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CROSSING OF THE VIRE RIVER

Interviews with Brig. General George Shea, Arty. Comdr. and Lt. Colonel James R. Winn, Executive Officer Corps Arty.

A. Best use of 4.2 Chemical Mortars by this Corps has been in firing in conjunction with artillery preparations and rolling barrages. For example: The crossing of the VIRE River at AIRE on 7 July by a Battalion of 30th Division. The river was 75 to 80 feet wide and well defended by elements of 17 SS Division.

Corps and Division Artillery worked out fire plan before the attack. All located enemy strong points in buildings were knocked down by 8 inch Howitzers day before the attack. This left debris but eliminated overhead protection.

In accordance with the plan of fire Corps Artillery opened fire on hostile batteries, known or definitely suspected, one hour before time of attack. Twenty minutes before attack Corps and Division Artillery and 92nd Chemical Battalion moved fire close to front line and pounded all known or suspected enemy installations. Mortar fire was extremely effective. At H-hour Corps Artillery resumed counterbattery fire. The Division Artillery including the 92nd Chemical Battalion mortars went into a rolling barrage keeping 300 yards in front of the infantry with their mortar fire. This fire was delivered on a time schedule and lifted in 100 yard jumps each five minutes. As a signal to the following infantry 12 rounds mortar and 4 rounds per Battalion FA of white phosphorous were fired in last volley on each successive line.

When limit of range of mortars was reached they ceased fire and Division Artillery fired as called for by advance troops.

Mortars of the 92nd Chemical Battalion have also been used in repelling counter attacks, and as massed fires where desired. They have official credit for destruction of four tanks.

ALBERT H. PEYTON  
Colonel, Inf.  
Observer

*Extracted from a  
report of Col. Peyton*

*J. Ferris, Capt., ACUS*

CROSSING THE VIRE RIVER

Interviews with Lt. Col. Renald Le V. Martin CO 92nd Chemical Bn.  
and Major Carl M. Wissinger Executive Officer 92nd Chemical Bn.

Example #1

Crossing over VIRE River just north of AIRE on July 7, 1944 by one battalion 117th Inf. 30th Division with mission to establish a bridge head.

The 92nd Chemical Bn. under artillery control was in position 400 yards back of L.D. and joined artillery in preparation, from H-15 to H-5 which was fired on opposite bank at range of approximately 1000 yards. It then lifted its fire 300 yards and laid a controlled barrage from H-hour to H plus 40 on time schedule. One round per gun was fired each 30 seconds. As shown by overlay the area of advance had 9 phase lines or barrage lines. The time schedule required five minutes fire on each of the 9 lines. The firing was done in accordance with the plan and the infantry followed closely. As a marker to the following infantry, one WP per platoon was fired at the end of firing on each phase line. For additional control one forward observer advanced with each assault company. He was in radio communication with his company FDC.

Upon reaching first objective (near 9th phase line) just short of crest of a hill the infantry reorganized. When it was ready to resume the advance, about 1½ hours later, they called through their own artillery for the second part of the mortar barrage. The second part of the barrage was fired on time schedule exactly like the first part except rate of fire was one round per gun each minute. The infantry advanced closely behind the barrage and secured their objective, involving an advance of about 2000 yards, with relatively light casualties.

The first part of the barrage was fired during darkness as it started at 0430. When the attack started it was contemplated that it would go straight ahead, but after reorganizing the attack moved off at about 30° to the right. No plan had been prepared for barrage fire in this direction but data was prepared, and the Bn changed its fire to the new area and delivered on schedule.

It is interesting to note that this was the first mission fired by this battalion in combat.

ALBERT H. PEYTON  
Colonel, Inf.  
Observer

*Extracted from a  
report of Col. Peyton*

*J. Dennis, Capt., AUSA*

XIA Corps.

After Action Report for 2nd Div.

July 7

July 7 - G-3 Periodic Report, dated 050730 July - Unknown good.

30<sup>th</sup> Div - 117<sup>th</sup>, plus 743 TK Bn (less 1st plto/D + 3rd plto/C) crossed Yui River at 070430, following a bridgehead and continued atk to W + S.

119<sup>th</sup>, less 2nd Bn, supported crossing of 117<sup>th</sup> by heavy weapons fire at 071040. 2nd Bn, in Div. Reserve, crossed Yui River on concrete bridge W of Div at 071015.

120<sup>th</sup>, minus 2nd Bn, (plus 1<sup>st</sup> + 2nd plto/D + 3rd plto/C, CO C, 105<sup>th</sup> Engr C Bn) forced crossing of Yui at Tante Canal. 2nd Bn supported crossing by fire from all weapons.

Div Artillery (203rd FA Bn, 92d Cav Bn, 823rd TD Bn) supported Div in river + canal crossing.

35<sup>th</sup> Div - 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn/134 alerted to relieve 2d Bn/120<sup>th</sup> early morning of 8 July.

3rd Armored Division - CCA moving into zone B of Div (505747) prepared to atk when ordered, in zone of

3<sup>rd</sup> Div.

CCA moving from assembly area to atk in zone of 30<sup>th</sup> Div. Leading element

moved at 071930.

Div Artillery (55<sup>th</sup> FA Bn attd) fired 22 missions in support of 30<sup>th</sup> Div atk. At close of period all Bns in gear to support atk CCB in zone 30<sup>th</sup> Div.

XIA Corps Artillery - Fired 1 hour preparation in support of 30<sup>th</sup> Div atk. Followed by 45 min scheduled fire.

12<sup>th</sup> AAA Gp - Supported atk of 30<sup>th</sup> Div.

113<sup>th</sup> Cav - Covered Yui at Tante Canal operating on right of 30<sup>th</sup> Div.

Field Order #4, dated 022230 gnd

XIX Corps atks on order, CG, First U.S. Army as part of First U.S. Army in resumption of the offensive to secure the Corps obj. (St. do)

29<sup>th</sup> Inf Div

747 Tank Bn  
459 AAA AW Bn  
821 TD Bn

30<sup>th</sup> Inf Div

743 Tank Bn  
531 AAA AW Bn  
823 TD Bn

30<sup>th</sup> Div to make main effort in the direction St. Jean de Waeye - St. Gilles - St. 10. Crossing Vie River and Vie et Tante Canal on narrow fronts, closely following heaviest available Artillery units.

29<sup>th</sup> Div, relief, atkg on Corp order, in conj with 2nd Div (V Corps), makes main effort on left on a narrow front, with rings Corps obj in zone.

113<sup>th</sup> Cav Gp - To relieve 30<sup>th</sup> Div in zone A on Corps Order, occupy and defend zone. On Corps order cross Vie River and/or Vie et Tante Canal. Move to R. flank 30<sup>th</sup> Div, operate in zone B, destroying or capturing enemy in vic Grammes to Canal, maintaining contact 30<sup>th</sup> Div and with VII Corps.

SITREP - 30<sup>th</sup> Div front line 483755 - 484755 - 500735; Enemy arty moderate

G-2 Periodic Report - Units identified in Corps Sector as of 3 July, from W to E. (Periodic Rpt #19)

1. Elements of 17<sup>th</sup> Inf Div Gnd, 1st Bn, Berlichingen
2. Combat Group HEINTZ
  - 1<sup>st</sup> + 2nd Bns 984<sup>th</sup> Inf Regt
  - 275<sup>th</sup> Fus Bn
  - 275<sup>th</sup> Engr Bn
  - Engr Bn Angers
  - 4<sup>th</sup> Bn, 352nd Art Regt
3. Combat Group (KENTNER)
  - 1<sup>st</sup> + 2nd Bns 897<sup>th</sup> Inf Regt 266<sup>th</sup> Inf Div
4. Remnants 552nd Inf Div (not including 2 bns)
5. 30<sup>th</sup> Mobile Brigade
6. Combat Group BOCHM
  - 2nd Bn 943rd Inf Regt
  - 353rd Fus Bn
7. 2nd Bn, 9<sup>th</sup> Para Regt
8. 8<sup>th</sup> G 2nd SS Command Regt DAS REICH } exact location  
353rd Motor Bn } unknown.

First report that Panzer Lehr may have left Berlichingen Sector zone on July 3 from the British XII Corps.

XIX Corps  
After Action Report July.

July 7 - Periodic Report (G-2) #21. Light patrols without any aggressive penetration. The enemy continues to resist strongly patrol intrusion into their front areas.

✓ One or two units of 38<sup>th</sup> SS Pz Gren Regt believed to be on Corps right flank. (Periodic Report #22 as of 6 July) Behavior of the Germans in the area today (right flank included) Small concentrations of armor observed - believed to belong to the 2<sup>nd</sup> SS Div Das Reich. Companies of the Das Reich may operate independently. TAC/R indicates a general, though not large, movement of troops from S + SE to NW. Small groups of tanks (one group of 20) have been observed with greater frequency in the S + SE area and to the NW and NW of S + SE. No large concentrations evident.

Enemy Capabilities - The Germans' most probable line of action continues to be a tenacious defense of his present positions - allowing isolated elements to the most threatened area as replacement or for local counterattacks.

G-2 Periodic Report #23, 7 July.

Enemy fighting from hedgerow to hedgerow delaying our advance w/ new tactics and use of mines and booby traps.

Enemy arty mostly harassing with great amount falling in vic of bridge W of Atr.

Small c/arks launched by enemy to delay our advance. 84 prisoners captured.

PW captured from 14<sup>th</sup> Co, 984<sup>th</sup> Regt, reports company having 2 platoons w/ total 8-10 88<sup>mm</sup> ~~mm~~ bazookas, 1

platoon of 75 mm AT guns.