NINTH U.S. ARMY
North U.S. Army

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Critique

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   A. G-2 Remarks #99, 12 Dec
During October over the Ninth Army was the northernmost American Army, adjacent to the Second British Army, also in HOLLAND, and from 16 November the Ninth drove to the ROER River, approximately six miles distant from its 22 October front lines, and where it was situated late 15 December, planning a crossing of the ROER. The Ninth's major expression of its opinion of the enemy capabilities consisted in (1) the belief in the strength of the enemy's ROER fortification, (2) the recognition of the ROER dems flooding threat, (3) and the recognition of the presence and power of the Sixth Panzer Army as a strategic reserve west of the RHINE. There was no expression of opinion that USDA expected or considered the enemy capable of the Counteroffensive.

HUSA arrived in France during late August, became operational on 6 September, and its major action during September was the conquest of REEST, with containing actions against the ports of LKENINT and ST. MAZAIRE. (1) The Army became the northernmost U.S. Army in the Twelfth Army Group when its command post was established on 22 October in HAIKISTRICT, Holland; the activity of the month consisting of planning for action west of the RHINE, and supply and movement to the assigned zone. (Ibid.) Containing operations continued until 16 November, when HUSA launched an aggressive drive to the ROER River, about six miles distant, in conjunction with the adjacent (south) First U.S. Army's drive to cross the ROER. (Ibid) Despite stiff resistance, both the XIII and XIX Corps were situated on the west bank of the ROER at the end of November. (Ibid)

Until 16 December, the Ninth Army eliminated remaining enemy forces in its sector west of the ROER, and prepared to cross the ROER. (I,D) Resistance was stubborn, counterattacks were mounted although 1th enemy had withdrawn his high grade troops, and the enemy was alert, with evidences of "grim determination to defend between the ROER and RHINE."

During the first two weeks of December the Ninth Army planned the ROER assault. (I,D) Three considerations were quoted by the G-2 After Action Report for December as being of "considerable importance." (II,A) First, USDA regarded the enemy field fortifications west of the ROER to be extensive, and a successful crossing required detailed planning and means to breach the. Second, the
enemy capability of releasing the ROER dams south of Duren to flood the river valley was considered such a serious threat that the attack had operation had been postponed by "higher authority," until their destruction by aerial bombardment or capture by the First U.S. Army. The third factor was the respect held for the reserve Sixth Panzer Army. USAA's attitude towards this force was expressed thus: As to the third consideration, 6th Panzer Army, the enemy had been about to contain the Ninth and Ninth Armies with committing any of the Four Panzer Division constituting this force. This enemy had given him a very powerful mobile striking force, with which to counter any break through of his River defences. The presence of such strong forces east of the Rhine and the strength of the River works made it clear that the enemy intended to make a determined stand west of the Rhine along the River."

This opinion of the Sixth Panzer Army as a strategic reserve constituted the Ninth Army's expression of its appraisal of the major enemy capabilities and intentions. "Large-scale counterattack potentials, intentions, or capabilities were not discussed among the daily C-2 Periodics. USAA's reports did not indicate that the command had stated its views about the enemy in C-2 Estimates of the Enemy Situation. Air reconnaissance did not suggest enemy buildup operations and offensive intentions, possibly because poor weather had forced reduced flights." (II) No interpretive commentary was offered on the the point "several changes in enemy dispositions occurred during the week of 9-16 December, merely the shifting to the south of the 26th Panzer and 3 Panzer Grenadier Divisions, and movement of the 266th Infantry Division into the Ninth's zone." (Ibid.)

Enemy operations on the 16th did not seriously affect the Ninth, according to the December 3-2 After Action Report:

"On the 16th of December, the enemy launched a powerful offensive on the right of the First Army. A considerable portion of the available German reserves was used in this drive. "Having thrown the bulk of his forces into this attempted break-through, the enemy was fairly quiet on the Ninth Army front, engaging principally in harassing artillery and mortar fire and field consistent air activity throughout the period."
I. After/Action Reports, Army.

A. September, 1944.
(Source: L-196(1))

NUSA assumed initial operational responsibility on 5 September, having arrived in the CHERBOURG Peninsula during late August. It captured the city of BREST, France on 16 September, and the month concluded with containing action against the ports of LORIENT and ST. NAZAIRE.

B. October.
(Source: L-216(1))

The command post was moved to NAASSMAT, Holland, and the headquarters was established by 22 October. During the month NUSA was concerned with planning of operations against enemy positions west of the RHINE, and with supply and movement of units to the rear of action. There was some minor activity by and against the XII Corps in particular, but no major enemy activity. NUSA became the northernmost III U. S. Army on the Twelfth Army Group's front.

C. November.
(Source: L-268(1))

At the beginning of the period NUSA occupied a 14 mile front roughly from the RHINE River, north of which was the Second British Army, to approximately WURSELEN, the boundary with the First U. S. Army. Containing operations and patrols comprised the operations until 16 November, when a Army Group offensive was launched toward KOB. NUSA was to drive aggressive to the ROER River, about six miles distant, and the First Army was to drive across the ROER. Resistance was stiff, but the month's end found both the XIII and XII Corps on the west bank of the ROER River.

D. December.
(Source: L-344(1))

"Until 16 December the divisions of the Army were eliminating the remaining enemy formations in the sector west of the Roer River and restoring, refitting and training for the next assault to cross the Roer toward the Rhine. ..."
The enemy drive altered plans, and new ones had to be made without delay. Every effort was devoted to preventing the advance of the Russian forces west of the Rhine, against the flank of the American left wing. The problem of fighting back against the drive, to rendering assistance to the hard-hit First Army of the south...

"The XXX TAC was hampered by poor weather but managed to fly some missions, cutting rail lines, attacking fortified sites and giving close support to ground troops whenever visibility permitted. In early December the staff was engaged in planning the crossing of the Roer River. Such plans and to take into account tactical fortifications on the eastern bank, the possibility of flooding through demolition of the dams on the upper reaches of the river and the disposition of the Sixth Panzer Army, "a very powerful mobile striking force," somewhere west of Cologne.

Resistance remained stubborn up to the conclusion of the operation on the Roer, with counterattacks mounted from time to time, although the enemy had withdrawn some of his high grade troops. He was sensitive to patrols across the Roer. His posts were manned and he was alert. Our troops observed extensive digging and other evidences of a grim determination to defend the area between the Roer and the Rhine Rivers."

II. C-2 After/Action Report.
(Source: L-344(7))

A. 1-15 December.

"Situation at Beginning of Period.
At the beginning of the month, Ninth Army was continuing its drive toward the Rhine River (Operation Q). Stubborn enemy resistance, heavy minefields, and bad weather had all contributed in slowing the advance. In spite of these difficulties, the Army had gradually moved forward. At the end of November our front lines, except in the extreme north portion lay generally along, or slightly to the West of the Roer River. At this point, forward movement became secondary to consolidation of the position, rectification of the front lines, and preparation for crossing the Roer River.

"The crossing of the river itself was estimated to be a simple operation in view of the small size of the obstacles. However, there were three factors of considerable importance to be considered before forcing the crossing. First, the extensive field fortifications constructed by the enemy on the East side of the river. Second, the known capability of the enemy to flood the Roer River valley by release of water impounded by 3 dams South of Duren. Third, the location of the 6th Panzer Army West of Cologne in the zone of advance of Ninth and First Armies.

"The first of these considerations, the enemy defensive works, made it a prerequisite of a successful crossing to have all details of the positions worked out and the necessary means available to breach the enemy's formidable positions. The second consideration,
the enemy's capability of flooding the valley was considered so serious a threat to the success of the crossing, that higher authority had directed a postponement of the bridgehead operation until the dams in question had been destroyed by aerial bombardment or captured by the First Army. As to the third consideration, the 6th Panzer Army, the enemy had been able to contain the Ninth and First Armies without committing any of the four Panzer Divisions constituting this force. This economy had given him a very powerful mobile striking force with which to count any break thru of his Roer River defences. The presence of such strong forces west of the Rhine and the strength of the Roer River works made it clear that the enemy intended to make a determined stand west of the Rhine along the Roer.

"Enemy Operations During the Period.
"Resistance on the front continued to be stubborn at all points of contact. . . .
"During the second week of the period, the last enemy resistance West of the Roer and Inde Rivers in the XX Corps zone ended after our troops, in bitter fighting, cleaned up the Sportplatz and Hassenfeld Gap. Save all of our patrols crossed the river. Enemy outposts and pillboxes were well manned and alert. The period closed quietly.

"Enemy Dispositions During the Period.
"There were no changes during the first part of the month, except that contact was lost with 19 SS Pz Divs. . . . Most of the fighting on the Ninth Army front was being done by 363 Inf Div. The enemy's nominal strength on our front continued to be 3 divisions, equivalent only to 3-4 divisions (27,000 men) supported by 90 tanks.
"By the end of the period all Pz and Pz Gr Divs had been withdrawn from contact. Four Volksgren Divisions remained on the line. It was estimated that 2 Pz Divs, 2 Pz Gr Divs and 1 Inf Div were in immediate reserve, with the 6 Pz Army in strategic reserve.

"G-2 Air.
"Throughout the period bad weather of preceding weeks and the resultant poor conditions of many of the air strips had hindered the activity of the G-2 Air Branch. Such conditions made it necessary to fly on a reduced scale for a large part of the period, and photography was reduced. In order to alleviate this condition, tactical reconnaissance aircraft were given photo missions in addition to their regular visual missions. In this way a portion of the photo reconnaissance was completed."

B. 16-31 December.

"Situation at Beginning of Period.
"During the week immediately preceding the period under review, enemy activity on the Ninth Army front had been confined to limited counter-attacks, patrolling, and harassing artillery fire. On 9 December the last enemy resistance west of the ROER and INR
Elbe in the XIX US Corps zone had been eliminated as ZAPPINKELATZEN (FO25 594) and RASMUSSEN (SM27) were cleared. Several of our patrols crossed the fast flood-swollen ROE RIVER, only to find a vigorous and alert enemy on the east bank.

Several changes in enemy dispositions occurred during the week 9-16 December. The Second SS Panther Division and Third Panzer Grenadier Divisions were shifted south out of the Ninth Army zone. The 36 Infantry Division was moved into the zone. On the 16 December, enemy strength on the Army front was a nominal 7 divisions, equivalent to 5-6 divisions (25,500 men), supported by approximately 95 tanks.

Enemy Operations During the Period.

On the 15th of December, the enemy launched a powerful offensive on the front of the First Army. A considerable portion of the available German reserves was used in this drive.

Having thrown the bulk of his forces into this attempted breakthrough, the enemy was fairly quiet on the Ninth Army front, engaging principally in harassing artillery and mortar fire and fairly consistent air activity throughout the period....

III. G-2 Periodical.

(Source: L-344 (E))


1. Enemy Situation at End of Period.

2. Defensive Organization.

Confirmation of the enemy's intention to utilize the ROE RIVER dams as a defensive measure was received from a PW captured by First US Army. The PW, of 942nd Rgt, 353rd Inf Div, stated that his unit received a message the night of 11 Dec which said that upon the radio signal HUM, repeated four times, the Commandant of DOREN (P1246) would order the opening of the flood gates of the dam. The PW believed this could be accomplished by means of a single electric switch in DOREN."

Order of Battle Notes, attached to the Periodical.

1. General: "

a. Sixth Army: A PW captured by 3 US Armored Div claims that the HQ of Sixth (66) US Army is located at Castle SCHLEGELHEIM (7253611)."