

G-2

G-2 After Action Report

August - 1944

- SECTION I - 3 August to 7 August, Concentration at ST Jores
- SECTION II - 8 August to 9 August, Movement to LE Mans Sector
- SECTION III - 10 August to 13 August, Operations at Sille Le Guillaume
- SECTION IV - 14 August to 17 August, Movement to Argentan
- SECTION V - 18 August to 21 August, Battle of Argentan Falaise Gap
- SECTION VI - 22 August to 29 August, Advance to Chalons-Sur-Marne
- SECTION VII - 29 August to 31 August, Occupation of Chalons-Sur-Marne
- SECTION VIII - Comments, Observations, and Recommendations

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SECTION I

Concentration at ST JORES

3 - 7 August 1944

The concentration of the 80th Infantry Division in FRANCE at ST JORES from 3 August to 7 August 1944, occurred simultaneously with the breakthrough at AVRANCHES and the attack on the BRITTANY PENINSULA. The rapidity and strength of the breakthrough had temporarily thrown the GERMANS on the US. Army front into confusion. Field Marshall ROMMEL had been reported wounded and VON KLUGE had been made C in C in the West. The enemy had committed at that time approximately forty-five divisions on the NORMANDY front and had managed to build up a mobile reserve of five Panzer Divisions. This reserve, together with remnants of the units swept aside at AVRANCHES, counterattacked on 6 August from MORTAIN in a desperate effort to cut the Third U. S. Army supply lines in the vicinity of AVRANCHES. It was to meet this counterattack that the 80th Division received its first combat orders on 7 August 1944. During this period, the Division Intelligence Agencies made final preparations for functioning in combat.

SECTION II

Movement to LE MANS Sector 8-9 August 1944

The GERMAN counterattack having been stopped in the vicinity of MORTAIN, the 80th Division, temporarily motorized, moved South during the night 8-9 August. During this movement, the Division received its baptismal fire in AVRANCHES and ST HILAIRE Du HARCOURT, which were bombed by the enemy as the columns passed through during the night. At ST HILAIRE, the first prisoner of war was taken, when a GERMAN aviator surrendered to Lieutenant Lloyd C. Bloomer, "A" Battery, 314th Field Artillery Battalion.

Closing into an assembly area, the Division was immediately committed from LAVAL to LE MANS. LE MANS had been liberated early that day and the extended supply line was vulnerable to attack by elements of the 706th German Division from the vicinity of SILLIE LE GUILLAUME. First contact with the enemy was made on the 9th of August when the 317th and 318th Infantry Regiments moved North and liberated EVRON and ST SUZANNE, and received fire from occasional snipers.

SECTION III

Operations at SILLIE LE GUILLAUME - 10-13 August 1944

The enemy situation North of the LE MANS - LAVAL highway was obscure when the Division moved into the area. Information gained from the 90th

Infantry Division in the vicinity of LE MANS and from civilians established the fact that the 706th Infantry Division was operating in this sector. PW taken on the 10th from the 748th Regiment of the 706th Infantry Division confirmed this fact. Elements of the 1st Sicherung Regiment formerly charged with the defense of PARIS as part of the 325th Sicherung Regiment were also rushed to this area to try and stem the American advance. The Division advance northward, however, was opposed only by small disorganized groups, and by minefields and demolitions. On 11 August, SILE LE GUILLAUME was occupied without opposition. On 13 August, VILLAINES was seized with only light opposition from the enemy who by this time had withdrawn completely to the North to escape encirclement.

SECTION IV

Movement to ARGENTAN - 14-17 August

From the 14th through the 17th of August, the 80th Division was out of contact with the enemy. During this period, the Germans were fighting a desperate rearguard action, to save remnants of the 7th German Army from encirclement. German strong points were holding at ARGENTAN FALAISE to prevent the closing of the trap and the 9th SS Panzer Division was trying to hold the eastward attack of the US and British forces. The 80th Division was ordered to move on ARGENTAN to eliminate that German strong point and to close the ARGENTAN - FALAISE Gap on 17 August.

SECTION V

Battle of Argentan - Falaise Gap 18-21 August

The city of Argentan and the high ground North of Argentan to Le Bourg St Leonard were strongly held by the 728th Infantry Regiment of the 116th Panzer Division. Argentan itself was held by a GAF Battalion and a detachment of about 100 SS troopers. 14-15 Panther tanks and numerous self-propelled 20mm AA Guns were also committed to the defense of the city and vicinity. The enemy defensive position was well protected by minefields and booby traps and the enemy had had ample time to dig in. The Forrest of Gouffern, between Argentan and Chambois, provided cover for the enemy supply installations and communication lines.

The enemy resisted our attacks fiercely on the 18th and 19th of August supported by heavy artillery concentrations and direct fire guns. On the night of the 19th the enemy withdrew from Argentan, but the majority of the defenders were cut off by our troops on the high ground back of the town or caught in the "pocket" into which they were driven. The Argentan-Falaise pocket was closed when the 90th U. S. Infantry Division and the Polish Armored Division met at Chambois. During the remainder of operations, there was no organized resistance.

The enemy surrendered in large numbers or were killed and their equipment destroyed by our artillery fire and aerial bombing. The Division took 1009 prisoners during this operation and destroyed 14 enemy tanks.

Great quantities of German supplies and equipment were destroyed and equally large amounts were captured. One ammunition dump captured by the 80th Division contained 27,000 tons of ammunition; a GAF map depot captured contained maps of every theater of operations including maps used for coordination of air and submarines in the Atlantic, and a complete annotated aerial photo coverage of the United Kingdom.

SECTION VI

Advance to Chalons - 22-29 August

With the conclusion of the Argentan action, the Allied Division that had driven in from the South were pinched out by the British drive East. The 80th Division returned to the Third U. S. Army to take up the pursuit of the enemy fleeing East to try and establish the line of the Marne. Many disorganized German units were held South of the Loire River. The 80th Division moved from Argentan South to the Loire and East along the Loire and finally went into an assembly area Northeast of Sens preparatory to crossing the Seine River and moving on Chalons Sur Marne on 26 August. The enemy had blown all bridges in the Division zone of advance across the Seine and Aube Rivers and had withdrawn to the Northeast the night of 28-29 August; mining roads and making hasty roadblocks of fallen trees as they went. The 51st SS Brigade was fighting fiercely in Troyes but was surrounded and wiped out by the 4th Armored Division. On the Division West boundary in the vicinity of Sezanne the German 48th Infantry Division with remnants of other forces retreating from the Paris area were withdrawing Northeast and constituted a possible threat to the Division West flank.

During the night of 25-26 August, the enemy continued to withdraw. The Division advance was unopposed until the advance elements reached the high ground West of the Marne River. Many small units of the enemy were left behind our forward elements during this march and were captured during the next few days in the Division rear areas.

In addition to strong enemy outposts on the high ground West of the Marne, mines, booby traps and demolitions slowed up the advance of our troops. Large fires were seen burning in Chalons and civilians reported the Germans were withdrawing from Chalons. Our troops received artillery fire from across the Marne about 1800 hours and patrols to the river received small arms fire. All bridges across the Marne were blown. During the night, the enemy continued their withdrawal to the East from Chalons and the FFI attacked the retreating enemy in the city. The attack of the French and the arrival of the 4th Armored Division on the high ground Southeast of Chalons threw the enemy into further disorder, and our troops occupying the city on the morning of the 29th of August, met with only scattered resistance.

Prisoners were taken from many units and no definite organization could be identified. Chalons had been an enemy supply and evacuation center and quantities of supplies were left behind by the Germans (See attached list). Besides these supplies, over 60 wounded Americans were recaptured in the hospital of Chalons, and several escaped American prisoners and one American newspaper correspondent made their way into our lines.

SECTION VII

Occupation of CHALONS - 30 -31 August

With the enemy continuing to withdraw toward the MEUSE River, the Division outposts around CHALONS met with no organized resistance. Stragglers and disorganized groups of enemy were captured in both forward and rear areas. Information had been received from civilians and other sources that the 15th and 3d Panzer Grenadier Divisions (recently engaged in the GEORANCE, ITALY sector) were now moving into the Division zone of advance with the mission of establishing a line of defense and halting the spearhead of the Allied drive Eastward. These reports were confirmed when a sharp patrol action took place between the Division Reconnaissance Troop and a motorized patrol of the 3d Battalion of the 29th Panzer Grenadier Regiment on 1 September 1944. The enemy's instructions had been to hold the line of the MARNE, but our rapid advance had made this impossible, and the enemy had to fall back to attempt to hold line of the MEUSE; or failing that, to fall back to the line of the MOSELLE River.

SECTION VIII

Comments

The 80th Infantry Division went into combat against an enemy that was totally disorganized and with the exception of two days at ARGENTAN, all the action was in the pursuit of the enemy. Information of the enemy organization in this type of action was relatively unimportant. The location of enemy minefields, booby traps, demolitions, and enemy pockets of resistance, and the quick dissemination of this information was the chief function of the G-2 Section.

Information obtained from German prisoners was invaluable and it was rarely found that German soldiers would hold back any information they had.

Information from civilians, both from the organized FFI and the local population, was plentiful and of great use. Evaluation of this information after a period of time showed that almost invariably there was a foundation but the facts were usually exaggerated and often distorted.

It was found necessary to keep an IPW Team with each regimental CT at all times. It was also found necessary to caution all units again against allowing anyone to interrogate prisoners or talk to them before they reached the regimental PW enclosures.

The Photo Interpretation Team was used during this phase of operations to supplement the map issue by sketches and blow ups. The fast moving situation and changes of front made it impossible for photographs of the zone of advance to be received in time to be of value.

The Order of Battle Team was incorporated into and worked as a part of the G-2 Section.

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Roster of G-2 Section and Attached Intelligence Teams:

G-2 Section

AC of S, G-2 Richard R. Fleisher
Asst AC of S, G-2 E. Coe Kerr
Asst AC of S, G-2 Robert M. Walker

M/Sgt Edward J. Patrick

T/Sgt Roy D. Moore T/4 John Mackenzie
Sgt John J. Meehan T/4 Robert E. Matteson
T/4 Walter R. Bryans Cpl Harry A. Jessell

MII Team #444

OIC - Captain Edgar A. Eschmann, Jr.
Asst- 2d Lt Robert Wechsler

M/Sgt Thomas Dolgoff T/3 Abram Mason
S/Sgt Clarence Freeman T/3 Bernard Rosen

PI Team #69

OIC - Captain, M. E. Derbin
Asst- 2d Lt John Lang

M/Sgt William De Huszar T/3 Asael Sorenson
S/Sgt John Rampf T/3 Nate Kaplan

IPW Team #75

OIC - Captain Paul Loeser, Jr.
Asst- 2d Lt Eric Denzer

M/Sgt Jules Oppenheimer T/3 Henry Fluss
S/Sgt Ernest S. Isenberg T/5 Fred B. Hirschel

IPW Team #76

OIC - 1st Lt Theodore E. Gutmann
Asst- 2d Lt Ernest W. Beissinger

M/Sgt Siegmund Fuld T/3 Eric Goldschmidt
S/Sgt Ernest Steen T/5 Ralph Hatry

OIC Detachment

OIC - Captain Thomas McMillen
Asst- 2d Lt Carl O'Neal

T/Sgt Rober W. Rainey	S/Sgt John Klinek
T/Sgt Clayton Axtell	S/Sgt John Quinlan
T/Sgt Thomas Eddington	Cpl. Reuben Raymond

OB Team #34

OIC - 1st Lt. Armand V. Paolino

M/Sgt Herbert Fleck
S/Sgt Herbert Arnot