIEWER: You mentioned all of the replacements that you received just before you moved north to participate in the Battle of the Bulge. Was there time to give them any kind of training or orientation once you received them?

*To analyze how conducting night operations has changed over time, compare Field Service Regulations 100-5, *Operations* (Washington: USGPO, 1944), 241-246, with Field Manual 100-5, *Operations* (Washington: USGPO, 1982), 9-15 - 9-16. See Field Manual 7-20, *Infantry Battalion* (Washington: USGPO, 1944), 135-150, and Field Manual 7-20, *The Infantry Battalion (Infantry, Airborne, and Air Assault)*, (Washington: USGPO, 1984), 4-42 - 4-48. See also, Field Manual 7-10, *Rifle Company, Infantry Regiment* (Washington: USGPO, 1944), 62-74, and Field Manual 7-10, *The Infantry Rifle Company (Infantry, Airborne, Air Assault, Ranger)*, (Washington: USGPO, 1982), 3-33 - 3-44.

GEN DEPUY: I took the period around Christmas, and put them all in a defensive position up on the Maginot switch position that I talked about earlier, so that they could get to know one another. Then, we took every company through an attack sequence. By that time, we had learned one great lesson — you either infiltrate or you bypass. The best way to bypass is a wide swing. But, if that is impossible, then you place a high volume of direct fire on him and envelop the position. That is, you go around him. Penetrate by infiltration and bypass. That is what the Germans learned in World War I. In the west we called it von Hutier tactics.*

INTERVIEWER: Remember the regimental treatment rule in Vietnam — if it sounded big, you treated it as big? Later, after you left, we received instructions that if we ran into something, even if it was just a little something — one or two guys shooting rifles — we were to stop, pull back, bring in the air and artillery, and then, move forward. It was very frustrating because we could not develop any momentum even when we felt that we could easily handle the situation. The guy on the ground sort of knows best whether or not he can handle the situation.

GEN DEPUY: Here are some of the rules that we had — if you heard a machine gun, it was a company; if there was also mortar fire, then it was a battalion; if it was just a few riflemen, then it could be a platoon or less. If you encountered machine gun and mortar fire, then you ought to go at it the right way. Don't piecemeal your platoons or you will lose each platoon one at a time. Under those circumstances, the platoons ought only to probe the area to find out where the enemy is.

INTERVIEWER: Well, that was a very sensible rule based on sound principles and thinking the thing through; but, later on, people forgot the key part. They just went with rules such as, "When you hit something, we'll overcome it with fire." As a result, maneuver became very, very slow. People forgot what you were trying to do, which was not to move slowly, but to move securely by knowing what you were up against while still moving as fast as you could.

GEN DEPUY: That's right. It got all out of whack. The one thing that I really wanted to avoid wherever possible, was to fight all the action on ground chosen by the enemy. If the enemy is in bunkers and has prepared the killing ground, you ought to stay out of it. Now, if he's got a 360 degree killing ground, you still don't want to go into it if you can avoid it. If you can drop a 2,000 pound bomb in the middle of it, then that's what you should do.

INTERVIEWER: That's right.

GEN DEPUY: But, if he has a flank, then go around it, get around to his rear. Do something, but don't keep sending rifle platoons into the killing ground. He probably has his bunker with small firing slits, and he'll just cut your legs off as you come in. Then you'll try to evacuate casualties,

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*For a discussion on the development of German tactics in World War I, see Graeme C. Wynne, *If Germany Attacks: The Battle in Depth in the West,* (London: Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1940); reprinted by Greenwood Press, 1976.

and suffer even more casualties; we know all about that. It's terrible. I hope the Russians always try to come into our killing grounds, hoping, of course, that we've got them organized.

INTERVIEWER: Was there anything special that you did with your battalion during World War II when you moved at night in a mounted configuration? Were you ever mounted when you moved at night?

GEN DEPUY: Once in a great while we were told to continue a pursuit at night because our higher headquarters just didn't want to lose the momentum. Frankly, in those cases, we just continued at night with the same formation that we had had during the day, which normally was with some tanks up front.

INTERVIEWER: An area where I feel that we are lacking doctrinal knowledge is in the area of conducting mechanized night attacks.*

GEN DEPUY: I think there is a difference of opinion. In a night pursuit, which is done only when the enemy is retreating and is disorganized, you're just trying to take advantage of his confusion. But, you can have a bad accident while you're doing that — you can run into a hornet's nest. Still, on the average, if everybody's pursuing, and the enemy is in bad shape, it's a worthwhile tactic. It's not very scientific, and if you run into some fire, again, you have to decide if you're going to fight or bypass. Mostly, you would like to bypass, but bypassing at night is hard. You lose control because you have to move off the road. The best way to maintain control at night is to go down the road. So, generally speaking, in the night pursuit, if you run into something tough, that's the end of movement until morning. By the time you're able to do anything about it, it's already daylight.

But, with regard to a night attack, a night mounted attack, again, I would say that if it's against serious opposition, meaning an organized enemy position, it seems to me that unless you have overwhelming superiority, you would try to bypass and get way behind it and force the enemy to move the following morning. If you were going to make a deliberate night attack it would be because you were going to use some infantry at night to seize a critical piece of terrain that maybe, is occupied by enemy antitank guided missiles, which you want out of the way so that in the morning, when you move ahead with your armor, you're not going to be hit by them.

INTERVIEWER: You're talking now, about dismounted infantry?

GEN DEPUY: Dismounted infantry, absolutely.

INTERVIEWER: You do it to facilitate what you are going to do later, right?

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*See Field Manual 71-2, *The Tank and Mechanized Infantry Battalion Task Force* (Washington: USGPO, 1977), 4-47 - 4-51.

GEN DEPUY: That's right. But, in respect to mounted action at night — attack or pursuit — once all of the vehicles have night vision devices it may be possible to fight at night as we do now, in the daytime.

INTERVIEWER: You mentioned earlier about a fellow who didn't sleep, or didn't eat, while there was a battle going on. While you were an S-3, and later on, when you were a battalion commander, how did you regulate your eating and sleeping? Obviously, you were doing a lot of planning, and you took a very active role even in the execution part of a lot of things. So, how did you regulate your time? Did you have a schedule that you tried to follow?

GEN DEPUY: Well, as far as being the S-3 was concerned, I could pace myself, and would try to be at the critical places at the critical times. War isn't one pellmell, mad fight, anyway, as you know. There are long periods of boredom, interspersed with moments of horror and terror — that's what war is. But, there's a lot of waiting time and a lot of coordination time and normally, at night, the fighting dies down unless you have a night attack. When you're a battalion commander, you're really in control because there is nobody out there but you. There's nobody up in the helicopters. None of that. So, you do everything you can. You fight as long as you can, and when you have to have some sleep, you get some sleep. It's just that simple. You have to plan and control each critical operation. So, if you and your guys have to get some sleep, then you just don't take the next step. You've got control of the situation. When you're young and under 30, you can do fairly well. You can go quite a long time without sleep, and you can bounce back with just a little bit. If you're much older than that, then you have a lot of trouble. I guess the Arab-Israeli War was an example in which some Israelis fought for about four days without sleep, at the end of which, you know, they were just finished. At the end of WWII my regimental commander was 27 years old; I was 25. The other two battalion commanders were 28 and 26.

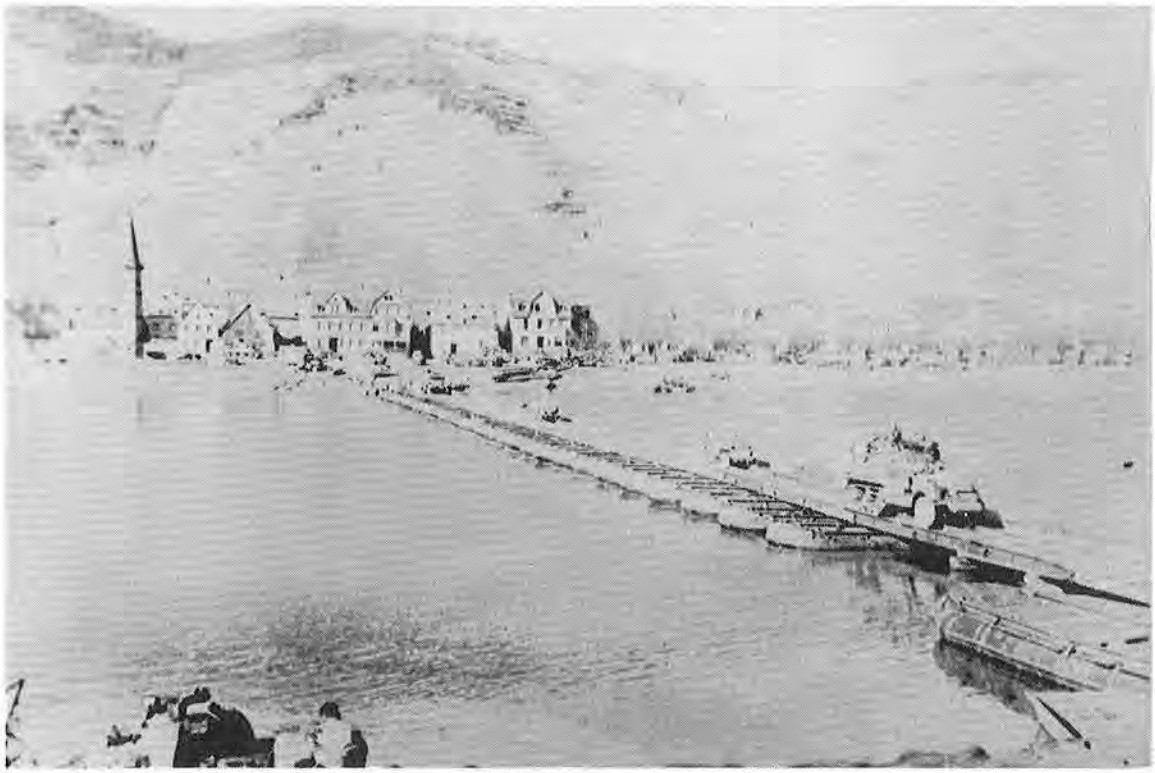
INTERVIEWER: Going back to the Second World War, General Weaver, who was the assistant division commander of the 90th, and later commanded the 8th Division, wrote a book about his experiences as commander of the 8th Division. In it he discussed getting ready for a river crossing operation, and mentioned that the preparations for conducting the crossing were very thorough. How much of that did he bring with him to the 8th Division from the 90th?*

GEN DEPUY: I don't know, but we did cross a lot of rivers. The main thing to remember about a river crossing is the coordination with the engineers, the coordination between the combat engineers and the assault rifle battalions. We became very good at that. Normally, we had different engineer battalions because we had to use corps engineers. You see, it takes a lot of engineer battalions to support a river crossing. In fact, it takes an engineer battalion to support an infantry regiment. You have got to have at least an engineer company to take an infantry battalion across, and we had one engineer company on the Saar. That meant two or three echelons or waves per battalion were required. If the river is flowing fast that can cause problems.

*For a discussion of the 8th Division's river crossing preparations see William G. Weaver, *Yankee Doodle Went to Town* (Ann Arbor: Edwards Brothers, Inc., 1959), 383-418.

I'll give you an example. Later on in the war, we crossed the Moselle for a second time, this time near Koblenz. It must have been in March of 1945. The Moselle is very wide there; it's very close to where it spills into the Rhine. I should say that it's a couple hundred yards across and flows through a chasm. So, it was flowing, oh, six to seven miles an hour. That's fast. That meant that the boats would strike the far bank about a quarter mile downstream. Now, by the time they returned to the near shore, they would be a half mile downstream from the original launching area. But, you wanted to land at a particular place on the far side. So, I demanded enough engineers so that I could get my entire battalion together on the other side, all at the same place. We started almost a half mile upstream, and finally, we just drifted across diagonally. But, we made it. Now, a few boats drifted on beyond but mostly, we landed where we wanted to land. But, it was very expensive. I used a whole engineer battalion. I put a company of engineers with each rifle company, and that enabled us to do the crossing in a single lift.*

In crossing the Saar, after that first schmozola where we lit up the valley and everybody opened fire, the first two companies got across. The boats came back further downstream, and a lot of the engineers abandoned them and wouldn't go across again. So, my guys had to scarf up the boats and drag them up the bank right across from the pillboxes, in the middle of the night. I'd already gone across. My S-3 stayed and he put guys in the boats. They went across and then, just let the boats go; I guess some went all the way to the Rhine.



A typical scene as the 90th Division crossed the Moselle River for the second time.

*For a discussion of the 90th Division's March 1945 Moselle River crossing operation, see Charles B. McDonald, *United States Army in World War II: The Last Offensive* (Washington: USGPO, 1973), 246-249, 259.

This particular engineer battalion was not brilliant. The two Moselle crossings were super, but the Saar crossing, I have to admit, was a little hairy. Those engineers had never seen anything like it, that is, being driven into the boats at the point of a pistol. They probably thought they were in with a bunch of madmen. Remember, we were crossing into the Siegfried Line — into a line of pillboxes which were manned. But, generally speaking, the engineers were good. They laid out all the tape and had all the boats in the right place. That tape is very important. About a half mile behind the river, at the end of each tape, was a big white placard with a black number on it. So, the first squad went to number one, the second squad went to number two, the third squad to three, and then, the first squad of the next platoon went to number four, and so on. This is very helpful at night.

INTERVIEWER: Another aspect of tactical operations is close air support. Was there anything unusual or noteworthy about how you coordinated the close air or marked your positions?

GEN DEPUY: You mean in World War II?

INTERVIEWER: Yes, sir.

GEN DEPUY: Well, generally, we didn't have any close air support. They didn't have a system back then like we have now. There was no tactical air control system. When we first went to Mayenne and to Le Mans, they had Air Force officers in trucks with radios with our two lead battalions. That was the only time in the war that I saw that — the only time! They talked to the fighters, the P-47s and P-51s, and got them to attack the German tanks and troops that the column ran into. It worked pretty well. In fact, it worked very well. I think flights were rotated over the head of the column, more or less, as a result of preplanning, and when they got there the Air Force officers on the ground would pick them up by radio and direct them in on the target. This was Task Force Weaver. We had priority because this was the breakout from Normandy.

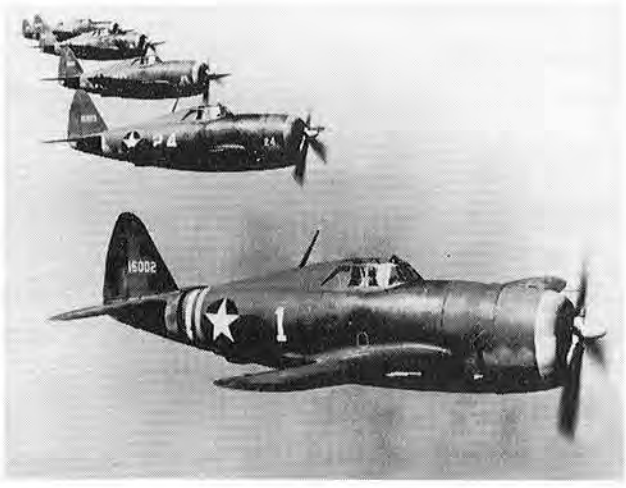
Another story. Across the Saar, I needed some emergency resupply. In order to do that I had to call back to my regiment on the other side of the river and have them go to division. Division went all the way back to the XIX TAC, which was a part of the Ninth Air Force working with Third Army. They launched fighters that had ammo and medicine packed in the wing tanks. They flew up to where we were and found the corner of the woods where we had put out a couple of fluorescent panels in the form of a cross. We had asked that they drop it in the corner of the woods, northwest of the panel, and they did. So, that was sort of remote control. But, other than that, I don't remember any close air support. The first real use of close air support was in Korea. The Air Force made its money in WWII by armed reconnaissance. It just went out and killed everything it saw.

INTERVIEWER: Did the Germans have any close air support?

GEN DEPUY: Apparently they did in Russia, particularly with the Stukas. The Stukas had radios that could talk to a regiment on the ground. They did that a lot, which was closer to close air support than what we had. But, they didn't use Stukas against the Western Allies because Stukas

couldn't survive against our fighters. Stukas could survive against Russian fighters but they couldn't survive against P-47s, P-51s, Hurricanes, and Spitfires. So, they didn't use them at all against us.

INTERVIEWER: Toward the end of the war, was there any point during the campaign when you noticed that the quality of the German soldier or his will to fight just evaporated? Did it occur when they collapsed, when they were in a rout, or when the end was near? Could you pick a place?



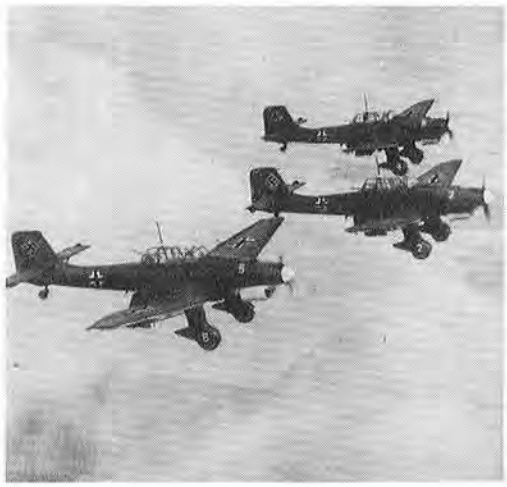
Republic P-47 Mustang "Thunderbolts"



North American P-51 Mustang Fighter



British Supermarine Spitfire



German Stuka dive-bombers on a mission

GEN DEPUY: Well, I really don't know if I should try to do that. Obviously, the cohesion of the Germans disappeared after the Bulge. Now, that doesn't mean that there weren't isolated German units that fought, but they lost coherence. There was no longer a continuous front. There was no longer any chance that they could do anything serious. We could always find a flank, and we always outnumbered them. My memory of it isn't so much that the Germans lost heart, but that they lost organization. They just finally fell apart. They were strained beyond the elastic limit.

INTERVIEWER: Now, when the Third Army ran out of fuel and you bellied up to the Moselle, the Germans had a chance to regroup. Then you smashed through them again.

GEN DEPUY: We never smashed through them down there around Metz. We smashed through on the Moselle, but we were never able to continue that drive past the Saar. The Bulge intervened. The real breakthrough was in the Bulge.

INTERVIEWER: Again, after the Bulge, you had a breakthrough, you had the momentum, and you were rolling. You continued to roll right up until the end of the war and the American Armies were ordered to stop, which, in turn, permitted the Russians to drive on into Berlin. Could the Americans have gone on further, at least as far as the 1st Battalion, 357th Infantry Regiment was concerned?

GEN DEPUY: Well, at the end of the war we were in Czechoslovakia. Sure, we could have gone further. We were stopped every night at a phase line, but we could have gone on. It was agonizing because there were POW camps out in front of us that were crying to be liberated. Yes, we could have gone on. It was just an effort to manage the collision with the Russians.

I suppose the best tactical training that people ever got without any great jeopardy and just enough casualties to make it exciting and serious, was as a result of the fighting we did from the end of the Battle of the Bulge to the end of the war.

There were many actions, all fought at the company and battalion level. We were mounted in trucks and had five tanks and five tank destroyers. Hopefully, the direct support artillery was in range. It was a small self-contained battalion task force. You were expected to pursue the Germans, and you fought a lot of small engagements. Each one was different. The terrain was different, the enemy weapons and strengths were different, and the circumstances were different, but the mission was always the same — to go.

Now, to me, that's the best training anybody ever got in the world. You can almost tell which people had that experience, particularly the people who were battalion commanders and had enough force to play with, and who had an independent mission in a zone of their own. The company commander was under the control of the battalion commander, right? The regimental commander just assigned zones. So, it was a battalion commander's war at that time.

Well, one of the things that had been impressed upon me by that time, was that we weren't getting any direct fire suppression. We just weren't very good at that, and by that time, you see, we were outrunning much of our artillery. We never had more than about one battalion of artillery available because we were moving too fast. So, we no longer tried to suppress only with indirect fire. My heavy weapons company, "D" Company, had six mortars and eight heavy machine guns.

I didn't think that was enough so I took .50 caliber machine guns from the trains and made a big .50 caliber platoon. Then I would attach the three heavy machine gun platoons to a single company. And, every time we would become involved in one of these little battles, wherever it was, I'd put that company in an overwatch position. I didn't call it overwatch then. I didn't know that word at the time. I put it in a base of fire. The commander had eight heavy machine guns, six .50 caliber machine guns, and the light machine guns of that company, and he had the company to protect it and to help move it. So, two companies were my maneuver companies, and one company was my fire support company, my base of fire company. I'll tell you, it really was marvelous. They just overwhelmed anything that we ran up against. My regret is that it took so long to figure that out.

Pin him down with direct fire and move around him by maneuver. The serious war was really over by the time we got smart. I always used to maneuver with the tanks and overwatch with the tank destroyers. If it was a little village, if it was the corner of the woods, if it was a hill with brush on it, whatever or wherever it was, we'd just smother it with fire and get total fire superiority. Then, we'd move around the flank and go get 'em — usually from the rear. Almost without exception they'd all come out yelling "Kamerad, Kamerad." It was the only way I could figure out how to get firepower out of a light infantry battalion.

I would have loved to command a tank battalion or an armored task force. That's why the mechanized infantry squad, which we were discussing earlier, can be very small, because it can operate in the fire envelope of the armored task force. If it's a tank company with a mech platoon, we're only talking about 15 or 20 men who are going to get out on foot to fight, but what we've got is about 10 or 12 tanks and about four Infantry Fighting Vehicles (IFVs) with automatic weapons on them that can totally suppress that woodline or those buildings.

Now, against Russians I don't think that we ought to fight by platoon. We ought to fight at battalion level, which would mean a whole battalion worth of tanks. That would be 30 tanks, and a whole infantry company, maybe 15 IFVs, firing in support of 60 dismounted troops who are going to get close enough to throw hand grenades. And, you're not going to use those 60 guys outside of that fire envelope. You can't, because if you do, they'll get bogged down in some little miserable fire fight. Then you'll have to go and rescue them and get them back out of there while suffering a lot of casualties. So, you don't want to send them deep into the woods; you want to send them right down the woodline so that you can fire right in front of them as they go.

That tactic, which is a real Panzer-grenadier tactic, is something that the Germans understand, but one that has been very difficult to introduce into the US Army. It is an appreciation of heavy direct fire suppression, which most of our light infantry has never seen done. It's not in their bones. Some have seen it, but very few. It's very impressive to see 30 tanks firing, 15 halftracks with machine guns on them, and the tanks firing their .50 calibers — in those days, also the bow gun — the coax and the main gun. There are very few enemy companies, even battalions, that can stand up to that kind of firepower. That's how you have got to engage the enemy if you have to move somewhere. Maneuver supported by heavy firepower — that's the ticket.

For instance, the enemy is sitting in a village that blocks the route through a valley and you've got to move down that valley. Or, they're in the woods on the side of the valley, and you've got to get them out of there so that you can go down the valley. There are times when even with armored forces somebody has to clean them out. Now, one thing an armored force can do is just

go down the valley and suppress as it goes. But, the valley is still closed to supply, POL, ammo trucks, and so on. So, somebody has got to go in and clean it out. Toward the end of the war, while going across Germany, I watched the 4th Armored Division. We opened up river crossings for the 4th Armored. I watched them conduct what they called reconnaissance by fire, but, really, what it was, was suppression. They suppressed everything that looked suspicious and kept on going, whether it was at the edge of the town, or the edge of a woods, a farm house, or two barns — anything they thought might give them trouble. They turned everything on it like a hose, and if there was anything in there, this technique would shut it down.

Now, that's fighting by using firepower, and that's why at the Combat Development Experimentation Center, two squads suppressing and one moving, was 60 percent better than one suppressing and two moving. What bothers me is that the US Army has been led mostly by light infantry generals like myself, for a long time. Thank goodness for the General Starrys. We always had a few. We had Abe and Polk, and so on, but we've never had a majority. We've always had a heavy majority of light infantry soldiers, and Vietnam produced a lot more. If you look at how many generals we have, and we have quite a few — what, maybe 400? I'll bet you that 50 percent of them were light infantry commanders. Well, 40 percent of them at least. They were the ones we were trying to make heavy infantry commanders.*

INTERVIEWER: Well, the same is true of our group, too. Most of us are light infantry commanders.

GEN DEPUY: Sure. The point is, you have to learn, and it takes a little mental work to get there.

INTERVIEWER: I'd like to ask one last question. When you finished up in Germany at the end of World War II and reflected back on your experiences, what do you recall were your first thoughts as to what your battalion had accomplished and how?

GEN DEPUY: One of the comments that I've made has infuriated the Infantry School. Now, I don't blame them for being infuriated, but I honestly concluded at the end of World War II, when I soberly considered what I had accomplished, that I had moved the forward observers of the artillery across France and Germany. In other words, my battalion was the means by which Field Artillery forward observers were moved to the next piece of high ground. Once you had a forward observer on a piece of ground, he could call up five to ten battalions of artillery and that meant you had moved combat power to the next observation point — more combat power than the light infantry could dispose of. Now, you needed the infantry to do that. You needed the infantry to protect them, but the combat power came from this other source, and I think that trend has

**General Donn A. Starry,* USA, Retired. General Starry was commissioned in the Cavalry in 1948, and later commanded the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment (1970), and V Corps (1976-77). General Starry also served as the Commanding General, TRADOC (1977-81), and Commander in Chief, Readiness Command (1981-83). *General Creighton W. Abrams, Jr.* See note, page 61. *General James H. Polk,* USA, Retired. Commissioned in 1931 in the Cavalry, General Polk commanded the 3rd Cavalry Group, Mechanized, during World War II (1944-45). Later, he commanded the 4th Armored Division (1961-62), and V Corps (1965-66). General Polk also served as Commander in Chief, US Army Europe, during the period 1967 to 1971.

accelerated ever since. I think the infantry has the dirtiest job of them all. But, if you want to be rigorously analytical about what you're really trying to do, it's trying to move combat power forward to destroy the enemy, and the combat power that you are moving forward has been, in the past, mostly artillery, and that is even more true today. The infantry has a lot of ears and a lot of eyeballs. Now, it can call forward even more artillery fire and different kinds of munitions — Cannon Launched Guided Projectiles (CLGPs), the Family of Scatterable Mines (FASCAMs), Dual Purpose Improved Conventional Munitions (DPICMs), high explosive (HE), smoke, and illumination, and soon they will also have terminally guided anti-armor munitions. The infantry is a sensor. It's a sensory organization that works into the fabric of the terrain and the enemy, and can call in all of this firepower — including artillery and TAC air that can really do the killing.

INTERVIEWER: I've got two questions to ask the answers to which will be of benefit for the historians who read this transcript. First, what happened to the 90th when the war ended?

GEN DEPUY: Well, the 90th was supposed to go to Japan so it was held over. All the old 90th troopers went home, but a lot of the officers stayed, and it was filled up with the short-termers. They had a point system, so it was filled up with the people who had just come to Europe in the late arriving divisions, and we started to train for Japan. We had a regiment at Grafenwohr. I was the G-3 of the division at that time. We were starting all over again, to train those regiments to go to Japan, and then, of course, in August, the war was over. So, I came home and the division came home and was disbanded.

INTERVIEWER: When did you become the division G-3?

GEN DEPUY: June, maybe the end of June. Something like that. I was G-3 over there for, oh, maybe two or three months.

INTERVIEWER: My last question has to do with the treasure that the 90th found at the end of the war. Can you tell us about that?

GEN DEPUY: The Third Army was headed for Leipzig and Dresden through Thuringia. The First Army was headed for the Elbe. The Ninth Army and others were farther north. So, everybody was headed toward Berlin, Leipzig, Dresden, and the northern half of Germany. I think there was a rumor that the Germans were going to create a redoubt near Berchtesgaden. The Third Army was stopped and turned to the southeast. Well, I had just reached the top, the absolute geographic peak, of the Thuringian Mountains, and was looking down into the valley at Eisenach. I was just about ready to go down the eastern side when I was told to stop and pull back. We pulled back and each unit was given an assembly area.

My assembly area was at Merkers. So, I put the battalion in the town, and was told, "You're going to get new orders in a couple of days." We had some parties and just had a hell of a good time. In the middle of the night, probably the first night we were there, a German woman started having a baby. Well, we had a curfew so the midwife couldn't get to the woman; rather, the woman had to go out in the street. The MPs stopped her, and she said, "I'm about to have a baby,

a kinder," and swore at them. And, she said, "Dummkopf Americans! You don't know anything. You're right on top of all the gold of Germany." The next day, the Counter Intelligence Corps found it down there, in this vast salt mine. It was so large we drove jeeps 40 miles an hour through the main tunnels. So, we were kept there for about a week, to guard it and get it out. That was a welcome change. The war was essentially over by this time. Anyway, we guarded it and helped haul it up on elevators. All the top generals of the Army — Bradley, Eisenhower, Patton — everybody I can think of, went down on one elevator operated by a German to see it. They went down and played with all the gold. Also, the Germans had all of the art treasures of Berlin stashed down there.



View of the Reichsbank wealth discovered by the
90th Division in the salt mines near Merkers, Germany.



General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Supreme Allied Commander,
General Omar N. Bradley, Commanding General, 12th Army Group,
Major General Manton S. Eddy, Commanding General, XII Corps,
Colonel Bernard Bernstein, and others shown touring
the salt mines where the German treasure was hidden.



Among the treasures discovered in the salt mines
was this Durer Engraving taken from the Berlin Museum.

CHAPTER IV

The Need For Change:

Reflections On World War II

INTERVIEWER: The first question I would like to ask relates back to your World War II experiences. Please summarize for us some of those experiences.*

GEN DEPUY: My experiences were just part of the larger experience of the 90th Division. It is hard to overstate how ineffective that division was at the beginning, and how very effective it was at the end and how that enormous change related directly to the quality of its leaders. The natural leaders for company and battalion command were there all the time, as they are in any division, but their emergence and selection for key jobs did not occur until McLain and Van Fleet came along. This whole process remains something of a mystery but perhaps the best way to describe it is in terms of its opposite — the situation which existed at the beginning. Under the first three division commanders — one in the States and two in England and Normandy. There was no apparent effort to evaluate and eliminate poor leaders. It must have been either that the top commanders didn't know a poor leader when they saw one, didn't understand enough about war to provide a basis for evaluation, or were indifferent. In any event, we went to war with a batch of incompetents in charge. That incompetence trickled down and caused the tactical failures I have described and the incredible casualties. All this was indelibly stamped on my mind and attitude ever after for both good and bad.

I want to make it very clear that I considered the 90th a very gallant division which started to emerge from the doldrums during the Falaise encirclement, matured during the Moselle and Saar operations, and reached its peak efficiency during the Bulge.

I also came away from the war with a very strong impression that most of the fighting was done by a very small percentage of the soldiers. But, as you would expect, by and large, the officers and the sergeants performed better than the privates. Now, that isn't to say that there weren't some natural leaders who appeared amongst the privates and corporals. But, in a pinch, then, as now, I would rely on officers first, sergeants second, and privates third; that is, if I didn't know them individually ahead of time. I still feel the Army needs a lot more leaders in proportion to followers, particularly now that war is more dangerous, and equipment is more complex. That means smaller companies. The larger companies of WWII exposed too many reluctant soldiers to enemy fire. Smaller companies and smaller platoons and squads means more leaders. Such smaller units would achieve a much higher percentage of active participation in the battle.

Another very strong impression that I came away with has to do with what Liddell Hart called the indirect approach. I mentioned in our last interview, the last thing you want to do is to attack

*This is the second interview conducted on 26 March 1979, with General DePuy, USA Retired. This interview was conducted at his home in Highfield, Virginia. The interviewers were Lieutenant Colonels William J. Mullen and Romie L. Brownlee.

the enemy head-on, or where he wants you to attack him.* In Vietnam we again learned that lesson the hard way. If you choose to attack the enemy head-on, you have to get through the area that he has prepared for you — the killing zones, or whatever you want to call them. He has his fires registered, he has his fields of fire cleared, and he has his bunkers or his positions sited to take advantage of you. So, it's almost the height of stupidity to let that happen. Almost anything is preferable to that. Now, in World War II, when we fought the Germans, they were already very much on the decline. Their strength was low. So, usually, it was relatively easy to find a way around or through them at night. That's one of the reasons why toward the end of the war almost all of our units operated a great deal at night. They did that for two reasons. First, it was easier to penetrate, or bypass, or sneak through without being shot at while en route. Then, once you got through and grabbed a piece of ground that was important in that particular area, the other side had to react. Also, as I said before, this allowed you to get your artillery observers up on the high ground so that the combat power of the artillery could be brought to bear on the enemy.

I really believe, based on my experience, that the combat power provided by the artillery, I'm sorry to say, probably represented 90 percent or more of the combat power actually applied against the enemy. That's why I say that getting a forward observer to a high piece of ground and protecting him was the most important function that the infantry performed in that war. That's not to degrade the infantry, it's just objective analysis.

Lastly, I have spoken frequently about the importance of direct fire suppression. There are times when it is not possible to bypass. Sometimes it is necessary to go straight in on the enemy. In these cases the only solution is very heavy suppressive fire and an attack on a narrow front through a favorable and protected piece of terrain like a narrow draw or other covered approach. We went into Berle, Luxembourg, during the Bulge, with A Company in the assault and B Company in overwatch. However, A Company quickly masked the fires of B Company and B Company was not well disposed or instructed. We were in a hurry. It turned out all right and we picked up a reserve company and a German headquarters in Berle, but we didn't do it very well. When General Rommel was a first lieutenant in WWI he developed the overwatch and penetration technique into a fine art. All American commanders should read his account in *Infantry Attacks.***

INTERVIEWER: Would you tell us the circumstances under which you earned some of your decorations in World War II?

GEN DEPUY: All right. Let me say first of all that as you fellows know, having fought yourselves, decorations go to the wrong people. The privates, the sergeants, and the lieutenants, who do the real fighting, normally perform where there is nobody around to observe it, or they observe one another; but, they are not the people who write up the citations. So, the colonels and the generals get more decorations than they should. I hope they all realize that.

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*See B.H. Liddell Hart, *The Decisive Wars of History* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1929), and *Strategy,* 2nd ed., revised (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967).

**See Erwin Rommel, *Infantry Attacks.* Translated by G.E. Kidde. Washington: Infantry Journal, 1944; reprinted as *Attacks*, by Athena Press, Inc., in 1979. See also, William E. DePuy, "Reexamining an Old Law 'One-Up and Two Back'?" *Army* 30 (January 1980), 20-25.

Well, the Distinguished Service Cross I received for the crossing of the Moselle River at Brodenbach. In this case, it involved crossing the Moselle, climbing up the river's very steep banks, some vineyards, and then, going down and across one of the deep ravines that led down to the river. It was there that my S-3 and I encountered some German machine gun people. Next, we climbed back up to the high ground in the rear of the town of Brodenbach. We had a number of minor encounters while all of this was happening from 2 o'clock in the morning until we took the town of Brodenbach about 7 o'clock that same morning. That action didn't justify a decoration, but I received one, anyway.

One Silver Star was for an action which involved going through the Siegfried Line at Habscheid and Brandscheid shortly after the Battle of the Bulge. Now, although I tried to lead my battalion single file, I think I told you that it got split in the middle and unfortunately, A Company, which was at the tail of the column, wandered off into a little valley in the middle of the Siegfried Line. So, they were in the bottom of a saucer surrounded by pillboxes, which were occupied by Germans. The company commander, who was new, was rather upset and nervous, and he was taking casualties. Anyway, I grabbed a tank platoon, which was not my tank platoon. That was the problem. The platoon leader refused to go, so I relieved him, took command of the platoon, and took it over into that little valley and got A Company out. The first tank that I climbed on ran over two stacked Teller mines and blew me off of the rear deck. I got on a second tank and we exchanged rounds with a German tank at the bottom of the valley. I was standing on the back deck, shooting a .50 caliber machine gun at the pillboxes near A Company. Anyhow, we managed to get A Company out of there.



Lieutenant Colonel DePuy shown receiving the Distinguished Service Cross from Major General S. LeRoy Irvin, XII Corps Commander.



Lieutenant Colonel DePuy shown receiving one of his three Silver Stars awarded during World War II.

I received three Silver Stars. Another was for an action which took place between Metz and the Saar on the Nied River. We had broken out of our bridgehead, the one I mentioned where the enemy heavy tank battalion came through and shot out the bridges at Koenigsmacher. We came down to the Nied River, and the assistant division commander, "Wild Bill" Weaver, was standing up on a hill looking down on the river. We had a battalion that had started down. I was still the regimental S-3, and General Weaver said to me, "We better go down and grab that bridge down there." The Nied is a very small river, but nonetheless, it's swampy. So, we really needed a bridge. I got in my jeep and went down to catch the battalion and have it move directly over to take the bridge. There was a small hill just on our side of the river, and the battalion went around the right side of the hill, which was away from the river, because that's the way the road went. [See Map 17, page 65]

When I was halfway there we came under fire, so I got out of the jeep and went on foot. I could see the tail of the battalion going around the right side of the hill. I decided that I would intercept them, so I went around the left side of the hill with my radio operator. When I had gotten all the way around the left side of the hill and to the bridge, there wasn't anybody there. The company had yet to come around from the other side of the hill, so I went across the bridge into a little town the name of which I can't remember. As I was standing in the street over there waiting for the company, a couple of German soldiers came out and surrendered. I went looking for some more and before I was through, I had collected quite a few. I then decided that I had better take them back over to our side of the river. So, I started walking back across the bridge with them when our battalion suddenly came around the corner and opened fire on them. They scattered all over the place, but we collected about, oh, 10 or 15 of them. Our company stopped firing and came across the bridge. That was kind of a silly action. But, that was that, and that's enough of war stories.

INTERVIEWER: You mentioned previously that it was really your preference to fight as a battalion and not in smaller units. I wonder if you might like to expand on that a bit?

GEN DEPUY: Yes, I do have a personal preference for fighting at battalion level, because I really believe that if it's heavy combat involving large forces, then companies, particularly infantry companies, are too fragile. It was my observation that companies sent on independent missions — that is, in a separate terrain compartment — normally bogged down. Now, I also have come to the conclusion more recently, that not only would I like to fight at battalion level, but I'd like to have the battalions be smaller. That's simply to increase the ratio of leaders to followers and to get the quality of the battalion up. You've heard me say a lot about that. I'd like to have a battalion that has a larger percentage of those kinds of people who fight. And, you get that, I think, by having more officers and more sergeants. So, the associated reason is not just battlefield leadership and courage, but also its effectiveness. We now are going to have million dollar tanks and half-million dollar infantry fighting vehicles. We need quality in those tanks. It's absolutely ridiculous to have a million dollar tank in the hands of the survivors of a tank platoon. You need more than that. We are going to have very powerful fighting machines. The Air Force wouldn't think of putting just anybody in the cockpit of an F-15, and we have to think that same way about our fighting vehicles.

Now, the other thing is that more and more, the infantry becomes the agent for firepower and support from the rear, whether that's artillery with six or seven kinds of sophisticated ammunition, or attack helicopters, or tactical fighters. They also must use engineers and sometimes air defense weapons. The coordination problems are enormous. But a company commander is alone. He's on his own. Maybe he's got a radio operator with him, but he has to do it all. He could well be under fire, personally, and he just hasn't got the people available to help him.

At least a battalion commander has a little staff. He's got an S-3 who is his right-hand man. He's got an exec who can go back to the rear with the S-4 and make sure that the replacements and the ammo get up. He's got an S-2 who tries to see to it that he knows as much about the enemy as possible, and he's got a lot of radios, whereas his company commanders have only one or two. He's got officers up to the ranks of captain and major to help him. So, he's in a much better position to coordinate the application of all that combat power and to synchronize the actions of his battalion and all of its supporting elements. If you rely on a company commander to do that, it's almost inevitable that not every time, but most of the time, the company will not develop all that combat power. That's why I want to see the Army move that way, toward smaller battalions as the basic fighting unit.

I'm sure that in the long run they are going to do it. Right now there is great resistance to it. It's a new idea. It offends people. Lieutenant colonels don't want smaller battalions. They don't want to be told that they can't control a big outfit. Company commanders don't want smaller companies. They don't want to be told that they are too busy to develop the combat power. But, the fact is, that's all true.

We've got to get these battalions smaller, better and smaller — and more of them. Then, we have to fight so that the battalion commander coordinates the infantry with the tanks, the artillery, the air, the air defense, the helicopters, and the engineers. He's in a better position to do that than is anybody else. He has to fight within what I call a single terrain compartment. If he has to send a company over into another valley to operate independently, where he can no longer control it, then that company must have tanks, infantry, and artillery observers, and the company commander must coordinate the combined arms team. But, I don't want them to do that very often because if the fighting is serious in the other valley, the company isn't big enough to do it.

INTERVIEWER: Recently we asked you about the ROTC training program. Please briefly describe the program of instruction for the pre-World War II ROTC.*

GEN DEPUY: Well, in the academic environment of the school, as I recall, there was a little bit of military history. There was a lot about how an officer behaves, how you got calling cards printed, about "Rank Hath Its Privileges," and things like that. There was a lot of drill. Because we had a small regiment of cadets there were a lot of the cermonial type things — how to stand up straight, how to salute, how to march, and all of that sort of thing, and everybody liked it. Then, we had the six-week summer camp at Fort Snelling, where the 3rd Infantry was in charge. It was a very old regiment, filled with a lot of fine sergeants. It didn't seem to me that the officers spent

*For an overview on typical ROTC training during the mid and late 1930s see, *The R.O.T.C. Manual: Infantry*, 21st ed., 4 vols (Harrisburg: The Military Service Publishing Company, 1939).

very much time with us, but the sergeants were great. It was all "nuts and bolts" type training. It was a squad level, machine gun level, rifle level type of training — by far the best training we got. That's about it. I might go on to say something about the ROTC right now, if you don't mind.

INTERVIEWER: Please do.

GEN DEPUY: Not without a lot of controversy, several years ago, based on our appreciation of Israeli training and our general feeling that officer training in our Army was pegged several notches too high, General Gorman and I decided that the goal of ROTC plus the basic course should be to qualify all lieutenants for lieutenant's jobs. A lieutenant in the combat arms graduating from ROTC should be between skill levels 2 and 3 in terms of the Skill Qualification Tests. That would mean that in the Armor, for example, he would be qualified as a tank commander. In the Infantry he would be qualified as a squad leader. The basic course which he then attends after graduation, could pick up on that level of expertise and make him a lieutenant platoon leader. Now, I think that that's right, and I wish that it had been that way back when I was in ROTC. I never went to a basic course nor did ROTC teach us to be platoon leaders.

INTERVIEWER: Could you give us your significant impressions on German and US equipment, weapons, vehicles, and tactics?

GEN DEPUY: Well, I thought the German machine pistol, which was an area suppression weapon, had great advantages, whereas we were trained for point targets with rifles. So, the Germans, it would seem to me, were ahead of us there.

Also, their tank guns and antitank guns were superior to ours. If you'll read the history, you'll find that the Germans were behind the Russians at the beginning, but they then caught up and surpassed everybody at the end of the war, in terms of the size of their antitank and tank guns up to 88 millimeters. Their weapons were manufactured in such a way that they were easier to maintain and they operated better in the mud, in dampness, and in cold weather. You asked a moment ago whether or not we used their equipment or they used ours. We really didn't use their equipment very much because we had such a plentitude of our own, and our supply system was geared to our types of ammunition, and so on. Most units picked up a few German Volkswagens and trucks and things for fun, but not very seriously. I might say that we did, in fact, like the German Panzerfausts and that was because our 2.75-inch rockets didn't have the penetration capability of the Panzerfausts. A lot of units did pick up and carry the Panzerfausts with them. [See photo, page 67]

INTERVIEWER: Was there anything about their tactics, good or bad, that impressed you?

GEN DEPUY: Yes, the infantry tactics of the Germans involved a lot of direct fire suppression that our tactics didn't. They didn't have as much indirect fire suppression, as much artillery, as we did, but they had mortars, and direct fire suppression, coupled with a lot of movement. They also did a lot of talking. You could hear the German sergeants, Feldwebels, shouting to their men all

the time during an attack, giving instructions, "Go this way, go that way, more fire over here, put fire by the corner of the field." Our fellows didn't talk it up very much. If you don't talk it up, it means that nothing much is going to happen.

INTERVIEWER: Last week we discussed what the soldiers carried with them into Normandy and I forgot to ask you how they had streamlined their loads by the end of the war. What were they carrying when the war ended?

GEN DEPUY: I'm not sure that I can answer that question. I think that one thing they carried more of was grenades, because as infantrymen season themselves, they begin to be impressed with the value of grenades. We probably carried less small arms ammunition, which isn't necessarily good, but it's undoubtedly true. But, we carried a lot more machine gun ammunition of all kinds, because we tried to emphasize direct fire suppression with machine guns. So, we had to carry that. Whenever we went into an area where our tanks couldn't go with us — crossing a river or conducting a night attack in a forest — we usually carried mines. I guess, also, we probably paid more attention to making sure that we had pyrotechnics. The better we got with them, the more we used them.

INTERVIEWER: In the area of command and control, please comment on how you controlled your companies as a battalion commander, and how you controlled the battalions as a regimental S-3.

GEN DEPUY: Our squads were not well-trained. Sometimes the platoon sergeants would take one element, one good sergeant would take another element, and the platoon leader would take the third element, and that's about the way they operated. Now, this caused me to use companies a little bit like the Army tends to use platoons today. In other words, I would give a whole company a rather simple mission, with the objective being located not too far away — a "Go take the three buildings at the edge of the village" type of thing. I usually commanded from the vicinity of the lead company, and almost all of the orders were issued eyeball-to-eyeball — direct orders. I would call it positive control. I'd go along with the lead company and when they ran into trouble, I'd have the second company commander right with me, and usually the third company commander overwatching somewhere. I then would tell the company that was behind me, exactly where to go, and go with them. In other words, if the first company ran into trouble and dropped down into a base of fire, then I'd go with the next company and, maybe, the tanks. The tank destroyers would be overwatching. So, with one company and the tanks, we would try to go around a flank or try to get behind them.

So, it was all a very direct, close type of coordination. Infantry radios didn't work too well, but we used them whenever we had to. When we were mobile and going cross-country, I always moved in a column. I never went on two routes. I didn't like that technique because I didn't think that I had good enough control. We often used artillery radios for command and control because they were much better than ours.

INTERVIEWER: As the regimental S-3, did you do the same sorts of things as you did as a battalion commander?

GEN DEPUY: In all cases where there was a deliberate action, like a river crossing or a deliberate attack as around Metz, most of the coordination was done eyeball-to-eyeball with the battalion commanders. But, it wasn't a question of drawing up a plan on paper and carrying it out to them. That never happened. The paper plan, to the extent one existed, consisted only of an overlay. I guess we wrote a few regimental orders for the history book, but it was almost always going out and talking to a battalion commander and agreeing with him, usually on the ground, about how we were going to do something, then going to another battalion commander and agreeing with him on the ground as to how we were going to do it. So, they had total participation, which is really the only way to do it. When we were going across France, we occasionally did go on parallel routes. Once in awhile we'd have to call a battalion commander on the radio and tell him to go someplace else. But, when it was serious fighting, it almost always involved face-to-face coordination.

INTERVIEWER: During the Second World War you encountered a number of people who, for one reason or another, were either famous and/or colorful. One such individual that I can think of is General Weaver, who was the assistant division commander and later, commander the 8th Division. Please comment on such people who stand out in your mind.

GEN DEPUY: Well, "Wild Bill" Weaver was much loved by everybody. He was a tall, thin, rather worn looking chap, who apparently had been an absolute tiger in World War I. He was an eccentric. I'll tell you two little stories about Wild Bill.

The first one occurred during the Falaise Gap action when he was with another regiment. This regiment went into the town of Le Bourg-St. Leonard, which was just southwest of Chambois, where the cork was finally put into the bottle. Anyway, in the middle of the night, I think it was the 2nd Panzer Division, or the 2nd SS Panzer Division, decided to get out of the trap by going through Le Bourg-St. Leonard. So, a quite exciting fight took place in the town during the middle of the night. Wild Bill, who always wore a nightshirt, was aroused from his bed in Le Bourg-St. Leonard. He slapped on his steel helmet and his pistol belt, grabbed his aide, and took personal command in the streets of Le Bourg-St. Leonard, while still in his long, white nightgown. Well, believe me, the division remembered that. He was an utterly fearless man.

While at Maizieres-les-Metz General Patton got tired of reading about it, and ordered us to take the town. We held the northern third of the residential area, and the entire industrial area, which included a large steel plant. In addition to some very large Bessemer converters, there was a tall water tower. Occasionally, we would sneak our artillery observer up the water tower at night, and then he would set up on our side of the water tower and peek around and adjust artillery fire. Wild Bill came to visit one day and wanted to go up the water tower. He later had a heart attack when he was with the 8th Division, but he obviously was already suffering from heart trouble because he tired very easily. So, he said to me, "Come on, DePuy, we're going to go up on that water tower."

I said, "That's a dumb thing to do, General." Anyway, we started up and got about halfway when he just ran out of steam. Of course, I was behind him. So, we had to wait there, halfway up, for a long time while Wild Bill caught his breath. I thought he wouldn't make it, but he finally did. Like a bulldog, he got to the top. By this time, of course, we had attracted quite a bit of attention. And, while we were up there, a German assault gun fired a round through this empty water tank. Well, if you think you've ever heard a large bang-clang and resonating sound, you should hear an armor-piercing round go through an empty water tank. That encouraged us all to leave and we scurried back down. But, anyway, he spent almost all of his time while he was up on the water tank around on the front side where he got a very good view of everything. That gives you some flavor of the man. He was clearly the most colorful and, I would say, the most loved old codger we ever had in the division.



Major General
William G. Weaver



Major General
George Bittman Barth

INTERVIEWER: Would you say a few words about your regimental commander, Colonel, later Major General, George B. Barth?*

**Major General George B. Barth* was commissioned a second lieutenant of Infantry in 1918, and later branch transferred to the Field Artillery. Assignments after World War II included service as Commanding General, 25th Infantry Division Artillery (1950-51), Commanding General, 5th Infantry Division (1952), and Chief, Joint Military Assistance Group, Greece (1952-55).

GEN DEPUY: Well, Bittman Barth was an artilleryman. He was Chief of Staff of the 9th Division before he was sent to the 90th after Colonel Sheehy was killed. He was a marvelous and strong man. He was my favorite. I cannot say enough about the integrity, the quality, and the strength of the man. He was wounded very seriously in Maizieres, just at the end of that night attack I mentioned. He was underneath an overhanging concrete ramp in the steel plant, but the round landed right in front of him and practically blew off his leg. But, he pulled himself back together at Walter Reed after a long, long time, and then, went on to become a brigadier, and eventually went to Korea. He commanded the initial task force of the 24th Divison in Korea. He ended up commanding a division at Indiantown Gap, the 5th Division, I think it was. He was a splendid man. You see, he had a regiment in which there was only one other Regular officer, Buddy Ryder. So, the leavening of the professional army was pretty thin. There may have been one or two lieutenants from the Military Academy, but, if so, they went unnoticed among the general herd. Barth was the soul of the Army in the 357th Infantry. He was the rock on which we rebuilt a fighting regiment. It was all because of his strength of character — compassion mixed with firmness.

INTERVIEWER: Two names that we picked up in reading about the division surface significantly in your later career, General Talbott and General Stilwell. Did you know General Talbott at the time, and if so, what was your relationship with him?*

GEN DEPUY: Well, I knew General Talbott only in the sense that he was the S-3 of the 359th during most of the time that I was the S-3 of the 357th. Then, we both went on to command battalions. So, I didn't really know him well at the time; I just knew of him. He was clearly a superior officer. Since the war, as you know, General Talbott and I have become great friends. We both commanded the 1st Division in Vietnam, and both of us have been presidents of the 1st Division Society. We also served together at TRADOC. General Talbott was and is, a splendid soldier.

General Stilwell was the division G-3, and as a regimental S-3, I saw quite a lot of him. We've been close friends ever since, and have done a lot of things together. He came up and pinned on my lieutenant colonel's leaves in the little town of Binsfeld, in Luxembourg, in the middle of the Battle of the Bulge. He later became G-3 of XXII Corps, commanded by Ernie Harmon, who previously had been the 2nd Armored commander. Of course, from an operational standpoint,

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**Lieutenant General Orwin C. Talbott*, USA Retired, was commissioned a second lieutenant, Infantry, in the California National Guard in 1941, and a year later, received a Regular commission. During the Battle of the Bulge, he commanded the 1st Battalion, 359th Infantry Regiment. Later assignments included service as Executive Officer to General Lyman L. Lemnitzer while Chief of Staff of the Army, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Commander in Chief, European Command, and Supreme Allied Commander, Europe (1959-63); Commanding General, 1st Infantry Division (1968-69); Commanding General, US Army Infantry Center and Commandant, US Army Infantry School (1969-73); and Deputy Commanding General, US Army Training and Doctrine Command (1973-75).

General Richard G. Stilwell, USA Retired, was commissioned in the Corps of Engineers in 1938, and later transferred to the Infantry. Following World War II, General Stilwell served as the Chief of Staff, US Army Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (1963-65); Commanding General, 1st Armored Division (1967-68); Commanding General, XXIV Corps (1968-69); and Commander in Chief, United Nations Command, Korea. Since 1981, General Stilwell has served as the Deputy Under Secretary for Policy, Department of Defense.

Dick Stilwell really ran the 90th Division during the whole time that he was there, certainly during McKelvie and Landrum's time. McLain was a fine, great leader, a wise man, and just. He and Dick Stilwell worked magnificently together. But, under the first two generals, Dick ran the division. Dick had to do it there wasn't anybody else to do it except, perhaps, for "Hanging Sam" Williams before he was unfairly removed. I think it was while Van Fleet was the division commander that Dick left. Actually, it was Dick Stilwell who brought me into the Central Intelligence Agency to work for him in 1950, and then, brought me over to become J-3, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV), when he became the MACV Chief of Staff. Then, we were together in the Pentagon, again. He is, of course, really a splendid man. A very, very, smart, tough, professional soldier, I'm one of his greatest admirers.



Lieutenant General
Orwin C. Talbott



General
Richard G. Stilwell

INTERVIEWER: You completed your tour in Europe as the G-3 of the 90th Division. Is there anything significant about that assignment?

GEN DEPUY: No, not really. When I became the G-3 right after the war, the division was designated to go to Japan, so we were filled up with low point men. We sent almost all of our own people home, received low point fillers, and started to train at Grafenwohr. We had a regiment at Neustadt, one at Grafenwohr and one at Amberg. At first, we had an exclusive franchise on Grafenwohr — no other division used it. We opened it up, had the first exercises there, and planned to train for Japan there. We planned to use everything we had learned. I wrote the training programs with the help of the staff and consultations with a lot of people. But, I'll tell you, they bore no resemblance to the training programs that we had had before the war. Our training programs were very practical with lots of live fire and lots of direct fire suppression — at all levels.

INTERVIEWER: Well, when World War II came to a close, you were the G-3 of the 90th Division. We'd be interested in what your thoughts were regarding a career in the Army. Did you have any thoughts about getting out? What led you to stay in the Army and make it a career?

GEN DEPUY: Well, I assumed that I would get out. I didn't realize that there would be an option to stay in. I came back to the United States very shortly after our victory over Japan because I was a "high point man." There is a small story here. In August of 1945 General Herb Earnest who commanded the 90th Division at the end of the war, took a party of battalion and regimental commanders to Bad Tolz to spend some time with General Patton in a seminar to review lessons learned. I was then G-3. General Earnest and I stayed with General Patton in his house on the Tegernsee. His aide, Codman, was going home and General Patton asked me if I would like to be his aide. I was astounded. I told him I would do whatever he wanted but thought he should know that I had orders to Leavenworth. He told me I should go to Leavenworth and stay in the Army which is what I did.



Lieutenant Colonel DePuy during
a reprieve from combat in May 1945.



Major DePuy while the S-3,
357th Infantry Regiment,
near Metz in October 1944.

CHAPTER V

Education Of A General Staff Officer

INTERVIEWER: I'd like to ask you about your impressions of the Command and General Staff College at that particular point in time. You were a combat veteran who had commanded a battalion and had been a S-3 at every level. What did Leavenworth have to teach you in 1945?

GEN DEPUY: Well, the atmosphere was a peculiar one since everybody there considered himself to be an expert. So, the poor instructors had a very hard time. The classes were very large, 500 in a one room type of thing. But, the fact of the matter is, that I learned a lot. I learned the right words and terms to explain a lot of things that we had done, but had never taken the trouble to define. The one part where I did poorly was the G-3 part, just because I thought I knew it. I did better in the G-1, G-2, and G-4 areas because I didn't pretend to know much about them. Now, the course I went to was only four months long. It was one of two interim courses; it was the wartime course slightly expanded. It was much like the CAS[3] Course which is now so popular.

It was very much a regimental and division level course with a little bit about corps, with a heavy emphasis on operations. There was also a logistics course going on, but it was entirely separate. So, we didn't get much of that, and they didn't get much of ours. Both courses were about the same size in terms of students. The logistics course, called the service course, was run by the Army Service Forces. It was just as large and located in the big riding hall. They just had a partition down the middle, and half of it was the ground course and the other half was the service course.

Following Leavenworth, I assumed that I was going back to Europe because they weren't letting everyone out quite yet. On my way back to Europe, I went to the Pentagon to see a hometown friend of mine, Lieutenant Colonel Chuck Wilson, now a retired major general. He was working for Colonel Michaelis. Mike Michaelis was in the 101st during World War II and was now running the procurement branch of G-1.* They asked me how I felt about being integrated. I applied for the Regular Army, and they gave me a job. So, I didn't go back to Europe. That's the reason I went into the G-1 shop of the War Department. George Forsythe was there, Art Collins and a lot of others were also there, and Mike Michaelis was the boss. I worked there for a couple of years. During that time I was integrated into the Regular Army. It was always an attractive thing to me. Also, the pay was a lot better than teller's pay in my father's bank. In fact, it was $535.00 a month plus allowances. I believe bank tellers in South Dakota at that time, were lucky to make $150.00, and that's about where I would have started. So, number one, I enjoyed the Army and

**General John H. Michaelis*, was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Infantry in 1936. During the Korean War he commanded the 27th Infantry Regiment (1950-51). Other assignments included service as the Commanding General, US Army, Alaska (1959-62); Commanding General, V Corps (1962-63); Commanding General, Allied Land Forces, Southeastern Europe (1963-66); Commanding General, Fifth Army (1966-69); and Commander in Chief, United Nations Command, US Forces, Korea, and Eighth Army, Korea (1969-72).

felt comfortable with it, and secondly, I really didn't want to go back to South Dakota. I found Washington to be an exciting place for a young fellow right off the reservation, so I decided to stay. That's about how complicated my decision was.

I worked in G-1 of the War Department. My job there was the All Volunteer Army. I arrived just at the time we went off the draft. There were three officers, a colonel and two lieutenant colonels, involved in enlisted procurement in the whole Pentagon, and I was the only officer involved in the enlisted volunteer program. The only one! I went up to New York with Major General St. Clair Street from the Air Force. The Air Force was still part of the Army at that time, and he was the head of the recruiting service. I went up with him, and he signed a $1,000,000 contract with N.W. Ayers Co., for recruiting advertising. We have the same company today. But, we didn't do very well. We had a very small Army in those days. I had a graph right behind my desk and, as I recall, we needed to recruit about 15,000 men a month in order to meet our requirements, and that graph on my little chart ran around 12,800 to 13,000, maybe 13,500. Every month we were falling a couple of thousand men short. So, by the time the Korean War came along and Congress reinstituted the draft, we were very much understrength. We tried all sorts of inducements but none of them worked very well. The general atmosphere right after World War II was that the war was over, enlisted salaries were very low, and there wasn't anything very glamorous about military service. So, it just didn't work.

INTERVIEWER: Were you inflicted with the same reduction in rank that a lot of officers suffered at the end of the war, or were you able to retain your rank of lieutenant colonel?

GEN DEPUY: Most of the colonels were reduced. Dick Stilwell reverted back to lieutenant colonel. I just happened to be under the wire. I was promoted in January of 1945, and I believe if I had been promoted a month later, I would have been reduced back to major, but I just missed it.

INTERVIEWER: Sir, according to your biographic sketch, the next significant step is your tour at the Army Language School learning Russian but then being posted to Hungary as the assistant attache. Is there anything that you would like to tell us about that?

GEN DEPUY: Well, I can only say that I went to the Army Language School to study Russian because I thought that Russia was important. I was a little bit tired of the tactical side of things at the moment, and I thought that that would be a good thing to do. It was — and I learned it. But, unfortunately, as I was about to go to Russia to become assistant attache, all of the American attachés in Hungary were ejected, and I was diverted. So, all of my Russian went for naught and Hungarian is an impossible language. I never did learn to speak it. It was rather an exciting time in that the Communists were in the process of consolidating their power. Cardinal Mindszenty was in the legation. Laszlo Rajk was arrested and all sorts of things were happening during that time. But, it all culminated when I broke my leg while skiing and had to come home. I first entered a Hungarian hospital, but they did such a bad job on my leg that I had to come back to Munich where the Americans redid it. I then came back to Walter Reed and was in Walter Reed when the Korean War broke out. So, there is not much more to be said about that.

INTERVIEWER: At one point, though, you actually became the acting attaché.

GEN DEPUY: Yes, that's right. The attaché had left. There was a very rapid turnover in Hungary in those days.

INTERVIEWER: Was that because the Hungarians were heaving the Americans out of the country?

GEN DEPUY: Yes. The Hungarian Communist regime was hostile to the Americans at that time, so there was a high turnover. Personna non grata was the term they used, and I guess about four attachés and assistant attachés were ejected from the country.*

INTERVIEWER: Well, you must have been unique then, getting booted out because of a broken leg.

GEN DEPUY: I think if it hadn't been for the broken leg, I probably would have gone the same route as the others. I did have one experience in Hungary which almost changed the whole pattern of my life. It almost turned me into the intelligence game permanently — something that I did not want. We really were not trained to collect information in a clandestine manner although at the time, Eastern Europe was a boiling pot of clandestine activity. We military chaps were amateurs. But, one day we received a message from Washington to go to Mohacs to report on the Danube bridge which the Germans had dropped in late 1944, as the Russians started their envelopment of Budapest. Some intelligence analyst in Washington was trying to complete the book — there was one being complied on each country — and there were reports that the bridge was being rebuilt. So, one sunny autumn day in 1949, I put on my Air Force fur collared flight jacket — no hat — civilian trousers and shirt, and stirred up my Hungarian jeep driver — a blond crew cut chap in a field jacket with no hat — and we drove south to Mohacs.

Mohacs, by the way, is the site of the defeat of the Hungarian Army by the Turks. It lies 10 miles or so west of the main highway into Budapest from the southeast, which is the link with Rumania along the north bank of the Danube, and with Belgrade, the capital of Yugoslavia. It is about 75 miles south of Budapest. The trip down was uneventful and the bridge, it turned out, was not being rebuilt. As we returned to the main road leading north to Budapest, we encountered a Russian military convoy proceeding north. It consisted of US jeeps, 2½-ton trucks, stake and platform 10-ton trucks, plus artillery and towed antitank guns. The convoy seemingly was endless. So, as we sat there at the road junction, we counted the vehicles and recorded bumper numbers. The march units were closed up but there were gaps between serials. After an hour we became impatient and pulled into a gap. The only identification on our jeep was a small 6 by 8 inch enamel US flag on the right base of the windshield. Fortunately, we looked like all of the Russian jeeps in the convoy. Anyway, about 30 miles up the road, the column turned into a huge forested area on

*For an overview of the political situation in Hungary during this period, see Paul E. Zinner, *Revolution in Hungary* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), 103-158.

the right or east of the highway. A large group of officers and MPs were on the road and there was no way we could avoid turning in so we tucked up close behind a 2½-ton truck and scooted in with the convoy. The delegation on the road looked at us hard but didn't stop us.

Inside the forest the road swept around in a large circle. We were moving counterclockwise. To the right, at intervals of perhaps 200 to 300 yards, were parking areas and bivouacs, most of them occupied with Russian troops and equipment. After about a mile, the element we were following turned into one of these areas and we were alone on the circular inner road — and a bit nervous I might add. Soon we came up behind a Budapest municipal water sprinkler wetting down the road. We could see no way out except to follow the circular road. It led us by tank parks, artillery parks, and command posts with lots of radio antennae, etcetera. I kept notes and counted everything. Lo and behold, we finally came back to the point near the main highway where we had entered. The MPs were still there and we chose not to exit through them so we started our second trip around the cricuit. After more counting and more nervousness we reached the far side of the circle and found a small firebreak road which we followed to the east. It finally took us out of the forest and we found back roads which led to the main highway north of the Russian encampment.

In the legation I stayed up most of the night preparing a very voluminous and detailed report. In those days we had a book of Russian bumper numbers which identified divisions and regiments. It turned out that we had seen ninety percent of the 17th Guards Mechanized Division moving from the USSR to Hungary in preparation for the invasion of Yugoslavia from the north. In those days we had no satellite photography or other coverage. My report on a scale of A to F for reliability of the source, and 1 to 5 for accuracy of the information, was rated A1. For a short time I became the darling of the US intelligence community. It nearly did me in professionally. It nearly sucked me into the intelligence business permanently, but after one tour with the Central Intelligence Agency, I was able to squirm out of an assignment to G-2, US Army, Europe (USAREUR), in 1952, and resume my career as a tactical officer with infantry units and staffs.*

INTERVIEWER: After recovering from leg operations, you put on a cloak and dagger and went to work for the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Would you comment on what your duties were?

GEN DEPUY: Well, let me say that my leg was really banged up very badly. They had to operate on it and put in a lot of screws, wrap wire around it and so on. So, I was at Walter Reed in June, when the Korean War started, and about September, I was able to get around a little bit on crutches in a half-shell cast. I really wanted to do something. Dick Stilwell was just starting up an element in the CIA, which had to do with functions such as guerrilla warfare and things like that. It became the active part, not the clandestine intelligence part, of the Agency. So, as my leg slowly got better, and without any previous experience of any kind, I was placed in charge of China operations, believe it or not.

For a couple of years, I busied myself with those kinds of things which took me to the Far East on many, many trips. I guess that's really all I want to say. I was to spend a lot of time around the periphery of China, and in Thailand, Taiwan, Japan, and Okinawa. It was a very active life and

*For a discussion of the events surrounding Stalin's deployment of troops into Hungary for possible use against Tito, see Duncan Wilson, *Tito's Yugoslavia* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 60-72.

rather exciting. I have to say in retrospect, that it was not all that productive, but everybody was working hard. At that time, you see, China was clearly the enemy. Remember, it wasn't long after the Korean War began when China intervened. So, I'll go this far, we were involved in very active covert operations against China. You asked how I felt about sitting out the war in Korea. Well, I'll have to say that I was actively employed in government service. When I left the Armed Forces Staff College in 1953, even though the war was nearly over, I tried very hard to get to Korea. But, instead, they sent me back to Europe for the third time. I went back for a fourth time, later. There is just something about Europe; I just seemed to go that way.

INTERVIEWER: Was the Armed Forces Staff College merely a repeat of what you had done previously at Leavenworth, or was there a different curriculum?

GEN DEPUY: Oh, there was an entirely different curriculum. It was all "joint," and there was a fascinating group of people in that particular class. Fred Weyand was there. He was the best golf player. Jack Norton and George Forsythe were both there, as was Harry Kinnard who was on the faculty. Chesarek was there, and so was Dutch Kerwin.* It was a very relaxed kind of a course. I lived in Washington and commuted with Colonel Art Allen and Chesarek, and played golf everyday. I have to tell you, I didn't get much out of that course; I don't think anybody did. It was a six month course. Joint doctrine is so vague because the really important things are done by the service elements, not by the joint elements. We didn't get into joint operations except at the joint planning level, and that's pretty thin gruel. So, I did not hold the Armed Forces Staff College course in very high regard. The Navy held it in such low regard that they sent mostly supply officers and people like that, although they did send Admiral Nimitz's son, who very shortly thereafter, left the Navy. But, by and large, they sent the second team, and so did the Air Force.

INTERVIEWER: Was the Armed Forces Staff College in the normal progression, or was it a little sideshow in the Army's educational system?

**General Frederick C. Weyand*, USA Retired, was commissioned through ROTC at the University of California, in 1938. During World War II, he served in the China-Burma-India Theater. Other assignments included commanding the 25th Infantry Division (1964-67), II Field Force, Vietnam (1967-68), and the US Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (1972-73). General Weyand also served as Chief of Staff of the Army (1974-75). *Lieutenant General John Norton*, USA Retired, was commissioned in the Infantry in 1941. During World War II, he commanded a battalion in the 82nd Airborne Division in the European Theater. Other assignments included commanding the 1st Cavalry Division (1966-67), and the Combat Developments Command (1970-73). *Lieutenant General George I. Forsythe*, USA Retired, was commissioned in the Infantry in 1939, through ROTC at the University of Montana. During World War II, he served in both the Pacific and the European theaters. Other assignments included commanding the 1st Cavalry Division (1968-69), and the Combat Developments Command (1969-70). General Forsythe also served as the Project Manager, All-Volunteer Army (1970-72). *Lieutenant General Harry W.O. Kinnard, Jr.*, USA Retired, was commissioned in 1939, in the Infantry. During World War II he served with the 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment. Other assignments included commanding the 11th Air Assault Division, Test (1963-65), the 1st Cavalry Division (1965-66), and the Combat Developments Command (1967-69). *General Ferdinand J. Chesarek*, USA Retired, was commissioned in the Field Artillery in 1938. During World War II he commanded the 28th Field Artillery Battalion in the European Theater (1944-45). Other assignments included commanding the 5th Field Artillery Group (1954), the 4th Logistics Command (1961-62), and the Army Materiel Command (1969-70). *General Walter T. Kerwin, Jr.*, USA Retired, was commissioned in the Field Artillery in 1939. Duty assignments included commanding the 3rd Armored Division Artillery (1961-63), II Field Force, Vietnam (1968-69), the Continental Army Command (1973), and the Forces Command (1973-74). General Kerwin also served as the Vice Chief of Staff of the Army (1974-78).

GEN DEPUY: Well, I don't really know what the career managers would say, but I think in the current parlance, it was one of the "brownie points" that you were supposed to get.

INTERVIEWER: So, it was one of the holes in your ticket that had to be punched.

GEN DEPUY: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: We would now like to talk about your next tour in Europe, which occurred in late 1953. You were on the V Corps staff, but you also commanded the 2nd Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment. We're interested in your impressions about the soldiers, the equipment, the state of training, and how you found this Army compared to the one you had left in 1945. What kind of war did you believe that we should be preparing for, and how did you go about doing that.

GEN DEPUY: When I left the Armed Forces Staff College, I went to Europe and was assigned as head of the counterintelligence branch of G-2, at US Army, Europe (USAREUR) headquarters, which was a legacy of my Hungarian and CIA experience. This horrified me so much I went to the general and told him that I didn't want the job. I used even stronger language than that. Though he didn't like it very much, he let me out. It just so happened that in V Corps, the lieutenant colonel in the G-3 section who had been conducting the infantry battalion Army Training Tests (ATTs), had been relieved. So, they were looking for someone, and Colonel George Forsythe recommended me to General I.P. Swift, the V Corps commander. He was a fine soldier. He was also an irascible but marvelous sort of a fellow, and he gave me the job. So, I went up to V Corps, specifically picked by Swift to do that job, and for two years I was the Assistant G-3 for Training. General, then captain, Bob Fair, by the way, was one of my assistants. For two years in a row I tested all of the infantry battalions in the 1st and 4th Divisions, and in the 350th Infantry from Austria. I did not test the armored infantry of the 2nd Armored Division. Well, let me tell you, I learned a lot doing that.

That was probably the best training I ever got in the Army. It was very strenuous because each one of those tests lasted for a day and a half. We didn't get any sleep and then, after one day of rest, we would test another battalion. I went through a little over 20 battalions each year. I watched people do it right, and I watched people do it wrong. I saw a lot more do it wrong than I saw do it right. I was struck by the fact that those who had commanded battalions in war were something like five times as good and those who hadn't. I blamed a little of that on Leavenworth, because the ones who hadn't commanded in war, more or less took a passive attitude, and waited for voluminous recommendations from their staff. With all of that going on, there was never time enough to move the troops, or to let them dig in, or to do all of the things that they had to do. They were always late, or lost, or mixed-up in one way or another. Now, the guys who previously had commanded battalions, more or less made up their own minds, and the staff ran around behind them and made it work. They gave the troops plenty of time to move and to dig in, which made it a lot better. So, after two years of testing battalions, there was very little I didn't know about the infantry in Europe, including the personalities as well as the good things and the bad things.

From there I then went to the 4th Division which was commanded by General Eddleman. They had a battalion of the 8th Infantry stationed all alone in Budingen, which I asked to command — and I got it. When I arrived there, it was just as if it was the day after World War II. Nothing had changed. The weapons were the same and the terrain was the same. So, I just felt very much at home. As I looked at the training of the battalion, which was as good as any of the battalions over there, I found that at the squad level it was a shambles, just like my battalion had been in World War II. At the platoon level, it was a little bit better. The company commanders were better. They had good potential. So, I decided to spend my time at the bottom. Now, that is when I first applied the overwatch — at least under that terminology. I had an opportunity when I was at corps to go over and watch 2nd Armored Division tank training under General Howze.* In my opinion, General Howze was the best trainer in the Army. Unfortunately, he wasn't appreciated the way he should have been. Everything that he had written about how to train a tank platoon struck me as precisely the way to train a rifle squad since each of them have two operating sections or teams. So, I wrote up several little booklets which we used as training manuals and doctrine in that battalion. I trained all of the squads and platoons uniformly. I personally tested them all. I tested every squad three or four times. I used to spend days and weeks out there with those squads. I knew every squad leader well — both his good points and bad points. They got very, very good.

The other thing I brought with me from World War II was that I insisted that when the battalion was dug in, you couldn't see it from the front. All of my colleagues had come from Korea, and they built big forts. When you got out in front, you could see everything. Well, one of the problems that I had was that the umpires who came to test me thought I was crazy. They didn't understand why I hadn't built Korean pillboxes on the military crest or at the bottom of the hill. Instead, I had my guys behind rocks, trees and bushes. I wouldn't let them disturb the bushes, but made them dig in behind them, so you couldn't see a thing from the front.

Well, to make a long story short, when I took my first annual training test at Wildflecken, the first thing we did was the defense, and all of the company and platoon umpires ran back to the battalion umpire and said, "This battalion is totally unsatisfactory. They don't know how to dig in." So, the battalion umpire came and told me that, and I said, "Okay, stop. Go and get the regimental commander, we're going to have a little talk." This was very ironic because the fellow testing me, Colonel Claude Baker, was the man who had previously commanded my battalion. I had taken over from him, and now he was testing me. But, he was a hell of a good man. He had been in the 5th Regimental Combat Team in Korea and was a terrific fighter. We talked it over, and he agreed one hundred percent with what we were doing. He got all his umpires together and instructed them. They also were skeptical about the overwatch, and bounding, and all of that. Anyhow, we took the test, and we got a low score. We got 80 on a scale of 100. Well, it turned out that when the year was over, 80 was the high score in the corps, but it was a hard way to get started.

**General Hamilton H. Howze*, USA Retired, was commissioned in the Cavalry in 1930. During World War II he commanded the 13th Armored Regiment in the Mediterranean Theater (1943-44), and Combat Command A, 1st Armored Division, in Italy (1944-45). Other assignments included command of the 82nd Airborne Division (1958-59), and the XVIII Corps (1961-63), and Eighth Army, Korea (1963-65). He also served as Commander in Chief, United Nations Command, US Forces, Korea, and Eighth Army, Korea (1963-65).

The point of all this is, that if your squads are well-trained, and you know that they are doing one of three things, then you can visualize how much space they take. And, if the platoons are trained the same way, everything is uniform. Now, there is plenty of room for initiative on the part of the leaders to adapt this to the terrain and to the enemy, but at least you know what it is that they are working with. And, the battalion ran just like a clock. The problem was that it was about a decade or two ahead of its time. That sounds a little egotistical, but that's exactly right, because if you went out and looked at a rifle squad or a platoon today, you would see exactly that. If you looked at the defensive positions, you would see what you knew in Vietnam as the DePuy foxhole, where they all had frontal cover and were all camouflaged. So, that's what happened to the 2nd Battalion, 8th Infantry.*

INTERVIEWER: In the 2nd Battalion, 8th Infantry, you commanded soldiers a generation younger than the soldiers you had commanded in World War II. Although they apparently were similar in many respects, please compare the quality of the soldiers in the mid-1950s with those of the mid-1940s.

GEN DEPUY: Well, of course, it may have been a generation or a half generation later, but they were the same age at the time, so they had the same characteristics. I thought the quality was pretty good. In fact, I thought the quality, if anything, was better. There was, however, one big difference — we had a lot of blacks. We didn't have any blacks in World War II. But, this time I had blacks, and I thought they were fine. However, we were beginning to have some racial problems even then, in that they divided up the gasthauses. All the blacks went to one, while all the whites went to others, and once in awhile they would fight over a gasthaus. Now, in the early 1950s, when I was in the 8th Infantry, the Korean War was just over. So, there was a wartime mentality in the Army. A wartime mentality means that you get a lot of soldiers furnished to you who do what they are told. So, back then, there wasn't the concern that the Army shows for its people today, although we had some education programs. But, we spent almost all of our time training, and most of that training was done in the field; yet, the soldiers accepted that. We didn't have any particular problem. You asked me if I thought the soldiers liked it. I don't suppose they did. I don't think they liked it any more than wartime soldiers liked it. However, the soldiers responded to pride of unit. They knew they were better trained than the other battalions and took great satisfaction in that. By the way, my company commanders were superb. Only one was a Regular. The others were products of Korea — enlisted men promoted to officer. One, Joe Hackett, was the best I've ever had — tough, demanding, autocratic, but incredibly effective.

INTERVIEWER: What was the mission of the 8th Infantry?

GEN DEPUY: The 4th Division had responsibility for the sector now held by the 3rd Armored Division, and part of the 8th Mechanized sector around Fulda and over to Bad Hersfeld. In those days we were very thin on the ground. There was no German Army. You ran up to get into

*For a discussion of the DePuy foxhole or "1st Division Bunker," see "Combat Notes: Bunker Building," *Infantry* 59 (September-October 1969), 46-50.



The DePuy foxhole was also called (for test purposes) PARFOX or parapet foxhole. The hole was either dug behind a large rock, mound or tree so that it afforded frontal protection. If no natural feature was available, the soldiers placed the spoil in front of the hole in the form of a berm high enough to cover the heads of the occupants from frontal observation or suppression. The soldiers fired at 45° angles from behind this camouflaged frontal cover. If *time* allowed, camouflaged overhead cover was added. Interlocking fields of fire covered all the killing zones and the position could not be suppressed by direct fire. One such position at Loc Ninh prepared by the 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry in 1967, caused an exchange ratio of enemy to friendly killed of 198 to 1.

position depending upon how much warning you had, and then, you delayed back toward the Rhine. We had about one platoon for each paved road. That's all! So, it was going to be a platoon battle, and each platoon had a recoilless rifle. Maybe a platoon would have a section of tanks but normally not. They had their 106mm recoilless rifles on jeeps; they had a machine gun or two, and a 3.5-inch Bazooka or two. They scattered a few mines out across the road, and there would be a mile or two between platoons. That's one of the reasons why I concentrated on squad and platoon training, because it was going to be a squad and platoon war.

INTERVIEWER: Was your battalion foot mobile or motorized?

GEN DEPUY: We were a foot mobile division, but there were enough truck companies around so that when necessary, we could mount up on trucks.

INTERVIEWER: After your command of the battalion you became Deputy Chief of Staff at V Corps for awhile.

GEN DEPUY: Yes. I was promoted out of the battalion. That's why I left. I was promoted to colonel, and they didn't have a job for me in the division, so I went back and became the Deputy



106mm Recoilless Rifle (top photo) and 3.5-inch "Bazooka" in action (bottom photo).



Chief of Staff at V Corps. That was a holding job and during that time, the most interesting thing I did was act as the deputy director for a couple of big Seventh Army exercises. I then came back to the United States to work in the Chief of Staff's office.

INTERVIEWER: Sir, at this particular point in time, as you prepared to return to the United States, you had been on active duty about 15 years or so, and were at mid-career. From a personal point of view, did you see yourself as a man with a future in the Army? In terms of comparison with your contemporaries, how did you size up the situation?

GEN DEPUY: Well, I was right with my contemporaries, but my contemporaries were well ahead of the pack. When I say contemporaries, I'm talking about Chuck Wilson, George Forsythe, Art

Collins, and people like that. All of us had been lucky enough to command battalions when we were very young and retain our lieutenant colonel's rank. We were on the forward slope of the "hump" and were all moving along together. We recognized that we were in a fairly advantageous position because we were being promoted to colonel at a reasonably young age, although we had all been lieutenant colonels for about nine years. But, about then, promotions began to move again. So, in those days, my attitude was that I was right on par, but on par with a group that was strategically well-placed in the race, age wise.

INTERVIEWER: Upon your return from Europe in 1956, you were assigned to the Office of the Chief of Staff in the Pentagon. You were there for almost four years. What went on while you were there? What things were you working on, and what things were you thinking about?

GEN DEPUY: The reason I went to the Chief of Staff's office was because of General Forsythe. George Forsythe was working there, and he needed to find somebody to take his job so he could go down and take command of a battle group in the newly activated 101st Airborne Division. So, he arranged for my immediate transfer to take care of his little problem. When I arrived there, I found a rather amazing situation. You may not recall, but the Chief of Staff of the Army was Max Taylor, Eisenhower was the President, and massive retaliation was the strategy. The Air Force was riding high. The Army was feeling sorry for itself. Because Ike thought that he knew all about the Army, it was getting short shrift. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs was Admiral Radford. Admiral Radford, I think, despised the Army even more than most admirals. General Westmoreland was the Secretary of the General Staff and the coordination group was the Army's response to the inter-service war. It was formed under Brigadier General Lyle Metheny, a marvelously leathery, former cavalry sergeant. He was both brilliant and combative. He surrounded himself with some bright young colonels, at least that was his idea — Mel Coburn, Don Yuell, George Forsythe, a fellow named Pickell, Lieutenant Colonel Grant, and later, Ham Twitchell and others. Their job, without it ever being put into a charter, was to assist the Army in surviving the regime of Eisenhower and Radford, and the era of massive retaliation.*

This little office became very active in trying to influence members of Congress and members of the press. They became a little overactive and went a little bit too far at one point, and some of the papers they had written were exposed to full daylight. So, they were, to put it kindly, dispersed. Colonel Forsythe went to the 101st, which he wanted to do anyway, but the timing was fortuitous. Yuell went up to the War College, and the others went elsewhere. Anyway, there was some slight embarrassment, and I arrived just at that time.

The question then was what would we do? For awhile we wrote learned papers. General Taylor was the leading advocate of the concept of flexible response. He also came up with the Pentomic Division. This was his response to the fact the Army seemed to have been left out of the atomic age and needed to sound and appear very modern. Pentomic was thought to be one way to do that. Actually, I think the Pentomic idea has more merit to it than it was ever given credit for having. So, we worked the inter-service beat. Oh, we did all sorts of things. We started the Army Association at that time. I was, for about three years, the Chief of Staff's man for the Army

*For an overview of this particular period, see Maxwell D. Taylor, *The Uncertain Trumpet* (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1960).

Association. We helped organize and put on the first annual meeting and the initial symposiums. When I say "we," I really mean more than anyone else, Bob Cocklin. He was then, as now, the primary power behind the Association of the United States Army (AUSA). It was pretty small. General Gavin was very instrumental in getting it started, along with Cocklin, Forsythe and others. We wrote some speeches. I contributed to one of the chapters in General Taylor's book, *The Uncertain Trumpet*, which had to do with the tactical air forces. We regarded it as regrettable that they had been split from the Army. You can still make a good argument for that today, but they are split and that's that. We generally watched over the interservice battles that went on. Now, this was rather an awkward thing to do, because General Eddleman, for example, was the DCSOPS, and if you asked him who was responsible for all of these matters, he would have said that he was. So, it was not always a comfortable place to be. It was one of those little groups that is often resented, sometimes does some good, sometimes doesn't do much at all, but often does some things that need to be done which the large formal staffs either don't want to do, can't do, or don't do. That was a rather strange career interlude. By the way, the officer who sat right next to me for two of those four years was Bernie Rogers. He then went over and became General Taylor's executive officer. So, I guess that explains the coordination group.*



General
Bernard W. Rogers



General
Maxwell D. Taylor

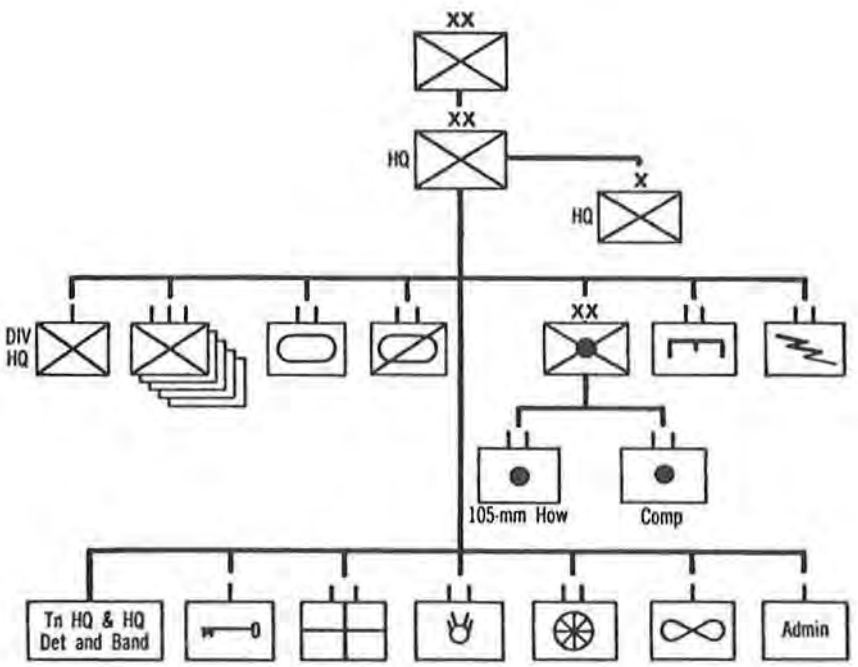


Lieutenant General
George I. Forsythe

**General Maxwell D. Taylor*, USA Retired, was commissioned in 1922, in the Corps of Engineers. Transferring to the Field Artillery, General Taylor commanded the 82nd Airborne Division Artillery (1943-44), in the European Theater during World War II. Other assignments included command of Eighth Army, Korea (1953-54), and Army Forces, Far East (1954-55). General Taylor also served as Chief of Staff of the Army (1955-59). Retiring in 1959, General Taylor was recalled to active duty to serve as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (1962-64). Retiring again in 1964, General Taylor served as Ambassador to South Vietnam (1965), and as Special Consultant to the President (1965-69). *General Bernard W. Rogers,* USA, was commissioned in the Infantry in 1943. General Rogers has commanded the 5th Infantry Division (1969-70), and Forces Command (1974-76). General Rogers also has served as the Chief of Staff of the Army (1976-79). Since 1979, General Rogers has been the Supreme Allied Commander, Europe.

INTERVIEWER: Could you say a few more words about the Pentomic Division? We noted in one of your letters that you took exception to the Pentomic Division.

GEN DEPUY: Well, of course, one of the great flaws of the Pentomic Division was the fact that there weren't any jobs for infantry lieutenant colonels. The armored division stayed aloof from it throughout, as did the armored infantry. So, in an infantry battle group you had a colonel dealing directly with captains. You had a lieutenant colonel as the deputy commander, and you had majors as the principal staff officers, S-1, S-2, S-3, and S-4. So, there wasn't any career progression. What happened to this captain after he relinquished command of his company while waiting to become a colonel? You can't train an Army that way. You need a lieutenant colonel level command for sure, in order to keep them current and give them command experience. So, that was bad. Also, the companies were too large and unwieldy. However, other than that, I had fun with it because commanding a battle group was really like commanding my third battalion. It was just a great big battalion. And, having commanded two battalions previously, I really like to think that I handled the battle group very well. The span of control wasn't too much. I have to say that some battle group commanders who had not had a lot of experience with battalions found it cumbersome. But, they tried to do it through the staff like a brigade or regiment rather than command it directly like a battalion.*



Pentomic Infantry Division

*See Field Manual 7-100, *Infantry Division* (Washington: USGPO, 1958), 6, 8.

INTERVIEWER: With regard to the 1st Battle Group, 30th Infantry, please comment on your training program based on your assessment of what you needed to do, what you did, and how you felt about the results.

GEN DEPUY: Well, you may remember that while I commanded the 1st Battle Group, 30th Infantry, it was mechanized. In fact, the 30th was the first mechanized battle group in Europe. So, actually, I guess I could divide the training that we did there into two periods and two different subjects. The first period was when I again trained all of the rifle platoons in the three types of overwatch and the platoon techniques, dismounted. Incidentally, I had some marvelous young fellows there. George Joulwan and Jim Madden were both there, as was Charlie Getz and a number of other chaps who have done rather well. So, anyway, I started out again training from the bottom up, and did all sorts of testing of squads, platoons, and companies. Then we were mechanized and were able to operate like armored forces, which I liked. But, you have to train very carefully to do that. You've got to have companies that can be underway in five minutes — max! I mean, the whole company must be moving in the direction that you want it to move, and doing what you want it to do as a result of battle drill type command and control.

To this day, most units in our Army can't do that. Generally speaking, the tank battalions do better than the mech battalions. If you have, as I did in the 30th Infantry, five maneuver elements and often more than that, with one or two tank companies or sometimes a cavalry troop attached, it is necessary to go to checkpoint-type command and control and mission-type orders. We trained very hard to be able to do that, to be able to call up "Charlie Six" and say, "Move to Checkpoint 55." That's all I would have to tell him! Within a matter of a minute or two, I'd get an "on the way," whether he had tanks with him or not. And, he knew what to do when he got to Checkpoint 55. That was part of our Standard Operating Procedures (SOP). You go there, you occupy a battle position, you look around and see what's going on, you contact any friendlies in the area, you sight your company in the direction that you think the enemy is coming from, and you prepare to move again. Now, if I wanted him to do more than that, I could tell him to go to Checkpoint 55 and put in a strong point, which meant, "Dig in; you are going to be there a long time." Or, I could tell him, "Go to Checkpoint 55 and be prepared to move on order to Checkpoint 56." But, very few things had to be told to these people. So, the alacrity of the organization was very high while still maintaining squad and platoon battle drill.

In fact, that makes it easier because you know exactly what they look like on the ground — how much space they take and how much time. I think it was about a month after we were mechanized, that I took the battle group into the field in January, when the ground was frozen, and just stayed in the field from then until early April, training tactically. We could go anywhere. We went down and played games with the 2nd Cavalry, the 4th Infantry, and the 15th Infantry. In fact, we went right through that training into our Army Training Test at Hohenfels, without ever coming back. Now, the wives didn't like that, but it was absolutely super training. It was the kind of training that you would do if you knew you were going to go to war. The troops were dirty. I mean, their clothing was torn and dirty. Also, their vehicles were dirty, but they had learned how to maintain themselves in the field. They were not eating candy bars anymore. They were eating Army food. The replacement system, the maintenance system, the supply system, and the tactical system, were all working in the field.

It was very interesting when we went into the training test. Andy Goodpaster gave it to us.* When we went into it, the umpires all looked at the battle group and then reported immediately to me and to Andy that they were disappointed because the soldiers didn't appear to be "up" for it; they didn't seem to be "high" for this training test. Well, they weren't. I mean, this was just another day. Eventually, the soldiers became enthusiastic. It was a three or five day test, and they just steadily gained enthusiasm from the competition, and they hit the high point at the end instead of at the beginning. But, our vehicles were running 90 to 95 percent operational all of the time. We had absolutely no trouble of any kind. We were ready for war.

One of the reasons that the battle group experience was interesting was that in the beginning I was also the commander of a task force. I had the 30th Infantry, the 38th Infantry, a tank battalion, and a cavalry squadron. That got to be so interesting that Goodpaster came up and took over. I had responsibility for the Meiningen Gap. When we weren't out training the individual elements, we'd take the whole task force out and train up there by Munnerstadt, Neustadt and Konigshofen. So, I would say that the 30th was the practical culmination of my experience as an infantry unit commander. I felt like I was able to put it all together, make it work, and really move it around tactically.



General
Andrew J. Goodpaster



Colonel DePuy, Commander, 1st Battle Group, 30th Infantry, shown briefing the Commandant of the German Infantry School in 1961.

*_General Andrew J. Goodpaster_, USA Retired, was commissioned in the Corps of Engineers in 1939. During World War II, General Goodpaster commanded the 48th Engineer Construction Battalion in Italy (1943-44). Other assignments included command of the 8th Infantry Division (1961-62), service as the Director, Joint Staff (1966-67), and a tour as the Commandant, National War College (1967-68). General Goodpaster also served as Commander in Chief, Europe and Supreme Allied Commander, Europe (1969-74). Retiring in 1974, General Goodpaster was recalled to active duty in 1977 and served as the Superintendent, United States Military Academy (1977-81).

INTERVIEWER: It appears that you felt very good about the quality of the soldier that you had then. Would you compare them with the World War II variety?

GEN DEPUY: I am led to believe that that was the time when the Army had the best people it has ever had. I say that because I read a book recently that said the Selective Service System rejected about 35 percent, and in 1960 and 1961, the Army rejected 78 percent at the Armed Forces Examination and Entrance Station (AFEES). This means that the Army was getting roughly the top 20 percent of the physical and mental specimens in the country. In short, the troops were super. Of course, they were not volunteers.

INTERVIEWER: Before taking command of the 30th Infantry you were a student at the British Imperial Defense College. Please tell us about your experiences there?

GEN DEPUY: I'll just say that it was a very pleasant interlude for me and the family. I happen to enjoy the British. The course lasted for a year and was a very high level type of thing. We were concerned about things like the Commonwealth and the world, and we travelled around a lot, including a trip to the Middle East. Also, I met a lot of people who are still friends. It was the most relaxing year of my life; it was a very nice sabbatical.

INTERVIEWER: In the spring of 1962 you became the Director of Special Warfare in the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations and Plans (DCSOPS), in the Pentagon. What happened during the time you were there?

GEN DEPUY: That was an interesting period. I came back there under the auspices of General Bill Rosson, who had been the Assistant Division Commander of the 8th Division, and had been the director of an exercise in Germany, which is what brought the two of us into close contact.* He was appointed the Special Assistant to the Chief of Staff for Counterinsurgency. Then, within a month after his return from Europe, he sent for me and I came back to take the job as Director of Special Warfare. Needless to say, I didn't know anything about it. We had some interesting people in there. My deputy was George Blanchard; Bill Bond, who was killed in Vietnam, was there also. But, counterinsurgency was all the rage in Washington because the Kennedys had come into office pledged to "help any friend." The Vietnam War was still at a relatively low level at this time. The Army was trying to find, as were the other services, a role in this new and exciting high-priority national endeavor. I had just one year of that.

In retrospect, I have a couple of feelings about it. We were rather mechanistic about the whole thing. I guess I'm using the same words that I used to describe the training for World War II, but I think in some respects, the situations were not dissimilar. None of us were experts. The subjects were guerrilla warfare, unconventional warfare, psychological operations, political action, and

**General William B. Rosson,* USA Retired, was commissioned in the Infantry through ROTC at the University of Oregon in 1940. During World War II, General Rosson commanded the 3rd Battalion, 7th Infantry, in the European Theater. Other assignments included command of the 30th Infantry Regiment (1946-47), the 39th Infantry Regiment (1955-56), and I Field Force, Vietnam (1967-68). General Rosson also served as Commander in Chief, US Army Pacific (1970-72), and as Commander in Chief, US Southern Command, Panama (1972-75).



General
William B. Rosson



General
George S. Blanchard

civic action. I think those are the functions that fall under the general rubric of Special Warfare. We were trying to organize Special Forces units around the world — a group in Okinawa, a group in Panama, a group in Europe, plus another reserve group or two at Fort Bragg — and combine them with other experts in civil affairs, and be ready to do whatever the President said this country was going to do anywhere in the world. The whole thing, of course, eventually was sucked into the maw of Vietnam, but it was an activist philosophy. It was premised on the assumption that if we were smart enough at all those things then we could somehow thwart the efforts of the communists to subvert the Third World through wars of liberation. We thought we could bring up some disadvantaged country in the image of America. Well, now, after all these years, we know better. We have a much more modest view of our capabilities. So, I look back on all of that as a period of fumbling — national fumbling. A lot of rather important people in the Administration were behind it, including General Taylor. He left the Pentagon and became an advisor to the President and then came back as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff because he was, indeed, first of all, a flexible response man, and counterinsurgency was regarded as a component of flexible response. There was a great deal of confidence in Washington, naive confidence, that we could do anything we set our minds to. What we discovered in Vietnam and are discovering again in Central America is that the political dimension of an insurgency is central to the outcome. On the political side we are really amateurs. Our belief in political freedom —that is, one-man-one-vote — ties our hands in the rough and tumble politics of dictators and communists.

The reason I left Special Warfare was that I was promoted. I want to add one thing that I just thought of. In 1962, I went over to Vietnam with Colonel George Morton to establish the Special Forces headquarters at Nha Trang. The Central Intelligence Agency had taken over a number of Special Forces "A" Detachments and had inaugurated a program up at Ban Me Thuot, with the Rhade tribe of Montagnards. It had worked rather well and the history of Vietnam is that anything that worked well with ten good men, we tried to expand to 10,000 men right away. We thought Special Forces had a role to use its own troops, but we didn't want them to play it under the Agency. The Army wanted to play its own game. So, that was the beginning of setting up the Special Forces Command in Vietnam, a command which grew to at least 10,000 at its peak. In fact, the whole operation had the moniker of "Operation Switchback," which meant the switch of



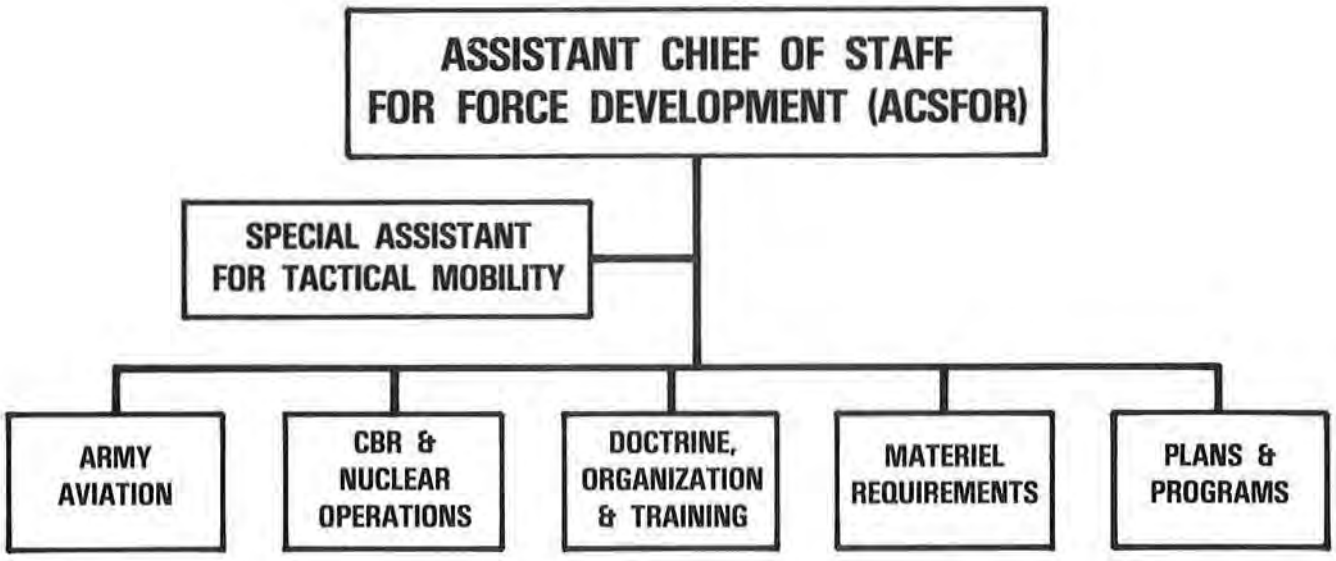
Special Forces and Vietnamese soldiers during a combat patrol into Vietcong infested territory.

the Special Forces from the Central Intelligence Agency back in the Army. That's just another footnote.

INTERVIEWER: Following your tour as Director of Special Warfare you spent a year as the Director of Plans and Programs, in the Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff for Force Development (ACSFOR).

GEN DEPUY: Well, let me say that that experience was a very important one to me, and really was most beneficial in terms of preparing me to later take over the Assistant Vice Chief of Staff's job, which was also primarily a programming job. The job in ACSFOR was an interesting one. You know, George Blanchard, Fritz Kroesen, and Donn Starry had that same job.* To this day all of us speak the same language and have the same strong feelings about the necessity for what we then called a Force Development Plan. Donn Starry calls it the Battlefield Development Plan, which is simply the Force Development Plan transplanted down to the Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), because they are no longer doing it up in the Pentagon. Fritz Kroesen understands all of that. Paul Phillips happened to be another one of the people who held the job. So, it's a special little club that we have. Basically, we were trying to do force planning at the departmental level so that weapons development, organization, training, tactics, and resources were all synchronized. It was a big step to take and it was only partially successful. After ten years of existence General Abrams eliminated ACSFOR and the force development function went to DCSOPS where it has

**General Frederick J. Kroesen, Jr.*, USA Retired, enlisted in the Army Reserve in 1942, and was called to active duty the following year. General Kroesen was commissioned in 1944, following completion of the Infantry Officer Candidate School, at Fort Benning, Georgia. During World War II, General Kroesen served with the 254th Infantry Regiment in the European Theater. Other assignments included commanding the 1st Battalion, 187th Airborne Regimental Combat Team, Korea (1953), the 2nd Battalion, 187th Airborne Regimental Combat Team, Japan (1953-55), the 196th Light Infantry Brigade, Vietnam (1968-69), the 23rd Infantry Division, Vietnam (1971), VII Corps (1975-76), and Forces Command (1976-78). General Kroesen also served as the Commander in Chief, US Army, Europe and Seventh Army (1979-83).



ACSFOR Organizational Chart as of July 1963.

not prospered. So, TRADOC has taken over half of the function and the other half of it is done by DCSOPS and the Director of the Army Staff's Program and Analysis Office.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think it's now appropriately placed at TRADOC, or should there still be something like that in the Department of the Army?

GEN DEPUY: Well, I think that it's very difficult for TRADOC to do it because TRADOC is one of several subordinate commands, and the Force Development Plan should have a great deal of executive power. Frankly, it also had difficulty in ACSFOR for the same reason. You had force development planning in ACSFOR, operational planning in DCSOPS, and then you had program planning up in the Office of the Vice Chief of Staff. The higher you go, the more power you have. Programming at the Chief of Staff's level, feeds the budget directly, whereas the Force Development Plan was a supporting document that didn't feed the budget quite as directly, but was used by the staff in formulating their portions of the program. As I said, it was difficult to accomplish in ACSFOR. It will be even more difficult to do down in TRADOC, and I think it is still an open question about whether or not a reincarnation of it is needed up at the Department of the Army level. The symptoms of the problem are visible in the Army's efforts to cope with the "tank program" and the "force modernization" problem.

CHAPTER VI

Early Days of the Second Indochina War

INTERVIEWER: At this point in your career you again were assigned to an active theater, this time as the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) J-3. Please give us a brief description of your duties, the projects, you were working on, and the activities that were going on at that time.*

GEN DEPUY: When I arrived General Harkins was still in command but General Westmoreland had already arrived. He was the deputy and was obviously being groomed to take Harkin's job.** General Stilwell the former J-3, became the Chief of Staff. It was a deceptively quiet atmosphere. Militarily it was not terribly active in the spring of 1964, when I arrived. People were still very much concerned about the overthrow of the Diem regime and were trying to pick up the pieces. I might add that political turmoil continued with a series of almost comic opera coups. Then in the fall of 1964, the Vietcong launched a coordinated effort to topple the Government of Vietnam (GVN) through a series of large battles which we can talk about later.

General Westmoreland then assumed command. MACV changed from a staff that originally was very much concerned with advisory duties and the support of the ARVN in terms of training, to a staff that was increasingly concerned with operations. There was still a Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG), when I arrived, but it then was absorbed within MACV. We soon had about 13 companies of helicopters deployed throughout the country, and we had an Air Force Advisory Detachment with the Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF), some Navy elements, and the Special Forces. Incidentally, the first Ops Center at MACV consisted of one officer and one sergeant who were located in a large closet. It contained a single sideband radio used for communications with the Military Police in Saigon, and some commercial telephones for communications with the corps. That was it. That was the Ops Center. We ran the US effort through the senior corps advisors. They were the subordinate echelons. And, they had operational control of the helicopters unless we took them away.

What operational influence we had was generally based upon deciding which battles were the most important, allocating our intra-theater airlift accordingly for moving Vietnamese troops, and

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*For background on the US Army's early involvement in Vietnam see Ronald H. Spector, *United States Army in Vietnam: Advice and Support: The Early Years, 1941-1960* (Washington: USGPO, 1983). See also, William E. DePuy, "Vietnam: What We Might Have Done and Why We Didn't Do It," *Army* 36 (February 1986), 22-25, 28-40.

**_General Paul D. Harkins_ was commissioned in the Cavalry in 1929. During World War II, General Harkins served as the Deputy Chief of Staff, Seventh Army (1943-44) and Third Army (1944-45), in the European Theater. General Harkins also commanded the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (1962-64). _General William C. Westmoreland_, USA Retired, was commissioned in the Field Artillery in 1936. During World War II, General Westmoreland served in the European Theater with the 9th Infantry Division. Other assignments included command of the 187th Regimental Combat Team, in Korea (1952-53), the 101st Airborne Division (1958-60), the XVIII Airborne Corps (1963-64), and the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (1964-68). General Westmoreland also served as Chief of Staff of the Army (1968-72).



General Paul D. Harkins



General William C. Westmoreland





US Army advisors working with the South Vietnamese.

assembling helicopters companies wherever the battle was taking place. To indicate what a one-horse operation we were running we kept a Caribou (C-7) out at Tan Son Nhut loaded with hand pumps. These were needed to pump fuel out of 55-gallon drums into helicopters. There was a sergeant whose name I think was Smith, who was CINCPUMP. The problem was always the time it took for refueling. If you could refuel rapidly near the battle site, you didn't need as many helicopters and vice versa. If I decided to move some helicopter companies from the Delta up into the III Corps, we immediately dispatched Sergeant Smith with the hand pumps and we got the tactical airlift to begin flying in 55-gallon drums of fuel.

My close friend and constant companion was Brigadier General Thang, the J-3 of the Vietnamese Joint Staff. He controlled ARVN to the extent that there *was* central control. The corps commanders were political-military feudal lords.

INTERVIEWER: You have characterized or at least painted a picture showing the Vietnamese government to be on the verge of losing control. I wonder if you would comment on your appraisal of the government, and on the effectiveness of its organization?

GEN DEPUY: Well, there wasn't a Vietnamese government as such. There was a military junta that ran the country. Most of the senior Vietnamese officers, as you know, had served in the French Army. A lot of them had been sergeants. Politically, they were inept. The various efforts at pacification required a cohesive, efficient governmental structure which simply did not exist. Furthermore, corruption was rampant. There was coup after coup, and militarily, defeat after defeat. General Westmoreland indicated in a message that he sent after the battle of Binh Ba, up in Quang Ngai Province, that he gave the Vietnamese government six months to live at most, because they were losing a battalion a day, and a district town a week, something like that. The situation was very critical. That was the assessment in MACV at the time that recommendations and decisions were being made concerning the introduction of US Forces. To coordinate the entire US effort General Taylor, who was then the ambassador, formed a mission council consisting of himself as chairman, General Westmoreland, and the AID, CIA, and USIA heads. Many subcommittees were formed and much paper generated. The J-3 was drawn into this effort in support of General Westmoreland. This was the beginning — a belated beginning I might add — in the integrated pacification effort which finally congealed under Mr. Komer and was placed entirely under MACV. In the beginning there were endless jurisdictional disputes.

INTERVIEWER: In terms of the ARVN, was there any single thing such as the way they did business, or the way they controlled their fires, or the intelligence they had, that you could point at and say, "This is where they need help. If we fix this, then the ARVN will be a lot better."





Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) elements conducting area sweeps.

GEN DEPUY: The basic motivation of the ARVN seldom equalled the motivation of the VC and NVA. On the technical side, the ARVN was losing the war just the way the French had lost the war, and for many of the same military reasons. They didn't have the mobility to react rapidly to a Viet Cong attack, so the attacks, almost without exception, were successful and the attackers withdrew before any substantial reaction could take place. It was like the French on Route 19

when they were defeated at the Mang Yang Pass. The French soldiers fought well, but if you look at it from an analytical point of view, from the moment the first shot was fired, the force ratios moved progressively against the French because they could not be reinforced while their casualties mounted. The Viet Minh were already there in strength.* Now, the same thing was happening to the ARVN in the days just before our rather massive intervention. Even with a few helicopter companies, it wasn't enough to allow the ARVN to react quickly enough. Not only that, but the ARVN commanders hadn't tasted success for a long time, so they had become pessimistic. They expected defeat. They conceded to the enemy superior tactics, superior indoctrination, and superior will power. And, they lost all of the battles they thought they were going to lose, just as most troops will under those conditions. Just to jump ahead and finish this sort of tactical train of thought — in every operation fought over there by American forces, and certainly when you and I were together in the 1st Division, from the time the first shot was fired in any battle, from that minute on, the combat power ratio turned in our favor. The situation was just the reverse from what had occurred before, because we brought in artillery, we brought in air, and then, we brought in more troops. Now, the ARVN eventually tasted success; it was able to move with our help, and began to achieve victories. There is nothing that helps an Army like victories. The ARVN got fairly confident, and it was winning battles. And then, we vietnamized.

So, they again lost their ability to concentrate. The name of the game in a war like that is that the insurgents have the advantage of picking the time and the place to attack. They can decide to fight only when they are going to win. The only antidote for that is to be able to react faster and to put more on the battlefield than they can. By and large, the American Army did that, and, by and large, it won battles. So, when you strip away all of the politics and everything else, that is the tactical story of Vietnam.

INTERVIEWER: In your role as the J-3, I imagine you had a lot of contact with the various US agencies that either were present or were coming into Vietnam during that period. Please describe your perception of the role and the interface between these agencies during that period of time.

GEN DEPUY: Well, as I said earlier, they had what was called the Country Team, sometimes labeled the "Mission Council." General Westmoreland was a member; the local heads of the CIA, USIA, and the US Agency for International Development (USAID), were members; and then, there was a political officer representing the State Department. The ambassador was chairman of the group. It met once or twice a week while General Taylor was in Vietnam as the ambassador. It met formally at least once a week. They decided how to coordinate the activities of the various agencies represented. Everything considered, I believe they did a pretty good job. To be frank, there was a certain amount of bickering. There was this feeling of which element was really the most important element. They would argue about how big the police force should get under the auspices of AID, versus how big the regional forces should get under the auspices of MACV. But, all of the arguments were eventually resolved by reasonable men.

The Country Team caused a lot of things to happen long before Komer came along with Civil Operations and Rural Development Support (CORDS). Everybody recognized that there were

*For an account of the battle of Mang Yang Pass, see Bernard B. Fall, *Street Without Joy*, 4th ed. (Harrisburg: Stackpole Co., 1967), 182-225.

several levels of war going on simultaneously, ranging all the way from the very quiet, subversive political war and use of terror down in the hamlets and villages, up to the use of main forces, with everything in between. The political actions of the Vietnamese government, the nature of the economy, prices, the building of roads — there was nothing that happened in Vietnam that wasn't relevant to the total outcome. So, the agencies began to reinforce their efforts. Each agency brought in more people and more money, and initiated new activities. The US and the Vietnamese organizations were sort of parallel hierarchies, with the US trying to help at every level. Eventually, we were helping in all of the provinces and districts, at all of the corps and division headquarters, in every department and ministry of the government, at all of the ports and airfields, with the intelligence and police services, and with all of the social welfare services. You can go on, and on, and on. I believe that by the time of TET, under Komer's "blowtorch" treatment, that effort was moving along quite well.

INTERVIEWER: This was TET of what year, sir?

GEN DEPUY: TET came in 1968. TET was the watershed. Before TET, I would say that the military battle wasn't won, the subversive battle wasn't won, and the economic battle wasn't won; but, the other side wasn't winning either. It was a stalemate. The enemy couldn't take over South Vietnam and we couldn't defeat the enemy who controlled his casualties by pacing his operations — by controlling the tempo. Then TET came along and showed that in that kind of a war, the guerrillas, the enemy, can make a sudden effort and go anywhere, including in the nation's capitol or in the American Embassy, if they are willing to pay the price. But, people back in the United States still thought of war in terms of lines, and concluded that if the enemy could get into Saigon, then we were losing. So, TET struck a deathblow in Washington, even though the VC were decisively defeated and never recovered. After TET it was a North Vietnamese war. TET was a military disaster and a political triumph for the other side. The North Vietnamese lost the battle but they won the war as a result of TET, no question about it. It terrified and horrified the people in Washington. Eventually, however, historians will write about the Vietnam War and say, "The kind of things we were doing in Vietnam before TET were right for that kind of war. But, it would have taken a very long time."

However, considering the attitude in the US, the effort was too expensive, lasted too long, became too frustrating, was too complex, involved too much television, resulted in too much gore, and required too much patience. In short, the American people decided that Vietnam wasn't worth it. The other way to have won the war was General LeMay's concept — "Bomb North Vietnam back into the stone age." In retrospect, his solution was more American than the sophisticated counterinsurgency efforts which couldn't finish the job within the tolerances of the American people and their political leaders.

INTERVIEWER: Concerning the Vietnamese National Police Field Force, at one point there seemed to be some controversy over just how extensive its role was going to be, or just what it was going to do, at least as far as the Vietnamese were concerned. I wonder if you would care to comment on that?

GEN DEPUY: Yes. That has an interesting origin. The British in Malaysia were prohibited by treaty from having an army.* So, the British had to create a large police force. The police force was, in fact, an army. Most people don't understand that. It was organized into companies and battalions, and was armed just like an army, and it fought just like an army. It had two branches, a special branch which was concerned with intelligence activities, and a combat branch which exploited the intelligence. Well, people who were only casual students of that whole thing, thought that the solution in Vietnam was to do just as the British had done in Malaysia. Well, there were several other factors to consider. One was that we didn't have to call the army a police force. Another consideration was that there was no American "El Supremo" the way there had been when Templar was in Malaysia. A third consideration, and perhaps the most important one, the communist terrorists were Chinese, not Malayans. That really helped in the identification of friend and foe, in the creation of patriotism, and with everything else. But, I only mention this because repeatedly, the AID people would bring up experts from Malaysia, including Sir Robert Thompson, and an Australian who worked with the police, Ted Serong, both of whom recommended that we recreate the winning combination that they had had in Malaysia, which meant creating a very large combat police force.**

Now, the mission of that combat police force would be indistinguishable from that of the regional forces. The only difference was going to be who commanded it. They wanted to command it from Saigon, the way the police field force in Malaysia had been commanded from Kuala Lumpur, whereas we were trying to decentralize the political/police action down to the province and to the district levels. And so, the police field force was simply a jarring note in the great symphony that was going on in Saigon, and those of us in MACV fought it and contained it. We didn't see how we could tolerate it. You can always have a few independent folks floating around, intelligence people like the CIA, but you cannot tolerate having little feudal armies running around in a district or in a province while getting their orders from Saigon. So, that's the background.

INTERVIEWER: So, the national police force would have been in addition to all of the other local, regional, and regular forces in an area.

GEN DEPUY: Yes, but the concept was very fuzzy.

INTERVIEWER: Another interesting occurrence during this period of time was the difficulty that the Vietnamese had with the Montagnards. Would you comment on that, both in terms of it being a long-standing problem, and what was finally worked out?

GEN DEPUY: The Vietnamese word for the Montagnards is "Moi," which means savage. The Vietnamese are a proud race, and are very conscious of their long cultural history, and successful

*For an overview of the Malayan insurgency, see Noel Barber, *War of the Running Dogs: The Malayan Emergency: 1948-1960* (New York: Weybright and Talley, 1972).

**For an overview of Sir Robert Thompson's ideas on dealing with an insurgency, see Robert Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency: The Lessons of Malaya and Vietnam* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1966).

military history. And, they really regarded the Montagnards as aborigines, which, in fact, they are. Now, the Americans, on the other hand, have always had a love affair with the Montagnards. Scholars of various kinds found their way up into the mountains and lived with and studied the tribes, and became fascinated with these aborigines. They noted that the Montagnards were pure, simple, mountain folk, and not very guileful. So, we had to like them. Meanwhile, we were having a lot of trouble with the more sophisticated Vietnamese in the lowlands. So, the Americans, from the very beginning, were emotionally linked with the Montagnards against the Vietnamese. And, for that reason, the Vietnamese distrusted the Americans.

Well, there were some rather sophisticated Montagnards, one of whom was Y Bham. Y Bham was the hereditary king of all the Montagnards. He was a Rhade who lived in Ban Me Thuot, and was serving as the assistant province chief of Darlac Province at the time of the Montagnard rebellion, the first Montagnard rebellion. He ran off into the forest and the Montagnards attacked a number of Special Forces camps. They left our chaps alone but they killed the Vietnamese Special Forces troops, and threw their bodies into the garbage pits, or otherwise treated them badly. This caused quite a problem for the Americans because the Vietnamese government naturally wished to take severe reprisals against the Montagnards. But, the Montagnards were the darlings of the State Department, and the CIA particularly, didn't want them massacred. Anyhow, I had a personal involvement in this situation. I was sent up to Ban Me Thuot by "Westy" to take charge of the situation there. The situation was that there were about five Special Forces camps around Ban Me Thuot that had been taken over by the Montagnards.* However, their attempt to take over Ban Me Thuot had failed. The countryside was filled partly with VC and partly with hostile Montagnards. Around the Special Forces camp of Buon Sar Pa, located south of Ban Me Thuot, the Montagnards had seized two district chiefs and a number of other officials and their families, and had them locked up. The government of Vietnam sent two of the Dalat generals up to Ban Me Thuot to take charge of the situation or to take the blame. You may recall that the Dalat generals had been incarcerated at the time that General Khanh took over. He was the little chubby general who smoked Salems all the time. Tran Van Don did not come up. Kim came up, as did the former III Corps commander, Ton Tat Dinh. Although Kim was the most brilliant of them all, and was fluent in French, nobody trusted him. Anyway, he came up as the foreign policy advisor. Tan Tat Dinh served as the military advisor. Now, General Lam, an inscrutable Chinese-looking chap, who later commanded I Corps, was the 23rd Division commander, and I was the MACV player. We had a lot of American advisors in Ban Me Thuot, working with the 23rd Division and assisting with the administration of the province.

Well, finally, after a lot of palavering both day and night, we got it all settled in all of the camps and got all of the remaining Vietnamese officials and Special Forces personnel back, except at Buon Sar Pa. At Buon Sar Pa there was a chap named Y Tlur, who later became a Kit Carson scout with the cavalry, who was the leader of the rebels. Colonel John Speers, who commanded the 5th Special Forces in Nha Trang, flew in by helicopter to visit his Special Forces personnel, and Y Tlur had him arrested. Then, Colonel Fritz Freund who was the deputy corps advisor at Pleiku, flew in and they also arrested him, but only halfheartedly — he kept his weapon. So, there we were, with the US Special Forces Detachment, the commander of the 5th Special Forces

*For an overview on the Special Forces working with the Montagnards and on the rebellion, see Francis J. Kelly, *U.S. Army Special Forces: 1961-1971* (Washington: USGPO, 1973).

Group, a senior advisor, two district chiefs, and a lot of other officials and their wives, all locked up by the Montagnards. General Khanh flew up and said that he was going to take the place by force and then was going to try the Montagnards for treason. I exacted a promise from General Khanh and from Generals Kim, Dinh, and Lam, that they would give me one more day to try and somehow solve this situation. I already had made all of the arrangements for a rescue operation for the following morning and had obtained the necessary permission from Saigon. We were going to circle the camp with US A-1s, and have a Special Forces ad hoc battalion loaded in helicopters ready to go in and rescue everyone.

At 11:00 o'clock that night one of the advisors called to say that the 23rd Division was on the move. If the division had attempted to seize the camp it would have resulted in a real massacre, probably of our people as well as everyone else. So, I dashed over to General Lam's house at 2:00 o'clock in the morning, and confronted him with the fact that he had promised me as one soldier to another, not to do that. I told him that he couldn't do it — it was against the honor of a soldier. And, my God, he called it off. Well, the next morning at H Hour, 0900, it was foggy. Finally, at 1000 hours, the fog lifted. We had arranged that as soon as we circled the camp, Fritz Freund, who I must say is a brave man, would get Y Tlur to line up all of the Montagnards on parade, a whole battalion of them. Freund, even though technically under arrest, was still carrying his Swedish K, and he thrust it into the hands of Y Tlur and said, "If you're going to kill me, kill me now with my own weapon in front of your troops." Very dramatic. He's a big ham. Since Y Tlur didn't say anything, Freund spun on his heels and went down and clipped the lock off of the prison compound and let all of the prisoners out. We had passed him a pair of clippers through a liaison officer that we had sent into the camp everyday. He then marched the prisoners to the gate while all of the troops still were standing in formation.

We then landed some helicopters and the prisoners all got aboard the helicopters and took off. The Montagnard troops and Y Tlur were so astonished that they just stood there, still in their formation, with their mouths hanging open. Then Fritz, not knowing when to let well enough alone, said to me, "Come on, give a speech to the troops." So, I went in. They couldn't understand me, and I couldn't understand them, but I gave them a rousing speech and told them they had made all the right decisions, and so on and so forth. I shook their hands, inspected them, congratulated them, and then, I wheeled around and went down and got on the helicopter with Fritz and John Speers and flew away. About an hour later, the Vietnamese 23rd Division entered the camp. All was sweetness and light, and nobody got killed. So, anyway, that's the sort of comic opera "Perils of Pauline" stuff, that went on with the Montagnards. They had another incipient rebellion later on, but it was a lesser problem. Now, Y Bham never did come back. He stayed in Cambodia and started a thing called FULRO, which was the Unified Front for the Liberation of Oppressed People. We never knew, or at least I never knew, whether it was communist-inspired, Cambodian-inspired, or genuine, but I think it finally petered out.

INTERVIEWER: Thanks for sharing that story with us.

GEN DEPUY: That's more, probably, than you had in mind.



General DePuy preparing to encourage some 400 Montagnard "rebels" at the Buon Sar Pa Special Forces Camp to release their South Vietnamese and American "prisoners" in September 1964.

INTERVIEWER: At this particular time the government of the United States was making the decision that led to the introduction of significant US ground forces into the conflict. Please comment on that decision, particularly in terms of the timing, the quantity of forces involved, the missions that the American units were assigned, and the organizations involved in terms of whether or not we brought in the right kind of folks to do what you thought needed to be done.

GEN DEPUY: This is as good a point as any to tell you what I believe to be the structure of the Vietnam War. By structure I mean the organization and objectives of both sides and the way they interacted in each phase of the war. This will take a little time.

The first phase of the war was a classic Asian insurgency patterned after the Chinese experience as explained by Mao and after the experience of the Viet Minh in their successful war against the French. It was classic in that it was both a military and political effort at every level. There were guerrilla squads in the hamlets, platoons in the villages, companies in the districts, and battalions

in the provinces. At each level decisions were made by a committee involving political and military leaders controlled by the party cell. The party, in turn, was controlled by Hanoi. From about 1957 until the end of 1964, the main effort was carried by South Vietnamese Communists. The command of South Vietnam was divided into two sectors. The southern half of the country was controlled by the National Liberation Front from a headquarters on the Tay Ninh/Cambodian boundary called COSVN. The effort in the northern half of the country was controlled directly by Hanoi through military regions.

By 1960 an echelon of military force above the province level appeared in War Zones C and D. These units were of regimental size and were employed by COSVN. We called them Main Force units. By 1964 the regiments in War Zones C and D combined to form the 9th VC Division. That is the unit, you will recall, that received the bulk of our attention in 1966 and 1967.

It was against the insurgency that the US directed its early efforts in support of the ARVN and the GVN. We only vaguely understood the organization of the Viet Cong in 1960, and knew even less about its operating practices. But, it is essential to an understanding of the war to understand how this structure operated.

The higher echelons supported the lower by attacking the popular or regional forces in the hamlets and villages in order to gain dominance over the region so that the guerrilla units could operate freely and the political apparatus could organize the people. On the other hand, the lower echelons supported the higher by recruiting for them, by providing intelligence and guides, and by stockpiling food and ammunition where it would be needed. The whole organization was mutually supporting, both politically and militarily.

The best example of the early counterinsurgency effort was an operation launched by General Westmoreland in 1964 called HOP TAC. It was targeted against each echelon of the Viet Cong structure simultaneously. The overall objective was the security of Saigon and the surrounding area.

Visualize a target on the rifle range. The bull's eye was Saigon proper. In this central area the Vietnamese police and intelligence agencies sought to uncover and eliminate the Viet Cong terrorists, guerrillas, and political cells. We called this function "securing". In the secure inner zone the government would conduct education, information, health, and economic programs to secure the loyalty and ensure the prosperity of the inhabitants. The GVN wasn't very good at this in the early days, as I have said.

In the next ring of our target the object was to clear out the Viet Cong guerrillas and the district companies and provincial battalions so that the secure area in the center could be expanded. We called this function "clearing". It was done by the ARVN, and as it progressed, security would be provided by locally recruited and organized popular and regional forces.

Of course, one danger to all of this was the intervention of the Viet Cong Main Force regiments which from time to time, would move into the "clearing zone" and destroy ARVN battalions, Regional Force companies or Popular Force platoons. That, of course, would move the whole process back to square one.

Therefore, in the outer ring of our target, we provided for an effort by the elite and more effective elements of ARVN to operate aggressively against the Main Force units, keeping them on the run, and destroying them whenever possible. This was the origin of the term, "Search and Destroy". It was a perfectly logical description of the function — search for and destroy the Viet

Cong Main Force units. Unfortunately, television coverage of a Marine putting his cigarette lighter to a thatched roof in a small hamlet turned "Search and Destroy" into a dirty word.

Now, so long as the insurgency was primarily a South Vietnamese affair, this was about all that could be done. However, unbeknownst to us at the beginning, the high command, I guess the Politburo, in Hanoi decided in late 1963 or early '64, to reinforce the Main Force war. They also ordered the Viet Cong to take the offensive in the fall of 1964. [See Map 20, page 132.]

In October and November of 1964, the 9th VC Division, then consisting of two regiments, went to the coast of eastern Phuoc Tuy Province, and received from NVN trawlers a full array of new weapons — AK-47s, RPG-2s, 80mm mortars, 12.5mm antiaircraft machine guns, claymore mines, and etcetera. In December, the 9th occupied the Catholic hamlet of Binh Gia in Phuoc Tuy Province. Then, in rapid succession, they destroyed four battalions including ARVN Rangers and Marines. This action sent shock waves through the GVN, MACV, and the US government. The Main Force offensive utterly destroyed the pacification effort in Phuoc Tuy. No HOP TAC could survive such an incursion. By May of 1965 the 9th VC Division had mounted equally successful attacks against the district town and Special Forces camp at Dong Xoai, and against the capital of Phuoc Long Province, Song Be. ARVN infantry and airborne battalions were wiped out in these actions.

In the north the 1st and 2nd VC regiments conducted a similar operation against the district town of Binh Ba, 20 miles west of Quang Ngai. Again, several ARVN battalions including a Ranger battalion, were totally destroyed.

It was in this environment that the first deployment of US combat forces occurred. General Westmoreland wanted some US troops to reverse the disintegration of ARVN. He gave them no more than six months unless the US intervened.

The first batch of US troops were used as a fire brigade rushing to threatened areas and pursuing the VC Main Forces. That level of effort would have been about right except that as the US troops arrived so too, did the first NVN Army forces. Not only did NVN reinforce the VC Main Forces — for example, the 101st NVN regiment joined the 9th VC division in late 1964 — but also, entire NVN divisions began to fight for border areas inside South Vietnam as early as 1965. The battle of the Ia Drang by the 1st Cavalry was just such a fight involving three NVN regiments. The Marines had a battle in 1965 just south of the DMZ with an entire NVN division. The battles of Khe Sanh and in the A Shau Valley, and those north and west of Kontum, were border wars.

General Westmoreland found the game changing under his feet. Washington was almost always one phase behind in its understanding. The media had the same problem, and still has.

So, to wrap up this discussion, I believe there were five wars, not one. I believe they changed over time and in geographic focus:

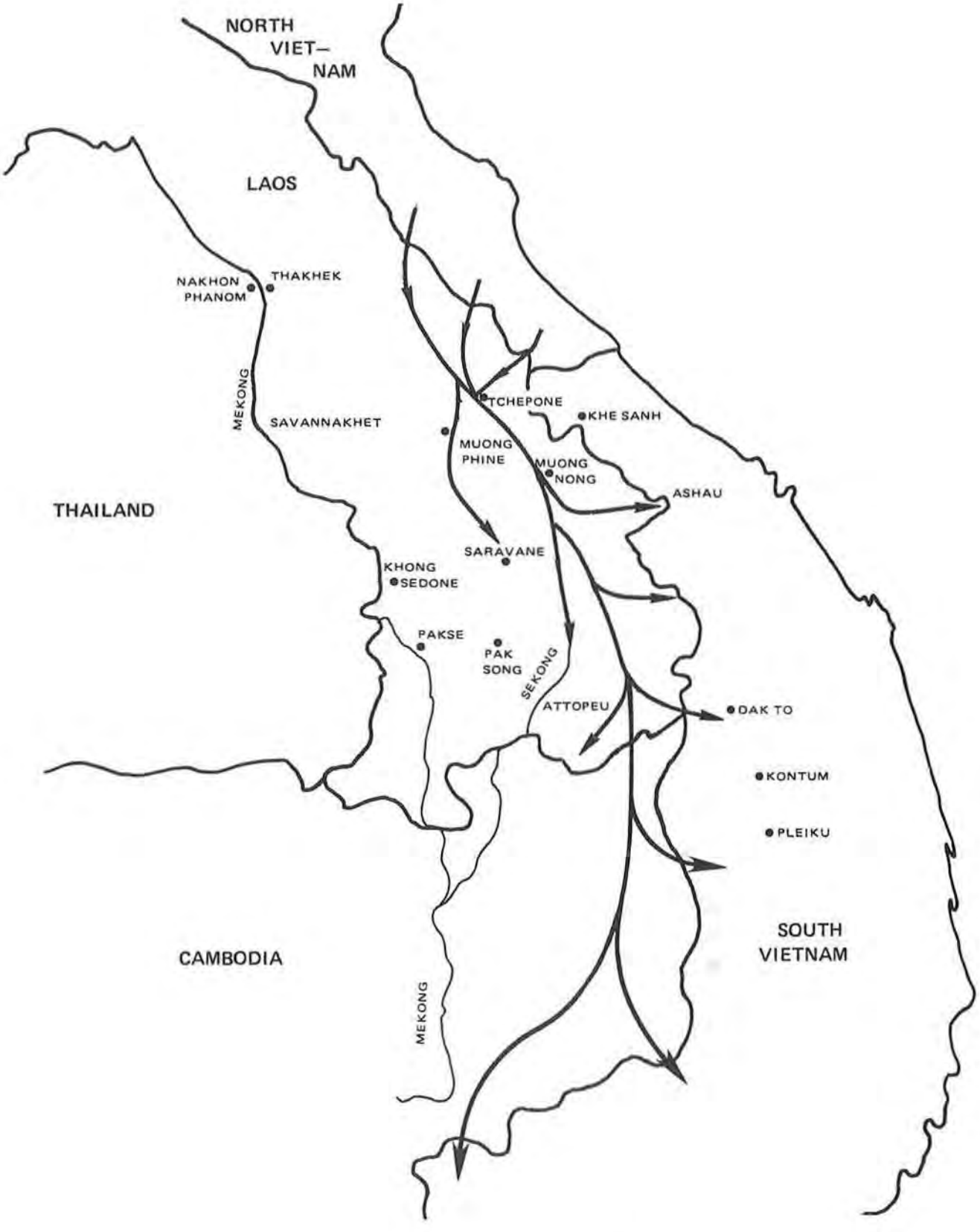
War #1 — 1957-64: An insurgency of the classic Asian variety, focused on the Delta and on the lowland coastal areas where the population was centered.

War # — 1965-71: A reinforced Main Force war still related to the insurgent structure and focused in or near the populated areas.

War #3 — 1965-72: Concurrently with War #2, a border war between the NVN Army and the US Army in the Central Highlands and in the northern provinces, especially north of Da Nang.

War #4 — 1965-72: Concurrent with Wars #2 and #3, a retaliatory and interdiction war against NVN by the Air Force and Naval Air.

War #5 — 1972-75: The outright invasion of SVN by NVN after the US had withdrawn.



Map 20 — The Ho Chi Minh Trail

Most Americans who served in Vietnam observed or participated in just one or two of these "wars." The press formed its basic opinions during "War #1" and largely ignored the rest. Bill, you and I fought mostly in War #2 and perhaps at Loc Ninh and An Loc, in War #3.

It is my absolute conviction that US forces fought extremely well in Wars #2, #3, and #4. With respect to War #1, I have always felt that regular US Army troop units are peculiarly ill suited for the purpose of "securing" operations where they must be in close contact with the people. They can, of course, conduct "clearing" operations, and are perfectly suited for "Search and Destroy". The closer one moves toward the political and psychological end of the spectrum, the more inappropriate is the use of foreign troops who don't speak the language, and who may well have a negative effect on pacification efforts.

Against this background and structure the argument about priorities as between the pacification effort and the big unit war or arguments about the uncounted enemy seem trivial to me.

It was also against this background that the various decisions were made about troop deployment and rules of engagement. By the time this government began to realize what it was up against — for example, there were about 20 NVN Army Divisions in SVN at the end (more divisions than we had in the active US Army). It was too late. Once more we were one or two steps out of phase with reality.

INTERVIEWER: What thought was given to the sanctuaries?

GEN DEPUY: At one time General Westmoreland had the brilliant idea of putting the 1st Cavalry Division into Thailand, and operating across the narrow panhandle of Laos, from the west, and interdicting the Ho Chi Minh Trail. We even made some of the coordination necessary to do that. By that time Dick Stilwell was in Thailand. However, that concept wasn't approved. The State Department didn't like that idea. Then, Westy wanted to put them right into Laos astride the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Harry Kinnard, who I still see from time to time, and I were talking about that just the other day. He told me how he had been directed to plan for that contingency. The division would have gone in about where Lam Son eventually went in toward the end of the war. Too bad they didn't because that trail could have been physically cut. Hell, later it became a pipeline and a highway. It would have been one big battle and it would have required a lot more than one division, but it was the way to go. But, General Westmoreland was not permitted to do it. At that time we were captives of our own emphasis on counterinsurgency which blinded us to the escalating dimensions of the war. We fought continuously to get permission to put recon and targeting teams into Laos and Cambodia. It was like pulling teeth. Ambassador Sullivan in Laos fought us every step of the way. Finally, Nixon started bombing in Cambodia and finally invaded. That caused a firestorm in the US. Neither the public nor the media had the slightest conception of the scope or intensity of the war. We in the military failed miserably in portraying the war for what it was. Of course, there is some question as to whether or not that is a military responsibility.

INTERVIEWER: Sir, I wonder if you would describe what "Apache Forces" were?

GEN DEPUY: Well, I can't remember much about the details. The idea was to get Montagnards or Nungs who were willing to fight on our side, and put them with US units. Some of them were called Kit Carson Scouts, and some were called Apache Teams.

INTERVIEWER: What was the attitude of the Vietnamese government toward refugees which, by this time, were being generated all over the country?

GEN DEPUY: The American AID people and the American mission, the Country Team, were always very much concerned about refugees, and spent a lot of time with the Vietnamese government worrying about them, taking care of them, putting up refugee camps, getting rice for them, and so on. I wasn't involved directly in that so I don't have any useful memories to recount.

INTERVIEWER: What was the Navy doing at this time? The 7th Fleet was certainly involved in the area throughout the war, but at this particular point in time what were they doing?

GEN DEPUY: In the beginning, of course, the Navy advisory effort was involved in organizing the Vietnamese Navy into a coastal patrol designed to prevent infiltration along the coast. Later, the US Navy came in and augmented that effort with their own people. They really thickened it up and made it pretty good. The last big infiltration along the central coast occurred at Vung Ro, in 1965. Later, from time to time, they caught trawlers, and so on, down off the U Minh Forest. The rest of the Navy, the big Navy, of course, was on carriers bombing the North. The Navy also provided the boats for the Riverine force in the Delta. This could be described as the extension of the reinforced Main Force war into the Delta. Because of 9th Division operations the NVN also sent troops to reinforce the Delta in 1968.

INTERVIEWER: What constraints did you encounter in building up US forces? Were there any problems in terms of the combat service support structure, or with places to put them, or with the availability of supply lines?

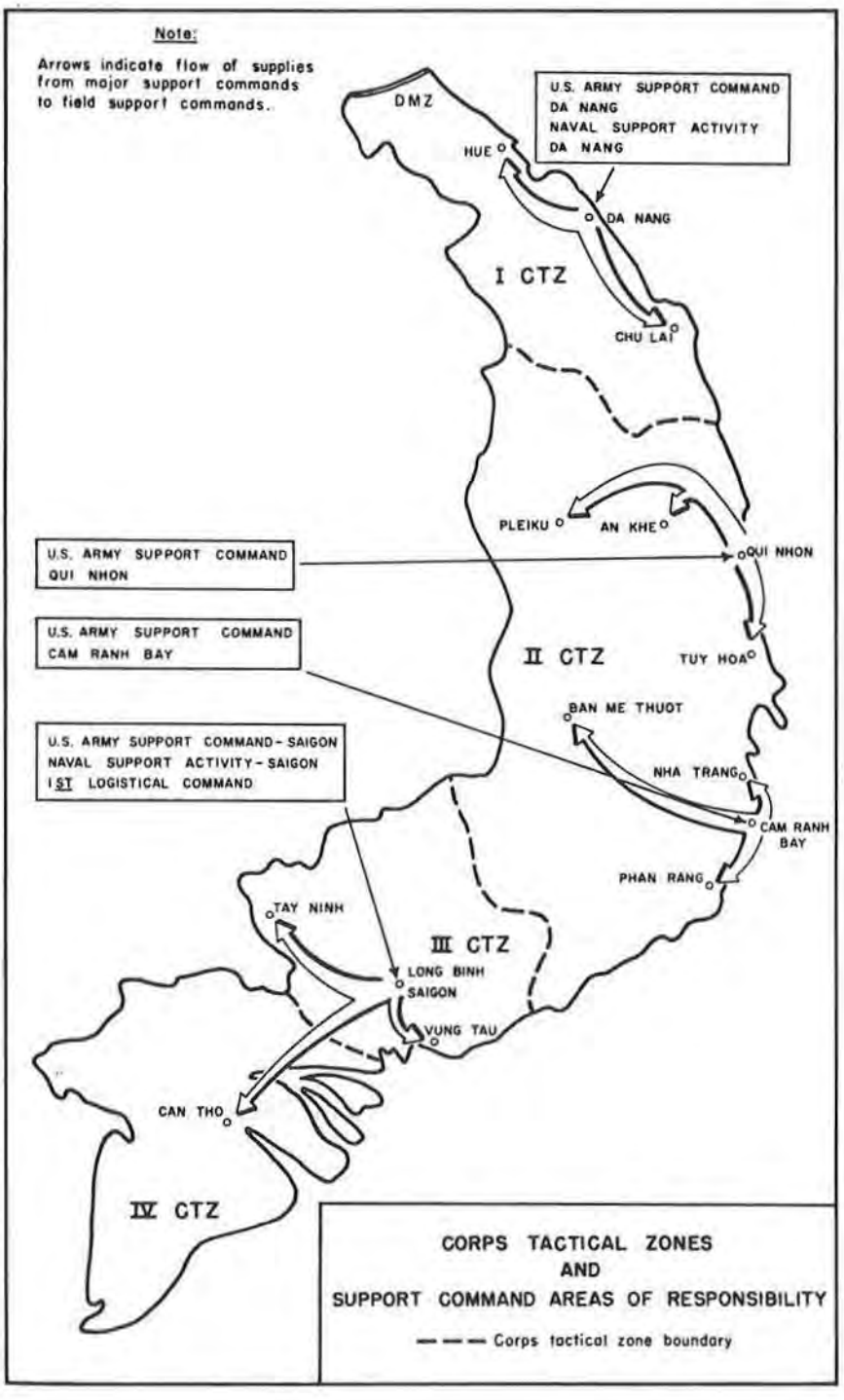
GEN DEPUY: The real problems associated with the Vietnam buildup were basing and logistics. The deployment of forces was really determined by those two factors. For a year and a half we went to countless force planning and deployment conferences in Hawaii and in the United States, and drew up an infinite number of alternative force plans, together with the infrastructure plans that went behind them. US Army, Vietnam, under a lot of different people and during those critical times under Jack Norton, was marvelously resilient and never said no when we wanted to bring in another unit. Lots of interesting problems came up. One was when we deployed the 1st Cavalry Division.* [See Map 21, page 136]

There we ran into an unexpected problem with Admiral Sharp. It may be true of all admirals, I don't know, but Admiral Sharp had a deep fear of the dangers associated with land warfare. He had a Dien Bien Phu syndrome. He didn't want to put the 1st Cavalry Division very far inland. We wanted to put the unit at Pleiku so that it could operate both north and south, and dominate the

*For a discussion on developing bases and on logistics, see Carroll H. Dunn, *Base Development in South Vietnam: 1965-1970* (Washington: USGPO, 1972), and Joseph M. Heiser, Jr., *Logistics Support* (Washington: USGPO, 1974).

high plateau. But, Admiral Sharp said that Pleiku was too far inland and that we would have another Dien Bien Phu. We pointed out to him that we had small detachments of advisors all over the highlands, including a number of them who had been in Pleiku for years. But, he wouldn't let us do it, so we compromised on An Khe, which was halfway between Qui Nhon and Pleiku. I went up there myself with a party from the 1st Cavalry and picked the place out. But, it was a lot more difficult to go into An Khe than it would have been to have gone to Pleiku. So, that's just one example.

We had a difficult time in determining exactly the sizing of our logistic forces because it was hard to predict what the consumption of gasoline, diesel, and ammunition would be. Generally speaking, though, during the time that I was there, we were a little thin on the logistics side. The best example of that came from a meeting I used to chair every morning in Saigon. The first report I always got was on the backlog of our tactical intratheater airlift, C-130s and C-123s. That backlog would go up, and up, and up, whenever we ran an operation. Then, we would work that backlog back down by stopping all major operations. After doing that, we again would be able to move the 173rd or the 101st, or the Vietnamese, and support another operation during which the logistic backlog once again would grow. So, all in all, it was a very fine tuned thing.


Note:
Arrows indicate flow of supplies from major support commands to field support commands.
DMZ
HUE
U.S. ARMY SUPPORT COMMAND
DA NANG
NAVAL SUPPORT ACTIVITY
DA NANG
DA NANG
I CTZ
CHU LAI
PLEIKU
AN KHE
QUI NHON
U.S. ARMY SUPPORT COMMAND
QUI NHON
U.S. ARMY SUPPORT COMMAND
CAM RANH BAY
II CTZ
TUY HOA
BAN ME THUOT
U.S. ARMY SUPPORT COMMAND - SAIGON
NAVAL SUPPORT ACTIVITY - SAIGON
1ST LOGISTICAL COMMAND
NHA TRANG
CAM RANH BAY
PHAN RANG
TAY NINH
III CTZ
LONG BINH
SAIGON
VUNG TAU
CAN THO
IV CTZ
CORPS TACTICAL ZONES
AND
SUPPORT COMMAND AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY
— — — Corps tactical zone boundary

Map 21

CHAPTER VII

Introducing Agility: The First Division

INTERVIEWER: After serving as the MACV J-3 for a period of time, you were reassigned in March of 1966, as the commander of the 1st Infantry Division. By this time you had extensive command experience, particularly at the battalion and battle group levels. You had commanded previously in combat, and you had been able to observe the war in Vietnam for a couple of years. Now you were taking over a large organization. What were your objectives for the division, and your philosophy of command?*

GEN DEPUY: The greatest influence on me was the impact of my two years as J-3 MACV. It was a period of transition from counterinsurgency support to direct American combat involvement. I had a unique opportunity to learn about the organization and tactics of the VC. Also in that period we developed together with the GVN a pattern of response to that particular threat — an Asian insurgency organized and executed by World Class revolutionaries. We didn't know at the beginning that the North Vietnamese Army would intervene massively. We saw three levels of threat. At the bottom the guerrillas in the hamlets and villages. In the middle the local forces such as the district companies or battalions, and at the top the Main Force regiments and divisions. In late 1964 through '65, we helped the GVN organize a multi-layer attack against this structure in the area of Saigon. Called HOP TAC (cooperation/coordination), it involved three kinds and levels of operation. At the center the police and intelligence agencies sought to root out the VC infrastructure — the terrorists and subversive cells and the VC political organization. This operation was called "securing." Around and outside the secure center was an area shaped like a doughnut in which the ARVN regular battalions and regiments sought to destroy or chase away the VC guerrillas and local forces. This was called "clearing". The idea was that once the area was cleared, Popular and Regional Forces would be organized at the village and district level to maintain security and the central secure area would be expanded. Thus, pacification would be extended throughout the country. But, the VC Main Forces were organized to defeat this concept. For example, VC provincial battalions like our friends in the Phu Loi battalion or regiments like the 271 and 272 from War Zones C and D, would move in on short campaigns or single battles to tear up the Popular and Regional Forces and defeat the ARVN. They did this often and well. These attacks demoralized the entire GVN civil and military structure, and defeated pacification efforts. Indeed, by late 1964 and early '65 they had nearly won the war. Therefore, the third element of the HOP TAC plan was for the elite units of the ARVN — airborne, marines, and rangers — to operate outside the doughnut area, and to go after the Main Force VC to destroy or

*For additional information on the 1st Infantry Division during this period see Jimmie E. Wilson, ed., *First Infantry Division in Vietnam: July 1965 - April 1967* (Tokyo: Dai Nippon Printing Company, Ltd., 1967), and Brigade Information Office, *A Pictorial History of the 2nd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division* (Tokyo: Dai Nippon Printing Company, Ltd., 1966).

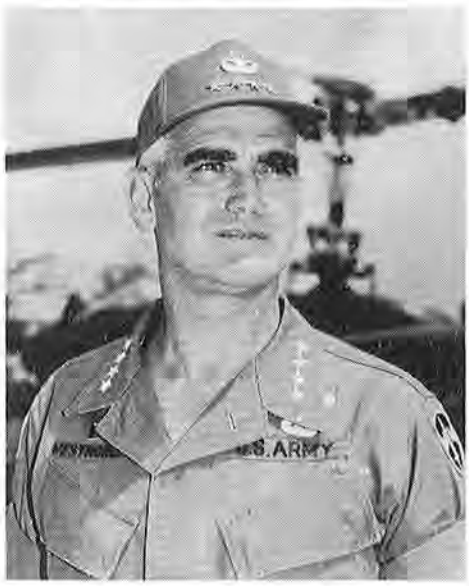
to disrupt their operations and thus protect the pacification effort. These operations were called "Search and Destroy." I tell you all this because the original purpose and mission for US troops was this third mission. All this was not without controversy. The Chief of Staff of the Army thought he was sending the 1st Division to practice counterinsurgency — that is, clearing and securing, civic action and Psy Ops. MACV wanted the 1st Division for Search and Destroy. We did not do a good job in MACV in explaining this to incoming divisions. For example, the Marines came in and started securing and clearing and practicing pacification operations under the tutelage of Lieutenant General Krulak, the Marine counterinsurgent. Soon, of course, they were drawn into a brutal Main Force war with the North Vietnamese just south of the DMZ.

When the 1st Division came in, it began to patrol its area. It had some very big fights with the 9th VC Division which contested the area. These were single battalion battles on our side — like the 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry at Lo Ke and the 2d Battalion, 2d Infantry at Long Xuyen.

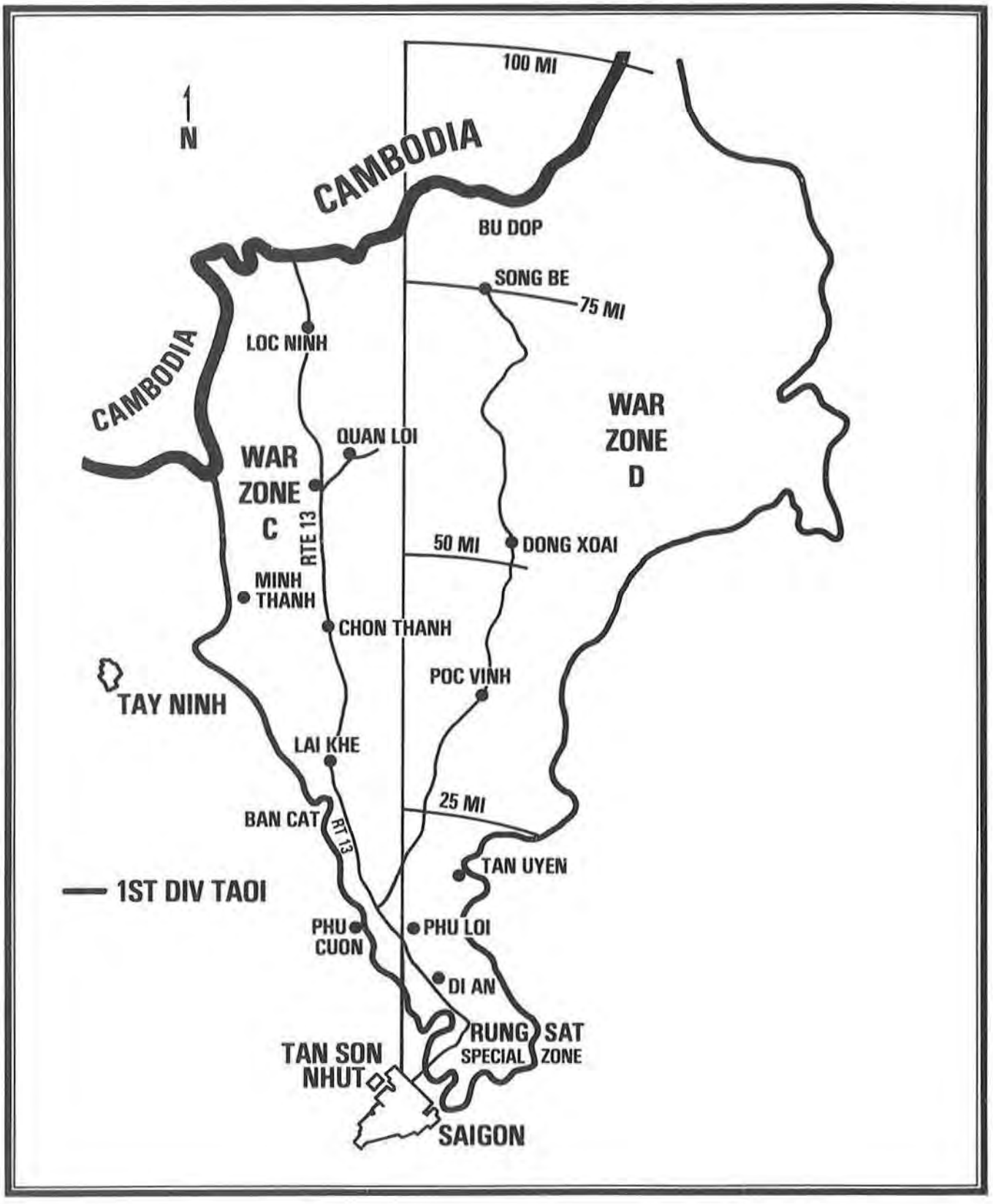
It was my idea to go after the Main Forces wherever they could be found and to go after them with as many battalions as I could get into the fight — what was later called "pile-on".

To do that required a very agile and fast moving division, a division which was, in fact, airmobile. My initial efforts were to create just such a division. I took it as my main mission to defeat or disrupt the activities of all the VC Main Forces north of Saigon in the III Corps zone. As a minimum it was essential to keep the 9th VC division entirely out of the populated areas. [See Map 22, page 139]

General Westmoreland also wanted the 1st Infantry Division to be mobile. His idea was that he was bringing in US troops to turn the war around. He wanted them to go into Tay Ninh Province, and up to Song Be, and down to Xuan Loc, or wherever it was likely that the VC/NVA main force units were operating at the time. His philosophy, with which I entirely agreed, was that the US units were there to fight the enemy "big boys," the big regiments that were tearing up the ARVN and destroying the pacification effort. I knew the difference between what the division was doing and what was expected of it. Now, if you ask me if General Westmoreland told me precisely to do these things, he didn't. But, we had worked together closely for two years. It was clear to me that



General William C. Westmoreland, Commander, US Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV), and United States Army, Vietnam (USARV)



Map 22 — 1st Infantry Division's Area of Operations

he wanted me to get cracking. So, as soon as I got there, I moved the division around a lot. I even moved it sometimes when I really didn't have very good intelligence on which to base the move. I just moved it to get it moving. I moved my CP to Phuoc Tuy, then to Tay Ninh, then to An Loc and Quan Loi, and then to Dau Tieng, because I wanted the division to be mentally mobile as well as physically mobile. I wanted a division that could pile-on. I visualized a division commanded from a helicopter in flight. And, I looked for people who could do that, and for people who thought that way. Also, I looked for people who couldn't think that way so that I could send them on to other duties.

INTERVIEWER: I infer from your comments that your philosophy was pretty simple. You were going to get the division moving, and in terms of being the commander, you were going to tell people what was expected of them. To be on your team they had to be folks who felt the same as you did about getting on with the job, wherever you put them. Is that right?

GEN DEPUY: Yes. I wanted people who were flexibly minded, didn't need a lot of instructions, would get cracking, and would get out and do something useful on their own once they were given a general direction. Of course, I was also interested, as I always have been, in the problems down in the squads and the platoons, because I realized that I was seeing the same problems occur all over again. They just weren't trained and were stumbling into battles. Mind you, they stumbled into battles under me, too, but I wanted to try to help all I could in that respect. So, I started putting out instructions on overwatches and on finding out where the enemy was by using only a small number of people, but using lots of firepower and frontal parapet foxholes, and things of that nature, which, I guess, was really a culmination of everything we've been talking about.

INTERVIEWER: After you took command and had a chance to look at the soldiers function during a couple of operations, how did you find their morale and willingness to fight?

GEN DEPUY: I thought the soldiers were just like soldiers always are, everywhere — they were fine. They were just as good as their leaders. In fact, when you compared division personnel at that time with those of a later period, the division was lucky. It had a lot of good long-term, experienced sergeants. It also had the 1st Division spirit. It would do anything it was asked to do.

INTERVIEWER: It wasn't long after you assumed command that the division was involved in a major operation, Operation BIRMINGHAM, in which you had a lot of success. You also had one or two really mean fights, the battle of Lo Go being one of them. But, it was a division level operation in which you had little influence in terms of the tactical planning, or in terms of support planning. Would you comment on that?

GEN DEPUY: We sent two brigades to Tay Ninh. I exchanged one brigade for another because one brigade didn't do very well. One brigade was slow on the uptake so I replaced it with the 2nd Brigade commanded by Ernie Milloy. We hopped all around War Zone C, but we didn't find very much. Then one day a fighter bomber happened to drop a bomb on some 55-gallon fuel drums hidden along the river. So, we went over and searched along the riverbank. Now, it turned out

that the riverbank was a depot which stretched for about ten miles. This was along the border with Cambodia. That whole operation taught us how to operate. The brigade and the battalion commanders then knew that we wanted to conduct a lot of air mobile search operations, how we wanted them to be conducted, and that we were going to be very flexible. The only real concrete accomplishment was that we scarfed up all the supplies that had been stacked along the river, of which there was a substantial amount. One place had four or five thousand uniforms. I remember finding lots of sewing machines. We made a haul in sewing machines. It must have been a quartermaster depot.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have any problems with your logistical support on that operation? Later on, you established policies whereby every three or four days we could just about count on getting a change of fatigues and underwear, and little things like that — the things that meant something to the soldiers.

GEN DEPUY: Well, we were just learning. I have to tell you that the first time I ordered the division to go into the field, I didn't say anything to them except, "We're going. 1st Brigade, go into that area. 2nd Brigade, go into that area. Division, go there." Now, when we went out, the division headquarters commandant and all of the principal staff officers stayed back at base camp, while all of the second team went out with me. That was quite interesting. And, the same thing was true of logistics. The DISCOM stayed back and all of the assistants — the assistant quartermaster, the assistant ordnance officer, the assistant transportation officer, the assistant headquarters commandant, and the assistant chief — went out. Well, we turned that all around. The first team went out and the second team stayed back. But, it was part of the division's mentality at that particular time. And, the logistics didn't work very well that first time because they had never practiced it. It had been home-based logistics, so it took some time to shake that down. By the way, the logisticians were super. The G-4, Gene D'Ambrosio, was and is one of the finest logisticians and soldiers the Army has ever had. Once he knew what we wanted, he and the DISCOM produced miracles.

INTERVIEWER: Another aspect of that particular operation at Lo Go was discussed later in the Career Course at Fort Benning, and I remember that we were all very impressed that you had fired into Cambodia during the operation.

GEN DEPUY: We were up at Lo Go. The two battalions up there were Dick Prillaman's 1st Battalion, 2nd Infantry, and Bill Hathaway's 2nd Battalion, 16th Infantry. They moved north parallel to the Cambodian border and got in a little fight. Some of the fire they were getting was from across the Ben Go River in Cambodia, so we just fired artillery over there. We fired artillery along the riverbank into Cambodia, and I remember that some reporter found out about it and asked me if I had authorized it, and I replied that I had directed it.

INTERVIEWER: At the time, that represented a change to the rules of engagement.

GEN DEPUY: Incidentally, there was no population there. It was just the middle of the jungle, with nothing but birds and snakes.

INTERVIEWER: We're not going to cover each and every operation during your time with the division, only the ones that seem significant to us. Please discuss your scheme to lure the main force regiments of the 9th VC Division out into the open so that you could get a crack at them.

GEN DEPUY: I'd like to discuss that in the context of that entire campaign, because we fought a campaign up there against the 9th VC Division, or maybe they were fighting a campaign against us, I'm not sure which it was. In any event, for some reason or another, the 9th VC Division, which had four regiments at that time, including the 101st NVA Regiment, elected to fight a campaign for control of Highway 13 up north of Lai Khe, north of Chon Thanh. There were four big battles which all took place in June and the first two or three days in July of 1966. The first battle was the smallest of them all. Kyle Bowie's 2nd Battalion, 28th Infantry, fought that battle against a battalion up at the Loc Ninh Plantation. No, wait, there was a battle even before that. The first battle was at the railroad tracks between Chon Thanh and An Loc — the battle of Ap Tau O — where Troop "A" of the 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry, got into a mammoth fight. They were attacked by a whole regiment there, and we threw Herb McChrystal's 2nd Battalion, 18th Infantry, into that fight as a relief force. That particular engagement was a very spectacular one. It involved the entire 272nd Regiment, with all three battalions in line. The VC recon company was the foot of the "L" shaped ambush. There were very heavy casualties on both sides. But, it was a troop against a regiment — 135 Americans against 1,200 VC. The next battle was Kyle Bowie's at Loc Ninh. Then, there was the battle at what we called Golden Gate, which was located between Loc Ninh and An Loc. This battle involved two VC regiments, the 271st and the 273rd Regiments. The last battle, which we liked the most, although I'm not sure that the 1st Battalion, 2nd Infantry loved it so much, was the battle of the Minh Thanh Road, which again, involved the 272nd Regiment. [See Map 23, page 143]

The precursor of that was the battle of Golden Gate, between Loc Ninh and An Loc, which occurred because we had told the An Loc Province Chief that we were going to send some cavalry up to Loc Ninh and bring some engineer road graders back. And, sure enough, within a couple of days, when we sent the cavalry troop up there, they were attacked by two regiments. So, we thought that if they were going to do that to us, then we'll try to do it to them. So, we told the same Province Chief in the presence of his whole staff that although we had a tough time moving our engineer equipment around the last time, we were going to do it again, only this time we were going to move them down to Minh Thanh and fix up the airfield down there. We told the Province Chief that we were going to send our folks down on such and such day and that we'd like some of his security people to help us. The reason we did that was because we had spotted the radio of the 272nd Regiment located just off that road, about 2,000 meters off the road, and right in the middle. Anyway, instead of sending one cavalry troop, we really sent two with infantry aboard, which probably was a mistake. We had artillery that we had brought in under other pretenses spotted all around the area. We had Bob Haldane's 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry, lined up at the Dutchman's place getting ready to go. We had Jack Conn's 2nd Battalion, 2nd Infantry, down at Minh Thanh, and John Bard had the 1st of the 18th Infantry all ready to go on the flank of the

ambush site. So, we had three infantry battalions, most of the cavalry squadron and a couple of companies of the 2nd Infantry mounted and ready to go.

INTERVIEWER: "B" Company was the only one mounted!

GEN DEPUY: Okay, only "B" Company was mounted. Your memory is better than mine. We had air available, and we had the artillery registered. We went down the road and, sure enough, they did just what we wanted them to do — they attacked us. And then, the reaction forces went in. It wasn't perfect, but it wasn't bad. Sid Berry was in command; it was his brigade, the 1st Brigade. I guess we took a lot of pleasure out of the fact that this was one of the few times that they did just what we wanted them to do rather than us doing what they wanted us to do. And, it was, I would say, a successful operation.

In these several battles in June and July 1966, we tried to reinforce as rapidly as possible. At Ap Tau O, the cavalry battle, we were able to get one infantry battalion into the area but at the very end. That was 2-18 under Herb McChrystal. At Loc Ninh we did not reinforce — not enough time and too far away. At Golden Gate we brought in 2-18 in two locations plus the 1-28 and 2-2. At Minh Thanh we brought in 1-28, 1-18, 1-16, and 2-2. So, you can see that we were getting better — faster and more nimble.



Map 23 — The Battle of Ap Tau O



A critique of the Battle of
Ap Tau O for members of the
1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry

INTERVIEWER: I would be remiss from the historical point of view if I left this particular chapter of your career without asking about that marvelous fighting invention, the "Go-go Chinook."

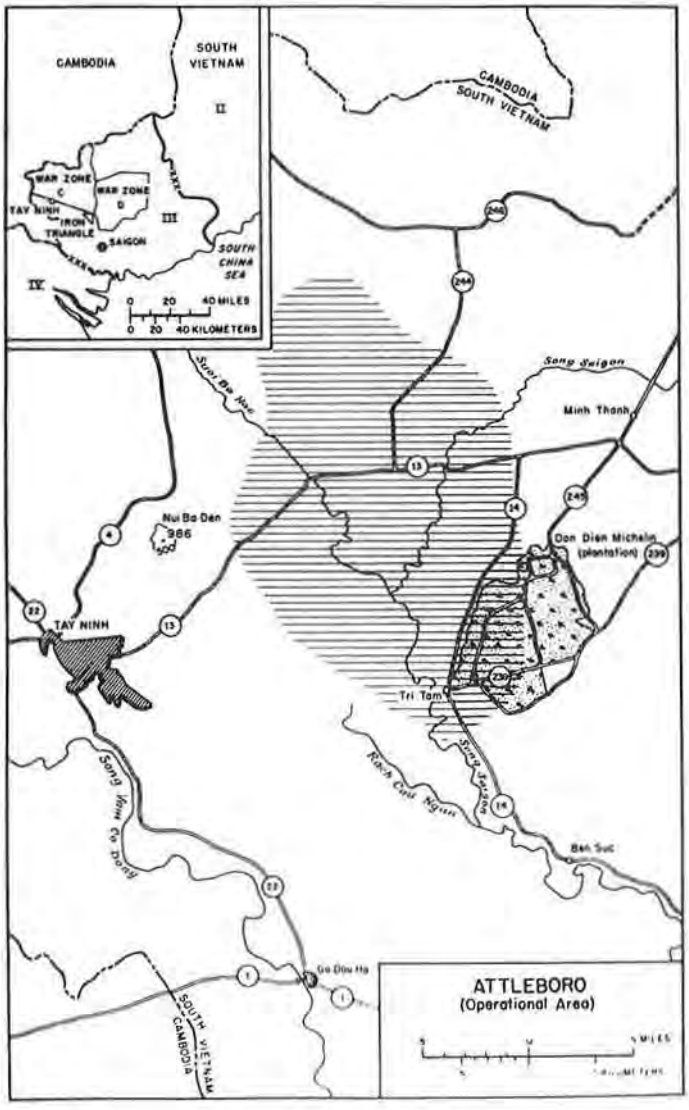
GEN DEPUY: Somebody put a lot of guns in some Chinooks and formed them into a platoon called the "Go-go Birds." This platoon was going to be our answer to the ambush. They gave them to the 1st Division to test. I don't think they liked us very much and left. The first time we used them was in the battle at Golden Gate. One of these huge things was hit and fluttered down right in between the two engaged forces. Finally, somehow, while our hearts were in our throats, it lurched back out of there. At the Minh Thanh road, the same thing happened. One got shot down right in the middle of the ambush, right at the most critical point — geographically and chronologically. So, they were an interesting embellishment to the proceedings. It was an idea whose time had not yet come. However, the crews of the Go-go birds were incredibly brave and aggressive.

INTERVIEWER: But, it was one way of getting a lot of firepower into the action, at least that's the way I always saw it. The next operation that was of note was ATTLEBORO.

GEN DEPUY: Yes, ATTLEBORO was one that we got into through the backdoor. This was when the 196th Infantry Brigade was out cutting its teeth in the area west of the Michelin, where a lot of rice had been found before. They were patrolling all around the area, and it so happened that the 9th VC Division had decided to attack the Soui Da Special Forces camp about that time. Two of the division's VC regiments went into attack positions in fortified camps right in the middle of the area where the 196th was patrolling. So, from finding nothing and having no contact at all for several days, the 196th suddenly found itself in the middle of a hornet's nest. The brigade was all broken up into company-size and smaller units. It quickly turned into a terrible shambles. At one time, the commander of the 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry, Sandy Meloy, was commanding, oh, I don't know how many companies, probably nine or ten companies — and he had been without sleep for three or four days. It was just an awful thing. Anyhow, General Weyand ordered us to go over there and get involved and take over, which we did. In fact we were already there when he issued the order. We got the 196th out of there and back to their camp at Tay Ninh, where they had to sort themselves out. They had taken a lot of casualties. It was really a tragic thing. We had many small fights and one large battle which occurred when Jack Whitted's 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry, was put down about 300 meters from the VC's main ammo dump. We took out thousands of rounds of ammunition, weapons, mines, claymores, etcetera. [See Map 24, page 145]

I'd like to say something about that fight because some people have been critical about the 1st Division's use of a lot of firepower. I would say, and this obviously sounds somewhat defensive, that we fired a lot of ammunition during fights but fired much less ammunition between fights. I happened to look up the records and had some charts made before I left over there. The 25th Division fired more artillery than the 1st Division fired by a wide margin. But, we got our reputation from the concept that we used when fighting. Let's say that there was a company or a battalion in a clearing and the VC or the NVA were attacking it. The problem, as we analyzed it, was that one of three things was happening in a "doughnut," a doughnut that might be two or three hundred

yards in depth. The enemy were either reinforcing, or they were maneuvering, or they were withdrawing. But, you never knew which, because you could not see them. The least reliable reports come from people in contact because they are under fire. So, we would take artillery batteries and simply put boxes of fire around the fight and tell them to continue to shoot until we told them to stop. Maybe on one side we'd put in air strikes and put in artillery boxes around the rest. So, they fired a tremendous amount of ammuntion during those fights. And, old "Slam" Marshall in the story about ATTLEBORO, said that "quite by accident" a VC battalion had walked into one of these barrages and was eliminated. Well, that was no accident. It was the only way I knew of employing firepower in a jungle fight. I still think that that is precisely the right thing to do, but it has been interpreted as just throwing a lot of artillery out that's not under adjustment. Anyway, I wanted to get that in the record.*



Map 24 — Operation ATTLEBORO
Operation ATTLEBORO commenced on September 14, 1966, with elements of the 196th Infantry Brigade conducting an air mobile assault followed by a search and destroy operation. Although contact with the enemy was initially light and sporadic, before the operation was completed on November 25, it would involve over 22,000 American and allied troops.

*For a detailed discussion of Operation ATTLEBORO, see S.L.A. Marshall, *Ambush: The Battle of Dau Tieng* (Nashville: The Battery Press, Inc., 1969).

INTERVIEWER: Sir, the 1st Division flew in and took over direct control of Operation ATTLEBORO. Did the 196th Brigade then work for you?

GEN DEPUY: The sequence was rather interesting. I happened to have flown over to visit the 196th Brigade one day just out of plain curiosity, or perhaps, I smelled a fight. At that time they were beginning to get all these contacts. I looked at the brigade's operations map; they had five battalions, so they had 15 companies scattered around. They had the two "Wolfhound" battalions, the 27th Infantry, as well as the three of their own. I looked at that map and listened to what they were telling me, and I knew that there was a disaster under way. Every hair went up on the back of my neck; every instinct told me that they were in terrible trouble. I didn't know exactly what was going on out there, but I sensed that they were in terrible trouble.

I flew home and ordered Colonel Mickey Marks to move his 3rd Brigade headquarters to Dau Tieng. No, I told him to send a battalion to Dau Tieng and to be ready to move his headquarters. That's right, that's the first thing I did. He sent a battalion and the next day I went up again. General Westmoreland's deputy, John Heintges, was up there, and he went back and reported to General Weyand, who was temporarily in command of the II Field Force, and told him that there was a disorganized big fight going on up at the Michelin and that he wanted the 1st Division to go up and take over.* I had already ordered Mickey to move. I also ordered the cavalry to make a night move with the artillery. They moved all the way from Lai Khe down through Saigon, and all the way up Route 1 to Tay Ninh City and then back to Suoi Da that night. There was some confusion in the area but no casualties. I wanted some artillery up there and the next morning we moved a lot more in by helicopter. The next day, General Hollingsworth went over and took charge of the Special Forces. They too, were in terrible shape. They had a Nung battalion, a "Mike" or mobile strike force, that had run into one of the VC regiments. The 196th had run into another one. So, Holly took charge of the Special Forces battle, Jack Deane went to the 196th Brigade particularly to Sandy Milloy's fight, and I took charge of bringing in the 1st Division. Then we began to pull the 196th out. Eventually, we had most of the 1st Division involved.

INTERVIEWER: Did you recommend the relief of the 196th Brigade commander?

GEN DEPUY: No, I did not, but I have to say that his relief or transfer neither surprised me or displeased me because I didn't think that the brigade was being well handled.

INTERVIEWER: He was relieved then?

GEN DEPUY: He was by Westmoreland. Perhaps transferred is a more correct term.

**Lieutenant General John A. Heintges,* USA Retired, was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Infantry in 1936, following graduation from the United States Military Academy. In World War II, General Heintges commanded both an infantry battalion and regiment in the 3rd Infantry Division in the European Theater of Operations. Other assignments included duty as the Commanding General, 5th Infantry Division (1963-64); Commanding General, US Army Infantry Center and Commandant, US Army Infantry School (1964-65); Commanding General, I Corps (Group), Korea (1965); Deputy Commander, US Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (1965-67); and Deputy Commanding General, Eighth US Army, Korea (1969-70).











Scenes from Operation ATTLEBORO

INTERVIEWER: I think this is a good point to ask you about the technology of modern warfare that you had under your control, particularly the firepower, the new aspect of firepower coordination required by tactical air, and the mobility inherent in helicopters. How did you use them and what did you get out of them?

GEN DEPUY: Well, I guess that the 1st Division, without being organized as an air mobile division, and without having a large air cavalry squadron, tried to practice what I now understand to be the tactical concepts of an air mobile unit. Sometimes people laughed about the 1st Division being the first air mobile division (heavy), and so on. The fact of the matter is, that in the early days in Vietnam, we had more helicopters available operationally from the 1st Aviation Brigade than the 1st Cavalry Division. And, since the 1st Cavalry Division had to maintain its own helicopters, they found it very difficult to lift an entire battalion in one lift. But, you will recall that in the 1st Infantry we did that repeatedly. In fact, there were days when we had 90 lift ships available to the division, plus lots of gunships. That was more air mobility than anybody had before or after, including the 1st Cavalry or the 101st. And, that was true for much of 1966.

Well, as we discussed earlier about the French at the Mang Yang Pass, the whole name of the game in Vietnam was to make a contact, and you had to do that with a relatively small unit or you would scare off the enemy. Of course for the small unit that made the initial contact, it was more often than not a nightmare. It often occurred in inaccessible terrain and usually on ground chosen by the other side. So, from then on, the salvation of your own troops, and the success or failure of the operation, depended on how rapidly you could get in combat power. Time was of the essence. We had a rule in the 1st Division that we would not operate one of our infantry battalions outside the range of our own artillery. In order to do that, we often had to position our artillery all around the countryside. I was never happy if we had only one battery of artillery in range. I really considered that at least two batteries of artillery, firing from two different directions, was the minimum because one battery could also come under attack at the same time. Often we had three, four or five batteries that could fire. And, we tried to get the air in as quickly as possible. I think we solved fairly well the problem of being able to fire the artillery and utilize air assets and gunships simultaneously. The heavy ordnance comes from the artillery and the air. The heaviest ordnance is from the air, but when you look at the rate at which they deliver their bombs, it's not any heavier, and sometimes not as heavy, as the artillery in terms of pounds of explosive and lethality, although when the air comes in with Cluster Bombs (CBUs) they are very lethal. So, it was a question of coordinating all of that.

Now, in order to do that you had to work out the air procedures. You had to have your artillerymen completely indoctrinated and have them positioned in the right place. They had to have their ammunition available at the gun site and be able to shoot fast. You had to have infantry units that could be ordered to move. For example, we might inform a battalion, "We are sending helicopters — load when they arrive — and then come to this area. I'll tell you what to do when you get here." We had to have infantry that could move just like that. There were several occasions when I asked battalions to move without sending them any helicopter lift. They bummed rides here, there, and everywhere. Once I told Jack Conn and his 2nd Battalion, 2nd Infantry, to get up to Quan Loi any way he could. We were in a fight and were using all of the helicopters. He arranged to borrow two C-130s from the Air Force and made it from Lai Khe in about four hours. First, it's the mentality; it's a doctrinal understanding of agility and speed. It's

the technical ability to coordinate maneuver with air, artillery and gunships, without having long pauses in which nothing happens. By and large, I think we succeeded in doing all of that. People have said our air/mobile operations were too large and we put so many troops in that there was no chance of any contact. I think that's a legitimate criticism, and we did some of that. On the other hand, if you are trying to surround something fast, or trying to get in fast, like Al Haig did when he put his entire battalion into Ben Suc in a matter of 30 seconds after they appeared over the trees, then that's okay. There are times when you want to put a lot in.

That brings to mind a period during the time when General Abrams was in command and there were very few contacts. It was very difficult to establish contact because the enemy was in Cambodia. And so, they broke down battalions into companies, companies into platoons, and platoons into squads, for the purpose of conducting saturation patrolling. They weren't getting any contact. However, as soon as you start getting large contact, your forces congeal back up to company level as a minimum size, because a company is the smallest element that can take care of itself if you expect heavy contact. So, that takes you back to the profile of activity in Vietnam — very high in 1965, '66, and early '67, and very low in late '67 until TET, high in TET and for six months after TET, and then, low again. So, it was a roller coaster. If you talk to people present in one period, they tend not to understand what was going on and to be critical of what happened in another period.

This may be a good time to talk about the functioning of the division staff and some of the people involved. During my tenure with the 1st Division I had three G-3s — Sam Walker, Al Haig and Paul Gorman. Bill Le Gro was the G-2 and Gene D'Ambrosio the G-4. Ed Kitchens was the Chief of Staff following Bill Glasgow. It was a super staff, and the ADCs — Bernie Rogers, Jack Deane, Mel Zais, and the incomparable Jimmy Hollingsworth* — were no small shakes either.

*_General Sam S. Walker,_ USA Retired, was commissioned in the Infantry in 1946. During the Korean conflict, General Walker served in the 19th Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division. Other assignments included duty as the Commander (Cdr), 2nd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division (1966); Commanding General (CG), 3rd Infantry Division (1972-74); Cdr, Berlin Command (1974-75); and CG, Allied Land Forces, Southeastern Europe (1977-78). _General Alexander M. Haig, Jr.,_ USA Retired, was commissioned in the Cavalry in 1947. During the Korean conflict, he served as Aide-de-Camp to the X Corps CG. Other assignments included duty as the Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs (1970-73); and Vice Chief of Staff of the Army (1973). After retiring in 1973, General Haig served as the Chief of Staff to the President (1973-74). Recalled to active duty in 1974, General Haig served as Supreme Allied Cdr, Europe (1974-79). Retiring again in 1979, General Haig later served in the Reagan Administration as the Secretary of State (1981-82). _General Paul F. Gorman, Jr.,_ USA Retired, was commissioned in the Infantry in 1950. During the Korean conflict, General Gorman served in the 32nd Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division. Subsequent assignments included duty as the Cdr, 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division (1970-71); CG, 8th Infantry Division (1977-79); Assistant to the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff (1981-83); and Commander in Chief, US Southern Command (1983-84). For a biographic sketch of _General Bernard W. Rogers_ see page 109. _General John R. Deane, Jr.,_ USA Retired, was commissioned in the Infantry in 1942. During World War II, General Deane served with the 415th Infantry Regiment, 104th Infantry Division, in the European Theater of Operations. Other assignments included duty as the CG, 173rd Airborne Brigade (1966-67); CG, 82nd Airborne Division (1968-69); Chief of Research, Development and Acquisition (1973-75); and CG, US Army Materiel Development and Readiness Command (DARCOM) (1975-77). _General Melvin Zais,_ deceased, was commissioned in the Infantry in the US Army Reserve in 1937. During World War II, General Zais commanded the 3rd Battalion, 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 17th Airborne Division, in the European Theater of Operations. Subsequent assignments included duty as the CG, 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile) (1968-69); CG, XXIV Corps (1969-70); CG, Third Army (1972-73); and CG, Allied Land Forces, Southeastern Europe (1973-76). _Lieutenant General James F. Hollingsworth,_ USA Retired, was commissioned in the Infantry in 1940. During World War II, General Hollingsworth commanded a company, a battalion, and an armored task force in the 2nd Armored Division, in North Africa and the European Theater of Operations. Other assignments included duty as the CG, Fort Jackson (1969-70); CG, US Army, Alaska (1970-71); CG, Third Regional Assistance Command and Senior Advisor, Military Region 3 (1971-72); and CG, I Corps (ROK/US) Group, Korea (1973-76).

We based all of our operations on Bill Le Gro's intelligence. The Le Gro/Gorman team was unbeatable. We moved fast to exploit intelligence obtained concerning any location or movement. No matter how fast we moved or how many battalions we threw into a battle, our logistics system always rose to the occasion. Many of our biggest battles occurred when we sought the enemy out based on our intelligence and on our appreciation of their most likely actions. Signal intelligence was our primary source. Long range patrols sometimes verified such intelligence but often provided invaluable negative intelligence — that is, information that the enemy was not in a certain area. We studied his infrastructure and managed to locate almost all of his main camps. Often we were surprised, but so was he. We fought several major campaigns against the 9th VC Division, our worthy opponent — the first on Route 13 in the summer of 1966 and near the Michelin in the fall. The 9th Division did not fare well in its prolonged contest with the 1st Division.

INTERVIEWER: One type of operation that was controversial in that a lot of the units didn't do it, was night operations. We really never heard much from you in terms of night operations, yet those operations that the division did do involved frequent night movements and a lot of patrolling. But, there were a lot of things that we probably could have done at night and didn't. What were your thoughts about night operations and were you satisfied with what the 1st Division was doing?

GEN DEPUY: Well, I probably should have done more, but, really, there are only two things that you can do at night, one of which is just move without fighting. We discussed that earlier. So, I think that perhaps we should have moved some battalions and companies into blocking positions or ambushes at night. But, as far as moving and fighting at night, when you don't know exactly where the enemy is, I'm against it because I don't think you can develop any combat power. If he's there and organized, and you're moving and disorganized, you are not going to like the results. However, don't forget how effective our operations were in the Rung Sat, the mangrove







Typical scenes in the Rung Sat Special Zone

swamps below Saigon, where the VC tried to mine the ship channels. In the Rung Sat we moved through the swamps on foot waist deep in water and muck to establish ambushes. The VC moved only by boat. They did not know — could not know — where we were. At night, as they moved about by boat, they would run into our ambushes and be destroyed. We rotated a number of battalions through Rung Sat and had spectacular results. The 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry pioneered that technique. There were no big battles, just dozens of successful ambushes. Normally, the battalion in the Rung Sat achieved the best combat results of all the battalions in the division. We also found whole villages on stilts and naval mine factories there. All the fighting in Rung Sat — every bit of it — was at night.

INTERVIEWER: Hopefully, you can get them to attack you at night, which is even better.

GEN DEPUY: Oh, yes. They did a lot of that.

INTERVIEWER: In terms of night operations, I thought that that was what we did best.

GEN DEPUY: Yes, that's what I wanted to do, to have them attack. Additionally, we found that units deployed across major VC supply and courier routes had great success at night. For example, Al Haig's battalion, the 1st of the 26th Infantry, loved to sit on a sandy hill south of Chon Thanh, because all night, every night, small groups of VC would stumble into his outposts.

INTERVIEWER: That's why, as a policy, the division always dug in. They didn't sit around in their hammocks waiting for the dark to come.

GEN DEPUY: Right. So did the Romans. They always put up a camp. The Romans put up a wall wherever they were; an earthen wall at first. They dug in every night because they operated alone in hostile territory — and so did we.

INTERVIEWER: As time went on, what was your appraisal of the technical ability of your small units and individual soldiers? I'd like for you to address three things: did you think they could shoot; what did you think of their ability to move, i.e. did they react properly; and, what did you think of their communications capabilities?

GEN DEPUY: I suspect that we didn't shoot very well. I suspect that in those quick encounters we did poorly compared to say, the British and the Australians. With respect to the cloverleaf and that type of activity, to the extent it was used — and, by the way, I know it was used only by some units because I saw a lot of examples where it wasn't. I remember a patrol in Rufe Lazzell's battalion, the 1st of the 16th Infantry, near Suoi Da, when General Bernie Rogers landed and tried to collect them. There was a platoon that was bumbling through the woods in the old-fashioned way — single file — and just happened to stop for a rest break in the middle of an ambush. They decided that that was the end of the day's work. So, they just sat down in the middle of an ambush which made it very easy for the VC. But, they weren't cloverleafing, you can be sure of that. Nonetheless, I do think that we had fewer units stumbling into killing zones because of that

technique. But, maybe the wish is the father of the thought here. That's what it was designed to do, and I think it did help that way. As far as communications were concerned, at what levels are you talking about?

INTERVIEWER: Do you think that we talked too much on the radio? That's a frequent criticism.

GEN DEPUY: I'm sure we did and I think that the analysis afterwards by the signal intelligence people pretty well proved that we did. We did a lot of talking in order to increase the control and agility of the division, and the speed with which we could move. But, I think we probably paid a high price for it. That still bothers me. I still think our SOIs are too cumbersome. So, we erred on one side. If you followed the current SOIs completely, you didn't have time to fight. What we need to do is come out in the middle. We had Doc Bahnsen working on that at Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC). I think he made some progress, but I don't know how much.

INTERVIEWER: In terms of support for the deployed battalions, combat service support mainly, were there any unique problems or solutions that stand out in your mind?

GEN DEPUY: Well, you are in a better position to answer that question than I am. We pretty much left it up to the Division Support Command (DISCOM) and brigade trains to provide what was needed. The critical supplies upon which division operations wholly depended were ammunition and POL — POL to move and ammo to fight. We were major users of CH-47 choppers to move both. Our DISCOM was flexible and fast under the directions of our G-4s who were the best in the business. I could throw the division around the III Corps area at will and the support would always be there. But, you were at the receiving end, and it always looks different at the other end — it never looks as good. What did you think?

INTERVIEWER: We always had what we needed. One thing that you had, and it probably saved Whitted's battalion, were the pre-rigged bundles of various types of ammunition standing by. I remember Clarence Sprouse, the Division Sergeant Major, was down there guiding helicopters in and getting the stuff out to those who were shooting it up as fast as it could be given to them.

GEN DEPUY: That system was in effect long before that particular battle. That's very important too, because when a unit needs ammo there is no time to count it or time to ask for this, that, and the other thing. It's got to be a pre-packaged push package.

INTERVIEWER: I'd like to hit a major controversy, if you will, that surrounds your reputation as a commander in Vietnam — the handling of leaders who were found to be incompetent. It's been said that you fired scores of battalion commanders and I'd like you to address that issue. Also, if you would, contrast the handling of unsatisfactory leaders in World War II, with how it was done in Vietnam.

GEN DEPUY: Well, I guess I have to say that I'm fairly well convinced that once a man has made a bad mistake, not of judgment, but of incompetence, and revealed himself by his actions, actions

that are the consequence of a general weakness in command, then there is very little you can do to change him at that stage in his life. Of course, I can't say that I can predict ahead of time who they are going to be. Now, as for relieving scores of people, based on the paper which you have just shown me which refreshes my memory, there was one infantry battalion commander, a former Special Forces officer, who was relieved rather early on. He really should never have been a corporal. But, other than that, there were three infantry battalion and three artillery battalion commanders relieved. I am prepared to admit that it's possible I was wrong on some of those. In the case of two of the artillery battalion commanders, the DIVARTY commander relieved them and I agreed with his actions. In one case, I took the initiative. And, in the case of one of the infantry battalion commanders, it was just plain unwillingness to obey orders and do what he was told to do. In the case of another one, I really should have relieved him the first time he failed but I gave him another chance, and he killed a lot more people — our people. In the case of the third one, I think I may have acted hastily. So, really, we're not talking about dozens or hundreds, we're talking about a few. And then, there were some division staff people, a G-5, a Provost Marshall, and a PIO, and some others like that. Oh, I don't know what they all added up to but I would say 10 or 12, something on that order.

INTERVIEWER: Well, as of the end of December 1966, there were 11. Now, in your correspondence we found at least one reference where you declined to accept an officer because you felt that he didn't have the necessary experience. I believe it was an artilleryman and I've always thought that perhaps it was not accepting people that led to the horrible stories that were going around in the ranks of the lieutenant colonels and colonels for a period of time.

GEN DEPUY: Well, the first thing that happened was that they sent me a list of 24 lieutenant colonels to fill a whole variety of jobs. They were from all branches but most of them were slated for battalion command. I believe that I only accepted two from that list. Now, the reason I turned them down is that these were men who had been — most of them had been — lieutenants in Korea, and hadn't had any kind of experience with combat units since.

That's one of the reasons the Army is wise now to select for command. You know, being a commander of a unit is not a right, it's a privilege, a privilege that you've got to earn. You have to train for it. I just didn't see any reason why we should train people who had never had a company command, had never been a battalion S-3, and had never been a battalion exec, when we wanted to win a war, and when others were available. So, now you have heard my feelings on that. In World War II and specifically in the 90th Division, the problem was that prior to combat there wasn't any effort made to eliminate people who were clearly deficient. As a consequence, we suffered inexcusable and enormous casualties. In the six weeks in Normandy prior to the breakout, the 90th Division lost 100 percent of its soldiers and 150 percent of its officers. In infantry units, where these casualties were almost entirely concentrated, the rates ran at 300 to 400 percent — in just six weeks, as you will remember. That's indelibly marked on my mind. I told that story to General Johnson when he came out to see me. And, I told him that I couldn't change; I either would have to be removed or I would continue to remove officers who I thought didn't show much sign of learning their trade, and, at the same time, were getting a lot of people hurt. You can't get a soldier back once he's killed.

I know that's the way wars are frequently fought, but Vietnam didn't have to be fought that way because it was a small war. Besides, we didn't put everybody in it, anyway. We could have put the good ones in and kept them longer. We could have saved lives and been more effective that way. Here we had a conflict between using Vietnam to train the Army for the next war, versus trying to win the war in Vietnam. Those were the two conflicting points of view. So, with regard to having six months in command and trying to rotate everybody through, I've always said that that was running the war for the benefit of the officer corps. So, in any event, I'm sure I made mistakes on some of the people I relieved. But, I don't think I made very many. I think most of them were cut and dried cases of pure ineptitude or malfeasance. I acted in every case on behalf of the lives of our 1st Division soldiers who always paid the price for the actions of weak or incompetent leaders. So, if I had to do it again, I'd probably do the same thing, only I'd probably do it a little more cleverly.

INTERVIEWER: It needs to be remembered that there were, in fact, just 11 names on that letter which is a far cry from what people back in the United States apparently were talking about.

GEN DEPUY: You might be interested to know that in the First World War, in the first month of the war, Field Marshal Joseph Joffre relieved, I believe it was 72 general officers — several Army commanders and scores of corps and division commanders. Now, you see what that process was. It was a peacetime army going into war, and when you send an army into war you find that a lot of people aren't fit for war. They just aren't the kind of people you want to fight a war. And, you have a lot of human wastage; you have wastage of both the people who are relieved, and of the people who suffered while they were in command before being relieved.

INTERVIEWER: Sir, one of the things that marked the division by the time I got there, which was in July of 1966, was that the division was really proud of the fact that it was the "Big Red One." There was a good feeling about the division. We had confidence in our leaders. We had confidence that we had the stuff we needed to fight and we felt very strongly that anytime any of us got into trouble, the whole division was going to get us out. That's just the way we felt about it. Now, one of the things that you did — and you appeared to have your ADCs working that way, too — was that in terms of keeping people feeling good, there seemed to be a rather liberal policy towards awards and decorations, visits, pats on the back, and that sort of thing.

GEN DEPUY: Well, I'd like to pick up on your comment about the division going to the aid of somebody. That was a conscious policy that we talked about quite a lot. Now, the people to whom that was really important, were the sergeants and the privates who went out on patrols. Whether they were in the Long Range Reconnaissance Patrols (LRRP), or just in an infantry battalion, they knew that we would, in fact, not only go to help them, but go right away. It was very important for them to know that. And, I agree with you, that belief did permeate the division. It was a great morale builder. To this day, I meet soldiers who remember that. They believed that. As a matter of fact, during that entire time, we had no men missing in action. We even committed two battalions to retrieve Sergeant Nunez's body. In that kind of war, it's a very important thing to do. You are asking a lot of people to take a lot of risks, and to do a lot of things they would rather

not do. They'd rather be doing almost anything else. So, we did have that reputation and that was a natural outgrowth of our quick reaction type operation.

As for being liberal about awards and decorations — sure. My God, why not? I don't know precisely how many people but perhaps a hundred thousand men from all over this country went through the 1st Division while it was in Vietnam. They were only there for a short period of time. If they were in the infantry they didn't last very long. They got sick, wounded, or something else happened to them. They didn't go home with much. So, all those decorations now are scattered all over the United States. And you know, my guess is that for awhile they hid them away but are now getting them out. Secondly, the 1st Division was lucky in that it was a magnet for talented officers. I won't name them all but during my one year with the division we had Bernie Rogers, Jack Deane, Mel Zais, Jim Hollingsworth, Paul Gorman, Al Haig, Sam Walker, Bob Haldane, Dick Cavazos, Dick Prillaman, and 30 others who became general officers. I don't have time to mention the colonels and captains who were legion.*

INTERVIEWER: With regard to awards and decorations, there have been accusations made that there was something called a "battalion commander's packet." This was an awards packet or a basic load of awards and decorations, that if one survived as a battalion commander he supposedly received when he left. Would you comment on that?

GEN DEPUY: Well, if they had such a thing I didn't know about it. I will say this, though. General Patton had a theory. He said, "Every successful battalion commander has earned a Distinguished Service Cross (DSC). Every one in Third Army." He said that we might not know about what he had done to earn it, but for sure he had done it. Well, I feel a little bit like that about a battalion commander, or a company commander for that matter. I know they earned it if they were any good. But, we just didn't know about it. However, I don't know anything about any such packet. I never heard that expression.

INTERVIEWER: Right now the Army is involved in a little bit of a controversy concerning special items on uniform. What are your thoughts on this subject?

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*For biographic sketches of General Rogers, Deane, Zais, Hollingsworth, Gorman, Haig, and Walker, see page 149. *Lieutenant General Robert Haldane,* USA Retired, was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Infantry in 1947. Prior to entering the United States Military Academy in 1943, General Haldane served in the European Theater of Operations as an enlisted soldier in the Army Air Corps. Other assignments included duty as the Commander, 3rd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division (1968-69); Commanding General, US Army Training Center, Fort Polk (1974); Commanding General, 5th Infantry Division (Mechanized) (1975); Chief of Staff, US Army, Europe (1979-80); and Chief of Staff, European Command (1980-82). *General Richard E. Cavazos,* USA Retired, was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Infantry in 1951. During the Korean conflict General Cavazos served as a platoon leader and company commander in the 65th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Infantry Division. Subsequent assignments included duty as the Commander, 2nd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division (1970-72); Commanding General, 9th Infantry Division (1977-80); Commanding General, III Corps (1980-82); and Commanding General, US Army Forces Command (1982-84). *Lieutenant General Richard L. Prillaman,* USA Retired, was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Armor in 1950. During the Korean conflict, General Prillaman served as a company commander in the 5th Regimental Combat Team. Subsequent assignments included duty as the Commanding General, US Army Training Center and Fort Jackson (1974-77); Commanding General, 2nd Armored Division (1980-82); and Director, Operations, J-3, Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (1982-84).

GEN DEPUY: Well, I personally am in favor of distinctive items of equipment, and caps, and all that sort of stuff, as long as it's within reason. But, that's just my personal feeling. I regretted seeing the berets go. I will say that when I went down to Fort Rucker and saw the band at the Aviation Center, in orange berets with white laces in their boots, I didn't like the coloring. But, I didn't have any problems with the black berets on the tankers, or the red berets on the airborne, or the black berets on the 101st, and so on and so forth. If the troopers liked that, and it made them feel better and tougher, I'd give it to them anytime.

INTERVIEWER: If we might go back for just a few minutes to some of the tactical things that happened in Vietnam. Would you compare that war with World War II, tactically, down at the squad and platoon level, and discuss some of the principles and techniques that you added, or maybe threw out, in Vietnam?

GEN DEPUY: Well, the first thing that holds up in both cases is the type of individual foxhole, or emplacement; I'm now more convinced than ever that you've got to have frontal cover. Otherwise, you will be suppressed by direct fire, and once you're suppressed by direct fire, the next thing will be hand grenades, and pretty soon, that will be the end of it. So, that was the same for both wars, and will be the same in any future war unless you're fighting from an armored vehicle of some sort.

From the offensive point of view, the big difference was between seeking out the enemy force and seeking out terrain. Terrain was less important in Vietnam for two reasons. First, most terrain didn't give you visibility or observation, so it was unimportant from that standpoint. And, it was totally unimportant if it wasn't important to the enemy. So, except for Nui Ba Den and some other big mountains used for radio relays, terrain in Vietnam made no difference. Visibility was what you were looking for, visibility around a defensive position. So, instead of going for terrain and bypassing the enemy, you were forced to fight the enemy. You were forced to do something with him on ground chosen by him. You couldn't pry him out of his position by getting the high ground to his rear, which is what we tried to do in World War II. That led to going right after him, and going right after him led to the things that we talked about earlier. Sometimes, if there were just a few of them, a good dashing charge with a lot of shooting was probably the right thing to do; but, it was awfully hard to tell when that was the right thing to do. If he happened to be in bunkers it was almost suicidal to do that. As you know, I preferred that the leading elements not automatically charge the enemy. Attacking the enemy should be done as a result of a decision, not as a result of an automatic response.

I do not like automatic reactions to contact. And, I say that, even though I admit that if you had an airborne unit under your command, with all tigers in it, then it might be that on the average, you'd do better by an immediate charge. If you had a disaster, it would be a big disaster, but often it worked. In Vietnam, where you had to go directly after the enemy force and you couldn't attack where the enemy was weak, it raised this other question. So, what I tried to emphasize was that when you make contact, make contact with a small force because you're going to make contact in adverse circumstances. You're probably going to be in his killing zone. After you've made contact, don't go after him unless a competent person like the company commander or the battalion commander decides to do so. Try to find out how big he is. Now, we had some rules

about that. If you only hear rifles, it's probably a platoon; if you hear a machine gun and rifles, it's probably a company; and if you hear rifles, a machine gun and a mortar, it's most likely a battalion. So, act accordingly. It is not smart for a platoon to attack a battalion. You'll just lose the platoon. We should do like the Viet Cong did at Bau Bang against Paul Gorman's battalion — probe around and find the general configuration of the position, and determine whether it's fortified or not, then report back to the next higher headquarters. That way you don't get so enmeshed that you can't shoot at it, or you can't drop a bomb on it. The best thing to do would be to bring up more force and try to surround it, but don't surround it too tightly; that way you can still bomb it. Now, we often tried to do that. Sometimes we made a real mess of it. Sometimes everything went wrong. By the way, the VC decided not to attack Paul Gorman. They were smart. He was loaded for bear.

So, those are the big differences. I would say that in fighting Russians, or fighting Germans, or fighting in Europe, it should be a very rare thing when you attack right up the hill into the teeth of the defense. Remember, he has a large advantage just because he's down, camouflaged and waiting, while you're up, exposed and moving. You can't see him but he can see you! So, you don't want to fight under those circumstances if you can avoid it. You'd rather be down and waiting for him to move up. That's why if you get behind him and force him to move, you reverse the whole situation. But, in Vietnam that was very difficult to do. You might get behind him but he'd just sneak off to the flank and disappear.

INTERVIEWER: Many times in Vietnam we just weren't patient enough to do what you're suggesting.

GEN DEPUY: Well, we might as well talk about that battle on the 25th of August. I believe it was on the 25th of August. Suffice it to say that Bill Mullen's patrol got into the middle of a VC base camp, and then his company went in to rescue the patrol, and his battalion came to reinforce him, and then, I brought in other battalions. Paul Gorman's battalion, the 1st of the 26th Infantry, came in from the south. "Goony" Wallace's 1st Battalion, 16th Infantry, came all the way across from Lai Khe, while Elmer Pendleton's 2nd of the 28th Infantry, came in from the north and tried to block that escape route. We tried to get all around the camp because, obviously, the patrol reported that there were a lot of enemy. It turned out to be a battalion-sized base camp. Gorman's move was only partially successful. "Goony" Wallace's move was a disaster. Elmer Pendleton was positioned okay, but they didn't go out his way. The 1st of the 2nd Infantry, when it came in, was not well in hand. I presided over this very gory and unsuccessful operation. The VC made monkeys of us. We had a cavalry troop that was in there. We had an APC sitting partly in the bunkers, and we had people in so close that when Paul and others brought in NAPALM, it burned the map right out of his hand. It was just a long day.

INTERVIEWER: Well, it was, but the way it actually unfolded — the patrol got into the base camp and hollered for help. We got artillery for them right away and then proceeded to try to reinforce them. When my company got into the base camp mounted on a platoon from the 4th Cavalry, maybe even two platoons, we actually were in a different part of the base camp from where the patrol was at. But, we were in it. The VC weren't! They had run away to fight



Close air support was frequently available to support the ground forces.



A typical NAPALM strike.

somewhere else when they heard us come in. So, really, we owned the base camp then, or at least pieces of it. We couldn't find the patrol but we had our piece of the camp. I left two platoons to hold on to the base camp, which I thought to be a good idea, and we sailed along looking for that patrol. We got down into a swamp and got our tracks bogged down. That's when the 4th Platoon leader called up and said, "I'm the only man left in the platoon." That's when we realized that the VC had come back. We then went back to the base camp and actually, we were in pretty good control of the mess in and around our piece of the base camp. But, two things happened. First, from an overall perspective, which proves every point that you've ever tried to make about the things a company commander has to do in the middle of a big scrap, I could only tend to first things first. I was trying to coordinate a lot of things and was getting no help. The other problem was that the cavalry troop commander on the scene had flipped his lid. It was about his third big fight. I didn't recognize it at the time, probably because of being so busy, but we could have gotten a lot more mileage out of those guys. Anyway, there were all kinds of people trying to help but because of all of them trying to talk on the radio at the same time, they were worse than no help at all. And, I remember trying to talk to you, personally. I thought I could get through that way. I wanted to tell my division commander that we were in contact with something big. We didn't know what it was, but it was big. And secondly, that we were okay and to go ahead and try the doughnut thing. Well, I'm happy to discover that you tried to do just that. I have thought all along that these companies which kept coming in — which was nice to see — screwed up all of the fire support, and made a bit of a mess of it. While we're on the subject, one of the outcomes of the thing was the NAPALM strike which you referred to earlier. I don't know if anyone ever told you what really happened, but I watched that pod of NAPALM sail off of the airplane. Now, there was a large tree there and the pod hit that tree and instead of following the flight path of the plane did a 90 degree turn. That's why it came across our position.

GEN DEPUY: To the left?

INTERVIEWER: It burned the map right out of General, then Colonel, Gorman's hands. One of the things that I was always very proud of was that when confronted, attacked might be a better word, by the press over this disasterous example of close air support, you sprang to the Air Force's defense. Now, I've been told that you actually accepted full responsibility for what happened. At the time, I think people were throwing around numbers like 40 who were killed by the NAPALM. A reporter saw it happen and drew the inference that we had killed our own people with NAPALM. I don't think we killed anybody.

GEN DEPUY: I don't think so, either. Well, anyway, Spike Momyer, who was the Seventh Air Force commander, came up with Westmoreland, and I met him back at the brigade CP. He said that he wasn't going to drop any ordnance within 500 yards of the 1st Division. I told him that we really couldn't live with that. And, he said, "Well, I've been getting all sorts of flack." Incidentally, I saw Spike Momyer two days ago and we talked about this incident. So, I said, "What can I do to help you?" He said, "Well, you've got to get the press off my back." So, I went down the next night to Saigon, to what they called the 5:00 o'clock follies, and told all the reporters what had happened, and said that the Air Force dropped their bombs and NAPALM exactly where we had asked them to. If anybody got hurt as a result of that, then we took full responsibility for it. I wanted them all to know that and to get off the Air Force's back. I told them that if they wanted to get on anybody's back, then to get on ours. So, I did that, and that kept the Air Force more or less happy with the 1st Division.

INTERVIEWER: Another outcome of that fight was that two or three prisoners were captured. I understand that one of them talked and that based on his information you were able to determine the habits of the Phu Loi Battalion. I can remember that you talked on this orchestration of harrassment and interdiction fires over a period of months, that you were building into a crescendo so that you could drive the Phu Loi Battalion to the point where they would much rather give up the war than to carry on. I wonder if you would comment on that?

GEN DEPUY: Well, actually, Paul Gorman was the maestro. We did pick up the Phu Loi Battalion's roster over by the Song Be River, right after that battle. We found it near the little village of Phuoc Vinh, near that plantation house. The roster was marked up with various and sundry pieces of information. It actually contained the wounded and killed on it, and so on. Paul Gorman, who became the G-3 after that battle, was the man who took it on as a personal project with my full and enthusiastic approval to round up the Phu Loi Battalion. He was the brains behind all of that. He was working an agent or two who were supposedly talking to the commander, who was reported to be a great big fellow. Several times Paul thought that the battalion was about to defect because of the artillery fire and the general conditions in the area. But, they never did. So, maybe they were smarter than we were. We're back here and they're still over there.

INTERVIEWER: Just a couple of short questions. First, going back to your earlier statements about the percentage of people who actually did the fighting in World War II, would you make that same analysis about Vietnam? Was the percentage about the same, or was it better?

GEN DEPUY: It was better but I don't know the percentages. I'd be willing to say that one of the reasons it was better was because the leadership mixture was higher. We had better company commanders and better sergeants in the earlier part of the war. As I said, I don't know what the percentage was but my guess is that 50 percent would be very, very good. I'd say that 50 percent would be high. I hope they got up to that. "Slam" Marshall measured it in Korea. I think that in World War II, it was 25 percent, and in Korea "Slam" thought that it got up to 40 or 50 percent.*

INTERVIEWER: I know that he told the story about soldiers who didn't fire their rifles but just got down in the holes, and about soldiers who occasionally threw grenades but didn't pull the pins.

GEN DEPUY: Well, even in the best airborne battalion that went across the Carentan Causeway, over half of the men never fired a round.

INTERVIEWER: Were there any difficulties or experiences that you had as a division commander that came as a surprise? In other words, were there things that you didn't really expect might happen but, in fact, did?

GEN DEPUY: I was not surprised at the high proficiency of the VC and the NVA, because during my two years as J-3 down at MACV, I had already formed a very good opinion of them. I guess my biggest surprise, and this was a surprise in which I have lots of company, was that the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong would continue the war despite the punishment they were taking. I guess I should have expected that. I guess I should have studied human nature and the history of Vietnam and of revolutions and should have known it, but I didn't. I really thought that the kind of pressure they were under would cause them to perhaps knock off the war for awhile, as a minimum, or even give up and go back north. I understand that from 1965 to '69 they lost over 600,000 men. But, I was completely wrong on that. That was a surprise.

I guess I was surprised a little bit, too, after I took over the division, about the difficulty we had in finding the VC. We hit more dry holes than I thought we were going to hit. They were more elusive than I had expected. They controlled the battle better. They were the ones who usually decided whether or not there would be a fight. They were going to attack Soui Da. They were going to attack Loc Ninh. They were going to attack An Loc. By the way, these were campaign plans, not battle plans. We got around somehow and engaged them, but they could have said no at any point. I think when the American Army looked for them during much of Abe's tour there, and didn't find them, again, they were making all the decisions. That is inherent in such a war. The enemy was smart. He wanted to win, not lose battles. He rarely charged into our killing zones. If he didn't like the odds he withdrew into Cambodia or otherwise evaded us.

INTERVIEWER: General Marshall, S.L.A. Marshall, quotes you as asking him about this same time, how much longer we had to win the war. That indicates to me that you saw a problem in terms of our staying power.

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*For a discussion concerning the percentage of infantrymen firing their personal weapons in Korea, see S.L.A. Marshall, "Commentary on Infantry Operations and Weapons Usage in Korea," *Operations Research Office Report, ORO-R13: Project DOUGHBOY* (Chevy Chase: The John Hopkins University, 1951).

GEN DEPUY: Well, I did. I was very worried about our staying power. I didn't think the American people would put up with the war for very long, given television, and given what I was reading in the press from the United States. But, the big surprise was that the VC and NVA were simply able to avoid enough direct confrontations that they were able to survive. They metered out their casualties, and when the casualties were getting too high, as for example in 1966 and '67, and then again, during and after TET, they simply backed off and waited. They came back later, under circumstances in which they could afford to sustain more casualties. Now, I wish that we had all been smart enough to say in 1965, when we went in, "That's what they are going to do to us." If we had been that smart then maybe we wouldn't have gone in. We did intervene on behalf of a very weak and dubious regime, albeit one better than communism. Still, it was very dubious in terms of political weight and meaning. But, I don't remember anybody saying that, do you? Not even the experts, the scholastics, or the academics said that. Oh, there was one who did, Francois Sully, who is now dead. Now, the reason he did is because he had been through it before with the French. He told me and he told others. He said, "You're never going to win it. You're not going to be able to find them. You're going to thrash around and you're only going to fight the battles that they win." Well, he wasn't quite right. He wasn't right in every detail, but he was right in net and sum. What we also didn't anticipate was the massive intervention of the North Vietnamese Army. In 1965 who would have thought that the North Vietnamese would have 23 divisions in South Vietnam by 1975? They even replaced the casualties in VC units at the local level.

INTERVIEWER: Sir Robert Thompson said that we came so close to winning that it's really amazing that we didn't. When we pulled out, had we just continued to supply the South Vietnamese at a tolerable rate then they would have maintained the struggle, but we didn't. So, they no longer had the artillery or lift capability necessary. They didn't have the mobility and firepower advantages that they had not only learned to use, but that they had grown accustomed to using.*

GEN DEPUY: Well, you have to have mobility and firepower in a war like that. In other words, if you want to go back and fight it like the French did, you can, but you will lose. So, we pulled the wherewithal out from under them. Whether they could have done it all alone, even with the resources, I just don't know. But, they certainly never had a fair try once we pulled out our tactical support.

INTERVIEWER: Supposing we had kept the Vietnamese Army in the ball game with all these massive supplies, the battlefield was just part of their challenge. Now, if they got well from the village level on up in terms of a government that really was a government, and if the Army could keep on winning, and if the VC continued coming out where the ARVN could get at them, then perhaps the government could have won.

GEN DEPUY: Well, I'm not sure. The reason I hesitate to say that the Vietnamese could have made it alone, even if we had left them with about the same mixture — the helicopters, aircraft,

*Sir Robert Thompson, "The Vietnam War" (Lecture presented at the US Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, 21 September 1978).

and artillery — is because of the number of divisions that the North Vietnamese eventually committed. I think it exceeded the elastic limits of the South Vietnamese. But, we did make a terrible mistake when we cut the legs off from under them. In the larger context I think the only way the war could have been won was to establish a defensive line from the South China Sea — to the Mekong along Route 9 and physically prevent the North Vietnamese from infiltrating supplies and units to the south. General Westmoreland proposed such a scheme in 1965 and 1966, but he was turned down.

INTERVIEWER: Continuing on with some more questions on Vietnam, what is your appraisal of the body count as a measure of success?*

GEN DEPUY: It is a gruesome way of accounting, but there didn't seem to be any other way to keep track of the progress being made. On the one hand, the intelligence people tried to estimate the size of the enemy force at all levels, from regular or main forces, down through guerrillas. Then they subtracted from that the so-called body count and "Chieu Hois." I believe that problems arose with the body count in certain units. You may recall that the Rhodesians deal in body count. Even in Ireland, the British keep track of it. I think it's inevitable that people will do that. Now, if units compete for body count, and they inflate them, then that's a corruption of the system. So, I think it's inevitable that there will be some kind of counting of enemy casualties, and that automatically brings you into an area of potential abuse.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have confidence in the accuracy of the body count reporting of the 1st Division?

GEN DEPUY: Well, not really. I think that General Talbott improved it later by being very precise. When I was there it really wasn't too much of an issue. Really, the fad hadn't started, and I think that our body count reports were very general estimates. I suppose there was some inflation factor in it. At the time, however, I didn't think it was very important.

INTERVIEWER: Did you use the statistics to compare units?

GEN DEPUY: No, I did not.

INTERVIEWER: I'd like to add that that's the way it was perceived down at the battalion level. We were never bugged about body count. Sir, please share with us the prerequisites that you used when you assessed someone's potential to be a battalion or brigade commander?

GEN DEPUY: Well, I think the first requirement of a battalion or brigade commander, as well as a company commander or a division commander, is attention to detail; knowing weapons; knowing

*This is the third interview conducted with General DePuy, USA Retired. This interview was conducted on 23 April 1979, at his home in Highfield, Virginia. The interviewers were Lieutenant Colonels William J. Mullen and Romie L. Brownlee.

tactics; studying the enemy; being practical; and having a good firm grip on the unit, whatever type it may be, and at whatever level, from division all the way down to company.

INTERVIEWER: In your management of the war as a division commander, were you under any constraints imposed by the Commander, US Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (COMUSMACV), in terms of holding down friendly casualties?

GEN DEPUY: No, not from General Westmoreland. The only pressure I ever had on casualties was from the Chief of Staff, Harold K. Johnson, who came out and was critical of the casualties we had suffered in Phuoc Tuy Province.* I agreed with him that it was most unfortunate. But, it was one of those episodes in war that was unavoidable if you are going to be aggressive. That balance between aggressiveness and casualties is the agonizing role faced by any commander, whether he is a company commander or a division commander. He must be judged on the long-term averages, I think, rather than on any one little episode. With respect to General Johnson, you must understand that he was devoted to the concept of pacification. He liked what he saw in the 25th Division under Fred Weyand.

You will recall that the 25th Division was deployed between the Saigon River, which was our southern boundary, and the Oriental River, which came into Saigon from the Parrot's Beak. This area was heavily populated. Weyand was correct in his emphasis on pacification and security. On the other hand, the 1st Division was a jungle division. Except for an area around Di An, south of the line, Lai Khe — Phuoc Vinh, we had very little civilian population. Instead, what we had was an enormous operating area which included *all* of War Zones C and D, and went all the way to the Cambodian border on the west and north, as far east as Song Be. Our AO was ten times the size of the 25th Division's AO. I regarded it as my job, my mission, to keep the 9th VC Division back in the jungle — to engage it continuously, to destroy it if possible, and to keep it out of the populated areas. While I commanded the 1st Division we succeeded in that mission completely. The 9th VC Division *never* penetrated into the populated area during 1966 or early 1967. By the way, this was the tactical purpose of "Search and Destroy" operations.

INTERVIEWER: Later on in the war, a major activitiy of the friendly forces in Vietnam was pacification. Earlier in the history of the Vietnamese conflict, before the Americans came in, it is my understanding that pacification was getting cranked up, but when Diem fell, and a series of coups came along, followed by the influx of the Americans, the country's pacification effort became second in importance to the bigger war. During the time of the buildup, when you were commanding the 1st Division, the division had its own pacification effort. Please describe that effort in terms of the guidance that you were given, the objectives that you were trying to reach, and perhaps, some of the people who were involved?**

**General Harold K. Johnson,* deceased, was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Infantry, in 1933. Prior to World War II, General Johnson served with the 57th Infantry, Philippine Scouts. Captured at fall of Bataan in 1942, he participated in the Bataan death march and was imprisoned until 1945. During the Korean conflict, General Johnson commanded the 5th Cavalry and the 8th Cavalry Regiments, 1st Cavalry Division. Subsequent assignments included duty as Commandant, Command and General Staff College (1960-63); Deputy Chief of Staff for Military Operations (1963-64); and Chief of Staff of the Army (1964-68).

***For an overview of pacification efforts in Vietnam, see Tran Dinh Tho, *Pacification* (Washington: USGPO, 1979).

GEN DEPUY: Let me answer the earlier part of your question. When Diem was involved in what they called the Strategic Hamlet Program, strongly supported by the US, the growth of the Viet Cong force was still in its infancy, and the North Vietnamese had no units in South Vietnam. Therefore, the focus of the battle was down in the villages, the hamlets and the districts. The largest VC units really were found at the provincial level, although the beginnings of some main force units appeared in War Zones C and D. Then, when Diem was overthrown, the government became disorganized and relatively less effective. The Strategic Hamlet Program was thought to have been a failure, and the emphasis swung to the ARVN, not because someone decided to drop pacification and go to big units but because the opposition organized regiments and divisions and began to beat the hell out of the ARVN. That's why we intervened with US troops. There is a lot of rubbish available on this subject, so beware!

For a period from the end of 1964 until 1967, maybe even beyond that, the emphasis was clearly on main forces — ours and theirs. Then, our government, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the Agency for International Development (AID), the Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS) organization, and the government of Vietnam began to get better organized and were once again able to address pacification. Once again, pacification began to take on an added importance and a larger role. Within the 1st Division area we were in an area that was less populated than were the areas where the divisions in the Delta, or around Saigon, or the 25th Division, or the divisions up in the northern coastal area such as the Americal were located. You will recall that our AO included a lot of jungle and little population; nonetheless, we did recognize that success eventually would depend on the quality of the ARVN, and in our case, on the 5th Division, on the provincial regional forces, on the district and village level, on the popular forces, and on all of the programs that were then being supported.

So, in order to work with the Vietnamese, we established an organization under Colonel Bobby Schweitzer, called HELPER — the name itself indicating the purpose. This was a way, we hoped, by which we would be able to work with all of those echelons of the Vietnamese, and in return, we could obtain intelligence from them. In that way we would be more effective in supporting them at every level — supporting them with military operations, supporting them with civic action, and in supporting their medical, construction, and propaganda efforts, and so on. And, in the case of Colonel Schweitzer, we had the perfect man. He spoke Vietnamese, was the bravest man I ever met, was a man of enormous initiative and energy, was wounded a number of times, and had the confidence of the Vietnamese at every level to the extent that they would assign forces to him at his request without his even telling them what he was going to use them for. And, there would be no intelligence leaks of any kind. So, whatever success we had, and I think the HELPER Organization had many, in strengthening the Vietnamese and in attacking the enemy's so-called infrastructure, can be credited primarily to Colonel Schweitzer and his men.*

INTERVIEWER: The HELPER Program then, was the result of your own assessment of what was needed as opposed to something that you were directed to do in your area of operations?

**Lieutenant General Robert L. Schweitzer,* USA Retired, was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Infantry in 1953. Subsequently, he transferred into the Armor branch. His assignments have included duty as Commander, 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment (1973-74); Director, Office of Defense Policy, National Security Council (1981); and Chairman, Inter-American Defense Board (1983-1986).

GEN DEPUY: Yes. We weren't directed to do that. After Komer arrived and CORDS was created, there was more emphasis on support of the Vietnamese.* As I understand it, under General Talbott the 1st Division had the principle mission of supporting the Vietnamese, or assisting in "Vietnamization" as Secretary Laird called it. During my time, we were not directed in any way to do those things, but it just seemed the necessary thing to do. My guess is that there was never another Schweitzer.

INTERVIEWER: With regard to Vietnam, the press have been praised or vilified, depending on who you talk to, but there is no question about the fact they had an enormous impact on the outcome of the war. We'd like very much for you to comment on the reporters that you came in contact with and your feelings as to their objectivity, their expertise, their knowledge of the subject on which they were reporting, and so forth.

GEN DEPUY: Well, I think the reporters over there who worked with the combat troops were fine. I liked them, and I thought they were fair enough, and very brave, and as good as combat reporters have ever been. I am thinking about Arnett, Pappas and the like. I think the problem was not with the reporters so much as it was with the editors back in the United States. I have a theory which may not hold water, but it seems to me that something happened fairly early on, maybe even as early as 1962, '63, or '64, which resulted in the intellectual elements of our society — and this included a lot of the editors, television correspondents, and even some of the reporters — somehow getting the impression that social justice was on the side of the enemy. This happened early on and then was repeated again later, with the American public. In other words, I see it as two waves.

The first wave was amongst the reporters and the intellectuals coming to the conclusion that somehow or another we were guilty of some form of political aggression and were being heavy-handed about it. Conversely, there was a love affair with the idea of the brave freedom fighter in black pajamas making monkeys out of the establishment. Then, that whole thing was repeated when American troops went over. When the American troops first went over, the American people, the man on the street, was told that there was a communist menace, and that we were going over to cope with it. Therefore, at that time, the enemy was the problem. The enemy was evil. Then, through the bombardment of television and articles written by a lot of the intellectuals who had already been through this process earlier with the ARVN, it seems to me that the average American got to the point where he wondered on which side lay the purity of social justice. Now that we know about the aims and activities of the North Vietnamese and their direction of the effort from the very beginning, all of this was nonsense.

INTERVIEWER: About the 1st Division scholarship fund, which was set up for the children of soldiers and officers who were killed in action and became a hallmark of the division, I wonder if

*_Robert W. Komer_ served in the Directorate of Intelligence and Office of National Estimates, Central Intelligence Agency, during the period 1947 through 1960. Subsequently, Ambassador Komer served as the Senior Staff Member, National Security Council (1961-65), and as Special Assistant to the President (1966-67). Following the completion of his tour as head of CORDS in 1968, he served as the Ambassador to Turkey (1968-69); Advisor to the Secretary of Defense for NATO Affairs (1977-79); and as Undersecretary of Defense for Policy (1979-81).

you would discuss that both in terms of being the commanding general when it was started, and then, later on, as the president of the society.

GEN DEPUY: Well, for the record, the Scholarship Fund started in a rather interesting way. You may recall that there was a sergeant named Nunez, who was a member of the division's Long Range Patrol Company. They went into a jungle area up on the edge of War Zone C, south of what we called the "Red Barn." It was an area in which there was a large base camp used from time to time by one of the regiments in the 9th Division, and during this particular patrol one of the regiments was there. I don't remember which one, I think it was the 273rd. But, in any event, the patrol ran into a real hornet's nest, and Sergeant Nunez was killed. We put some more troops in there in order to get his body back because there was a point of honor not to leave any of the 1st Division's dead in the hands of the enemy. So, we did that. In fact, we had a substantial fight in the area. Not long after that I received a letter from Mrs. Nunez telling me how much her husband had loved the 1st Division, and what a great soldier, husband and father he had been, and that she hoped that her small sons would grow up in his image. She said it much better than that, but that was the message. Well, it was a very touching letter, so I published it in the *American Traveler*, which is the 1st Division's newspaper, with the suggestion that perhaps some of us ought to pitch in some money to take care of Sergeant Nunez's sons and others like him.

Well, the morning following publication of the newspaper I found on my bunk a letter with quite a lot of money in it. I've forgotten how much, but several hundred dollars, and a little note that just said, "From some anonymous artillerymen." I learned later that Colonel, later Brigadier General, Marlin Camp, the DIVARTY commander, had been the ringleader behind it. That was sufficiently encouraging, so we started a fund and began to collect money by any and all means, some fun and some more formal than that. But, in any event, the division commanders who followed me, particularly General Talbott, really did a tremendous job, and the fund eventually rose to about



Major General DePuy presenting a 1st Infantry Division scholarship to Richard Fieller, son of Sergeant Richard B. Fieller.



Eric Nunez, son of Sergeant Rudolph A. Nunez, holds his scholarship certificate.

$900,000. Right now it's almost that. Over a thousand scholarships have been awarded at $2,500 each, and the fund is in a very healthy condition. Our worry now concerns the number of young orphans who will, in fact, use the money. At some point in time we're going to have to increase the size of the scholarship because of inflation. By 1990 we will have provided well over a million dollars for about 1000 scholarships.

INTERVIEWER: Please comment, if you would, on the selection of Sergeant Major Woolridge to be the Sergeant Major of the Army. Was he your sergeant major?

GEN DEPUY: Yes, he was. But, I have to tell you that at the time I didn't have the slightest inkling that Woolridge was involved with a number of fellow sergeants in the division in ripping off the various club funds. Woolridge, you may know, was quite a soldier. In World War II he was in the 26th Infantry, I believe it was "K" Company, and his squad leader was Sergeant Major Dobol. Another squad member was Sergeant Major Cannon. Another squad member was Sergeant Major Joe Venable, who was killed with General Ware. So, in one squad of the 26th Infantry were three future sergeants major of the 1st Division, Dobol, the first Command Sergeant Major in the whole Army and Woolridge, the first Sergeant Major of the Army. Dobol spent 26 years in the 26th Infantry. Now, Woolridge was a fighter. He was big man; he was tough; and he was brave. I like to think that he was taken in by slicker parties, but that in no way relieves him of responsibility for what he did. I was sufficiently impressed with him as the sergeant major of the division, that I recommended him to be the first Sergeant Major of the Army, and he was selected. And then, only later, did it develop that he was involved in all of these things, which was a great tragedy and an occasion, I might say, of great sadness on my part, because I did like him very much. And, it's been very painful for me ever since; I'm sure it's been more painful for him.



Major General DePuy and John H. Hay at General DePuy's change of command ceremony.



Major General DePuy departing the Republic of South Vietnam.

CHAPTER VIII

Washington Transition:
1967 - 1972

INTERVIEWER: After your tour as commander of the 1st Infantry Division, you returned to the United States and became the Special Assistant for Counterinsurgency to the Secretary of Defense. We would appreciate it if you would comment on what your duties and responsibilities were, and any recollections that you have concerning significant activities during that time period.

GEN DEPUY: Well, the Special Assistant for Counterinsurgency was a member of the Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, so my bosses were the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Director of the Joint Staff. That office was started back in the Kennedy Administration when counterinsurgency was stylish. A Marine major general named "Brute" Krulak was the incumbent. He was a very articulate, interesting, and fascinating man. After being the commander of the Marine Corps, Pacific, he retired and went into the newspaper business. He's a very fine, intellectually outstanding man. But, those were the days when the Special Assistant for Counterinsurgency Special Activities (SACSA), was involved in trying to figure out how the military services could do guerrilla warfare, psychological warfare, escape and invasion, and civic action around the world, and special operations — the sponsorship for special operations in North Vietnam, was vested in the SACSA. However, when I came back from Vietnam, General Earle Wheeler requested that I serve as the SACSA. The nature of the job changed considerably because I became, in fact, the assistant to the Chairman for Vietnam, in a much broader context than just counterinsurgency or special operations. I became an assistant across the board, minus the air war. The air war was the province of the Joint Staff's J-3. For example, when General Wheeler went to Vietnam on that very famous trip right after TET, I went with him as the only member of the Joint Staff.*

Also, I became a member of a very interesting interdepartmental group which met frequently at the State Department. The Assistant Secretary of State for the Far East at that time was William Bundy and his principal deputy was Phil Habib, whom I had known for some time. The member from International Security Affairs (ISA), was a very fine man named Dick Stedman, who more recently has been on a commission to recognize the Joint Staff. The CIA member was George Carver. So, in this group we had both the civil and military side of the Pentagon represented as

**Lieutenant General Victor H. Krulak*, USMC Retired, was commissioned a second lieutenant in 1934. During World War II, General Krulak commanded the 2nd Parachute Battalion, 1st Marine Amphibious Corps, in the Pacific Theater of Operations. During the Korean conflict, he served as the Chief of Staff, 1st Marine Division. Subsequent assignments included duty as the Commanding General, Marine Corps Recruit Depot (1959-62); and Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific (1964-68). *General Earle G. Wheeler*, deceased, was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Infantry in 1932. During World War II, General Wheeler served in the 63rd Infantry Division in the European Theater of Operations. Subsequent assignments included duty as the Commander, 351st Infantry Regiment (1951-52); Commanding General, 2nd Armored Division (1958-59); Commanding General, III Corps (1959-60); Chief of Staff of the Army (1962-64); and Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff (1964-68).

well as the State Department and the CIA. We also had a member from the White House, Bill Jordan, who is now an ambassador. We met at least once a week on interdepartmental policy issues concerning Vietnam. I represented the Chairman in those meetings. I represented him personally, and ex officio, the Joint Staff. Although not formally acknowledged, this group tried to help their principals in preparing for the Tuesday luncheons with the President whose attendees were the equivalent of the War Cabinet. That was a rather unusual arrangement, one not written into the charter of the Joint Staff or SACSA. While I was doing that I also supervised the writing of the Westmoreland report, that first report which was really joint by the Commander in Chief, Pacific (CINCPAC), Admiral U.S. Grant Sharp, and Westmoreland. You may recall that it was a chronology, a very factual, straightforward kind of chronology. I recruited some people like John Seigle and others, to help with that.*

I guess the most noteworthy thing that happened during my tour was going to Vietnam with Wheeler just after TET, during which the very controversial question arose as to whether or not General Westmoreland had asked for 206,000 additional troops, and whether TET had been a victory or a defeat. I wrote the report for General Wheeler. Incidentally, as an aside, that is one of the reports that was featured in the Pentagon Papers case because Daniel Ellsberg leaked that report, together with the Pentagon Papers. That brought General Gorman and me into the Pentagon Papers trial in Los Angeles.

When we came back from our post-TET visit to Vietnam, the President convened a group including General Ridgway, General Taylor, Abe Fortas, Clark Clifford, George Ball, and others. They were given briefings by Habib, Carver and myself as to what happened during TET. They met with the President the following day, and reported to the President that the war appeared to be lost. Well, in my opinion, they had already decided that before they ever came to Washington. They seized upon those parts of the briefing which supported their view and paid very little attention to the other parts. However, I must say that the briefings were not encouraging at that time. And, perhaps those of us who gave the briefings were suffering a little bit from the Washington point of view, as opposed to the field point of view, despite the fact that some of us had just been out there.**

Walt Rostow, who was the President's National Security advisor, was astounded by this, and the President was furious, and demanded to know who it was who had "poisoned the well?" He was told that there were three people who had poisoned the well — Habib, Carver, and DePuy. So, he said that he wanted to talk to these three fellows to determine just what it was that they had said. We went to the White House about two days later, in the afternoon, and Carver and I gave the President the same briefing. Habib had wisely left town. The President, it seemed to me, wasn't paying any attention to us; he was making and taking telephone calls. They were taking

*William C. Westmoreland, "Report on Operations in South Vietnam: January 1964-June 1968." *Report On the War in Vietnam (as of 30 June 1968)* (Washington: USGPO, 1969), 68-347.

**Extracts of General Wheeler's 27 February 1968, "Report of Chairman, J.C.S., on Situation in Vietnam and MACV Requirements," are contained in Mike Gravel, *The Pentagon Papers: The Defense Department History of United States Decisionmaking in Vietnam,* Vol. IV (Boston: Deacon Press, 1975), 546-549, and *The New York Times, The Pentagon Papers* (New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1971), 615-621.

pictures. Patrick Nugent, who was President Johnson's grandson, was running around the room, and the President would pick him up from time to time and put him on his knee and give him a drink out of a Coke bottle from which the President was drinking. All in all, it was a very disorderly, disconcerting episode — almost amusing in a comical sort of way if it hadn't been so important. When we were all finished, the President sort of waved us out of the room by saying, "Well, I don't see anything wrong with what you told them." He didn't go on to say, I guess, what was implicit, which was that maybe the briefing wasn't the problem — maybe we hadn't really "poisoned the well." But, just two days later, the President announced that he would not seek reelection. I guess he had made that decision *before* we briefed him, which may explain his relative lack of interest.

You asked another question which had to do with perceptions of the war. Well, it was rather shocking to return to Washington and see what the perceptions were. And, there's no doubt that the perception in Washington was a gloomy one, one that pervaded all of the agencies of the government and the press. TET had been a terrible blow to Washington. As I said earlier, it seemed as though people in Washington — not in the government, but in the press — felt that somehow or other, we were the aggressors. We were the evil ones; we were the clumsy ones; and we were the ones who used the big bombs, whereas the other side used persuasion and intellectual means. Therefore, we certainly were bound to lose, and probably ought to lose! That was the impression that I had during 1968, 1969, and 1970. Now, don't forget that there were riots and burnings in Washington at that time. Of course, we now know that TET was a military victory for us and represented the virtual demise of the VC. We also know that the North Vietnamese Army was deployed to the south to win the war which could not have been won by the VC alone. However, that was by no means understood in Washington at that time. General Westmoreland tried to tell anyone who would listen that TET was a victory — but no one would listen to him. His credibility was destroyed by TET and only history and time will correct that.

INTERVIEWER: How was your job as the Special Assistant to the Chairman related to the other job you had when you were in the counterinsurgency business as an Army officer? It sounds like you were doing for the Army what you later did for the Joint Staff.

GEN DEPUY: Not really. In 1963 and '64, I was involved strictly in the emerging organization and procedures for counterinsurgency. With Wheeler as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, the scope included the whole war.

INTERVIEWER: In terms of organization, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs has that whole Joint Staff, but he doesn't have an independent brain trust working for him and feeding him advice. It appears that he often goes into issues meetings, or goes into see the President, or to the National Security Council (NSC), and is really relying on his own assessment of the situation, an assessment which he has gained through sitting with the chiefs as a member of the corporate body, or that he has picked up through his control of the Joint Staff. But, he doesn't really have people who are dedicated to him, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, feeding him information, and helping him make an appraisal independent from that of the corporate body, the

Chiefs of Staff. It sounds like your organization gave him that capability. You were his "in-house" experts on the Vietnam War, and he was getting something separate from what might be coming to him from the Chief of Staff of the Army, or the Chief of Naval Operations.

GEN DEPUY: Well, that's a distorted picture. Remember, the Chairman has the entire Joint Staff at the disposal. The J-3 and the J-5 both supported him massively and continuously. Also, the Chairman has a special group which normally consists of a colonel from each of the services — and he also has a lieutenant general assistant. At one time General Goodpaster was that assistant, and at another time George Brown was. He later became Chairman. But, among other things, the Chairman's Special Group was also designed to do just what you are talking about. Now, in the case of Vietnam, they were colonels, and I worked with them all the time. I was a major general, I'd been in Vietnam, and had been a division commander, so I had some credibility.

The rest of what you say is right. The information he got from the services was of value, but it was different. General Wheeler played an enormously important role. You know, he was Chairman for over four years, and he was very close to the President. The President had confidence in him. He was the only uniformed participant in the "Tuesday Lunch," which included the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, the Chairman, the Director of CIA, some of the White House Staff, and Walt Rostow. That was the "War Cabinet", and at those Tuesday luncheons decisions were made. General Wheeler was very much a part of that, and he was also the communications link to the War Cabinet for the JCS and the command in Vietnam, although, of course, the CIA had its own sources of information, as did Rostow and the Department of State. Everybody had a line into Vietnam for intelligence. But, the military intelligence was provided through Wheeler.

INTERVIEWER: Sir, from 1969 to 1973, you served on the Army Staff as the Assistant Vice Chief of Staff (A/VICE). What did you work on during that time period? What were the major issues, the highlights during your tour, and what do you consider to have been your main accomplishments while you were there?

GEN DEPUY: Well, I became the A/VICE in 1969, replacing General Chesarek who went to the Army Materiel Command (AMC). Let me say a word about why there was an A/VICE, and incidentally, I would like to refer you to an interview with Colonel, now General, Dave Doyle on the functions and background of the A/VICE. There is a very interesting genesis of the A/VICE. It started with Mr. McNamara. When McNamara came into the Pentagon, he brought with him people like Charley Hitch from the University of California, and Alain Enthoven of systems analysis fame. These people brought with them the McNamara Management System, which was the five-year defense program, and the system of making changes to that program, and studies as to what those changes should be, and whether or not the changes were going to be cost-effective. All of this caused a revolution in the Pentagon. All of the services were found wanting by Mr. McNamara. All of the services had something like the old General Staff concept where a lieutenant colonel would be assigned to make a study on a subject. If his paper made literal sense,

they would adopt it. It probably wasn't a quantified study, but a judgmental study, and that was the character of all the services and certainly of the Army.*

Mr. McNamara was not happy with the data he got from the Army, either in quantity, or in quality. After Mr. Vance went up to become the Deputy, and Mr. Resor became the Secretary of the Army, they progressively established within the Office of the Chief of Staff, a small group of people who became a special information channel through the Secretary of the Army to Mr. McNamara.** This group consisted of some very interesting people like Dave Parker, a fine officer and an engineer major general, now retired, who was the Governor of the Panama Canal Zone during his last assignment. Sam Walker worked in there at one time. Paul Phillips went up and worked there. A fellow named Stockfisch from up in Defense also worked there. Eventually, under Chesarek, this function emerged as the office of the Assistant Vice Chief of Staff. It was comprised of a program shop — like the one Max Thurman now has, and his brother had before him, and Herb McChrystal, Jim Baldwin and Paul Phillips had before that. The Management Information Systems Directorate was started by Major General Hank Schrader, an engineer. Also, a special studies group was formed and was headed up at various times by Seigle, Menetrey, Bobby Montague, and "Tick" Bonesteel. Finally, and very importantly, it included a weapons systems analysis shop headed by Dick Trainor. It was a four-legged organization. The most important part was called the Force Planning and Analysis shop, but what it really became was the master program office for the Department of the Army.***

The Director of Management Information Systems tried to standardize and regulate both computer hardware and software for the Army's business systems. For the latter purpose we activated the Army's computer systems command which provided standardized management software for personnel, finance, and logistics.

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*General DePuy's comment concerning Dave Doyle's interview refers to Lieutenant General David K. Doyle, then Lieutenant Colonel Doyle, Chief, Staff Management Division, Office of the Assistant Secretary of the General Staff. General Doyle conducted an "end of tour" taped interview with General DePuy concerning his service as the Assistant Vice Chief of Staff, in March 1973. *Robert S. McNamara*, a top executive with the Ford Motor Company for nearly 20 years, served as the Secretary of Defense during the period 1961-68. Subsequently, he served as president of the World Bank from 1968 to 1981. *Charles J. Hitch*, an economist and Rhodes Scholar, served as Assistant Secretary of Defense (Comptroller) during the period 1961-65. *Alain C. Enthoven*, also an economist and Rhodes Scholar, served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Comptroller) during the period 1961-65, and as Assistant Secretary of Defense (Systems Analysis), during the period 1965-69. For a brief description of the McNamara Management System, see Robert S. McNamara, *The Essence of Security: Reflections in Office* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1968), 87-104. A much more complete explanation is contained in Samuel A. Tucker (ed.), *A Modern Design for Defense Decision: A McNamara-Hitch-Enthoven Anthology* (Washington: Industrial College of the Armed Forces: 1966).

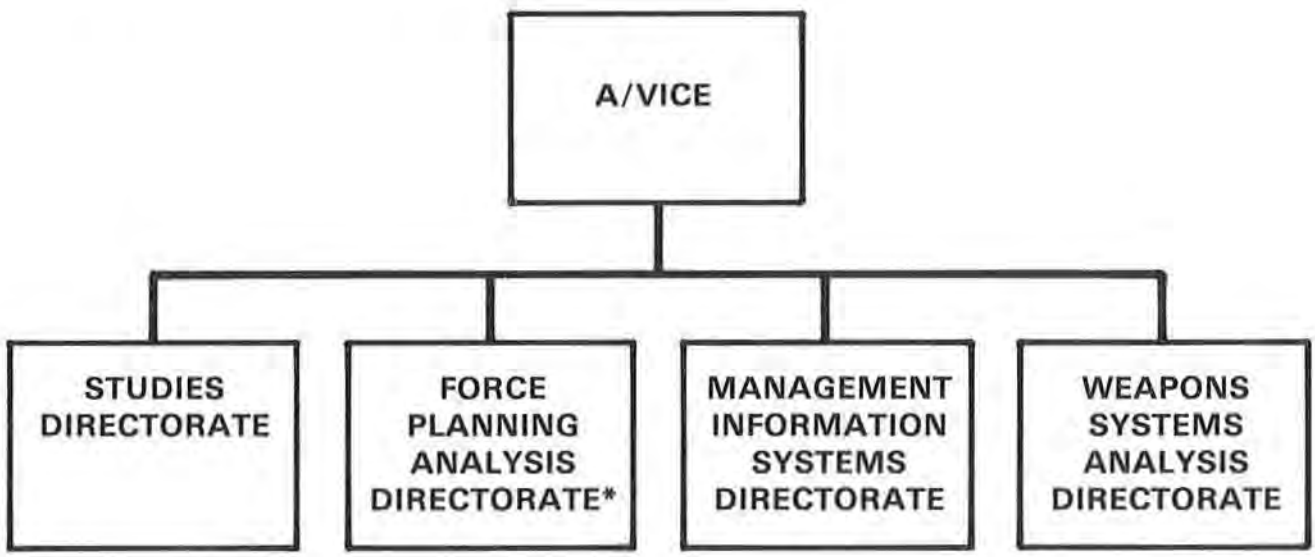
**_Cyrus R. Vance_, a career lawyer, served as General Counsel for the Department of Defense during the period 1961-62, after which he served as the Secretary of the Army from 1962 to 1963. During the period 1964 to 1967, Mr. Vance served as the Deputy Secretary of Defense. Mr. Vance also served as the Secretary of State from 1977 to 1980. *Stanley R. Resor*, a corporate law specialist, first served as the Under Secretary of the Army in 1965 and then as the Secretary of State from 1965 to 1971. Mr. Resor also served as the US Representative to the Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction Talks (1973-78), and as the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (1978-79).

***For a brief overview on the creation of the Assistant Vice Chief of Staff position, see Ferdinand J. Chesarek, "New Techniques for Managing Men and Materiel," *Army*, 17 (October, 1967), 51-52.

The weapons systems group supported the Vice Chief in his role as chairman of the Army's System Acquisition Review Council. It gave him advice independent of the staff. It was, therefore, thoroughly disliked.

The interesting thing is that when I became the A/VICE, I worked 80 percent of the time for the Secretary and 20 percent for the Vice Chief, General Palmer, and the Chief, General Westmoreland. Four years later, I was proud to be able to say that I worked about 80 percent of the time for the Chief and the Vice Chief, mostly the Vice Chief, and 20 percent for the Secretary. In other words, as the office gained stature and confidence, the Secretary was willing to put back into the "green-suit" part of the house, through the A/VICE and the Vice Chief, the authority and responsibility which had been taken away from the Army staff during the McNamara regime and for a long period thereafter.*

I think that's a very important period in the history of the Army General Staff. The Secretary was making the program decisions for the Army, and was using the A/VICE as his instrument and channel into the Army. I came out of that assignment fairly well educated in the techniques of program management, and to this day I am an ardent and enthusiastic believer in program management as the way to go for any large organization. I won't bore you with all of what that means, but it's the antithesis of budget management, and it's the opposite of General Staff management of the old kind.



* Later became the Planning and Programming Analysis Directorate

**General Bruce Palmer, Jr.,* USA Retired, ws commissioned a second lieutenant in the Cavalry in 1936. Branch transferring to the Infantry, General Palmer served as the Chief of Staff of the 6th Infantry Division and later commanded the 63rd Infantry Regiment in the Southwest Pacific Theater during World War II. Subsequent assignments included duty as the Chief of Staff, Eighth Army (1962-63); Commanding General XVIII Airborne Corps (1966-67); Commanding General, II Field Force, Vietnam (1967); Vice Chief of Staff of the Army (1968-73); and Commander in Chief, Readiness Command (1973-74).

So, that sort of covers what the A/VICE did. We did a lot in the automatic data processing field, and we did some in the studies field. For example, OPMS, or more specifically, selection for command, was the brain child of that group. But, basically, through the program system, we managed the Army down from 1.6 million men to 800,000 in four years — a traumatic period. Now, you suffered from all of those changes wherever you were at that time, and I'm sure that it seemed disorderly and hectic. On the other hand, what was going on was a demobilization. The Army was cut in half very rapidly, and yet, somehow it survived — barely, but it survived. It survived physically, and I think it has now demonstrated that it has rebounded intellectually, and from a morale standpoint. But, it was a very difficult period from a management standpoint. Now, do you want to ask any subsidiary questions?

INTERVIEWER: You mentioned several of the studies that went on while you were the A/VICE. One of those mentioned in your papers was the WHEELS study. Would you please comment on that?*

GEN DEPUY: Well, I will because the WHEELS study was a very unpopular thing. It was part of that process of bringing the Army down from 1.6 million to 800,000 men with a loss of commensurate resources, not only of people, which was obvious, but also of money. We were trying to adjust a large Army into the clothing that would fit a small Army. One of the things we went after was the number of wheeled vehicles in the Army. We discovered that there was one wheeled vehicle for every two soldiers in the active Army. That seemed to us to be unnecessarily high and also to be unnecessarily expensive. It also required a tremendous ordnance tail to maintain them. So, we went in and whacked out about 100,000 vehicles. That sounds like a lot, but that only brought us down from 460,000 to 360,000 for an Army of 800,000. And, mind you, in that Army of 800,000, 150,000 were students, transients, patients, and such. So, we still had one vehicle for every two soldiers in units and that included the Chief of Staff of the Army, every clerk-typist, every sergeant major, and so on. Anyway, the WHEELS study was very unpopular with the people whose ox was gored. I chaired the WHEELS study and my principal ally was Woody Vaughn, the deputy commander of AMC.

INTERVIEWER: At this particular time a lot of new equipment was entering the inventory. As the A/VICE what was your role in the procurement of this equipment and materiel?

GEN DEPUY: I didn't have any role in procurement as such. Procurement is a contractual arrangement involving the passing of money to contractors to buy things. But, my role as A/VICE was involved in the decision as to whether or not a particular weapon or piece of equipment would be put into the program or dropped from the program, or whether the size of the buy would be adjusted in order to make the program fit the total amount of money we had. There were thousands of program decisions of that nature.

*For further details on the WHEELS Study, see US Army Materiel Command Report, "Special Analysis of Wheeled Vehicles," dated 30 August 1972.

The decision-making process we used was like this: we had a junior group chaired by the major general who was the head of the Force Planning Analysis office. At one time it was Jim Baldwin, at another time it was Herb McChrystal, then it was Roy Thurman, and now it's Max Thurman. They headed a thing we called the "Prince George Riding Club" which was really the Program, Guidance and Review Committee (PGRC). They went over all of these program issues at the major general level. Then we formed a Select Committee or SELCOM, which I chaired. It consisted of each of the lieutenant generals of the Army staff, the Deputy Chiefs of Staff for Operations (DCSOPS), Logistics (DCSLOG), Personnel (DCSPER), and so on. This really was where most of the final tough decisions had to be made. What we were confronted with constantly was what we called decrement exercises. In other words, we needed a twenty-five billion dollar budget, but we were told that we would only get twenty-three billion, so we had to find those places where we could cut two billion dollars out of the program. We took some out of the structure, which meant a reduction in personnel. We took some out of Operation and Maintenance (O&M), which meant that we lost some readiness, we took some out of depot maintenance, we took some out of research and development (R&D), we took some out of procurement, and we took some out of the Reserve components. Every decision was unpopular.

There was a proponent for everything, and each proponent felt that the decisions taken were a mistake. As the chairman, I tried to get and usually did get a consensus, at least on most of the tough decisions. When I couldn't, I carried it to the Vice Chief of Staff, and the Vice Chief, based on our recommendations, would simply make the decision. Now, another thing that I did when we were in a terrible hurry in the last hectic days of the program cycle, or the budget cycle, was simply call in the budget and program directors of the staff, and we'd sit up in my office all night long and make hundreds of relatively minor but always controversial decisions — take this out, subtract that, reduce this, scratch that out. It was very arbitrary, but it had to be! At the time such actions were regarded as high-handed by many people, which led to a certain dissatisfaction with the A/VICE idea on the part of the regular staff agencies. But, it was a way to make the necessary, tough decisions rapidly during a very difficult management period. You mentioned the "Gama Goat," with regard to whether or not I was involved in saying, "Go ahead with it." I may have been; I probably was. I also was probably involved in saying go ahead with the M60A2, and with the Sheridan deployment to Europe, all three of which have been maintenance nightmares. All I can say is that those were three decisions out of 10,000 decisions that we made. They may have been mistakes, but you make lots of mistakes. I think if your batting average is anywhere near 80 percent, then you're probably doing very, very well, indeed.

INTERVIEWER: It was during this time period when the thinking began concerning the reorganization of the Army which eventually resulted in the creation of the Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) and the Forces Command (FORSCOM). Could you tell us how that started and about your involvement in it?

GEN DEPUY: Yes. The reason I became involved in the reorganization of the Continental Army Command (CONARC), which was the instrument by which TRADOC was born, was during this reduction of the Army, the cutting of the Army in half, we had difficulties with the management of



M551 Armored Reconnaissance
Assault Vehicle — SHERIDAN



M561 1¼-ton Gama Goat

CONARC. To put it in the simplest form, CONARC was a budget-managed command, not a program-oriented command. It was a decade behind in management techniques. Management was in the hands of civilians in the comptroller shops at every level. Not only that, but between CONARC and the various operating elements, such as the divisions, corps, the schools, and the training centers, were the Continental Armies. The Continental Armies were 90 percent civilianized, and were run almost entirely by the comptrollers. So, as I said, they were budget-driven, were highly bureaucratized, and were generally unresponsive echelons of management.

CONARC divided up money generally in accordance with priorities as they saw them, and then the Continental Armies generally divided up the money to their subordinate elements, and there was little visibility over the probable effects during the decision-making process. CONARC didn't know what the money was being spent for in terms of end items or actions. So, General Palmer and I had an increasingly difficult time with CONARC, and when we made cuts, as we had to do in adjusting downward the training base and the force structure, all sorts of unexpected things would happen out at some division or at some post, that seemed to make no sense at all. CONARC would ladle out the money and wait for the screams. Some of those screams were intolerable at the Department of the Army level. For example, one time Sixth Army decided to meet lower spending goals by simply firing the entire civilian work force — a super "gold watch ploy". Well, needless to say, CONARC was very defensive about this criticism.*

In fairness to CONARC, and the many fine officers who commanded it and served it, the size and staffing of that headquarters and its subordinate armies was never adequate to the management and command responsibilities assigned. After all, CONARC ran the whole *Army* in the US except for AMC.

Year after year CONARC received cuts in budget and in staff while at the same time the job became more complex. The demobilization after Vietnam broke the camel's back.

So, finally, General Palmer gave me the job of looking into the reorganization of CONARC. I accepted the task with enthusiasm. I turned to my studies group, at that time headed up by John Seigle, and we pulled out two sharp lieutenant colonels, Bill Tuttle and Jim Edgar, and gave them a month to come up with a concept. CONARC was clearly too big to be managed. So, the concept was to split CONARC in half, and take the troop part out of it and call it something else. Or, describing it the other way around, pull the schools and training centers out, and then CONARC would be divided into two commands. The next thought which automatically came along was, if you're going to create a separate schools and training command, then why not combine it with the Combat Development Command (CDC)? The interface between the CDC and the school system had always been very important but very difficult to manage. Although there was a Combat Development Agency at each school, it did not belong to the school. Also, doctrine was really the business of the schools, which taught it to the Army. So, the simple framework for the whole reorganization was just that — split CONARC in two and combine the CDC with the schools and training center part, and call it something new.

*"gold watch ploy" is a term referring to a bureaucratic maneuver by which a subordinate element deals with an unwanted reduction by offering to cut or eliminate that which it knows the higher element would never cut or abolish. The term stems from the ploy of offering to eliminate the gold watch presentation for 20 years of service. Its origin is business rather than military.

That concept was fleshed out in very broad terms in a month by those two young officers with some supervision from me. We then had a very remarkable experience that probably should go into the *Guinness Book of Records*. We took this study to General Palmer on a Monday, and he was very enthusiastic about it. We then went to General Westmoreland on Tuesday, and he approved it. We went to the Secretary of the Army on Wednesday and he approved it. Then we had a delay. We could not get to the Secretary of Defense, Melvin Laird, until Friday, at which time he approved it. That is not the actual chronology but is very close to it. In about a week, we went from concept to final approval.*

Thereafter, all we had to do was figure out how we were going to solve all the details. We brought General Kalergis in and made him the head of what was called the STEADFAST Study Group, which was charged with working out the details. But, the decision had already been made. Now, that certainly makes it a lot easier to implement than doing it the other way — that is, preparing a big study which includes all of the details, and then trying to get people to agree, which is something they'll never do. Although I'm prejudiced and subjective about it, I really think that (a), it was a very good idea whose time had come; (b), it was a simple idea; and (c), I think it has proved itself to have been very good for the Amry. It was hard to argue with. You could argue about the details but couldn't argue about the heart of the issue.**

INTERVIEWER: When the concept was initially briefed at CONARC headquarters how was it received? Did they perceive it as having their ox gored, or did they see it as a good move?

GEN DEPUY: They perceived it as having their ox being gored very badly, as did the CDC. Jack Norton was commanding the CDC at the time, and I went out and told him what the conclusions of the study were. The first reaction was "Okay." But, upon reflection, and I think after consultation with his troops, he also considered this to be a bad idea. It's very interesting though, when you look back. When George Forsythe was the commander of the CDC, he formally asked General Palmer in a message to have all of the schools assigned to him. Of course CONARC thought he was having a stroke of madness of some sort to suggest such a thing. But, he was right. He had the right idea. His only problem was that his idea was a year or two premature. The time just wasn't right. But, when we put TRADOC together and combined the schools, the training centers, and Combat Development Command, it was, in part, just a logical outgrowth of Forsythe's proposal. What George had said was that he had no power, no teeth and no assets. His command was simply too small to get things done. Now, Jack Norton really felt the same way. Jack felt that the commander of CDC should be a four-star general. Well, he was later, but only because the job was expanded into something which people felt to be more appropriate. Now, in that respect, at one time it looked as though the TRADOC commander was going to be a lieutenant general. Not because General Abrams didn't want to have a four-star general in there,

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**Melvin R. Laird*, a member of the House of Representatives in the 83rd through 90th Congresses, served as Secretary of Defense from 1969 to 1972. Later, he served as Domestic Advisor to the President during 1973-1974.

***For more information on STEADFAST, see James G. Kalergis, "Purposeful Changes: Reorganization, 1973," *Army*, 23 (October, 1973), 62-64.

but because he didn't know whether or not he could manage the authorization for another four-star general.

Also connected with that was the fact that when he picked the two commanders, General Kerwin and me, he was somewhat undecided as to which one of us ought to get which command. In retrospect, I can see where he would have wondered about that. But, in any event, he made the decision to send "Dutch" to FORSCOM and me to TRADOC. I personally preferred TRADOC, and that made it easy because "Dutch" preferred FORSCOM. When they told me that I would receive that command, they said, "But you probably will be a lieutenant general." I told them, "It doesn't make any difference to me." I then went down and became deputy commander of CONARC for about three or four months, from March to July of 1973. But, I was told before I went there that on the 1st of July I would become the TRADOC commander.

INTERVIEWER: Did they know that at CONARC?

GEN DEPUY: CONARC knew it. Well, "Dutch" knew it. You see, "Dutch" went down in February, and I arrived in March, but he knew it. Well, I guess everybody knew it. It hadn't been announced officially, but it had been announced unofficially.*

*For an overview on the early months of both FORSCOM and TRADOC, see Walter T. Kerwin, Jr., "In Army Forces Command The Mission is Readiness," *Army,* 23 (October, 1973), 27-30; and William E. DePuy, "TRADOC: A New Command for an Old Mission," *Army*, 23 (October, 1973), 31-34.

CHAPTER IX

Changing An Army

INTERVIEWER: When you arrived on the scene at Fort Monroe, which was to become the headquarters of TRADOC, what did you perceive to be the most critical tasks that you needed to tackle, both within your own headquarters, and those things that you wanted to do for the Army through TRADOC?

GEN DEPUY: Well, the most urgent task was to organize the TRADOC under sound management concepts. Fortunately, from TRADOC's standpoint, the Army echelon, the Continental Armies, were over with FORSCOM, so I didn't have to bother with them. So, we decided that it would be direct management from Headquarters, TRADOC, to some 19 operating agencies, which is quite a broad span of control. I brought to TRADOC my four years of experience in Program Management at the departmental level and brought people along with me who were able to install that — John McGiffert and later, Max Thurman, Max Noah, and people of that caliber. TRADOC was recognized to be the best managed, most responsive command in the Army right off the bat because of that. We knew what was going on. We had visibility over all of our programs. You may recall that we introduced the contract system which I still believe is the only civilized and effective way to deal with 19 different installations.

The contract was simple. I signed a piece of paper jointly with, say the Commandant of Fort Benning, or the Commandant of Fort Sill, or the Commander of the Training Center at Fort Jackson, which laid out in great detail exactly what it was that he was going to do during the year with the money and the other resources that I gave him. What that also forced us to do was to decide precisely what we were not going to do. If it wasn't on that piece of paper, then we weren't going to do it! But, if it was on the piece of paper, then he was going to have to do it with the resources I provided. So, we negotiated the contract which ensured that we had no misunderstandings. If during the year, I had to change the resources available such as pulling money away from one of my commanders, then I personally went to see that commander, and we renegotiated his contract. In other words, we both agreed as to what additional things he *would not do*! Therefore, there were no surprises, and we didn't do a lot of dumb things. They didn't throw a lot of "gold watches" at me in the hopes that I would not take the money away from them. I would just say, "I'm going to take the money away from you. Now, we're going to decide what the new contract will say." They still use that, and I still believe that it's a good system.

INTERVIEWER: Please give an example of the types of things that Fort Benning would contract to do.

GEN DEPUY: Sure. One of the things they would contract to do would be to handle a certain student load such as a certain number of lieutenants in the basic course, a certain number of young men learning to jump out of airplanes in the airborne course, a certain number of captains

in the advanced course, and a certain number of sergeants attending certain Noncommissioned Officer Education System (NCOES) courses. Commanders would contract to spend so much money on the repair and maintenance of facilities. They would contract to support certain peripheral activities in the general area of Fort Benning in support of reserve components, and so on. In short, everything they would have to do during the upcoming year was in the contract in sufficient detail to be binding — both on them and on me.

INTERVIEWER: In addition to the school and training centers you also took on the Combat Development Command and integrated that with the schools. How did you assess that marriage, as such, taking place?

GEN DEPUY: Well, I assessed the marriage as being necessary and natural. After all, the Combat Development Agencies already were located at the schools. Although not under the command of the schools, they were involved in matters which really should have been under the jurisdiction of the schools. I brought to TRADOC some strong feelings about the way the combat development process had worked, or had not worked, in the past. One of the feelings I had was that they spent too much time on very long-range studies — like the "Army 1990," or the "Army 2000," which never seemed to cause anything to happen. Therefore, I changed the focus and brought it way back in close, and incidentally, I've been heavily criticized for doing that. What I believed was that instead of trying to divine by some intellectual process, what the Army would look like in the year 2000, I was more interested in whether or not we needed a replacement for the M-60 tank, or for the M-113 personnel carrier, or for the Chaparral-Vulcan. I based this belief on the premise that people aren't smart enough to see what we'll need in the year 2000. The reason we aren't smart enough to do that is that the people we ask in 1979, for instance, to look at the shape of the Army in the year 2000, possess a 1979 mentality. So, the Army they see out there is simply a reflection of the 1979 Army with some gimmicks. They'll say, "By then we'll have more lasers, and we may have atomic energy, and we may have this, and we may have that." But, the concept is all based on a 1979 consciousness and information. I just don't believe humans can look to the long-range future that well, so I stopped most of the long-range studies.

I also tried to make some sense out of the so-called weapons requirement process. They used to have things called QMRs or Qualitative Materiel Requirements. This was a little bit like the Army in the year 2000. Somebody was supposed to sit down and visualize the perfect weapon of the future. Then, after you have visualized and described it, you turned it over to the engineers and the scientists and asked them to make one. Well, in the first place, there isn't anybody in TRADOC or CDC who can see further than the scientists or the engineers *have already seen*. Secondly, the QMRs constituted a hunting license for the scientists and engineers in the labs to spend a lot of money seeking a vague objective. I tried to turn that around and said, "We will study the M-60 tank. We will say what it is that we don't like about it, or the things we would like to have improved on that tank. Then we'll ask AMC to tell us what they can do, and have them certify that they can make the gun fire farther, or more accurately, or that they can provide better armor, obtain longer ranges, improve fuel consumption, or enhance maintenance. They'll write all that down and certify that that's all true, and that they can accomplish it given the state of the art.

Then, we'll agree on what we're going to do, and that will be a ROC or a Required Operations Capability." Now, I got the reputation of being a "ROC-crusher" because I wouldn't approve ROCs unless the developer certified that he could do it. That way I wasn't giving him a license to steal, and I could hold his feet to the fire. Those were the two areas in which I tried to bring this very vague intellectual exercise back into the realm of hardware and practicality. By today's mentality I am judged to have been in the Stone Age. Time will tell.

INTERVIEWER: I know that you put together some new organizations to help you do that, like the Logistics Center and the Combined Arms Combat Development Agency (CACDA) at Leavenworth.

GEN DEPUY: Well, in a way, these organizations had existed before. There was a Combined Arms Combat Development Agency at Leavenworth, and there was a thing called the Personnel and Logistics Agency at Fort Lee. We took that agency and had it concentrate on logistics only and created an Admin Center at Fort Ben Harrison to handle the personnel aspects. So, the Admin Center had finance and the Adjutant General, Leavenworth had all of the combat arms and combat support elements, and the Log Center had all of the combat service support. They were intermediate management echelons. I would have to say that all of them have had trouble. They are in a rather awkward middle position between TRADOC and the operating agencies of the schools, and it's been difficult for them to find out exactly how to operate in order to find the levers of power. Just as I left, the deputy from TRADOC went out and became the head of the Combined Arms Center at Leavenworth. We put good talent out there, and I think that they're now beginning to perform their function fairly well. But, it is a very difficult job. Part of the problem is that they are a long way from the flagpole — a long way from the TRADOC flagpole, a long way from the R&D flagpole, and from AMC, and from the Department of the Army. Sometimes they tend to get behind the power curve.

INTERVIEWER: Of course one of the things that you did at TRADOC was bring a new philosophy of training with you, which started at the Army Training Centers, in the Service Schools, and even reached out into the units. What were your thoughts about training as you arrived at TRADOC, and how did you intend to get those thoughts translated into actions?

GEN DEPUY: Well, I would have to say that when I first visited the schools and the training centers I was unimpressed. I was horrified by some of the things that I found. For example, at the Engineer School I discovered that the engineer lieutenants were never given an opportunity to learn how to drive a bulldozer, or run a road grader or a front-end loader. Yet, they would eventually go to an engineer platoon having that type of equipment, and I couldn't understand how they would be able to supervise, or to criticize, or to train. Down at Fort Benning most of the training of the lieutenants was accomplished in a classroom instead of out with troops. The orientation was very academic, very intellectual. I don't know whose fault it was. Some people didn't think it was a fault. There's been a big argument for years about education and training. I'm not sure what all the differences are, but I do know that the Army had moved pretty much towards education and away from training. TRADOC is now criticized for going too far towards training.

My conviction is that we were totally unbalanced towards education, and that as hard as TRADOC works, it will only bring the thing back into balance. As between the two, education and training, you need both.

At Fort Knox I thought that the training of the tank lieutenants, the armor lieutenants, was awful. They really weren't being trained to be tank commanders first and tank platoon leaders second. They were really being trained to be tank company commanders. The basic courses in all of the service schools taught them not to be what they were about to be, but what they eventually might be. And, when they went to the advanced course, they were taught about brigades and battalions instead of about being a company commander. I found that to be very interesting. It was part of the philosophy of the Mobilization Army in which everybody got a job one or two grades above where he then stood. But, we don't have a Mobilization Army; we have an 800,000 man Army! That's what we are going to go to war with. Why should we go to war with untrained platoon leaders, untrained company commanders, and untrained battalion commanders, when they have to win the first battle? So, the first thing I tried to do was to bring the school system back closer to where the Israeli school system is, which is a training system that trains tank commanders, tank platoon leaders, and tank company commanders at about the time that they are going to discharge those duties. As I said, this is controversial, and right now there is a bit of a reaction setting in to all of that. I just hope things do not go back to where they were, which was really bad.

Now, the training centers really upset me. CONARC had run the training centers with an iron hand. Everything that was done in the training centers was prescribed by CONARC. There was no latitude or flexibility, and the first consequence of that was that there was also no feeling of responsibility. No matter how dumb it might be, the answer always was, "It's in the directive. It's in the Program of Instruction (POI). We're doing just what we were told to do." This meant that the major general commanding the training center went around and inspected only to see how well his Center was doing what CONARC had told them to do. The colonels, the lieutenant colonels, and the captains all went around with their eyes glazed over, bored to death. The drill sergeants had taken over. Over time, the drill sergeants will distort even a very clear directive, and find some little aspect of it that was never intended to be important and make that the centerpiece of some training exercise or bit of instruction. Well, it was really bad. The execution was bad, the concept was bad, the training was bad, the supervision was bad, morale was bad, and motivation was bad.

One term they used in the training centers that conveys part of the problem was what the drill sergeants would refer to as being "on the trail." I don't know whether or not you know where the term "on the trail" comes from, but it refers to driving cattle herds from Texas to Colorado, or from Oregon to Colorado. That was the mentality that pervaded the training centers. The cadre were just getting one bunch of cattle through, and then another bunch of cattle would come along to be herded through, with a lot of screaming, shouting, yelling, and cursing, but with little effort to teach. It was just an effort to get through the day, to get another 100 trainees, or another 1,000 trainees through without an accident and without some sort of disciplinary problem. Well, what I did was say, "Each of you major generals running a training center is now totally responsible. If there's anything that goes on that's wrong or dumb, stop it, and change it. Do what's smart, and tell me later." I told them, "I don't ever want to be told by you or any of your colonels, captains,

lieutenant colonels, or sergeants, that you're doing something that's dumb, or that I find out is dumb, because you were told to do it. From now on you are going to do only what you think is right." Well, that had quite an impact. Now, one of the impacts that it had was that they all started doing things much better, and they thought up all sorts of marvelous new things to do, and marvelous new ways of doing it. Suddenly, they were enthusiastic. They now had a man-sized job to do, and they couldn't cover up anymore. In my opinion, it turned the whole situation around.

Recently, the Army got all excited when folks discovered that there were differences between the training programs at the various training centers. You may be sure that they are minor. You may also be sure that the price the Army pays for absolute conformity is too high. It results in lousy, irresponsible, lackluster training by officers and NCOs who are bored to death with "on the trail" type training.

Now, the last and biggest part of all of this is the whole philosophy of training. There I have to talk about General Gorman, because General Gorman and the others who were with him on the Combat Arms Training Board (CATB) at Fort Benning, brought to TRADOC a new concept of performance-oriented training, which is a systematic way to go about the setting of training objectives through the careful determination of tasks, conditions, and standards. They also brought to training some exciting new technology and procedures. It took me some time, frankly, to digest it all myself after I came to TRADOC. But, finally, I saw the great benefit and logic of what they were doing and fully supported it. The credit for the concept really has to go to General Gorman and to a number of other people who worked with him, both earlier and later. They are the ones who articulated this concept, and who were the leading proponents of it in the Army.*



General
Paul F. Gorman

*For a biographical sketch of *General Gorman*, USA Retired, see note, page 149.

INTERVIEWER: This concept included the Skill Qualification Tests (SQTs).

GEN DEPUY: That's right, the Soldiers' Manuals, SQTs, and the ARTEP — performance-oriented training of all kinds. Plus the front-end analysis of the tasks, and then, the establishment of standards against which you trained the soldier, and the conditions under which he had to perform the tasks before he was then ready to go on to the next step. You can apply that system to almost any kind of Army training, however complex — even tactical training. I would like to say that in addition to General Gorman, there was General Seigle who took over CATB, and Bill Hilsman and George Stotser, who also had CATB, and certainly eminent among all of the contributors to the theory, were Frank Hart and Bob Dirmeyer. Now, there are many others, but I haven't the time or the memory to name them all. There were a lot of very bright people who became the apostles and disciples of Gorman. Some of them, I suppose, were the ones who put it in Gorman's head in the first place and who have carried the ball in what I'm sure is the right direction for the Army.*

INTERVIEWER: What is your view on the classic issue of training versus education of the Officer corps?

GEN DEPUY: Interesting question. I'm not sure that I have it right because I have been accused, along with General Gorman, of being a trainer, not an educator. In fact, at one time, General Rogers, then Chief of Staff of the Army, asked me to take on the job of sorting out doctrine at echelons above corps. That doctrine fell between the cracks when General Abrams eliminated the "Army" echelon because he believed that Army Groups would control the corps and that such Army Groups would be multinational. Well, I told General Rogers that I would do that but that I needed the Army War College as the instrument. That would leave training and doctrinal issues

**Major General John W. Seigle*, USA Retired, was commissioned a second lieutenant of Armor in 1953. In Vietnam he commanded the 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry, 1st Infantry Division (1967-68). Other assignments included duty as the President, CATB (1972-73); Commander, 2d Armored Cavalry Regiment (1973-74); Deputy Chief of Staff for Training, TRADOC (1977-79); and Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, USAREUR (1980-82). *Lieutenant General William J. Hilsman*, USA Retired, was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Signal Corps in 1954. Other assignments included duty as Commander, 144th Signal Battalion, 4th Armored Division (1969-71); President, CATB (1973); Commander, 1st Signal Group (1973-75); Commanding General, The Signal Center and Commandant, The Signal School (1977-80); and Director, Defense Communications Agency (1980-83). *Major General George R. Stotser*, USA, was commissioned a second lieutenant of Armor in 1956. He commanded the 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry, 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) in 1969. Other assignments have included duty as Commander, 1st Brigade, 1st Armored Division (1974-76); President, CATB (1976-77); and Commander, 2d Armored Division (Forward) (1982-83). General Stotser is presently serving as Commanding General, 3rd Infantry Division (1985-). *Colonel Franklin A. Hart*, USA Retired, was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Infantry in 1954. In addition to commanding the 4th Battalion, 39th Infantry, 9th Infantry Division in Vietnam (1968-69), he served as a member of the CATB (1972-74); as President, CATB (1974); as Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff for Training (Plans and Projects), TRADOC (1975-79); and as Commander, Army Research Institute of Behavior and Social Sciences (1979-81). *Colonel Robert P. Dirmeyer*, USA Retired, was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Field Artillery in 1955. Assignments included command of the 2d Battalion, 4th Artillery, 9th Infantry Division, in Vietnam (1968-69); command of the 2d Battalion, 321st Artillery (Airborne), 82d Airborne Division (1970-71); duty as a member of CATB (1972-73); as Chief, Individual Training Branch, TRADOC (1975); and as Chief, Training Management Institute, TRADOC, with duty station at Fort Eustis, Virginia (1975-77).

for battalions, divisions and corps at Leavenworth, and for corps, armies, army groups, and theaters at Carlisle. As you can see, there would have been overlap at the corps level. He thought that that made sense but the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations and Plans (DCSOPS), which controlled the Army War College (AWC), was horrified at the thought that TRADOC might get its hands on his "educational" institution. I suppose he thought that Gorman and I would send drill sergeants to Carlisle. In any event, TRADOC did not get the AWC. The void in doctrine is being cobbled together slowly by a conglomerate of DCSOPS, Leavenworth, Carlisle, and the National War College (NWC). As to your original question, I suppose that training deals with "how to perform" a task or a group of tasks within a function, such as how to (1) assemble, (2) clean, (3) load, (4) aim, and (5) fire a rifle. The performance test would be whether or not the bullet hit the target, with all of the previous tasks being subsumed in the process. Education, on the other hand, would permit the soldier, or officer perhaps, more than the lower ranks, to put the function of firing a rifle at an enemy in combat into the larger context. And, the context is almost infinite as it can be expanded to go beyond the technical, organizational, tactical and operational dimensions to the strategic, political, historical, psychological, and ethical spheres as well. In shorthand, training tells us "what and how;" education tells us "why" and even "whether."

INTERVIEWER: What developments do you consider to have been the most significant while you were commanding TRADOC?

GEN DEPUY: Well, I guess we should take them by functional category. Starting with training, I would say that reorienting the school system so that it had a larger training as opposed to educational aspect to it. I regard that as very important. General Gorman and I saw eye to eye on that. But, there are those who feel that that was a mistake, and there are those who feel that we should educate officers and train soldiers. I think that is wrong. I think you should train a man for the job he is going to perform, and then you can educate him so that the intellectual and moral environment in which he pursues his particular job will be enhanced. That way you will have safeguards against stupidity, immorality, illegality, and so on. But, I believe you have to train a gunner to shoot. You have to train a squad leader to lead a squad. You have to train a man to be a tank commander. You have to train a man to be a tank platoon leader, and incidentally, he shouldn't be a tank platoon leader unless he first has been trained to be a tank commander because a tank platoon leader is also a tank commander.

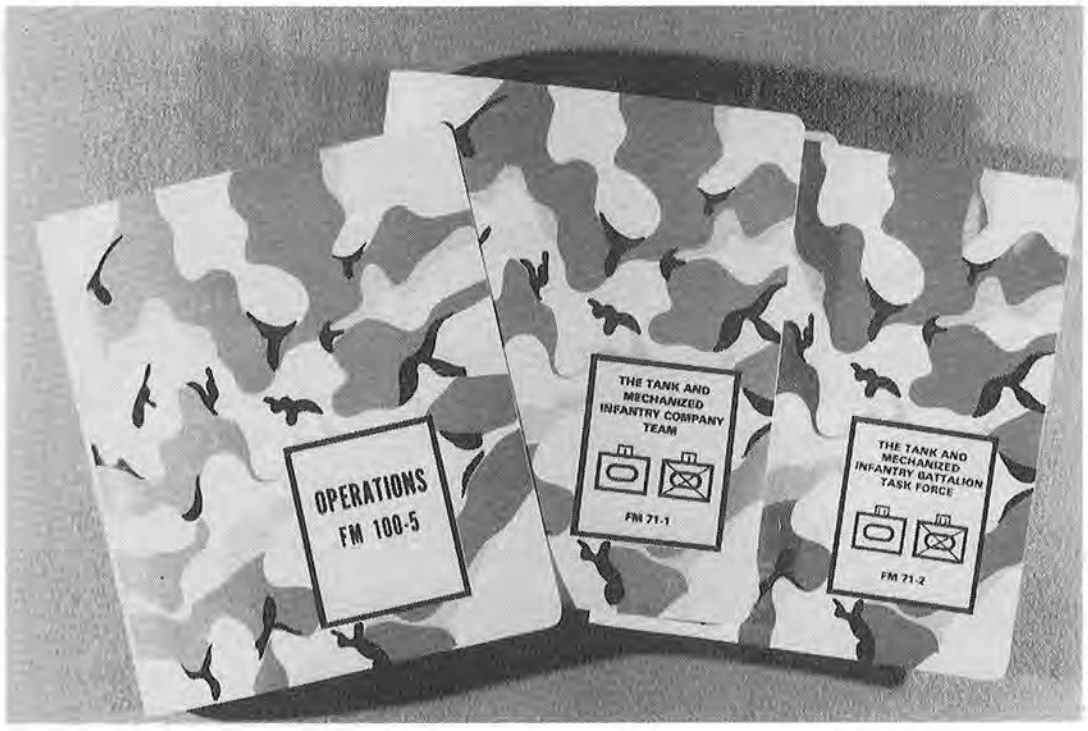
I think you train a company commander. You don't educate him, you train him to use tanks and tank platoons and infantry and antitank guided missiles. You teach him all about those things, about their tactical employment and about the organizations which employ them. Also, you teach him how to train the people inside his organization. I believe you train a battalion commander to operate a battalion. You look at a manual for a battalion task force, tank or mech, and I think you are looking at an operator's manual just like when you buy a car and you get an operator's manual. You buy a Toro lawn mower and you get a little booklet that tells you how to put it together and how to operate the thing. I think that the field manuals on the combat operations of a platoon, or a company, or a battalion, are, in fact, the operator's manuals, and the lieutenant colonels, or the captains, or the lieutenants, or the sergeants, need to be trained to get the most out of the mechanisms they have inherited.

Now, TRADOC did a lot in that direction, both in the officers' school system, in the NCO school system, in the training centers, and even in the Army Training and Evaluation Programs (ARTEPs) for unit commanders. It partakes to a very great extent of the Israeli system. The Israeli system is almost purely training. They don't have the time or the structure to educate for some future war. They only have time to train for this war, or the one they think could start tomorrow morning. So, it is a very austere, efficient, concentrated, and highly focused effort. I think it is also appropriate and necessary because of the complexity of modern weapons. I don't think that any other approach can cope with the modern battlefield and modern weapons. So, TRADOC moved the pendulum toward the center between education and training by pushing it hard towards training. We did that because training had almost disappeared, particularly for the officers. Not to worry that education was stamped out. It was not. It was simply that we tried to bring the training of officers up to an equal status with their education. I doubt that we ever made it and you can be absolutely certain that the pendulum will swing back. Performance-oriented training is so demanding that weak sisters will begin to drift away from it and drift back to the warm embrace of vague educational goals instead of specific training tasks. You can bet your farm on it!

Now, of course, with combat developments, as I indicated earlier, we tried very hard to bring it back to the practical, real world, where people could understand it and do something about it. And, we tried to orient it towards Europe, which is the principal and directed mission of the Army. TRADOC was involved in the process of decision-making during weapon system development through operational test design and then, by taking the test results through analysis, and drawing judgments as to whether or not the system was cost-effective in comparison with its predecessors or current competitors. This keeps TRADOC in business during the long years it takes to develop a new tank, a new antitank guided missile or a new aircraft. Some of these systems were taking ten to twelve years. But, during this period of time, there are very formalized steps during which the new model is tested and then the test results are analyzed to determine whether or not it is a good idea to proceed further when you compare the new weapon's actual performance against either the old weapon that it is scheduled to replace, or against some alternative weapon system. So, without saying a whole lot more, I think that the combat development process was sharpened up considerably, and the leverage of the user through TRADOC was increased.

Now, the third area, which really falls in between the first two in a rather awkward way organizationally, is doctrine — how to fight. After many experiments and much puzzling over where to put the responsibility, I finally put it in a special office called the Tactical Doctrine Office, which was an appendage of my own office. I understand that General Starry is going to create a separate staff section, but for the same reason. If you give it over to Combat Developments you have trouble because it gets into an area where a lot of individual weapons systems are being developed. There you don't seem to find the initiative and authority required to take new doctrinal directions. Those new initiatives almost have to come from, and with, the authority of the commander of TRADOC. That's what I discovered and that's what General Starry is discovering. I wasn't able to get Leavenworth to do it. Although they did a lot of good work, they just didn't seem to be able to do that. If you put it over on the training side of the house you have the same problem. So, Starry is deciding now what I decided a long time ago, which is, if you are going to change the doctrine by which the Army fights, which is enormously important and controversial, the higher level commanders must be directly involved. So, after the Arab-Israeli war, and after

our examination of new weapons systems, we embarked on updating the doctrine for the fighting elements of the Army. Our aim was to put out 40 or more "How to Fight" manuals, which would tell everyone in the combat and combat support arms how the Army would fight on the modern battlefield at every echelon from the weapons crew up through the division. That effort is about 60 to 70 percent complete now. The first manual was FM 100-5, and all the others in some way or other, are related to, or derived from FM 100-5.



"How to Fight" Manuals

FM 100-5 *Operations*

FM 71-1 *The Tank and Mechanized Infantry Company Team*

FM 71-2 *The Tank and Mechanized Infantry Battalion Task Force*

It was not a revolutionary doctrine, it was evolutionary, but it's more weapons oriented than any doctrine we have ever had before. It starts with weapons and then goes to the enemy, and then looks for the best solution for applying the weapons against the enemy in accordance with whatever mission you may have, like, for example, the defense of Europe. The doctrine in FM 100-5 was influenced greatly not only by weapons but also by the difficult military-political situation facing the German Army. General Abrams and Lieutenant General Hildebrandt, the Inspektur (Chief of Staff) of the German Army, directed me and Lieutenant General von Reichert, the German Army's Vice Chief of Staff, to conduct a series of staff talks to harmonize US and German doctrine, procedures and, if possible, weapons requirements. Very simply, the German problem is that West Germany has very little depth in which to conduct mobile operations. The Germans are

not interested in maneuvering around and through the industrial heartland and population centers of the Bundesrepublik which lie just a few miles from the border. Thus, with the German insistence on "Forward Defense," the military-political compromise we reached was to conduct an "active" (read highly mobile) defense compressed into a band of terrain of perhaps 20, 30 or 40 kilometers from the border. Recently, this concept has come under heavy criticism and has been labeled "attrition warfare."*

Furthermore, the argument goes that US doctrine is oriented too much towards the defense and is too dependent on high technology. These are profound questions which will be argued for a long time. There are no easy answers. That, I would say then, is the third major contribution of TRADOC.

Behind all of that is a big testing organization, an analytical organization, a training publications organization, ROTC, and many other things, but those were the big three — training advances in technique and in practicality; bringing combat development forward into the world of today's technology and getting it out of the vague distant future, while systematizing TRADOC's involvement in weapons systems acquisition; and then, lastly, updating or publishing a full new set of operating manuals for the Army.

INTERVIEWER: One of the things that you initiated when you commanded TRADOC was a study on the organization of the division. Would you tell us just how that fits into all of this?

GEN DEPUY: Yes. Very simply, the new doctrine of the Army or the doctrine which is expressed in FM 100-5 and all of the derivative manuals, very clearly is based around weapons systems. It says that you study the weapons, yours and the enemy's, and then you look for ways of optimizing the employment of your new weapons and minimizing your vulnerability to his weapons. Now, what we are confronted with is that new weapons are arriving in great numbers, all within a very short period of time. If you believe what the doctrine says, which is that tactics are based on weapons applied against a particular enemy for a particular purpose, then when you get new weapons you have to take a look at your organization and your tactics.**

Division 86, which is what they now call it — we called it the Division Restructuring Study — is an effort to adapt our organization to new weapons which are more lethal and more complex.*** For example, the XM-1 tank, the Infantry Fighting Vehicle (ITV), the Improved Tow Vehicle (ITV), the new air defense weapons, the attack helicopter, advanced tactical fighters, new artillery ammunition, TACFIRE, and other automated control systems, are, in most cases, as complicated or more complicated than World War II aircraft, which were all flown by officers. I say it is not too great a stretch of the imagination to have only lieutenants in XM-1 tanks. I could

*These criticisms and an excellent discussion of the evolution of Army doctrine during this period are contained in John L. Romjue, *From Active Defense to AirLand Battle: The Development of Army Doctrine, 1973-1982* (Washington: USGPO, 1984).

**This discussion refers to the 1976 version of FM 100-5. The Field Manual was changed substantially in 1982.

***For an overview of the evolution of Division 86, see John L. Romjue, *A History of Army 86*, 2 Vols. (Fort Monroe: US Army Training and Doctrine Command, 1982).

justify that. I am not suggesting that we do it right now. Frankly, I would suggest that we put warrant officers in as an immediate solution just to raise the quality of the tank commanders. If we already are having trouble in achieving full performance with the weapons we have today, and I maintain that we are having great difficulty in extracting the full potential from our weapons and from our organization, then we have to look for solutions.

There are two areas of solution and Division 86 is simply a reflection of that search. The first question we must answer is whether or not we intend to raise the quality of the operators to match the quality of the weapons. We just don't have the last surviving corporal in charge of a XM-1 if you want to exploit the capabilities of the XM-1 any more than the Air Force would put the oldest surviving mechanic in the cockpit of an F-15. The Air Force would never consider it, yet we consider it every day. We even take people out of the orderly room and the mess hall and put them in tanks. The Air Force doesn't do that. In the Army you buy quality by rank. If you can only get so much quality for $400 a month and you need to pay $1500 a month for the kind of quality you need, then what you are talking about is a lieutenant. If you are willing to pay $800 a month then you are talking about a sergeant. So, in the Army you get quality by raising the rank or increasing the rank mixture.

Now, because of the complexity of these weapons, both tactically and mechanically, the second thing you want to do is simplify the tactical training and maintenance responsibilities of the platoon leaders, company commanders and battalion commanders, to a level where they can cope with it. Right now they can't cope with it. They have too many men to be trained on too many weapons, in too short a time, with too many diversions. We know from testing that the difference between a well-trained crew and an average crew is very great. It can range from 20 to 50 percent of effectiveness, sometimes even more. So, that means you can get more combat effectiveness by increasing the performance of the unit than you ever could by putting new weapons in it. Well, that's what Division 86 is all about — an effort to improve performance by improving quality, by increasing the leadership mix, and through simplification by reducing the size of units so that the tactical and technical training comes back down to manageable levels.

INTERVIEWER: You have written extensively in the area of doctrine and have published in a number of periodicals. All of the work you did at TRADOC was focused on finding the essence of how the United States is to successfully conduct warfare in the future. I wonder if you would outline for us the lessons learned from the Arab-Israeli War of 1973, and what you took from that war that is applicable for the United States Army.*

GEN DEPUY: Well, the first thing the Arab-Israeli War did was to provide a marvelous excuse or springboard, if you will, for reviewing and updating our own doctrine. Some of the evidence coming out of that war was awesome. For example, the losses of equipment that occurred in a short period of time, and the fact that the Israelis ran more tanks through their maintenance

*Among the numerous accounts of the Arab-Israeli conflict of 1973, some of the more readable include: Avraham Adan, *On the Banks of the Suez: An Israeli General's Personal Account of the Yom Kippur War* (San Rafael: Presidio Press, 1980); Chaim Herzog, *The War of Attonement: October, 1973* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1975); The Insight Team of the London *Sunday Times The Yom Kippur War* (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1974); and Edgar O'Ballance, *No Victor, No Vanquished: The Yom Kippur War* (San Rafael: Presidio Press, 1978).

system than the total number of tanks they possessed at the beginning of the very short war. The lethality and range of weapons and the tremendous importance of well-trained crews and tactical commanders, as evidenced by the performance in certain areas of small numbers of Israelis against large numbers of say, Syrians. It also fed into our training philosophy which I discussed earlier — the training of a platoon leader, a tank commander, a gunner, and a battalion commander. It helped us argue for more training within the Army establishment.

Now, as far as "how to fight" goes, the big lessons applied to the lower echelons: the crew drills of the Israeli armored force; the mine-clearing techniques; and the assault of fortified positions. There wasn't anything that happened in the Arab-Israeli War that is in conflict with the doctrine which now has been published; but, it would be incorrect to say that the Arab-Israeli War was the sole foundation upon which that doctrine was built. In fact, there are aspects of the current US Army doctrine which the Israelis do not consider directly applicable to their tactical situation, one being elasticity or the active defense. They believe that they are perfectly able to defend on their frontiers and although they had trouble doing so in the Sinai, they essentially pulled it off in the Golan region. So, there are differences.

FM 100-5, therefore, partakes of the lessons of the Arab-Israeli War primarily in terms of the importance of weapons and weapons operators' proficiency and performance. As for the overall tactics, they are drawn much more from the very unique environment of NATO, which involves a two-to-one or three-to-one enemy superiority, the requirement for forward defense because of the political dynamics involved, particularly in West Germany — the fact of the matter is, there isn't much depth of terrain to fight on and there isn't much terrain to give away — and lastly, as I have described more than once, the fact that the reserves in the Soviet Union are a lot closer than the reserves in the United States, and the Soviet Union's reserves are much larger. So, from the moment the battle starts, we are at a disadvantage, and as the war goes on it gets worse, not better, as far as force ratios. So, FM 100-5 tries to express a unifying concept behind all of the new doctrine. It starts out and discusses at great length, weapons characteristics. Next, it talks at some length about the tactics of the Russians.

When FM 100-5 was written it was just before the current emphasis on a broad front attack, or a single echelon attack, or a daring thrust, whatever you want to call it. In those days most people were thinking about the classic breakthrough operation. It has since become very clear that there are other options and that the Russians may well use a broad front attack and what now are called Operational Maneuver Groups (OMGs). It really doesn't change what you have to do, but it does make it more difficult. FM 100-5 says that the first thing you have to do is understand the enemy. You have to understand his weapons and you have to understand his tactics. Also, you have to understand your own weapons, and how to use them to their absolute maximum, and to try to minimize your vulnerability to his weapons. It says that you have to have superior intelligence or information on the enemy if you are outnumbered. You have to have intelligence good enough and soon enough so that you have at least a slight jump on your enemy, something that is very difficult to accomplish. As he concentrates, whether in five big concentrations, or 30 little concentrations, or even 120 little concentrations, you know through your sensors and reconnaissance, and your target acquisition systems, at least the general location of his mass and the direction of his movement. Then, using your own mobility, you can begin to concentrate to defeat each of your enemy's concentrations. To do that you need all of your ground mobility, all of

your air mobility, all of the TAC AIR, and all the flexibility of your artillery, missiles and rockets. That is all concentration. And, the manual describes, and I think correctly and clearly, that concentration is primarily the business of division and corps commanders. The business of getting the Army on the right part of the battlefield and acquiring the intelligence which is needed in order to do that is the job of the generals at division and corps and above. Now, if you have been able to concentrate an adequate force quickly, then perhaps you can stop him and then counterattack to destroy him, and you can accomplish this mission well forward, which, of course, is what the Germans hope will happen.

If, on the other hand, there has been some glitch in the intelligence, some hesitation in the concentration, some deception on the enemy's part, or just a mistake on our part, and he hits our small force with a very hard blow, from a very large force, then the doctrine says that we have to trade a little bit of space for time and casualties. It describes how we can, in fact, fight a very stubborn action in a very small area, against a very large force, if we are very good at it, very well-trained, have good control, understand weapons, and use those weapons at their optimum engagement ranges, and then, move so that we are always fighting battles where they are most advantageous to us and least advantageous to the other side. There are many other things that need to be done including the synchronization of maneuver, air defense, fire support, electronic warfare, and all of the combat service support, through good command and control.

I would like to end this discussion by saying that there are people who feel that the doctrine of the Army is too defensive. They feel that success in battle only comes to the attacker. And, they are disturbed about the amount of time, effort, and concentration that we now have on the defense. I agree with all of that. I think it is too bad. I don't think it is a formula for winning the war. At best, it is a formula for a stalemate or for deterrence. Unfortunately, however, the facts of life in NATO, and the correlation of forces as the Soviets call it, are such that we do not have a general offensive capability in Europe. If you ask the Germans why they defended for two and one half years in France during World War I they would tell you because the forces were almost equal, and they used the rest of their forces to defeat the Russians. If you ask the Germans why they defended in Russia for two and one half years after their initial attack in World War II, they would say because the ratio of forces, the resources and the means of war dictated that. I once discussed this with General Haig. He accosted me with the fact that he thought we were concentrating too much on the defense. I replied that I wasn't concentrating on the defense, he was. I pointed out to him that in FM 100-5, we had one chapter on the offense and one chapter on the defense, and that he was the one who turned to the chapter on the defense and for very good reasons — because he has to defend. The correlation of forces is such that he must. I said, "If, on the other hand, you prefer to attack, go back to Chapter 1. It tells you how to do that. But, I notice that you are spending all of your time on Chapter 2."

So, this causes the Army some moral anguish. It hurts the feelings of soldiers to always be talking about the defense; there is a yearning to attack and to counterattack. Incidentally, the counterattack to destroy an enemy force which has been stopped by defensive fires is the essence of the "active" defense. But, the counteroffensive — to do that you need the forces, you need the resources, you need the ammunition, and you need the ability to sustain it. It is my judgment that the man who writes the doctrine doesn't decide how to fight any particular campaign; rather, the man who decides which part of the doctrine he is going to use is the operational commander

and he decides how he is going to fight in whatever theater of war he happens to be in at the time. Presently, it is Haig and Blanchard. At one time it was Pershing, and at another time it was Eisenhower. They all acted in accordance with the relative strength of the forces opposing them and their mission.*

INTERVIEWER: If you had to put your finger on two or three things that spell the difference between fighting outnumbered and winning and fighting outnumbered and losing, what would they be?

GEN DEPUY: If you have force ratios that are near the three-to-one or two-to-one level, performance by the crews and tactical leaders is going to make the difference. The quality of our corps, division, brigade, battalion and company commanders, and the quality of our tank crews, infantry fighting vehicle crews, air defense crews, and helicopter crews, will make the difference. I believe that the difference between the good unit and the bad unit is often a factor of four or five, even though they have the same number of men and the same weapons. There is no way that we can get the same degree of improved performance out of some small change in weapons as we can get through the careful selection of people, the training of people, the selection of leaders, and the training of leaders and units.

INTERVIEWER: You're talking now, not only of optimizing the capability of weapons, but of all the equipment. I remember when you discussed Vietnam, you were concerned with the agility of your units. The helicopters were there and all of that, but it was the commander who could think through how to successfully use that equipment who made the difference.

GEN DEPUY: Mobility is mental. Given any set of weapons at any particular time, the battle will be more affected by the difference in leadership and troop performance between the two armies than it will be by differences between weapons. The difference between the M-60 tank and XM-1 tank, although important, is less important than the difference between high performance units and low performance units.

INTERVIEWER: You mentioned mobility yet one of the criticisms that has been directed at the active defense has been that it assumes a mobility differential that we do not have.

GEN DEPUY: I don't think the active defense claims that you need a mobility differential — sort of a tank for a tank, or an IFV for an IFV, or a helicopter for a helicopter — because you don't. Really, it's intelligence; it's the decision-making process; it's the technique of using mission-type orders and moving fast; it's that mobility of mind. The mobility of the Air Force is high enough for concentration, and the mobility of the attack helicopter is high enough for concentration because

*For a biographical sketch of *General Haig*, USA Retired, see note, page 149. *General George S. Blanchard*, USA Retired, was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Infantry in 1944. During World War II he served with various infantry regiments in the European Theater of Operations. Subsequent assignments included duty as the Executive to the Secretary of the Army (1964-66); Commanding General, 82nd Airborne Division (1970-72); Commanding General, VII Corps (1973-75); and Commander in Chief, US Army Europe (1975-79).

the other guy is moving on the ground. The flexibility in long-range artillery and missiles is good for concentration, and our mobility on the ground, the cross-country mobility of our heavy equipment, is about the same as his. So, that criticism is, I think, ill-founded. I would say that mental agility is more important than physical mobility. The commander who is thinking ahead, leaning forward, figuratively speaking, issuing warning orders, and having everybody right on the tips of their toes ready to move at an instant's notice to one of three or four different places, and a unit commander who can say, "Follow me," and the unit will go with him and be briefed while moving — that's the kind of mobility that we need.

INTERVIEWER: Sir, throughout your career you developed a lot of concepts and important doctrinal points. Would you please mention those that you consider to have been significant developments?

GEN DEPUY: I think I will just go right to World War II and say that I really was impressed with the fact that we saw the German soldier only on very rare occasions, nor were we able to suppress him very well. So, the first lesson I learned was that he was a master at field craft — at cover and concealment. Later, when I looked at his positions, I was impressed by the way he picked positions where his body and his head were protected from frontal fire yet he was able to defend his position no matter what we threw at him. In turn, then, I was impressed with our inability to do suppression with indirect fire only. In the early days of the war we didn't use enough direct fire overwatching — I didn't know that word then — for suppression. I didn't even know the word "suppression." We used base of fire, but we didn't use enough base of fire and we weren't organized too well for it.

I also was very much impressed when I watched armored divisions doing what they call reconnaissance by fire, which is, in fact, suppression — watching the fantastic firepower of an armored task force as it swept by a wood line and just absolutely scorched it with fire and received



Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicle with Bushmaster

no return fire. So, I am not only a believer in suppression, but I am a believer in massive direct fire suppression; that is why I have been one of the greatest supporters of the Infantry Fighting Vehicle with the Bushmaster on it.

Of course another thing was the great utility that you got out of issuing very specific orders to soldiers. My conviction is that eight or nine out of ten soldiers off the streets need to be told specifically what to do on the battlefield. The battlefield is a terrifying place. It is an alien environment for a normal, gentle, human being; most people are not at home on the battlefield, and would prefer to be elsewhere. If they have the choice between being active and inactive, they will be inactive. Still, most of them will do what they are told to do. That tells me that we need a lot of instructions going to the soldiers all the time during battle. If not, nothing will happen. It will all die down and pretty soon there will be no activity of any kind — no firing, no movement, no initiative, nothing. I was impressed with the fact that the Germans always were talking a lot during the attack. You could hear them all the time issuing instructions such as go there, do this, and do that. On our side there was very little of that. So, what this tells me is that we need a lot of leadership on the battlefield and that that leadership has to be active. Otherwise, we will not get the soldiers to participate in the battle. We'll end up with only that hardcore 10 percent fighting, and that simply is not good enough; but, that is all we will get.

The other thing I discovered, which I have already mentioned, is that if we give our soldiers a separate mission like we did with the squads in the night attack at Maizieres les Metz, and let them figure it out for themselves, they just do magnificently. And, finally, the last point that came out of my European experience was the utter futility and the homicidal aspects of attacking an enemy head-on through his killing zone where he is strong. Vietnam bore that out again, as did Korea. Those were the things I really picked up there.

When I went to the 8th Infantry, in the early 1950s, which was my first command after the war, I formalized the overwatch which now has become the doctrine of the US Army in the cavalry, the armor, and the infantry. I also formalized the use of frontal cover with the foxholes — dig in behind the tree, behind the rock, or pile something up in front of you, and fire at an angle. Be able to see forward if you have to, but don't fight straight forward, otherwise you will be subjected to effective frontal suppression by the enemy and you won't be able to defend your position. The next chance I had with troops was with the 30th Infantry, which was the first mechanized battle group in the Army. There I learned that armored warfare requires different command techniques than does foot warfare, and that you can move faster and that you should exploit that capability. You need to think ahead. Again, most units have more mobility than they can use; so, you have to have mission-type orders, to move by checkpoints, and you have to have people who are trained to move very rapidly. Also, I learned a lot more about suppression while moving.

INTERVIEWER: Sir, looking back over your career, do you have any regrets or any dissatisfaction?

GEN DEPUY: Well, that is a very difficult question. I would do a lot of things differently. I think all of us would if we had known then what we either know or have figured out now. But, the main regret that I have is that I don't think I was very good at teaching. In other words, I think that if I had it to do over again, I would spend a little bit more time trying to teach people, as opposed to

managing or directing them. Now, that is easy to say but maybe it is unrealistic; some officers are very good at teaching while others are not so good. I think that I might have been able to propagate my ideas more effectively if I had been a little more patient with people and spent a little more time with them instead of being in such a bloody hurry. Looking back throughout all of my time in the Army, that's the one great regret I have.

INTERVIEWER: General Hackett's book, *The Third World War*, lists you as a contributor. Would you discuss your involvement with that book?*

GEN DEPUY: Well, I don't think I am violating a confidence with General Hackett. He wrote me a letter and told me that friends of his had suggested that I might help him, or participate with him, in writing a book. At that time I don't think it had a title, but he sent me an outline and the outline simply provided that the Russians would launch a surprise attack and NATO would be defeated in a very short period of time. The purpose of the book was to alert the governments of Europe to the problem and thus, hopefully, induce them to greater efforts — more money, more troops, and so on. I wrote back and told him that I had spent a number of years convincing or trying to convince, our Army that it could fight and win if it fought the right way, and that I really didn't want to associate myself with a book describing the defeat of our troops. I really couldn't walk away from what I had been doing over the last several years.

General Hackett wrote back and said that General Benecke of the German Army, a former Commander in Chief, Allied Forces Central Europe, had had somewhat the same reaction and as a consequence, he was going to change the approach. If you have read the book you will notice that it ends with a situation that many people say is very improbable. He has been criticized for that. But, no defeat was inflicted on NATO. I felt that a defeat would be bad for the morale of the soldiers and would not inspire the Dutch, the Danes, the Belgians, or the British, to spend more; rather, it would make it all seem even more hopeless. In any event, I then did send him some notes and suggestions, some of which found their way into the chapter on V Corps. He and his colleagues, whoever they are, then turned it into an exciting battle story. You will notice that the tactics contained in the book are FM 100-5, 71-1, and 71-2 tactics, and that the corps commander becomes the USAREUR commander. That was his idea, not mine, but it was a good one. So, that's the background.

INTERVIEWER: One final question. After several years of working with industry, how does the Army development program look from the outside?

GEN DEPUY: The short answer is frustrating. By that, I mean that the weapon systems acquisition process and structure are so enormously complex that industry finds it difficult to cope. The decision-making process is diversified and obscure. From inside it looked orderly and logical. From outside, it looks chaotic. For example, it is true that eventually decisions are made at or near the top by the ASARCS (Army Systems Acquisition Review Council), the DSARCS (Defense Systems Acquisition Review Council), congressional committess, or sometimes, willful individuals such as the Vice Chiefs of Staff, assistant secretaries, under secretaries, etcetera. But,

*General Sir John Hackett, *The Third World War: August 1985* (New York: MacMillan, 1978).

industry is incredibly well-informed through a penetrating intelligence network, about the shape and origin of the papers and studies upon which the decision-makers act. After all, the decision-makers are only as smart as the information they have. The information they have is carefully managed and metered by the staff agencies and commands upon which they depend. They are almost totally at the mercy of these information sources which, in turn, are vulnerable to their own internal workings and biases. This is the endemic disease of large bureaucracies. I know because I have been victimized many times by that system.

Let me give you a typical example. When the development community launches a new effort or proposal, it knows that it must show decisive improvement over the older model with the same function, e.g., the old scout helicopter versus the new scout helicopter, etcetera. A common argument is that the old model has reached its technological limits and it is now necessary to start from scratch. The amusing (a cynical choice of words) fact is, that just as soon as the new model is securely lodged in the program and budget, the development community discovers marvelous ways of improving the older system. You can bet your farm that the product-improved older system was *not* given a fair comparative evaluation during the decision-making process with regard to the new replacement — comparative that is, from a cost effectiveness standpoint. Now, this "information" on the lack of growth potential for the old system came from the same engineers and managers who suddenly saw all kinds of options five years later when they could do so without jeopardizing the new product. I call your attention to the M48A5 and M60A3 tanks as product improvements that flourished after the M-1 Abrams tank was secure. In this case it is important to acknowledge that chobham armor developments *did* require a new tank. Another example is the AH-1D Cobra attack helicopter versus earlier efforts to develop a light experimental helicopter. The vulnerability of decision-makers to the information control held by the development agencies is never higher than when the development agency is pushing its own design against all comers. The development commands compete with industry when they organize around some particular technology and push it through the decision process from an "insider's" position. The materiel command agencies are in the unique position of being the prosecutor, judge, and jury against any threatening competitor.

My advice to the Army Materiel Command is to disqualify the development command as an evaluative agency — which, by the way, is its primary function — when it has its own horse in the race. Being composed of humans, it is only too humanoid in its biases. The kind of "information" it supplies the decision-makers is often downright sinful. I could give examples but I then would be in a contest in which the "information" given to the high command in refutation of my charge would come from the accused. Thus, we then would re-enact the venal process one more time. In addition to disqualifying the government's development agencies as evaluators of their competitors one more step is essential. Industry must be afforded open channels to the decision-makers. These by-pass channels are essential to give decision-makers a balanced information diet. Of course industry will put its best foot forward. Of course it will bias its presentations. But, decision-makers need to hear opposite views and when possible, call for side-by-side evaluations — fly-offs, shoot-offs, etcetera. Industry tends to see the services as follows: the Navy owns its contractors; the Air Force is in cahoots with its contractors; and the Army fears its contractors. Overstated? Sure! But close enough for government work.

INTERVIEWER: Well, I believe that sums up what we set out to do.

GEN DEPUY: I want to thank you for taking the time and trouble to do all of this. I wish you both good luck and happy service.



Retirement review in honor of General DePuy, 30 June 1977.

1985 AFTERTHOUGHTS

When the director of the Military History Institute informed me that this oral history would be published he also asked if I had anything to add. Reading back over the manuscript it seemed to me that some subjects were not adequately or fairly covered because of the conversational method and the interaction of the participants. In short, some important subjects were dropped in midcourse as our attention turned to something else. Thus, these afterthoughts recorded five years later.

The first topic on which I have some afterthoughts is tactical doctrine. Recently I have given vent to my concern that "maneuver doctrine" has been oversimplified and that a basically good idea stands in danger of being corrupted by the uncritical enthusiasm with which it has been surrounded. My central thoughts on this subject are exposed in an article, "Toward a Balanced Doctrine," contained in the November 1984 issue of *Army* magazine, so I won't repeat them here.*

A second afterthought is related to the issue of weapons technology. It concerns the vast misunderstanding which I perceive in respect to the impact of technology on tactics. Few subjects have been the target of such loose thinking. On the other hand, nothing could be more important.

First, let me say that the so-called Congressional Reform Movement has been the source of nonstop rubbish on this subject. Unfortunately, they have apparently convinced a large number of otherwise sensible people that high technology is the enemy. They have taken some obvious truths and moved their argument abruptly to the big lie. No reasonable man favors "runaway" technology — weapons that won't work, costs that cannot be borne, or machinery that demands skills not to be found in the military population.

A description of the dark side of the military weapons development program, the worst examples, have been airily ascribed to the whole sincere and difficult search for excellence in the equipment to be provided the US Armed Forces — forces faced with formidable opponents worldwide, opponents who do not themselves shrink from high technology.

Much of the argument would be ludicrous were it not so dangerous. For example, some of the more feverish reformers yearn for the good old days of "low-tech" when our forces were equipped with P-51 fighters and SHERMAN Tanks. In their time, of course, P-51s and SHERMANS were high-tech. But, the baleful effects do not stop with such limited damage. These same worthies have managed to associate high technology with "attrition warfare". Whole battalions of impressionable minds have signed up for these mental gymnastics, this "disarming" concept.

At the same time, the anti high-tech crowd loves maneuver warfare — a concept of fighting which demands the highest technology man can design. The very systems of mobility (M1 Abrams tank, M2 Bradley fighting vehicle, M3 Scout vehicle, AH64 Attack helicopter, and UH60 Blackhawk utility helicopter), firepower (smart munitions and long range delivery systems),

*William E. DePuy, "Toward a Balanced Doctrine (Synchronization in Maneuver Doctrine)," *Army*, (November, 1984), 18-21.

intelligence (airborne sensors and analysis centers), and C^2 (satellite communications, cellular radios, graphic aids to decision making), upon which a maneuver doctrine utterly depends, is a fair inventory of the very highest technology.

The real issue is how to exploit American science and technology for decisive military purposes. How can we defeat our enemies quickly with the least cost in American lives and treasure? The Army has gone after this objective through the "Concept Based Requirements System". It supposes that the weapons systems acquisition process starts, or should start, with military requirements derived from operational concepts. This puts the conceptual people at the head of the line, that is, in the number one spot in a linear sequence. [See Chart, page 201]

This is not a bad concept except for one thing. It doesn't work that way. Operational concepts have never been able to "get out front." If you read them carefully — Airland Battle 2000, Army 21, Focus-21, and so on, you will find that they are, in fact, a description of the application of currently understood technology within the mainstream of tactical evolution. Ideas about air mobility *followed* the helicopter, they did not precede it! Go back and read Gavin's "Cavalry — And I Don't Mean Horses" in the '50s, in *Army* magazine.*

Deep attack, Follow on Forces Attack, and Assault Breaker, followed the discovery that we could make smart munitions. There are virtually *no* exceptions to this sequence. The technology comes first and then the applications, applications that are conditioned and constrained by the tactical concepts, follow.

It is important to understand and accept this relationship. But, the thought goes farther. The relationship between the research community, the developers and the users, is clearly circular. That is, the relationship is interactive and continuously so. As with all circles, there is no point of origin and no end point. Research is not conducted without an awareness of potential applications. Development of those applications is not undertaken in an employment vacuum. Concepts of employment are a synthesis of tactical experience and new technical capabilities.

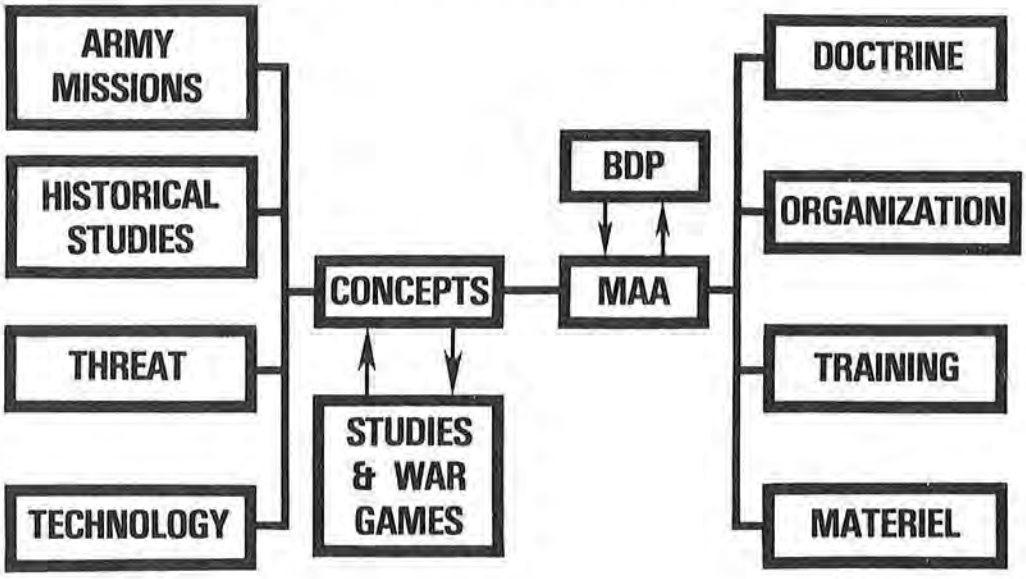
Unfortunately, the circular imperative collides with the linearity of our organizations and procedures, particularly with the rigid temporal linearity of the program and budget process. Every element or link in the chain yearns for the orderly, simple, linear process. The user states a "military" requirement and the research and development community follows orders. How naive!

It is the feedback loops between the creators (researchers), applicators (developers), and exploiters (tactical users), that are critical and enormously difficult to achieve. Linearity hates feedback loops. They interrupt the smooth flow of the program and funding process. They embarrass the user who changes his performance specifications. They cause cost overruns and change test criteria.

I see no easy way out of the dilemma. It calls for an appreciation of the complexity of the relationship and constant vigilance. Let me cite two examples, one good and one bad. The Mechanized Infantry Combat Vehicle — later known as the M2 Bradley — program was interrupted and delayed, and cost increases occurred when the users finally realized after testing that the fighting vehicle needed a two-man turret instead of the original one-man version. The change was made. The developer was mad at the user, and Congress was mad at everybody. Yet, it was exactly the right thing to do. This change was the product of a circular, not a linear process.

*James M. Gavin, "Cavalry, And I Don't Mean Horses," *Armor*, 68 (May-June, 1954), 18-22; and *Combat Forces Journal*, 4 (June 1954), 22-27.

CONCEPT BASED REQUIREMENTS SYSTEM



In the case of the division air defense weapon system, it became apparent through analysis first, and tests later, that the guns alone could not do the whole job. The circular feedback loop cried for the addition of a light missile like STINGER. But, the orderly forces of linearity prevailed — backs were stiffened, necks were bowed, and the Army has a troubled system. Human beings aren't smart enough to move operational concepts beyond the state-of-the-art. People aren't smart enough to *anticipate* the kinds of information that will begin to flow to them from the feedback loops *during* research development and exploitation.

Management has tried to build a fail-safe linear system. Remember "fly before buy," independent testing, and independent cost analysis? Well, to date, management has failed. They should start all over again and accept the circular process. After all, it is easier to move on a wheel than a skid. A stone boat was a linear concept.

The third and last afterthought pertains to the soldier. Reading back over the transcript I don't think I gave the soldier — the private soldiers and the junior NCOs in World War II — a fair representation. You recall I said that only a small fraction did the fighting. That was true, but it was the product of untrained leaders at every level. To the best of my knowledge, in every army — and my German and Israeli friends verify this point — only a few men are natural, aggressive fighters. The rest respond only to firm, sensible leadership. When casualties are high, leaders go first. In the six weeks in Normandy the 90th Division ran through two to five sets of infantry company officers — 150 percent of the total number of officers in the division, which represented about 2,000 men. This had two effects. First, these junior officers never had time to season, and second, their training was mechanical and technical rather than tactical. The training never did improve, but as the war went on a few survivors accumulated some seasoning through luck and natural cunning. Once the meat grinder of Normandy was broken up, the casualty rates

went down and the reciprocal seasoning rates went up. By the midpoint of the war we had a fair number of smart, tough fighters. Troop performance improved along a parallel path. By the end of the war the 90th was a good division, not brilliant, but good — as good as one could expect, and better than most.

General McLain, a splendid officer, told us when he first arrived that there was nothing wrong with the 90th Division except for its leaders. The troops, he said, were just like those in the best divisions, and he was right. Therefore, the secret to success lies in the selection and training of leaders *before* the first battle so that the seasoning process can stay ahead of the casualty process. When the opposite happens, as in the case of the 90th Division, a downward spiral occurs and the resultant disaster is a producer of mass casualties without any offsetting contribution to the war effort. In Normandy, the 90th Division was a killing machine — of our own troops!

This leads to the crucial question as to what has been done to avoid a repetition of this process. I am happy to be able to say that the present officer selection and training process is light years ahead of the "peoples' army" of World War II. It is also miles ahead of the process used during the Vietnam War.

First, the Army now selects its battalion and brigade commanders from among its highest quality officers through a centralized process. The difference in performance, even in peacetime, is startling.

Second, training has been moved to a new and much higher plateau of effectiveness and the credit for the conceptualization of that massive change goes to General Paul Gorman, the revolutionary Deputy Chief of Staff for Training at TRADOC from 1974 to 1977. To Gorman goes the credit for moving from time oriented training — "In the next hour we will discuss the platoon in the attack, or the operation of the PRC-77 radio, or the M-1 rifle" — to performance based training — "At the completion of this demonstration you will be required to place the PRC-77 into operation in the proper manner. If you cannot perform this function you will repeat the instruction on an individual basis."

From World War I until 1975, the Army followed the Army Training Program which carried a division from individual training through squad, platoon, company, battalion, regiment or brigade, to division, in each arm or service on the basis of so many hours for this and so many hours for that. Men and units proceeded through the program whether they learned or not. Frankly, nobody knew. There were few tests and what there were, were subjective. If you could survive the schedule you were presumed to be trained. The heart of the Gorman revolution was that no soldier proceeded to Step 2 until he had demonstrated satisfactory hands-on performance of Step 1. This same procedure was applied to units. The concept led to the soldiers' manuals, Skill Qualification Tests, and the Army Training and Evaluation Program. Gorman was also the conceptualizer of the National Training Center and of advanced simulation and simulator development throughout the Army.

My net assessment of the effect of these two vital programs — leader selection and performance training — is that the performance and battle participation level of the American Army has moved from the 20 percent to the 60 percent level and is rising.

In fact, the whole Army in every department is in great shape. The soldiers, by every measurement, are the best the country has seen in its Army and vastly better than during the

draft. Officers are better trained and more carefully selected for command. NCOs are progressively trained in their own education system. Individual performance — as in tank gunnery — has never been higher. Unit performance because of such programs as the NTC is the highest ever achieved in a peacetime Army. The new doctrine is superior to the old and the whole Army is intellectually engaged in that collective enterprise. The image of the Army as portrayed in the press and on television is radically out of step with the realities. It is too bad that the American public does not know what a fine Army they have. Perhaps they are beginning to appreciate the higher quality of this critically important institution. It is not perfect. It is sometimes hard to love. But it is solid and honest and sincere in its unremitting efforts to achieve excellence. It will serve the country well.

This brings me to my last observation — a word about the Army as an institution and a career. The Army has been good to me. It has given me an exciting and satisfying life — a purpose and a fulfillment. The common caricature of military life is one of stultifying regimentation, a narrow and confining life, and a numbing boredom. Perhaps we shouldn't let the secret out that this caricature is not only wrong but is, in fact, a reversal of the facts.

My experience and opinion, particularly after observing the great American industrial establishment at close hand, is that there are more degrees of freedom in a military career than one could find outside with rare exceptions. The distinguishing characteristic of a command position AT ANY LEVEL is that the incumbent is *ON HIS OWN*. If he expects to have his hand held — it won't happen. The higher the command the more total is the veil of silence which descends upon the commander. He is given all the elbow room he needs to put the stamp of his own convictions and capabilities on the enterprise over which he presides. He also has enough rope to hang himself should he be inadequate to the challenge. The difference in style and substance between two military commands is as great or greater than that between any two civilian enterprises, and the differences flow from the man in charge.

My advice to the serving officer is to think long and hard before jumping into the "Greener Pastures" on the other side of the fence. You are now in the most productive years of your life in the most important business in the country, and you will find few opportunities on the outside to match those which you take for granted in the Army.

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