

HEADQUARTERS, 19TH DIVISION ARTILLERY, 1944

WFO 30, U.S. ARMY
13 October 1944

SUBJECT: Documentation of Siegfried Line.

TO : Commanding General, 19th Division Artillery WFO #30, U.S. ARMY

1. Many of the details of our experiences in breaching the Siegfried Line have been given to us by our infantry. Since they actually underwent the experiences, it is felt that a truer picture will be obtained direct from them, rather than having us give a report of their experiences. All of the following information was reported to us by artillery Liaison Officers, Forward Observers, and rear area artillery personnel.

2. For segment of the line encountered see Annex "A" overlay for 1/25,000 map.

3. Plan of segment of the line encountered:--The line was constructed to take full advantage of the river and marshy ground. These natural obstacles canalized the avenues of approach, and offensive positions had been established to cover these approach routes. The general plan of defense was first, the river fordable in a few places, secondly, a high wooded ridge overlooking the river and approaches from the west; thirdly, well placed pillboxes along this ridge supplemented by dug in positions both with and without overhead cover. Lastly anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines which were laid to further canalize avenues of approach. In depth behind the wooded ridge were additional mine fields, anti-tank ditches, and pillboxes designed to resemble haystacks and farm houses. These were very well camouflaged due to aging of camouflaged positions over a long period of time.

The wire encountered by our Forward Observers proved to be no obstacle to the troops with whom they were working. The only wire encountered was single strand, much of it had been cut by mortar and artillery fire. Fields of fire had been prepared in some cases by cutting of vegetation and trees. This was true in the case of the fortifications found on the high wooded ridge. Behind the ridge, the woods gave way to open, rolling terrain and fields of fire were no problem for the enemy.

4. Detailed plan of different types of defense and obstacles:--This information cannot be given accurately by us, since the appearance of these positions had been greatly altered by our engineers and infantry by the time we were close enough to inspect them.

5. Statement of tactics:--Use of artillery by the enemy in defense of his positions; and use of our artillery in the assault:--At the opening of this operation the enemy artillery missions consisted of many harassing and interdiction fires in our area, with little effect. Also there were several fires in our area, which seemed to be attempts at counterbattery, however, these were characterized by an unusually small amount of ammunition for counterbattery fire. Medium and heavy caliber artillery were used for interdiction and harassing fires. As the operation progressed, the enemy changed his methods to shooting large concentrations with guns of mixed caliber. Areas would be fired on from several directions simultaneously; however, the fire was still

quite ineffective and continued so until our troops crossed the river. It is believed that by far the greatest percentage of the enemy's fire up to this time was unobserved. From the time of the river crossing on, the enemy placed the greatest part of his unobserved fire on the crossing points, and fired observed concentrations on the troops that were assaulting the pillboxes. The fires on the bridges were quite effective as harassing fires and caused quite a few casualties. Another effective use of the enemy artillery was obtained by waiting until our troops entered the woods and then firing concentrations along the edge of the tree line. This resulted in many tree bursts and the effect would have been devastating if the enemy data had been more accurate. However, many of his fires were wasted on areas which our troops did not enter. His method of using observed fires in the defense was very effective. At one time he would assault a pillbox, and eventually take it there was a tendency to crowd around them at first. The enemy took advantage of this by firing flares from boxes which he still held toward the one which had just been taken and within a minute or two surprise fire would be brought down on the box in our possession. This resulted in casualties for a while, until our men learned not to gather around these boxes. Another use of enemy artillery was displayed in their counterattacks. When our troops moved into their pillboxes, and the enemy counter-attacked, self-propelled guns and haul-down tanks were used to fire direct fire on the boxes. This fire did little damage to the box itself; however, it effectively neutralized the personnel on the inside. After driving the enemy from the wooded ridge and turning to the south, our infantry has again come under heavy concentrations of observed fire. They are once again using the scattered night harassing fire.

Our experience in the attack demonstrated that light artillery is almost worthless as far as destroying pillboxes even with concrete piercing fuses; however, in most cases it can be effectively used in cooperation with medium or heavy caliber artillery. We fired on suspected locations several times and knocked the camouflage material off exposing the pillbox for adjustment by heavy artillery. Another very effective system we used was to adjust on boxes and stay laid on them while the heavies or mediums fired on them. When the heavier artillery hit a box, the survivors (if any) often ran out of the box in an attempt to get away. We would then fire on them and the effect was usually very gratifying. We had difficulty in adjusting on the field fortifications which were around the pillboxes on the wooded ridge; because of the excellent camouflage and cover. However, when observers could pick these positions up, we could greatly facilitate the advance of our infantry by neutralizing these positions before the infantry attacked the pillboxes. We recommend that fuzes delay be used on these fortifications since as a rule they had very good overhead cover.

Special care should be given to the selection and preparation of defensive fires. We found that counterattacks were frequent and some of our defensive fires were used almost every night. The artillery has given full credit for stopping several counterattacks.

We shot in our defensive fires as often as possible because we were almost certain to use them, and because the counterattacks often occurred at a dark when there was no opportunity to adjust fire. This operation required more observers than normal, due to the fact that visibility was poor and zones of observation restricted by the wooded ridge line.

6. Statement of fighting quality of troops:-- This can best be obtained from the infantry. However, our observers reported that after a few hits on a pillbox there was a noticeable decline in the enemy's will to fight, and on several occasions they gave up without any resistance.

7. Miscellaneous remarks:-- Forward Observers who went into pillboxes were rendered impotent when the enemy counterattacked. They were pinned down by enemy direct fire and could obtain no observation to adjust fire on enemy guns.

Close cooperation with the engineers is necessary to facilitate the development of the situation after the initial breaching of the line. We were delayed in moving to new positions by an extremely large number of anti-tank and anti-personnel mines. As a result we suffered casualties in both men and vehicles. Artillery mine clearing crews are not capable of finding and removing wooden anti-personnel mines, especially when the situation calls for a rapid forward displacement.

For the Battalion Commander:

Harley M. Force, Jr.
HARLEY M. FORCE, JR.
Capt. F.A.
S-2

30th Inf Div.

BREACHING THE SIEGFRIED LINE

62-211 (4)

(Comments of Lt Col Otto Ellis, Executive Officer of the 30th Division Artillery, given to Captain Ferriss on 17 October 44)

The SP 155's did a creditable job in their efforts to knock out the pillboxes facing the 30th Division. Of course no artillery can destroy pillboxes, but the SP 155's ran the Jerries out of the pillboxes, at least temporarily.

Col Ellis believes that the enemy was fooled as to where the attack would be launched by (1) the fact that the division originally approached the Siegfried Line south of the target area; (2) artillery feints in front of the 120th Infantry on the south; and (3) the fact that the division's artillery was emplaced in the position of a ring around the 120th with a preponderance on the left.

The counter-battery program was not as effective as it should have been. He attributes this to a good deal of poor weather and to the shortage of artillery ammunition. In this connection Col Ellis emphasizes the tremendous amount of artillery necessary to actually silence the enemy's batteries. With an inexhaustible supply he believes that we have enough rifles to silence them in 10 hours. He points out that in the last war it was not unusual to throw out 4 million rounds in one night.

The 92d Chemical Battalion fired a moving barrage arranged so that it could be halted or moved according to directions of the FO. This barrage was more effective in the case of the 117th than the 119th. This may have been due to (1) the failure of the 119th to keep up with the barrage (it is a good deal more difficult for infantry to keep up with a mortar barrage than an artillery barrage); (2) or to "fallacies in the artillery plan." ("Fallacies" result from (1) errors in maps, (2) inability to make complete daylight reconnaissance.)

The artillery support in this operation was very effective against enemy counterattacks. Of course artillery can kill only when the enemy does get

out of its holes and counterattacks. That is its job.

Col Ellis feels there was nothing exceptional in the operation except the flexibility of communications and liaison. There was never any break in artillery communications during the operation.

(Additional comments of Major Parrish, S-1 of 30th Division Artillery)

The enemy has had more artillery during this operation than any previous operation. His firing has been almost continuous. Fortunately, although our infantry took a lot of it, most of what the enemy fired was wild. This was particularly true of the long range heavy stuff. The greatest difficulty of the enemy artillery is the lack of observation. Only occasionally does it have good ground OP's, e.g., slag piles. It is SOP for our artillery to knock out all likely enemy OP's, and these slag piles got a great deal of attention.

The enemy's inability to launch any sizable coordinated counterattack was due more than anything else to the work of our artillery and our control of the air.

The shortage of ammunition has meant that in all artillery planning, we have had to spread our concentrations very thin. Major Parrish believes that if we had had enough ammunition we could have blacked out the enemy's artillery.

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HISTORY

Thirtieth Infantry Division Artillery

1-31st July 1944

Between the 1st and 7th July 1944, the activity pattern of the 30th Div. Arty. closely resembled that of the preceeding month; however, an air of expectancy permeated the command as it was felt that the role of defending a river line was rapidly drawing to a close. At the C.P. in the vicinity of Lison, Normandy, France, final plans and preparations during this period were completed for the support of the first coordinated attack of the division, a river crossing operation. This operation was to play an important part in a coordinated 1st U.S. Army attack.

The general plan of attack was as follows: The 117th Inf. would force a crossing of the Vire et Taute River in the vicinity of Aires and together with the 119th Inf. attack westward using the Aires-St. Jean de Daye Highway as the axis of attack. The 120th Inf would, at a later hour, force a crossing of the Vire et Taute Canal in the vicinity of the crossing of Highway No. 2 north of St. Jean de Daye, using said highway as an axis of approach to St. Jean de Daye. The two forces to join south of said village in the vicinity of the latter.

As the infantry plan of attack took shape and materialized, likewise did the artillery plan of supporting fires. The latter involved the use of eight field artillery battalions and one chemical mortar battalion in addition to the organic artillery battalions of the Division Artillery, which are four in number. The bulk of the artillery was to support both crossings which were thousands of meters apart as shown by maps of the area. The plan was further complicated by the fact that both operations must be supported without moving a battalion; the Chemical Mortar Battalion must be employed to support an infantry attack (a most unusual role) and the attack must be supported by successive concentrations, both on time and on call in order to conserve ammunition.

In accord with the foregoing plan, at 07430B July 1944, the division lashed out with the first of its slashing two fist attacks, that of the westward drive of the 117th Inf., followed by the southward drive of the 120th Inf. Marching behind murderous artillery fire both bridgeheads were secured by sundown of the 7th July 1944, according to plan. According to reports from Army Headquarters, this was the greatest display of artillery fire to date displayed in operations on the Normandy Beach Head. Certainly its effectiveness could not be minimized in view of the casualties sustained by the division which were: KIA, 23; WIA, 262; MIA, 2. This river crossing operation, one of the most hazardous of military operations, was successfully accomplished against a fierce and fanatically determined enemy, who had had weeks in which to prepare his defenses against this very operation, who occupied high ground affording superior observation and fields of fire over thousands of meters of ground, much of which must of necessity be crossed, and who had orders to hold his ground at all cost.

Credit for the success of this operation is in large part due to the superior work of Col. Otto Ellis and Lt. Col. Frederick C. Shepard, Executive Officer and S-3 in the order respectively, who took great pains to consider the minutest detail and meticulously secure the same. This plan may very well be of historic significance in future artillery study. See "Annex 1, F.O. No. 3, 30th Infantry Division Artillery". Also, see: "Annex 2" and "Annex 3"; photographs of river-crossing sites.

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In succeeding days following the attack of the 7th July 1944, the division pushed steadily forward until a parabolic line was established extending from Goucherie to a point approximately 2500 meters south of St. Jean de Days thence to La Meauffe.

On the third day of the attack Headquarters and Headquarters Battery crossed the Vire et Taute River at Aires and established the C.P. in the vicinity of the latter village. This was a period of extensive enemy sniper activity. In reconnoitering for a C.P. Major Parrish and Lt. Flowers were pinned down by sniper rifle fire, "Burp" gun fire and artillery interdiction and harrasing fire in the order mentioned, extending an otherwise one hour reconnaissance into a four hour ordeal. When the main body moved from the old C.P. Captain Campbell who remained to close out wire communications was immediately taken under sniper fire and forced to seek cover. During this move Jerry chose to counter-attack in force right at the time when the command post was in route to the new area. The situation was first dealt with by Gen. McLain, Maj. Parrish, Capt. Campbell and Capt. Kunkel who remained at the old C.P. for a period. Upon the arrival of Col. Ellis and Lt. Col. Shepard at the new C.P. they took over and directed the highly effective fires of the Div. Arty. out of pocket, proverbially speaking, with a map board, two grease pencils and a telephone. Literally, a curtain of artillery fire was pulled down on Jerry and the celebrated Panzer Lehrs promptly retired; however, not before suffering severe punishment.

The 113th Cav. Regt., using the bridge head established by the 120th Inf., attempted to secure the right flank of the division and to clean out a pocket to the immediate right rear; however, it became or originally was a little too hot for them to handle. The Ninth Division, using the same beach head, cleaned out this pocket in time and pushed southward to eventually square out the front on a line east and west.

On the ____ July 1944, the division again executed a coordinated attack which ultimately took the division to the line Pont Hebert-Vents and westward to the Division boundary. The

The break-through attack of 25th July 1944, was the next major item on the agenda of the division. Plans for this operation were evolved and completed from the C.P. located approximately 600 meters north and 1000 meters east of Vents. This attack was to be preceded by a great air bombardment involving upwards of 3000 aircraft, followed by artillery; then the breakthrough by the infantry and finally the passing through of the armor. After many days awaiting favorable bombing weather, the 24th July was set for the show. The bombers took off and a considerable part of the artillery preparation was expended when the attack was called off because of poor visibility. Unfortunately, many of the bombs fell short and considerable casualties were caused.

On 25th July 1944, the division once more smashed into the enemy lines seeking the all important breakthrough. This day the bombers of the Ninth Air Force really tore into our troops in earnest. Casualties ran high and this attack literally tore the guts out of the very high fighting spirit, morale and will of our forces. The 92 Chemical Mortar Battalion is a example of the havoc wrought. This battalion sustained four consecutive attacks by our bombers which for all intents and purposes put them out of action for the day. Despite the foregoing, the air did discourage the enemy and no doubt did contribute materially to the success of the operation. By late evening the armor began to pass through our troops.

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Upon passing through this division, armored elements, including the 2nd Armored Division, broke into the open. Thus did this division break the crust of enemy resistance and unleash the havoc of armor upon the enemy which subsequently made such spectacular dashes, first to the coast and thence into France proper.

The division pressed on in succeeding days to capture first an intermediate object and then the final objective of the drive, Tessy sur Vire.

The month of July saw the final seasoning and shaking down of the division. The division, including all elements thereof worked smoothly and lived up to and exceeded the very high esteem in which it is held by higher authority. All objectives were taken in order, with all proper dispatch and the division was the pace setter for the divisions on the right and left flanks of the division, respectively.

The division was first up against a make-shift group, organized and pressed into the line until seasoned troops could be brought to bear. This group was largely made up of teenage boys, fanatical as they were unpredictable. The original river crossing was just in time to forestall an attack in force by seasoned forces of the enemy freshly brought into the line.

Beginning with the river crossing and continuing throughout the month the division experienced some of the fiercest fighting of the whole Normandy campaign to date. The division sustained sixteen counter-attacks in the first seven days of the crossing, two of which were in force, supported by numerous tanks ~~and were~~ seeking a breakthrough to the sea. Involved in these counter-attacks were several well known German Paratroop Regiments, elements of the 2nd SS Panzer Division, the Panzer Lehr Division, etc. In the first seven days of this attack the division lost 3,277 officers and men, fired 6,592 rounds of 155 mm Howitzer ammunition and 22,054 rounds of 105 mm Howitzer ammunition. See "Annex 4". All attacks were either stopped before our lines, or sealed off by artillery fire, localized and then liquidated by the infantry. None of these attacks forced the division to give ground although they came in considerable force, many of which came across the front of the Ninth Infantry Division and into the exposed right flank of the division.

On the first night of the occupation of the C.P., previously mentioned, in the vicinity of ~~Yanks~~ Le Manior (440628) the unit was subjected to a holocaustic saturation attack by enemy bombers. The first wave struck at approximately 280155Z July, bracketing the C.P. area and causing casualties in the division C.P. across the road. The second wave obtained obtained hits in the C.P. and Battery area, one of which hit the stable in which the aid station was located destroying valuable medical supplies and equipment. One bomb hit in the vicinity of the aid station killing Major Joseph Funk, Div. Arty. Surgeon, who was at the time answering a call for medical aid by the wounded of the first attack. In addition to Major Funk, a driver was killed, the first cook and two cook's helpers of the general's mess, the Intelligence Corporal and a guard were wounded and three Liaison Officers were evacuated as a result of this attack. In addition to the foregoing, practically all of the transportation of the Div. Arty. Headquarters was either damaged or destroyed; the officer's mess tent was torn to ribbons, the equipment destroyed; all of the personal baggage of the officers was burned completely when the officers' baggage trailer burned. The stable burned the remainder of the

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night affording a perfect beacon for returning enemy bombers. This stable was only ten paces from the building housing the C.P. and all of the officers. The remainder of the night was hectic for all concerned.

On 29-30th July the C.P. was again bombed. On 29th July the C.P. was moved to the vicinity of La Gonnivière (49605695) and housed in buildings again. On wave of bombers struck at 302130B July and another at 0510. No damage was done to the premises; however, needless to say neither wave caught the personnel sleeping as the first severe bombing had done. We found that we were finally a very profitable target for Le Boche. On the night of 30-31st July, the C.P. was again attack by enemy bombers, this time with more success. One stick of 186 pound bombs and assorted anti-personnel bombs landed squarely in the C.P. area. Two of the 100 pound bombs landed 20 feet from the front door of the house in which the C.P., quarters and installations were located. As the plans for the coordinated attack for the following morning were being completed these bombs burst in the windows, including all blackout, blew off a door and penetrated the building in a dozen places. One hot fragment finally lodging in General Lewis' bed. No casualties were incurred by this attack and little time lost in the completion of the Field Order. Another room was promptly prepared, blacked out and work went on almost immediately.

Brigadier General Raymond S. McLain left this command on 25th July 1944, and reported for duty with the 90th Infantry Division where he subsequently took command. His leaving was a serious blow to the personnel of this organization as well as to the organization. He was loved and respected by every member of the division with whom he came into contact. Much of the success of the division during this period was due to his activities, the benefits and lessons learned from his vast experience in actual combat and his sound counsel. Captain Richard Kunkel also left as his Aid de Camp. As counter-battery officer, Capt. Kunkel's work was of invaluable benefit to the division. His superior handling of counter-battery missions will long be remembered in this organization.

General James M. Lewis assumed command of Div. Arty. 281000B July 1944.

The Air OP's throughout this period proved their worth time and again and were used during all daylight hours. Enough cannot be said for their part in the operations of the command. Capt. Blohm, Div. Arty. Air Officer, can feel justly proud of his "brood". See "Annex 5, Report of Air Officer, July".

The work of Sgt. Ellis and his communications section; of Sgt. Duffie and his Medical Detachment; of Sgt. Fountain and his Operations Section and of Sgt. Berg as Sergeant Major could not be excelled. Through adversity, fire, bombings, etc., they maintained their poise, sound judgment and further enhanced the respect and admiration in which they are held by the officers and men of this command.

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Position Areas: 1 July 10th July 17th July 20th July 28 July 29 July

Div. Arty. (See Body)

113th F.A. Bn. 52757924 48887590 45607000 43986371 45105990

118th F.A. Bn

197th F. A. Bn 525744 48657211 46206940 44656277 48705595

230th F.A. Bn. 45808160 46907680 46807300 45006930 45106220 47505780

Missions Fired:

Light Battalions: 2381 missions

(200 counter-battery missions included)

Medium Battalions: 865

Casualties:

KIA - 27

WIA - 119

MIA - 0

NBC - 20

Note: Casualties were extremely high among the forward observer parties and liaison parties. Two (2) of the light battalions sustaining in excess of 70 % officer forward observer casualties. One light battalion lost all three liaison officers and one replacement liaison officer.

Materiel Loss:

Primary loss in materiel occurred from shell and bomb fragmentation. Although accurate records are not presently available tires, radiators and gas tanks on approximately fifteen per centum of the vehicles were punctured and repaired. Loss by accident and by mechanical failure was negligible.

Prisoners Captured: 35, including three by the Chaplain.

Effective Strength, 31st July: 2121 Officers and Men.

<u>Ammunition Expenditures:</u>	<u>113th</u>	<u>118th</u>	<u>197th</u>	<u>230th</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Lts</u>	<u>Med</u>
	17424	21848	17345	28136	65557		84803

Comments:

Hedgerow fighting is exceedingly expensive in forward observers and the equipment of these parties. These parties must of necessity be in most cases not over one hedgerow behind the leading elements of the infantry. These parties must use every effort to conform in appearance to the troops which they are accompanying otherwise they find themselves casualties in the very early stages of the operation.

Units should be allowed to enter combat with a fifty per centum coverage in officer strength of battery grade. Some delay is occasioned in receiving replacements and green officers straight out of a replacement center and entering combat for the first time with seasoned troops find the going rough to say the least and casualties among this element are high. Further, battlewise enlistedmen are not prone to respect the judgment of these officers at times when confidence is of great concern.

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Unit: 30th Inf Div
 Place: $\frac{1}{2}$ Mi WEST of
 PONT DE ST. FROMOND
 Date: 9 July 1944

UNIT REPORT NO. 26

Inclosure No. 2 to accompany Unit Report No.

Par. 2 - OWN SITUATION:

- a. Front lines, or most advanced elements: See overlay.
- b. Location of troops, CIs, boundaries, etc: See overlay.
- c. Location of adjacent units and supporting troops: See overlay.
- d. Brief description of operations during period:

Div Arty, 203rd FA Bn and 391st Groupment (391st Armd FA Bn and 58th FA Bn) attached supported attack of Div South from St. Jean de Daye - Aire. Support by successive cns on call. H Hour 0700.

Organization: 230th FA Bn direct support 120th Inf
 118th FA Bn direct support 117th Inf initially
 197th FA Bn direct support 119th Inf
 203rd FA Bn general support and reinforcing
 fires of 230th FA Bn.
 113th FA Bn general support
 391st Groupment (391 & 58th ARmd FA Bas) direct
 support CCB and be prepared to reinforce fires
 of 197th FA Bn
 228th FA Gp, genl supt of Corps - reinforcing fire of Div.
 113th, 118th displaced to positions S and W of Vire River
 during day.

From 1530 to 1930, Div Arty assisted in repulsing counterattack on South front. Fire from 18 Bns, namely, Div Arty, 391st, 58th, Corps Arty, 54th and 67th Armd FA Bas, concentrated fire on front of counterattack.

Ammunition Expended: (090600 - 091930 July 44)

105-mm - 4871 Rds.
 155-mm - 4000 Rds.

- e. Estimate of combat efficiency: 100 per cent.
- f. Results of operations during day: En Arty and general activity kept to minimum.

Shepard
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CANCELLED

UNIT OF THE ARMY
 5 SEP 1946

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