honor, and it was created by this Congress in 1861. Senator James Grimes of Iowa, chairman of the Senate Naval Committee, proposed legislation to require that a medal of honor, similar to the Victoria Cross of England, be given to naval personnel for actions of bravery in action. His legislation, which was signed into law by President Lincoln on December 21, 1861, established a Medal of Honor for enlisted men of the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps. Subsequently, legislation was enacted extending eligibility for the medal to Army-enlisted personnel as well as officers of the Armed Services.

Senator Robert F. Kennedy once said, ''It is from numberless diverse acts of courage and belief that human history is shaped. Each time a man stands up for an ideal or acts to improve the lot of others or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope.''

Those extraordinary Americans who have won the Medal of Honor have, through their acts of remarkable courage, certainly shaped the history of our country and our world. We are doing the right thing today by honoring these courageous citizens.

I am proud to be a cosponsor of H.R. 1663 and urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. REYES).

Mr. REYES. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1663, the National Medal of Honor Memorial Act. This is a good bill because it honors the incredible courage and valor of our most distinguished veterans. Moreover, it ensures that future generations of Americans will know of the great sacrifices made by these men and women who answered the call to national service for their country. Medal of Honor winners have shown that they were willing to defend our liberty no matter what the price. Their heroism in battle has become legendary.

Since the Civil War, our country has recognized their outstanding acts of courage and bravery through the Congressional Medal of Honor. As there have been only 3,429 award winners in the history of our Nation, these veterans truly occupy a very special place in the hearts of all Americans. Therefore, I think that it is important that we designate sites around the country as national memorials for our Medal of Honor winners.

With this bill, we recognize memorials in Riverside, California; Indianapolis, Indiana; and Mount Pleasant, South Carolina, to honor the contributions to our freedom and to our country of these brave, fine Americans. I therefore strongly endorse this legislation, and I urge all my colleagues to join in unanimously approving this bill.

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. STUMP. Mr. Speaker, I thank the ranking member of the committee, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EVANS), for all his help in bringing this to the floor; and also the gentleman from California (Mr. CALVERT), the chief sponsor, for bringing this bill to us and for working so closely with the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 1663, the National Medal of Honor Memorial Act.

As the 20th Century draws to a close, many veterans wonder if the nation has lost sight of the sacrifices which have been made to preserve freedom. This bill, loudly states that we the Congress, who represent the people of this great nation, have not lost sight of the heroic sacrifices made in the name of freedom. We appreciate the great contributions of these brave individuals who knowingly placed themselves in harm's way, ready to sacrifice life and limb so that their comrades may live and this nation's values remain strong.

Over this last Memorial Day weekend, I had the distinct pleasure to assemble with nearly 100 Medal of Honor recipients to dedicate the Congressional Medal of Honor Memorial site at the White River State Park in Indianapolis, Indiana. It was truly an inspiring gathering, and at the same time, proved a very humbling experience. These individuals epitomize the true meaning of selfless sacrifice and personal commitment.

While many have answered the call to duty, they have answered a higher calling. A calling that is spiritual in nature and bigger than one's self. For love of God, country, family and friends. Their significant contributions have helped secure a more democratic and peaceful world over the last century. More importantly, their actions serve as a testament to all Americans about serving and caring for others.

Recognizing these Congressional Medal of Honor memorials sites in California, Indiana, and South Carolina as National Medal of Honor memorials continues our commitment to these gallant and heroic men and women and I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 1663.

Mr. STUMP. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SUNUNU). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. STUMP) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1663, as amended.

The question was taken.

Mr. CALVERT. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

COMMENDING VETERANS OF THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE

Mr. STUMP. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the joint resolution (H.J. Res. 65) commending the World War II veterans who fought in the Battle of the Bulge, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.J. RES. 65

Whereas the battle in the European theater of operations during World War II known as the Battle of the Bulge was fought from December 16, 1944, to January 25, 1945;

Whereas the Battle of the Bulge was a major German offensive in the Ardennes forest region of Belgium and Luxembourg which took Allied forces by surprise and was intended to split the Allied forces in Europe by breaking through the Allied lines, crippling the Allied fuel supply lines, and exacerbating tensions within the alliance;

Whereas 600,000 American troops, joined by 55,000 British soldiers and other Allied forces, participated in the Battle of the Bulge, overcoming numerous disadvantages in the early days of the battle that included fewer numbers, treacherous terrain, and bitter weather conditions;

Whereas the Battle of the Bulge resulted in 81,000 American and 1,400 British casualties, of whom approximately 19,000 American and 200 British soldiers were killed, with the remainder wounded, captured, or listed as missing in action;

Whereas the worst atrocity involving Americans in the European theater during World War II, known as the Malmédy Massacre, occurred on December 17, 1944, when 86 unarmed American prisoners of war were gunned down by elements of the German 1st SS Panzer Division;

Whereas American, British, and other Allied forces overcame great odds throughout the battle, including most famously the action of the 101st Airborne Division in holding back German forces at the key Belgian crossroads town of Bastogne, thereby preventing German forces from achieving their main objective of reaching Antwerp as well as the Meuse River line;

Whereas the success of American, British, and other Allied forces in defeating the German attack made possible the defeat of Nazi Germany four months later in April 1945;

Whereas thousands of United States veterans of the Battle of the Bulge have traveled to Belgium and Luxembourg in the years since the battle to honor their fallen comrades who died during the battle;

Whereas the peoples of Belgium and Luxembourg, symbolizing their friendship and gratitude toward the American soldiers who fought to secure their freedom, have graciously hosted countless veterans groups over the years;

Whereas the city of Bastogne has an annual commemoration of the battle and its annual Nuts Fair has been expanded to include commemoration of the legendary one-word reply of ''Nuts'' by Brigadier General Anthony McAuliffe of the 101st Airborne Division when called upon by the opposing German commander at Bastogne to surrender his forces to much stronger German forces;

Whereas the Belgian people erected the Mardasson Monument to honor the Americans who fought in the Battle of the Bulge as well as to commemorate their sacrifices and service during World War II;

Whereas the 55th anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge in 1999 will be marked by many commemorative events by Americans, Belgians, and Luxembourgers; and

Whereas the friendship between the United States and both Belgium and Luxembourg is

strong today in part because of the Battle of the Bulge: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That Congress—

(1) commends the veterans of the United States Army, the British Army, and military forces of other Allied nations who fought during World War II in the German Ardennes offensive known as the Battle of the Bulge;

(2) honors those who gave their lives during that battle;

(3) authorizes the President to issue a proclamation calling upon the people of the United States to honor the veterans of the Battle of the Bulge with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities; and

(4) calls upon the President to reaffirm the bonds of friendship between the United States and both Belgium and Luxembourg.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. STUMP) and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EVANS) will each control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. STUMP).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. STUMP. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on House Joint Resolution 65.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Arizona?

There was no objection.

Mr. STUMP. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Mr. STUMP asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. STUMP. Mr. Speaker, this country is justifiably proud of the role its armed forces played during World War II. A few minutes ago, we recognized the relatively few Americans who have been awarded the Medal of Honor for extraordinary acts of gallantry. However, Americans performed hundreds of thousands of courageous acts wherever they were committed to battle during World War II.

The actions of Americans who fought in the Battle of the Bulge are some of the best examples of everyday tenaciousness and bravery of American fighting men. Throughout this battle, the largest pitched battle ever fought by Americans, tens of thousands of Americans and British troops exhibited great courage and determination. Their heroism and willingness to endure great hardship resulted in the defeat of a desperate, powerful and well-trained German army.

It is fitting, Mr. Speaker, that we recall today the service of over 600,000 American combat troops who eventually beat back the last bold thrust of Hitler's war machine. This resolution commends all veterans who served or gave their lives during the Battle of the Bulge, and I urge my colleagues to support it.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.J. Res. 65 and urge the Members of the House to approve this measure. I also salute the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH), the vice chairman of the committee, for his leadership on this issue.

This measure, Mr. Speaker, commends those veterans who fought and died during World War II in the offensive known as the Battle of the Bulge. It also authorizes the President to issue a proclamation calling upon the people of the United States to honor the veterans of this battle with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities.

1999 marks the 55th anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge, a costly and important victory for the United States. It is fitting that we as a Nation honor the sacrifices and service of America's veterans who fought and sacrificed during this battle. H.J. Res. 65, as amended, is an excellent bill; and I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. STUMP. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH), the vice chairman of the committee and the chief sponsor of this resolution.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my good friend, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. STUMP), the chairman of our full committee, for yielding me this time and for being a cosponsor and also extend my thanks to my good friend, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EVANS) as well for cosponsoring and for the bipartisanship that he brings to the committee.

I also want to thank a number of other Members. There are 42 cosponsors of this resolution, including the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN), the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HYDE), the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. DINGELL), and several other Members who are deeply committed to remembering all veterans, but in particular those who fought in the Battle of the Bulge.

Mr. Speaker, today the House will rightly honor the Americans and allied forces who fought in the Battle of the Bulge. As the son of a World War II combat infantryman who fought in the other major theatre in World War II, he fought in New Guinea, the Philippines, and several islands in the Pacific, I urge all Members to enthusiastically support House Joint Resolution 65, which was introduced to recognize the 55th anniversary of the largest battle in the history of U.S. modern warfare, the Battle of the Bulge.

H.J. Res. 65, as amended, was marked up in the Committee on Veterans' Affairs as well as the Committee on International Relations, and, hopefully, will get the unanimous support of this body.

Let me also thank the veterans of the Battle of the Bulge Association, an organization that was formed back in 1981. They now have about 10,000 members. And the idea behind it is to perpetuate the memory of the sacrifices involved during the battle, to preserve historical data and sites relating to the battle, and to foster international peace and good will, and to promote friendship among the battle survivors as well as their descendants.

I also want to thank Stan Wojtuski, the National Vice President of Military Affairs for the Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge for his work on this resolution, and Mrs. Edith Nowels, a constituent of mine living in Brielle, New Jersey. She has worked very closely in crafting this resolution, and I am very grateful for that.

I think it is very important to point out that Edith Nowels' brother, Bud Thorne, was killed in action during the battle, and was awarded the Medal of Honor along with 17 others who received that highest of medals for their valor and bravery. There were also 86 servicemen who were awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for their valor during this vital battle.

According to the citation presented to his family, Corporal Thorne single-handedly destroyed a German tank. And in the words of the citation, ''Displayed heroic initiative and intrepid fighting qualities, inflicted costly casualties on the enemy and insured the success of his patrol's mission by the sacrifice of his life.''

I would like to take just a very brief moment, Mr. Speaker, to provide a brief overview of the battle so that my colleagues will gain a better understanding as to why this chapter in World War II deserves special recognition today. One of the most decisive battles in the war in Europe, the Battle of the Bulge began on December 16, 1944, when the German Army, in an effort to trap the allied forces in Belgium and Luxembourg, launched an attack against what were perceived as a weak line of American and allied troops. Their goal was to submit the allied forces in Belgium and Luxembourg and race to the coast towards Antwerp.

Adolf Hitler and his generals knew the German Air Force could not maintain regional air superiority, so they were banking on bad weather and relatively green and a fatigued American troops, who were greatly outnumbered. At the outset of the battle, the German troops, forming three armies, numbered approximately 200,000 versus 83,000 Americans. Their goal was to capture bridges over the Meuse River in the first 48 hours of the attack and then press on to Antwerp.

At the time of their initial attack, the Germans had more than 13 infantry and 7 panzer divisions, with nearly 1,000 tanks and almost 2,000 larger guns deployed along the front of about 60 miles. Five more divisions were soon to follow, with at least 450 more tanks. Although the Americans were caught by surprise, they tenaciously fought back in those early days of the attack

in December, holding the line in the north while the Nazis pushed through in the middle of the bulge towards the Meuse River.

One incident which particularly hardened the Americans and allied forces as to the intent of the German Army was the Malmedy Massacre. Eighty-six American POWs were murdered by the Nazis as they moved towards the capture of the Meuse River. The same German unit which was responsible for this infamous massacre eventually killed at least 300 American POWs and over 100 unarmed Belgium civilians. News of these horrific events outraged and further galvanized the will of American forces to prevail.

Recognizing what they were up against, General Eisenhower transferred the command of all American troops north of the bulge to British General Montgomery. Those south of the bulge were under the command of General Bradley. Meanwhile, the Germans were being slowed down by the dogged defense of the town at St. Vith by Brigadier General Hasbrouck. St. Vith was strategically important due to the number of key roads which met in the town and were essential to the German drive towards Antwerp.

General Patton's Third Army, under the command of General Bradley, was proceeding north to cut through the southern flank of the German bulge in the lines and provide relief to Brigadier General Anthony McAuliffe, whose refusal to surrender to his German counterparts at Bastogne on December 22 is forever known in history with that famous phrase, when he just said back to the Germans, ''Nuts.'' He would not surrender. He just said nuts to them, and they wondered what that meant.

□ 1100

He was not going to give in. As more American reinforcements arrived, eventually totaling 600,000 troops, they assisted in holding up the northern and southern flanks of the Nazi advances. Hitler's generals found that they were running out of fuel and that their hope of seizing allied fuel supplies was becoming a pipe dream and their race to the Meuse river slowed down to a crawl. While Adolph Hitler insisted on pressing with air strikes against advancing allied reinforcements, his generals knew that they had been beaten, and he eventually authorized the retreat of his armies at the end of January.

Mr. Speaker, the cost in lives from this engagement is astronomical and absolutely staggering. The American armies had more than 81,000 casualties; and of these, 19,000 men were killed in action. The British had 1,400 casualties with 200 killed. Both sides lost as many as 800 tanks each, and the Germans lost 1,000 planes. All told, it was one of the largest pitched battles in history with more than three times the number of troops from both the North and the South that engaged in the Battle of Gettysburg. Three times the size of Gettysburg. In the words of British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and I quote, in addressing the House of Commons, he said, ''This is undoubtedly the greatest battle of the war and will I believe be regarded as an ever-famous American victory.''

Mr. Speaker, I hope all Members will support this resolution. The veterans of the Battle of the Bulge every year travel to Europe and reacquaint themselves with those with whom they fought side by side and those that they liberated. They will be meeting again soon in both Luxembourg and Belgium. I hope we will go on record supporting their efforts, their valor and this resolution puts all of us on record in that regard.

Mr. Speaker, I include a list of Medal of Honor recipients for the RECORD, as follows:

RECIPIENTS OF THE MEDAL OF HONOR—ARDENNES CAMPAIGN

Arthur O. Beyer	Jose M. Lopez
Melvin E. Biddle	Vernon McGarity
Paul L. Bolden	Curtis F. Shoup
Richard E. Cowan	William A. Soderman
Francis S. Currey	Horace M. Thorne
Peter J. Dalessondro	Day G. Turner
Archer T. Gammon	Henry G. Turner
James R. Hendrix	Henry F. Warner
Truman Kimbro	Paul J. Wiedorfer

Mr. Speaker, I include the following brochure regarding the Ardennes-Alsace Campaign for the RECORD:

ARDENNES-ALSACE

INTRODUCTION

World War II was the largest and most violent armed conflict in the history of mankind. However, the half century that now separates us from that conflict has exacted its toll on our collective knowledge. While World War II continues to absorb the interest of military scholars and historians, as well as its veterans, a generation of Americans has grown to maturity largely unaware of the political, social, and military implications of a war that, more than any other, united us as a people with a common purpose.

Highly relevant today, World War II has much to teach us, not only about the profession of arms, but also about military preparedness, global strategy, and combined operations in the coalition war against fascism. During the next several years, the U.S. Army will participate in the nation's 50th anniversary commemoration of World War II. The commemoration will include the publication of various materials to help educate Americans about that war. The works produced will provide great opportunities to learn about and renew pride in an Army that fought so magnificently in what has been called ''the mighty endeavor.''

World War II was waged on land, on sea, and in the air over several diverse theaters of operation for approximately six years. The following essay is one of a series of campaign studies highlighting those struggles that, with their accompanying suggestions for further reading, are designed to introduce you to one of the Army's significant military feats from that war.

This brochure was prepared in the U.S. Army Center of Military History by Roger Cirillo. I hope this absorbing account of that period will enhance your appreciation of American achievements during World War II.

GORDON R. SULLIVAN,
General, United States Army Chief of Staff.

ARDENNES-ALSACE

16 December 1944–25 January 1945

In his political testament *Mein Kampf* (''My Struggle'') Adolf Hitler wrote, ''Strength lies not in defense but in attack.'' Throughout World War II, attempts to gain or regain the initiative had characterized Hitler's influence on military operations. Thus, when the military situation in late 1944 looked darkest on the Western Front, an enemy offensive to redress the balance of the battlefield—and thereby cripple or delay the Allied advance—should have come as no surprise.

Hitler's great gamble began during the nights of 13, 14, and 15 December, when the initial assault force of German armor, artillery, and infantry gradually staged forward to attack positions along the Belgian-German-Luxembourg border. This mustered force, with more than 200,000 men in thirteen infantry and seven panzer divisions and with nearly 1,000 tanks and almost 2,000 guns, deployed along a front of 60 miles—its operational armor holdings equaling that on the entire Eastern Front. Five more divisions moved forward in a second wave, while still others, equipped with at least 450 more tanks, followed in reserve.

On the Allied side the threatened American sector appeared quiet. The 15 December daily situation report for the VIII Corps, which lay in the path of two of Hitler's armies, noted: ''There is nothing to report.'' This illusion would soon be shattered.

STRATEGIC SETTING

In August 1944, while his armies were being destroyed in Normandy, Hitler secretly put in motion actions to build a large reserve force, forbidding its use to bolster Germany's beleaguered defenses. To provide the needed manpower, he trimmed existing military forces and conscripted youths, the unfit, and old men previously untouched for military service. Panzer divisions were rebuilt with the cadre of survivors from units in Normandy or on the Eastern Front, while newly created Volksgrenadier (''people's infantry'') divisions were staffed with veteran commanders and noncommissioned officers and the new conscripts. By increasing the number of automatic weapons and the number of supporting assault gun and rocket battalions in each division, Hitler hoped to make up for hurried training and the lack of fighting fitness. Despite the massive Allied air bombardment of Germany and the constant need to replace destroyed divisions on both the Eastern and Western Fronts, where heavy fighting continued, forces were gathered for use in what Hitler was now calling Operation Wacht am Rhine (''*Watch on the Rhine*'').

In September Hitler named the post of Antwerp, Belgium, as the objective. Selecting the Eifel region as a staging area, Hitler intended to mass twenty-five divisions for an attack through the thinly held Ardennes Forest area of southern Belgium and Luxembourg. Once the Meuse River was reached and crossed, these forces would swing northwest some 60 miles to envelop the port of Antwerp. The maneuver was designed to sever the already stretched Allied supply lines in the north and to encircle and destroy a third of the Allies' ground forces. If successful, Hitler believed that the offensive could smash the Allied coalition, or at least greatly cripple its ground combat capabilities, leaving him free to focus on the Russians at his back door.

Timing was crucial. Allied air power ruled the skies during the day, making any open concentrations of German military strength on the ground extremely risky. Hitler, therefore, scheduled the offensive to take place when inclement weather would ground Allied planes, or at least limit their attacks on his

advancing columns. Because the requisite forces and supplies had to be assembled, he postponed the starting date from November until mid-December. This additional preparation time, however, did not ease the minds of the few German generals and staff officers entrusted with planning Wacht am Rhine.

Both the nominal Commander-in-Chief West Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt and Army Group B commander Field Marshal Walter Model, who had primary responsibility for Wacht am Rhine, questioned the scope of the offensive. Both argued for a more limited attack, to pinch out the American-held salient north of the Ardennes around Aachen. Borrowing a bridge-players term, they referred to Hitler's larger objectives as the grand slam, or big solution, but proposed instead a small solution more compatible with the limited force being raised.

Rundstedt and Model believed that Hitler's legions were incapable of conducting a blitzkrieg, or lightning war, campaign. The twin swords that had dominated the field during the 1940 drive across France, tanks and air power, no longer existed in the numbers necessary to strike a decisive blow, nor was the hastily conscripted infantry, even when led by experienced officers and sergeants, up to the early war standards. Supply columns, too, would be prone to interdiction or breakdown on the Eifel's limited roads. To Hitler's generals, the grand slam was simply asking for too much to be done with too little at hand.

The determining factor was the terrain itself. The Ardennes consists of a series of parallel ridges and valleys generally running from northeast to southwest, as did its few good roads in 1944. About a third of the region is coniferous forest, with swamps and marshes in the northlands and deep defiles and gorges where numerous rivers and streams cut the ridges. Dirt secondary roads existed, making north-south movement possible, with the road centers—Bastogne and Houffalize in the south, and Malmedy and St. Vith in the north—crucial for military operations. After the winter's first freeze, tanks could move cross-country in much of the central sector. Fall 1944, however, brought the promise of mud, because of rain, and the advancing days of December, the promise of snow. Either could limit the quick advance needed by Wacht am Rhine. Once the Meuse River, west of the Ardennes, was gained, the wide river itself and cliffs on the east bank presented a significant obstacle if the bridges were not captured intact. Since the roads and terrain leading to Antwerp thereafter were good, the German planners focused on the initial breakthrough and the run west to the Meuse. The terrain, which made so little sense as an attack avenue northwestward, guaranteed the surprise needed.

Previous offensives through the Ardennes in World War I and early in World War II had followed the major roads southwestward, and had been made in good weather. The defenses then had always been light screens, easily pushed away. In 1940 the weakly opposed German armor needed three days to traverse the easier terrain in the southern Ardennes in good weather, on dry roads. For Wacht am Rhine, the American line had to be broken and crushed immediately to open paths for the attacking panzers; otherwise, the offensive might bog down into a series of fights for roads and the numerous villages on the way to the Meuse. Precious fuel would be used to deploy tanks to fight across fields. More importantly, time would be lost giving the defenders the opportunity to position blocking forces or to attack enemy flanks. Only surprise, sheer weight of numbers, and minimal hard fighting could guarantee a chance at success. If the Americans fought long and well, the same terrain that guaranteed surprise would become a trap.

The Ardennes held little fascination for the Allies, either as a staging area for their own counterattacks or as a weak spot in their lines. General Dwight D. Eisenhower, the Supreme Allied Commander, had concentrated forces north and south of the area where the terrain was better suited for operations into Germany. Field Marshal Sir Bernard L. Montgomery's 21 Army Group to the north began preparations for the planned crossing of the Rhine in early 1945. Lt. Gen. Omar N. Bradley's 12th Army Group to the south and Lt. Gen. Jacob L. Devers' 6th Army Group in the Alsace region would also launch attacks and additional Rhine crossings from their sectors.

Located in the center of Bradley's sector, the Ardennes had been quiet since mid-September. Referred to as a ''ghost front,'' one company commander described the sector as a ''nursery and old folk's home. . . .'' The 12th Army Group's dispositions reflected Bradley's operational plans. Lt. Gen. William H. Simpson's Ninth Army and most of Lt. Gen. Courtney H. Hodges' First Army occupied a 40-mile area north of the Ardennes, concentrating for an attack into the Ruhr industrial region of Germany. Lt. Gen. George S. Patton, Jr.'s Third Army was in a 100-mile sector south of the forest, preparing a thrust into the vital Saar mining region. In between, the First Army hold 88 miles of the front with only four divisions, two ''green'' units occupying ground to gain experience and two veteran units licking wounds and absorbing replacements; an armored infantry battalion; and two mechanized cavalry squadrons. Behind this thin screen was one green armored division, whose two uncommitted combat commands straddled two separate corps, as well as a cavalry squadron and an assortment of artillery, engineer, and service units.

Bradley judged his decision to keep the Ardennes front thinly occupied to be ''a calculated risk.'' Nor was he alone in not seeing danger. Probability, not capability, dominated Allied thinking about the Wehrmacht's next moves on the Western Front in mid-December 1944. Commanders and intelligence officers (G–2) at every level—from the Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF), to the divisions holding the line—judged that the Germans were too weak to attempt regaining the initiative by a large-scale offensive. Despite their awareness that enemy units were refitting and concentrating across the line, they concluded exactly what Hitler had intended them to conclude. Knowing that the Germans were concerned with major threats to both the Ruhr and the Saar, Eisenhower's G–2 believed that they probably would use the uncommitted Sixth Panzer Army, suspected to be in the northern Eifel, to bolster their weakening northern defenses, or at least to cripple the impending Allied push toward the Ruhr. Both Hodges' and Patton's G–2s viewed the enemy as a reflection of their own operational plans and thus assessed the German buildup as no more than preparations to counterattack the First and Third Armies' assaults.

With only enough troops in the Ardennes to hold a series of strongpoints loosely connected by intermittent patrols, the Americans extended no ground reconnaissance into the German sector. Poor weather had masked areas from aerial photography, and the Germans enforced radio silence and strict countersecurity measures. Equally important, the Allies' top secret communications interception and decryption effort, code-named Ultra, offered clues but no definitive statement of Hitler's intentions. Yet Wacht am Rhine's best security was the continued Allied belief that the Germans would not attack, a belief held up to zero hour on 16 December—designated by the Germans as Null-tag (''Zero-Day'').

BATTLE PLANS

Field Marshal Model's attack plan, called Herbstnebel (''Autumn Fog''), assigned Lt. Gen. Josef ''Sepp'' Dietrich's Sixth Panzer Army the main effort. Dietrich would attack Hodges' First Army along the boundary separating Maj. Gen. Leonard T. Gerow's V Corps in the north from Maj. Gen. Troy H. Middleton's VIII Corps to the south, brushing aside or overrunning the V Corps' 99th Infantry Division and a cavalry squadron of the VIII Corps' 14th Cavalry Group before driving for the Meuse and Antwerp. South of the Sixth Panzer Army, Lt. Gen. Hasso von Manteuffel's Fifth Panzer Army would hit the VIII Corps' 106th Infantry Division and part of its 28th Infantry Division, tearing open Middleton's thin front and adding a secondary effort. Farther south, Lt. Gen. Erich Brandenberger's Seventh Army would attack the remainder of the 28th as well as the VIII Corps' 4th Infantry Division and then cover the advance of the panzers as far as the Meuse River. An airborne drop and infiltration by small teams disguised in American uniforms were added to create havoc in the American rear.

North of the Sixth Panzer Army, the six divisions of Lt. Gen. Gustav von Zangen's Fifteenth Army had a dual role. In addition to fighting and thereby holding American divisions in the crucial Aachen sector, Zangen would attack southward on order after Dietrich's panzers had broken the American line, a variation of the pincers attack originally preferred by Hitler's generals.

The Sixth Panzer Army was to attack in two waves. The first would consist of the LXVII Corps, with the newly organized 272d and 326th Volksgrenadier Divisions, and the I SS Panzer Corps, with the 1st and 12th SS Panzer, the 12th and 277th Volksgrenadier, and the 3d Parachute Divisions. The 150th Special Brigade and a parachute contingent would seize terrain and bridges ahead of the main body after the two corps broke through the American defenses. Dietrich planned to commit his third corps, the II SS Panzer Corps, with the 2d and 9th SS Panzer Divisions, in the second wave. The Sixth Panzer Army's 1,000-plus artillery pieces and 90 Tiger tanks made it the strongest force deployed. Although Dietrich's initial sector frontage was only 23 miles, his assault concentrated on less than half that ground. Relying on at least a 6:1 troop superiority at the breakthrough points, he expected to overwhelm the Americans and reach the Meuse River by nightfall of the third day.

According to Dietrich's plan, the LXVII Corps would secure the Sixth Panzer Army's northern flank. By sidestepping Monschau to seize the poorly roaded, forested hills and upland moors of the Hohe Venn, the LXVII's two divisions would block the main roads leading into the breakthrough area from the north and east. Simultaneously, the I SS Panzer Corps to the south would use its three infantry divisions to punch holes in the American line and swing northwesterly to join the left flank of the LXVII Corps. Together, the five divisions would form a solid shoulder, behind which the panzers of the I and II SS Panzer Corps would advance along the Sixth Panzer Army's routes leading west and northwest.

Three terrain features were critical to Dietrich's panzer thrust: the Elsenborn ridge, the Losheim Gap, and the Schnee Eifel ridge. The Elsenborn ridge, a complex series of fingers and spurs of the southern Hohe Venn, controlled access to two of the westerly panzer routes; a third passed just to the

south. The 277th Volksgrenadier Division would attack into the east defenses of the ridge, and to the south the 12th SS Panzer Division would debouch from its forest trail approaches into the hard roads running through and south of the ridge.

Further to the south the Losheim Gap appears as open rolling ground between the Elsenborn ridge to the northwest and the long, heavily wooded Schnee Eifel ridge to the southeast. Measuring about 5 miles wide at the German border and narrowing throughout its roughly 14-mile length as it runs from northeast to southwest, the gap is an unlikely military avenue, subdivided by lesser ridges, twists, and hills. Its roads, however, were well built and crucial for the German advance. Over its two major routes Dietrich intended to pass most of his armor.

The Sixth Panzer Army shared the Losheim Gap as an avenue with its southern neighbor, the Fifth Panzer Army. Their boundary reflected Hitler's obsession with a concentrated attack to ensure a breakthrough, but the common corridor added a potential for confusion. The Sixth Panzer Army was to attack with the 12th Volksgrenadier and the 3d Parachute Divisions through the northern portion of the gap, while the Fifth Panzer Army's northern corps, the LXVI, would open its southern portions. Additionally, the LXVI Corps had to eliminate the American forces holding the Schnee Eifel on the southern flank of the gap and seize the crucial road interchange at St. Vith about 10 miles further west. Manteuffel wanted part of the 18th Volksgrenadier Division to push through the southern part of the gap and hook into the rear of the Schnee Eifel, the remainder of the division to complete the encirclement to the south of the ridge, and the 62d Volksgrenadier Division to anchor the LXVI's flank with a drive toward St. Vith.

To the south of the Losheim Gap—Schnee Eifel area, along the north-south flowing Our River, the Fifth Panzer Army's major thrusts devolved to its LVIII and XLVII Panzer Corps, aligned north to south with four of their five divisions in the assault wave. Each panzer corps had one designated route, but the Fifth Panzer Army commander did not plan to wait for infantry to clear them. Manteuffel intended to commit his armor early rather than in tandem with the infantry, expecting to break through the extended American line quickly and expedite his advance to the west. The LVIII's 116th Panzer and 560th Volksgrenadier Divisions were to penetrate the area astride the Our River, tying the 106th and 28th Divisions together, and to capture the three tank-capable bridges in the sector before driving west to the Meuse. To the south the XLVII's 2d Panzer and 26th Volksgrenadier Divisions were to seize crossings on the Our and head toward the key Bastogne road interchange 19 miles to the west. The Panzer Lehr Division would follow, adding depth to the corps attack.

Covering the Fifth Panzer Army's southern flank were the LXXXV and LXXX Corps of Brandenberger's Seventh Army. The LXXXV's 5th Parachute and 352d Volksgrenadier Divisions were to seize crossings on the Our River, and the LXXX's 276th and 212th Volksgrenadier Divisions, feinting toward the city of Luxembourg, were to draw American strength away from Manteuffel's main attack. The 276th would attack south of the confluence of the Our and Sauer Rivers, enveloping the 3-mile defensive sector held by an American armored infantry battalion, and to the south the 212th, after crossing at Echternach, would push back the large concentration of American artillery in the sector and anchor Army Group B's southern flank. The Germans had a fairly good idea of the American forces opposing them. Facing Dietrich's Sixth Panzer Army was the V Corps' 99th Infantry Division. Newly arrived, the 99th occupied a series of forward positions along 19 miles of the wooded Belgian-German border, its 395th, 393d, and 394th Infantry regiments on line from north to south, with one battalion behind the division's deep right flank available as a reserve. Gerow, the V Corps commander, was focused at the time on a planned attack by his 2d Infantry Division toward the Roer River dams to the north and had given less attention to the defensive dispositions of the 99th. This small operation had already begun on 13 December, with the 2d Division passing through the area held by the 99th Division's northernmost regiment. Two battalions of the 395th Infantry joined the action. Slowed by pillboxes and heavy defenses in the woods, the 2d's attacks were still ongoing when the enemy offensive begin on the sixteenth.

To the south of the 99th Division the First Army had split responsibilities for the Elsenborn ridge—Losheim Gap area between Gerow's V Corps and Middleton's VIII Corps, with the corps boundary running just north of the village of Losheim. Middleton's major worry was the Losheim Gap, which potentially exposed the Schnee Eifel, the latter held by five battalions of the newly arrived 106th Division. When Bradley refused his request to withdraw to a shorter, unexposed line, the VIII Corps commander positioned eight battalions of his corps artillery to support the forces holding the Losheim Gap—Schnee Eifel region.

South of the corps boundary the 18th Cavalry Squadron, belonging to the recently attached 14th Cavalry Group, outposted the 9,000-yard Losheim Gap. Reinforced by a company of 3-inch towed tank destroyers, the 18th occupied eight positions that gave good coverage in fair weather but could be easily bypassed in the fog or dark. To remedy this, Middleton had assigned an additional cavalry squadron to reinforce the gap's thin line under the 14th group. The cavalry force itself was attached to the 106th Division, but with the 106th slowly settling into its positions, a coordinated defense between the two had yet to be decided. As a result, the reinforcing squadron was quartered 20 miles to the rear, waiting to be ordered forward.

South of the Schnee Eifel Middleton's forces followed the Our River with the 106th Division's 424th infantry and, to the south, the 28th Division. After suffering more than 6,000 casualties in the Huertgen Forest battles in November, the 28th was resting and training replacements in a 30-mile area along the Our. Its three regiments—the 112th, 110th, and 109th Infantry—were on line from north to south. Two battalions of the 100th Infantry held 10 miles of the front and the division's center while their sister battalion was kept as part of the division reserve. The 110th had six company-sized strongpoints manned by infantry and engineers along the ridge between the Our and Clerf Rivers to the west, which the troops called ''Skyline Drive.'' Through the center of this sector ran the crucial road to Bastogne.

South of the 28th Division the sector was held by part of Combat Command A of the newly arrived 9th Armored Division and by the 4th Infantry Division, another veteran unit resting from previous battles. These forces, with the 4th's northern regiment, the 12th Infantry, positioned as the southernmost unit in the path of the German offensive, held the line of the Sauer River covering the approaches to the city of Luxembourg. Behind this thinly stretched defensive line of new units and battered veterans, Middleton had few reserves and even fewer options available for dealing with enemy threats.

OPENING ATTACKS, 16–18 DECEMBER

At 0530 on 16 December the Sixth Panzer Army's artillery commenced preparation fires. These fires, which ended at 0700, were duplicated in every sector of the three attacking German armies. At first the American defenders believed the fires were only a demonstration. Simultaneously, German infantry moved unseen through the dark and morning fog, guided by searchlight beams overhead. Yet, despite local surprise, Dietrich's attack did not achieve the quick breakthrough planned. The LXVII Corps' attack north and south of Monschau failed immediately. One division arrived too late to attack; the other had its assault broken by determined resistance. The 277th Volksgrenadier Division's infiltrating attacks followed the preparation fires closely. The Germans overran some of the 99th Division's forest outposts, but they were repulsed attempting to cross open fields near their objectives, the twin villages of Krinkelt-Rocherath. By nightfall the Americans still contested the woods to the north and east of the villages. The 99th's southern flank, however, was in great peril. The 12th Volksgrenadier Division had successfully cleared the 1st SS Panzer Division's main assault avenue, taking the village of Losheim in the early morning and moving on to separate the VIII Corp's cavalry from its connection with the 99th.

South of the American corps boundary the Germans were more successful. Poor communications had further strained the loosely coordinated defense of the 106th Division and the 14th Cavalry Group in the Losheim Gap. The German predawn preparation fires had targeted road junctions, destroying most of the pole-mounted communications wire interchanges. With their major wire command nets silenced, the American defenders had to rely on radio relay via artillery nets, which the mountainous terrain made unreliable.

The attack in the Losheim Gap, in fact, was the offensive's greatest overmatch. The 3d Parachute Division ran up against only one cavalry troop and a tank destroyer company holding over half the sector, and its southern neighbors, the two reinforced regiments of the 18th Volksgrenadier Division, hit four platoons of cavalry. Although some American positions had been bypassed in the dark, the attacking Germans had generally cleared the area by late morning. Poor communications and general confusion limited defensive fire support to one armored field artillery battalion. More importantly, the cavalry's porous front opened the American rear to German infantry; by dawn some of the defenders' artillery and support units behind the Schnee Eifel encountered the enemy. Subsequently, many guns were lost, while others hastily clogged the roads to find safer ground.

The uncoordinated defense of the 106th Division and 14th Cavalry Group now led to tragedy. The cavalry commander quickly realized that his outposts could neither hold nor survive. After launching one abortive counterattack northward against 3d Parachute Division elements with his reserve squadron, he secured permission to withdraw before his road-bound force was trapped against the wooded heights to his rear. This opened the V and VII Corps boundary and separated the cavalry, Middleton's key information source on his northern flank, from the Schnee Eifel battle. Throughout the day of 16 December the 3d pushed north, ultimately overrunning the cavalry's remaining outposts and capturing a small force of the 99th Division. But all of these scattered forces fought valiantly so that by dark the Sixth Panzer Army's route was still clogged

by units mopping up bypassed Americans and their own supply and support rains. To the south the 18th Volksgrenadier Division's attack in the Losheim Gap had slid by the cavalry, but failed to clear the open ridge behind the Schnee Eifel. South of the Schnee Eifel the rest of the 18th was unable to push through the defenders to catch the 106th's units on top of the Schnee Eifel in a pincer. Further south the 106th's 42th Infantry had blocked the path of the 62d Volksgrenadier Division across the Our River. By dark the 106th had thus lost little ground. It had committed its reserve to block the enemy threat to its south and was expecting Combat Command B, 9th Armored Division, shifting from V Corps reserve, to conduct a relieving attach via St. Vith toward the Schnee Eifel. But while the defenders moved to restore their positions, the 18th, by searchlight and flare, continued to press south from the gap.

South of the 106th Division, the 28th Division fended off the Fifth Panzer Army's thrusts. In the north the 112th Infantry held back the LVIII Panzer Corps' two divisions, while the 110th Infantry blocked the paths of the XLVII Panzer Corp's three in the center. The 110th's strong points, which received some tank reinforcement from the division reserve, held firm throughout the sixteenth, blocking the route westward. By dark, although German infantry had crossed the Our and started infiltrating, American roadblocks still prevented any armor movement toward Bastogne.

South of the fifth Panzer Army, Brandenberger's Seventh Army also failed to break through the American line. The 28th Division's 109th Infantry managed to hold on to its 9-mile front. Although the LXXXV Corps' two divisions had seized crossings on the Our and achieved some penetrations between the regiment's company strong-points, they failed to advance further. Similarly, the Germans' southernmost attack was held by the 4th Division's 12th Infantry. The LXXX Corps' divisions met with heavy resistance, and by nightfall the Americans still held their positions all along the Seventh Army front, despite some infiltration between company strongpoints.

Hitler responded to the first day's reports with unbridled optimism. Rundstedt, however, was less sanguine. The needed breakthrough had not been achieved, no major armored units had been committed, and the key panzer routes were still blocked. In fact, the first day of battle set the tone for the entire American defense. In every engagement the Americans had been outnumbered, in some sectors facing down tanks and assault guns with only infantry weapons. Darkness, fog, and intermittent drizzle snow had favored the infiltrating attackers; but, despite inroads made around the defenses, the Germans had been forced to attack American positions frontally to gain access to the vital roads. Time had been lost and more would be spent to achieve a complete breakthrough. In that sense, the grand slam was already in danger.

American senior commanders were puzzled by the situation. The Germans apparently had attacked along a 60-mile front with strong forces, including many new units not identified in the enemy order or battle. Yet no substantial ground had been lost. With many communications links destroyed by the bombardment and the relative isolation of most defensive positions, the generals were presented with a panorama of numerous small-unit battles without a clear larger picture.

Nevertheless, command action was forthcoming. By nightfall of the sixteenth, although response at both the First Army and 12th Army Group headquarters was guarded, Eisenhower had personally ordered the 7th Armored Division from the Ninth Army and the 10th Armored Division from the third Army to reinforce Middleton's hard-pressed VIII Corps. In addition, shortly after midnight, Hodges' First Army began moving forces south from the Aachen sector, while the Third Army headquarters, on Patton's initiative, began detailed planning to deal with the German offensive.

Within the battle area the two corps commanders struggled to respond effectively to the offensive, having only incomplete and fragmentary reports from the field. Gerow, the V Corps commander in the north, requested that the 2d Division's Roer River dams attack be canceled; however, Hodges, who viewed the German action against the 99th Division as a spoiling operation, initially refused. Middleton, the VIII Corps commander in the south, changed his plans for the 9th Armored division's Combat Command B, ordering it to reinforce the southern flank of the 106th Division. The newly promised 7th Armored Division would assume the CCB's original mission of relieving troops on the Schnee Eifel via St. Vith. Thereafter, mixed signals between the VIII Corps and the 106th Division led to disaster. Whether by poor communications or misunderstanding, Middleton believed that the 106th was pulling its men off the Schnee Eifel and withdrawing to a less exposed position; the 106th's commander believed that Middleton wanted him to hold until relieved and thus left the two defending regiments in place.

By the early morning hours of 17 December Middleton, whose troops faced multiple enemy threats, had selected the dispositions that would foreshadow the entire American response. Already ordered by Hodges to defend in place, the VIII Corps commander determined that his defense would focus on denying the Germans use of the Ardennes roadnet. Using the forces at hand, he intended to block access to four key road junctions: St. Vith, Houffalize, Bastogne, and the city of Luxembourg. If he could stop or slow the German advance west, he knew that the 12th Army Group would follow with massive flanking attacks from the north and south.

That same morning Hodges finally agreed to cancel the V Corps' Roer dams attack. Gerow, in turn, moved the 2d Division south to strengthen the 99th Division's southern flank, with reinforcements from the 1st Infantry Division soon to follow. The First Army commander now realized that Gerow's V Corps units held the critical northern shoulder of the enemy penetration and began to reinforce them, trusting that Middleton's armor reinforcements would restore the center of the VIII Corps line.

While these shifts took place, the battle raged. During the night of 16–17 December the Sixth Panzer Army continued to move armor forward in the hopes of gaining the breakthrough that the infantry had failed to achieve. The Germans again mounted attacks near Monschau and again were repulsed. Meanwhile, south of Monschau, the 12th SS Panzer Division, committed from muddy logging trails, overwhelmed 99th Division soldiers still holding out against the 277th and 12th Volksgrenadier Divisions.

Outnumbered and facing superior weapons, many U.S. soldiers fought to the bitter end, the survivors surrendering only when their munitions had run out and escape was impossible. Individual heroism was common. During the Krinkelt battle, for example, T. Sgt. Vernon McGarity of the 393d Infantry, 99th Division, after being treated for wounds, returned to lead his squad, rescuing wounded under fire and single-handedly destroying an advancing enemy machine-gun section. After two days of fighting, his men were captured after firing their last bullets. McGarity received the Medal of Honor for his actions. His was the first of thirty-two such awards during the Ardennes-Alsace Campaign.

Ordered to withdraw under the 2d Division's control, the 99th Division, whose ranks had been thinned by nearly 3,000 casualties, pulled back to the northern portion of a horseshoe-shaped line that blocked two of the I SS Panzer Corps' routes. Although the line was anchored on the Elsenborn ridge, fighting raged westward as the Germans pushed to outflank the extended American defense.

During the night of the seventeenth the Germans unveiled additional surprises. They attempted to parachute a 1,000-man force onto the Hohe Venn's high point at Baraque Michel. Although less than half actually landed in the area, the scattered drop occupied the attention of critical U.S. armored and infantry reserves in the north for several days. A companion special operation, led by the legendary Lt. Col. Otto Skorzeny, used small teams of English-speaking soldiers disguised in American uniforms. Neither the drop nor the operation gained any appreciable military advantage for the German panzers. The Americans, with their resistance increasing along the Elsenborn ridge and elsewhere, were undaunted by such threats to their rear.

Further south, however, along the V and VIII Corps boundary, the Sixth Panzer Army achieved its breakthrough. In the Losheim Gap the advanced detachment of the 1st SS Panzer Division, Kampfgruppe Peiper, moved forward through the attacking German infantry during the early hours of the seventeenth. Commanded by Col. Joachim Peiper, the unit would spearhead the main armored assault heading for the Meuse River crossings south of Liege at Huy. With over 100 tanks and approximately 5,000 men, Kampfgruppe Peiper had instructions to ignore its own flanks, to overrun or bypass opposition, and to move day and night. Traversing the woods south of the main panzer route, it entered the town of Buellingen, about 3 miles behind the American line. After fueling their tanks on captured stocks, Peiper's men murdered at least 50 American POWs. Then shortly after noon, they ran head on into a 7th Armored Division field artillery observation battery southeast of Malmedy, murdering more than 80 men. Peiper's men eventually killed at least 300 American prisoners and over 100 unarmed Belgian civilians in a dozen separate locations. Word of the Malmedy Massacre spread, and within hours units across the front realized that the Germans were prosecuting the offensive with a special grimness. American resistance stiffened.

Following a twisted course along the Ambleve River valley, Kampfgruppe Peiper had completed barely half of its drive to the Meuse before encountering a unit from 9th Armored Division and then being stopped by an engineer squad at the Stavelot bridge. Unknown to Peiper, his column had passed within 15 miles of the First Army headquarters and was close to its huge reserve fuel dumps. But the Peiper advance was only part of the large jolt to the American command that day. To the south the 1st SS Panzer Division had also broken loose, moving just north of St. Vith.

As Kampfgruppe Peiper lunged deep into the First Army's rear, further south the VIII Corps front was rapidly being fragmented. The 18th Volksgrenadier Division completed its southern swing, encircling the two regiments of the 106th Division on the Schnee Eifel. While a single troop of the 14th Cavalry Group continued to resist the German spearheads, the 106th's engineers dug in to block the crucial Schoenberg road 2 miles east of St. Vith, a last ditch defense, hoping to hold out until the 7th Armored Division arrived.

St. Vith's road junctions merited the priority Middleton had assigned them. Although the I SS Panzer Corps had planned to pass north of the town and the LVIII Panzer Corps to its south, the crossroad town became more important after the German failure to make a breakthrough in the north on 16–17 December. There, the successful defense of the Elsenborn ridge had blocked three of the Sixth Panzer Army's routes, pushing Dietrich's reserve and supply routes southward and jamming Manteuffel's Losheim route. South of the Losheim Gap the American occupation of St. Vith and the Schnee Eifel represented a double obstacle, which neither Dietrich nor Manteuffel could afford. With thousands of American soldiers still holding desperately along the Schnee Eifel and its western slope village, the Germans found vital roads still threatened. Further west, the possibility of American counterattacks from the St. Vith roadnet threatened Dietrich's narrow panzer flow westward as well as Manteuffel's own western advance. And from St. Vith, the Americans could not only choke the projected German supply arteries but also reinforce the now isolated Schnee Eifel regiments.

For the 106th Division's men holding the Schnee Eifel, time was running out. The 7th Armored Division's transfer south from the Ninth Army had been slowed both by coordination problems and roads clogged by withdrawing elements. Led by Combat Command B, the 7th's first elements arrived at St. Vith in midafternoon of 17 December, with the division taking command of the local defense immediately. That night both sides jockeyed in the dark. While the 18th Volksgrenadier Division tried to make up lost time to mount an attack on the town from the northeast and east, the 7th, whose units had closed around St. Vith in fading daylight, established a northerly facing defensive arc in preparation for its attack toward the Schnee Eifel the next day.

South of St. Vith the 106th Division's southernmost regiment, the 424th Infantry, and Combat Command B, 9th Armored Division, had joined up behind the Our River. From the high-ground positions there they were able to continue blocking the 62d Volksgrenadier Division, thereby securing the southern approaches to St. Vith. But unknown to them, the 28th Division's 112th Infantry was also folding rearward and eventually joined the 424th and the 7th Armored Division, completing a defensive perimeter around the town. During the night of 17 December, with these forces combining, Middleton and the commanders in St. Vith believed that the VIII Corps' northern flank would be restored and the 106th trapped regiments relieve.

On 18 December Middleton's hopes of launching a counterattack toward the Schnee Eifel faded as elements of three German divisions converged around St. Vith. Although situation maps continued to mark the last-known positions of the 106gh Division's 422d and 423d Infantry on the Schnee Eifel, the massive weight of German numbers ended any rescue attempts. Communicating through a tenuous artillery radio net, both regiments believed that help was on the way and that their orders were to break out to the high ground behind the Our River, a distance of between 3 and 4 miles over difficult enemy-held terrain.

The following day, 19 December, brought tragedy for the 106th Division. The two stranded regiments, now behind the Schnee Eifel, were pounded by artillery throughout the day as the Germans drew their circle tighter. With casualties mounting and ammunition dwindling, the 423d's commander chose to surrender his regiment to prevent its annihilation. The 422d had some of its troop overrun; others, who were both segmented and surrounded, surrendered. By 1600 most of the two regiments and their attached support has thus been captured. Nevertheless, one battalion-sized group evaded captivity until the twenty-first, and about 150 soldiers from the 422d ultimately escaped to safety. The confused nature of the final battles made specific casualty accounting impossible, but over 7,000 men were captured.

The tragedy of the Schnee Eifel was soon eclipsed by the triumph of St. Vith. Every senior German commander saw the ''road octopus''—the omnidirectional junction of six roads in the town's eastern end—as vital for a massive breakthrough, freeing up the Sixth Panzer Army's advance. For the Americans, holding St. Vith would keep the V and VIII Corps within a reasonable distance of each other; without the town the enemy's spearheads would widen into a huge salient, folding back toward Bastogne further south. With intermittent communications, the St. Vith defenders thus operated with only one order from Middleton: ''Hold at all costs.''

Despite a ''goose-egg'' position extending 12 miles from east to west on tactical maps, the St. Vith defense literally had no depth. Designed to fight on the move in more favorable terrain, the four combat commands of the 7th and 9th Armored Divisions found themselves moored to muddy, steep sloped hills, heavily wooded and laced with mud trails. The first action defined the defense's pattern. Unengaged commands sent tanks and halftracks racing laterally across the perimeter to deal with penetrations and infiltrators, with the engaged tanks and infantry holding their overextended lines as best they could. After two days of sporadic attacks, the German commanders attempted to concentrate forces to crush the defense. But with clogged roads German preparations for a coordinated assault encountered continuous delays.

Although the VIII Corps' northern flank had been at least temporarily anchored at St. Vith, its center was in great danger. There, the 28th Division's 110th Infantry was being torn to bits. After failing repeatedly to seize crossing on the Our, Manteuffel had passed some of the 116th Panzer Division's armor through the 2d Panzer Division to move up the Skyline Drive ridgeline and enter its panzer route. Thus by 17 December the 110th had elements of five divisions bulldozing through its strongpoints along the ridge, forcing back the 28th's northern and southern regiments that were attempting to maintain a cohesive defense. The 2d entered Clervaux, in the 110th's center, by a side road and rolled on westward toward Bastogne; holdouts in Clervaux continued to fight from within an ancient castle in the town's eastern end. To the south some survivors of the ridge battle had fallen back to join engineers defending Wiltz, about 4 miles to the rear, and the southern approach to Bastogne. Even though the 110th has suffered over 80 percent casualties, its stand had delayed the XLVII Panzer Corps for a crucial forty-eight hours.

The southern shoulder provided VIII Corps' only clear success. The 4th Division has absorbed the folded back defenses of the 109th Infantry and the 9th Armored Division's Combat Command A, thus effectively jamming the Seventh Army's attack. With the arrival of the 10th Armored Division, a provisional corps was temporarily formed to block any advance toward the city of Luxembourg.

The events of 17 December finally demonstrated the gravity of the German offensive to the Allied command. Eisenhower committed the theater reserve, the XVIII Airborne Corps, and ordered three American divisions training in England to move immediately to north-eastern France. Hodges' First Army moved the 30th Infantry and 3d Armored Divisions south to extend the northern shoulder of the penetration to the west. Although Bradley remained the least concerned, he and Patton explored moving a three-division corps from the Third Army to attack the German southern flank.

Allied intelligence now began to discern German strength objectives with some clarity. The enemy's success apparently was tied to gaining the Meuse quickly and then turning north; however, most of the attacking divisions were trapped in clogged columns, attempting to push through the narrow Losheim Gap and enter the two panzer routes then open. The area, still controlled by the VIII Corps, seemed to provide the key to stabilizing the defensive effort. Somehow the VIII Corps, whose center had now been destroyed, would have to slow down the German drive west, giving the Americans time to strengthen the shoulders north and south of the salient and to prepare one or more major counterattacks.

Middleton committed his only reserves, Combat Command R of the 9th Armored Division and seven battalions of corps and army engineers, positioning the units at critical road junctions. Teams formed from tank, armored infantry, and engineer units soon met the 2d Panzer Division's lead elements. Outgunned in a frontal fight and disadvantaged by the wide-tracked German tanks' cross-country capability in the drizzle-soaked fields, Middleton's armored forces were soon overwhelmed, even though the fighting continued well into the night. By dawn on the eighteenth no recognizable line existed as the XLVII Panzer Corps' three divisions bore down on Bastogne.

Late on 17 December Hodges had requested the commitment of SHAEF reserves, the 82d and 101st Airborne Divisions. Promised to Middleton by the morning of the nineteenth, the VIII Corps commander intended to use them at Houffalize, 17 miles south of St. Vith, and at Bastogne, 10 miles further south, as a solid block against the German advance to the Meuse. But until the airborne divisions arrived, the VIII Corps had to hold its sector with the remnants of its own forces, mainly engineers, and with an armored combat command from the 10th Armored Division, which was beginning to enter the battle for the corps' center.

Middleton's engineer ''barrier line'' in front of Bastogne slowed the German advance and bought critical time, but the arrival of Combat Command B, 10th Armored Division, at Bastogne was crucial. As it moved forward, Middleton dispatched three armored teams to the north and east during the night of the eighteenth to cover the road junctions leading to Bastogne. A key fight took place at Longvilly, just a few miles east of Bastogne, where the remnants of the 9th Armored Division's Combat Command R and the 10th's Team Cherry tried to block the Germans. Three enemy divisions converged there, trapping the CCR force west of the town and annihilating it and then surrounding Team Cherry. But even as this occurred, the lead elements of the 101st Airborne Division passed through Bastogne to defensive positions along the villages and low hills just to the east of the town. Joining with the CCB's three armor teams and the two battalions of engineers from the barrier line, the 101st formed a crescent-shaped defense, blocking the five roads entering Bastogne from the north, east, and south.

The enemy responded quickly. The German commanders wanted to avoid being enmeshed in any costly sieges. So when Manteuffel saw a hole opening between the American defenses at St. Vith and Bastogne, he ordered his panzer divisions to bypass both towns and move immediately toward

their planned Meuse crossing sites some 30 miles to the northwest, leaving the infantry to reduce Bastogne's defenses. Although Middleton had planned to use the 82d Airborne Division to fill the gap between Bastogne and St. Vith, Hodges had been forced to divert it northwest of St. Vith to block the Sixth Panzer Army's advance. Thus only the few engineers and support troops defending the road junctions and crossings along the narrow Ourthe River west of Bastogne lay in the path of Manteuffel's panzers.

COMMAND DECISIONS, 19–20 DECEMBER

Wacht am Rhine's timetable had placed Dietrich's and Manteuffel's panzers at the Meuse four days after the attack began. The stubborn American defense made this impossible. The Sixth Panzer Army, the designated main effort, had been checked; its attacks to open the Hohe Venn's roads by direct assault and airborne envelopment had failed, and Kampfgruppe Peiper's narrow armored spearhead had been isolated. To the south the Fifth Panzer Army's northern corps had been blocked at St. Vith; its center corps had advanced nearly 25 miles into the American center but was still meeting resistance; and its southern corps had been unable to break the Bastogne roadblock. The southern flank was in no better straits. Neither the Seventh Army's feint toward the city of Luxembourg nor its efforts to cover Manteuffel's flank had gained much ground. Hitler's key requirement that an overwhelming force achieve a quick breakthrough had not occurred. Six divisions had held twenty, and now the American forces, either on or en route to the battlefield, had doubled. Nevertheless, the Sixth Panzer Army's II SS Panzer Corps had yet to be committed, and additional divisions and armor existed in the German High Command reserve. The unspoken belief among Hitler's generals now was that with luck and continued poor weather, the more limited objectives of their small solution might still be possible.

Eisenhower's actions had also undermined Hitler's assumption that the Allied response would come too late. When ''Ike'' committed two armored divisions to Middleton on the first day of fighting and the theater reserve on the next, a lightning German advance to the Meuse became nearly impossible. Meeting with his commanders at Verdun on 19 December, Eisenhower, who had received the latest Ultra intelligence on enemy objectives, outlined his overall operational response. Hodges' First Army would break the German advance; along the southern flank of the German penetration Patton's Third Army would attack north, assuming control of Middleton's VIII Corps from the First Army; and Middleton's Bastogne positions would now be the anvil for Third Army's hammer.

Patton, content that his staff had finalized operational planning, promised a full corps attack in seventy-two hours, to begin after a nearly 100-mile move. Devers' 6th Army Group would take up the slack, relieving two of Patton's corps of their frontage. In the north Montgomery had already begun moving the British 30 Corps to backstop the First Army and assume defensive positions behind the Meuse astride the crossings from Liege to Namur.

Eisenhower began his Verdun conference saying, ''The present situation is to be regarded as one of opportunity for us and not disaster.'' That opportunity, as his generals knew, hung not on their own operational plans but on the soldiers on the battlefield, defending the vital St. Vith and Bastogne road junctions, holding on to the Elsenborn ridge, and blocking the approaches to the city of Luxembourg, as well as on the soldiers in numerous ''blocks'' and positions unlocated on any command post map. These men knew nothing of Allied operational plans or even the extent of the German offensive, but in the next days, on their shoulders, victory or disaster rested.

One unavoidable decision on overall battlefield coordination remained. Not one to move a command post to the rear, General Bradley had kept his 12th Army Group headquarters in the city of Luxembourg, just south of the German attack. Maj. Gen. Hoyt S. Vandenberg's Ninth Air Force headquarters, which supported Bradley's armies, stayed there also, unwilling to sever its direct ties with the ground forces. But three German armies now separated Bradley's headquarters from both Hodges' First Army and Simpson's Ninth Army in the north, making it difficult for Bradley to supervise a defense in the north while coordinating an attack from the south. Nor would communications for the thousands of messages and orders needed to control and logistically support Bradley's two northern armies and Vandenberg's two northern air commands be guaranteed.

Eisenhower, therefore, divided the battlefield. At noon on 20 December ground command north of the line from Givet on the Meuse to the high ground roughly 5 miles south of St. Vith devolved to Montgomery's 21 Army Group, which temporarily assumed operational control of both the U.S. Ninth and First Armies. Shifting the ground command raised a furor, given the strained relations Montgomery had with senior American commanders. Montgomery had been successful in attacking and occupying ''ground of his own choosing'' and then drawing in enemy armored reserves where they could be destroyed by superior artillery and air power. He now intended to repeat these tactics, planning to hold his own counterattacks until the enemy's reserves had been spent or a decisive advantage gained. The American generals, however, favored an immediate counteroffensive to first halt and then turn back the German drive. Equally disconcerting to them was Montgomery's persistence in debating command and strategy, a frequent occurrence in all coalitions, but one that by virtue of his personal approach added to the strains within the Allied command.

The British 2d Tactical Air Force similarly took control of the IX and XXIX Tactical Air Commands from Vandenberg's Ninth Air Force. Because the British air commander, Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur ''Maori'' Coningham, had long established close personal relations with the concerned American air commanders, the shift of air commands passed uneventfully.

FIRST ARMY BATTLES, 20–27 DECEMBER

Eisenhower and Montgomery agreed that the First Army would establish a cohesive defensive line, yielding terrain if necessary. Montgomery also intended to create a corps-sized reserve for a counterattack, which he sought to keep from being committed during the defensive battle. The First Army's hasty defense had been one of hole-plugging, last stands, and counterattacks to buy time. Although successful, these tactics had created organizational havoc within Hodges' forces as divisional units had been committed piecemeal and badly jumbled. Complicating the situation even further was the fact that the First Army still held the north-south front, north of Monschau to Elsenborn, while fighting Dietrich's panzers along a nearly east-west axis in the Ardennes.

Blessed with excellent defensive ground and a limited lateral roadnet in front of V Corps positions, Gerow had been able to roll with the German punch and Hodges to feed in reserves to extend the First Army line westward. Much of the Sixth Panzer Army's strength was thus tied up in road jams of long columns of vehicles. But American success was still far from certain. The V Corps was holding four panzer divisions along the northern shoulder, an elbow-shaped 25-mile line, with only parts of four U.S. divisions.

To the west of the V Corps the 30th Infantry Division, now under Maj. Gen. Matthew B. Ridgway's XVIII Airborne Corps, marched south to block Kampfgruppe Peiper at Malmedy and, along the Ambleve River, at Stavelot, Stoumont, and La Gleize. To the south of Peiper the XVIII's other units, the 82d Airborne and 3d Armored Divisions, moved forward to the area between the Salm and Ourthe Rivers, northwest of St. Vith, which was still in danger of being isolated. By 20 December the Peiper force was almost out of fuel and surrounded. During the night of the twenty-third Peiper and his men destroyed their equipment, abandoned their vehicles, and walked out to escape capture. Dietrich's spearhead was broken.

North of St. Vith the I SS Panzer Corps pushed west. Part of the LVIII Panzer Corps had already bypassed the defenders' southern flank. Standing in the way of Dietrich's panzers was a 6-mile line along the Salm River, manned by the 82d Airborne Division. Throughout the twenty-first German armor attacked St. Vith's northwestern perimeter and infantry hit the entire eastern circumference of the line. Although the afternoon assault was beaten back, the fighting was renewed after dark. To prevent being trapped from the rear, the 7th Armored Division began pulling out of its advanced positions around 2130. The other American units around the town conformed, folding into a tighter perimeter west of the town.

Ridgway wanted St. Vith's defenders to stay east of the Salm, but Montgomery ruled otherwise. The 7th Armored Division, its ammunition and fuel in short supply and perhaps two-thirds of its tanks destroyed, and the battered elements of the 9th Armored, 106th, and 28th Divisions could not hold the extended perimeter in the rolling and wooded terrain. Meanwhile, Dietrich's second wave of tanks entered the fray. The II SS Panzer Corps immediately threatened the Salm River line north and west of St. Vith, as did the LVIII Panzer Corps circling to the south, adding the 2d SS Panzer Division to its drive. Ordering the St. Vith defenders to withdraw through the 82d Airborne Division line to prevent another Schnee Eifel disaster, Montgomery signaled them that ''they come back with all honor.''

Mud threatened to trap much of the force, but nature intervened with a ''Russian High,'' a cold snap and snowstorm that turned the trails from slurry to hard ground. While the Germans seemed temporarily powerless to act, the St. Vith defenders on 23 December, in daylight, withdrew across the Salm to reform behind the XVIII Airborne Corps front. Ridgway estimated that the successful withdrawal added at least 100 tanks and two infantry regiments to his corps.

The St. Vith defense purchased five critical days, but the situation remained grave. Model's Army Group B now had twelve full divisions attacking along roughly 25 miles of the northern shoulder's east-west front. Hodges' army was holding with thirteen divisions, four of which had suffered heavy casualties and three of which were forming in reserve. Montgomery had designated Maj. Gen. J. Lawton ''Lightning Joe'' Collins' VII Corps as the First Army's counterattack force, positioning its incoming divisions northwest of Hodges' open flank, hoping to keep them out of the defensive battle. He intended both to blunt the enemy's assault and wear down its divisions by withdrawing the XVIII Airborne

Corps to a shorter, defendable line, thus knitting together the First Army's fragmented defense. Above all, before launching a major counterstroke, Montgomery wanted to cripple the German panzers with artillery and with constant air attacks against their lines of supply.

The Russian High that blanketed the battlefield brought the Allies one tremendous advantage—good flying weather. The week of inclement weather promised to Hitler by his meteorologists had run out—and with it the ability to move in daylight safe from air attack. The Allied air forces rose to the occasion. Night bombers of the Royal Air Force's Bomber Command had been attacking those rail yards supporting the German offensive since 17 December. In the five days of good weather following the Russian High, American day bombers entered the interdiction effort. As Allied fighter bombers patrolled the roads throughout the Ardennes and the Eifel, the Ninth Air Force's medium bombers attacked targets west of the Rhine and the Eighth Air Force's heavy bombers hit rail yards deeper into Germany. Flying an average of 3,000 sorties daily during good weather, the combined air forces dropped more than 31,000 tons of bombs during the first ten days of interdiction attacks.

The effects on the ground battle were dramatic. The sluggish movement of fuel and vehicles over the Ardennes' few roads had already slowed German operations. The added strain on resupply from the bombing and strafing now caused halts up and down the German line, making coordinated attacks more difficult. Still, panzer and infantry units continued to press forward.

From Christmas Eve to the twenty-seventh, battles raged along the First Army's entire front. The heaviest fighting swirled around the positions held by Ridgway's XVIII Airborne Corps and Collins' VII Corps, the latter having been piecemealed forward to extend the First Army line westward. While the XVIII Corps battled the Sixth Panzer Army's last attempts to achieve a northern breakthrough, the VII Corps' 3d Armored and 84th Infantry Divisions held the line's western end against the LVIII and XLVII Panzer Corps. These units had become Model's new main effort, swinging wide of Dietrich's stalled attack, and they now had elements about 5 miles from the Meuse. Upon finding the 2d Panzer Division out of gas at the German salient's tip, Collins on Christmas Day sent 2d Armored Division, with heavy air support, to encircle and destroy the enemy force.

The First Army's desperate defense between the Salm and Meuse Rivers had stopped the Sixth and Fifth Panzer Armies, including six panzer divisions. The fierce battles—at places as Baraque de Fraiture, Manhay, Hotton, and Marche—were epics of valor and determination. Hitler's drive for Antwerp was over.

THIRD ARMY BATTLES, 20–27 DECEMBER

The 20 December boundary shift transferred Middleton's VIII Corps and its Bastogne garrison to Patton's Third Army, which was now moving forces from as far away as 10 miles to attack positions south of the German salient. Bastogne had become an armed camp with four airborne regiments, seven battalions of artillery, a self-propelled tank destroyer battalion, and the surviving tanks, infantry, and engineers from two armored combat commands—all under the 101st Airborne Division's command.

Manteuffel had ordered the Panzer Lehr and the 2d Panzer Divisions to bypass Bastogne and speed toward the Meuse, thus isolating the defenders. As the 26th Volksgrenadier Division and the XLVII Paner Corps' artillery closed in for the kill on 22 December, the corps commander's emissary arrived at the 101st Division's command post, demanding surrender or threatening annihilation. The acting division commander, Brig. Gen. Anthony C. McAuliffe, replied ''Nuts,'' initially confounding the Germans but not Bastogne's defenders. The defense held.

For four days bitter fighting raged in a clockwise rotation around Bastogne's southern and western perimeter, further constricting the defense within the low hills and patches of woods surrounding the town. The infantry held ground, with the armor scurrying to seal penetrations or to support local counterattacks. Once the overcast weather had broke, the defenders received both air support and aerial resupply, making it imperative for Manteuffel to turn some of his precious armor back to quickly crush the American defense, a large deadly threat along his southern flank.

Meanwhile, as Bastogne held, Patton's Third Army units streamed northward. Maj. Gen. John B. Millikin's newly arrived III Corps headquarters took command of the 4th Armored and 26th and 80th Infantry Divisions, in a move quickly discovered and monitored by the Germans' effective radio intercept units. In response, Brandenberger's Seventh Army, charged with the crucial flank guard mission in Hitler's offensive, rushed its lagging infantry divisions forward to block the expected American counterattack.

Jumping off as promised on 22 December some 12 to 15 miles south of Bastogne, III Corps divisions achieved neither the surprise nor momentum that Bradley and Patton had hoped. No longer a lunge into an exposed flank, the attack became a frontal assault along a 30-mile front against infantry holding good defensive terrain. With Bastogne's garrison totally surrounded, only a quick Third Army breakthrough could prevent the brilliant holding action there from becoming a costly disaster. But how long Bastogne's defenders could hold out was a question mark.

To the east, as Millikin's III Corps moved against hardening enemy resistance along the Sure River, Maj. Gen. Manton S. Eddy's XII Corps attacked northward on a front almost as wide as the III Corps'. Taking control of the 4th Infantry and 10th Armored Divisions and elements of the 9th Armored Division, all units of Middleton's former southern wing, Eddy met greater difficulties in clearing the ridges southeast of Bastogne. Meanwhile, the 35th and 5th Infantry Divisions and the 6th Armored Division moved northward to strengthen the counterattacks. Millikin finally shifted the main effort to the west, where the 4th Armored Division was having more success. Following fierce village-by-village fighting in frigid temperatures, the 4th linked up with Bastogne's defenders at 1650 on 26 December, lifting the siege but setting the stage for even heavier fighting for the Bastogne sector.

NORDWIND IN ALSACE, 31 DECEMBER–5 JANUARY

By 21 December Hitler had decided on a new offensive, this time in the Alsace region, in effect selecting one of the options he had disapproved earlier in favor of Wacht am Rhine. With the Fifteenth Army's supporting thrust canceled due to Dietrich's failure to break the northern shoulder, and with no hope of attaining their original objectives, both Hitler and Rundstedt agreed that an attack on the southern Allied front might take advantage of Patton's shift north to the Ardennes, which Wehrmacht intelligence had identified as under way. The first operation, called Nordwind (''Northwind''), targeted the Saverne Gap, 20 miles northwest of Strasbourg, to split the Seventh Army's XV and VI Corps and retake the Alsace north of the Marne-Rhine Canal. If successful, a second operation, called Zahnartz (''Dentist''), would pursue objectives westward toward the area between Luneville and Metz and into the Third Army's southern flank. Lt. Gen. Hans von Obstfelder's First Army would launch the XIII SS Corps as the main effort down the Sarre River valley, while to the southeast four divisions from the XC and LXXXIX Corps would attack southwesterly down the Low Vosges mountain range through the old Maginot Line positions near Bitche. A two-division panzer reserve would be held to reinforce success, which Hitler believed would be in the Sarre River sector. Reichsfuehrer Heinrich Himmler's Army Group Oberrhein, virtually an independent field army reporting only to Hitler, was to pin the southern flank of the Seventh Army with holding attacks. The new offensive was planned for the thirty-first, New Year's Eve. However, its target, the U.S. Seventh Army, was neither unready nor unwarned.

Lt. Gen. Alexander M. Patch's Seventh Army, part of Devers' 6th Army Group, which also included the French First Army, had been among the theater's unsung heroes. After conducting assault landings on the coast of southern France in August 1944, the small army had chased a significantly larger force northward; but, much to the chagrin of his commanders, Patch had been ordered not to cross the Rhine, even though his divisions were among the first Allied units to reach its banks. In November the Seventh Army had been the Western Front's leading Allied ground gainer. Yet, when Patton's Third Army found its offensive foundering, Patch, again following orders, had sent a corps northward to attack the Siegfried Line's southern flank, an operational lever designed to assist Patton's attack.

On 19 December, at the Verdun conference, the 6th Army Group was again relegated to a supporting role. Eisenhower ordered Devers to assume the front of two of Patton's corps that were moving to the Ardennes, and then on the twenty-sixth he added insult to injury by telling the 6th Army Group commander to give up his Rhine gains by withdrawing to the Vosges foothills. The switch to the defense also scrapped Devers' planned attacks to reduce the Colmar Pocket, the German foothold stretching 50 miles along the Rhine's western banks south of Strasbourg. Held in check by two corps of General Jean de Lattre de Tassigny's French First Army, this area was the only German bridgehead in Devers' sector. But by Christmas Eisenhower saw a greater threat than the Colmar Pocket opening on his southern front.

Allied intelligence had confirmed that a new enemy offensive in the Alsace region was imminent. Eisenhower wanted the Seventh Army to meet it by withdrawing to shortened lines to create reserves, essentially ceding northern Alsace back to the Germans, including the city of Strasbourg. Not surprisingly, Devers, Patch, and de Lattre objected strongly to the order. In the end, rather than withdraw, Devers shifted forces to create a reserve to backstop the key enemy attack avenues leading into his front and ordered the preparation of three intermediate withwrawal lines forward of the defensive line designated by Eisenhower.

By New Year's Eve, with two U.S. divisions withdrawn from the Seventh Army and placed in theater reserve, the 6th Army Group's front resembled the weakened defense that had encouraged the German Ardennes offensive. Patch's six divisons covered a 126-mile front, much of it along poor defensive ground. Feeling that the Saree River valley just north of the Low Vosges would bear the brunt of any attack, Patch assigned Maj. Gen. Wade Haislip's XV Corps a 35-mile sector between Sarreguemines and

Bitche, with the 103d, 44th, and 100th Infantry Divisions holding from northwest to southeast, backed by the experienced French 2d Armored Division. Maj. Gen. Edward H. Brooks' VI Corps took up the balance of Patch's front from the Low Vosges southeast to Lauterbourg on the Rhine and then southward toward Strasbourg. Brooks' corps had the veteran 45th and 79th Infantry Divsions and the 14th Armored Division in reserve. Patch inserted Task Force Hudelson, a two-squadron cavalry force, reinforced with infantry from the uncommitted 14th Armored Division at the boundary joining the two American corps.

The deployment of three additional units—Task Force Linden (42d Infantry Division), Task Force Harris (63d Infantry Division), and Task Force Herren (70th Infantry Division)—demonstrated how far Devers and Patch would go to avoid yielding ground. Formed from the infantry regiments of three arriving divisions and led by their respective assistant division commanders, these units went straight to the Seventh Army front minus their still to arrive artillery, engineer, and support units that comprised a complete division. By late December Patch had given the bulk of Task Force Harris to Haislip's XV Corps and the other two to Brooks, who placed them along the Rhine between Lauterbourg and Strasbourg.

Despite knowledge of the impending Alsace offensive, the exact location and objectives were unclear. Troop buildups near Saarbruecken, east of the Rhine, and within the Colmar Pocket pointed to possible thrusts either southwestward down the Sarre River valley or northward from the Colmar region, predictions made by the Seventh Army's G–2 that proved to be remarkably accurate.

On New Year's Eve Patch told his corps commanders that the Germans would launch their major offensive early the next day. Actually, first combat began shortly before midnight all along the XV Corps front and along both the southeastern and southwestern approaches from Bitche toward the Low Vosges. The XIII SS Corps' two reinforced units, the 17th SS Panzergrenadier and 36th Volksgrenadier Divisions, attacked the 44th and 100th Division, whose prepared defense in depth included a regiment from Task Force Harris. The Germans made narrow inroads against the 44th's line near Rimling during fighting characterized by constant American counterattacks supported by French armor and Allied air attacks during clear weather. After four days of vicious fighting the XIII SS Corps' initial offensive had stalled.

The XC and LXXXIX Corps attacked near Bitche with four infantry divisions abreast. Advancing through the Low Vosges, they gained surprise by forgoing artillery preparations and by taking advantage of fog and thick forests to infiltrate Task Force Hudelson. As in the Losheim Gap, the defending mechanized cavalry held only a thin line of strongpoints; lateral mobility through the rough snowladen mountain roads was limited. The light mechanized forces were soon overrun or bypassed and isolated by the 559th, 257th, 361st, and 256th Volksgrenadier Divisions. The Germans gained about 10 miles during Nordwind's first four days, heading directly for the Saverne Gap that linked the XV and VI Corps.

Both American corps commanders responded quickly to the threat. Haislip's XV Corps plugged the northwestern exits to the Low Vosges with Task Force Harris, units of the 14th Armored and 100th Divisions, and a regiment from the 36th Infantry Division, which Eisenhower had released from theater reserve. Brooks' VI Corps did the same, stripping its Lauterbourg and Rhine fronts and throwing in Task Force Herren, combat engineers converted to infantry, and units of the 45th and 75th Infantry Divisions to plug holes or block routes out of the Low Vosges.

While units fought for twisted roads and mountain villages in subfreezing temperatures, Obstfelder's First Army committed the 6th SS Mountain Division to restart the advance on the Saverne Gap. In response, Patch shifted the 103d Infantry Division eastward from the XV Corps' northwestern wing to hold the southeastern shoulder of the Vosges defense. By 5 January the SS troopers managed to bull their way to the town of Wingen-sur-Moder, about 10 miles short of Saverne, but there they were stopped. With the Vosges' key terrain and passes still under American control and the German advance held in two salients, Nordwind had failed.

Meanwhile, the original SHAEF withdrawal plan, especially the abandonment of Strasbourg, had created an Allied crisis in confidence. Supporting Devers' decision not to withdraw, the Free French government of General Charles de Gaulle enlisted British Prime Minister Winston Churchill's support to amend Eisenhower's orders. Fortunately, Patch's successful defense temporarily shelved the SHAEF withdrawal plan, but Alsace was not to be spared further German attacks. Hitler's armored reserve and Himmler's Army Group Oberrhein had not yet entered the battle.

ERASING THE BULGE

North of the Alsace region the Allied commanders were concerned with reducing the enemy's Ardennes salient, now called the ''Bulge.'' From the beginning of Wacht am Rhein they had envisioned large-scale counterattacks. The decisions as to where and how the attacks would be launched, however, underscored their different perspectives. The theoretical solution was to attack the salient at its base. Patton had in fact planned to have the Third Army's right flank corps, the XII, attack further eastward toward Bitburg, Germany, along what he referred to as the ''honeymoon trail.'' Bradley, however, as the commander responsible for the southern attack, wanted to cover the shortest distance to relieve Hodges' beleaguered First Army units. Overruling Patton, he designated Houffalize, midway between Bastogne and St. Vith, as a primary objective. Middleton's reinforced VIII Corps, the westernmost force, would drive on Houffalize; the middle force, Millikin's III Corps, would remain on Middleton's right flank heading for St. Vith; and Eddy's XII Corps would serve as an eastern hinge. Bradley's choice made the best use of the existing roads; sending Millikin's IIII Corps along advantageous terrain corridors avoided the favorable defensive ground on the successive ridges east of Bastogne. Once linked with the First Army, the 12th Army Group's boundary would revert to its original northern line. Only then would Bradley send the First and Third Armies east into the Eifel toward Pruem and Bitburg in Germany. Bradley further solidified his plan by committing newly arriving reinforcements—the 11th Armored, 17th Airborne, and 87th Infantry Divisions—to the west of Bastogne for Middleton's VIII corps.

Montgomery had eyed Houffalize earlier, viewing the approaches to the town from the northwest as excellent for a corps-sized attack. His own extended defensive line on the northern shoulder of the bulge and the piecemeal entry of Collins' VII Corps into battle further west did not shake his original concept. Much like Bradley, he saw an interim solution as best. Concerned that American infantry losses in Gerow's V Corps had not been replaced, and with the same terrain and roadnet considerations that had jammed the German assault westward, Montgomery ruled out a direct attack to the south at the base of the bulge. As December waned, Rundstedt's remaining armored reserves were centered near St. Vith, and the roadnet there offered inadequate avenues to channel the four U.S. armored divisions into an attack. Unwilling to weaken his western flank now that his reserve had been committed, Montgomery seemed more prone to let the VII Corps attack from its present positions northwest of St. Vith. Eisenhower raised the issue of committing the British 30 Corps. But having deactivated units to rebuild the corps for use in his projected Rhineland offensive, Montgomery agreed to move it across the Meuse to assume Collins' vacated front, a transfer that would not be completely accomplished until 2 January. From there, the 30 Corps would conduct limited supporting attacks. Although Hodges, as First Army commander, would select the precise counterattack axis, he knew Montgomery's repeated preference for the VII Corps to conduct the main effort and also Bradley's preference for a quick linkup at Houffalize. Hodges' decision was thus predictable. The VII Corps would constitute the First Army's main effort, aimed at Houffalize. Ridgway's XVIII Airborne Corps would cover the VII's northeastern flank, and, like Millikin's III Corps, its advance would be pointed at St. Vith. The Germans would thus be attacked head on.

Timing the counterstrokes also raised difficulties. The American generals wanted the First Army to attack immediately, claiming the Germans had reached their high-water mark. Montgomery demurred, citing intelligence predictions of an imminent offensive by the II SS Panzer Corps—an assault he welcomed as it fit his concept of weakening enemy armor further rather than conducting costly attacks. Contrary to Montgomery's tactics, Eisenhower preferred that the First Army attack immediately to prevent the Germans from withdrawing their panzers and shifting them southward.

Patton's renewed attacks in late December caused the Third Army to learn firsthand how difficult the First Army battles had been. In the Third Army sector the relief of Bastogne had not changed the intensity of combat. As Manteuffel received panzer reinforcements, he threw them into the Bastogne salient before it could be widened and extended northward toward the First Army. Patton's Third Army now encountered panzers and divisions in numbers comparable to those that had been pressing against the northern shoulder for the previous 10 days. In the week after Bastogne's relief the number of German divisions facing the Third Army jumped from three to nine around Bastogne and from four to five in the III and XII Corps sector of the front.

The fighting during the 9-mile American drive from Bastogne to Houffalize became a series of bitter attacks and counterattacks in worsening weather. Patton quickly added the 17th Airborne, the 87th and 35th Infantry, and the 11th and 6th Armored Divisions to his attacking line, which stretched 25 miles from the Ourthe River to the Clerf. While the III Corps continued its grim attacks northeastward against the forested ridges of the Wiltz valley leading toward German escape routes eastward out of the salient, VIII Corps forces added some width to the Bastogne salient but gained no ground northward before New Year's Day. Both sides reinforced the sector with every available gun. In a nearly week-long artillery duel Patton's renewed attacks collided with Manteuffel's final efforts to eradicate the Bastogne bridgehead.

During the same week German attacks continued along the First Army line near the Elsenborn ridge and in the center of the

XVIII Airborne Corps line before a general quiet descended upon the northern front. In many areas the fields, forests, and roads were now covered with waist-high snowdrifts, further impeding the movement of both fighting men and their resupply vehicles.

Climaxing Wacht am Rhein's efforts, the Luftwaffe launched its one great appearance of the campaign during the early morning hours of New Year's Day. Over 1,000 aircraft took off before dawn to attack Allied airfields in Holland and Belgium, with the objective of eliminating the terrible scourge that the Allied air forces would again become once the skies cleared over the entire battle area. The Germans destroyed roughly 300 Allied machines, but their loss of more than 230 pilots was a major blow to the Luftwaffe, whose lack of trained aviators was even more critical than their fuel shortages.

Casualties mounted, bringing on a manpower shortage in both camps. Although the Germans continued to commit fresh divisions until late December, the Americans, with only three uncommitted divisions in theater, were forced to realign their entire front. Many units moved from one combat to another without rest or reinforcement. December's battles had cost the Americans more than 41,000 casualties, and with infantry replacements already critically short, antiaircraft and service units had to be stripped to provide riflemen for the line. Black soldiers were offered the opportunity to fight within black platoons assigned to many white battalions, a major break from previous Army policy.

Despite the shortage of replacements, both Patton's Third Army and Hodges' First Army attacked on 3 January. Collins' VII Corps in the north advanced toward the high ground northwest of Houffalize, with two armored divisions in the lead. Meeting stiff opposition from the LXVI Corps, VII Corps infantry soon replaced the tanks as difficult terrain, icy roads, and a tenacious defense using mines, obstacles, antitank ambushes, and armored counterattacks took their toll. The XVIII Airborne Corps moved its right flank south to cover Collins' advance, and in the far west the British 30 Corps pushed eastward. Under intense pressure Hitler's forces pulled back to a new line, based on the Ourthe River and Houffalize, with the bulk of the SS panzer divisions withdrawing from the battlefield. Poor weather restricted Allied flyers to intermittent close support for only three days in the nearly two weeks that VII Corps units fought their way toward their juncture with the Third Army.

South of the Bulge the Third Army intensified its attacks northward to meet the First Army. Still counting on Middleton's VIII Corps to break through, Patton sent Millikin's III Corps northeastward, hoping to enter the roadnet and follow the terrain corridors to link up with Ridgway's XVIII Airborne Corps attacking St. Vith. Despite having less than fifty-five tanks operational, the I SS Panzer Corps counterattacked the III Corps' 6th Armored Division in ferocious tank fights unseen since the fall campaign in Lorraine. While the III Corps' 90th Division infantrymen broke through to the heights overlooking the Wiltz valley, the VIII Corps to the west struggled against a determined force fighting a textbook withdrawal. By 15 January Noville, the scene of the original northern point of the Bastogne perimeter, was retaken. Five miles from Houffalize, resistance disappeared. Ordered to escape, the remaining Germans withdrew, and on the sixteenth the Third Army's 11th Armored Division linked up with the First Army's 2d Armored Division at Houffalize.

The next day, 17 January, control of the First Army reverted to Bradley's 12th Army Group. Almost immediately Bradley began what he had referred to in planning as a ''hurry-up'' offensive, another full-blooded drive claiming the Rhine as its ultimate objective while erasing the Bulge en route. On the twenty-third Ridgway's XVIII Airborne Corps, now the First Army's main effort, and the 7th Armored Division took St. Vith. This action was the last act of the campaign for the First Army. Hodges' men, looking out across the Losheim Gap at the Schnee Eifel and hills beyond, now prepared for new battles.

In the Third Army sector Eddy's XII Corps leapt the Sure River on 18 January and pushed north, hoping to revive Patton's plan for a deep envelopment of the German escape routes back across the Belgian-Luxembourg-German borders. Intending to pinch the escape routes via the German tactical bridges on the Our River, the 5th Division crossed the Sauer at night, its main body pushing northward to clear the long Skyline Drive ridge, where the 28th Division had faced the first assaults. By the campaign's official end on the twenty-fifth the V, XVIII, VIII, III, and XII Corps had a total of nine divisions holding most of the old front, although the original line east of the Our River had yet to be restored.

NORDWIND REVISITED, 5–25 JANUARY

In early 1945, as Operation Wacht am Rhein in the Ardennes started to collapse, Operation Nordwind in the Alsace was revived. On 5 January, after Nordwind's main effort had failed, Himmler's Army Group Oberrheim finally began its supporting thrusts against the southern flank of Brooks' VI Corps, with the XIV SS Corps launching a cross-Rhine attack north of Strasbourg. Two days later, south of the city, the Nineteenth Army launched Operation Sonnenwende (''Winter Solstice''), attacking north, astride the Rhone-Rhine Canal on the northern edge of the German-held Colmar Pocket. These actions opened a three-week battle, whose ferocity rivaled the Ardennes fighting in viciousness if not in scope and threatened the survival of the VI Corps.

Sonnenwende sparked a new crisis for the 6th Army Group, which had too few divisions to defend every threatened area. With Brooks' VI Corps now engaged on both flanks, along the Rhine at Gambsheim and to the northeast along the Low Vosges mountain exits, Devers transferred responsibility for Strasbourg to the French First Army, and de Lattre stretched his forces to cover both the city and the Belfort Gap 75 miles to the south.

But the real danger was just northeast of Strasbourg. There, the XIV SS Corps had punched out a 10-miles bridgehead around the town of Gambsheim, brushing off small counterattacks from Task Force Linden. Patch's Seventh Army, reinforced with the newly arrived 12th Armored Division, tried to drive the Germans from the Gambsheim area, a region laced with canals, streams, and lesser watercourses. To the south de Lattre's 3d Algerian Division defended Strasbourg, while the rest of the French First Army kept the Colmar Pocket tightly ringed. But the fate of Strasbourg and the northern Alsace hinged on the ability of the American VI Corps to secure its besieged flanks.

Having driven several wedges into the Seventh Army, the Germans launched another attack on 7 January. The German XXXIX Panzer Corps, with the 21st Panzer and the 25th Panzergrenadier Divisions, attacked the greatly weakened VI Corps center between the Vosges and Lauterbourg. Quickly gaining ground to the edge of the Haguenau Forest 20 miles north of Strasbourg, the German offensive rolled along the same routes used during the successful attacks of August 1870 under Field Marshal Helmuth von Moltke. Moltke's successors, however, made no breakthrough. In the two Alsatian towns of Hatten and Rittershoffen, Patch and Brooks threw in the Seventh Army's last reserve, the 14th Armored Division. Assisted by a mixture of other combat, combat support, and service troops, the division halted the Germans.

While the VI Corps fought for its life in the Haguenau Forest, the enemy renewed attacks on both flanks. During an intense battle between units of the 45th Division and the 6th SS Mountain Division in the Low Vosges, the Germans surrounded an American battalion that had refused to give ground. After a week's fighting by units attempting its relief, only two soldiers managed to escape to friendly lines.

Although gaining ground, the enemy had achieved no clear-cut success. Hitler nevertheless committed his last reserves on 16 January, including the 10th SS Panzer and the 7th Parachute Divisions. These forces finally steamrolled a path along the Rhine's west bank toward the XIV SS Corps' Gambsheim bridgehead, over-running one of the green 12th Armored Division's infantry battalions at Herrlisheim and destroying one of its tank battalions nearby. This final foray led Brooks to order a withdrawal on the twenty-first, one that took the Germans by surprise and was completed before the enemy could press his advantage.

Forming a new line along the Zorn, Moder, and Rothback Rivers north of the Marne-Rhine Canal, the VI Corps commander aligned his units into a cohesive defense with his badly damaged but still game armored divisions in reserve. Launching attacks during the night of 24–25 January, the Germans found their slight penetrations eliminated by vigorous counterattacks. Ceasing their assaults permanently, they might have found irony in the Seventh Army's latest acquisition from SHAEF reserves—the ''Battling Bastards of Bastogne,'' the 101st Airborne Division, which arrived on the Alsace front only to find the battle over.

Even before Nordwind had ended, the 6th Army Group commander was preparing to eliminate the Colmar Pocket in southern Alsace. Five French divisions and two American, the 3d Infantry and the rebuilt 28th Division, held eight German infantry divisions and an armored brigade in a rich farming area laced with rivers, streams, and a major canal but devoid of significant hills or ridges. Devers wanted to reduce this frozen, snow-covered pocket before thaws converted the ploughed ground to a quagmire. General de Lattre's French First Army would write finis to the Germans in the Colmar Pocket, but it would be a truly Allied attack.

To draw the German reserves southward, plans called for four divisions from the French I Corps to start the assault. This initial foray would set the stage for the French II Corps to launch the main effort in the north. The defending Nineteenth Army's eight divisions were low on equipment but well provided with artillery munitions, small arms, and mines, and fleshed out with whatever manpower and materiel that Himmler, the overall commander, could scrounge from the German interior. Bad weather, compartmentalized terrain, and fear of Himmler's SS secret police strengthened the German defense.

On 20 January, in the south, Lt. Gen. Emile Bethouart's French I Corps began its attack in a driving snowstorm. Although its gains were limited by armored-infantry counterattacks, the corps drew the Nineteenth Army's armor southward, along with the arriving 2d Mountain Division. Two days later, in the north, Maj. Gen. Amie de

Goislard de Monsabert's French II Corps commenced its attack, led by the U.S. 3d Division. Reinforced by one of the 63d Infantry Division's regiments, the 3d advanced over the first of several watercourses and cleared the Colmar Forest. It met resistance on the Ill River but continued to fight its way forward through enemy counterattacks, subsequently crossing the Colmar Canal and opening an avenue for the French 5th Armored Division. The Allies pushed further eastward in deepening snow and worsening weather, with the 28th and 75th Divisions from the Ardennes following. On the twenty-fifth Maj. Gen. Frank W. Milburn's XXI Corps joined the line. Assuming control of the 3d, 28th, and 75th Divisions, the 12th Armored Division, which was shifted from reserves, and the French 5th Armored Division, the corps launched the final thrust to the Vauban Canal and Rhone-Rhine Canal bridges at Neuf-Brisach. Although the campaign was officially over on 25 January, the American and French troops did not completely clear the Colmar Pocket until 9 February. However, its successful reduction marked the end of both the German presence on French territory and the Nineteenth Army. And with the fighting finally concluded in the Ardennes and Alsace, the Allies now readied their forces for the final offensive into Germany.

ANALYSIS

Hitler's last offensives—in December 1944 in the Ardennes region of Belgium and Luxembourg, and in January 1945 in the Alsace region of France—marked the beginning of the end for the Third Reich. With these final attacks, Hitler had hoped to destroy a large portion of the Allied ground force and to break up the Allied coalition. Neither objective came close to being achieved. Although perhaps the Allies' victory in the spring of 1945 was inevitable, no doubt exists that the costs incurred by the Germans in manpower, equipment, supplies, and morale during the Ardennes-Alsace battles were instrumental in bringing about a more rapid end to the war in Europe. Eisenhower had always believed that the German Army on the Western Front had to be destroyed west of the Rhine River to make a final offensive into Germany possible. When added to the tremendous contributions of the Soviet Army, which had been fighting the majority of Germany's armed forces since 1941, the Ardennes-Alsace victory set the stage for Germany's rapid collapse.

With little hope of staving off defeat, Germany gambled everything on achieving a surprise operational decision on the Western Front. In contrast, the Allied coalition pursued a more conservative strategy. Since the Normandy invasion Eisenhower's armies had neither the combat power necessary to mount decisive operations in more than one sector nor the reserves; more importantly, their logistical capability was insufficient to fully exploit any major successes. The resulting broadfront Allied advance steadily wore away the German defenses; but, as in the case of the Ardennes and Alsace fronts, the Allied lines had many weak points that could be exploited by a desperate opponent. Moreover, once Hitler's attacking legions had been stopped, the Allies lacked the combat power to overwhelm the German divisions defending their recently acquiring gains. In the Ardennes, terrain and worsening weather aided the Germans in holding off Allied counterattacks for an entire month, ultimately allowing them to withdraw a sizable portion of their initial assault force with perhaps one-third of their committed armor.

The battle in the Alsace appeared to be less dramatic than in the Ardennes, but was no less an Allied victory. Hitler spent his last reserves in Alsace—and with them the ability to regain the initiative anywhere. Like the Normandy Campaign, the Ardennes-Alsace struggle provided the necessary attrition for the mobile operations that would end the war. The carefully husbanded enemy reserves that the Allies expected to meet in their final offensive into Germany had been destroyed in December and January.

Some thirty-two U.S. divisions fought in the Ardennes, where the daily battle strength of U.S. Army forces averaged twenty-six divisions and 610,000 men. Alsace added eleven more divisions to the honors list, with an average battle strength of 230,000. Additionally, separate divisional elements as well as divisions arriving in sector at the end of the campaign granted participation credit to three more divisions. But the cost of victory was staggering. The final tally for the Ardennes alone totaled 41.315 casualties in December to bring the offensive to a halt and an additional 39,672 casualties in January to retake lost ground. The SHAFE casualty estimate presented to Eisenhower in February 1945 listed casualties for the First Army at 39,957; for the Third Army at 35,525; and for the British 30 Corps, which helped at the end, at 1,408. Defeating Hitler's final offensive in the Alsace was also costly; the Seventh Army recorded its January battle losses at 11,609. Sickness and cold weather also ravaged the fighting lines, with the First, Third, and Seventh Armies having cold injury hospital admissions of more than 17,000 during the entire campaign. No official German losses for the Ardennes have been computed, but they have been estimated at between 81,000 and 103,000. A recently published German scholarly source gave the following German casualty totals: Ardennes—67,200; Alsace (not including Colmar Pocket)—22,932. Most of the figures cited do not differentiate between permanent losses (killed and missing), wounded, and non-battle casualties.

Analysts of coalition warfare and Allied generalship may find much to criticize in the Ardennes-Alsace Campaign. Often commonplace disputes over command and strategy were encouraged and overblown by newspaper coverage, which reflected national biases. Predictably, Montgomery inspired much American ire both in revisiting command and strategy issues, which had been debated since Normandy, and in pursuing methodical defensive-offensive tactics. Devers and de Lattre, too, strained coalition amity during their successful retention of liberated French terrain. But in both cases the Allied command structure weathered the storm, and Eisenhower retained a unified command. Preservation of a unit Allied command was perhaps his greatest achievement. In the enemy camp the differences between Hilter and his generals over the objectives of the Ardennes offensive were marked, while the uncoordinated efforts of Obstfelder's First Army and Himmler's Army Group Oberrhein for the Alsace offensive were appaling.

The Ardennes-Alsace battlefield proved to be no general's playground, but rather a place where firepower and bravery meant more than plans or brilliant maneuver. Allied and German generals both consistently came up short in bringing their plans to satisfactory fruition. That American soldiers fought and won some of the most critical battles of World War II in the Ardennes and the Alsace is now an indisputable fact.

U.S. DIVISIONS IN THE ARDENNES-ALSACE CAMPAIGN

1st Infantry Division, 2d Infantry Division, 3d Infantry Division, 4th Infantry Division, 5th Infantry Division, 9th Infantry Division, 26th Infantry Division, 28th Infantry Division, 30th Infantry Division, 35th Infantry Division, 36th Infantry Division, 42d Infantry Division, 44th Infantry Division, 45th Infantry Division, 63d Infantry Division,* 70th Infantry Division, 75th Infantry Division, 76th Infantry Division, 78th Infantry Division, 79th Infantry Division, 80th Infantry Division, 83d Infantry Division, 84th Infantry Division, 87th Infantry Division, 90th Infantry Division, 94th Infantry Division, 95th Infantry Division, 99th Infantry Division, 100th Infantry Division, 103d Infantry Division, 106th Infantry Division.

2d Armored Division, 3d Armored Division, 4th Armored Division, 5th Armored Division, 6th Armored Division, 7th Armored Division, 8th Armored Division, 9th Armored Division, 10th Armored Division, 11th Armored Division, Armored Division, 12th Armored Division, 14th Armored Division.

17th Airborne Division, 82d Airborne Division, 101st Airborne Division.

ARDENNES-ALSACE 1944–1945

Further Readings

A number of official histories provide carefully documented accounts of operations during the Ardennes-Alsace Campaign. U.S. Army operations are covered in Hugh M. Cole, The Ardennes: Battle of the Bulge (1965); Charles B. MacDonald, The Last Offensive (1973); and Jeffrey J. Clarke and Robert Ross Smith, Riviera to the Rhine (1991), three volumes in the United States Army in World War II series. Air operations are detailed in Wesley F. Craven and James L. Cate, eds., Europe: Argument to V–E Day, January 1944 to May 1945 (1951), the third volume in the Army Air Forces in World War II series, and the British perspective and operations are covered in L. F. Ellis, Victory in the West: the Defeat of Germany (1968). Among the large number of books that describe the fighting in the Ardennes are Gerald Astor, A Blood-Dimmed Tide (1992), John S. D. Eisenhower, The Bitter Woods (1969), Charles B. MacDonald, A Time for Trumpets (1985), S. L. A. Marshall, The Eight Days of Bastogne (1946), Jean Paul Pallud, Battle of the Bulge Then and Now (1984), Danny S. Parker, Battle of the Bulge (1991), and Robert F. Phillips, To Save Bastogne (1983). At the small-unit level Charles MacDonald's Company Commander (1947) is still the standard classic. Fighting in the Alsace region has been sparsely covered, but Keith E. Bonn's When the Odds Were Even (1994) is valuable.

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. Shows).

Mr. SHOWS. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to address my colleagues and the American people about a moment in American history that stands out in my family as one of the most crucial there ever was. It is one of those moments in our history where the larger story of the American experience becomes intertwined with the personal legacy of an American family.

The Battle of the Bulge began on December 16, 1944, and ended on January 25, 1945. This enemy offensive was staged to split our forces in half and cripple our supply lines. Of course there were 600,000 American troops participating in the Battle of the Bulge, as we have heard awhile ago. 810,000 Americans were casualties, of whom 19,000 were killed; 33,400 were wounded; and there were 2,000 who were either captured or listed as missing.

*Elements only

One of these 2,000, I want to talk about this morning. My father, Clifford Shows, was one of those captured as a prisoner of war. Today in Mosselle, Mississippi, my father is a veteran. He stands tall when the national anthem is played, enjoys his family and neighbors, and lives out a most American life. It is hard for me to talk about it.

We must remember the actions of my father and the thousands of others who fought then that we might be free now. This year is the 55th anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge. Let us pause, let us remember, and let us be thankful. Please support H.J. Res. 65.

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. REYES).

Mr. REYES. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.J. Res. 65 which commends our World War II veterans who fought in the Battle of the Bulge. This is a great bill because it honors the determination and the courage of these veterans in stopping the last great Nazi counteroffensive of World War II.

History tells us that the fighting in Belgium sealed the victory for the allies in Europe. Without this victory, many additional months of fighting would have been necessary before Nazi Germany's surrender. Our troops overcame superior numbers of Nazi troops and harsh weather to repel and turn back this last great offensive of World War II.

Victory, however, came at a terrible price, with about 81,000 American casualties, 19,000 of which were killed. Each and every veteran of the Battle of the Bulge witnessed the horrors of war. One of those was my own father-in-law, Victor Gaytan, who today is a disabled veteran who lives with the wounds he suffered defending our freedom against that threat in Belgium that winter.

Today, my wife and I are honored to have him live with us. Yes, at 79 he walks a little slower, moves at times hesitantly and with great pain; but when you look into his eyes, there is no doubt about his role in saving our country and our way of life. He is a hero to us and was one of those great Americans that courageously turned back the last desperate attempt of the Nazis to stop Allied momentum toward Germany.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that we can never sufficiently express our gratitude to these veterans, America's greatest generation. But this legislation is a proper and fitting way to honor them and their service to their country. With this legislation, we honor these American soldiers and we ensure that future generations of Americans remember the price of freedom in Europe and around the world during World War II. I strongly support this legislation and urge the House to unanimously pass this great bill.

Mr. STUMP. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH).

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, just to point out during markup, and this was extraordinary, at least four Members came forward to speak as the gentleman from Texas just pointed out, his father-in-law, the gentleman from Mississippi, his dad, and so many others. Few battles have touched more people than the Battle of the Bulge. The gentleman from Arizona's uncle also fought. He is a combat veteran himself, but his uncle fought at the Battle of the Bulge, was there.

And Joe McNulty, one of our key staffers on the majority side, he just came up and whispered to me that his father got the purple heart, was wounded in both legs. There are few battles that have touched more people and few battles that have done more to save freedom and liberty than the Battle of the Bulge. It is amazing how many people in this Chamber have relatives and close relatives and perhaps themselves actually fought in that very, very famous battle.

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. BARRETT).

Mr. BARRETT of Wisconsin. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EVANS) for yielding me this time. I rise in support of House Joint Resolution 65. I want to pay special tribute to a man who was killed in that fight, Bob Kuehn of Rhinelander, Wisconsin. Bob Kuehn was raised in Rhinelander, Wisconsin. After graduating from high school, he attended St. Norbert College in De Pere, Wisconsin, where he was a member of the ROTC program. He graduated in June of 1944 and later that month was married to Gertrude Kuehn of Sturgeon Bay.

They traveled to Camp Fannin in Tyler, Texas; but he was called into Patton's Third Army, and he was killed December 17, 1944, leaving a 23-year-old widow back in Wisconsin. That widow was my mother. Fortunately, my mother was able to move on and attended school at the University of Wisconsin where she met my father, who also fought in World War II and earned the Distinguished Flying Cross for his service.

My father, of course, was fortunate to meet my mother, and my two sisters and I are fortunate enough to have them as parents. But Bob Kuehn has never been forgotten. I pay tribute to him and the thousands of other Americans who gave their lives to protect our freedoms.

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. TRAFICANT).

Mr. TRAFICANT. Mr. Speaker, it is fitting that we pay tribute to those who gave of their lives and served at the Battle of the Bulge and to every soldier, every man and woman who participated in the Great War to protect our freedoms, protect the independence of this Nation, and to promote freedom and democracy in the world. I did not plan to speak on this resolution, but I do so now in honor of all of those who have served, to remind this Congress that the grave sacrifices they made to win the war, we may be losing the peace.

Last week, they celebrated 50 years of communism in China, parades, tanks, missiles, floats, parties. What bothers me is with a $70 billion trade surplus they enjoy from Uncle Sam, they paid for that parade last week with our cash. Ronald Reagan's great fight was to make sure that communism did not spread, and, by God, I am not so sure we are living up to the great task and challenge and the example set by those who fought in the Battle of the Bulge; I am not so sure we are passively turning our back and taking for granted our great freedoms that they protected. I think we better look at it. They won the war. Let us not lose the peace. I am proud to support this resolution. I commend the authors.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.J. Res. 65, a resolution commending our veterans of the Battle of the Bulge. I urge my colleagues to join in supporting this worthwhile measure.

This year marks the 55th anniversary of the German Ardennes offensive of December 1944, more commonly known as the Battle of the Bulge. In the weeks leading up to the Christmas of 1944, it appeared to the Western Allies that victory over the German army was near at hand. Many thought that one final push was all that was needed to force a total collapse of German resistance on the Western front.

What the Allied commanders were not aware of was the fact that the German dictator was planning one final, desperate offensive through the Ardennes Forest, in the hopes of splitting the Allied lines.

The German attack came as a total surprise, and achieved initial success. Poor weather prevented Allied air superiority from being brought to bear, and the German Panzers took full advantage of the respite. Yet, in the end, their offensive failed.

The offensive failed because American soldiers shook off their initial shock and fought with a stubborn tenacity to prevent a German breakthrough. The Allied lines gave way, hence the ''Bulge'' description, but refused to break. After several days, the weather cleared, and the overwhelming Allied advantage in tactical air power was finally brought to bear in a concentrated counterattack.

The resolution honors those courageous veterans who fought in the Battle of the Bulge, resulting in a tenacious defense, under horrible conditions, against an enemy with superior armored forces. Their success in halting the German Ardennes offensive preserved the Allied lines, and helped to maintain the offensive pressure on Germany.

The efforts of our veterans in the Battle of the Bulge, like those of all Americans who fought against tyranny in World War II, deserve our recognition and respect. Accordingly, I urge my colleagues to join in supporting this measure, which memorializes the significant contributions of the veterans of the Bulge to the ultimate victory of freedom over tyranny during the Second World War.

Mr. GEJDENSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of House Joint Resolution 65

which commends United States Veterans for their heroism in the Battle of the Bulge during World War II. The resolution also reaffirms our bonds of friendship with our Allies we stood together with during that noble cause.

I commend the bill's sponsor, Mr. SMITH of New Jersey, and the Chairman and Ranking Members of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, Mr. STUMP and Mr. EVANS for their support. I am proud to be a cosponsor of this resolution.

I would like to take this time to pay tribute in particular to two of the 600,000 American troops who served in the German Ardennes offensive, known as the Battle of the Bulge. These two heroes who risked their lives to defend our freedom come from my home state of Connecticut.

One is Bob Dwyer of Vernon, Connecticut. After serving his country in World War II, he now continues to serve his nation in peacetime by working for the Veterans' Coalition in Connecticut. Mr. Dwyer plays a central role in this group which provides crucial services and assistance for veterans and advocates on their behalf.

Another hero is Gerald Twomey of Norwich, Connecticut. Mr. Twomey served in a World War II reconnaissance unit that had already fought in North Africa, Sicily, and Normandy before he made his way to this momentous battle. In an interview with Bob Hamilton of the New London Day last year, Mr. Twomey described his service in Africa and Italy as difficult but nothing like the organized resistance he and his comrades met in Ardennes. ''That was brutal,'' said Twomey. ''It was very, very cold weather, a lot of snow. It was tough. They kept bringing over replacements, and they were knocking them off as fast as they could bring them over . . . It was much worse than North Africa, much worse.''

Anyone who has studied the accounts of this battle is struck by the resilience and courage of our troops at the Battle of the Bulge. Their bravery withstood Hitler's last ditch offensive to prevent the Allies from closing in on Berlin. A passage from the book Citizen Soldiers by Stephen Ambrose serves as a testament to the courage of American fighting men in recovering from a withering German attack and summoning the strength to respond:

> From the Supreme Commander down to the lowliest private, men pulled up their socks and went forth to do their duty. It simplifies, but not much, to say that here, there, everywhere, from top to bottom, the men of the U.S. Army in northwest Europe shook themselves and made this a defining moment in their own lives, and the history of the Army. They didn't like retreating, they didn't like getting kicked around, and as individuals, squads, and companies as well as at Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force, they decided they were going to make the enemy pay.

Mr. Speaker, I have nothing more to add except to once again thank these American heroes on behalf of my constituents in Connecticut and citizens across this nation.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to join my colleagues in paying tribute to the courageous Americans who fought during World War II, especially those who fought at the Battle of the Bulge.

The Battle of the Bulge, as you and my colleagues know, Mr. Speaker, was a major German offensive in the Ardennes forest region of Belgium and Luxembourg that was fought from December 16, 1944 to January 25, 1945. Over 600,000 American troops participated in the Battle of the Bulge, sustaining 81,000 casualties.

I am proud of my many family members and constituents who served this country in the last world war. In so doing, I especially think about my cousin John Henry Woodson, Jr., who not only fought in World War II but was actually left for dead behind enemy lines. He was reported as missing in action for almost three weeks, before he found his way back to the American troops. Although he was fortunate to be among those who returned home, that terrible experience and others during the war left an indelible memory and mark on the rest of his life.

John served the Virgin Islands Community exceptionally for many years, first at the Department of Health and later as a public school science teacher and principal. He is remembered by the Virgin Islands through the Junior High School, on St. Croix, which bears his name.

Today, as we remember those veterans who fought at the Battle of the Bulge for their service and sacrifice, I lovingly remember my cousin Johnny, and the other Virgin Islanders who also served there.

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. STUMP. Mr. Speaker, once again I would like to thank the gentleman from Illinois, the ranking member of the committee, for all of his assistance on this bill, as well as the gentleman from New Jersey who brought the bill to us in the committee.

Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SUNUNU). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. STUMP) that the House suspend the rules and pass the joint resolution, House Joint Resolution 65, as amended.

The question was taken.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

SENSE OF CONGRESS IN SYMPATHY FOR VICTIMS OF HURRICANE FLOYD

Mr. FRANKS of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 322) expressing the sense of the House of Representatives in sympathy for the victims of Hurricane Floyd, which struck numerous communities along the East Coast between September 14 and 17, 1999.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 322

Whereas on September 16, 1999, Hurricane Floyd deposited up to 18 inches of rain on sections of North Carolina only days after the damaging rains of Hurricane Dennis;

Whereas Hurricane Floyd continued up the eastern seaboard, causing flooding and tornadoes in Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, and Connecticut;

Whereas Hurricane Floyd is responsible for 66 known deaths, including 48 confirmed dead in North Carolina alone, as well as 3 in New Jersey, 2 in New York, 6 in Pennsylvania, 4 in Virginia, 2 in Delaware, and 1 in Vermont;

Whereas hundreds of roads along the eastern seaboard remain closed as a result of damage caused by Hurricane Floyd;

Whereas waters contaminated by millions of gallons of bacteria, raw sewage, and animal waste have flowed into homes, businesses, and drinking water supplies due to septic, pipeline, and water treatment system damage caused by the flooding associated with Hurricane Floyd, a situation that poses considerable health risks for individuals and families in affected States;

Whereas areas in 10 States were declared Federal disaster areas as a result of Hurricane Floyd—Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Virginia;

Whereas individuals registering for Federal assistance in States hit by Hurricane Floyd totalled 68,440 as of September 26, 1999, with 39,265 in North Carolina, 11,121 in New Jersey, 4,582 in New York, 3,222 in South Carolina, 3,153 in Virginia, 371 in Delaware, 6,479 in Pennsylvania, 173 in Connecticut, and 74 in Maryland;

Whereas thousands of individuals and families have been displaced from their homes and are now taking refuge in temporary housing or shelters;

Whereas over $2 million in temporary housing grants have been issued in New York and New Jersey and the residential loss estimates are over $80 million in North Carolina alone; and

Whereas the nature of this disaster deserves the immediate attention and support of the Federal Government: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) expresses its deepest sympathies to everyone who suffered as a result of Hurricane Floyd; and

(2) pledges its support to continue to work on their behalf to restore normalcy to their lives and to renew their spirits by helping them recover, rebuild, and reconstruct.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. FRANKS) and the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. TRAFICANT) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. FRANKS).

Mr. FRANKS of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

In communities up and down the East Coast, including many in my own congressional district, Hurricane Floyd left a path of unprecedented destruction, hardship, and tragedy. It has been more than 3 weeks since the storm hit, and still thousands of families are unable to return to their homes. In communities throughout our area, downtowns have become ghost towns.

Several of the towns I represent have suffered through floods before, but past storms were nothing in comparison to what happened on the evening of September 16. In the small community of Bound Brook, New Jersey, flood waters as high as 12 feet turned the downtown