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*American Intelligence on the German
Counter-offensive*

1 November - 15 December 1944

Vol. I. - Corps, Armies, 12th Army Group.

(Vol. II. - Divisional Level).

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ORDER OF THE DAY, 16 DECEMBER 1944.

By: Commander-in-Chief West.

Soldiers of the Western Front!

Your great hour has come!

Today, strong attack armies have gone into action against the Anglo-Americans.

I do not have to tell you any more. You are all aware of the fact that:

Everything is at stake!

Bear in mind your holy responsibility to sacrifice everything and to perform the supreme task for

our Fatherland and our Führer!C-in-C West
von Rundstedt
(Fieldmarshal) Generalfeldmarschall.

Hauptquartier, den 12.44

618aten der Westfront!Eure große Stunde hat geschlagen!Starke Angriff-Armeen sind heute gegen den Anglo-Amerikaner angetreten. Mehr brauche ich Euch nicht zu sagen. Ihr ~~mit~~ fühlt es alle.Es geht ums Ganze!

Tragt in Euch die heilige Verpflichtung, alles zu geben und Übermenschliches zu leisten für

unser Vaterland und unseren Führer!

Der Oberbefehlshaber West

Von Rundstedt

Generalfeldmarschall

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REF ID: A557776

OBJECTIVES.

To determine if the American commands:

1. Considered the German forces capable of launching a major counteroffensive.
2. Expected the 15 December Counteroffensive as the result of recognition of enemy build-up preparations.
3. Forwarded intelligence data to higher and lower commands which they acquired and interpreted as attack signs.
4. Realized quickly the assault's gravity.

METHODOLOGY.

1. A detailed examination was made of intelligence and operational combat records that were officially issued by all participating command and on at least the regimental level up, and which were held by the Historical Records Section, Departmental Records Branch, AGO.

A. Particular intelligence documents were aggressively sought and exhaustively examined, e.g., G-2 Periodics, Estimates of the Enemy Situation, G-2 Journal, G-2 messages, all of which were currently written and presumably not subject to later editing for revision of facts or points of view purposes.

2. Combat Interviews also maintained by the Historical Records Section were examined with care. Inasmuch as officially issued documents such as After/Action Reports and their supporting documents tended to recount actions without commentary, Combat Interviews were usually the only available source for commanders' opinions, analysis, and descriptions of intentions and plans. Furthermore, Combat Interviews partially substituted for loss of records due to capture or destruction, e.g., the 106th Infantry Division had two regiments captured on 19 December, with the resultant loss of records. Combat Interviews also tended to provide more detailed descriptions of specific incidents than did official issuances, which often reported only the bare outlines.

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AMERICAN INTELLIGENCE ON THE GERMAN COUNTEROFFENSIVE.

1 November - 15 December 1944.

Resumé

I. Order of Battle, Missions and Operations.

When the Counteroffensive was launched during the morning of 16 December, the American Order of Battle in the zone of the Twelfth U.S. Army Group was as follows, north to south:

NINTH U.S. ARMY	
FIRST U.S. ARMY	
VII Corps	
V Corps	
78 Inf. Div.	
2 " "	}
99 Inf. Div.	
VIII Corps	}
106 Inf. Div.	
28 " "	}
9 Arm'd Div.	
4 Inf. Div.	}
THIRD U.S. ARMY	

-----ARDENNES area.

Divisions:

Six divisions were on the Ardennes line, and another, the 83d Infantry Division, had departed as recently as 7 December, having been on this line for approximately 2-1/2 months. Of these seven divisions, the 106th Infantry and 9th Armored possessed very limited capacities for the performance of intelligence. Their commitment was their first of the war, and they had been positioned only five days. In contrast, the other five divisions were substantially more qualified to estimate the enemy, due to considerable previous battle experience and/or a several week position tenure. They were: 2d, 28th and 83d Infantry Divisions, which were battle-wise, and had occupied Ardennes sectors from three to ten weeks; 4th Infantry Division, very battle experienced, but only eight days on the Ardennes line, and the 99th Infantry Division which had been on the line for five weeks for its initial occupation of a front line sector.

None of the seven divisions were placed upon the Ardennes front for defense against an expected or even possible major offensive. The original 2d Division's mission was to relieve the 4th and 28th Divisions, then on

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19 December it moved to the V Corps to participate in that command's 13 December SCHELT and ROER Dams offensive. Also committed to this assault was the 99th Division which had been engaged in the unsuccessful November SCHELT drive of the V Corps. Battle indoctrination on a quiet front was the objective of the new, inexperienced 103th Infantry and 8th Armored Divisions. Rehabilitation was the need and mission of the 4th and 28th Divisions after their HUPGEN Forest fighting. Vigorous patrolling of the JOELLE-SAUER Rivers to prevent river crossings was expected of the 83d Division.

Quiet, inactive fronts were anticipated by the 1th, 103th, Infantry and 8th Armored Divisions. The 2d, 28th, 83d and 99th Divisions did not express their expectations.

Divisional operations were defensive on quiet, inactive fronts until 13 December, when the 2d and 99th Divisions went onto the offensive in the V Corps ROER dams drive. Prior to and subsequent to that date, there was no indication of divisional changeover from either defense or offense to defensive emergency measures prompted by sudden intelligence that a major attack was imminent.

Corps:

The First Army had three Corps on the line, north to south, the VII, V, and VIII. Each had occupied its position since early October.

The northern one, the VII, was an experienced command, having participated in some of the heaviest American fighting since its invasion landing on UTAH Beach, D-Day, 6 June. It launched an attack on 18 November to seize EOLF, as part of the First Army's drive towards the ROER dams. By 14 December the main enemy resistance west of the ROER had ceased in the northern half of the Corps zone, and likewise on the southern on the 16th. Patrolling and clearing the enemy from the west bank were the actions on the 17th and 18th of December, and defense improvement was the activity on the 19th and 20th. Effective 212400 December, its zone was assumed by the XIX Corps, and it moved to the MARCHES-TOTTEN area. Thus, the VII Corps was north of the 16 December Counteroffensive, and did not engage in the action until 22 December, when it defended, having moved into the attack area.

Similar to the VII Corps, the D-Day V was battle-wise and pre-occupied with the First Army's offensive to the ROER. Having launched its attack on 13 December, the V Corps was striving to capture the ROER River dams, and continued on the 16th, although it was slowed by increasing German resistance. Its southern flank division, the 99th Infantry, and adjacent to the VIII Corps, was struck by the German onslaught on early 16th, forcing the 99th onto the defensive.

In contrast to the other two Corps, the southern VIII was the major initial victim of the enemy attack of the 16th. Following its mid-June

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arrival in France, and its BREST campaign, the VIII Corps assumed a defensive position on the Ardennes front in early October. Activity continued defensive, with some active patrolling and harassing artillery until the morning of the 16th when the enemy launched his Counteroffensive against the VIII.

Armies:

North to south were positioned the Ninth, First, and Third Armies, as of early 16 December. The Counteroffensive was initially launched against the First Army. All three armies were experienced commands, the First being the senior, having landed on D-Day. As of 16 December, the Ninth was situated on the ROER River, planning a crossing. The First was continuing its offensive toward the RUINE, to capture KOLN and SOFT. Specifically, its immediate objective was the capture of SCHIED and the ROER River dams, an offensive launched on 13 December by its VII and V Corps. The Third Army was engaged on the First Army's southern flank in an offensive in the SAAR region.

Army Group:

The Twelfth U.S. Army Group was the command under which were the Ninth, First, and Third Armies. It was known also as the Central Group of Armies. The British occupied its northern flank, and the Sixth U.S. Army Group the southern.

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II. Estimates of Enemy Offensive Potentialities.

None of the commands on the division, corps, army, or army group level expressed the expectation that the enemy would launch a major counterblow approximately during December on its own initiative, independent of the American (or Allied on the Western Front) operations.

Primary Expectations and Conceptions:

Divisions: The most prevalent description was the characteristic of defense. Some minor aggressiveness was expected, such as small patrol actions, infiltrations, harassing artillery fire, and limited, local counter-attacks. 2d Division claimed a major counterattack from the OERUND-SCHLEIDEN area in case of sizeable penetrations.

Corps: Determined defense; and counterattacks against penetrations.

Armies: Concern over the northern locale was the dominant thought. Enemy action in the north was expected.

12th Army Group: Extreme optimism that the enemy would collapse suddenly in the face of pressure was the key thought. The Group felt the enemy gave priority to the northern locale.

Employment of Sixth Panzer Army as Strategic Reserve:

Divisions: 2d: Expected it to be retained as a single, strong counterattack force, rather than as relief of the hard pressed forces east of AACHEN.

Other divisions: They identified movements and dispositions of various enemy units, but not as an organized army.

Corps: VII: Elements would probably counterattack after the VII reached the East bank of the ROER River.

VIII: It was backing up the infantry. In general, enemy reserve forces (designation not specified) were not expected to counter-attack unless the enemy felt the VIII was mounting an offensive.

V: Did not mention the Sixth Panzer Army, although the V Corps referred to five committed panzer divisions.

Armies: FUSA: To be used after the Allies had crossed the ROER River.
 NUSA: To counter breakthroughs of the ROER defenses.
 TUSA: To launch a spoiling attack in the AACHEN-DUREN sector.

2 Estimates

12th A Gp: To be retained as a unit to counterattack after the Allies had crossed the ROER.

Location of Sixth Panzer Army:

Divisions:

2d: Did not know.

Corps:

VII: Did not mention location.

V: Stated that five panzer divisions were uncommitted west of the RHINE, but did not designate the force as the Sixth Panzer Army or any other.

VIII: Vicinity of COLOGNE.

Armies:

NUSA: Mentioned only movements of certain divisions southward, with no allusion to them being of the Sixth Panzer Army.

FUSA: Believed it between the ROER and the RHINE.

TUSA: Believed it between DUESSELDORF and COLOGNE. Added that 14 German divisions were out of contact, 8 Panzer, 3 Para, and 3 Infantry.

12 A Gp: Described as located west of COLOGNE, possibly BIELEFELD, but its whereabouts were admittedly unknown.

General Analysis by Command Level:

Division.

References to an expectation that the enemy would launch a major counterblow approximately during December were wholly lacking. Some minor aggressiveness was expected, such as local counterattacks, small patrol actions, harassing artillery fire.

However, certain major, yet limited, attacks were deemed possible or probable. The 4th Division regarded the enemy as capable of an attack to seize the CITY OF LUXEMBOURG. A distracting attack upon ETTELBRUCK could be launched, according to the 28th. Day or night counterattacks, utilizing reserves up to 12,000 men, were considered within the enemy's capability by the 83d Division. The 2d claimed on 11 December that the enemy could make local counterattacks and a major one from the GEMUND-SCHLEIDEN area in case of sizeable American penetrations. According to the 99th, limited, possibly regimental attacks could be made against it to relieve pressure, as a reaction to the 99th's offensive. On the other hand, the 99th also considered the enemy capable of infiltrating and penetrating the 99th's thinly held positions, even

thrusting an entire battalion through the line at any number of locations. Neither the 106th Infantry nor the 9th Armored referred to limited attacks within their sectors.

On the division level, only the 2d Division commented on the Sixth Panzer Army as a strategic mobile reserve and its use. This force was described on 25 November as a strategic reserve, but not purposed for a future large-scale counterblow. On 1 December, however, it was not thought to constitute an effective mobile reserve any longer, due to commitments of its units. This view was reversed ten days later, in that the 2d considered the Sixth Panzer Army as being kept intact as a single, strong, counterattack force, rather than to relieve the hard pressed forces east of AACHEN. Although the 2d designated the 1,2,5,9 and 12 SS Panzer Divisions as comprising this Army, the 2d Division did not know their location.

Corps.

Determined defense was regarded as the primary enemy capability and intention. Counterattacks against American penetrations were expected. Only the VII and VIII Corps mentioned the Sixth Panzer Army by name, as a reserve, but the V Corps mentioned five uncommitted, reserve, panzer divisions as being west of the RUINE.

Defense of the vital AACHEN-COLOGNE corridor to RUHR, and the probability of an enemy counterattack with elements of the Sixth Panzer Army after the VII Corps reached the east bank of the ROER River were the main capabilities anticipated by the VII Corps. In its 9 December G-2 Estimate, the VII wondered how long the enemy could continue in the face of his loss rate and the demand for troops in the south.

The V Corps was preoccupied with its own offensive, and measured enemy potentialities against its own operations, as reactions to the V Corps drive. Evidence was lacking that the V Corps thought in terms of the enemy launching a specifically planned offensive of its own completely independent of the V Corps offensive. Prompt counterattacks with available reserves were expected, in compliance with the German system of defense. Five panzer divisions west of the RUINE were uncommitted, and one could be available within six hours, with possibly another in 24 hours. This force was not named, e.g., Sixth Panzer Army, as of 8 December. A determined defense was the current and major expectation of the enemy on that date.

From 4 October the VIII Corps estimated that defense of the SIEGFRIED Line was required of the enemy, and on 9 December the VIII believed that the enemy's current active defense would continue. Counterattacks to restore positions and reinforcements from reserves were expected unless the enemy felt the VIII Corps was mounting an offensive.

The VIII regarded the enemy practice of giving new divisions experience on the VIII's front, then moving them elsewhere, as indicating the enemy's desire that the zone remain quiet and inactive. German forces were considered as very low in quality. Among the reserves listed as of 9 December, the Sixth Panzer Army comprised five divisions, in the vicinity of COLOGNE backing up infantry.

Armies.

Concern over the northern locale was the dominant thought held by the three Armies, the Ninth, the First and the Third. This characteristic was manifested in two forms, (1) preoccupation with their own operations in the north, and/or (2) concern over anticipated enemy action in the northern area, not in the southern. Enemy attack potentialities in the north were regarded as the enemy's likely capability, inasmuch as the Ninth and First Armies were involved in their own offensives in that area. The Third Army was also worried over northern attack probabilities, although its own front was in the south.

The second distinctive point was the recognition of the concept of a mobile reserve force for counterblow purposes. Each army identified this force as the Sixth Panzer Army, but it was regarded as a counterblow, not counteroffensive force on the enemy's initiative, independent of the Allied offensive. It would not be used until after the Allies had crossed the ROER River, according to the First Army. The Ninth felt this reserve would be employed to counter breakthroughs of the ROER defenses. A spoiling attack in the AACHEN-DUREN sector was expected by the Third Army.

As of the immediate period preceding the Counteroffensive, the location of this Sixth Panzer Army was uncertain. FUSA believed it to be between the ROER and the RHINE, TUSA between DUESSELDORF and COLOGNE, but the Ninth Army mentioned only movements of certain divisions southward, with no reference to the Sixth Panzer Army. TUSA added that 14 German divisions were out of contact, 8 Panzer, 3 Para, and 3 Infantry.

Twelfth Army Group:

Optimism was the key feature of the Twelfth Army Group's estimate of the enemy potentialities. Due to such a thin, brittle defense, a breaking point might develop suddenly, if pressure were continued. In point: "Given time and fair weather we can make progress against him anywhere."

Priority was given to the northern locale by the enemy, the Army Group felt. The Sixth Panzer Army was the "precious guard over the RHINE," and was expected to be retained as a unit to counterattack after the Allies had crossed the ROER. It was described as located west of COLOGNE, possibly BIELEFELD, but its whereabouts were admittedly unknown.

III. Attitude Towards the VIII Corps.

As noted, the armies and the 12th Army Group predominantly worried about the northern portion of the Western Front, and considered that the enemy had placed priority on it over the southern. Inasmuch as the actual Counteroffensive was launched against the central, specifically the VIII Corps of the First Army opinions held concerning this VIII Corps sector would be of informative towards assessment of the conceptions held by American forces regarding the enemy potentialities.

Division.

Of the four VIII Corps divisions on the Ardennes line as of 15 December, only one expressed a pre-Counteroffensive opinion on the enemy's use of the front. On 1 December, the 9th Armored Division's November G-2 After/Action Report stated: "The enemy seemed to be using this quiet sector as a 'training area' to give reorganized and Volksgrenadier units some front line experience before sending them to an active zone." This analysis had reduced value, however, inasmuch as the 9th AD did not possess a sector of its own as of that period. It was in VIII Corps reserve as a division, with elements attached to the 83d Division for battle indoctrination. Presumably the comment about the enemy pertained to the 83d Division's sector. The 83d offered no opinion on the intention of the enemy facing it.

The 106th Division did not provide a current statement of its opinion. A post-campaign Combat Interview reported that area facing the 106th was believed to be for training and resting.

Neither the 4th nor the 28th Division remarked upon the mission of their enemies.

Corps.

The VIIIth Corps G-2 observed in his G-2 Estimate of 9 December: "The enemy practice of bringing new divisions to receive front line experience and then relieving them out for commitment elsewhere indicated his desire to have this sector of the front remain quiet and inactive."

Army.

In perspective, little consideration was devoted to the central Allied zone. Both the First and Third Armies were concerned over the northern and southern portions of the Allied front. While they expected counterattacks in the northern, they qualified their views by pointing out that Allied southern operations might force some employment of the Sixth Panzer Army in the south -- the Third Army's zone. This opinion took the form that while the enemy desired to retain the Sixth as a unit, Allied pressure might compel piecemeal commitment, sharing the Sixth

2 Attitud

between both the northern and southern zones. Thus, the central portion of the Allied front, the Ardennes area, was not a dominant consideration.

In fact, the expressed opinions concerning it were few in comparison. The First Army's attitude towards its own VIII Corps was negative. While it recognized some buildup and activity, intentions for its use were misconstrued. FUSA pointed out that for the past month there was a definite pattern for the seasoning of newly formed divisions in the relatively quiet VIII Corps prior to their dispatch to more active fronts. However, as of 15 December, FUSA indicated unawareness of the enemy's strength in the TRIER-PRUM sector. The Third Army referred only briefly to the TRIER, KYLLBURG, WITTICH area, by noting on 15 December that the 2 Panzer and 130 Pz Lehr Divisions appeared to be reforming, with the 116 Panzer Division reportedly slated for that area.

12th Army Group.

Similar to the armies, the north-south concept was basic among the Army Group opinions. The northern and southern zones were considered as vital areas by the enemy, the Group felt. Of the two, the Group regarded the northern as being considered by the enemy as the locale of primary importance.

In contrast to and sharing equal significance with the north-south concept was the Group's separate, negative attitude towards the VIII Corps. No attack potentiality was accorded it. Moreover, it was deemed to be a transient area. As of 7 December the Group's G-2 reported to his Commanding General that the enemy's policy was to employ newly arriving units in the VIII Corps sector and to send more experienced ones to more critical sectors. Again, three days later he described the VIII as "probably a focal center for enemy troops going either to the north or south." Furthermore, apparently the Group did not rate the VIII Corps high enough from an operational standpoint to assign a Phantom unit to it, 9 November-16 December, whereas it did immediately when the VIII became active after 16 December. A Phantom unit was an intelligence collection and communications organization.

The 12th Army Group was the only command which referred to the calculated risk concept of the VIII Corps. No pre-16 December document, however, referred to this subject. For example, none of the minutes of the daily Commanding General's Briefings alluded in the slightest manner to either the subject or to conferences on it. Two after-the-event references were made to the calculated risk idea, one on 21 December, the other in August 1945, which claimed the subject was considered.

~~SECRET~~IV. Specific Evidence of Enemy Offensive Intentions.Seven Attack Signs.

Divisions.

These originated with certain divisions of the VIII Corps, and were particular data which conveniently might be termed ostensible attack symptoms. Only 61 PW's were captured by the V and VIII Corps divisions, 1 - 15 December, and one civilian informant was taken into custody. These seven instances ostensibly indicated the imminence of increased enemy operations. Four prisoners of war captured on 15 December claimed they had heard rumors or statements that a large-scale attack was to be launched between 16 - 25 December. A civilian woman taken into custody on the 14th described the woods towards BITBURG as full of German equipment. Two divisions reported an acceleration of enemy vehicular activity during the last three days.

Even on the division level these seven data did not appear sharply indicative. Only four were reported to higher commands. They were: one PW claim about an impending attack, the woman informer's data, and the two concerning increasing vehicular traffic. As to the PW's claim, no plans, orders, or other supporting documents were provided to lend credence, and, seriously wounded, he was under morphine during interrogation. The custodial division (28th) considered the woman informer fairly reliable, but pointed out that she had not noted anything of military significance. Neither the 28th nor 106th Divisions considered the increasing vehicular movements as important. The 28th regarded those it observed as normal relief traffic, inasmuch as a precedent action had occurred some three weeks previously.

Corps.

These four attack data were acquired by VIII Corps divisions, and reported to the Corps. The VIII's attitude towards them was not specified, and the only clue was their disposition. All were reported in the G-2 Periodic for the day, and in case of the woman's data, in the daily Intelligence Summary and in the G-2's informal typed daily review. No corps messages to FUSA were located. There was no evidence of their exerting influence or causing defensive measures to be taken.

Army.

The First Army received the VIII Corps G-2 Periodic reporting the four ostensible attack data, but, whatever their influence, there was no expression that FUSA undertook protective measures as a reaction. The two traffic acceleration data were simply described in a single sentence in FUSA's own Daily G-2 Periodic, without interpretative commentary, suggesting no special importance being attached to it. As to the PW claim of

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an impending attack, FUSA G-2 Periodic for 15 December declared that many PW's made such a claim. Other FUSA records did not amplify this assertion in any manner, statistically or otherwise, and the source of FUSA's information was not obvious. FUSA made no direct reference to this VIII Corps PW allusion. It regarded such a claim as propaganda to bolster German troop morale, but a limited offensive might be launched as a Christmas morale 'victory' for civilian consumption. The women's buildup data was "very interesting." PAC/R and PW's had indicated a build-up was being executed. FUSA felt that the mentioned engineers and bridging equipment suggested offensive rather than defensive action.

FUSA's disposition of these four data was simply to report them with the above comments in its own G-2 Periodics for 14 and 15 December, respectively. The women informer's data was also reported by FUSA in its G-2 Midnight Roundup of data and its G-2 ISM, both for 14 December.

12th Army Group.

This command obviously and naturally was more preoccupied with consideration of strategic and larger relationships over its front than over particularized, ostensible attack signs. Of this latter category, the group would logically depend upon its subordinate commands to assemble information from PW's, civilians, etc. Only one of the seven security attack symptoms acquired by VII Corps divisions was reported by the Army Group. One of the two traffic acceleration data was mentioned by the G-2 during the Commanding General's Briefing of 180915 December, and he interpreted the activity as the movement of the 326th Infantry Division from the VII Corps's zone.

Enemy Activity.

Divisions.

Enemy operations did not manifest offensive signs, or at least none were so interpreted. Each division considered the enemy activity as generally defensive, thus not an offensive sign, with limited patrolling and light artillery fires, and a tendency to increase action at night. Poor quality of troops suggested defense to the 99th Division. The 100th described the enemy as non-aggressive, with no offensive indications.

Corps.

The VII and V Corps were occupied with their own offensives, and the recognized enemy's defensive action was the expected reaction. No particular attack symptoms were noted. Enemy activity was defensive and relatively inactive during the several weeks of the VII Corps occupation of its Ardennes front. It was limited to patrolling and harassing artillery, which did not suggest offensive intentions.

3. Specific Evidence

~~SECRET~~Identification of Units.

Inasmuch as the commands identified so few German divisions facing them as of approximately 15 December, the fact did not intimate a large-scale impending attack. A statistical comparison of the pre-Counter-offensive and the 16 December identifications emphasizes the point.

Divisions.

The five V and VIII Corps divisions stricken on 16 December had identified elements of nine divisions, as of the eve of the Counteroffensive, whereas they found elements of 22 on the 16th.

Corps.

On the V Corps front, the 99th Division was stricken on the 16th, but the Corps G-2 was previously aware of only three of the 12 assaulting divisions. The VIII Corps was aware of four divisions, but 10 assaulted on the 16th.

FUSA.

A comparison of the Units in Contact sections of the 15 and 16 December 1-2 Periodics indicated that FUSA was aware of the presence of elements of 16 enemy divisions on its front, whereas, 22 actually struck on the 16th.

Air Reconnaissance.Divisions.

Air reconnaissance by either friendly or enemy planes was not discussed by the 4th, 83d, and 106th Divisions. The 9th Armored mentioned some by the enemy during November. Lack of American reconnaissance was the complaint of the 99th, but weather was given as the reason. Photo missions were requested by the 28th, but the priority was too low, and the last photo was taken on 25 November. The 28th's Artillery Air OP flew short flights on 12 and 13 December, the weather permitting, but no outstanding data was discovered. No mention was made of American reconnaissance made by the 2d Division.

Corps.

On the V Corps front, air reconnaissance did not reveal attack signs. Actually, it was negligible due to bad weather, and was largely in support of the offensive ground operations, rather than for information.

VIII Corps air reconnaissance, when flown on five days of the 1-15 December period, observed only minor activity, such as movements of two trains and a few vehicles, from which no pattern could be deduced.

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4 Specific Idences

FUSA.

According to aerial reconnaissance, the northern portion of First Army front, the V and VII Corps zones, and north of them, was the locale of the enemy activity during the several weeks preceding the Counter-offensive. While FUSA noted and drew findings about the activity, it did not announce the meaning and purpose.

FUSA summarized the situation on 13 December. Enemy defenses had been improved east of the ROER, particularly north of DUREN, during the past several weeks, by additional entrenching, shifting of artillery, etc. Although not discussing the significance, FUSA stated there had been considerable motor movement in the VII Corps zone between the ROER and ERFT. While long convoys or large concentrations of motors had not been evident, a few vehicles could be seen at times in almost each small village. Traffic on road was limited to a few vehicles in any one locality, with no definite trend in direction. Rail traffic had been heavy, and not confined to main lines. Cut trackage was speedily repaired. High priorities were apparently given to rail road bridges on the AACHEN-DUREN-KLIN Line and those paralleling the ERFT.

As to the frequency of flights, poor weather had prevented them during two days of the 2 - 8 December period. While weather limited them, flights were made on 14 and 15 December.

12th Army Group.

Air reconnaissance was not interpreted as indicating an attack. It was hampered by weather, and during the 1 - 15 December period, there were no flights on 7, 9, 13th.

V. Pre-Counteroffensive Security Measures.

Divisions.

4th Division (VIII Corps).

Shortly after the 4th and 83d Divisions exchanged sectors on 7 December, the 4th issued on the 15th a draft of a 4-1/2 page mimeographed document titled, DEFENSE PLAN, 4TH INFANTRY DIVISION. A broad front, serious assault of the actual Counteroffensive's proportions was not mentioned. The severest effort the enemy was conceived capable of was a major attack to seize the CITY OF LUXEMBOURG. Defense was to consist of delaying actions, counterattacks to restore the lines, and, if withdrawals were necessary, they would be executed only upon approval or order of the Division Commander.

28th Division (VIII Corps).

Security plans were considered protective, according to a postwar discussion by the 28th Division G-3. He wrote that the divisional and two combat commands of the 9th Armored Division were protectively disposed. On the 28th's 23-mile front the 112th Infantry was holding in strength on a comparatively narrow front, the 110th Infantry had company strong points along the main north-south highway paralleling the OUR River and had set up observation outposts along the river. The 109th Infantry held a sector not as wide as the 110th but excessive to cover in strength, and had two battalions on the line and one in reserve. Artillery battalions were so situated as to furnish a "certain amount of fire in any sector of the Division." The only divisional reserve was one 110th Infantry battalion. However, the 9th Armored Division had one combat command in the vicinity of TROISVIERGES and another near ESCHDORF. "It was anticipated that in the event of a normal attacking force that these two CC's could move in, and stem the attack." The CC's had selected the routes. All plans covered the road net west of the river. "It was believed that this force, and in the way disposed, would give adequate warning of an impending attack and that it would be possible to hold the roads against enemy until sufficient force was mustered. An attack of the force, which did make the breakthrough, was never anticipated."

108th Division (VIII Corps)

The only analysis on the subject concerning the 108th Division was a Combat Interview with the Executive Officer, 3d Battalion, 422d Infantry in May 1945. When asked about preparations and plans for offsetting a counterattack, he "said that artillery forward observers were with his companies and that extensive defensive fires had been planned but because of a ruling no artillery, machine gun or small arms ammunition had ever been fired prior to the counterattack." It will be recalled that this was the 108th's initial commitment of the war, and that it had taken its Ardennes position as recent as 11 December.

99th Division (V Corps)

A Combat Interview with the Commanding General on 28 January 1946 was the source of information concerning the 99th's security measures. From 9 November, when the Division moved to its Ardennes position, until 13 December, when the 99th participated in the V Corps attack towards the ROER dams, its main activities consisted of improving positions and patrolling. "As part of the normal precautions against attack, General Lauer had defensive positions dug several thousand yards to the rear of the front lines.... General Lauer stated that at the time he considered this to be a wasted effort. However, those positions turned out to be of great help and value in slowing down the German advance until a more completely organized defense could be prepared. For 99th's attack, and to guard against the expected reaction, General Lauer had the 3d Battalion of the 394th Infantry in reserve in the vicinity of P. BUCHOLZ. It was to be able to move by motor and marches to any needed sector upon one hour's notice.

Corps.

V Corps

Security planning and actions were not reflected in pre-16 December records of the Corps. The only retrospect description found was in the form of the Combat Interview with the Commanding General held by the Theater Historian on 12 September 1946.

Two specific questions were asked. One: "What counterattack plans, if any, had been established by V Corps prior to 16 December 1944?" The 2d and 99th Divisions had been told to prepare defensive positions, and they reconnoitered the defense line generally from the ELSBORN RIDGE back to MAMEDY. The second question inquired if the General participated in discussions with VIII Corps or FUSA regarding plans to prepare a reserve defense position, inasmuch as the V Corps right flank protection depended upon the VIII Corps position. According to the General, he was at all times concerned with the VIII Corps tie-in, and expressed his view to the VIII that that portion of his V Corps line should be more strongly held than any other. Positions were selected "to seal off the area in the event of a rupture along that part of the front."

VIII Corps

According to the command's October After/Action Report, when the VIII Corps relieved the V Corps on 4 October it assumed a 50-mile line, which was later expanded to 88 miles, approximately. This extended front stretched the divisions "and made the problem of preserving depth and continuity in the defense an extremely difficult one." Only the more commanding ground could be organized with any force, leaving many vacant spots. While divisions' mobile reserves protected against "any major enemy thrust," the front was decidedly open. Enemy patrols were frequent occurrences. In respect to security activity, "since the most active area

3 Security Measures

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in the sector was in the north and as this area appeared to be most likely section of the Corps front for future operations, the bulk of the Corps Artillery was committed to the north....

During the first fifteen days of December the VIII Corps conducted the deception operation KOBLENZ, designed by Twelfth Army Group to tie down enemy divisions on VIII Corps front and to attract enemy forces from the stubbornly held BUREN area. This operation was not approved by the Corps Commanding General.

The major VIII Corps documentation upon security consisted of post-campaign explanations by the Commanding General, in a July 1945 letter replying to questions on the subject from the Theater Historian. According to the letter, the FUSA's G-2 reported on 10 December (G-2 Estimate #37) that the enemy was capable of a large-scale offensive in the ROERMOND-SCHLIT area. The historian asked, therefore, what measures were taken to alert, shift or request additional troops? Or, was the Corps well-prepared to meet such an attack? The CG replied that his commanders were "always kept abreast of the situation." No request was made to FUSA for more forces, because FUSA had taken away troops, referring to the transfer of CG's 9th Armored Division to V Corps. He then moved the 9th Armored's CR from the south to the north to support the right of the 18th and left of the 24th Divisions. The General pointed out that the high command could not have been alarmed over his 88-mile front, because he was directed to stage the KOBLENZ deception plan to draw more troops to his front.

Another question pertained to steps taken during the "ten weeks of inactivity" to prepare reserve defense positions, and to seek FUSA's permission to withdraw to a stronger defense line in case of a heavy attack. According to the General's answer, there were hardly sufficient troops for outposting, rather than for organizing a defense zone. A deployed defense covered key approaches. Outposts were too thin to permit local, regimental, and divisional reserves.

FUSA and Twelfth Army Group.

Procedural measures were not pointed out by these two commands. At least the latter did not interpret any commentaries as such, and no understandable descriptions were located among the records.

Although highly doubtful as appertaining to security, mention is made in the Twelfth Army Group's retrospect comments on the calculated risk concept of the VIII Corps sector. They were made on 21 December and in Army Group's records there were no pre-15 December allusions to the subject in any form.

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Corps.

When the Counteroffensive was launched, the VII and V Corps were engaged in offensives against COLOGNE and the ROER dams respectively, where as the VIII Corps occupied a quiet, inactive, defensive front. The VIII Corps bore the brunt of the attack, and each of its four divisions were involved. The V Corps southernmost 99th Division was also struck, but the 2d and 28th Divisions received only some shelling, and they continued their offensives during the day.

No belief was held by the VIII Corps that a major enemy counter-offensive would be made, and the command was surprised by the assault. Its realization of the scope was not reached until approximately early morning of the 17th. At midnight of the 16th, it thought the attack was only a counterattack to restore lost positions. This view was held even though the VIII had received two copies, one from the adjacent V Corps, of the Von Rundstedt Order announcing the action. The Corps possessed one copy at 2120, the other at 2320, on the 16th.

V Corps issuances, e.g., Intelligence Summaries, during the 16th provided no indication of a comprehension of the enemy objectives and intentions. As did the ISUM's of 0600, 1200, 1800, that of 2400 described operations only, without commentary on their overall significance. However, the G-2 Periodic for 160001A-162400A, issued 170030A, declared: "The enemy apparently planned an all out attack against the VIII and V Corps with the main spearhead directed approximately at the boundary between the two corps." The source or reasons for the opinion were not stated. Perhaps it was partially derived from the Von Rundstedt Order, which the Corps G-3 received by telephone from the 99th Division at 1350A. Doubtless the G-2 became aware of it.

In contrast to the V and VIII Corps, the VIIth was not attacked, and continued its own offensive until 21 December when it withdrew for participation in the Counteroffensive.

703A.

The First Army asserted in its G-2 Periodic, 160001A-162400A December, dated the 17th, that the German attack was an all-out one, that the enemy was staking all on this offensive, that his current capability was to drive through FUSA's rear areas and seize bridgeheads over the MEUSE River. However, if the attack showed signs of slowing down, Rundstedt might decide that the recapture of AACHEN would suffice as a Christmas present for Hitler.

12th Army Group.

The Group's G-2 did not conclude until 19 December that the enemy's action was an all-out offensive. As to objectives, the only current view

3 Initial

expressed prior to 10 January 1945 was that of 17 December, to the effect that the Group believed ST. VITH was the initial objective, with LINGEN possibly in mind. Acknowledgement was made on the 19th that the German offensive had been a surprise, that the enemy had skillfully, secretly regrouped and attacked.

A brief chronology delineates the gradual formation of the Group's recognition of the significance of the enemy action. News was received from the V Corps at approximate two-hour intervals, but most data was the generality that enemy pressure continued. None was direct from the VIII Corps, but the V Corps commented on the adjacent VIII. The first interpretation of the day's events was issued at 2300 within the G-2 Periodic, cautioning against over-estimation of the meaning until the assault's magnitude was more defined. At the CG's Briefing of 0915 on the 17th, the G-2 reported that attacks had been made, but limited his assessment to acknowledgement that the enemy had passed from defensive policy to offensive activity. His Periodic at 2300 that day stated: "It appears that a strong counter-offensive has been launched by the enemy. ..." He also mentioned objectives for the first time, that ST. VITH seemed to be the initial goal. Then, on the 19th, two appraisals were issued, and they remained the last current ones during the Battle of the Bulge. The G-2 Periodic, issued at 2300, declared that evidence was mounting that the HOFFER assault was "a thoroughly planned, deliberate, 'all-out' offensive." During the 19th, at an unspecified hour, the G-2 Intelligence Summary for the week ending 162400 December was issued, proclaiming the enemy had opened his biggest offensive since the beginning of the Western Europe campaign. Having acquired the Rundstedt Order on the 17th, it was cited as evidence of the attack's scope. Explaining the attack, the ISUM asserted that the enemy had decided to take the initiative with his reserves, and "to gamble all on the success of a single bold stroke." The G-2 acknowledged that a high degree of surprise had been obtained by the enemy's skillful regrouping and launching of simultaneous attacks.

VI. Initial Recognition of the Assault's Gravity.

If a command possessed buildup warnings or otherwise expected the enemy to launch a large-scale offensive within a particular area at a certain time, presumably the command would not be surprised when the action actually occurred. Too, it would readily recognize the seriousness of the assault. The above tests were applied to the various commands, and their records reflected both surprise and slowness in awareness of the Counteroffensive's gravity, scope, and objectives. There was a dominant lack of pre-Counteroffensive knowledge of the German intentions and preparations.

Divisions.

With the exception of the 4th Division to some extent, no division indicated even the approximate hour on 16 December that it realized the scope and fury of the Counteroffensive. Such a determination was gradual, and not prior to noontime approximately. The hours of identification of the 22 assault divisions were not fully recorded.

Reactions of the five divisions were thus:

4th Division. -- At about 1100 the decision was made that more than a raid was involved. Communications had been disrupted, a factor delaying the decision. The pre-attack artillery barrage had cut the wires in the assaulted 12th Infantry's sector, forcing recourse to officer couriers.

28th Division. -- A confidence in the protection of its security plans against a described normal attacking force led the 28th into non-anticipation of the five division drive upon itself.

99th Division. -- It did not believe the enemy was capable of a large-scale offensive, and felt during the first hours that the German action was a reaction to the 99th's own offensive. Although the 99th captured the Commander-in-Chief West's Order of the Day during the morning of the 13th, it did not realize the nature of the action. Eventually, with the passage of the hours, it realized the offensive was neither localized nor a reaction. This opinion was due in part to the attack's sheer strength of 12 divisions identified on that day, and the PW's meager impressions of their missions.

106th Division. -- Although it too had captured Von Rundstedt's Order of the Day, the 106th, believed the attack was local, a mere patroling action. It was also over-optimistic because its lines were stubbornly defending against three divisions.

9th Armored Division. -- The assault appeared to resemble strong patrols during the first hour. This division claimed it had received no prior indications of the proximity of the divisions which struck it.

VII. Forwarding of Intelligence.

If a command acquired distinctive data pointing to offensive possibilities, the forwarding of it to superior commands would demonstrate alertness. On the other hand, was warning and/or informative data transmitted from higher to subordinate commands?

Transmission from Lower to High Commands.

Divisions:

Three VIII Corps divisions, the 4th, 28th, and 106th, acquired seven ostensible attack-sign data during the approximate 13 - 15 December period. While interest was taken in them, the data was not regarded as particularly significant, and was not expeditiously reported to Corps. Only four of the data were forwarded. Two concerning observation of increasing traffic were reported only in the daily G-2 Periodic. Of the four PW's captured on 15 December who claimed an impending attack, a report to Corps, by message, was made in only one instance, at 2006, on the 15th, 33 minutes after the 106th Division headquarters received the news. None of the four PW claims were reported in the G-2 Periodic for the 15th. Of the remaining three, one was reported to the 106th Division at 2200, and although 4th Division troops had captured two deserters at about 1830 on the 15th, the Division did not receive a report until midnight. The woman informer's data was made known to the VIII Corps on the 14th, the day she was taken into custody, probably by telephone, although the transmission method was uncertain. Her data, however, was not reported in the 28th's G-2 Periodic for either the 14th or 15th.

Divisional reporting of intelligence data was usually in the daily G-2 Periodics, which were issued regularly. However, the 2d and 108th Divisions omitted even the title of the prescribed section ENEMY CAPABILITIES. The 4th, 2d, and 28th Divisions were the only ones to issue G-2 Estimates of the Enemy Situation. Supplementing official issuances, the 4th and 108th Divisions sent daily messages to the VIII Corps at approximately midnight. But, only enemy operations, e.g., flights, patrols, etc., were discussed, with attack potentialities conspicuously absent.

Corps.

Daily G-2 Periodics were the major medium. The V and VIII Corps included the ENEMY CAPABILITIES section in their periodics, but entries were regularly No Change. The only instance of the VII Corps inclusion of this section was on 7 December, when it quoted from a SHAEP G-2 Weekly ISUM. G-2 Estimates were issued by all three Corps.

The VIII Corps received reports on four attack data from certain of its divisions, and promptly reported them in its G-2 Periodic, but there was no evidence of forwarding to the First Army by message. One data,

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however, was reported in the Corps ISUM.

Armies.

FUSA reported its intelligence data through its daily G-2 Periodics and G-2 Estimates. It issued the Estimates prolifically, 34 of them between 8 June and 10 December. They were more expressive of the FUSA opinion on the enemy potentialities. In fact, the ENEMY CAPABILITY section of the G-2 Periodics referred to the Estimates for that subject. The four attack data forwarded from VIII Corps divisions were received and reported by FUSA in its G-2 Periodics. The woman informer's data was also described in an ISUM, and in a midnight description of incoming information.

The primary intelligence medium of the Third Army was the daily G-2 Periodic. Its last G-2 Estimate prior to 20 December was #10, 1 November. FUSA's G-2 Periodics were distinctive for their discussions of enemy strategy and problems that would logically be a function of a higher command. This suggested that FUSA received and reported in its own issuance comments from superior commands. The Periodic was extensively equipped with various sections and annexes, in which high level weekly conclusions were deduced, overall German reserves were analyzed, and intelligence data was even separated into strategic and tactical, all comprehensively dealing with the German forces on the Western front, rather than those facing the Third Army.

Only G-2 Periodics were the main intelligence issuance of the Third Army. No evidence of G-2 Estimates was located.

12th Army Group:

Opinions and data from the Group were expressed in published issuances, the G-2 weekly Intelligence Summaries and daily Periodics, rather than in messages.

Receipt from Other Commands.

Divisions:

Issuances from higher commands were received by the divisions, but, if they contained warnings or information concerning an expected enemy counteroffensive of major proportions, the divisional operations did not respond by suddenly establishing serious protective measures. Corps Daily Intelligence Summaries, both V and VIII Corps, were the issuance most regularly received. G-2 Periodics and Estimates of the Corps were received irregularly and incompletely. If the Corps sent messages of warning about enemy potentialities, they were not mentioned in the divisional reports, nor did commanders refer to such messages or warnings during debriefing interviews. Some First Army and 12th Army Group issuances were received irregularly and incompletely. FUSA G-2 Periodics were received two or three days after issuance. Mention was made by the 99th Division of receipt of the 12th Army Group's Weekly Intelligence Summary ending 9 December.

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Corps.

The VIII Corps received reports on four of the seven ostensible attack data acquired by certain of its divisions, 13 - 15 December. And, the VIII reported them in its G-2 Periodic.

Each of the V, VII, and VIII Corps received G-2 issuances from higher and adjacent commands. G-2 Periodics were the usual document, particularly in the case of the VIII Corps. FUSA ISUR's were also frequently received. The VII Corps tended to possess copies of recent SHAEF and 12th Army Group G-2 Weekly Intelligence Summaries.

Army Level.

FUSA obtained official issuances, e.g., daily G-2 Periodics and Intelligence Summaries, from subordinate commands, adjacent armies and their corps, the British Second Army, and Twelfth Army Group, with some slight acquisitions from SHAEF. There was no indication as to the particular influences exerted by these issuances. Four data were acquired from the VIII Corps which ostensibly intimated an impending attack.

In respect to the Third Army, a dominant fact was that TUSA discussed systematically and extensively enemy potentials on the Allied front in its G-2 Periodic and its annexes. That characteristic strongly indicated that TUSA obtained its information from higher commands, inasmuch as Allied front subjects would be more within their purview. Perhaps TUSA acquired its data through its own resources, but that was doubtful. While TUSA commonly paraphrased the data, it made 12 acknowledgments in the daily Periodics of the September - 15 December period. Most of the cited sources were the 12th Army Group and 21 British Army Group. SHAEF was not a contributor, judging by the lack of references to that command.

12th Army Group.

During the pre-Counteroffensive period, the Group did not receive valuable impending attack evidence from subordinate commands, and the sources of the G-2 conceptions of the enemy capabilities and intentions were largely undisclosed, with only the barest indication of SHAEF as a source.

Only one ostensible attack data was received, this being the 108th Division's observation of increasing vehicular traffic, 13 - 15 December, and which was forwarded through the VIII Corps and FUSA. In this connection, note is taken that of the original seven apparent attack data acquired 13 - 15 December by three VIII Corps divisions, only four were forwarded to the Corps, and only one finally was commented upon by the 12th Army Group. FUSA, however, had reported all four in its G-2 Periodic.

If SHAEF were an information source, little credit was given. Weekly Intelligence Summaries and daily Periodics were the primary Army Group G-2 issuances. Particularly in the former were discussed overall enemy strategy and problems of the Western Front, which might have been a prerogative of its higher headquarters, SHAEF. If SHAEF was the source of some or much of the 12th Army Group's commentary as stated in its G-2 ISUM's, there was no intimation of the fact. Texts also did not contain indirect credit, e.g., phrases such as 'according to SHAEF,' 'SHAEF sources,' etc. The only instances of acknowledgement of SHAEF as a source occurred in annexes to daily G-2 Periodics. A single annex of these pages of the 5 December Periodic was devoted to paraphrasing a SHAEF DIGEST of 25 November. Order of Battle Notes of approximately a dozen paragraphs were attached to the daily Periodic. Of the daily issuances 1 - 15 December, there were 32 such paragraphs.

If the 12th Army Group obtained data from others, the British, Third U.S. Army, Sixth U.S. Army Group, they were not cited as sources. The First Army was cited twice, once in the ISUM dated 26 November, and once in the G-2 Periodic of 14 December.

Attention is called to the Group's receipt of certain informative, captured documents during the 16 - 19 December period. The Order of the Day, 16 December, by the Commander-in-Chief West (Feldmarschal Von Rundstedt), which announced the Counteroffensive to German forces was captured by the 93rd Division (V Corps) and the 103th Division (VIII Corps) on the 18th. Several supplementary documents were also captured, e.g., on dealing with Operation GREIF, Orders of the Day by subordinate commanders, etc. Von Rundstedt's Order was significant and informative, and doubtless would have aided the Army Group's evaluation of the attack's gravity and scale. Evidence was uncertain if the Group received this Order. No mention was made among the Group records, nor did G-2 commentaries during 16 - 19 December on the meaning and objectives of the Counteroffensive refer to it by name or contents. The only indication that the Group might have received it consisted in the fact that the Group, both TAG and Main, were on the distribution list of the First Army's ISUM 58-929, 161800A-162400A December, which was transmitted at 170439A. This four-page ISUM included a paraphrase. The other documents were received on the 17th.

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TWELFTH

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TWELFTH ARMY GROUP

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TWELFTH U.S. ARMY GROUP

CRITIQUE

I. Optimism and Conception of Enemy StrategySummary

When Allied forces (First U.S. Army) reached the German border in mid-September, the Group's G-2 considered the enemy's strategy as play in/for time to replenish his manpower, "a desperate strategy to cover a hopeless military, economic and political situation." During the succeeding weeks, however, the G-2 recognized enemy recuperation, as manifested in by reorganization of troops while in the line, by an offensive against the British on 27 October, by skillfully shifting north and south forces, particularly to meet the Allied 16 November offensive, by successful resistance with infantry while withdrawing armor to form a strategic reserve of armor designated as the Sixth Panzer Army. Formation of this reserve force was observed from early October onward, and while thought by 8 December to consist of five panzer divisions, its precise location was unknown, but was believed west of COLOGNE. Employment of the Sixth Panzer Army was interrelated with the enemy's defense plan, in the G-2's estimation. As of 2 December, he explained that this defense plan had been clear for some time, to be an all-out defense at the ROER River, beyond which Allied advances would threaten the RUHR. Priority was thought conferred on the northern front, because of proximity to the industrial RUHR and the terrain was advantageous to Allied mobility. Thus, the north-south concept was highly significant, and the G-2 thought in terms of the north. At no time did he mention the central zone, part of which was the VIII Corps, and which was struck by the Germans on 16 December. The primary capability was the Sixth Panzer Army, which was expected to be used as a unit, and to counterattack after the Allies had crossed the ROER. It was the "precious guard over the Rhine." Even so, due to pressure in both the north and the south, the enemy's freedom of choice for employment of the Sixth Panzer Army was restricted. He would need to sacrifice the one vital area for the other, or dissipate this army's usefulness by division. The G-2 felt the north would be protected. In its case of forced Sixth Panzer Army's commitment, the Army's counterattack capacity east of the ROER would be substantially diminished, and a counter-offensive potentiality virtually destroyed.

As of the last few days preceding the Counteroffensive, 8, 11, 12 December, the G-2 expressed highly optimistic opinions. Recent deterioration signs of the enemy had appeared, such as 3-1 casualty rate, low morale, increasingly poor quality of manpower, etc. In point, the Group's intelligence

TWELFTH U.S. ARMY GROUP

SUMMARY

When the first Allied forces (First U.S. Army) reached the German border on 13 September, the initially expressed estimate on the enemy by the Twelfth Army Group's G-2 was exceedingly optimistic. The enemy was playing for time to replenish his manpower, a "desperate strategy to cover a hopeless military, economic and political situation." This exhilaration of mid-September was modulated during the next three months, as the enemy's recuperative ability was manifested. Optimism of the G-2 reached another high pitch during the last week preceding the Counter-offensive. The defense was so thin and brittle that continued pressure might develop a sudden, without warning breaking point. In fact: "Given time and fair weather we can make progress against him anywhere."

During this three month interval between mid-September and mid-December, the enemy won the Group G-2's recognition for the German rehabilitation. The enemy stemmed the Allied tide with miscellaneous battle groups such as broken infantry divisions, then reorganized them in the line into controlled, numbered divisions. Concurrently, armor was withdrawn to form a strategic armored reserve, the Sixth Panzer Army. While the G-2 was mindful that the southern front might claim employment of part or all of this army, the Group's intelligence officer strongly considered the northern front to have priority in the enemy's eyes. As to specific use of the Sixth Panzer Army, the G-2 felt it would likely be retained as a unit to counter-attack after the Allies had crossed the ROER. It was the "precious guard over the RHINE." Its use might be forced, however, by Allied pressure. If so, both its counterattacking and counteroffensive ability would be substantially diminished, if not destroyed. Irrespective of the G-2's assessment of the Sixth Panzer Army, its views lacked a certain practicality, because the G-2 was never sure of its precise location. As of December, it was described as being west of COLOGNE. NIELEFELD was mentioned, but the G-2 admittedly lacked knowledge of the whereabouts.

Basic among the G-2's opinions was the north-south concept. A definite feature of the G-2's attitude was his marked interest in the northern and southern zones. They were considered vital areas. While strong defense of the south (Third U.S. Army and Sixth Army Group zones) was a distinct capability, the northern was given priority by the enemy, the G-2 felt. Terrain favored Allied tanks, therefore a serious defense. More particularly, the vital industrial RUHR was in the north, requiring the utmost protection. The enemy throughout the weeks was thought sensitive to advances toward COLOGNE and the RUHR. To repeat, the northern zone was the locale of primary importance to the enemy, the Group's intelligence officer felt.

In contrast to and sharing equal significance with the north-south concept, was the G-2's separate, negative attitude towards the central zone

#2. 12 A Op. Summary.

of the Western front. No attack potentiality was accorded the central VIII Corps sector, where the Counteroffensive was actually launched. Moreover, it was deemed to be a transient area. On 7 December the G-2 reported to the Commanding General that the enemy's policy was to employ newly arriving units in the VIII Corps sector and to send more experienced units to more critical sectors. Three days later he described the VIIIth as "probably a focal center for enemy troops going either to the north or south." Another clue as to the Group's attitude towards the VIII Corps might be found in the treatment accorded it. Apparently it was not aggressive, therefore not rating the facilities of operational forces. The Group operated an intelligence collection and communications force known as Phantom, and units of it were attached to major commands of the Group. Inasmuch as no messages were received direct from a VIII Corps Phantom, 9 November - 15 December, perhaps no Phantom was assigned to the VIIIth. Probably only operational commands possessed Phantom, inasmuch as the V and VII Corps, Seventh Army, etc., were equipped with it. In that case, seemingly the VIII Corps were deemed relatively inactive.

A controversial aspect of the VIII Corps was whether or not it was judged as a calculated risk. No pre-16 December document referred to this. Two retrospect ones did. One, the Group's After/Action Report for November referred to a conference or so between the CG, C/S, G-3 and G-2 about the VIII Corps as a calculated risk. But, this report for November was not issued until 21 December. Furthermore, the daily Commanding General's Briefings could be logically expected at least to allude to such conferences, but no daily Briefing, September - 15 December mentioned such a meeting or the calculated risk subject. The second after-the-event reference to the calculated risk idea was the written explanation by the G-3 in August 1945, in response to Counteroffensive questions by the Historical Section, USFET (Rear). He claimed that a spoiling attack possibility in the ARDENNES area was recognized, but even if he looks through, the enemy "wouldn't have anything. With major attacks going on to the north and south the calculated risk of leaving the ARDENNES sector lightly held was accepted."

Of importance, along with the Group's conception of what the enemy could or would do, was possession or lack of actual evidence pointing to the Counteroffensive. No claim was advanced prior to 16 December by the Group that it possessed data denoting an impending Counteroffensive. Air reconnaissance reports were not interpreted as indicating such an attack. Enemy dispositions and movements during the first two weeks of December did not appear suggestive. No attack potentiality was mentioned by the G-2 during his reports on the 14th and 15th of December.

When the Counteroffensive was launched on 16 December, the G-2 did not conclude until the 19th that he was faced by an all-out offensive. The only current view about objectives was that of 17 December -- the next was 18 January 1945, to that effect that ST. VITH was believed to be the initial objective, with LIEGE possibly in mind. Acknowledgement was made on the 19th that the German offensive had been a surprise, that the enemy had skillfully, secretly, regrouped and attacked.

12. Summary.

Forwarding of data naturally fell into two categories, (1) from the Group to higher headquarters, (2) to the Group from its subordinate commands. As to the first, the Group expressed its opinions and data in the published issuances of the G-2's weekly Intelligence Summaries and daily Periodics, rather than in messages, etc.

Analysis of the forwarding by subordinate commands to the Group was divided into pre-16 December and the post-16 December periods. No valuable impending attack evidence was received prior to that date. Of the seven so-called attack evidence data obtained by divisions, only one, that of observed traffic acceleration on 14 December on the 103th Division front, was forwarded through the Corps (VIII) and First Army. The Army Group considered such activity as indicating the movement of a division out of the sector. The Group G-2's conceptions of the enemy capabilities and intentions were largely undisclosed, with only the barest indication of SHAFF as a course. Respecting the immediate period following 16 December, the major instances of forwarding concerned the captured Commander-in-Chief West's Order of the Day, 16 December, announcing the German offensive to Western forces, and a document describing Operation GREIF, which mentioned early objectives. Several other papers in connection with the GREIF one, were likewise captured. Supposition is the only basis for believing that the Group probably received on the 17th the gist of the Von Rundstedt Order. Presumably the First Army's G-2 ISUM for the 16th, and wired at 0430 on the 17th, was received by the Group. If so, this was the only receipt, and it was a description of the document, not the text. The text, however, of the GREIF document, as well as of the others, were received and published by the Army Group on the 17th. In passing, attention is called to the misadventure befalling one of the two copies of the Von Rundstedt Order that might have been available to the Group. This case illustrated the ease of distortion during transit of a significant document. While the V Corp's copy of the Rundstedt Order was wired to the First Army on the 16th, it was paraphrased to indicate a mere division commander had issued it, instead of properly, the highest of German commanders, the Commander-in-Chief West. First Army naturally misconstrued its importance, and, in turn, referred in its own telegram to the Army Group to the Von Rundstedt Order as originating from a divisional commander. In point, it must be said, that USA apparently obtained the correct text elsewhere, and later, in the same telegram, accurately described it. But, momentarily, USA's evaluation of the document's information was thrown off base.

officer opened his final ISUM, dated 12 December, with the "unqualified statement" that due to attrition "the crust of defense is thinner, more brittle and more vulnerable than it appears on our G-2 maps or to troops in the line." The enemy depended upon the rate of attrition due to Allied offensives and the rate of infantry reinforcements, a balance then favoring the Allies. Therefore: "With continued Allied pressure in the South and in the North the breaking point may develop suddenly and without warning." As for the Allies: "Given time and fair weather we can make progress against him anywhere."

These optimistic views did not intimate that the G-2 expected the large-scale counterblow in the Allied and Group's central sector a few days later. This attack was not launched on the northern front as expected, and was an offensive initiated by the enemy, not the anticipated defensive action.

Chronology

The following successive treatment traces the Group's thought trends, ascertainment of which pattern was the objective of a discussion of enemy potentialities as assessed by the Group. Inasmuch as the Analysis portion of this section of the Critique is also generally by date, the reader may question why two chronological arrangements. Because this analysis of the Group's opinion was somewhat complicated, the high points were traced for reading convenience, and necessarily in sequence, hence the Chronology.

In order to provide quantitative analysis, a substantial time span was undertaken. Inasmuch as the invasion and pursuit were climaxed with the arrival of Allied forces (FUSA of 12th Army Group) on the German border on 13 September, mid-September was adopted as the logical period from which to date the tracing.

On 19 September the Group's G-2 issued his first opinion of the future following the First Army's arrival on the enemy's WEST WALL. Optimism prevailed. The enemy needed to determine whether to hold the Western or the Eastern Front at all costs. As to the Western, the enemy needed to hold the British northern advance and delay the American through the SIEGFRIED Line. Failure of the latter would require a belated withdrawal to the RHINE. Hitler's strategy was to gain time for the production of new divisions from total mobilization and replenishment of his depleted, ineffective air force. This was "a desperate strategy to cover a hopeless military, economic and political situation."

From 23 September onward the G-2 displayed a growing recognition of the enemy's recuperative power, of his resistance and attack abilities. While the enemy capabilities were more realistically appraised during the

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succeeding weeks, optimism continued.

Inauguration of this parallel appreciation-optimism began at once. During the week ending 23 September the enemy had impressed the Group by managing to stabilize the First and Third U.S. Armies fronts. Nevertheless, his only choice was which vital area to defend, the northern or southern. By 7 October the British had been halted, the American AACHEN drive slowed, and the line held in the TUSA and Sixth Army Group zones, without commitment of armored reinforcements. A panzer grenadier division had even been pulled out in the south. However, playing for time to build defenses, mobile reserves, manpower, etc., was the enemy's only strategy, including stalling until winter. Respecting mobile reserves, the concept of an enemy buildup of a mobile armored strategic reserve was advanced in the G-2 ISHM for 7 October. No force was identified. Simply, the idea was stated in the opinion that infantry would probably defend the WEST WALL, releasing armor for local or strategic reserves. Seven days later the G-2 was more definite, declaring that a lack of several panzer divisions for a long period indicated construction of a mobile counterattack force as a strategic reserve.

As of 14 October, the Group felt that despite surprising recuperative power and ability to shuttle armor to threatened areas, as demonstrated during the past week in the transfer of armor from both north and south to the AACHEN area, the enemy still lacked power to hold against several, simultaneous, co-ordinated attacks.

By 21 October, the G-2 claimed the enemy's armored reserve was his main hope of averting defeat in 1944. Both Western and Eastern fronts threatened its premature employment. On the other hand, given time, e.g., 1 December, "he could probably scrape together a powerful striking force of panzer divisions." Withdrawal of panzer divisions from the line and other evidence pointed to the MUNSTER and PADERBORN vicinities as the formation area. This force would be presumably employed in the northern sectors, where Allied breakthroughs would be dangerous, due to terrain advantages to Allied mobility and the proximity of vital RUER industry.

Enemy abilities and rehabilitation were forcefully obvious to the G-2 by the end of October. The enemy had attacked the British southeast flank, in the vicinity of WEERT and LIESEL, on the 27th, apparently to relieve pressure on the Fifteenth Army. A reorganization of German forces was apparent. While halting the Allied advances with hastily formed battle groups from broken divisions, etc., they were trained in the line and organized into numbered divisions. Furthermore, much of the panzer force had been withdrawn to form a substantial counterattacking force. As to the assault upon the British, it might be exploited to threaten ANTWERP, but was unlikely if the armored reserve would be depleted. Instead, the continued reserve buildup of armor was expected by the G-2, unless Allied thrusts forced employment, such as breakthroughs in the Ninth or First Army sectors toward the RHINE.

The strategic armored reserve was named for the first time, by 4 November, as the Sixth Panzer Army, reportedly in the BIELEFELD Area. While the enemy was thought fully capable of increasing the rate of reinforcements to the west as pressure developed, the G-2 felt they would be sent to the northern localities, that the enemy would continue to be very sensitive in the direction of COLOGNE and the RUHR, and less so in the south.

While he thought on 11 November that the key to the enemy's situation laid in his disposition of armored forces, the G-2 only partially knew their location. None opposed the Sixth Army Group, three faced the Third Army, at least part of two were committed against FUSA near AACHEN, the Ninth Panzer was at VENLO, and the 10th SS was believed east of ARNEBIM. Unlocated were the 15th Panzer Grenadier and 2d Panzer Divisions. Certain SS (1, 2, 9, and 12) and Panzer LEHR divisions were regarded as having been out of the line for weeks, but were believed to be resting and refitting in the PADERBORN area. Continuing the thought expressed a week previously, the G-2 expected the northern front to be protected, west of COLOGNE, with available Panzer reserves, even though their non-use against the Third U.S. Army necessitated withdrawal in that area to the WEST WALL.

During the week ending 16 November, the G-2 was again impressed by the enemy's abilities, and he predicted the conditions for the use of the Sixth Panzer Army, although he did not know its "precise location" at the moment. In meeting the Allied 16 November offensive, the enemy had skillfully shifted divisions to vitally threatened areas and employed tactical armored reserves to absorb the initial force. The Sixth Panzer Army would be used as unit, but not until a breakthrough of the ROER River defense line. Its punch was expected by the G-2 to be withheld, pending developments, until conditions were ripe for its use. It would probably remain in the north, because of the general enemy sensitivity to COLOGNE, the RUHR, and the First and Ninth Armies' attacks. The enemy might, even so, move this army if the British rapidly advanced toward the RUHR, or if a WEST WALL breach developed in the Army Group G area. However, if German infantry and tactical reserves could contain the Allies, the enemy would be free to launch a major counterattack, or move some or all of this Army to seriously threatened vital areas.

Even considering the marked deterioration of the situation on the southern front during the week ending 25 November, the G-2 was unsure if the Sixth Panzer Army would be sent there. The Sixth U.S. Army Group had formed the VOSGES trap during its attack between KARLSRUHE and BASLE, and a decision whether to commit the Sixth Panzer Army seemed to be rapidly forced. The G-2 stated he could not predict the enemy's action. He reasoned that part or all of that Army might be sent to the south if that were the greater threat, or retained in the north for the same reason, or split if both offensives constituted serious threats, although obviously reluctant to do so.

"At no time since September (had) such a critical dilemma confronted the enemy," wrote the G-2 in his ISUM for the week ending 2 December. Second in importance to that of the ROER, the Third and Seventh U.S. Armies threatened breakthroughs of the WEST WALL in the south. Likewise serious was the enemy's situation in the AACHEN area, due to attrition. Reinforcements from the Russian front would invite disaster there. Despite this precarious situation, the G-2 observed that none of the four SS panzer divisions then thought constituting the Sixth Panzer Army had been committed. The G-2's attitude towards this reserve force was a mingling of uncertainty and definiteness. His knowledge of the Sixth Panzer Army's location was limited to the presumption of its being in reserve in the general area west of COLOGNE. The enemy's defensive plan, however, had "been quite clear for some time. It involves all-out defense at the ROER River beyond which Allied advances would constitute an immediate threat to the RUHR." These expressed views of early December declared the northern front to be of first priority.

Optimism prevailed during the last week prior to the Counteroffensive, according to the G-2's three statements of opinion. They were his report to the Commanding General's Briefing 0000015A December, his ISUM for the week ending the 2nd but dated the 12th, and the G-2's letter of the 11th to his 21 Army Group colleagues.

The report to the Commanding General took note of an enemy capability to reinforce between TRIER and LUXEMBURG and east of AACHEN, or by committing the sixth Panzer Army. No mention was made of the central zone, part of which was the VIII Corps sector. The Sixth consisted of five panzer divisions, and "this precious guard over the RHINE" was unlikely to be risked unless tactical reserves could not halt the Allies east of the ROER, or the Allies offered an opportunity to be taken off balance "so that an abrupt counterstroke could nullify any future Allied prospects for the winter." The reader is invited to note the description of "abrupt", suggesting a quickly planned operation to meet an unexpected advantage, rather than a long planned, deliberate campaign.

An "unqualified statement" was made by the last ISUM preceding the Counteroffensive, on 12 December, that due to attrition "the crust of defense is thinner, more brittle and more vulnerable than it appears on our G-2 maps or to troops in the line." Furthermore, the enemy was dependent upon the balance between the rates of attrition due to Allied offensives and infantry reinforcements, a balance then favoring the Allies. Therefore: "With continued Allied pressure in the South and in the North the breaking point may develop suddenly and without warning." Regarding the Sixth Panzer Army, it was still the primary enemy capability, but it might not have complete freedom of choice of time and place. Third and Seventh U.S. Armies' breakthroughs might force commitment in the south, or, due to inadequate infantry reinforcements in the ROER area, if committed there then its counterattacking capacity east of the RHINE would be greatly diminished. Mounting a major counteroffensive capability would be virtually destroyed.

General Sibert, the G-3, agreed with his 21 Army Group opposite that stabilization of the front for long was unlikely, unless on the RHINE line. He hoped the Third Army's ZWEIFRUCKEN successes would draw off one or two Sixth Panzer Army divisions. Many recent and agreeable signs of Nazi deterioration, had appeared, e.g., 3-1 casualty rate, low morale, increasingly poor manpower quality, etc. In sum, the G-2 wrote a single sentence that described his estimate of the enemy's situation at the time, an optimistic one, which did not intimate that the G-2 expected an all-out counteroffensive within a few days. He stated:

"Given time and fair weather we can make progress against him anywhere."

Analysis

Allied forces (First U.S. Army) reached the German border on 15 September 1944, thereby concluding the invasion and pursuit periods through FRANCE and BELGIUM, and introducing the invasion of GERMANY proper. For practical purposes, an analysis of the Group's opinion of the German potentials which the Group formulated during the pre-16 December period, could well commence with mid-September.

As of this period when the Group's First Army had reached and was poised on the SIEGFRIED Line -- on the German border, the 12th Army Group appraised the enemy's situation in its G-2 Weekly Intelligence Summary, #6, for the week ending 16 September, and issued on the 19th. (1, 19 September) Optimism prevailed. A fundamental decision by the enemy was urgent as to whether the Russian or the Western front was to be "held at all costs," and as to the number of forces to be allocated to each. He could "hardly expect anything but defeat." The ISUM stated that Hitler's strategy (appeared) to have as its sole objective the gaining of time in which to produce new divisions from total mobilization and to replenish his depleted and ineffective air force. In the meantime, the vital RUHR and SAAR required protection, and the Russians prevented from winning the war. "It (was) a desperate strategy to cover a hopeless military, economic and political situation." As to the Western front, the enemy must hold the British northern advances and delay the American through the SIEGFRIED Line. Failure of the latter would force a related withdrawal to the RHINE.

As will be noted, occasional references were made to the Russian possibilities, but the Group concerned itself primarily with the Western front. Its analysis of enemy strategy and problems embraced the entire Western line, rather than restricting itself to the 12th Army Group's own zone.

Optimism of the ISUM of 18 September began to be tempered in the ISUM of 23 September due to the realistic, successful performance of the enemy during the past week. (1, 23 September). Acknowledgement was made that,

temporarily at least, the enemy had managed to stabilize the front opposite the First and Third Armies. He undoubtedly intended to hold the SIEGFRIED Line at all costs, and if bad weather limited Allied air attacks, believed he could prevent a major breakthrough.

Nevertheless, the Group contended that apart from withdrawal, the enemy's only initiative was his choice of which vital area on the Western Front to reinforce and to attempt prevention of a breakthrough. In this connection, the Group introduced a prime factor, which, as the weeks passed played an increasingly salient role: This was the concept of defense or sacrifice of vital areas, either the northern or southern portions of the Western Front.

Specifically, the ISUM of 23 September noted that the Third Army's arrival on the ROSSLEE, the FUSA's approach toward AACHEN, the later Allied ARNHEM advance, each constituted a vital area at the moment. Each received available reinforcements accordingly. As the weeks passed, this element of threats to vital areas and the shifting of forces to meet them became more pronounced and frequent. As of this 23 September period, the Group felt that the enemy's strategy would seem to call for the immediate defeat of the British TOLLAND thrust, then the destruction of FUSA's SIEGFRIED Line foothold near AACHEN. According to the Group, the enemy regarded the RHINE advances as the greater threat. He would therefore withdraw from ALSACE LORRAINE, to provide mobile forces to oppose the northern drive which, if successful, could quickly prove fatal. Infantry and static troops would defend south of the VII Corps (FUSA).

Because of the enemy's successful resistance, the Army Group tended to appraise his capabilities and possibilities more realistically, from the approximate 23 September period onward. The next ISUM, 7 October, pointed out that the British advance had been halted, the American AACHEN drive slowed, and the line held in the FUSA and Sixth Army Group zones. (I, 7 October). This had been accomplished without the commitment of badly needed armor in a major counterattack in the British zone, by the use of infantry and fortress troops, and without substantial armored reinforcements against the American AACHEN offensive. The 3d Panzer Grenadier Division had even been pulled out in the south. Fundamentally, the enemy's inherent weaknesses remained, e.g., oil and equipment shortages, economic drain by satellites and occupied territory, the Russian advance, and particularly the lack of manpower to fight in anything but static positions. Playing for time was his only strategy. Time to build defenses around GERMANY, to mobilize manpower, to build mobile reserves, to use unproven jet-propelled planes and improved weapons, or ultimately to negotiate successfully, or the Allies might become weary and dissuaded. As the initial instance, the Group referred to the enemy as stalling for time until winter could impede the Allies Western Front drive. He would "probably attempt to defend the West Wall along its entire length at all costs."

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The 12th Army Group ICGM injected a major concept, namely, the enemy's build-up of a mobile strategic reserve of armor. Integration of such a concept was not denied. No force was identified; simply, the idea was stated. Its composition was described within the opinion that the WEST WALL would probably be defended by infantry and fortress troops, thus releasing armor for local or strategic reserves.

During the week ending 14 October, the Army Group became more definite in its conception of this armored strategic force. (I, 14 October) The "lack of identification of several Panzer divisions for a long period indicated that it still intends to build a mobile counterattack force as a strategic reserve." Importantly, this force was characterized as counter-attacking, not counteroffensive. Presumably the G-2 meant to make the distinction. Note was taken of the enemy's ability to shuttle to threatened areas, inasmuch as he had transferred armor to the American AACHEN attack front both the north and south, particularly from the Third Army's METZ-NANCY area. Furthermore, the Group remarked that a "surprising regenerative power had been manifested during September." In contrast to some enemy capacities, the Group felt the enemy lacked the power to hold against simultaneous co-ordinated attacks against several points. In general, while the Allies seemed to favor the enemy's reformation of ground, air, and armor forces, the Allies could accumulate supplies quicker, and the enemy's tank and armor strength, manpower, oil and essential metals would be revealed.

Often motivated by increasing recognition of the enemy's demonstrated intentions, as indicated in the 21 October ICGM. (I, 21 October) "A strategic reserve in the West would undoubtedly force the commitment of the enemy's reserve divisions with whatever equipment they have at the time." Similarly, "Russian advances through SOBATEST toward VIENNA or westward between VIENNA and the ALP might force a rush of reserves to the Eastern front. The enemy was threatened on both Western and Eastern fronts" with a "pressure point in the armored reserve upon which he must rest his main hope of averting defeat this year." This double threat was his greatest danger, "by attacking his armor on both fronts. On the other hand, he was apparently building up a new reserve. Given 'sufficient time, say until 1 December, he could probably scrape together a powerful striking force of panzer divisions.' It would be presumably employed 'in the northern sectors of the Western front where Allied break-throughs would be most dangerous to the enemy' because of terrain advantages to Allied mobility and the proximity of Allied industrial areas in GERMANY. Such a reserve of armor might enable the enemy to achieve his major objectives of stalling the Allied advance for the winter of the West wall or the WEST." Thus, the 12th Army Group's G-2 emphatically expressed his opinion of the conditions and location of use of the enemy's reserve. It is noted that the geographical area was in the North. Furthermore, the Group was more definite as of this period about the location of the reserve: "There is also further evidence of withdrawal of armor divisions from the line for rest and refitting and of enemy build-up of a strategic reserve of armored forces in the general area of METZ and AACHEN." This formation area was in the north, where the unit was likewise expected. Another strong protective measure credited to the enemy was the enemy's new construction of defenses of "surrounding density" in the threatened sector between AACHEN and COLOGNE. They

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consisted of fire trenches, barbed wire and anti-tank ditches to the East of the ROEP River. Similar works were appearing east of the BRPT. A detailed discussion of these defenses was provided in an annex to the ISUM #11 for the week ending 21 October. (II, #11).

Continuing enemy successes so impressed the G-2 that he acknowledged strong enemy capacities, in his ISUM for the week ending 29 October. (I, 25 Oct) In the first place, the enemy had on the 27th "ended a long period on the defensive by launching a comparatively large-scale attack against the British southeast flank in the vicinity of WEERT and LIESSEL." The G-2 was uncertain, however, of the attack's purpose. It was apparently aimed at relieving pressure on the Fifteenth Army. The enemy may also have intended to exploit initial success in the attack by an attempt to cut off the ARNHEM salient at its base and to threaten ANTWERP." While the enemy could press the attack in the Eindhoven area with strategic armored reserves, he would unlikely press an ANTWERP attack that would deplete his armored reserve. "It seems more likely that the enemy will continue, without depletion, the buildup of his long needed armored reserve unless and until Allied thrusts eastward demand its employment. The enemy's most likely and serious capability would now appear to be a counterattack with strong forces of Panzer regiments against any Allied breakthrough in the Ninth or First Army sectors which threatens to push our advance to the RHINE." The second distinctive point pertaining to the enemy's performance was described thus: "It is now apparent, however that the reorganization of the German forces during the past two months has been fully as significant as the actual rate of reinforcement and indeed more important in restoring the fighting value of enemy forces in the West." Reorganization and reinforcement were executed in three distinct phases:

1. In order to halt the Allied advance and to man the WEST WALL, battle groups were hastily formed from broken divisions, fortress troops, etc.

2. Training was completed in the line itself, and these miscellaneous battle forces were reorganized into disciplined, controlled, numbered divisions.

3. A large part of the panzer force was withdrawn from the line for complete resting and refitting, and for the formation of substantial counter-attacking force to cooperate with a rejuvenated, enlarged air force. This achievement depended not only upon the ability to produce the necessary manpower, "but depended also on the enemy's ability to disengage these forces and still retain sufficient strength in the line to contain the Allied advance within reasonable limits." Poor weather and Allied supply difficulties aided the accomplishment.

Two major points were expressed in the ISUM for the week ending 4 November. (I, 4 Nov) One, the suspected enemy's strategic armored reserve force was named for the first time, being identified as the Sixth Panzer Army. The second, the northern portion of the Western front, rather than the southern was designated as the more important.

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As to the Sixth Panzer Army, tactical reconnaissance late in the just ended week indicated heavy troop movements in the First Army's northern sector. Their identity was not clear. They might be new infantry divisions, a "part of the newly identified SIXTH Panzer Army from East of the RHINE," or part of the tactical reserve, e.g., 2 or 9 Panzer Divisions. Inasmuch as tanks had not been observed, the forces might be infantry only. In respect to the Sixth Panzer Army's employment, the 12th Army Group opined: "The enemy's chief reserve of rested and re-equipped divisions for use in the West is undoubtedly the five armed divisions reported to be under Sixth Panzer Army in the BIELEFELD area and three parachute divisions that do not appear to be heavily committed."

The second salient point of this 4 November ISUM was the designation of the northern locality as the recipient of German reinforcements. As "Allied pressure in the North and the South develops during November the enemy is fully capable of increasing the rate of reinforcement to the West. If this pressure results in a major break-through threatening bridgeheads over the RHINE, the September expedient of rushing a large number of units into action may well be repeated. Eastern front needs would exert some influence upon the quantity of reinforcements. The areas to which such reinforcements might come is, of course, unknown but there seems little reason to doubt that the enemy will continue to be very sensitive to pressure in the direction of COLOGNE and the RUER and less sensitive in the South."

Attachment of increasing significance to the existence of armored reinforcements and their use in the north was continued by the 11 November ISUM. (I, 11 Nov, "The key to the enemy's essential capabilities and intentions must be found in the disposition of his Panzer and Panzer Grenadier Divisions." Their disposition, however, was only partially known to the 12th Army Group's G-2. He related that none opposed the Sixth Army Group, three faced the Third Army, at least part of two were committed against FUSA near AACHEN, the 9th Panzer was at TUNLO, and the 10th SS was believed east of AACHEN. On the other hand, the 18th Panzer Grenadier and 2d Panzer Divisions were unlocated; the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 12th and Panzer Lehr were regarded as having been out of the line for weeks, but were believed to be resting and refitting in the FAHRSBACH area of northwest GERMANY. Specifically, "the enemy's most important capabilities relate to his employment of this substantial panzer reserve on which he must base his chief hope of averting defeat this year." He was expected to protect his northern front, the general area west of COLOGNE "with any divisions which may be available from his panzer reserve even though the failure to employ some of these divisions against the Third Army may necessitate withdrawing under pressure in that area to the WEST GALT." In a word, the enemy was expected to sacrifice the southern front, if necessary. In particular, his "most likely capability is believed to be the strong reinforcement of his areas Northwest, West or Southwest of COLOGNE with all available panzer reserves for attack on the Northern flank of the Ninth Army, or the Southern flank of the VII Corps or for counter-attack against any further Westward advance toward COLOGNE."

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Since late September the Twelfth Army Group's G-2 had reflected in his ISUM's his growing recognition of the enemy's recuperative power, of his resistance and attack abilities. A major manifestation of the enemy's capacity was the formation of the Sixth Panzer Army, while successfully resisting Allied drives on the Western Front. Progressive interest in the employment of this Army was described in the ISUM's. The ISUM for the week ending 15 November continued the procedure of evaluating the enemy capabilities in terms of the Sixth Panzer Division. (I, 18 Nov)

In the first place, the enemy had further demonstrated "considerable skill in shifting divisions to meet vitally threatened areas and in employing tactical armored reserves to absorb the initial force of Allied attacks." His latest exploit was occasioned by the Allied offensive on 16 November. He hastily redispensed divisions to meet local tactical situations, and hurried low-grade infantry divisions to the West, yet holding the Sixth Panzer Army in strategic reserve. He utilized his tactical armored reserve, with the possible exception of 10SS and 2 Panzer Divisions.

Whereabouts of the Sixth Panzer Army were uncertain, however. "While the precise location of Sixth Panzer Army is not known, persistent statements by prisoners of war to the effect that 2 SS and 12SS Panzer Divisions are West of the RHINE continue to be received, with a possibility that 1 SS and 9 SS are also there."

A highly significant prophecy was ventured by the Twelfth Army Group in this 18 November ISUM, to the effect that indications were that the Sixth Panzer Army would "be used as a unit and then not until a breakthrough of the ROER River defense line." Both the locality and time for this Army's use were thus suggested.

While this force was considered capable of either a counterattack or a counteroffensive, it had not yet been employed, perhaps due to transport or supply difficulties. Instead, "it seems more likely that the enemy believed that conditions were not yet ripe for its employment." Those favorable conditions were then described. "The necessity for launching a strong counter-attack to stop an Allied thrust toward COLOGNE or the RUHR has not yet arisen." The enemy could hold his punch and await developments. For instance, "if the enemy intends to launch a major counter-offensive against any Allied salient East of Aachen designed to re-establish the SIEGFRIED Line positions or to cripple American forces in this area, the more opportune time will presumably come when our attacks have spent their force and our supplies are dwindling." On the other hand, if already committed infantry and tactical reserves could contain Allied attacks, commitment of his strategic Panzer reserve in "an essentially defensive counterattack" would be unnecessary. "He will then be in a position to launch a major counter-offensive or move some or all of the elements of Sixth Panzer Army to Army Group G or to whatever vital area is seriously threatened." Because of his sensitivity to the advance toward COLOGNE and the RUHR, and his appreciation of the First and Ninth U.S. Armies' attacks, he would not likely move the army from that area. He might move it in the case of a rapid advance toward the RUHR by the British or a WEST WALL breach developed in the Army Group G area.

Thus, the Twelfth Army Group considered several alternative uses for the Sixth Panzer Army, mainly that it would be retained and used in the north as a unit.

During the following week, that ending 25 November, the enemy situation markedly deteriorated, and he was being rapidly forced into a decision to commit the Sixth Panzer Army described as his "only mobile armored reserve in the West." (I, 25 Nov) In its attack towards the RHINE between KARLSRUHE and BASEL the Sixth U.S. Army Group had formed the VOSGES trap, which seemed "likely to force the bulk of the German Nineteenth Army to withdraw across the RHINE." Defeat of this German force would permit the Sixth Army Group to direct a large part of its forces northward against the WEST WALL in co-operation with the Third Army. A prompt, rapid, heavy reinforcement of the WEST WALL from TRIER to KARLSRUHE seemed "almost certain," from the German Fifteenth Army, from GERMANY or SCANDINAVIA or from the German Nineteenth Army, if a substantial number of divisions escaped across the RHINE from the VOSGES trap. "Whether units of the Sixth Panzer Army will also move from COLOGNE to the rear of the WEST WALL between TRIER and KARLSRUHE depends on Allied pressure and progress in each area." It would doubtless be employed at the point of greatest danger.

The north vs. south concept was fully apparent. The Twelfth Army Group's G-2 wrote that the enemy action at that time could not be predicted, but the "capability of moving a part or all of (his) armored reserve to oppose the American Third and Seventh Armies should be recognized." The situation in some respects is comparable to that at CAEN and ST. LO in the middle of July." Twelfth Army Group pointed out enemy alternatives: (1) If troops in the line held Allied forces in the north, and a serious breakthrough appeared imminent in the south, at least part of the Sixth Panzer Army would almost certainly be sent south. (2) In contrast, no such southward movement would occur, if the First and Ninth Armies offensives against the heart of industrial GERMANY continued "to be the major threat." (3) If both offensives constitute serious threats, the "enemy might be forced to split the Sixth Panzer Army although he is obviously reluctant to do so."

The enemy's situation became acute during the succeeding week, which ended 2 December. (I, 2 Dec) Whereas during the preceding week, ending 25 November, only the southern front was relatively critical for the enemy, now both the northern and southern were. A division of the Sixth Panzer Army between them, and insufficiently so in each case, might be forced upon the enemy. Or, if he solved the Western front problem with reinforcements from the Russian front, he would invite disaster in the East. In respect to the Western front, "at no time since September has such a critical dilemma confronted the enemy."

Having withdrawn so rapidly from the Sixth U.S. Army Group's area, the enemy was by early December threatened with a possible breakthrough of the WEST WALL, by the Third and Seventh U.S. Armies. "This is a threat second only in importance to the threat to the RUHR." Additional panzer reinforcements in the KARLSRUHE-TRIER area were imperative. Although unlocated for

a long while, the 2d Panzer Division might be a candidate, but would probably be inadequate. The enemy "must then decide whether to move any part or all of the Sixth Panzer Army from the COLOGNE area."

His condition in the Aachen area was likewise serious. Attrition was "producing an acute situation for the enemy but so far he has managed to avoid the piecemeal commitment of the four remaining divisions of Sixth Panzer Army." Remnants of some twelve infantry and four panzer-type divisions were crowded into a front barely thirty miles long. Some had been badly decimated and possessed little fighting value. In fact, the twelve infantry divisions might not have an actual strength of more than four equivalent divisions.

Despite his critical condition, the enemy had not committed any of the four SS panzer divisions of the Sixth Panzer Army. Its location was described as "held in reserve presumably in the general area West of COLOGNE." According to this ISUM of 2 December, "the enemy defensive plan has been quite clear for some time. It involves all-out defense at the ROER River beyond which Allied advances would constitute an immediate threat to the ROER."

The last Twelfth Army Group G-2 Weekly Intelligence Summary issued prior to the 16 December Counteroffensive was No. 18 for the week ending 9 December, and issued on the 12th. (I, 9 Dec). Number 19 made for the week ending 16-20 December, and issued on the 19th. (I, 16 Dec)

This ISUM's analysis of the enemy's capabilities pertained to the entire Western front, and was not localized to that of the Twelfth Army Group. This breadth of view suggested significance.

Optimism was the fundamental characteristic of this ISUM and was proclaimed in the opening sentence:

"It is not certain that attrition is steadily sapping the strength of German forces on the Western Front and that the crust of defenses is thinner, more brittle and more vulnerable than it appears on our G-2 maps or to the troops in the line."

Two "outstanding facts" supported "this unqualified statement." (1) The "deaths weakness of the individual infantry division in the line." Evidence indicated that infantry divisions in the line since Allied offensives were launched had been cut at least 50 percent and several others virtually destroyed. Daily transfusions from fortress troops kept these emaciated divisions alive. On the other hand, they were supported by ten battered Panzer or Panzer Grenadier divisions in tactical reserve and the still untouched Sixth SS Panzer Army. (2) Falling further into replacement arrears was inevitable for the enemy. His needed minimum replacement was 20 divisions a month, but only fifteen were foreseeable. Recently the rate had been only two or three per week. These two basic facts "made it certain that before

long he will not only fail in his current attempt to withdraw and rest his tactical reserve but he will be forced to commit at least part of his Panzer Army to the line."

The G-2 opinion of the enemy's potentialities as expressed in his last of the pre-Counteroffensive ISUM's reiterated that the enemy's primary capabilities related to his employment of the Sixth SS Panzer Army, and the enemy might not "have complete freedom of choice as to the time and place of its employment." The likeness of the current situation to that of CAEN and ST. LO of the NORMANDY campaign was again mentioned. The enemy had committed his armor at CAEN, but had difficulty in disengaging it when he needed it to control the ST. LO breakthrough. "A break-through by the Third and Seventh U.S. Armies could easily develop into a similar disastrous 'and run' and RUNDSTEDT appears to be determined to avoid the NORMANDY mistake." Allied pressure and his inadequate infantry reinforcements might force the decision upon him, nevertheless. Furthermore, the enemy had to solve the north vs. south concept, which and how he will support.

In respect to ROER counterattacks and of mounting a major counteroffensive, this ISUM noted the enemy's difficulties. "If lack of adequate infantry reinforcements required the commitment of his strategic reserves, the enemy's capability of counter-attacking any bridgeheads established East of the ROER is greatly diminished. Similarly the capability of mounting a major counter-offensive would be virtually destroyed if his armor is already engaged."

In summary, all of the enemy major capabilities depended "on the balance between the rate of attrition imposed by the Allied offensives and the rate of infantry reinforcements. The balance at present is in favor of the Allies. With continued Allied pressure in the South and in the North the breaking point may develop suddenly and without warning."

As traced in detail, the Group's G-2 Intelligence Summaries were concerned with certain key concepts:

1. The forced commitment of enemy forces on either the northern or the southern portions of the Western front, but pre-eminently the northern because protection of its industrial RUHR was essential to German strategy.

2. Employment of the mobile strategic reserve, the Sixth Panzer Army, when the Allied advance crossed the ROER River.

3. The heavy, rapid attrition of enemy forces on the Western front and the inadequate reinforcement, which might cause a German collapse.

These ISUM opinions were also set forth in other authoritative documents during the last days prior to 16 December. G-2 reports during daily Briefings at 0915 hours of the Commanding General by his staff, and a letter by Brig. Gen. Edwin L. Sibert, G-2, to Brigadier E. T. Williams, the 21 Army Group's Intelligence Officer, on 11 December, reaffirmed the above ISUM concepts. (V; DE)

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During the Briefing on 8 December, the G-2 recapitulated at length his appraisal of the enemy. He was capable of reinforcing between TRIER and KARLSRUHE with infantry and armor from the interior and other fronts. He could reinforce east of AACHEN with infantry from Germany or by committing panzer divisions of the Sixth Panzer Army. He could employ this army in the AACHEN sector.

The reader is invited to note that the specified geographical areas were the northern, represented by the AACHEN sector, and the southern, TRIER to KARLSRUHE. No mention was made of the central zone of the Western Front, part of which was the VIII Corps sector invaded by the 16 December attack. In fact, the AACHEN sector was considerably north of the VIII Corps sector, and the TRIER-KARLSRUHE zone was south of the 16 December attack zone.

Respecting the Sixth Panzer Army, its employment was a capability. But the Group G-2 prophesized that Von Rundstedt was unlikely to risk "this precious guard over the RHINE" consisting of five panzer divisions except under certain conditions. One, until the Allied advanced east of the ROER and could not be stopped by available tactical reserve. Second, or until the Allies offered an opportunity to be taken off balance "so that an abrupt counterstroke could nullify any future Allied prospects for the winter."

The Twelfth Army Group's estimate of the enemy and his potentials as of the period was again stated on 11 December by the G-2 in a letter to the 21st Army Group's intelligence officer. (IX) The latter had sent General Sibert a paper on the enemy situation as of 1 December 1944 and 1 March 1945, to which General Sibert replied. Acknowledgement must be made that the Sibert letter is being accepted on its face value, and that a copy of General Williams' letter has not been located. Perhaps a different complexion would be placed on the matter if General Williams' letter were available for checking. This would be unlikely, nevertheless, inasmuch as the Group's G-2's letter continued and epitomized the Twelfth Army Group's conceptions developed during the previous two months.

Hope and optimism characterized General Sibert's letter. Preliminary to his expression of views, he agreed with his 21 Army Group colleague that the front's stabilization for long was unlikely, unless on the RHINE line. He hoped for Patton's successes in the ZWEIFRUCKEN area, and that one or two divisions of the Sixth Panzer Army would be drawn to the south. By the time they were enroute or were engaged, the ROER dams situation would be cleared and progress toward the RHINE via COLOGNE could be resumed. The Group G-2 felt there were "many recent and agreeable signs of Nazi deterioration on our front." Casualties were at a 3-1 rate, morale was low, units were very under-strength, poorly equipped, supplied, underfed, and the manpower was "of increasingly poor quality." "Given time and fair weather we can make progress against him anywhere." An added immediate advantage was the certainty of record RHINE floods to inundated strategically and industrially important areas.

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Nowhere in this letter was intimation made about an enemy counter-blow. The only non-affirmative note was the inference that the Sixth Panzer Army constituted a threat. Otherwise, this 11 December opinion by the Group's G-2 was optimistic.

As the reader has noted, frequent references were made to the Group's belief that a German counterattack was expected when the Allied crossed the ROER River. Similarly noticeable was the omission of reasons for this belief. The only explanation of this point among the Group's records was the offering within the Order of Battle Notes annexed to the G-2 Periodic #192, 14 December. (III, B) It stated:

"A PW taken on 6 December claims to have heard at the end of November that as soon as the Allies crossed the ROER River, the SS Divs in reserve there were to counter-attack. The Luftwaffe will make its appearance and support the attack."

The Army Group surely possessed further reasons than this single data to anticipate an attack after the ROER crossing, but, to repeat, other supporting thought was not asserted.

II. Opinion on the VIII Corps Sector.

No attack potentiality was accorded the VIII Corps sector, where the Counteroffensive was launched. This contrasted the significance attached to the northern zone of the Western Front, and to a lesser degree to the southern. Pre-16 December opinion held that the VIII Corps sector was employed by the enemy as a transient area. The calculated risk concept was not mentioned prior to 16 December, but only in retrospect commentaries.

Two explanations are necessary, preliminary to an examination of the Group's attitude towards the VIII Corps. One, a geographical definition of the VIII Corps and its adjacent zones; second, a distinction between the current and retrospective opinions.

As noted in the weekly ISUM's lengthy discussions were devoted to northern and southern zones of the Western front, with no mention of the VIII Corps or to a central zone. Only slight attention was paid to the VIII Corps sector by the Group's G-2 in his issuances, and that simply in the Commanding General's Briefings. The descriptions of the VIII Corps sector in the Briefings denoted it as a central sector between the north and south. As to the northern and southern portions of the Western front, the reader understands from the ISUM's, that the former was the geography northward approximately from the ROER River dams facing the First U.S. Army and the British. The southern was the SAAR area in general, and in particular the Third U.S. Army and Sixth U.S. Army Group zones.

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Pre-16 December records did not evidence that current appraisals of the VIII Corps sector considered it in terms of either an attack potential or a calculated risk. Post-Counteroffensive commentaries stressed both. Current opinion held that the area was a transient area for German divisions before transfer to more active or critical areas. This purpose was not mentioned by post-campaign analyses.

Current opinion of the VIII Corps sector regarded that part of the Western Front as a transient area. G-2 reports during the daily Commanding General's Briefings were the only source of expressed opinions about the VIII Corps front. (V) The report on 7 December stated:

"In the VIII Corps sector there is still very little activity in the front lines. In the rear areas the enemy continues his movements. For the last few weeks his policy was to employ his newly arriving units in this area letting the more experienced units move to more critical sectors. This large activity might indicate some more units arriving on the western front."

The transient area concept was emphasized three days later, on the 10th:

"Continuous reports of movement into the VIII Corps and out are being made. This is probably focal center for enemy troops going either to the north or south."

Again, on the 12th:

"In the VIII Corps, there are no definite changes to report, but it becomes more and more clear that more than one formation has arrived into this sector and so we can expect two or at least one of the divisions from this area to appear in some other sector very shortly."

A further suggestion of the negative attitude towards the VIII Corps might be deduced from a certain treatment that the Twelfth Army Group apparently applied. The Group operated an organization known as Phantom, an intelligence collection and communication force, and units of it were attached to major commands of the Group. An examination of the 9 November - 15 December period of the Phantom Log maintained by the Group's TAC headquarters, disclosed that no entries were included from VIII Corps. (12 A Gp., G-3 Sitreps (Phantom Log), Nov. & Dec. '44. In L-471(19), L-320(11)) Speculating upon the reason, perhaps the VIII Corps was considered inactive, and Phantom teams were assigned only to commands conducting aggressive operations, e.g., V and VII Corps, Seventh Army, etc. If that logic was reasonable, then the VIII Corps' importance was not rated highly.

While the pre-16 December opinions did not mention the VIII Corps front as the locale from which an attack might be launched or to the sector as a calculated risk, after-the-event commentaries emphasized those aspects.

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The calculated risk concept was first stated five days after the Counteroffensive was launched, not prior. According to the Group's November After/Action Report, issued 21 December:

"10. The possible threat to our stretched out VIII Corps was discussed among the CG, G/S, G-3 and G-2. It was decided to take a calculated risk here in order to gain the necessary strength for the continuation of our pressure toward the RHINE and the Saar. It was felt that while the enemy was capable of a break-through that it would not lead to decisive results before we could take adequate countermeasures." (IV, C)

No reference was located among the records for September, October, November and the first half of December pertaining to this conference, or other discussions of the calculated risk idea. Mention of the concept and probably any conference on the subject would seem logical topics for the daily Commanding General's Briefings. No allusion whatsoever was found among the reports of those Briefings for November and December. (V, B, C)

As to the second and only other allusion to the calculated risk concept, Brig. Gen. A. Franklin Kibler, G-3, discussed it on 23 August 1945. (X, 2) He answered questions on the European operations, including the ARDENNES action, on that date, submitted by the Historical Section, USFET (Rear). Of these was this one:

"Q. If 12th Army Group did anticipate German offensive action, where was it expected to take place? What plans, if any, were made to meet this threat?

"A. It was known during early December that there were some 21 enemy divisions, 9 of which were Panzer and Panzer-grenadier type, massed west of the Rhine between BORN and DUSSELDORF. It was believed that these divisions had been concentrated opposite our major penetration of the Siegfried Line for the purpose of crushing any attempt to cross the ROER River and advance to the RHINE." A 30 November plan proposed entrapment and destruction of this force, but was not executed because of the difficult Eifel terrain and the non-preparation of the British to launch a major attack.

"The possibility of an enemy spoiling attack in the ARDENNES area was recognized but it was the opinion that even if they broke through there they wouldn't have anything. With major attacks going on to the north and south the calculated risk of leaving the ARDENNES sector lightly held was accepted."

III Lack of Counteroffensive Evidence

Sharing equal significance with the Group's conception of what the enemy could or would do, was the Group's possession or lack of actual evidence pointing to the Counteroffensive.

No claim was advanced by the Group prior to 18 December that it possessed data noting an impending Counteroffensive.

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In a word, the Group (1) did not refer to any specific data as constituting evidence; (2) it did not interpret air reconnaissance reports as indicating an impending attack; (3) enemy dispositions and movements during the first two weeks of December did not appear suggestive; (4) no attack potentiality was mentioned by the G-2 during his reports on the 14th and 15th of December.

Specific Data.

As noted on the Division, Corps, and Army levels, certain data acquired by some divisions of the VIII Corps (FUSA), ostensibly indicated the event. Actually, only four of the seven data were forwarded to higher commands. They were: two concerning an coordination of traffic activity, 13 - 15 December, one pertaining to a woman informer's testimony on 14 December about the enemy buildup; and one claim by a wounded PW on 15 December that he had heard an impending attack mentioned. The other three unforwarded data related to PW attack claims.

Four of the divisional "attack" data related to PW statements that they had heard an attack was planned for between 18 - 25 December. (Div Level) Only one of these four so-called evidence was transmitted by the divisions (108th) to the Corps (VIII), and it consisted of the testimony of a wounded PW under morphine during interrogation. If the Group was aware of this incident, no allusion was made among its records. In fact, only a single reference was made to a similar PW statement. The Order of Battle Notes annexed to the G-2 Periodic #192, 14 December, stated:

"A PW taken on 6 Dec claims to have heard at the end of Nov that as soon as the Allies crossed the ROER River, the SS Divs in reserve there were to counter-attack. The Luftwaffe will make its appearance and support the attack." (III, B)

Of these four forwarded data, only one of the traffic activity data was mentioned by the Twelfth Army Group, and it was not characterized as evidence. The original of this data was reported by the 108th Infantry Division (VIII Corps, FUSA) in its G-2 Periodic for 14 December. (Div Level) 108 Div, p. 114) Listening posts on that day reported heavy increases of vehicular traffic, particularly near ORIENT and BRANDSCHEID. The Twelfth Army Group reported in its G-2 Periodic #192 for 14 December the following: "In the Northern VIII Corps zone, vehicular traffic was observed moving north from GEMONT (L0302) and BRANDSCHEID (P0861). Should these movements prove to be of a divisional scale, 18 Infantry Division (German) would be the most likely candidate for a shift to the newly developing danger zone." (III, B) A further explanation of this traffic activity was advanced by the Group's G-2 during his report at the Commanding General's Briefing, at 0915, on 16 December. (V, 16 Dec) He said the 326th Infantry Division had moved from the northern VIII Corps sector, the movement probably accounting for the observed vehicular activity. Although this Briefing was at 0915 on 16 December, the G-2's report concerned the pre-16 December hours, with no reference to the German attacks of about dawn.

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Air Reconnaissance

Reports on this subject did not refer to attack manifestations. At least no such commentary was offered by the Group. Two daily statements were issued about the air, mainly combat operations, and neither provided interpretative commentary nor listed findings as attack evidence. One, Air Operations and Observations of Enemy Movements, was issued by the Target Intelligence G-2 (Air), and an example of its contribution is represented in the following excerpt from the 15 December issuance:

"If true, the heaviest rail concentration occurred at GREVENBROICH at 1130/1140 hours when F/U bombed and strafed 30 trains. ... Rail line from GREVENBROICH to ELSBORN revealed: east of BODSUNG, 75 mix cars in LIPP 2/1, 25 of these were oil, south of ELSBORN 30 plus cars equally made up of flats and wagons appeared loaded..." (VIII)

The other issuance on air was the air report of the daily Commanding General's Briefings. (ETO file, L-340(4) Illustrative was the 15 December report:

"No operations yesterday for the 8th Air Force and RAF. 1st TAF (Prov) supported 6 Army Group flying 156 armed reconnaissance sorties, particularly in support of Seventh Army. 2nd TAF flew 101 fighter sorties over Central Holland in support of 21 Army Group. 9th Air Force fighter and fighter bombers flew 415 sorties."

Enemy Dispositions

German movements and dispositions during the period immediately preceding the Counteroffensive could be revelatory. And, the extent of the Group's observation and interpretation of this activity could be expected to be reflected during the authoritative, daily Commanding General's Briefings. (V) Inasmuch as a commentary to that effect was wholly lacking, apparently the Group's G-2 did not conclude that the enemy movements manifested attack potentialities. Following the G-2's arrangement of discussing the enemy according to the front, an analysis of the Briefings indicated the following:

1. On the British portion of the northern front, the Group was aware of some movement of the Fifteenth German Army from the First Canadian Army's front. Its location and mission were unknown, however, as of 9 December, the last reference to it. Nor, as of 14 December, did the Group know the location and mission of the 5th Panzer Army, which PW's reported to have been relieved by the Fifteenth Army.

2. On the Ninth and First U.S. Army fronts, the enemy maintained a costly, strong defensive policy. Infantry was lacking. On 6 December, the view was expressed that certain movements suggested a change in reinforcement policy, to send back depleted rather than new divisions without sufficient training. The VIII Corps sector was regarded by the Group as a transient area. The enemy was sensitive to the ROER River dams approaches.

3. Shifting of troops to meet threats, withdrawals, and lack of reinforcements were the salient points of interest on the southern front --- Third and Seventh U.S. Armies and Sixth Army Group.

Except for the VIII Corps sector, which is discussed separately in this Critique, the following elaborates upon the above summary.

Front Facing the British in the North.

The movement and role of German forces, identified as the Fifteenth Army, from the front of the First Canadian Army were the concern of the Twelfth Army Group. On 2 December the 351 and 719 Infantry Divisions were reported as moving toward Germany, but their disposition in that country was undetermined. An outmovement of the 85th Infantry Division to a more critical sector was expected. The view was expressed on the next day that a shifting of troops "to more critical fronts" continued, and the enemy would leave very few troops in the area. The Fifteenth Army was said to have formerly controlled the area, but was unlocated at the moment. As of the 4th, the Group felt that a gradual enemy withdrawal was obvious. Three divisions (not named) were already identified on other sectors (not specified), and possibly three more were moving out. Headquarters of the Fifteenth Army was again reported west of COLOGNE. According to the Group's G-2 analysis of the situation, at least Western HOLLAND was being evacuated, with only small task forces being left behind for demolition and delaying action. On 5 December more movements in the First Canadian Army's area were reported. The Fifteenth Army seemed definitely west of EOLN. An unconfirmed PF statement suggested the Fifteenth would assume the 5th Panzer Army's zone. The 5th Panzer Army was reported as moving to the KOBLENZ area. According to the 6 December Briefing, "a great number of movements reported southeast of ARBHEIM might indicate some of the units withdrawn from the First Canadian Army sector (were) moving towards the ROER River or SAAR River areas." Simultaneously, reinforcements for the 1 Parachute Army might be coming from the MUNSTER area towards HOLLAND. On the 9th, the Group G-2 stated: "There is very little to report in the northern sector of the front. The main puzzle at the present still remains the actual role of the 15 German Army and its present location. It is almost sure, that it has moved out from the sector opposite the First Canadian Army. Four of its divisions have already been identified on other sectors and four more are definitely moving out. PF's insist that the new location of this army is in the area west of COLOGNE, with the mission of attacking towards AACHEN." Again was mentioned the Fifteenth's possible assumption of the 5th Panzer Army. This mention on 9 December was the last made of the Fifteenth Army.

Further allusions, however, were made concerning the Fifth Panzer Army. On the 9th, reference was made to PF statements that this army was moving towards KOBLENZ to reassemble, and to become a roving panzer reserve, similar to the EBERBACH Panzer Gruppe in the NORMANDY campaign. A movement

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10 Dec: In VII Corps sector, the 3 PG Division was reported by PW to be moving towards COLOGNE to reorganize; and, unconfirmed report claimed 333 Infantry Division was withdrawing. In the V Corps sector, the 39 Infantry Division was in a very depleted state.

Front Facing Southern U.S. Forces

Opposite the Third and Seventh U.S. Armies and the Sixth U.S. Army Group, German forces were considered to be in a predicament. On 2 December, a continuation of troop shifting in the Sixth Army Group's area was noted, and the next day the opinion was expressed that the enemy would hold as long as possible before withdrawing, to gain time for defense in GERMANY preparation. Withdrawal of the Panzer Lehr Division from the line was also pointed out on 3 December, but was identified opposite the 44th Division on the 4th. A commentary was offered on the same day that in the KARLSRUHE area of the Sixth Army Group, train movements indicated arrival of defense troops. In the Third Army's area, the Briefing of the 4th claimed that the XX Corps crossing of the SAAR River had caused the enemy to move units, particularly the 21 Panzer Division to meet the threat. On the next day, a lack of reinforcements in the TUSA sector was considered apparent. The enemy was being forced to recommit depleted units. According to the Briefing of 12 December, the enemy's front opposite the Sixth Army Group was reluctant to yield ground, but could not stop advances. Despite his need for reinforcements, the zone did not seem to have high personnel priority. In the Third Army's sector, as of 14 December, the enemy seemed unable to withdraw units for rest, due to the continuous need for troops. On the 15th, note was taken that in the Seventh Army's sector that reinforcements were needed, inasmuch as the remaining units were very depleted.

Reports for 14 and 15 December

During the daily Briefing of 0915 on 15 December of the Commanding General by his staff, the G-2 reported: "No major changes for the last period." (V, 15 Dec) Despite heavy losses from TRIER southward, the enemy had received "very little reinforcements." Battered units were required to most of the fighting. Sensitivity towards Ninth and First Armies thrusts onto the COLOGNE plain was continued by the enemy.

Although the German Counteroffensive was launched at approximately 0630 with artillery and later infantry on 16 December, the CG's Briefing 0915 did not mention these events. (V, 16 Dec) The report pertained only to the 15th.

Briefly, no changes were reported on the 21 Army Group front, the Fifth Army's zone was "very quiet". On the First Army front, while the enemy had counterattacked some in the VII Corps sector, he was "almost entirely pushed out of the west bank" of the ROER; heavily defended positions in the SIEGFRIED Line as well as normal heavy resistance and counterattacks

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of armor towards KOBLENZ was the only indication. The Fifth Panzer Army was thought in need of reinforcements, and that now might account for the armor reported moving into the VIII Corps sector. If this was to be the mission of the Fifth Panzer Army, the Twelfth Army Group's G-2 wondered as to the employment of the already First Parachute and the Sixth Panzer Armies. Three days later, on 12 December, the G-2 noted that the report on the reorganization of the Third PG Division near COLOGNE and other reports might confirm that the Fifth Panzer Army was out of the line, and was assembling between COLOGNE and KOBLENZ. Finally, on 14 December, the G-2 stated that the 340th Infantry Division had again reappeared in the line, and that obviously "The enemy divisions, part of the 5 Pz Army, are moving out the line. This leaves the 6 SS Pz Army the only armor immediately available to the enemy."

Front Facing Ninth & First U.S. Armies, in the North

Some interpretative comment was made concerning this front, but the Briefings largely pertained to allusions to disposition of individual divisions.

As to the former, on 4 December, the enemy was described as maintaining a strong defensive policy, which was very costly. This thought was repeated on the 5th, with the addition that the enemy apparently lacked infantry. No infantry had been moved into the area. On the 6th, the view was expressed that due to the reappearance in the line of the 246 and 47 Infantry Divisions and the Pz LEHR, the enemy reinforcement policy might be changed, to send back depleted rather than new divisions without sufficient training. And, on the 15th, the Group G-2 asserted that previous reactions indicated the enemy was sensitive to the areas controlling the ROER River dams, that an armored unit would likely appear.

Dispositions of specific divisions were reported thus:

- 2 Dec : 10 SS Pz Div was believed being replaced by 9 Pz Div
- 3 Dec : 9 Pz Div had been unidentified for some time, but reappeared in the line
- 6 Dec : 246 Inf Div reappeared in line
- 7 Dec : 10 SS Div reported moving across ROER to the east. 3 PG Div had withdrawn to the east.
- 12 Dec : 10 SS Pz Div was believed to be entirely on the east bank of the ROER, and possibly assembling in the vicinity of COLOGNE
- 13 Dec : Numerous train movements in BONN area indicated a divisional arrival.
- 14 Dec : In VII Corps area the bulk of the enemy units were on the east bank of the ROER. In the V Corps sector, the 272 and 277 Infantry Divisions were identified so far

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made tough going in the V Corps sector; the 326th Infantry Division had moved from the VIII Corps sector, probably explaining the observed numerous vehicular movements in the northern VIII Corps sector. No new identifications were made in the Third Army's zone. In the Sixth Army Group's zone, the enemy seemed "completely demoralized in the Seventh Army sector;" troops had broken through the MAGINOT Line and entered GERMANY.

IV. Opinion of the Attack's Significance

The Group's G-2 did not conclude until 19 December that the enemy action was an all-out offensive. As to objectives, the only current view expressed prior to 16 January 1945 was that of 17 December, to the effect that the Group believed ST. VITH was the initial objective, with LIEGE possibly in mind. Acknowledgment was made on 19 December that the German offensive had been a surprise, that the enemy had skillfully, secretly regrouped and attacked.

Interpretation of the attack were described during current operations and in retrospect. The former were more objective. The following discussion will be chronological, in order to mark changing views.

Preliminary to the ensuing analysis, the writer calls attention to a certain incompleteness of the discussion. Possibly divisional, corps, or the First Army commanders personally telephoned news of the German attack to the Group, which took the information into evaluation account, but Group records did not reflect such instances. Second, interviews with Group officers obtained by Mr. Forrest C. Pogue were not used, but interviews among the Group's official records were analyzed.

SUMMARY -- Current Opinions, 16-19 Dec.

The first interpretation of the day's events was issued at 2300 on the 16th, cautioning against overestimation of the meaning until the assault's magnitude was more defined. Although attacks had begun some three hours earlier, no mention was made of them during the Commanding General's Briefing at 0915, the subject being the previous day. News was received during the day at approximate two hour intervals from the V Corps particularly, but none direct from the VIII Corps, the chief sufferer of the assault. Most data was the generality that enemy pressure continued.

With the acquisition of additional data during the 17th, impressions gradually took shape. The G-2 reported at the CG's 0915 Briefing that attacks had been launched, but his assessment of their meaning was limited to acknowledgement that the enemy had passed from defensive policy to offensive activity. At 2300 the G-3 Periodic for the day stated: "It appears that a strong counter-offensive has been launched by the enemy. ..." The G-2 was not sure, apparently. For the first time, objectives were mentioned, in that captured documents indicated ST. VITH was the initial goal, to be followed by exploitations to the west and northwest, with LIEGE possibly in mind. These views were founded upon captured documents. Yet, the

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the Group seemingly did not possess the text of more informative of all the documents captured by the 106th Division (VIII Corps, FUSA) and by the V Corps on 16 December, the Commander-in-Chief West's Order of the Day, 16 December, announcing the Counteroffensive.

Two appraisals were issued on the 19th, and they remained the last current ones throughout the Battle of the Bulge. According to the G-2 Periodic for the day, issued at 2300, evidence was mounting that the BIEFEL assault was "a thoroughly planned, deliberate, 'all-out' offensive." A more comprehensive paper was also issued on the 19th -- the hour unspecified, in the form of the G-2 Intelligence Summary for the week ending 162400 December. It proclaimed the enemy had opened his biggest offensive since the beginning of the Winter Europe campaign. Inasmuch as the Group had apparently acquired the text of the Von Rundstedt Order of the Day since the 17th, it referred to this announcement as evidence of the attack's scope. Explaining the attack, this G-2 ISUM declared that the enemy had decided to take the initiative with his reserves, and to "gamble all on the success of a single bold stroke." This, instead of awaiting inevitable attrition of his infantry to the point that the Americans could execute an end run through the Third and Seventh U.S. Armies areas. A high degree of surprise was obtained by the enemy through skillful regrouping and launching of simultaneous attacks, the G-2 candidly acknowledged. However, the enemy's inherent, fundamental weakness of supply favored Allied repulse of the new German counterblow, after the enemy exhausted his long time hoarded initial stage supplies.

Summary - Retrospect Opinions

Post-campaign explanations were advanced on 16 January 1945, 31 July and 25 August. Actually, when the Group's December After/Action Report was issued on 16 January, the Battle of the Bulge was still raging, but this document was more of a narrative summary rather than a current analysis in the same category with daily and weekly reports. Because these three explanations were retrospect, their objectivity could be reasonably suspected. A primary value of after-the-event expositions would be their candor. If, after time had permitted revision of initial opinions, the Group was still willing to characterize the Group's pre-Counteroffensive expectations as inaccurate, this frankness might be accepted as of practical value.

Because it was more informative, the 25 August commentary is summarized first. This was the G-2's analysis revealed in his answers to questions submitted by the Historical Section, ETC. While a German offensive on spoiling attack had been considered possible, the Group did not believe on the actual operations and scope would be risked. Attention was given to an ARDENNES spoiling attack, but the sector was thought of as a calculated risk, in view of the major Allied attacks being executed in the north and south. The VIII Corps, with the 106th Armored Division in reserve, was expected to hold against any attack of the size anticipated. If not, First and Third Armies reserves could reinforce the flanks rapidly. Bad weather was the principal obscuration of the enemy's pre-16 December situation, because it prohibited effective air reconnaissance.

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In contrast to the August interview-type statement by the G-3, the Group published two explanations of the Counteroffensive. In passing, credit may be conferred on the Group for its restrained hindsight reasoning, in contrast to its subordinate FISA and V Corps. They retrospectively compiled lengthy, piecemeal, buildup evidence into post-Counteroffensive publications. (FISA, REPORT OF OPERATIONS, 1 AUG, 44-22 FEB 45, pp. 99-103; Corps Level, V Corps, p. 4) Twelfth Army Group publications did not contain such unob- jective issuances.

These two post-campaign publications were, in the main, quotes from the 18 December G-3 ISUM. Their originality consisted in remarks upon the attack's objectives which were the MEUSE River, then ANTWERP. The two publications were the December After/Action Report issued on 16 January and the G-2 Final After/Action Report covering the European War, dated 31 July.

Chronology - Current Opinions 16 - 19 December:

16 December.

As of the 0915 Briefing of the Commanding General by his staff, no news was in the Group's hands. At least neither the G-2 nor the G-3 re- marked upon the morning's events commencing approximately three hours earlier. (V, 16 Dec.) Their comments were obviously based upon the previous day. Respecting the VIII Corps, the G-2 discussed the movement and meaning of the 325th Infantry Division out of that sector. The G-3's only comment was "no change."

The initial recorded news was provided by the V Corps G-3 at 0900 to the Group's Phantom team, and was received by the Group's TAC headquarters at 0930A. (12 A Sp., G-3 Sitreps (Phantom Log), 16 Dec. In L-320(11) L Phantom was a special Group intelligence and communications organization and some units were assigned to each major command of the Group. Phantom's log at TAC headquarters was the single source of information on subordinate com- mands' messages to the Group during the 16th. Curiously, no messages were entered during the day from the stricken VIII Corps. None had been entered for at least a week prior to the 16th, suggesting that entries were made only for commands executing operations. VIII Corps entries were made subse- quent to the 16th. Messages were received during the 16th from the V, VII, XII, XIII, XIV, XV Corps, and at noon from the Seventh Army. Inasmuch as the V Corps was adjacent on the north to the stricken VIII Corps, and suf- fered some of the enemy's onslaught, messages from the V Corps Phantom/con- stituted the primary source of information. A V Corps message received by the Group's TAC headquarters at 0730A stated: "situation unchanged during night; normal patrol and artillery activity took place. ..." Then, at 0830A arrived the following initial information:

"Enemy artillery fire active along whole front this morning. 106 Div report counterattacks by small number of enemy in areas L0340 and 0893. A tank of 106 Div is under small arms fire. 99 Div report a counterattack

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against 383 Regt in area F0304, and another in area K9516. Elsewhere enemy patrol activity continuing."

The 106th Division was a VIII Corps command, and the 99th (V Corps) was adjacent on the north. Thus, although indirect, this was the first news about the VIII Corps.

V Corps messages added a few details throughout the 16th, but mostly repeated the generality that enemy pressure continued. Two hours after the first informative message, the Group received one at 1135A to the effect: "Enemy activity continues along whole corps front. ..." Others followed:

1425A --- "Enemy maintaining pressure along Corps front. 102 Cav Gp report increased enemy action along their front which is ... Situation obscure in WESTERNICH where enemy have infiltrated into the town. At ROLLES-BROICH infiltrations are being dealt with."

1645A --- "Enemy made penetration of approx 500 yds in area F0303 early this afternoon, but position now restored in that area and main enemy effort is now in area Q207 where heavy fighting continues. Remainder of Corps front no change in front line. ..."

1910A --- "Enemy pressure along 93 Div front continues.

...

2040A --- "Enemy pressure maintained against 99 Div. ..."

The first interpretation of the day's attacks was issued at 25000, and cautioned against over-estimation of the meaning until the assault's magnitude was more defined. (III, B) This view was expressed in the G-2 Periodic, 161800A-161800 December, issued near midnight. Quality of the six divisions involved, small scale attacks, "and the apparent lack of long range objectives would seem to limit the enemy's threat. More exactly, the enemy appears to be launching a major diversionary attack to force the hurried withdrawal of our divisions from the vital COLCOONE and SAAR River areas to meet the RIFFEL threat." The attacks could not "be regarded as a major long term threat" until their magnitude increased more cohesively, or until one or more of the Sixth SS Panzer Army elements were committed on the VIII Corps front.

17 December

During the CG's Briefing at 0915, the G-2 discussed the attack in connection with his report on the First Army area, but his assessment of its meaning was limited to acknowledgement that "the enemy went from the defensive policy to offensive activity." (V, 17 Dec) Objectives, strategy, tactics were not mentioned. He described the change as commencing with a heavy artillery concentration particularly in the VII and V Corps sectors. Infantry counterattacks of company to regimental strength concentrated primarily in the southern end of the V Corps and the northern of the adjacent (south) VIII Corps. Seven new divisional identifications had been made, although only two were new arrivals in the west. The following 16 divisions or elements had been identified on the V and VIII Corps fronts:

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Infantry: 12, 18, 26, 62, 89, 212, 272, 276, 277, 352, 580
 SS Pz : 12
 Panzer : 2, 118
 Proht : 5

With the acquisition of additional data during the day, an impression of the enemy's intent was noted in the G-2 Periodic issued at 2300, for the period of 161800A-171800A. (III, B) "It appears that a strong counter-offensive has been launched by the enemy, the 12 SS Panzer Division moving toward ST. VITH (P8887) and MALMEDY (17805) from the north and east and 11 6 Panzer Division moving toward ST. VITH from the southeast. Captured documents indicated ST. VITH to be the "first objective in this area to be followed by exploitations to the west and northeast, possibly with LIEGE in mind. The secondary intent appears still to be the relief of our strong pressure in the COLOGNE and SAAR River sectors and the continued threat of steady pressure on the central VIII Corps front. Should the enemy believe that he is succeeding in his counter-offensive, it is not impossible that the other half of the Sixth SS Panzer Army will attempt to drive to the southwest along the MEUSE River from the general area of ERKENLENZ (F0177)."

This statement of 2300 was significant for two reasons. First, the Group's G-2 referred to the enemy's objectives for the first time since the assault began approximately 0630 on the 16th. Second, the G-2's information source on the attack's objective was specified as captured documents, rather than varying origins.

Of salient interest is the point that the G-2's views were based mainly upon a document dealing with only one aspect of the Counter-offensive, Operation GREIF. (III, B, 17 Dec) German records will doubtless define the relative importance of GREIF, and more or less value can be assigned later to the document announcing it. But the Twelfth Army Group currently predicated its analysis upon this GREIF document, apparently lacking other information. Paragraph 1 stated: "Higher Hq planned to include in the attack the operations 'GREIF'. Paragraph 7 read: Publication below in level may only be made after the objectives mentioned in the operations order under Par. 3 - objective area St. Vith - high ground W and SW - have been reached."

Furthermore, in this connection, the point is stressed that the captured documents did not include the basic document of all, the Order of the Day, 16 December, by the C. in C. West, General Feldmarschal Von Rundstedt. As the following text indicates, this document would have been informative, but apparently the Twelfth Army Group did not possess it.

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

WE GAMBLE EVERYTHING!

You carry with you the holy obligation to give everything to achieve things beyond human possibilities for

Our Fatherland and Our Fuhrer!"

(106th Div G-2 Periodic #6, 10 Dec 44. In ETO file, 1351-(2))

Possibly General Bradley and/or other ranking officers, including the G-2, might have been personally informed of this Von Rundstedt Order of the Day by telephone, but the Group records did not evidence the point.

Judging by the records, the Group formulated its opinion upon the data contained in the GRIFF document and, to a lesser degree, upon some of the other captured documents, particularly the Orders of the Day, 16 December, by the commanders of the Army Group B and Fifth Panzer Army. All of these documents, including the Von Rundstedt one, were taken from the body of a German officer by the 106th Division (VIII Corps, FUSA) on the 16th.

18 December

Documents did not reflect interpretative commentary on the attack's significance.

19 December

Two appraisals of the situation were stated on this date, and they were the last to be made in current records through the end of December. They therefore constituted the Group's opinion as of the 19th and the last currently expressed one.

(1) According to the daily G-2 Periodic for the day, it was "becoming more and more evident that the present enemy assault on the BIEBEL area is a thoroughly planned, deliberate, 'all-out' offensive." (III, 19 Dec) No comments were made upon the objectives. The anticipation was expressed that a few of the enemy available reserves would be committed, either to exploit the BIEBEL situation, or to launch another thrust in co-ordination with the BIEBEL one. Three areas were specified as containing an unusual buildup: TRIER-LEITLACH-SINZ; KAISERLAUTERN-PIRMASENS-ROSENKIRCHEN-ST. WENDEL; and the NONCHAU vicinity.

(2) The second and more illustrative of the Group's thinking was the opinion declared in the weekly G-2 Intelligence Summary for the week ending 182400 December, but issued on the 19th. (I, 17 Dec) An analysis of this ISUM stressed the following points:

1. The magnitude of the attack was described in the lead sentence of the ISUM: "The enemy on 16 December opened his biggest offensive since the beginning of the campaign in Western EUROPE." More specifically, "RUNDSTEDT informed the soldiers of the Western Front that the hour of destiny had struck and that a night offensive faced the Allies with everything at stake." Allusion to the G. in C. West's Order of the Day, 16 December, indicated that the Group possessed this captured document by the 19th, inasmuch as there was no evidence that it possessed it by midnight of the 17th.

2. An explanation of the attack was advanced thus. As mentioned in its 12 December ISUM, the Group's G-2 drew an analogy with the CAEN ST. LO situation, to wit: attrition was apparently wearing down the enemy's infantry

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strength to a point permitting an American ST. LO 'land run' through the Third and Seventh Armies' sectors. Commitment of his available reserves, however, seemed likely to be forced, due to increasing infantry weakness and unlikelihood of sufficient replacements. This 19 December ISUM explained: "The analogy with CAEN and ST. LO has now broken down. The enemy decided not to await the inevitable result of the wearing down process. He decided to seize the initiative, to commit his reserves momentarily, and to gamble all on the success of a single, bold stroke." The situation resembled that at MORTAIN, in that the enemy massed forces to break through at that point to cut the Allied bottleneck at AVRANCHES.

3. Success or failure of the enemy attempt were described thus: "Success in this effort will be seriously damaging to the American forces; failure will be disastrous to the Germans. In view of the desperate nature of this decision, the enemy must be expected to bring to bear all available forces on the ground and in the air and to employ every weapon at his command with the probable exception of gas."

4. Notable for its candor was the G-2' discussion of the enemy's technique in organizing the Counteroffensive. "The skill in regrouping and launching the simultaneous attacks achieved a high degree of surprise." The enemy had taken advantage of adverse weather, which had restricted Allied reconnaissance, and by rigid radio silence "skillfully regrouped his forces and launched attacks simultaneously at five places along seventy miles of the central part of the Western Front." He had also disregarded terrain by throwing armor into sectors "considered ill-adapted for the use of tanks. He struck weakly held areas which had been quiet for many weeks." In order to maintain maximum surprise, his attacks in many areas were initially light, resembling reconnaissance in force. In fact, "it was not until the night of 16-17 December that he showed his hand completely by utilizing airborne forces and making his greatest air effort since early in the NORMANDY campaign."

5. Optimism concerning defeat of the German effort was dependent upon exploitation of the enemy's supply weakness. This condition is fundamental. While he has undoubtedly accumulated supplies over a period of time for the initial phases of the offensive, the enemy's inherent problems of fuel and transport were, however, fundamentally important. The Group's G-2 expected the enemy to attempt living off the country and captured dumps. With Allied air harassing railheads and communications, "the full power of the current offensive should diminish rapidly once his initial hoard of supplies is exhausted."

Chronology - Retrospect Opinions

13 January 1945

The Monthly After/Action Report for December was issued on 13 January, and its Intelligence Section substantially quoted from the G-2 ISUM of 13 December, in explaining the enemy's counterblow. (IV, 3) Its remarks upon the enemy objectives were the intrinsic contribution to an analysis of the enemy's opinion on the Counteroffensive's significance. "The enemy developed

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the full power of his offensive into a single blow evidently aimed at reaching the Meuse, from Liege to Givet, with the object of ultimately penetrating toward Brussels and Antwerp."

31 July 1945

As its contribution to the Twelfth Army Group's historical publication, FINAL AFTER/ACTION REPORT, the G-2 Section, discussed the Ardennes Offensive in a five-page chapter by that title. (VI) The first two paragraphs were largely quoted from the 19 December G-2 ISUM, similar to the December After/Action Report. The third paragraph also dealt with the planning and intentions of the enemy, whereas the subsequent pages were concerned with a description of operations from the 16th onward. This third paragraph stated that the Sixth SS Panzer Army "was given the mission of driving through Kalmiedy to Liege, to cut off the First and Ninth American Armies from the Ardennes to the south and to secure a position along the Meuse. Once this was accomplished, the German plan envisaged a continuation of the drive towards Antwerp to wrest this vital port from the Allies and to cut off the British and Canadian forces in Holland from the rest of the Allied forces." "The southern drive was made by Montaufel's Fifth Panzer Army, spearheaded by the end Panzer Division. Its mission was to drive straight through to the Meuse at Dinant and Namur and hold the southern flank of the drive. On the extreme south of the drive the German Seventh Army attacked into Luxembourg at Echternach in an effort to recapture the capital of the Grand Duchy."

25 August 1945

Various questions on Operation COBRA, the Advance to the SIEGFRIED Line, and the ARDENNES were submitted by the Historical Section, USFET (Rear), on 19 July 1945, to Brig. Gen. Henry B. Lewis, D C/S, but they were answered by Brig. Gen. A. Franklin Kipler, G-3, on 25 August. (X) Four of the ARDENNES questions dealt with the Group's appraisal of the enemy capabilities, anticipation of the attack and protective measures, and the Group's recognition of the attack's gravity.

These retrospective explanations by the Group's G-3 including some frankness, which was significant when ventured some seven months after the event, when time had permitted formation of equivocal explanations. The "capability of a German offensive or 'spoiling attack' had been discussed (during December) and was considered a possibility. It was not believed, however, that the enemy would risk an offensive of such size and scope as actually took place." "The possibility of an enemy spoiling attack in the ARDENNES area was recognized, but it was the opinion that even if they broke through there they would have nothing. With major attacks going on to the north and south the calculated risk of leaving the ARDENNES sector lightly held was accepted."

In reply to a query concerning the location of an anticipated offensive action, the G-3 explained: He knew during early December that 21 divisions were massed west of the RHINE between BOMM and DUISBURG, nine of which were

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panzer and panzer-grenadier types. "It was believed that these divisions had been concentrated opposite our major penetration of the Siegfried Line for the purpose of crushing any attempt to cross the RHEIN River and advance to the RHINE. Answering the followup question about the plans to meet this enemy threat, the G-3 referred to a 30 November proposed plan to entrap and destroy this concentration west of the RHINE, but it was rejected because of British unpreparedness to launch a major attack, and due to the difficulty of Eifel terrain.

The question was pointedly asked if the Group expected the VIII Corps to hold "in the event of a large-scale ~~attack~~ German attack," and what were the reinforcement plans? General Kibler replied it was believed the VIII Corps with the 9th Armored Division in reserve could hold "against an attack of the size anticipated." If it were greater than the VIII Corps could cope with, First and Third Armies reserves were available for rapid reinforcement on the two flanks.

The question was asked that if the Group did not consider the enemy capable of an all-out offensive during December, what were the principal factors obscuring the enemy situation? Bad weather was the answer. It prohibited "full effective news of air reconnaissance."

As to the Group's earliest recognition of the all-out scope of the attack, the Group reached that conclusion on the night of 16-17. The enemy's air and airborne efforts and identification of elements of the Sixth Panzer Army led to that belief.

V. Forwarding of Data

A. Forwarding to Higher Headquarters.

Opinions and data from the Group were expressed in published issuances, the G-2 weekly Intelligence Summaries and daily Periodics, rather than in messages, etc.

B. Receipt from Subordinates.

This topic will be treated chronologically. First will be the Pre-Counteroffensive Period, then Receipt of Attack News, 16-19 December. Preliminary to a discussion of each is a summary.

(1) Summary

During the Pre-Counteroffensive period the Group did not receive valuable impending attack evidence from subordinate commands, and the sources of the G-2 conceptions of the enemy capabilities and intentions were largely undisclosed, with only the barest indication of CHAMP as a source. Following the onslaught on 16 December two divisions captured certain documents on that day which pointed to the magnitude and objectives

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of the German blow. They were the C. in C. West's Order of the Day announcing the action to German forces, one describing Operation GREIF, and several other documents of a relatively minor nature. Only supposition is the basis for asserting that the Group probably received the gist but not the text of the Rundstedt Order, on the 17th, whereas the Group did possess the texts of the other documents and so published them on the 17th. The First Army wired a four-page Intelligence Summary at 0430 on the 17th, which included a description of the Order, but neither the FUSA nor Group records even intimated that the Group received this ISUM, so, that was the only receipt of the Order by the Group.

Group records did not contain a G-2 Journal listing receipt of documents, or a Journal File collection of texts. Determination of the extent of data's transmission to the Group was necessarily obtained through other sources. These were the G-2 weekly Intelligence Summary and daily Periodic Reports, both of which included annexes. To repeat, the ISUM's and the Periodics were the sole sources for analysis on receipt of data.

(2) Pre-Counteroffensive Period

Prior to 13 December, the Group did not receive realistic, impending attack evidence from subordinate commands, and evidence was negligible that the Group drew its intelligence conceptions from SHAEF or any other command or headquarters. Only one ostensible impending attack data was forwarded. It was from the 106th Division, through the VIII Corps and First Army to the Group. The data mentioned increasing vehicular traffic in the 106th's sector, but the Group's G-2 thought a divisional movement out of the 106th's front accounted for the activity. While overall enemy strategy and problems were more the prerogative of high headquarters, such as SHAEF, the Group discussed them extensively, without indicating the sources of clues.

Attack Evidence

Of especial interest would be the Group's receipt of impending attack evidence obtained and forwarded by subordinate commands. Seven data were noted by divisions, but only one reached the Group, that of increasing vehicular traffic. The Group's G-2 believed this was the movement out of the sector of an enemy division.

As noted on the Division, Corps, and Army levels, certain data received by subordinate commands of the VIII Corps (FUSA), seemingly pointed to a large-scale counteroffensive. Only four of the seven data were forwarded to higher commands, and only one reached the Group. Two concerned traffic acceleration, 12-13 December; one pertained to a German infiltration into the Group's line; and one, a claim by a Wehrmacht soldier that he had heard an indirect attack order. The other three pertained to attack claims. One of the three forwarded in German, was mentioned by the Group, and it was noted that the 106th Division (VIII Corps, FUSA) reported that listening posts had a very heavy fire, and that the enemy was clearly near the attack line.

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According to the Group's G-2 Periodic for the week, "In the Northern VIII Corps zone, vehicular traffic was observed moving north from ORMONT (L0893) AND BRANDSVEID (P9881). Should these movements prove to be of a divisional scale, 18 Infantry Division would be the most likely candidate for a shift to the newly developing danger zone." (III, B) Further notice was taken of this by the G-2 during his report at the Commanding General's Briefing at 0915, 15 December. (V, 15 Dec) He said the 325th Infantry Division had moved from the northern VIII Corps sector, the movement probably accounting for the observed vehicular activity.

Indications of information sources could be logically expected within the primary G-2 issuances, the weekly Intelligence Summary and daily Periodic. Only the latter provided such suggestions, but they concerned the order of battle type of information, not interpretative comments.

The ISUM discussed overall enemy strategy and problems of the Western Front, a high level analysis that might be the prerogative of a superior headquarters, such as SHAEF. However that might have been, the Group extensively discussed such subjects, but did not cite information sources. Surely SHAEF G-2 ISUM's and other intelligence data was received by the Group. If so, and if SHAEF was the source of some data and commentary contained in the Group's own ISUM's, no intimation was offered in the ISUM's of October, November and 1-15 December. This was true of both the text and the annexes of the ISUM's. Nor did the texts contain indirect credit, e.g., phrases such as 'according to SHAEF,' 'SHAEF sources,' etc.

The only concrete evidence of SHAEF as a pre-15 December source was reflected in annexes to the daily G-2 Periodics. There was only a single instance of an annex being devoted entirely to a SHAEF provided subject. Annex #2 to the 5 December Periodic was titled HIGHER FORMATION COMMANDS, a three-page commentary and list paraphrasing the SHAEF DIGEST #170, 23 November 1944. Annexed, however, to the daily Periodics were Order of Battle Notes, which invariably devoted one or more paragraphs to SHAEF material among their approximately a dozen paragraphs. Such paragraphs of half a dozen lines or so concluded with: "SHAEF COMMENT. ..." A tabulation of the OB Notes, 1-15 December, totaled 33 instances, with each day represented by one to five such paragraphs, except none on 10, 12 December. For example, the 1 December Notes contained the following:

"A moderate source rpts that on 7 Nov 'paratps for special tasks' bearing the number 22 were passing through BUSEN bound for TONDBERG (A13). SHAEF COMMENT: If true, they should belong to 2 Frcht Div. But source is given to garbling his identifications."

References to command's other than SHAEF were also few among the Group's ISUM's and G-2 Periodics. Although the ISUM's discussed the British, the First Army and the Sixth U.S. Army Group fronts, no allusion was made to these command's as sources. The First Army was cited twice. ISUM #12 for the week ending 25 November 1944, listed the First, including the citation

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of an enemy regimental order (4th Bn, 1559th Artillery Regt) which had been obtained from the First Army's G-2 on 11 October. The Group's G-2 Periodic #192, 14 December, contained an annex, #2, titled PARACHUTE DIVISION-IN MEMORIAN, procured from the FUSA G-2 Periodic #86, 12 December.

(3) Receipt of Attack News, 16 - 19 December

Records of the Group pointed to two particular sources of news during the first few days of the Counteroffensive, which appeared to have contributed largely if not exclusively to the Group's evaluation of the attack up to and including 19 December. Perhaps commanders of subordinate commands telephoned information, but the Group's records did not reflect such action. Possibly officer courier or other means were employed, which, again, were not manifested among the records. To repeat, the following analysis of the Group's informational sources 16-19 December was based upon the Group's official records. Claim is not made by the writer that no other sources were available.

The Group's Phantom operation and certain captured documents were the Group's sources of news.

Phantom was a special intelligence collection and communications organization, and some units of it were assigned to major commands of the Group. Phantom's Log at the Group's TAC headquarters entered the messages. In passing, mention is made that the Group's G-2 records did not contain a G-2 Journal and Journal File of messages, documents, etc. If one had existed, there was no evidence among the existing records. According to the TAC's log, the first news about the German blow came from the V Corps. (12th A Gp, G-3 Sitreps (Phantom Log), Doc. Is L-320(11).) Although the enemy attack had begun approximately an hour later, the Phantom team at V Corps messaged at 0730A that the situation was unchanged during the night and normal patrol and artillery activity took place. Then at 0900A the team was given attack news by the Corps G-3, which was received by the Group TAC at 0930. Enemy artillery fire had been active along the whole V Corps front; the 106th Division reported counterattacks by small number; etc. Following that message, V and VII Corps Phantom teams sent reports at approximately two hour intervals throughout the 16th. Curiously, although the VIII Corps was the chief victim, information about the attack on its front was via the V Corps. There was no Phantom news sent direct from the VIIIth to the Group on the 16th. Speculating upon the reason, a check of the TAC Phantom Log back to 1 December disclosed no daily entries from the inactive VIII Corps. Entries were from operational commands. Perhaps no Phantom team was located at VIII Corps because it was not an aggressive command, and there was none on duty when the enemy suddenly attacked on the 15th. The Phantom Log for the 17th was missing from the Group's records, preventing determination if there was a team with the VIIIth on the 17th, but there were VIII Corps entries on the 18th onward.

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Captured documents were at least a chief information source leading to interpretations on the 17th and 19th of the German effort. Certain documents were captured on the morning of the 16th by the 99th Division (V Corps) and the 106th Division (VIII Corps) which pointed to the magnitude of the sudden Counteroffensive. The most authoritative and informative document was the Order of the Day, 18 December signed by the Commander-in-Chief West, Field Marshal Von Rundstedt, announcing the counteroffensive to German forces. This was supplemented by Orders on the same day by the C.O.s of the Army Group B and Fifth Panzer Army. Sharing significance with Von Rundstedt's Order was another basic document discussing Operation GREIF, which mentioned certain objectives. There several other documents of lesser importance, but relating to those two primary ones. The question to be analyzed in detail in subsequent paragraphs will be which commands, including the Twelfth Army Group, received the translated text of the Von Rundstedt Order on the one hand, and/or the other documents. These participating commands chains were: 99th Division, V Corps, FUSA, 12th Army Group, 106th Division, VIII Corps, FUSA, 12th Army Group.

Briefly, evidence was uncertain if the Group received the text of the Von Rundstedt Order. No mention was made among the Group records. G-2 commentaries on 16-19 December on the meaning objectives of the Counteroffensive did not refer to it by name or to its contents. The only indication that the Group should receive it consisted in the fact that the Group, both TAC and Main, were on the distribution list of the First Army's ISUM #B-929, 161800A-162400A, which was transmitted at 170430A December. This four page ISUM included a correct paraphrase of the Order, and attributed its origin to Von Rundstedt. Group records contained no G-2 or G-3 Journal listing received issuances from other commands, nor a Journal File containing the actual document.

As to the other documents, the Group did receive them as demonstrated by their presence as Annex #3 to the Group's G-2 Periodic #195, for the 17th, which was issued 172300A December. (1-320(1))

Because of the basic character of the Von Rundstedt Order and the other captured documents, a chain of command analysis of their transmission is appropriate. For convenience, the Rundstedt document will be termed Order, and the other documents generally grouped and labeled as the other documents.

Through V Corps to FUSA:

The 99th Division obtained the Order during the morning of the 16th, the Corps passed it by 1350A, but FUSA reported receiving it from the Corps at 1244A.

A copy of the Order was taken from a PW during the morning of the 16th by Co. A, 1st Battalion, 394th Infantry, 99th Division, (Div. Laval, pp. 67, 94, 96) According to a Combat Interview with the regimental S-3, when the battalion CO tried to read the document, he cursed his lack of the language,

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Through VIII Corps to FUSA:

As noted above, the V Corps captured the text on the morning of the 18th, and put it on the wire as part of its Special ISOM at 1900. Also as noted, VIII Corps was on the distribution list. The VIII Corps filed the ISOM in its G-2 Journal File as message #90, at 2120. Thus, the VIII Corps had a copy of the text by midnight, from the V Corps.

The 106th Division Document's transmission was rather involved. A message was received by the G-2 at 1920 from the 424th Infantry, stating: "Possible 132 VC Div and 113 Inf Div documents taken from officer indicate large scale atks to be made by Germans. Translations following." (VIII Corps, p. 37). This regimental message was repeated to Corps ten minutes late by the Division, omitting the last two words. Then, at 1930 Corps was again messaged by the 106th: "We have captured document with lots of info. Would like you to come to CF after it." Notice to the Corps took another form. According to the VIII Corps, a message was received from the 106th addressed to Monarch 2 (VIII Corps G-2) stating that the 106th had received "Fragmentary reports of preliminary examination of a number of documents..." (ibid.). Their authenticity could not then be judged, because some of the reports had been via radio from isolated units who might find

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When and how the VIII Corps procured the text of the Order from the 103th Division as well as the other documents was not clear. Inasmuch as the 103th Division's G-2 Periodic 152400-162400 December contained a two page annex providing the texts of the Rundstedt Order and some of the other documents, surely the VIII Corps must have eventually received this information. (Dir Level, P. 129) However, the Corps G-2 Journal for the 19th, 17th and 18th did not enter the fact that a copy had been received. (L-540 (S)) Mention was made that other commands' issuances had been received. Perhaps, inasmuch as the 106th had so requested in its message of 1420, the Corps sent for the documents during the afternoon or evening. Anyway, they were in the VIII Corps possession by 2310. (VIII Corps, p. 37) At least they were a part of the Corps G-2 Journal File at that time, according to the filing notation. Including the Von Rundstedt Order, they had been translated by the O/B Team 44 of the 106th's G-2 section. (Ibid.)

There was no evidence that VIII Corps notified First Army about the Order and the other documents. Yet, FUSA published the texts of all documents except that of the Rundstedt Order in its G-2 Periodic for 13 December, and described their content in its ISMA 1800A-24COA. (FUSA, p. 32) V Corps had only the Rundstedt Order, whereas VIII Corps possessed all the documents. It is reasonable to assume that FUSA obtained the documents, except the Rundstedt Order, from the VIII Corps, but when and how was inexplicable.

The First Army received and transmitted the substance of the Rundstedt Order on the 16th, at which time, how, and from whom FUSA obtained the Order was less definite. While it received the text from V Corps, paraphrasing exactly dictated the circumstances, and mislaid FUSA's interpretation. Apparently, some time later, FUSA obtained from somewhere a properly phrased copy, indicating that the Order originated from Von Rundstedt. FUSA trans- mitted the substance of the Order in its G-2 LHM 191000A-19247A December, 1944, subject "The Order of the Day, XI Army Group, etc."

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~~SECRET~~

At 1244A FUSA received the following message from V Corps, with the quotes being the writer's, not FUSA's or V Corps:

- "1) ...
- "2) Document taken at L-024975 stated: "... soldiers on the Western front your great hour has struck. Strong attacking armies are advancing today. Everything is at stake. You bear in yourselves a holy duty to give everything and achieve the super human for our fatherland and for our Fuhrer, and for C-in-C West Rundstedt."

"This call to arms to be made known to all soldiers without exception at once before beginning of attack."

CG
12 VG Div

"(Note has been given to VIII Corps)"

This message could very easily have had slight influence upon the FUSA G-2, because it appeared to have originated by a mere German division commander, whereas, it was issued by the C-in-C West. His message concluded with the word Fuhrer, followed by the signature: Von Rundstedt, C-in-C West, General Feldmarshall. Apparently, either the V Corps attempted a paraphrase and so sent it, or the First Army communication center improperly received the message. Note is taken that the V Corps had sent the document correctly on another occasion. In its Special ISUM of 1600 the lines read: "... for our Fatherland and for our Fuhrer. The C-in-C West, Rundstedt, Feldmarshall. This call to arms ... of the attack. Signed Division Commander." (L-540(B) Msg 90) Incidentally, the V Corps had also received the text correctly from its 99th Division. (V Corps, p. 16) Irrespective of the fault, the transmitted message did not indicate the high authority of the pronouncement. The messages' importance could easily have appeared relatively inconsequential in FUSA's estimations, being issued by a mere division commander.

Actually, that attitude did result, and FUSA thought a division CG had signed the Order. FUSA wired its own G-2 ISUM #B-929, 1800A-2400A, at 0430 on the 17th, to the CG's of SHAEP, 12 Army Group Main and Tac, 21 Army Group Main & Tac, etc., and the comments in this four-page ISUM read as follows:

"... Document signed by CG, 12 VG Div, and captured this morning told German soldiers that their great hour had struck, that strong attacking armies were advancing today, and that everything was at stake, calling upon them to give for Germany, the Fuhrer, and Rundstedt their all."

Then, after discussions of other subjects on the first, second and third pages, the fourth page concluded:

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40. 12 A Op. Critique

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".... Taken from body of officer in 118 Pz Div and captured documents, including Orders of the Day from Model, Rundstedt, Manteuffel plus commanding generals of 56 Corps, 118 Pz Div and 62 VG Div and operational orders, indicates clearly, large scale offensive with St. Vith as first objective (Major) launched today, and subsequent drive to East and Northeast. In Order of Day from Rundstedt statement quote large armies are attacking the Anglo-Americans. We gamble everything on this operation. Unquote. ... Note GREIF Unquote is the name of operation and Order of the Day by Rundstedt was addressed to both quote soldiers of AACHEN and Eifel. Unquote. ... (L-540(8), 17 Dec., #71)

Thus, while the initial comments on the Rundstedt Order and the other captured documents indicated FUSA did not understand the Order originated from Von Rundstedt, FUSA it later referred to the Order and cited the most informative portions of it.

When and where FUSA obtained the text of this Order was not evident among the records of the V and VIII Corps and FUSA. The above ISUM's remarks were the only real evidence that FUSA did acquire the Order. V Corps contribution consisted of the mis-paraphrased message of 1244A hours. As noted in the discussion of the VIII Corps, its records did not suggest the VIII that forwarded to FUSA either the Order or the other documents. Even so, FUSA acquired them from some source. They were republished in the FUSA G-2 Periodic #190, 160001A-162400A December, dated 17 December, with the exception of the Von Rundstedt Order. (FUSA, p. 58)

This issuance of the other documents within the daily, distributable, G-2 Periodic was the FUSA transmission of those documents. As to the Rundstedt Order, the commentary on it within the ISUM of 1800A-2400A December, was the single instance of the FUSA's forwarding of the Order to higher commands.

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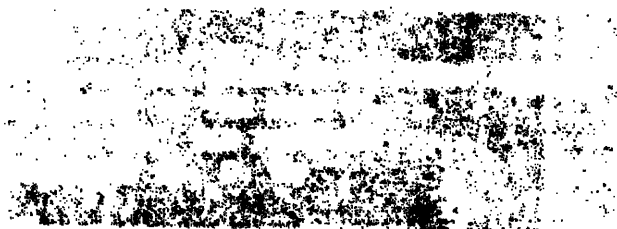
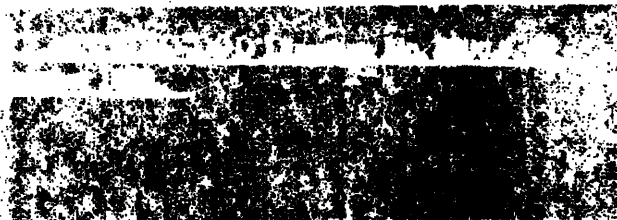
DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF MILITARY HISTORY
SPECIAL STAFF, UNITED STATES ARMY
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

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MEMO TO THE CHIEF OF MILITARY HISTORY:

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WASHINGTON 25, D. C.



CRITIQUE ON THE U. S. ARMY LEVEL.

Conception of Enemy Potentialities.

The dominating feature on the army level was the concern

each of the three Twelfth Army Group armies, the First, Third and Ninth, devoted to the northern portion of the Western front. This characteristic was manifested in two forms, (1) preoccupation with own operations in the north, and/or (2) concern over anticipated enemy action in the northern locale, not in the southern. The First and Ninth Armies were involved in their own offensives in the north in the ROER River region, as of 15 December, and they regarded the enemy attack potentialities as applicable to the north. Third Army was operating on the southern Allied front, but it likewise worried over the attack probabilities in the north.

Stress is reiterated upon this fact of all three armies being concerned with the northern locale. It was the most significant single conclusion that evolved from the writer's scrutiny of the records of these three armies.

Recognition of the concept of a mobile reserve force for counterblow purposes was the second distinctive point. Each army concluded that the enemy possessed such a force, and each identified it as the Sixth Panzer Army. In general, this command was considered as a counterblow, but not as a counteroffensive force independent of the Allied offensive, on the enemy's initiative. FUSA thought the enemy's strategy was based upon counterattacks, rather than on planned offensive action opened on his own initiative. While FUSI regarded the Sixth Panzer Army as the key to the enemy's counterattack strategy, the Sixth was not expected to counterattack until after the ROER River had been crossed by major Allied forces, and the locale would be between the ROER and the ERFT, south to north approximately between SCHLEIDEN and ROERMOND. The Ninth Army felt that the enemy had contained the First and Ninth Armies drives with inferior troops, without committing his buildup Sixth Panzer Army reserve, thus the enemy possessed a very powerful mobile striking force. It was to be employed, however, to counter breakthroughs of his ROER defenses. The Ninth held that the Sixth's presence and the strength of the ROER defenses made clear the enemy's intention to make determined stand west of the RUINE along the ROER. Beyond the above opinions, the Ninth did not discuss the enemy's large-scale counterattack potentialities, intentions nor capabilities. The Third Army was conspicuously cognizant of the enemy buildup of a reserve force, and during the approximate two months preceding the Counteroffensive, TUSA traced the weekly mutations of this force, which was largely represented by the Sixth Panzer Army. TUSA expected a counterattack or counteroffensive, but it would be a spoiling attack, and the locale would be the AACHEN-DURN sector, which was far north of the Third Army's zone.

#2. Army Level. Critique.

Inasmuch as the actual Counteroffensive was launched against the southern flank of the First Army, the VIII Corps, the attitudes of the three Armies towards the southern area of operations was significant, as well as that towards the northern. In the first place, while the First and Third Armies expected a counterattack in the northern zone, they qualified their view by pointing out that Allied southern operations might force some employment of the Sixth Panzer Army in the south. This opinion took the form that while the enemy desired to retain the Sixth as a unit, Allied pressure might compel piecemeal commitment, sharing the Sixth with both the northern and southern zones. The First Army's attitude towards its own southern sector was negative. While it recognized some buildup and activity, intentions for its use were discontinued. TUSA pointed out that for the past month there was a definite pattern for the seasoning of newly formed divisions in the relatively quiet VIII Corps prior to their dispatch to more active fronts. However, as of 15 December, the First Army indicated unawareness of the enemy's strength in the TRIER-PRUM sector. The Third Army referred only briefly to the TRIER, KEMMERS, WITTLICH area, by noting on 15 December that the 2 Panzer and 130 Pz Lehr Divisions appeared to be reforming, with the 116 Panzer Division reportedly slated for that area. Comments on the southern zone were not offered by the Ninth Army.

As of the immediate periods preceding the Counteroffensive, the location of this Sixth Panzer Army was uncertain. The First Army believed it to be located between the ROER and the RHINE, the northern boundary probably running from MUFFACHEN-GLADBACH to NEUSS. TUSA thought it to lie between Aachen and COLOGNE, but as of 13 December, TUSA acknowledged that in respect to German forces in general, 14 German divisions were out of contact, 3 Panzer, 3 Para, and 3 Infantry. The only commentary the Ninth Army made was that several changes in enemy dispositions occurred during the week of 9-16 December, namely, the shifting to the south of the 2 SS Panzer and the 3 Panzer Grenadier Divisions, and the movement of the 246 Infantry Division into the Ninth's zone.

Receipt of Data.

In the case of the First Army, the fundamental points were twofold, the receipt of information (1) from superior commands, and (2) from subordinate ones. The Third Army's point of emphasis was its acquisition and employment of data from superior commands.

TUSA obtained the official issuances, e.g., daily G-2 Periodics and Intelligence Summaries, from subordinate commands, adjacent armies and their corps, the British Second Army, and Twelfth Army Group, with some slight acquisitions from SHAEF. There was no indication as to the particular influences exerted by these issuances. Four data were acquired from the VIII Corps which ostensibly intimated an impending attack. These were reported by VIII Corps divisions during 12-15 December, and concerned an acceleration of enemy traffic, a woman's

#3. Army Level. Critique.

information about an enemy build-up in the general VIANDEN-BITBURG area, a PW's claim of an impending attack for about 17-25 December. While FUSA received reports on this data, mainly through the Corps G-2 Periodics, there was no expression that FUSA undertook protective measures as a reaction. In fact, FUSA did not appear to be impressed by the data, partly at least, because it already possessed virtually identical evidence, and those VIII Corps data were merely additional. This data on the Corps Level was not found conclusive or authoritative.

The Third Army's almost exclusive medium of transmission of intelligence data, the daily G-2 Periodic and its annexes, so systematically and extensively discussed enemy potentials on the Allied front, that the conclusion could be reasonably drawn that FUSA obtained its information from higher commands, rather than through its own resources. Such data would be an acquisition function of higher commands. While FUSA commonly paraphrased the data, it provided acknowledgements twelve times in the daily Periodics of the September-15 December period. The Twelfth U.S. and Twenty One British Army Groups were most of of the cited sources. SHAEP was not a contributor, judging by the lack of references to that command.

TWELFTH ARMY GROUP

DOCUMENTATION

I. Weekly Intelligence Summary for Week Ending _____ 1944.
 (Sources: Sept.-Oct. in L-471(9); Nov., L-471(10);
 Dec., L-320(3))

#1-5. August- Approximate 9 September.

These were not located among the records of the Army Group nor among those of other commands and headquarters, particularly SHAEF. They doubtless dealt, however, with operation prior to the Army Group's arrival on the SIEGFRIED Line on 12 September, with some commentary on the future. For practical purposes, the first ISOP issued after that event on the 12th, sufficiently traced the Army Group's attitude and opinion of the enemy as of that period.

#6. Week ending 16 Sept. 19 Sep. 44

*1. General Summary.

"In the past week there have been important developments in the steady progress toward Allied victory. LE HAVRE has fallen. BREST is tottering. The British, aided by Allied parachute divisions, are advancing Northward toward the RHINE, threatening to cut off all enemy forces in HOLLAND and to turn the enemy defenses on both the SIEGFRIED Line and the RHINE. In the VII and V Corps sectors the First Army has made penetration well into or beyond the SIEGFRIED Line. The Third Army, against stiff resistance, has crossed the MOSELLE in several places, has retaken NANCY and its XII Corps may now be headed toward SAAR-BRUCKEN. The gap between the Third Army's southern flank and the Sixth Army Group has been closed.

"The strength of the enemy's defenses of the SIEGFRIED Line which was a matter in doubt last week is evident now. The enemy cannot hold this line and can only use it for delaying action to assist an orderly withdrawal to the RHINE.

"The strategy of HITLER appears to have as its sole objective the gaining of time in which to produce new divisions from total mobilization and to replenish his depleted and ineffective air force. In the meantime, efforts must be made to protect vital areas such as the RHINE and the SAAR and to prevent the Russians from penetrating deeply into GERMANY and thus winning the war on the East front. It is a desperate strategy to cover a hopeless military, economic and political situation. Pursuant to this strategy, however, the enemy must attempt to hold the British Northern advance and to delay as long as possible American

#2. 12th A Gp. Documentation.

advances through the SIEGFRIED Line. Failing to hold American forces at the SIEGFRIED Line, the enemy must and belatedly will withdraw to the RHINE. By far the most important enemy capability related to the reinforcement of the Western front and the disposition of such reinforcements. It is estimated that ten divisions, as a maximum aggregate, might come to the Western front from GERMANY, RUSSIA, NORWAY and perhaps ITALY by 1 October. Assuming a maximum of ten divisions as reinforcements for the Western front within the next two weeks, it would seem that the order of priority in disposing them would be first to the 21 Army Group sector where the Allied drive Northward threatens to turn both the SIEGFRIED and the RHINE defenses; second, to oppose the First Army's Eastward drive in the VII Corps sector and third to meet the threat of the Third Army's XII Corps toward SAARBRUCKEN. The arrival of ten additional but presumably poor divisions will not, however, prove sufficient to stem the Allied drive to and beyond the RHINE. The enemy must, therefore, in the very near future reach a fundamental decision of governmental policy as to whether the Russians or the British and American must be held at all costs. HITLER's insane inability to face the facts may defer this decision until it is too late to make any difference. In the meantime, allocation of force between the Russian and the Western front is the focal point of interest in the war. The reappointment of BRUDERER as C-in-C WEST may be a straw in the wind. He was probably appointed to secure the confidence and preserve the will to fight of the regular army. In the past he has appeared to lack confidence when the German situation was far less serious than it is today. He can now scarcely expect anything but defeat. He probably shares the view of most conservative old school German officers who prefer defeat at the hands of the British and the American rather than by the Russians. Whether by choice or otherwise, he is now in a position where, even through inaction, he could insure that British and American forces reach BERLIN at least as soon as the Russians.*

#7. Week ending 23 Sep.

*1. General Summary.

"The most important development of the week has been the Allied advance Northward in the BREMEN salient. This sector has had the first call during the week on German reinforcements. ...

"In the vicinity of AACHEN the First SS Army has met the stiffest German resistance encountered for some time. Prior to the operations in HOLLAND our breakthrough the SIEGFRIED Line around AACHEN constituted the most critical threat to the enemy and it was to this area that reinforcements were rushed. ...

"In the Third Army area there have been no substantial enemy reinforcements recently.

"Apart from withdrawal, the only form of initiative which has remained with the enemy is his exercise of choice as to which areas in the West he will reinforce with new divisions. Even this choice is directly affected by our offensives. When the Third Army first reached the MOSELLE, this drive was the greatest threat to GERMANY and conse-

#3. 12th A Gp Documentation.

quantity it was here that the newly formed divisions came. With the arrival of the First Army before AACHEN, this area became vital and for a time received the available reinforcements. Now, HOLLAND is the threatened area and reinforcements are going there.

Meanwhile, opposite the First and Third Armies the enemy has managed temporarily, at least, to stabilize the front. The enemy is largely within the SIEPHELD defenses along the First Army front and may be willing to give up the whole of ALSDORF IDORFRAHE withdrawing to the SIEPHELD line under pressure. He undoubtedly intends, however, to hold the SIEPHELD positions at all cost and may believe that, with weather limiting our air attacks, he can prevent a major breakthrough. A serious threat of such a break-through exists at AACHEN and undoubtedly more immediate threat to turn both the SIEPHELD and the RHINE defenses exists in HOLLAND. Thus, enemy strategy would seem to call first for the immediate defeat of the British thrust in HOLLAND and then for the destruction of our foothold across the SIEPHELD line at AACHEN.

"The enemy is in urgent need of mobile forces to accomplish these objectives which are essential to his prolongation of the war. Within the next two weeks it is estimated that the enemy could bring a maximum of ten divisions, three of which might be mobile, as reinforcements for the Western Front. Six divisions, however, is considered a more likely figure, two or three of which might be mobile. Infantry and low category reinforcements will have to go to HOLLAND and to the Northern sector of our First Army front. If these areas remain critical because of continued Allied pressure. However, if given sufficient time, it would seem that the enemy would withdraw his mobile units from the Southern flank of the Third Army and from positions which they now hold in the SIEPHELD line replacing them, where our pressure makes it necessary with reformed or newly formed infantry and static units. The mobile units so withdrawn could then be employed in the area between COLOGNE and the SIEPHELD ZONE.

"In this area mobile units could act a local reserves to prevent a break-through Eastward or Northeastward from AACHEN or an advance Eastward or Southeastward from the British sector. These advances leading toward the RHINE and the open tank country North of the RHINE constitutes the greatest threats to the enemy and it is believed that the enemy will elect to withdraw from ALSDORF IDORFRAHE and rely on infantry and static troops for defense of the SIEPHELD line South of our VII Corps sector, in order to provide mobile forces to oppose threats in the North which, if carried out could quickly prove fatal."

#8. Week Ending 30 Sept.
Not available among the records.

#9. Week Ending 7 Oct.

#1. General Summary.

"The enemy's position has improved since last week to the extent that he has definitely stopped the British advance Northward

#4. 12th A Gp Documentation.

without committing badly needed armored forces in a major counterattack. The American advances in the vicinity of AACHEN have been slowed down by infantry and fortress troops without substantial armored reinforcements. The line in the Third Army and Sixth Army Group sectors has been generally held while the 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division has been pulled out possibly as a reserve to be used in any seriously threatened area. Finally the enemy has gained another week in which to strengthen the West Wall and perhaps to begin the build up of a mobile strategic reserve.

"The enemy's inherent weaknesses remain." The remainder of this paragraph dealt with oil shortages, that of equipment, the German air force weakness due to fuel shortage and inadequacy of airfields, the economic drain by Axis satellites and occupied territory, the Russian advances. Regarding the overall manpower problem, it stated: "Despite total mobilization the enemy is still short of suitable manpower and sufficient time to build up reinforcements that can fight in anything but static positions."

"The only strategy the Germans can have, at present, is to play for time, immediately, time to build defenses around GERMANY, to mobilize any person capable of warring them, to build up some mobile reserves, to equalize Allied numerical air superiority with yet unproven jet-propelled planes, to improve their no longer secret weapons or to develop new ones, ultimately, time to get out of the war without unconditional surrender through adroit negotiation or because of Allied weariness and disunity.

"Time was playing on the enemy's side last week on the Western front, and he probably feels a little more secure today than he did a week ago. In an effort to gain more time and to stall attacks in the West until winter can impede the full exercise of Allied tank and air superiority, the enemy will probably attempt to defend the West Wall along its entire length at all costs. In the area from TRIER South to the SWISS border, he may be willing to fall back under pressure to the West Wall and prepared positions in the VOSGES Mountains. The enemy probably hopes to defend the West Wall primarily with infantry and fortress troops thus releasing armor for local or strategic reserve. The most serious immediate enemy capability is to counterattack any Allied penetration in the vicinity of AACHEN with armor drawn from the NIEMEGEN sector or from the Third US Army front. Another serious capability, less immediate in effect, is the build up of a mobile counter-attacking force of Corps strength to be held in strategic reserve."

#10. Week Ending 14 October.

"During the past week the enemy apparently reached the conclusion that the American attack at AACHEN was the focal point of Allied effort and promptly moved to strengthen the line at that point with armor drawn from both the North and South. The enemy's primary problem was to find a method accomplishing the desired reinforcement at AACHEN while simultaneously containing Allied forces at other critical points. The line of communication to WALCHEREN, the Northern extremity of the WEST WALL at ARBETH, the corridor leading from METZ to SAARBRUCKEN and

#5. 12th & Gp. cementation.

BRANFORTH, and the BELFORT GAP without a doubt were all considered points of danger.

"Having decided that the American attack in the AACHEN area was the main Allied effort, the enemy showed a willingness to withdraw forces from the METZ-MENCY area. The willingness with which troops were spared from the Third Army front possibly indicated the enemy anticipation of falling back in the METZ area for a considerable distance. This is one of the few sectors of the front where the enemy is able to yield territory without giving up German soil. Further South, however, he had evidenced concern over Allied advances in the Sixth Army Group sector and has moved 106 Panzer Brigade to the West of the DOUBBS River in order to protect the BELFORT GAP position.

"It appears that the flow of rested and refitted divisions and GOTTENBERG divisions to the West has temporarily stopped and the only new division to appear during the past week is the 414 Infantry Division from BREMEN. Further, if a supply of new divisions were available to the West it is unlikely that there would be an active shifting of divisions up and down the line to danger point with the resultant heavy expenditure of gasoline and additional maintenance as was evident during the week. Possibly every unit that was even moderately well trained and equipped was rushed to the front during September; possibly the known shortage in small arms and other equipment is slowing down the program; possibly the demands for reinforcement on the Eastern front are so pressing that they are being given priority over the requests from the West. Whatever the true reason may be, the added strength is not appearing and the enemy must therefore shift his forces as best he can from one danger point to another. The METZ area apparently was regarded as the most dangerous a few weeks ago and forces moved to that area. The British attack in the North produced a new danger point and forces were sent there from GERMANY and First US Army front. The AACHEN attack is the third dangerous development but since no more strength came from GERMANY, it was necessary to draw from the line in the North and South in this instance. If the attack is proper, this shifting process may be expected to continue and it is not unlikely that the Southern sector will furnish additional reinforcements to the North.

"The enemy is continued to play for time in which to prepare defenses, rebuild his armored forces and retrain his air force. It is evident that in air power he has made substantial progress and the lack of identification of new SS Panzer divisions for a long period indicates that he still intends to build a mobile counterattacking force as a strategic reserve. Possibly he might supplement this, if our pressure permits, by replacing some of the armor in the line with Infantry and gathering also an immediate tactical reserve. Every indication points to an enemy intention of stubborn defense to gain time and in the short period of comparative quiet that occurred in September the Germans have shown a surprising power of recuperation. The enemy has also shown an

#6. 12 A Ep. - continuation.

ability to save forces promptly to a threatened point and to make excellent use of limited forces in well-prepared positions.

"There is no evidence, however, that the fundamental position and strength of the enemy has gained or that he has the power to hold it coordinated attacks are directed simultaneously at several points. The appearance to be on the side of the enemy for reforming of his ground, armored and air forces during the next few months but the passage of time should also be on the side of the Allies in building up supplies and in revealing the fundamental shortages of GERMAN in manpower, oil and essential metals."

#11. Week Ending 21 Oct.

"I. General Summary.

"The enemy continued on the defensive during the week ended 21 October, along the entire Western Front from BRESCIA to the SWISS border. Counterattacks on an important scale were mounted only in the AACHEN area. These counterattacks made primarily by elements of the 3 Panzer Grenadier Division proved ineffective and wasteful. No new divisions are known to have come to the Western Front during the past two weeks which probably is explained by the comparatively stable situation in the West in contrast to the strong pressure of the Russians in the East. There is some evidence of enemy concern over the breach of the West Wall at AACHEN in the apparent movement Northward of 15 Panzer Grenadier Division whose present location and precise destination are not yet established. There is also further evidence of withdrawal of panzer divisions from the line for rest and refitting and of enemy intentions to build up a strategic reserve of armored forces in the general area of NIMETZ and PADERBORN.

"The enemy's effort to build up a strong panzer force as a strategic reserve is indicative of the use the enemy makes of the armor granted him by inevitable Allied delay. With the exception of the penetration at AACHEN, the enemy holds the West Wall virtually intact. He has named it largely with infantry and fortress troops and he has had an opportunity to improve and to open its defenses. In the threatened sector between AACHEN and COLLOGEN there is a surprising density of newly-erected defense works including fire trenches, barbed wire and anti-tank ditches to the East of the ROER River. Similar defense works are also appearing East of the Eifel. As a part of these defense system the enemy is capable of flooding the valley of the ROER by the release of more than 100,000,000 cubic meters of impounded water.

"The enemy has so far been able to seal off or, at least, to prevent exploitation of each Allied penetration of the West Wall by switching armor from one sector to another. He is now apparently endeavoring to build up an armored reserve and given sufficient time, say until 1 December, he could probably scrape together a powerful striking force of panzer divisions. This force would be employed, presumably, in the Northern sector of the Western Front where Allied breakthroughs would be most dangerous to the enemy both because of terrain advantages to Allied mobility and the proximity of vital industrial areas in

#7. 12 A Op. Documentation.

C PLAN. Such a reserve of armor might enable the enemy to achieve his major objective of stalling the Allied advance for the winter at the West Wall or the RHINE.

Time is the vital factor in German planning. In building up an armored reserve the enemy may be hampered by various shortages and the shortage of oil may restrict its full employment. However, the greatest danger to the enemy's program lies in the threat of a major Allied attack in the West and in the actuality of the Russian advance. serious break-through in the West would undoubtedly force the commitment of the enemy's reserve divisions with whatever equipment they have at the time. Similarly, a Russian sweep through BUDAPEST toward VIENNA or an advance westward between WARSAW and the BALTIc might force the Germans to rush, at least, a part of these reserves to the Eastern front. The enemy is thus threatened both in the East and the West with a premature drain on the armored reserve upon which he must rest his main hope of averting defeat this year."

#12. Week Ending 23 October.

"1. General Summary.

"On 27 October the enemy ended a long period on the defensive by launching a comparatively large-scale attack against the British southeast flank in the vicinity of REPER and LIESEL. This attack in the direction of HINGHOVEN was apparently aimed at relieving pressure on the Fifteenth Army. The enemy may also have intended to exploit initial success in the attack by an attempt to cut off the ARHEMIE salient at its base and to threaten ARVINK. The attack made by the 9th Panzer Division supported by the 15th Panzer Grenadier Division followed a regrouping of German forces in which 9th Panzer came down from the ARHEMIE sector and 15th Panzer Grenadier came up from the south.

"During the first three weeks of October the enemy brought only one new division to the Western front, but during the week ending 26 October three new divisions appeared on the Western front and in addition two divisions that had been held in reserve were committed. It is now apparent, however, that the reorganization of the German forces during the past two months has been fully as significant as the actual rate of reinforcement and indeed more important in restoring the fighting value of enemy forces in the West.

"This reinforcement and reorganization have been carried through in three distinct phases. First, to halt the Allied advance and to man the WEST WALL, the enemy hastily formed battle groups from the broken divisions flooding back from the West, brought numerous fortress battalions into the WEST WALL and rushed up training divisions from Wehrkreise in Western GERMANY at the expense of severely damaging the Army's training system.

"The second phase was one of completing training in the line itself and of reorganizing these miscellaneous battle groups and

#8. 12 A Gp. Documentation.

some of the fortress battalions into disciplined and controlled divisions. During October established divisions or newly brought up divisional staffs absorbed many of these units. Battle groups and temporary divisions known only by the names of their commanders began to be replaced by recognized numbered divisions.

"The third phase was the withdrawal from the line of a large part of the Panzer force for complete resting and refitting. In this manner the enemy hopes to build a substantial counter-attacking force to cooperate with a rejuvenated and enlarged air force. The achievement of this aim required not only the ability to produce the necessary men and equipment but depended also on the enemy's ability to disengage these forces and still retain sufficient strength in the line to contain the Allied advance within reasonable limits. In this the enemy was greatly aided by weather that was unfavorable to the Allied advance and by Allied supply difficulties.

"It is clear that the increase in fighting value of enemy forces in West cannot be gauged merely by the four new divisions that arrived during the month. The true gain has been through reorganization and the effect has been to weld a large number of miscellaneous and poorly trained units into organized divisions and armies. The best indication of the importance of this gain is that the enemy in spite of withdrawing 116 Panzer Division to tactical reserve, 11 Panzer Division perhaps also to tactical reserve, and four or five more Panzer divisions probably to more distant areas for rest and refitting, still dared to attack the British in the direction of EINDHOVEN with a Panzer and a strong Panzer Grenadier division.

"The enemy is capable of continuing the present attack in the EINDHOVEN area with reinforcements drawn from strategic armored reserves. However, with the ease of the British salient so widened as to reduce its vulnerability and the attack now meeting increased resistance, it seems unlikely that the enemy will press on attack toward ANTWERP that will require depletion of armored reserve. It seems more likely that the enemy will continue, without depletion, the build-up of his long needed armored reserve unless and until Allied thrusts eastward demand its employment. The enemy's most likely and serious capability would now appear to be a counterattack with strong forces of Panzer reserves against any Allied break-through in the Ninth or First Army sectors which threatens to push our advance to the RHINE. Furthermore, the GAF is capable of providing substantially increased fighter strength for the support of such a counterattack. Although the deterioration of the German economy has apparently caused a concentration of GERMANY'S increased fighter strength for the defense of the REICH against strategic bombing, there seems little doubt that the major effort of the GAF would be diverted to ground support whenever the situation on the Western front became critical."

#9. 12 A Gp. Documentation.

#13. Week Ending 4 Nov.

*1. General Summary.

"During the past week the enemy moved divisions locally to oppose Allied attacks in both the Northern and Southern sectors of the front, reinforced the AACHEN area and continued the building up of mobile tactical reserves and the formation of an armored strategic reserve.

"The only new arrival on the Western front during the period has been the 18 Volksgrenadier Division. This is in contrast to the arrival of 269 Infantry Division and the reappearance of 91 and 361 Infantry Divisions the preceding week. However, in spite of lack of identifications it is apparent that some reinforcements did arrive. Tactical reconnaissance late in the week showed what appeared to be heavy troop movements into the Northern part of First US Army's sector. Whether these arrivals were new infantry divisions, a part of the newly identified SIXTH Panzer Army from East of the RHINE, or merely a part of the forces held behind the line in tactical reserve, such as 2 or 9 Panzer Divisions, is not yet clear. Since tanks have not been reported in any of these movements, it is conceivable that the movements may account for the arrival of infantry only. It is not likely that the German High Command will see fit to expend its last reserve of armor West of the RHINE, at least not until vital areas are immediately threatened. This will certainly be true as long as tactical reserves in the form of 2, 9, 116 and 10 SS Panzer Divisions exist in the North and 11 Panzer is available in the South, possibly bolstered by other mobile units.

"As Allied pressure in the North and the South develops during November the enemy is fully capable of increasing the rate of reinforcement to the West. If this pressure results in a major breakthrough threatening bridgeheads over the RHINE, the September expedient of rushing a large number of units into action may well be repeated. It is virtually impossible to estimate accurately such reinforcement in quantitative terms since the actual rate of reinforcement depends not only on the situation in the West but also on the gravity of the Russian threat in the East. With the Russians driving through BUDAPEST towards VIENNA only 150 miles distant and their Northern drive pushing well into EAST PRUSSIA the demands for reinforcement in the East promise to be very compelling.

"For reinforcement of the Western front, the enemy may draw primarily on his uncommitted divisions in GERMANY and in SCANDINAVIA. His forces in Southeastern EUROPE are likely to be drawn into the Russian struggle and there is little evidence that he is preparing to release any substantial forces from ITALY during November. Even if a few divisions can be released in ITALY, the Hungarian front is likely to consume them. The enemy's chief reserve of rested and re-equipped divisions for use in the East is undoubtedly the five armored divisions reported to be under

Sixth Panzer Army in the BIELEFELD area and three parachute divisions that do not appear to be heavily committed. In addition to this group, the 2 Panzer Division should be regarded as in reserve since it has not been seriously committed for a long period. In GERMANY and WEST POLAND there are 13 divisions which are available to the Eastern and Western fronts and though the actual disposition cannot be determined it hardly seems possible that more than eight at a maximum will come to the West. From SCANDINAVIA it is possible that three or four divisions might arrive from NORWAY and one from DENMARK while none are expected directly from FINLAND. The areas to which such reinforcements might come is, of course, unknown but there seems little reason to doubt that the enemy will continue to be very sensitive to pressure in the direction of SOLOMON and the NORTH and less sensitive in the South."

#14. Week Ending 11 Nov.

"The enemy continued on the defensive along the entire Western front during the week ended 11th November with activity on a relatively small scale North of the MOSELLE. South of the MOSELLE, the German First Army was fully occupied in defending against the offensive of the Third Army that began on the morning of the 8th of November.

...
 "The key to the enemy's essential capabilities and intentions must be found in the disposition of his Panzer and Panzer Grenadier divisions. There is none opposing the Sixth Army Group and there are but three opposing the Third Army's advance which has already made substantial progress. The 116th Panzer and the 3rd Panzer Grenadier are, at least in part, committed against the First Army's salient East of AACHEN. The 9th Panzer is located at VENLO, the 10th SS is believed located East of AACHEN and 15th Panzer Grenadier and 2nd Panzer are unlocated. 1 SS, 2SS, 9ss, 12SS and Panzer LEHR have been out of the line for weeks and are believed to be resting and refitting in the PADERBORN area of Northwest GERMANY. Photo reconnaissance of 6th November, covering possible entraining stations in the PADERBORN area, revealed that the main PADERBORN railway station was heavily loaded including many flats. Four trains were present, two of which were in motion. sidings near BAD LIPPERSING and SNUGELAGER were occupied mainly by empty flats. This heavy activity probably indicates preparation for a movement from that area.

"The enemy's most important capabilities relate to his employment of this substantial panzer reserve on which he must base his chief hope of averting defeat this year. It is possible that some of these divisions may be brought down to oppose the Third Army's advance. However, the enemy has shown great sensitivity to our attacks in the salient East of AACHEN and it is believed that he will protect the general area East of COLOGNE with any divisions which may be available from his panzer reserve even though the failure to employ some of these divisions against the Third Army may necessitate withdrawing under pressure in that area to the WEST WALL. The enemy's most likely capability is believed to be the strong reinforcement of the areas Northwest, West or Southwest of COLOGNE with all available panzer

reserves for attack on the Northern flank of the Ninth Army or the Southern flank of the VII Corps for counter-attack against any further Eastward advance toward COLOGNE.

#15. Week Ending 18 Nov.

*I. General Summary

"The enemy's appreciation that the major Allied offensive had opened in the West last week was shown by a hasty redistribution of divisions to meet local tactical situations and a hurried flow of low-grade infantry divisions to the West, while holding the Sixth Panzer Army poised in strategic reserve.

"The enemy's supply of armor in tactical reserve, with the possible exception of 10 SS and 2 Panzer Divisions, has now been utilized. The early arrival of 9 Panzer Grenadier Divisions and 15 Panzer Grenadier Divisions to meet the thrust North of ESCHWEILER, and the complete absorption of 11 and 21 Panzer assisted by 25 Panzer Grenadier Division in attempting to stem the Third US Army attack across the MOSELLE now leaves additional armored elements to be supplied primarily by Sixth Panzer Army. The paucity of infantry reserves was amply illustrated by the arrival on the front during the week of three new infantry divisions, all of which were being reformed in POLAND or Eastern GERMANY plus the recommitment of the reformed 338 Division. In September the Germans rushed some 18 divisions to the West, whereas in October there were only four new arrivals. Perhaps the number of divisions arriving in November will approximate the total for September, eight new arrivals, including 25 Panzer Grenadier, having already appeared, six of them during the past week. Evidently newly-formed infantry divisions coming into the West are not yet considered battleworthy, since they unusually take up quiet sectors of the front replacing more battle-ried divisions which move to active areas. However, in addition to the flow of new divisions to the West, an 8th Parachute Division is rumored to be forming, while 2 Parachute Division is possibly reforming in HOLLAND. On the assumption that perhaps three of the Sixth Panzer Army divisions are already West of the RHINE, reinforcements to the Western front during November have been considerable.

"The enemy thus far has demonstrated considerable skill in shifting divisions to meet vitally threatened areas and in employing tactical armored reserves to absorb the initial force of Allied attacks. In the way of mobile tactical reserves he still has 10 SS Panzer Division, reported moving South in the VENLO area, and also 2 Panzer Division which is reported in the WUENGEN-GLADBACH area. While the precise location of Sixth Panzer Army is not known, persistent statements by prisoners of war to the effect that 2 SS and 12 SS Panzer Divisions are West of the RHINE continue to be received, with a possibility that 1 SS and 9 SS are also there. Visual reconnaissance during the week has reported heavy concentrations of troop trains in the GIESSEN area, which detraining West of the RHINE has centered in the DUREN-GREVENBROICH-COLOGNE and SAARBRUECKEN-SAARLUTZ areas. Further,

however, has prevented reconnaissance on the OSNABRUECK-RUHR lines. The fact that none of the divisions which were reported arriving from the OSNABRUECK area as early as 16 November have been committed may indicate that Sixth Panzer Army will be used as a unit and then not until a break-through of the ROER River defense line. The large flow of rail traffic, including flat cars with tanks, through SAARBRUECKEN at the close of the week may mean that Third US Army sector is to receive a division from Sixth Panzer Army. If such is the case, Panzer LEHR is a likely candidate.

"The most important enemy capability related to the employment of Sixth Panzer Army particularly as it may be supported by a large fighter force. German fighters have not put in a large-scale appearance since the WERSEBURG raid by the Fifth Air Force and their recent inactivity may perhaps be explained by preparation for heavy support of ground forces.

"So far the enemy has not produced the counter-attack or counter-offensive punch which Sixth Panzer, with perhaps 500 tanks, is capable of delivering. The delay in employing this Army may have been due to transport difficulties or supply problems but it seems more likely that the enemy believed that conditions were not yet ripe for its employment. The necessity for launching a strong counter-attack to stop an Allied thrust toward COLOGNE or the RUHR has not yet arisen. On the other hand if the enemy intends to launch a major counter-offensive against any Allied salient East of AACHEN designed to reestablish the SIEGFRIED Line positions or to cripple American forces in this area, the most opportune time will presumably come when our attacks have spent their force and our supplies are dwindling. The enemy is thus in the position of holding his punch and awaiting developments.

"If our attacks can be contained by the infantry and the tactical reserves that have been committed, it is obvious that the enemy will have no necessity for employing his strategic Panzer reserve in an essentially defensive counter-attack. He will then be in a position to launch a major counter-offensive or move some or all of the elements of Sixth Panzer Army to Army Group G or to whatever vital area is seriously threatened. However, in view of the enemy's probable appreciation of the strength behind the attacks of the Ninth and First Armies and his great sensitivity to any advance toward COLOGNE and the RUHR, it is unlikely that he will move Sixth Panzer Army from this area unless an equally grave threat develops in some other sector. A breach of the WEST WALL in the Army Group G area or a rapid advance by the British toward the RUHR might present such a threat."

#16. Week Ending 25 Nov.

"I. General Summary.

"Since 4 November--four days before the start of the offensive--the enemy has brought 16 divisions to the Western Front, 10 infantry, 5 Panzer and one Panzer Grenadier. It is estimated that the enemy has suffered approximately 100,000 casualties on the whole front since the offensive began.

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"To counter any Allied exploitation of the breach in the SIEGFRIED Line in the AACHEN area and meet the threat to COLOGNE and the RUHR, the Germans have sent into the line in that area or into the immediate vicinity of the front 5 infantry and 6 Panzer divisions. Faced with a second thrust of increasingly alarming proportions, the enemy has been forced to send 3 infantry, two Panzer and one Panzer Grenadier divisions to parry the blow of the Third US Army directed toward the SAAR Basin and the SIEGFRIED Line South of TRIER. In a futile effort to stop a blow anticipated too late, the Germans sent three infantry divisions and diverted Panzer LEHR and 25 Panzer Grenadier from the Third Army sector to oppose the attack of the Sixth Army Group towards the RHINE between KARLSRUHE and BASEL.

"The chief development in the past week affecting enemy capabilities is the formation of the VOSGES trap which seems likely to force the bulk of the German Nineteenth Army to withdraw across the RHINE. The enemy undoubtedly will appreciate that this defeat will allow the Sixth Army Group to direct a large part of its forces Northward against the WEST WALL in cooperation with Third Army forces. The fact that the Sixth Panzer Army is concentrated in the COLOGNE Corridor necessitates placing major emphasis on the enemy capabilities of using these forces in either a counterattacking or a counter-offensive role in the First and Ninth US Army sectors. The growing threat to the WEST WALL from TRIER to KARLSRUHE, however, is likely to increase the enemy's reluctance to commit and tie down this armored reserve unless he is forced to do so or unless he feels confident of a decisive victory. Thus, while it is likely that he would employ a part or all of the Sixth Panzer Army in a counter-attack against any bridgeheads East of the ROER, in conjunction with flooding the river, in order to protect the COLOGNE Corridor, it seems unlikely that he would bring them West and across the ROER to commit them in a major counter-offensive. This counter-offensive use of the Sixth Panzer Army is a capability that appears less probable now than it did a week ago.

"Heavy reinforcement of the WEST WALL from TRIER to KARLSRUHE seems almost certain. For this purpose it seems likely that reinforcements will be brought from the Fifteenth Army, from GERMANY or SCANDINAVIA or from the Nineteenth Army if a substantial number of divisions succeed in escaping across the RHINE from the VOSGES trap. This reinforcement is likely to be started promptly and carried out rapidly. Whether units of the Sixth Panzer Army will also move from COLOGNE to the rear of the WEST WALL between TRIER and KARLSRUHE depends on Allied pressure and progress in each area. Without doubt these forces which represent the enemy's only mobile armored reserve in the West will be employed at the point of greatest danger. If the drive to the WEST WALL in the South gathers momentum and a serious break-through appears imminent and if at the same time the Allied forces in the North are being held by troops in the line, a movement South of at least a part of Sixth Panzer Army would seem almost certain. If the First and Ninth Army

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#14. 13. Documentation.

Army offensives threatening the heart of industrial GERMANY continue to be the major threat, no such southward move would be likely. If both offensives constitute serious threats, the enemy might be forced to split the Sixth Panzer Army although he is obviously reluctant to do so. Enemy action in this respect cannot be predicted at this time but the capability of moving a part or all of this armored reserve to oppose the American Third and Seventh Armies should be recognized. The situation in some respects is comparable to that at CAEN and ST. LO in the middle of July.

#17. Week Ending 2 Dec.

~~Not located among records of Historical Records Section, Departmental Records, Staff, Branch, AGO.~~

*I. General Summary.

"Although suffering from lack of infantry replacements, the enemy was able to contain the drives of the Ninth and First U.S. Armies without committing any of the four SS panzer divisions of Sixth Panzer Army which are held in reserve presumably in the general area west of COLOGNE. In the XX Corps sector of the Third U.S. Army the 90th Division is disposed along the West bank of the SAAR and the ~~95th Division~~ units of the 95th Division have established a bridgehead across the SAAR at SAARLUTERN. Further South the XII Corps is advancing on a five-division front toward the WEST WALL. French forces in the Sixth Army Group are slowly tightening the noose on the German Nineteenth Army and the Seventh US Army is turning Northward toward the WEST WALL on the right flank of Third US Army. The pressure of Allied attacks along the whole Western front is being felt by the enemy to a greater extent than is indicated merely by Allied gains. Attrition of enemy troops is running at a high rate. During November enemy casualties on the Twelfth Army Group front amounted to approximately 100,000 men.

"The enemy's defensive plan has been quite clear for some time. It involves all-out defense at the ROER River beyond which Allied advances would constitute an immediate threat to the RUHR. Pursuant to this plan the remnants of some twelve infantry and four panzer-type divisions are now crowded onto a front barely thirty miles long. Many of these divisions, however, have been badly decimated and possess little fighting value. Some units have been merged into single commands while others are known to be in a very weak condition. In fact the twelve infantry divisions may not have an actual strength of more than four equivalent divisions. The attrition of the divisions in the line in the AACHEN sector is producing an acute situation for the enemy but so far he has managed to avoid the piecemeal commitment of the four remaining divisions of Sixth Panzer Army.

"In spite of the indications of heavy attrition and resultant weakness in the AACHEN sector, the priority in reinforcement seems very recently to have shifted to areas further South. The 352 Infantry Division has just come into the sector immediately North of TRIER. The 245 Infantry Division has also come into the line opposing the Seventh US Army northwest of HAGENAU. Tactical reconnaissance indicates that

additional divisions have arrived or are on the way to reinforce the line in the Third and ~~seventh~~ Seventh US Army areas.

"The enemy's plan in the Third US Army sector and in the sector of Sixth Army Group may have been to withdraw under pressure to the RHINE between BASEL and KARLSRUHE and to the WEST WALL between KARLSRUHE and TRIER. It is doubtful, however, that the enemy expected to withdraw so fast or under so much pressure.

"The enemy now is threatened with a possible break-through of the WEST WALL by units of both the Third and Seventh US Armies. This is a threat second only in importance to the threat to the RUHR. The enemy probably can not hold the WEST WALL between KARLSRUHE and TRIER, or seal off penetrations of this line without bringing additional panzer reinforcements to this area. The 2nd Panzer Division, unlocated for a long time, may be a candidate. However, it will probably be insufficient and the enemy must then decide whether to move any part of all of the Sixth Panzer Army from the COLOGNE area.

"At no time since September has such a critical dilemma confronted the enemy. It would seem doubtful that the enemy can hold in the AACHEN area without committing the Sixth Panzer Army. It also seems doubtful that he can hold the WEST WALL in the South without additional reinforcements including armor. The enemy may have to divide the Sixth Panzer Army thus risking defeat both in the North and in the South, or if he holds Sixth Panzer Army in the North, run a good chance of the Third and Seventh US Armies reaching the RHINE this year in the area of MAINZ. Finally, to solve this problem with reinforcements from the Russian front is to invite disaster in the East."

#18. Week Ending 29 December.

1. General Summary.

"It is now certain that attrition is steadily sapping the strength of German forces on the Western Front and that the crust of defenses is thinner, more brittle and more vulnerable than it appears on our G-2 maps or to the troops in the line.

"Two outstanding facts support this unqualified statement:

"a. The first is that there is ample evidence that the strength of the infantry divisions that have been in the line on active sectors since the beginning of our offensives has been cut at least 50% and several other divisions are known to have been virtually destroyed. It is true that these exhausted divisions are supported by ten battered Panzer or Panzer Grenadier type divisions which make up the tactical reserves and by the fattening and still untouched Sixth SS Panzer Army. It is also evident, however, that to keep these infantry divisions alive at all the enemy has had to give them almost daily transfusions from the fortresses ~~their~~ troops which were once counted as a separate source of strength.

#16. 12 A Gp. Documentation.

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"b. The second fact is that while the enemy's minimum replacement need in the face of our offensives is twenty divisions a month, the estimated total available to him from all sources, for the foreseeable future, is fifteen a month. Recently the enemy has not even been able to keep up this rate-his replacement rate for several weeks being only two or three a week.

"These two basic facts--the deadly weakness of the individual infantry division in the line, plus the inevitability of the enemy falling still further in replacement arrears--make it certain that before long he will not only fail in his current attempt to withdraw and rest his tactical reserve but he will be forced to commit at least part of his Panzer Army to the line.

"The enemy's primary capabilities continue to relate to the employment of the Sixth SS Panzer Army but it may not be possible for the enemy to have complete freedom of choice as to the time and place of its employment. The situation is becoming similar to that which existed at CAEN and ST. LO. In the NORMANDY situation the enemy committed his armor at CAEN with the result that when he needed it to control the ST. LO break-through he had difficulty in disengaging it. It was badly battered by the time it could be brought against the American forces. A break-through by the Third and Seventh U.S. Armies could easily develop into a similarly disastrous 'end run' and RUNDSTEDT appears to be determined to avoid the NORMANDY MISTAKE mistake. The decision to commit it will be forced upon him, however, by Allied pressure and his inability to supply adequate infantry reinforcements to the line. The enemy, furthermore, may have little discretion as to whether he will commit this armor in the North or in the South. RUNDSTEDT must appreciate that a breakthrough in the COLOGNE-DUSSELDORF area spells disaster. This is amply demonstrated by the fact that he immediately located this armor behind the line in that area. He must also realize that a break-through of the WEST WALL in the STRASSBOURG-SAAR area would also have the gravest consequences. If the situation deteriorates seriously in the South, he will be forced to transfer some of the armor quickly to that area. At the same time, he must keep a strong reserve in the North to deal with a potential breakthrough in that area.

"If lack of adequate infantry reinforcements requires the commitment of his strategic reserves, the enemy's capability of counter-attacking any bridgeheads established East of the ROER is greatly diminished. Similarly the capability of mounting a ~~xxx~~ major counter-offensive would be virtually destroyed if his armor is already engaged. All of the enemy's major capabilities, therefore, depend on the balance between the rate of attrition imposed by the Allied offensives and the rate of infantry reinforcements. The balance at present is in favor of the Allies. With continued Allied pressure in the South and in the North the breaking point may develop suddenly and without warning.

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#19. Week Ending 162400 December. Examined 19 December.

#1. General Summary.

The enemy on 16 December opened his biggest offensive since the beginning of the campaign in Western EUROPE. By taking full advantage of adverse weather conditions which restricted Allied reconnaissance and by rigidly applying radio silence, he skillfully regrouped his forces and launched attacks simultaneously at five places along seventy miles of the central part of the Western Front. The skill in regrouping and launching the simultaneous attacks achieved a high degree of surprise. The element of surprise was heightened by the enemy's disregard of terrain in selecting the points of attack and he threw his armored forces into sectors considered ill-adapted for the use of tanks. He struck weakly held areas which had been quiet for many weeks. To maintain surprise as long as possible, his attacks initially in many areas were light and had the appearance of reconnaissance in force. It was not until the night of 16-17 December that he showed his hand completely by utilizing airborne forces and making his greatest air effort since early in the NORMANDY campaign.

"In the Weekly Intelligence Summary dated 12 December an analogy was drawn between the then current situation and that which existed at CAEN and ST. LO. The chief similarity was that attrition appeared to be wearing down the enemy's infantry strength to a point at which it was possible that at ST. LO 'end-run' might develop through the sectors of the American Third and Seventh Armies. The great dissimilarity, as pointed out, was that the enemy reserves, both tactical and strategic, were largely free and available for employment. It seemed likely that the enemy would be forced to commit these reserves due to his increasing weakness in infantry forces since it was not clear that he could bring forward sufficient infantry replacements.

"The analogy with CAEN and ST. LO has now broken down. The enemy decided not to await the inevitable result of the wearing-down process. He decided to seize the initiative, to commit his reserves momentarily, and to gamble all on the success of a single, bold stroke. Rather than the ST. LO-CAEN situation, the present attack bears a strong resemblance to his efforts to mass his forces and to break through at MORTAIN in order to cut the Allied bottleneck at AVRANCHES. At MORTAIN, KLUGE decided--perhaps aided by the FUERNER's intuition--to gamble all on one operation. He lost. The fundamental factors in the current situation are similar. Faced with inevitable disaster, RUNDSTEDT or HITLER decided that a huge and decisive gamble was justified. RUNDSTEDT informed the soldiers of the Western Front that the hour of destiny had struck and that a night offensive faced the Allies with everything at stake. His weary infantry divisions were left in the line and all of the recently brought-up infantry divisions were committed. Six of the ten divisions in his tactical reserves and four of his six armored divisions in strategic reserve were thrown into the battle. Success in this effort will be seriously damaging to the American forces; failure will be disastrous to the Germans. In view of the desperate nature of this decision, the enemy must be expected to bring to bear all available forces on the ground and in the air and to employ every weapon at his command with the probable exertion of gas.

#1. 12 A Documentation.

B. Extracts from daily Periodics.

#192. 14 Dec.

"1. Enemy Operations and Units in Contact.

a. Twelfth Army Group.

(1) Ninth US Army. ...

(2) First US Army.

...

In the Northern VIII Corps zone, vehicular traffic was observed moving north from ORIENT (LO893) and BRANSHEID, (P9881). Should these movements prove to be of a divisional scale, 18 Infantry Division would be the most likely candidate for a shift to the newly developing danger zone.

(3) ...

"ORDER OF BATTLE NOTES. Annex 1.

...

"5. A PW taken on 6 Dec claims to have heard at the end of Nov that as soon as the Allies crossed the ROER River, the SS Divs in reserve there were to counter-attack. The Luftwaffe will make its appearance and support the attack.

...

#194. 151800A-161800A Dec.

"1. Enemy Operations and Units in Contact.

Twelfth Army Group.

(1) Ninth US Army. ...

(2) First US Army.

...

"The sudden attacks and seemingly overpowering array of six enemy divisions identified within twelve hours should not be misinterpreted. The quality of divisions involved, the piecemeal efforts to launch small scale attacks and the apparent lack of long range objectives would seem to limit the enemy's threat. More exactly, the enemy appears to be launching a major diversionary attack to force the hurried withdrawal of our divisions from the vital COLOGNE and SAAR River areas to meet the EIFEL threat. Until the magnitude of the enemy's attack increases in more cohesive action or until one or more elements of the Sixth SS Panzer Army are committed on the VIII Corps front, the day's events cannot be regarded as a major long term threat."

#195. 161800A-171800A Dec.

"1. Enemy Operations and Units in Contact.

a. Twelfth Army Group.

(1) Ninth US Army. ...

(2) First US Army.

...

It appears that a strong counter-offensive has been launched by the enemy, the 12 SS Panzer Division moving toward ST. VITH (P8687) and MAMEDY (K7805) from the north and east and 116 Panzer Division moving toward ST. VITH from the southeast. Captured documents indicate that ST. VITH is the first objective in

in this area to be followed by exploitations to the west and northwest, possibly with LIEBE(X4739) in mind. The secondary intent appears still to be the relief of our strong pressure in the COLOGNE and SAAR River sectors and the continued threat of steady pressure on the central VIII Corps front. Should the enemy believe that he is succeeding in his counter-offensive, it is not impossible that the other half of the Sixth SS Panzer Army will attempt a drive to the southwest along the MEUSE River from the general area of ERKBLENZ (FO177)

OPERATION 'GREIF', Annex 3.

Five pages of translated captured documents by the 106th Infantry Division on 16 December were cited from the First U.S. Army's G-2 Periodic #190, 17 December. The documents pertained to Operation GREIF, the Orders of the Day of 16 December by certain commanders, etc. However, the omitted was the major document of all, the Order of the Day, 16 December, by the G in B West, Von Rundstedt.

#197. 19 Dec. Order of Battle Notes, Annex 1.

"1.

...

"5. With the passage of time, it is becoming more and more evident that the present enemy assault on the BIEBEL area is a thoroughly planned, deliberate, 'all-out' offensive. It is to be expected, therefore, that he will commit a few of his available reserve forces in an attempt either to exploit the BIEBEL situation, or to launch another thrust in coordination with it. Thus it would be of particular value to review those of his units which are known or believed to be available for such an attack role in the immediate future. It would also be well to note at this time that three general areas have been identified as receiving an unusual amount of movement and containing a consequently unusual build-up of enemy forces; the area bounded by TRIER(L2029)-METTLACH (L1800)-SINN(L0604); that bounded by KAISERLAUTERN (BO395)-PIRMASENS(Q9067)-HEIDENKIRCHEN(Q6083)-ST. WENDEL(Q59997); and that roughly about MUNSCHAU (K9418).

..."

IV. After/Action Reports.

Monthly

N.B. ---The After/Action Reports by the Twelfth Army Group possessed a trait which require the reader to exercise considerable caution in assessing the statements. Namely: Each monthly report was not issued until several weeks after the end of the calendar month. The inference might be drawn that time was thereby provided to edit the opinions. For instance, the September report was not issued until approximately seven weeks had transpired, the October one five weeks, and the November issue, three weeks, and the December report, two weeks. The issuance date will be provided in the following.

1. September report issued 17 October 1944.
(Source: L-1472(2))

12 A Gp. Documentation.

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To begin with, Panzer LEHR was probably in much worse shape than the others at the time the divisions were withdrawn from their rest and re-equip program. Consequently it required more personnel and material. Being a non-SS unit it may have been given unfavorable treatment in obtaining new personnel and equipment. However, there is no evidence to support this statement. The fact that the division was given a considerable amount of its equipment just prior to departure from the PADERBORN area would indicate that either Panzer LEHR was suddenly given a last-minute priority and all available unallotted equipment under control of Sixth SS Panzer Army was given to LEHR to enable it to perform its emergency function, or that the equipment was taken partly from the other divisions being sent out. If the latter is true or even if they were all receiving the same priority prior to 17 November (the date LEHR apparently received the bulk of its equipment), it is apparent that the four SS divisions are not at present complete in their reorganization and are possibly still receiving their equipment. The only difference is that they are now located where they can be hurriedly employed, if the situation in front of COLONG becomes critical. On the other hand, the possibility still exists that the four SS divisions did receive favorable treatment and may be held by Sixth SS Panzer Army to operate as a team when and if a favorable situation presents itself."

III. G-2 Periodics, December.

(Source: 12 A Gp., G-2 & G-2 Reports, Dec. 44.
In L-320(1))

The G-2 daily Periodic Reports were not particularly informative or descriptive of overall aspects of the enemy. They were detailed, primarily about operations of the immediate period. The ENEMY CAPABILITIES section was omitted. Usually each periodic included annexes, generally only one, Order of Battle Notes.

The G-2 Periodics for the period 1-15 December are extracted where pertinent, including certain ones following the 16 December attack, inasmuch as those ~~known~~ post-attack issuances were informative.

Of or

A. ~~Higher~~ Commands as Sources.

The ~~daily~~ Order of Battle Notes annexed to the daily G-2 Periodics abounded in extracts from SHAEF or, more usually, a brief statement or description would be made followed by: SHAEF COMMENT ---. These references indicated a familiarity with SHAEF opinions.

Inasmuch as the 12th Army Group records did not contain a G-2 Journal, nor a collection of issuances from other commands, there was no indication as to which SHAEF issuances the Army Group received. Doubtless the SHAEF Weekly Intelligence Summary was received. It was not named, however, by the 12th A Gp G-2 Periodics as a source.

On two occasions, in two periodics during the 1-15 December period, the periodics contained annexes in addition to the usual Order of Battle Notes. Periodic #183, 5 December, contained the Annex No. 2, HIGHER FORMATION COMMANDERS. The source for this three-page commentary and list was the SHAEF DIGEST No. 170. The second instance was in Periodic #192, 14 December, Annex #2, PARACHUTE DIVISION-IN-MEMORIAM. Its source was the G-2 Periodic #186, First US Army.

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#19. 12.1. Documentation.

"Prisoner of war statements indicate that the ROER defense line was begun at the beginning of October to include field fortifications and barbed wire, and that all bridges across the stream were prepared for demolition. Photos show extensive construction of anti-tank ditches along the ROER Northwest of HEINSBERG to the MEUSE.

#17. 2 December. Annex No. 2. THE ERFT RIVER DEFENSE LINE.

"The ERFT River, together with the defense installations and field works on its East bank, and the VORGEIRGE or VILLIE ridge to the East of the River, form the last natural defense position before the city of KOLN and the West bank of the RHINE between BONN and DUSSELDORF. This line is also a secondary line of defense behind the ROER positions presently being assaulted by the Ninth and First Armies. A sketch map 'Inclosure to Annex No. 2' is attached showing details of the ERFT defenses.

"In conclusion, the ERFT line is at present being developed into a final defensive position before the RHINE, utilizing all natural advantages, but as yet not strengthened against vulnerability to a flanking movement from the Southwest. According to PW statements, units of SS troops are in most of the towns and railheads of the ERFT Valley, and are reported to be working on defenses, and probably on positions between the ERFT and the ROER, where the compact village pattern would favor a hedgehog system of defense based on perimeter fortifications."

#18. Week Ending 9 Dec. Dated 12 Dec. Annex No. 7. SIXTH SS PANZER ARMY.

"1. INTRODUCTION.- One of the major questions now facing Allied Intelligence personnel is 'What is the present status and intended employment of the Sixth SS Panzer Army?' To answer this at the present time we have only the meager statements of a few prisoners from units in Fifth Panzer Army area behind which the four SS divisions of Sixth SS Panzer Army are now located, plus more or less detailed reports, some conflicting, on the organization and state of training of Panzer LEHR Division which was refitted and reorganized as a part of Sixth SS Panzer Army. Information on the four SS divisions is very scanty; however, on report on 12 SS Panzer Division indicates its training and personnel at least is somewhat similar to that reported of LEHR. From a study of Panzer LEHR Division which was committed into battle on 23 November, certain facts stand out which may well apply to the other divisions of Sixth SS Panzer Army; however, one must also take into consideration the fact that LEHR was the only non-SS unit in the Army, and may for this reason have received unfavorable treatment in the issuance of personnel and equipment.

"2. PANZER LEHR DIVISION.

- a. Reorganization and Training. ...
- b. Organization. ...
- c. Personnel. ...
- d. Equipment. ...

"3. CONCLUSION. It is difficult to use the Panzer LEHR Division as a yardstick for the four SS divisions of the Sixth SS Panzer Army.

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"The fundamental weaknesses in the German situation should not be disregarded. The initial phases of the present offensives are undoubtedly based upon supplies accumulated over a period time. The inherent weaknesses of the enemy as to fuel, motor transport, in a tank and transport tie line, however, of fundamental importance. The importance of denying enemy supplies cannot be overemphasized since he will undoubtedly endeavor to live off the country and captured dumps as in his first invasion of FRANCE. With Allied air power harassing enemy railheads and lines of communication, the full power of the current offensives should diminish rapidly once his initial hoard of supplies is exhausted.

"The enemy's primary capabilities related entirely to the employment of his remaining reserves. The most probable use is that he will commit them to exploit his penetration on the central part of the front or slightly further North to protect the Northern flank of his salient. A much less likely capability is an attack Southwestward along the MOSELLE from the GEILLENKIRCHEN area. This attack would form junction with the current penetration. Irrespectively of the exact place of commitment the NAHUR-LIEGE area appears to be the objective of the current offensive. A third capability is to press the attack from ECSTERACH towards LUXEMBURG possibly in conjunction with a new crossing of the MOSELLE from South of TRIER. Such an attack would be designed to widen the base for his salient further North and the recapture of LUXEMBURG could be represented as an outstanding victory to bolster the morale of the German Army and the public in the REICH. While there is accumulating evidence that such an attack is contemplated, its strength is not yet evident."

II. Weekly Intelligence Summaries --- Annexes to. (Sources: Ibid.)

Each of the Weekly ISM's possessed several annexes, e.g., German Order of Battle, papers on various subjects. The following were pertinent to the subject of this study.

#11. 21 Oct. Annex No. 2. ROER DEFENCE LINE.

"Considerable enemy work is being done along the East bank of the ROER River generally Northeast of AACHEN, and in the area just West of TREN. Some semblance to a field defense line is apparent with the line now extending Northeastwardly from DUREN to the forest in the confluence of the ROER and MAAS (WIELE). The stream itself affords an obstacle in advance of the line. Work in the open fields between towns, and around them in some cases, is progressing to a degree approaching continuity for a distance of some thirty kilometers North of TREN.

"While this work includes the usual types of ditches, trenches, and weapon positions, most of the effort is being expended in the preparation of what appears to be fox holes. ...

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#22.-A. 12 A Documentation.

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"SUBJECT: Operation 'GRIFF'.

"1. Higher Hq planned to include in the attack the operation 'GRIFF'.

"2. Undertaking 'GRIFF' will be made by our forces with American equipment, American weapons, American vehicles, American insignias - especially the 5-pointed yellow or white star may be painted on the vehicles.

"3. To avoid confusion with enemy troops, the forces employed in undertaking 'GRIFF' will identify themselves to our own troops:

a. During the day--by taking off their steel helmets.

b. At night--by red-blue light signals with flashlights.

"4. Forces of the undertaking 'GRIFF' will also identify themselves to friendly troops by painting white dots on houses, trees, and roads used by them.

"5. Employment of forces of undertaking 'GRIFF' is planned along the following roads:

a. Trois Fontes(5 km SW Stavelott). Bass Bodeus, Villettes, Bra, la Fourche, Haarrrs, Deus Ryn, Roche a Freus.

b. Right (8.5 km NW St. Vith): St. Thier, Ville du Bois, Vielsalm, Salmchateau; Road crossing at Point 444(0.5 km N Joubienal), Ibbronval, Rogne, Road crossing at Point 538 (2 km SW Malmepre), Monhay, Road fork at Point 430(eastern edge of Grandmenil), Road crossing IKT, 200(1 km N Mormont) Roche a Frone.

c. Roche a Frone, Aisne, Juzaine, Domal, Road fork 2 km SW Bomal, Tchigne, Oueux, Amas, Ocquier, Vervoc.

"6. Publication of the above orders through Div down to companies. Written distribution of this order is forbidden. Only Co Commanders are to be informed of this order, except in the case of forward bns, where platoon leaders will also be informed.

"7. Publication below bn level may only be made after the objectives mention in the operations order under Par. 3 - objective area St. Vith - high ground W and SW - have been reached.

"For the General Command
SIEBERT, C of S."

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A. September A/A Rpt. Dated 20 Nov. 44.
(Source: ETO File, L-471(2))

"III. INTELLIGENCE.

"17. With the advance of the armies under this command into Belgium, Luxembourg, Holland and Germany, intelligence and counter-intelligence emphasis has shifted from France to these countries. Aided by bad weather and Allied supply difficulties, the enemy has been able to stabilize the front and to stall for the time in which to repair his depleted air force, to produce new divisions from total mobilization and to move divisions from other areas to the Western Front.

"18. The most significant occurrence during the last week of September was the apparent withdrawal of the majority of the enemy's armored units for re-grouping and reforming in Germany, thus supplying the enemy with a sizeable mobile reserve. The German Air Force returned to the fighting front near the end of the period, mounting up to 140 sorties, 75 of which were long range bombers, in the area of the Allied airborne operation on 25 September 1944.

...

B. October, Dated 5 December 44.
(Source: ETO File, L-471(3))

"III. INTELLIGENCE.

"8. During this period of relative inactivity on the front, there has been adequate time to study the enemy's overall strategy and to calculate his likely reactions to any Allied advance. Of special interest were terrain studies prepared on the routes of approach to western Germany and defenses along the River Roer.

...

"12. Except for a comparatively large-scale attack launched against the British southeast flank in the vicinity of Heert and Liesel on 27 October, the enemy has been committed almost entirely to a defensive role on the Western Front. This strategy has been aimed apparently at gaining time in which to strengthen the defenses around Germany; to mobilize every available person capable of manning them; to build up a mobile reserve; to equalize Allied numerical air superiority with yet unproven jet-propelled planes; to improve the no longer secret weapons or to develop new ones; and, ultimately, time in which to withdraw from the war without unconditional surrender through adroit negotiation or Allied weariness and disunity.

...

C. November, Dated 21 Dec 44.
(Source: ETO File, L-471(4))

"III. INTELLIGENCE.

"8. An accurate and detailed check has been maintained on the reaction of the German High Command to the Allied all-out offensive which began 8 November 1944. Troop movements and transport behind the front have been kept under close scrutiny, despite inclement weather conditions that have seriously hampered aerial reconnaissance, as well as impeding progress on the ground.

"9. The enemy's defensive plan in the north has been quite clear for some time. It involves an all-out defense at the Roer River beyond which Allied advances would constitute an immediate threat to the Ruhr. Pursuant to this plan, the remnants of some 12 infantry and four panzer type divisions are now crowded into a front barely 30 miles long, and four additional panzer type divisions comprising the Sixth Panzer Army are held in reserve immediately behind this sector. In addition to this there are an estimated six panzer grenadier type divisions in tactical reserve which are ready for local emergency or for concentration at some critical point for defensive or counter-offensive operations. In the U.S. VIII Corps sector there are two or three Volksgrenadier Divisions presumably coming into this safe training detrainig area for experience in a quiet sector prior to moving into a more active front. On the other hand these troops may be building up in this area for counter-offensive purposes.

"10. The possible threat to our stretched out VIII Corps was discussed among the CG, C/S, G-3 and G-2. It was decided to take a calculated risk here in order to gain the necessary strength for the continuation of our pressure toward the Ruhr and the Saar. It was felt that while the enemy was capable of a break-through that it would not lead to decisive results before we could take adequate counter-measures.

"11. The enemy's plan in the south may have been to withdraw under pressure to the RHINE Rive between Bazel and Karlsruhe and to the West Wall between Karlsruhe and Trier. It is doubtful, however, that he expected to withdraw as so rapidly or under so much pressure, for he is now threatened with a possible break-through of the West Wall by units of both the Third and Seventh US Armies. The importance of this threat is second only to that of the Ruhr.

"12. During November, the enemy brought a total of 16 additional divisions to the Western Front; ten infantry, five panzer and one panzer grenadier. The rate of attrition in the Aachen sector is producing an acute situation for the enemy. However, priority in reinforcement seems to have shifted recently to areas further south in the Third Army and Sixth Army Group sectors. It is estimated that the enemy suffered 100,000 casualties on the Twelfth Army Group front along during November, 42,871 of which are prisoners of war. Many divisions, although still in the line, have been decimated and possess little fighting value.

"13. It seems doubtful that the enemy can hold in the Aachen area without committing the Sixth Panzer Army. It also seems doubtful that he can hold the West Wall in the south without additional reinforcements, including armor. Consequently, the enemy may have to divide the Sixth Panzer Army, thus risking defeat both in the north and in the south. If he elects to hold all elements of this army in the north, he will run a good chance of the Third and Seventh US Armies reaching the Rhine this year in the area of Mainz. At no time since September has such a dilemma confronted the German High Command and to solve it by bringing reinforcements from the Russian front would invite disaster in the east.

"14. Enemy strength opposing Twelfth Army Group forces at the end of the period was estimated as follows:

- a. Ninth Army - 8 nominal divisions, equivalent to 4 or 5 division (30,000 men) with 95 tanks.
- b. First Army - 2 nominal divisions, equivalent to

8 division (67,500 men) with 60 tanks.

c. Third Army - 10 nominal divisions, equivalent to 8 divisions (3,000 men) with 155 tanks.

d. Sixth Panzer Army continued to hold its position in reserve east of the Roer River behind the First and Ninth Army fronts with an equivalent strength of 4 divisions (30,000 men) and an estimated 320 tanks. Incl 3.

...

D. December. Dated 16 January 45.
(Source: HTO File, L-320(A))

"III. INTELLIGENCE.

"9. Enemy tactics during the first half of December were a continuation of those described in the November report, namely: stubborn defense of prepared positions with no commitment of armored reserves; preparation of additional defenses further to the interior; and small counterattacks to improve local tactical situations.

"10. On 16 December the enemy opened his biggest offensive since the beginning of the campaign in western Europe. Taking full advantage of adverse weather conditions which restricted Allied reconnaissance and applying rigid radio silence, the enemy skillfully regrouped his forces and launched attacks simultaneously at five places along seventy miles of the central part of the Western Front. The skill in regrouping and launching the simultaneous attacks achieved a high degree of surprise.

"11. The element of surprise was heightened by the enemy's disregard of terrain in selecting the points of attack. He threw his armored forces into sectors considered ill adapted for the use of tanks and struck weakly held areas which had been quiet for many weeks. To maintain surprise as long as possible, his attacks in many areas were initially light and had the appearance of reconnaissance in force. It was not until the night of 16-17 December that he showed his hand completely by utilizing airborne forces and making his greatest air effort since early in the Normandy campaign.

"12. The enemy developed the full power of his offensive into a single blow evidently aimed at reaching the Meuse, from Liege to Givet, with the object of ultimately penetrating toward Brussels and Antwerp. He committed to action all of the infantry divisions that were available to him in the west, but he was able to hold at least three Panzer divisions uncommitted. He threw in the full power of his augmented air force and used it with a disregard for losses unknown since the beginning of the campaign in France. Possibly because of Allied pressure, no pincer movement was developed nor even any serious diversionary attacks on the flanks of the salient.

...

V. Commanding General's Briefings.

A. Procedure.

"One of the principal duties of the G-3 Operations Branch was to present a complete briefing of the current situation as often as required to the Commanding General, authorized staff members and visitors. Due to the importance of the information presented, all briefings were given by, or were under the direct supervision of,

the Chief of the Operations Branch. Each briefing ~~index~~ included a presentation of our operations for the period since the last briefing, a G-2 situation summary, a report of air operations for the period presented by G-3 Air or the Ninth Air Force, and a daily weather report by the Ninth Air Force weather officer. Also, additional political, geographical, or military information on matters of outstanding interest was presented on occasion by appropriate staff sections. The importance of the briefings grew constantly throughout the period operations, not only as a source of vital and interesting information, but also as a means for orienting all staff officers." Briefings were held daily, during the morning, during this autumn period. "Material for briefings was taken from the same sources as for the G-3 Daily Report and Cosintrep, augmented by additional information from the armies through liaison and other channels. Phantom messages provided most up-to-the minute front line news." (Source: 12th Army Group. REPORT OF OPERATIONS, FINAL AFTER ACTION REPORT, Vol. V, Sxx G-3 Section, pp. 16-17. In Files of Historical Records Section, DR B, AGO, and archives of Historical Division, (SUSA.)

B. November '44 Briefings Regarding 'Calculated Risk' Conference on VIII Corps.

The Intelligence Section, par. 10, of the November After/Action Report of the 12th A. Gp, referred to a conference between the CG, G/S, G-3 and G-2 concerning the enemy threat to the stretched-out VIII Corps (TUSA), and that a calculated risk would be taken.

The G-2 CG Briefings for November were examined for elucidation of this subject, but no mention was found either to the subject or to such a conference.

(Source: Files of Historical Records Section, 12th Army Group. Commanding General's Briefings. In 99/12-3. ~~Index~~ (7664).)

C. December 00 Briefings.

(Source: 12 A Gp. G-3 Section Reports. Dec. 44. In L-320(4)).

H.P. --- There briefings occurred at 0915 Hours.

1. Dec.

"G-2 Report:

"Ninth and First Armies Counterattacks continue against our troops and the enemy's resistance continues to stiffen. On the northern flank of Ninth Army a large movement of armor has been reported. This might indicate that some units of the 6 Pz Army are moving into the line, or that the 10 SS Pz Div is being relieved by some unit of the 6 Pz Army. PW stated that the headquarters of 275 Inf Div has moved to the DANUBIUS border and the remainder of the division is being incorporated with the 314 Inf Div. The latter two units have been badly beaten.

A-7. 12 A. Documentation.

G-2

N.B. During the remainder of the 1-16 December period, extracts will be made from the Briefings pertaining to several factors:

1. G-2 reports about the British, indicating the Army Group's interest and observation on that portion of the Allied front.
2. Dispositions and movements of enemy forces on the British, Ninth-First Third U.S. Armies fronts, and when pertinent on the 6 Army Group front.
3. Enemy strategy, intentions and capabilities.
4. The above three factors were reported by the G-2, and any other pertinent G-2 data will be extracted also.

2 Dec.

"G-2 Report:

"First Canadian Army: 331 and 719 Inf Divs have been reported moving out of this sector towards Germany. Their disposition in Germany remains undetermined. 85 Inf Div in this area should be moving out soon toward a more critical sector.

"Ninth Army: ... It is believed that the 10 SS Pz Div is being replaced by the 9 Pz Div.

"Third Army: It is probable that the 11 Pz Div is moving out of the XII Corps sector. The latter has not been identified in the line for some time.

"6 Army Group: The shifting of the enemy's troops continues. ... The 363 Inf Div which was to relieve the Pz LEHR Div has been identified opposite the Ninth Army.

"A Pz has stated that the 6 Pz Army has six panzer divisions instead of five, the sixth division being the 5 SS Pz Div."

3 Dec.

"G-2 Report:

"First Canadian Army: The shifting of troops to more critical fronts continues and it is very evident that the enemy will leave very few troops in this area. The 15 German Army, which formerly controlled this area, is unlocated at present time.

"Ninth and First Armies: Numerous enemy counterattacks have been reported for the last period. The enemy still shows great concern for the AACFEN sector. 9 Pz Div which has not been identified for some time has now reappeared in the line and is probably responsible for the counterattacks yesterday. The majority of these counterattacks have been reported in the Ninth Army sector where the enemy is employing many tanks.

"Third Army: No new changes to report in enemy disposition. ...

"6 Army Group: Pz LEHR Div has been withdrawn from the line. Although this division had sometime to reorganize and re-equip, PW statements indicate poor condition of equipment. No new changes

#28. 12. Op. Documentation

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to report in the enemy order of battle. The enemy is still very concerned in getting his troops out of the gap. It is evident that he will hold out as long as possible before withdrawing across the river. It is the same old policy of trying to gain as much time as possible for preparation of more adequate defenses in Germany proper and to occupy the SIEGFRIED Line."

4 Dec.

"G-2 Report:

"First Canadian Army: It becomes more and more obvious that the enemy opposite this front is gradually withdrawing. Three of the divisions previously located in this area have already been identified on other sectors and possibly three more are moving out. The 15 German Army Headquarters has once again been reported in the area west of COLOGNE. It appears then that at least Western Holland is being evacuated, the enemy leaving behind only small task-forces for blowing objectives and troops for delaying action.

...

"Second British Army: No new changes to report in enemy dispositions. With the commitment of already three of the enemy's parachute divisions, his reserve, in this area, seems to be decreasing.

"Ninth and First Armies: The enemy continues to maintain his strong defensive policy. This is very costly to him. ...

"Third Army: XX Corps. Our crossings of the SAAR River has caused the enemy to move his units (particularly the 21 Pz Div) to meet our threat. ...

"6 Army Group: Pz LEHR has again been identified opposite our 44th Div. ...

"The 216 Inf Div is continuously being reported occupying the SIEGFRIED Line in the vicinity of KARLSRUHE. A number of tank movements are reported moving into this area indicating arrival of some more troops for the occupation of the defense in this sector."

5 Dec.

"G-2 Report;

"First Canadian Army: More movements in this area have been reported. ...

...

"Ninth and First Armies: The counterattacks have ended up for the last period, but the enemy's strong defensive policy continues. His lack of infantry is apparent ... There is no apparent move of infantry into this area, but the confirmation of the move of two or probably more enemy divisions from the COLOGNE area towards Germany, might indicate some reinforcements coming into this area eventually.

"The 15 German Army seems now to be definitely in the area west of KERN. Although it is not confirmed as yet, the possibility, that this army is to assume the sector at the present occupied by the 5 Pz Army, might be true. The latter has been reported moving to the COLOGNE area. For this change in command going to affect the 12 and 12 Gren Divs particularly in the Ninth Army sector

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remains to be seen.

"The 352 Div has now been definitely identified in the VIII Corps sector.

"Third Army: The lack of reinforcement in this sector is very apparent. In the meantime, the enemy is forced to commit his very much depleted units.

"6 Army Group: ..."

6 Dec.

"G-2 Report:

"21 Army Group: There are no changes to report in this sector. A great number of movements reported southeast of ANHEIM might indicate some of the units withdrawn from the First Canadian Army sector are moving towards the ROER River or SAAR River areas. At the same time, movements from the KUNSTER area towards Holland indicate reinforcements coming in for the 1 Pz Army.

"Ninth and First Armies: The 246 Inf Div, that has again reappeared in the line, has been responsible for the counterattacks in the VII Corps sector. This division has been out of the line for a short period. This, together with the loss of 47 Inf Div and Pz LEHR, might be an indication of a change in the enemy's policy as far as sending in reinforcements. It appears that he would rather send back depleted divisions, after they have received some replacements, than send in new divisions without sufficient training.

...

"Third Army: ..."

..."

7 Dec.

"G-2 Report:

"First Canadian Army: The 5 Pz Div has been reported moving from the LEIDEN-BAARLEN area towards Germany. German military sources indicated that this unit is going towards the AACHEN sector. At the same time, numerous movements in this sector to the east are believed to be local moves for occupation of sectors recently vacated by the divisions that have departed for other areas along the front.

"Second British Army: There are no changes to report in the enemy disposition. A great number of train movements are reported heading towards Holland indicating reinforcements coming in for the 1 Pz Army.

"Ninth and First Armies: The train and road activity is also very great in a direction towards COLOGNE indicating reinforcements coming in for the 6 Pz Army. At the present, the Pz Divs of this strategic reserve are believed to have between 80 to 100 tanks. This is a considerable increase since a few weeks ago, but at the same time only about 40 to 50% of their original T/O. The 10 SS Pz Div has been reported moving across the ROER River to the east. At the same time, the enemy is reported digging in and entrenching himself on the east banks of the river. Further south, the 3 Pz Div has been reported moving across the ROER River to the east. At the same time, the enemy is reported digging in and entrenching himself on the east banks of the river. Further south, the 3 Pz Div has also been reported moving across the ROER River to the east.

At the same time, the enemy is reported digging in and entrenching himself on the east banks of the river. Further south, the 3 Pz Div has also been reported moving across the ROER River to the east.

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#30. 24 Gp. Documentation.

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withdrawn to the east and the 246 Inf Div has counterattacked on several occasions. PWs from this division have stated that they are to fight a rear-guard action while the rest of the units are withdrawing. Although this statement is not indicative that the enemy is completely withdrawing from this sector opposite the VII Corps, it might be an indication of his future plans. In the VIII Corps sector there is still very little activity in the front lines. In the rear areas the enemy continues his movements. For the last few weeks his policy was to employ his newly arriving units in this area letting the more experienced units to move to more critical sectors. This large activity might indicate some more units arriving on the western front. This might also be a confirmation to a PW statement that the 12 Inf Div is to move to the south.

...

8 Dec.

"G-2 Report:

"Gen. VON RUNDSTEDT is running all German operations on the Western front. He has fought a more intelligent war since the loss of France. The depleted German Army has been built up considerably. RUNDSTEDT controls three Army Groups: Army Group North- 15 Army and 1 Para Army, Army Group B with 5 Pz Army and 7 Army and Army Group G with 1 and 19 Armies. In reserve is the 6 Pz Army under direct control of RUNDSTEDT. The infantry and Volksgrenadier Divs have all been committed in the line, the tactical reserve of Pz and PG Divs likewise and the 6 Pz Army and Para Divs remain in reserve.

"The following factors have aided the enemy considerably:

1. Bad weather has hampered our operations.
2. Decisive objective forced us to pick the most difficult terrain.
3. Fanatical resistance, assisted by the Gestapo.
4. Good Intelligence.

"Enemy losses since the start of the present campaign on 8 Nov have been large. 80,000 PW have been taken and casualties are estimated at 160,000 to 175,000.

"Enemy capabilities:

1. He can reinforce West Wall between TRIER and KARLSRUHE with more infantry and armor from the interior and other fronts.
2. He can reinforce the battle area east of AACHEN with infantry divisions from Germany or by committing Pz Divs of 6 Pz Army.
3. The employment of 6 Pz Army in the AACHEN sector.

"VON RUNDSTEDT is unlikely to risk this precious guard over the RHINE now amounting to 5 Pz Divs, until the Allied advance east of the ROER and cannot be stopped by such tactical reserve as are ~~available~~ available, or until the Allies offer the enemy opportunity to take us off balance so that an abrupt counterstroke could nullify any future Allied prospects for the winter.

"Enemy capabilities which must not be overlooked are as follows:

1. Continued employment of PAC and rockets against Allied lines, centers of communications and tactically against Allied troop concentration.

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#31. 2 A Gr. Documentation.

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2. The infiltration or dropping by parachute, saboteurs, agents, etc. to operate against us.

3. The expanded activity of the GAF, the ability to employ increased fighter support for ground operations, particularly jet-propelled craft."

9 Dec.

"G-2 Report:

"There is very little activity to report in the northern sector of the front. The main puzzle at the present still remains the actual role of the 15 German Army and its present location. It is almost sure, that it has moved out from the sector opposite the First Canadian Army. Four of its divisions have already been identified on other sectors and four more are definitely moving out. PWs insist that the new location of this army is in the area west of COLOGNE, with the mission of attacking towards AACHEN. They have also stated that this headquarters has taken over the sector previously occupied by the 5 Pz Army. The latter moving towards the KOBLENZ area where it is to reassemble, to become another moving panzer reserve like the Germans had during the NORMANDY Campaign in the form of the XXX KSBACH Panzer Gruppe. The only indication to this latter report is the movement of armor in the KOBLENZ area. The 2 and 116 Pz Divs are still unidentified. The 3 PG Div has moved across the ROER River to the east. The 10 SS PZ Div has been reported moving out and the Pz LEHR Div has been reported regrouping in the vicinity of KOBLENZ (it has not been identified in the south since the 4 Dec).

"5 Pz is in great need of reinforcements and this need might be an answer to the armor reported moving into the VIII Corps. If these reports are true the question arises as to the employment of the already Procht Army and the 6 Pz Army. The latter is definitely west of COLOGNE and getting ready to stop our efforts of crossing the ROER River towards the RHINE.

..."

10 Dec.

"G-2 Report:

XXX ...

"Second British Army: No new changes to report in enemy order of battle. Air reconnaissance has revealed large numbers of reinforcements coming in from the northeast, indicating that the enemy is preparing himself in this sector. It is also reported that the enemy reserve is receiving reinforcements.

"Ninth and First Armies: ... Continuous reports of movement into the VIII Corps and out are being made. This is probably a focal center for enemy troops going either to the north or south.

..."

11 Dec.

"G-2 Report:

...

"First Army: The last period can be characterized as that of more knowledge gained of 6 Pz Army. Reports indicate the 1 SS Pz Div has moved into the VII Corps sector, while 2 SS Pz Div is reported moving into the V Corps. A regiment of 2 Pz Div has been identified 322

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#12. 12 5 Documentation.

in the VII Corps. It is a possibility that the enemy was only able to form one regiment out of the entire division.

12 Dec.

*G-2 Report:

...
 *Ninth Army: Very little activity on the enemy side reported. The 10 SS Pz Div is now believed to be entirely on the east bank of the ROER River. Unconfirmed reports indicate that elements of this division are assembling in the vicinity of COLOGNE. This, with the reports that the 3 PG Div is also reorganizing in the vicinity of COLOGNE, might be another confirmation that the 5 Pz Army is out of the line and is assembling somewhere between COLOGNE and KOBLENZ.

*First Army: The bulk of the enemy units opposite the VII Corps are now believed to be east of the ROER River. ... In the V Corps, the enemy is still very much concerned about our disposition in the vicinity of BIERSTEIN and that is where the enemy is concentrating the majority of his units. ... In the VIII Corps, there are no definite changes to report, but it becomes more and more clear that more than one formation has arrived into this sector and so we can expect two or at least one of the divisions from this area to appear in some other sector very shortly.

...
 6 Army Group: There is no change to report in the HARDT Ebn sector. The enemy is very reluctant to yield ground in this area, but was not able to stop our advances. He is in great need of reinforcements, but his sector does not seem to be of high priority at the present. ...

13 Dec.

*G-2 Report:

...
 *Second British Army: No new changes to report in enemy disposition or order of battle. The 85 Inf Div has been reported moving in the area south of VENLO. It is not determined yet if it is going to remain in this area, opposite the XXX British Corps, or continue farther to the south.

*Ninth and First Armies: Increasingly unfavorable weather conditions have kept enemy activity at a minimum along the ROER River, particularly in the Ninth Army sector. ... A great number of train movements have been reported in the LOHN area, indicating a divisional arrival. Meanwhile the 6 Pz Army seems to be working very extensively on fortifications between the ROER and the RHINE Rivers.

14 Dec.

*G-2 Report:

...
 *Ninth and First Army: Patrols across the ROER River have encountered only infantry troops to date. The 3/ reappeared in the line and it becomes more and more obvious that the enemy's divisions, part of the 5 Pz Army, are moving out of

the ROER River
 Inf Div has again
 vious that
 ag out of

#33. 2 A Gp Documentation.

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the line. This leaves the 6 SS Pz Army the only armor immediately available to the enemy.

"In the VII Corps, the enemy's opposition is strong, particularly in the small town, but the bulk of the enemy units are on the east bank of the river. In V Corps, our attack has met with comparatively little opposition. No new identifications have been made. 272 and 277 Inf Divs have been so far identified.

"Third Army: The counterattack and heavy artillery concentrations continue in the XX Corps. No new identifications have been made. The enemy does not seem to be able to withdraw units that need rest since he is continuously in great need of troops in this sector. ...

...

15 Dec.

"G-2 Report:

"No major changes have been reported for the last period. Despite heavy losses in the battle for the SIEGFRIED LINE from TRIER to the south, the enemy has received very little reinforcements. The enemy is leaving the battered units to do most of the fighting. Opposite the Ninth and First Armies, the enemy continued to display his sensitivity towards any possible thrust ~~into~~ onto the COLOGNE Plain.

...

"Ninth and First Armies: Very little activity to report in the Ninth Army area. The enemy is obviously leaving the defense of this area to the present infantry formations. In the VII Corps, although some counterattacks have been reported, the enemy is gradually forced across the ROER River. The 3 PG Div has been reported by PW to be moving towards COLOGNE where it is to reorganize. There is also an unconfirmed report that the 353 Inf Div is to withdraw. No new identifications have been made in the V Corps. The main obstacle in this area so far are the 272 and 277 Inf Divs. The 89 Inf Div is in a very depleted stage. From previous enemy reactions, we know that he is very sensitive to this area that controls the ROER River dams. It is very likely that one of his armored units will appear in this area. No change in the VIII Corps.

...

"Seventh Army: The movement south of elements of the 21 Pz Div could not help the enemy's broken down resistance in this area. It now remains to be seen to what extent he has managed to occupy the SIEGFRIED LINE. It is obvious that he needs reinforcements in this sector, since the remaining units are in a very depleted stage.

..."

16 Dec. CG'S BRIEFING 0915 Hours, 16 Dec 44.

"G-2 Report:

"21 Army Group: No changes to report along the entire front.

"Ninth Army: Very quiet along the entire front. Some of our patrols that managed to cross the ROER River have found enemy outposts and pillboxes well manned and alert.

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#34.12 A G Documentation.

"First Army: Some more counterattacks have been reported in the VII Corps, but the enemy is almost entirely pushed out of the west bank of the river. Elements of the 12, 47, and 353 Inf Divs have been identified. In the V Corps, the going is very tough not only due to heavy resistance and counterattacks, but also because of the heavily defined positions in the SIEGFRIED LINE. The 326 Inf Div has moved up from the VIII Corps and units of this division have been identified in the KESTERNICH area. The move north of this division might be the answer to the numerous vehicular movements in the northern VIII Corps sector.

"Third Army:...No new identifications have been reported along the entire sector.

"6 Army Group: The enemy seems to be completely demoralized in the Seventh Army sector. Our troops have broken through all parts of the MAGINOT LINE and have now entered Germany. ...

"G-3 Report:

"Today is D plus 193.

"British: "1 Army Group. No change.

"American: Ninth Army. No change.

"First Army. VII Corps. 104th Div no change. 9 Div no change. 83rd Div captured BERZBUR F1041 and repulsed counterattack on left flank. 5th Armd Div advanced 3 Km east with advance elements to the ROER River at F1239. 1st Div no change. 3rd Armd Div no change. V Corps. Attack continued against still resistance, with no appreciable changes in front line. VIII Corps. No change.

..."

17 Dec

"G-2 Report:

"21 Army Group: No changes to report.

"Ninth Army: Several counterattacks have been reported in the XIII Corps area. These counterattacks have been made by elements of 183 and 340 Inf Divs.

"First Army: Along the entire army front, the enemy went from the defensive policy to offensive activity. This change began with a heavy artillery concentration particularly in the VII and V Corps sectors. The great number of counterattacks concentrated primarily in the southern end of V Corps and northern part of VIII Corps. These attacks ranged in size from company to regimental strength. Seven new divisional identifications have been made during the period, although only two divisions are new arrivals in the West. The enemy order of battle in the V and VIII Corps runs from north to south approximately as follows: 272 Inf Div, elements 89 Inv Div, 326 Inf Div, 277 Inf Div, elements 12 SS Pz Div, elements 12 Inf Div, 18 Inf Div, 62 Inf Div, 26 Inf Div, 116 Pz Div, 2 Pz Div, elements 5 Preht Div, 560 Inf Div, 352 Inf Div, 276 Inf Div and 212 Inf Div.

"Third Army: Enemy resistance continued to be very stiff along the entire front.

"6 Army Group: No changes to report."

#35. 12 A Gp. Documentation.

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VI. Report of Operations. Final After/Action Report.

A. G-2 Section.

(Source: 12 A Gp. Report of Operations. Final after/Action Report. Vol. III. G-2 Section. Parts I-IV. In Historical Records Section, and Archives of Historical Division, SSUSA.)

ix Chapter VII. The Ardennes Offensive. p. 25.

"On 16 December the Germans launched their biggest offensive since the beginning of the campaign in Western Europe. By taking full advantage of adverse weather conditions which restricted Allied reconnaissance, and by rigidly applying radio silence, the enemy had skillfully regrouped his forces. Simultaneous attacks were launched at five places along a seventy-mile sector of the Western Front. The skill in regrouping and launching the simultaneous attacks achieved a high degree of surprise. The element of surprise was heightened by the enemy's disregard of terrain in selecting the points of attack, and he threw armored forces into sectors considered ill-adapted for the use of tanks. The Germans' intelligence concerning our dispositions was, as usual, excellent. The attack was directed at a part of the line held in the north by two divisions seeing their first action --- the 99th and 106th Infantry Divisions - and in the south against two divisions which had recently seen much action in the Huertgen Forest and were in a quiet sector of the line for rest and rehabilitation -- the 28 and 4 Infantry Divisions. Ninth US Armored Division was backing up the line, but like the first two mentioned divisions, had yet to see action.

"To maintain surprise as long as possible, the German attacks in many areas were initially light and had the appearance of reconnaissance in force. It was not until the night 16-17 December that the Germans showed their hand completely and utilized airborne forces, making the greatest air effort since Normandy. The enemy had thrown all of his available reserves into the battle. Supplies had been accumulated over a period of time. The transport of gasoline was given highest priority on roads in enemy hands to assure that the striking Panzer forces had abundant supplies. There was no question, however, but that the enemy counted heavily on the surprise of his offensive resulting in the capture of our supplies to sustain his attacking forces. ..."

VII. Letter of Instruction.

(Source: Historical Records Section. SHAEF-Twelfth Army Group File, A 46-172. 300. Letters of Instructions)

#1. 29 July 44. Subject: Operations to Expand to Initial Lodgement Area.

Annex #2. Intelligence Estimate of the Enemy Situation.

#1. Summary of Strategic Situation.

- Following a discussion of pre-D-Day enemy strategy, the Normandy fighting, and conditions in Germany, the following views were advanced:

"Dangerously weak economically, the morale of its people at a record low, increasingly defenseless to air attack, its political leadership threatened, forced to fight intensively on three fronts, any one of which might prove decisive, and confronted with

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with the threat of other major attacks, the enemy must find a strategy which will at least avert immediate defeat. Under these circumstances, the logical strategy would appear to be one of gradually shortening lines, of economizing forces as far as consistent with inflicting the maximum cost to the Allies for each important gain and causing the greatest possible delay. The enemy might hope by this strategy, aided possibly by effective development of new weapons such as pilotless aircraft, long-range rockets and jet-propelled aircraft, to hold on until the force of the Allied offensives has been spent or weakened by war weariness and disunion.

"Applying this general strategy to the NORMANDY front, the enemy must regroup his forces retreating before the American advance, bring in reinforcements to delay this advance and prevent an immediate break-out from the COTENTIN Peninsula.

"The enemy strategic situation thus appears to require stubborn defense of essential territory while at the same time insuring that the strongest units are preserved for ultimate defense of the REICH on the battle line gradually moving across FRANCE from the sea to the mountainous country in the East. ...

..."

#7. 5 Sep 44.

"1. The Ninth Army, effective at 1200 hours, 5 September 1944, ~~XXXXXX~~ assumes command of the VII Corps, as now constituted, with the mission of reducing the BRITANNY Peninsula and protecting the south flank of the Twelfth Army Group along the LOIRE River from its mouth to ORLEANS exclusive. Ninth Army will prepare for further action to the east on the right(south) flank of the Third Army.

"2. ...
..."

#8. 10 Sep 44.

"Note: This Letter of Instructions confirms verbal orders of the Army Group Commander already issued but does not supplement them.

"1. a. See Current Intelligence Summary.

b. 21 Army Group continues advance to the East to isolate and occupy the RUHR. The capture of the Channel ports, the rocket bomb sites and the destruction of the enemy trapped along the coast will be completed.

"2. a. Twelfth Army Group advances to the East to secure bridgeheads over the RHINE River from NARNHEIM to KOLN both inclusive.

"3. a. First Army.

(1) Continue the advance to the East, to secure crossings over the RHINE River in the vicinity of KOBLENZ, BONN and KOLN.

(2) Maintain contact with 21 Army Group and protect the left(north) flank.

#27. 12. 35 Presentation.

b. Third Army.

(1) Continue the advance to the East in zone and secure crossings of the RHINE River in the vicinity of FANKHEIM and MAIN. If sufficient forces become available to Third Army, it will also seize a bridgehead in the vicinity of KARSRUHE.

(2) Protect the south flank East of ORLEANS inclusive. See Ninth Army. Reduce the BELTANY Foul area and protect the south flank along the LOIRE River from its mouth to ORLEANS exclusive.

#9. 23 Sep 44.

*1. a. The strong defensive positions held by the enemy along the SIEGFRIED line in the north facing the First U.S. Army and along the MOSELLE River in the south facing the Third U.S. Army have given him an opportunity to regroup and strengthen his forces defending the approaches to GERMANY. New divisions have been arriving from training areas in GERMANY and DENMARK and from the RUSSIAN Front. The latest arrivals have been employed in the area east of AACHEN where the First U.S. Army is driving toward KOEN. See current intelligence Summary.

b. (1) For the immediate future the Allied Expeditionary Force will make its main effort on the left. The Twenty-One Army Group has been directed that the clearing and opening of the port of ANTWERP is of first importance. At the same time it will continue its present drive to the northeast with the object of enveloping the RUHR Valley on the north.

(2) Sixth Army Group continues to attack northeastward to seize the RHINE crossings between SPEIER and MULHOUSE, inclusive.

*2. a. Since the support of the attack of Twenty-One Army Group is the primary consideration, the Twelfth Army Group will:

(1) Clear the area between its left(north) boundary and the MEUSE River and protect the right flank of Twenty-One Army Group as far north as MAASTRICHT.

(2) After mission (1) is assured and when sufficient forces become available push the attack on KOEN.

(3) Assume the defensive except as indicated in (1) and (2) above.

...

#10. 21 Oct 44.

*1. a. See current intelligence summary.

b. 21 Army Group has the immediate task of clearing the enemy from the west of the MEUSE in the VENO area and from the approaches to ANTWERP. When these missions have been accomplished they plan an attack southward between the RHINE and MEUSE Rivers. Sixth Army Group continues its attack on our south flank to seize the BELFORT gap and secure crossings of the MEUSE in the vicinity of STRASBURG.

*2. a. Twelfth Army Group will regroup and prepare for an advance by all three armies to the RHINE River. Target date First and Ninth.

Armed, 5 November. However, attack will not be made more than two days prior to attack of Second British Army. Target date, Third Army 10 November.

Amendments to Letter of Instruction #10, 21 October. During the following month six(6) amendments were issued: #1, 29 Oct.; #2, 30 Oct.; #3, 4 Nov.; #4, 12 Nov.; #5, 21 Nov.; #6, 27 Nov.

Of these six amendments, only #3, 4 November, restated and pertained to the Army Group's objectives, as follows:

"1. In compliance with SHYAP Directive, dated 2 November 1944, Letter of Instructions Number Ten, Headquarters Twelfth Army Group, is amended as indicated below.

"2. Delete Paragraphs 1b, 2a and 3a(2). Substitute:

"1. b (1) The 21 Army Group first priority mission is to open the port of ANTWERP. When operations to open ANTWERP have been completed, they will attack the enemy west of the MEUSE and advance to the RHINE in conjunction with the attack of Twelfth Army Group and protect the Twelfth Army Group north flank. The target date of this attack will be 10 November.

(2) Sixth Army Group will continue the offensive in conjunction with Third Army attack with the objective of capturing LUXEMBURG and protecting the south flank of Twelfth Army Group.

"2. a. Twelfth Army Group will re-group and prepare for an advance by all three (3) Armies to the RHINE River. Target date First and Ninth Armies, 10 November. Target date Third Army, 5 November.

"3. a. (3) After the attack of First Army has reached the RHINE, Ninth Army will attack northward between the RHINE and the MEUSE Rivers in conjunction with Second British Army. It will then take over the area west of the RHINE to REES inclusive. A New Inter-group boundary will be announced later."

#11. 25 Dec.

This Letter of Instruction was issued after the launching of the 16 December Counteroffensive.

VIII. Air Operations & Observations of Enemy Movements.

The Target Intelligence G-2(Air), issued a daily reports titled AIR OPERATIONS AND OBSERVATIONS OF ENEMY MOVEMENTS, consisting generally of the following sections: I. Air Operations (by commands, e.g., VIII AF) II. Enemy Movements. III. Schedule of Operations for the next day. IV. GAF Activity.

Of these four sections, the II. Enemy Movements pertained to enemy buildup. It, however, lacked interpretative commentary, and was extremely detailed in analysis. The section for 15 December, for instance, demonstrated this detailed type:

"II. ENEMY MOVEMENTS

"If true, the heaviest rail concentration occurred at GREVENBROICH at 1130/1140 hours when F/B bombed and strafed 30 trains.

However, TAG II of 1105 hours stated the yard at BREVELDORF with 50 plus box cars. The rail lines surrounding this area were covered during this period and the possibility for this considerable increase during this short period is not very probable. P/B returned to GREVELDORF around 1300 hours and attacked train of 10 box cars with, engine and five cars East of the town.

"Rail line from GREVELDORF to ELSDORF revealed: West of ELSDORF, 75 mixed cars in LIP M/Y, 25 of these were oil; South of Elsdorf 80 plus cars equally made up of flats and wagons appeared loaded.

"In the Third Army area the Eastern yard at SAARBRUCKEN was 1/2 full including 3 trains, averaging 20-30 box cars - yard appeared servicable."

~~(SUNNY)~~

Lack of aerial reconnaissance due to weather: -- Of the period 1-15 December, no reconnaissance was flown on 7, 9, 14 December.

Report(daily) closed 1000% for the preceding period.

21

(Source: For the 12 September - December 1944 period.

Historical Records Section. ~~12th Army Group~~ EUGEN File, A48p182. Drawer 5871, Box 6. 12th Army Group Target Intelligence G-2 Air. Air Operations and Observations of Enemy Movements.)

IX. Brig. Gen. E.L. Sibert, G-2, Letter to Brig. E.T. Williams, 21 Army Group, 11 Dec 44.

HQ, 12 A Gp,
Off. of the Asst. Ch. of S, G-2
APO 655

11 Dec 1944

Brigadier E. T. Williams, CBE, DSO.
MGS(E), Main Headquarters,
21 Army Group.

Dear Bill:

Thank you for the paper on the uneasy situation as of 1 December and as of 1 March.

I agree with you as the unlikelihood of the front being stabilized for long unless on the line of the RHINE. We have great hopes of Patton going through the line in the SAARBRUCKEN area. We hope that this will draw off one or two divisions from the Sixth Pz Army. About the time that these divisions are safely engaged in the South, we hope to have the dam situation on the Moselle cleared up so that we may proceed to the RHINE in the neighborhood of COLOGNE.

As to German build-up on this front, I have no argument with your figures, particularly when I note that you say there is no way

of setting what percentage will come West and what percentage will go East. The defeat here, however, that there are many recent and agreeable signs of Nazi deterioration on our front. We thank that we are inflicting casualties on him at a 3-to-1 rate with respect to our casualties, that his morale is low, that his units are very much under-strength, poorly equipped, poorly supplied and under-fed. We also think that his manpower is of increasingly poor quality and that given time and fair weather we can make progress against him anywhere.

I think one of the most significant things in the immediate future is the almost certainty of record floods on the RHINE. While this is a two-edged weapon, I think that we may find valuable use for this river in inundating strategically and industrially important areas.

Sincerely yours,

EDWIN L. SIBERT,
Brigadier General, GSC,
A. C. of S., G-2.

Distribution: 2 copies.

(Source: Historical Records Section, Files of 12th Army Group.
Top Secret. Drawer 5737. 371.3 Military Objectives. Vol.
III. Item #137.)

A B.--- A copy of Williams paper as referred to in paragraph one has not been located.

X. Answers to Questions by Brig. Gen. A. F.
Kibler, G-3, 23 Aug. 45.

(Source: ETO files, ML-1066.)

The Historical Section, USIST(Rear), submitted questions on 19 July 45 to Brig. Gen. Lewis, D C/S, and they were answered on 23 Aug 45 by Brig. Gen. A. Frank in Kibler, G-3, in a four-page paper. The following extracts dealt with the German Counteroffensive, in respect to the pre-Counteroffensive period, rather than the operational one. Questions pertained to Operation COBRA, the Advance to the SIEGFIED Line, the ARDENNES.

1. Q. Did 12th Army Group consider the enemy capable of an all-out offensive during December 1944? If it did not so consider, what were the principle factors producing obscuration of the enemy situation?

A. The capability of a German offensive or 'spoiling attack' had been discussed at this time and was considered a possibility. It was not believed, however, that the enemy would risk an offensive of such size and scope as actually took place. Obscuration of enemy situation was principally due to bad weather prohibiting full effectiveness of air reconnaissance.

#41 12 A Gpr Documentation.

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2. "Q. If 12th Army Group did anticipate German offensive action, where was it expected to take place? What plans, if any, were made to meet this threat?

"A. It was known during early December that there were some 21 enemy divisions, 9 of which were Panzer and Panzer-grenadier type, massed west of the Rhine between BONN and DUSSELDORF. It was believed that these divisions had been concentrated opposite our major penetration of the Siegfried Line for the purpose of crushing any attempt to cross the ROER River and advance to the RHINE. A plan had been proposed on 30 November to launch converging attacks to entrap and destroy this concentration west of the RHINE. The major effort of 12th Army Group was to be directed on the axis PRUM-EUSKIRCHEN coordinated with a southward drive by 21 Army Group between the RHINE and MEUSE Rivers. This plan, however, was rejected because of the difficulty of terrain in the Eifel and because the British were not yet ready to launch a major attack.

~~It was~~

"The possibility of an enemy spoiling attack in the ARDENNES area was recognized but it was the opinion that even if they broke through there they wouldn't have anything. With major attacks going on to the north and south the calculated risk of leaving the ARDENNES sector lightly held was accepted."

3. "Q. Was it estimated that orders to hold in place could be successfully carried out by VIII Corps in the event of a large-scale German attack? Had plans been made to reinforce the VII Corps sector should an enemy attack in strength occur? (((Miss Typographical error)))

"A. Against an attack of the size anticipated it was believed that VIII Corps, with 9th Armored Division in reserve, was capable of holding. If the enemy attack turned out to be greater than VIII Corps could cope with, reserves of First and Third Armies were available on either flank for rapid reinforcement."

4. "Q. At what time after its start was the German attack recognized by 12th Army Group as 'all-out' in scope?

"A. It is believed that on the night of 16-17 December when the enemy air and airborne efforts were made and elements of the Sixth Panzer Army were identified, the fact that Germany was committing all her available reserves of men, materiel and supplies was recognized."

5. --- The plan referred to in the answer of #2 was the following: This was one of the occasional ~~operational~~ operational plans and ~~studies~~ studies made by the G-3 Section. This one was, Estimate of Situation Major Effort in Kall Plain, 30 Nov 44. Includes map. Filed in Historical Records Section, ETO ML (Miscellaneous Log) ML-206. Four pages. Written by Col. R.H.D. Heister.

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XI. Activation of 12th Army Group.

Since January 1942 when the V Corps initial increment of forces arrived in the British Isles, this command was the senior one for American forces in the European Theater. Operation OVERLORD's plan provided that only one American army would participate in the invasion of Northern France, but other American forces would be added after the first phase of the invasion, to be placed under a single American commander and headquarters, who would conduct field operations under the direct command of the Supreme Allied Commander. Such a headquarters was activated on 19 October 1944, designated as the First US Army Group (FUSAG), in LONDON, England, and commanded by Lt. Gen. Omar N. Bradley. He was also assigned to command the First US Army---the American invasion army, which was activated the next day in BRISTOL, England.

Approximately one month after the 6 June 1944 D-Day, on 14 July, Headquarters Twelfth Army Group was activated, to be commanded by General Bradley, and most of the FUSAG personnel was transferred to the new headquarters. FUSAG continued until 18 October 1944, when it was deactivated. Effective 1 August 1944, the First and Third US Armies were assigned to the 12th Army Group, and on that day General Bradley relinquished command of the First US Army, and assumed operational command of the 12th Army Group. Headquarters 12th Army Group was deactivated a year later, 1 August 1945, after VE-DAY.

(Source: 12th Army Group REPORT OF OPERATIONS, FINAL AFTER/ACTION REPORT. Vol. I. Summary. Introduction. In files of Historical Records Section and Historical Division, AFSA.)

The First US Army Group was activated in ^{after} ~~August~~ 1944, is the second American army group in the ETO. _{on August}

~~SECRET~~

DC/BGSI/75Main Headquarters,
21 Army Group.

8 Dec. 44.

Dear Eddie,

Attached is a paper I wrote on the present form and what it might be by 1 March supposing the front stabilised meanwhile. Since this is unlikely, in fact the paper was designed to argue that it would be inadvisable, the conclusions warrant revision in some details. Nevertheless, you may be glad to have it as a 'cookshy' to see the way we're thinking.

Yours Ever,

(sgd) Bill

E. T. Williams

Brig-Gen E. L. SIBERT, GSC.,
A. C. of S., G-2,
HQ, 12th U.S. ARMY GROUP.

Sources: 12th Army Group File 50-67, Counter and Contact Intelligence
(XII)

~~SECRET~~A. NOTE ON SITUATION AT 1 DECEMBER

1. The enemy has in general three types of divisions:-

- (a) 'expendable' infantry which has suffered very high wastage in recent operations at a rate of six divisions lost weekly in the West alone. In general, in the second half of 1944, he suffers a net loss of eight divisions a month, for he manufactures twelve divisions to lose some twenty on all fronts. This wastage has obviously been intensified in recent operations in the West. He has further resources in Scandinavia which are directed, at an average rate of one division a fortnight, to the Western front. He has now approximately fifty infantry divisions in the West.
- (b) tactical reserves of approximately 15 Pz, PG and Para divs. With some exceptions these have been sucked into battle almost in their entirety in recent operations. Some were even in the line already. The six para divs, however, are recently refitted and in the main in quiet sectors; three only are really committed. The state of refitting of para divs is evidently well behind schedule. The four Pz divs have all been hit hard. Of the five Pz divs, two seem to be partially extricated from immediate battle. The situation has not been sufficiently dangerous to enforce the commitment of -
- (c) strategic reserves (apparently to von Rundstedt's own hand) save in one instance: Pz Lehr Division which would seem now likely to have an easier time again. There remains five refitted Pz divs, all believed forward of Cologne - SS Pz, 1, 2, 9 and 12 SS Pz Divs. These comprise 6 Pz Army. These divisions should be, in general, well up to strength with good equipment, perhaps 30% experienced personnel, the rest young, and some 500 tanks between them in equal proportions IV, Panther and Tiger, i.e. approximately 150 plus tanks of each type. This may be an overestimate as the state of Pz Lehr Division is far worse than we anticipated.

2. The present operations have caused the enemy very substantial casualties, estimated to exceed 150,000. They are having a very wearing effect on his infantry; they are liable to suck in almost all his tactical reserves, many of which are now much reduced in strength. To be really effective, to yield vital results, they must involve his strategic reserves. Von Rundstedt is fighting a highly intelligent battle. He seems unlikely to risk this precious guard over the Rhine until either (i) we advance over the Moselle to present a threat not to be blunted by such tactical reserves as Model has available within his Army Groups; or (ii) until we offer him opportunity to take us off balance so that he may launch a counter-stroke which could have the object of putting paid to our winter campaigning. But there is now obvious he can go to seize vital objectives. The bruited attack towards Aachen is not within his potential. He can hope only to deliver a blow so to retard our preparations as to guarantee our failure to recommence before the spring. His capacity to do so is in doubt, and, indeed, his attempt might give us the very opportunity we have so far failed to create. He needs for his enterprise (i) bad weather, else our air supremacy will disrupt his tired and unbalanced (iii)

bad weather, as our air supremacy will disrupt his assembly; yet this very weather would beg his own intent (ii) to find us tired and unbalanced (iii) adequate fuel stocks for sustained operations and to retire in his own time should they fail (iv) more infantry of good quality. He would then be taking an immense risk though the moral prize would be great, for a fillip is highly necessary, and to disrupt our winter campaigning would be a gain worth many risks. Nevertheless, it seems more likely, if he is allowed to continue conducting his own operations without higher intervention, that he will attempt to smash our bridgeheads over the Roor - and hold his hand.

5. Our strategic air offensive is directed on enemy fuel and enemy communications. Both are yielding dividends, yet to show results readily comparable they depend on operations on land being continued at full pressure; to ensure that enemy fuel consumption (never lower than today) is intensified; and that rearward disorganisation is linked to forward losses. The attack on communications is less affected than the fuel situation by ground operations since the volume of military traffic to the Western front is but a drop in the ocean of German economy as a whole. High wastage of weapons and equipment in operations in the West would be, however, a contributive factor. To pause on the ground would not invalidate the strategic air offensive, but it would delay and diminish its dividends.

8. If operations were allowed to stabilise between now and, say, 1 March the following is our estimate of the situation:

1. Military

The enemy would have the opportunity to refit his reserves and, in such an event, he may be expected to have, with the 5 Panzer Army he has refitted already, a total of 10 Panzer divisions fairly well up to strength with perhaps 1000 tanks, preponderantly Panthers and Tigers (including perhaps 250 Tigers II); 4 PG divisions and 6 Para divisions. In addition we may expect, on current form, the creation of another 30-40 Volksgrenadier divisions, at least half - probably more - of which may be expected to be directed to the Western front. 3 good and 2 inferior divisions should arrive from Scandinavia and 4 from Italy. The overall increase, then, is likely to be in the neighbourhood of an equivalent 4 Panzer, 2 Panzergradiers, 5 Mountain and 30 Infantry divisions. This may prove the last gasp of German divisional manufacture but on present evidence it can be done. It is not anticipated that a successful Russian offensive would affect this estimate by more than 10 divisions. We should be prepared for a total of 90-100 divisions on the Western front by early March if operations stabilise meanwhile. The majority, as many as 70%, would have a strength of 10,500 all ranks including services, and even by ME will be very ill-equipped with 57. This disadvantage would be offset in the first place by the time given to build more formidable defences and for more rigorous mining. As well as the improvement in his front line strength and in particular of its standard of training, a delay until March would also enable him to sort out his Volksturm organisation, a Home Guard still at the moment in its LDV stage of development.

Enemy fighter production is going up and the production of jet aircraft during the winter should materially alter the comparative strengths by the Spring.

A higher rate of production of V.2 and an improved technique must be expected; nor may we preclude the development of newer and more formidable retaliatory weapons.

2. Economic Situation

German production will continue to fall during the winter. The loss of the main iron ore supplies and the difficulty of transporting iron ore to the Ruhr has caused a sharp cut in steel output. Furthermore, lack of manganese and vanadium is affecting the quality of such steel as is produced.

The transport situation is deteriorating rapidly. The wear and tear of five years of war is now exacerbated by the heavy Allied attacks on the rail-cum system. The concomitant attacks on important waterways and on MT fuel places a greater strain on the railways with the net result that finished articles, components and raw materials are not moving in sufficient quantity. It is not anticipated, despite current worry, that the strain is likely to reduce a general strike of railwaymen before March if operations have been stabilised in the interim.

It is anticipated that the strategic attack on enemy oil will keep production to a level of 45% of the pre-war figure. His oil reserves are virtually exhausted but decreased consumption due to a stabilised front in the West would give him a cushion perhaps sufficient for one series of sustained operations at full pressure.

Industry is being affected by total mobilisation by the withdrawal of all men capable of bearing arms either for the Army or for para-military duties such as building fortifications. The main effect so far is to replace skilled labour by workers with insufficient training to maintain present output.

Recent air attacks on the German armament industry have affected production of tanks and MT and the pipeline in tank output has been so reduced that tanks are being sent direct from assembly plants to units. This is due in the main to reduced tank production, but it is also affected by the shortage of oil for testing. Tank production may be expected to be in the neighbourhood of 500 monthly (200 + Mk IVs, 300 + Panthers, 50 + figure 11). MT production is seriously affected by the loss of the manufacturing facilities of the West. The net result is that current output is not likely to exceed 7000 monthly. A short term cushion is provided by the number of civilian vehicles immobilised by fuel restrictions. The transport situation - rail, road and water - is likely to show increasing delays in traffic and a reduction in the movement of essential goods. This will cause manufacturing capacity, itself shrinking, to be less efficiently employed, with a consequent falling off in the production of armaments.

There is no reason to suppose that the economic machine will break down during the winter, but the supplies reaching the Army are likely to be increasingly below the quantities required to equip it to full strength. The speed of deterioration can, of course, be measured only by the rate of waste imposed. Two months' pause would reduce this growing gap between production and demand.