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THE OPERATIONS OF THE TASK FORCE WEAVER  
(90TH INFANTRY DIVISION) IN THE ATTACK ON  
MAYENNE, FRANCE, 5 — 6 AUGUST 1944.  
(NORTHERN FRANCE CAMPAIGN)

Type of operation described: TASK FORCE IN THE ATTACK

Captain Boyd L. Brown, Infantry  
ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS CLASS NO I

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THE OPERATIONS OF THE TASK FORCE WEAVER  
(90TH INFANTRY DIVISION) IN THE ATTACK ON  
MAYENNE, FRANCE, 5 - 6 AUGUST 1944  
(NORTHERN FRANCE CAMPAIGN)

ORIENTATION

INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operations of the Task Force Weaver, 90th Infantry Division, in the attack and capture of MAYENNE, FRANCE, 5 - 6 August 1944.

It might be well to discuss some of the major events of the invasion of EUROPE, which will lead up to and orient the reader for a better understanding of this operation.

On 6 June 1944 the fortress of WESTERN EUROPE was invaded by the greatest amphibious and airborne force in the history of warfare. By 1 August the Allied Forces, under the Supreme Commander General Eisenhower, had expanded their beachhead, fought through the hedgerows and cut the CONTENTIN PENINSULA, and reached far south to include the French town of AVRANCHES, on the GULF OF ST. MALO. (See Map A)

On 1 August General Omar N. Bradley took command of the 12th U.S. Army Group, comprised of the First and Third U.S. Armies. (1) The First U.S. Army, with the VIII, VII, and V Corps, was in contact with the enemy along a line that ran generally northeast from the town of AVRANCHES, joining with the British Forces under General Montgomery in the vicinity of the VIRE RIVER near LE BENY BOCAGE. The British First and Second Army zones were relatively small in comparison with that of the U. S. First Army. (See Map A)

"Third Army became operational officially at 1200 hours, 1 August 1944, engaged in flaming battle in two directions and going like a bat out of Hell in both." (2) These are the words of Colonel Robert S. Allen, wartime chief of Combat Intelligence on General George S. Patton's Third Army Staff, in his book Lucky Forward. This quotation is used to describe the Third U.S. Army's entrance into the conflict on 1 August 1944, in the vicinity of AVRANCHES, FRANCE.

This operation is often referred to as "The Breakout at AVRANCHES" and it is here that we might well find the beginning of our own operation.

On 1 August the Third Army comprised of the following: VIII Corps, commanded by Major General Troy H. Middleton and the XV Corps, commanded by Major General Wade H. Haislip. The Third Army had actually controlled the operations of the VIII and XV Corps from 28 July, (3) It is with the XV Corps that we will be primarily concerned since it's composition at that time was the 83d and 90th Infantry Divisions and the 5<sup>th</sup> Armored Division. (4)

THE GENERAL SITUATION

The initial breakout at AVRANCHES was led by the VIII Corps. Armor and Infantry streamed through the ever broadening gap on every available road. In order to exploit this success and maintain momentum, General Patton ordered the XV Corps through the AVRANCHES-MORTAIN gap behind the VIII Corps, between the 1st and 3d of August. At this time we find the 90th Infantry Division concentrating near ST. HILAIRE DE HARCOUET southwest of AVRANCHES. (5) XV Corps was ordered to seize bridgeheads across the MAYENNE RIVER both at MAYENNE and LAVAL, and subsequently to establish a bridgehead across the SARTHE RIVER at LE MANS. (6) To the 90th went the mission of seizing the bridgehead at MAYENNE, the operation with which we are concerned.

THE ORGANIZATION OF TASK FORCE WEAVER

At about midnight on the night of 4 - 5 August the Division Commander, Brigadier General Raymond S. McLain, summoned his staff and commanders to the Division Command Post, in the vicinity of LAUNAY. General McLain had been assigned to the Division on 30 July 1944 along with Brigadier General William G. Weaver, assistant Division Commander.

The Third Army G-2 report dated 4 August 1944 had stated in part "Enemy situation continues too fluid to define an established front line. Estimated battalion of Infantry reported at ERNEE." (8)

Therefore, to facilitate the accomplishment of the mission and at the same time take advantage of the enemy situation, General McLain now organized Task Force Weaver. It would be a fast, hard hitting, mobile striking force, capable of exploiting any penetration into enemy rear areas. It would be a self-sustaining unit insofar as its size and conformation would permit. The assistant Division Commander would be in command and from him it would gain its name. The following organic or attached units made up the force: (See Appendix A)

|                        |                          |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Det 90 Div Staff       | Co A 315th Med Bn        |
| 90th Rcn Troop         | Co A 607 TD Bn           |
| 712th Tank Bn          | Btry A 537th AAA Bn (AW) |
| 357th Infantry (Mtz)   | Det 90th MP Co           |
| 343d FA Bn             | Det 90th Sig Co          |
| Co A 315th Engr (C) Bn |                          |

(For organization of Task Force see Appendix B)

At 0200, 5 August 1944, the battalion and separate unit commanders of the 357th Infantry Regiment were notified to be at the Regimental Command Post at 0300 hours for the purpose of receiving the Regimental Commander's order for the march. Colonel G. B. Barth, the Regimental Commander, designated the 1st Battalion, commanded by Major E. S. Hamilton, as the advance guard and assigned twenty-eight two and one-half ton trucks for transportation. These trucks were to be picked up at ST. HILAIRE at 0600 hours. One platoon from the Regimental Anti-Tank Company was attached to the 1st Battalion, also Company A of the 712th Tank Battalion. Major Hamilton phoned Captain Len Redman, the Battalion S-3, and had him alert the battalion. Captain Redman was told to alert the Battalion Motor Officer, Lieutenant A. L. Todd, to ST. HILAIRE to pick up the trucks and bring them to the battalion assembly area.

At 0500 hours the Companies were fed a hot breakfast and at 0530 hours the company commanders reported to the Battalion Command Post to receive the march order. (9)

#### NARRATION

##### THE MARCH TO MAYENNE

Task Force Weaver, led by 1st Battalion, 357th Infantry Regiment as the advance guard, moved to cross the IP which was several miles south of ST. HILAIRE. The battalion order of march was: Company B, commanded by 1st Lieutenant B. F. Stevens, one section of machine guns from Company D attached; the battalion anti-tank platoon; the command group; Company C, commanded by 1st Lieutenant B. F. Adams, with one section of machine guns from Company D attached; the mortar platoon from Company D; Company A, commanded by Lieutenant George Spath; regimental anti-tank platoon; Company D (minus), commanded by Captain Liford Gibson; and Battalion Headquarters Company, commanded by Captain John Greene. The 343d Field Artillery Battalion and Battery A, 537th AAA Battalion (AW) were to follow the 1st Battalion of the 357th Infantry and be in direct support. The 3d and 2d Battalions of the 357th Infantry followed in that order and along with other elements constituted the Main Body. (See Appendix B)

At 0615 hours Major Hamilton, Commanding Officer of the 1st Battalion took the Liaison Officer of the 343d Field Artillery Battalion with him to the IP at ST. HILAIRE to confer with General Weaver. It was then discovered that something had gone wrong with the move as the leading elements were not crossing the IP as scheduled. Major Hamilton immediately returned to ST. HILAIRE to discover that the leading truck had taken the wrong route at the town square and that Company B was on the wrong road, away out of town, proceeding southeast. It was after nine o'clock before the remainder of the battalion could be turned around and headed in the right direction. Major Hamilton sent Captain Redman after Company B and had him direct it to LANDIVY where they waited for the column to catch up. (10)

At the IP, a platoon of engineers from Company A, 315<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion was attached to the 1st Battalion. By 0930 hours all elements of the Task Force were rolling. The light tanks and reconnaissance cars of the Task Force were well out in front and moving rapidly, meeting little if any resistance. Road blocks were encountered at TANNER, PAILLE, and ERNEE, but were quickly reduced. Overhead and to the front a Squadron of P-47's from XIX Tactical Air Force was providing air cover. The route of march was via LA TANAIRE to ERNEE where the direction would be to the east toward MAYENNE.

By noon the armored screen was almost to the day's objective with the advance guard following close behind. This was the beginning of a new experience for the men of the 90<sup>th</sup> Division. Whereas before it had been necessary to slug it out for each inch of ground gained in the hedgerow country, they were now rolling along at twenty miles an hour in enemy territory. It was the beginning of an operation that would make for Task Force Weaver a place in military history. If the

operation were successful, it appeared a route to the enemy rear area would be opened, that would expose a flank of an entire enemy army. General Weaver and Colonel Barth sensed that this was a bold and brilliant stroke of planning by General Patton. The men's spirits began to rise as this was something entirely new to them and many were the guesses as to what was in the wind. Definitely this was something out of the "big picture". Morale was on the up. (11)

The French people were astonished to see Americans when the column passed through the small towns. They lined the streets and in the traditional French custom, pelted the men with flowers in addition to passing out wine when the column stopped. Colonel Barth stated that, "he attempted to stop the latter, but gave it up as a bad job, as most of the stuff was cider and he thought his men would still be able to fight even after swilling down a lot of it". (12)

Sometime before 1400 the armored screen met resistance about one mile from MAYENNE, the objective. A German road block had been set up near a small stream outside the town and succeeded in knocking out two reconnaissance cars. At this time small arms fire was being received by the 1st Battalion. Colonel Barth came forward to report to General Weaver. Major Hamilton de-trucked his battalion and placed them in an assembly area. He then requested the artillery battalion to go into position immediately to support his attack. General Weaver attached Company C of the 712th Tank Battalion to the 1st Battalion. The mortar platoon, with its customary rapidity and aggressiveness and led by Lieutenant J. L. McLean, went into position to support the attack. Lieutenant Stevens deployed Company B astride the road leading into MAYENNE. One rifle platoon was on the left, one on the right, with a platoon of tanks accompanying each of the forward platoons, and the support rifle platoon following on the right. At 1645 hours, Lieutenant Stevens was ready to attack, and his company advanced to the German road block without meeting organized resistance. (13)

#### THE ATTACK ON MAYENNE

It was known that the MAYENNE RIVER ran through the town of MAYENNE and that one of the three bridges was still intact. It was essential that the attack progress quickly; the town must be taken and the bridge secured intact, if at all possible. Colonel Barth had selected Major Hamilton's battalion for the job. If leadership was to be a deciding factor in the accomplishment of the mission here was a supreme test. Colonel Barth has stated "he (Major Hamilton) has the dash of a Stonewall Jackson". (14)

Meanwhile, Colonel Barth was ordered to de-truck the regiment and prepare to attack the town by enveloping it on the right and cutting off the main road behind the town to the east. This meant getting his unit across the MAYENNE RIVER. While the 1st Battalion was engaged in getting into MAYENNE proper, the 2d and 3d Battalions would envelop to the right and attempt a river crossing. Lt. Colonel Mason's 3d Battalion, next in the column, was de-trucked and started across country to an assembly area under cover, near the river. Colonel Barth and another officer went forward to contact Colonel Mason and prepared for a reconnaissance of the river bank. As they reached the river bank they observed three truck loads of Germans on the high ground east of the river. They apparently were pulling out. Some fire was falling in the area but it was sporadic and all coming from the other side. At this time Colonel Barth made the decision to attempt an immediate crossing of the river. The rubber boats of the Task Force had not yet come up, as the column was still in the process of closing up, (It had extended back about twelve miles.)

Company I was brought down and deployed along the river bank to cover the attempted crossing. A skiff and a larger boat had been found in poor condition, being very leaky. They had no motors, no oars, no sails, but could possibly be used if some means of propulsion were devised. A board fence was torn down and the boards used as oars. With I Company covering, the two boats were loaded and the river crossing begun. The men appeared rather dubious but, when Colonel Barth took a position in one of the boats, the question appeared to be settled in the minds of the men. The boats were unloaded on the far side and Colonel Barth with one of the engineers returned for additional loads. In this manner the force on the far shore was gradually strengthened until the rubber boats of the Task Force arrived. (The crossing force had not yet been fired on). The rubber boats were inflated and the crossing went quite rapidly. By 2030 hours the entire two battalions were across the MAYENNE RIVER and the 3d Battalion nearly up to the main road behind the town. Colonel Barth felt that he had taken a chance and had been lucky. (15) This was the type of aggressive leadership that led to the success of the unit and was to predominate in future operations.

Let us rejoin the 1st Battalion at this time and find how their attack was progressing. We left Lieutenant Stevens astride the road with Company B and the attached tanks. The attack had been temporarily halted, while the high ground on the western edge of MAYENNE had been plastered with mortar, artillery and tank fire. The only casualties up to this point had been men in the reconnaissance cars knocked out at the German road block.

The advance continued and the 1st Battalion entered the western edge of MAYENNE, which was on high ground, gradually falling away to the river. At this time the battalion was taken under fire from the eastern section of the town across

the river. Company B had the mission of proceeding along the street that led downhill and onto the bridge that still connected the eastern and western sections of the town. The company had been deployed and was now engaged in working out the houses and buildings along the street. An enemy tank was reported to be on one of the streets paralleling the river and entering the western section from the north. Artillery fire was placed on this road and at the same time heavy mortars from Company D were displaced forward to positions on the western outskirts of town. The Battalion Anti-Tank Platoon was ordered up, and placed to cover two roads leading into the town, one from the north and the other from the northwest. While going into position and crossing the street leading to the bridge one of the gun crews was fired on. Sergeant Edwards was killed, and Sergeant Harbaugh and Private Sanchez, wounded. The Tank Company was working down the street toward the river in an attempt to gain positions from which they could fire into the eastern section of town. They also had the mission of covering the approach into the town from the south. By 1630 hours Lieutenant Stevens reported that his two leading platoons had reached the buildings on the western edge of the river. He had with him one of the platoons of tanks. Enemy fire had been increasing to the point where an all out assault must be launched in order to seize the bridge and a crossing forced. The street that led across the bridge followed the high ground to the eastern section of MAYENNE. On this street was located an occasional enemy tank, two 88's and a 20 mm gun, all of which were looking down the throats of Company B. Any crossing would be impossible at this time unless the enemy fire could be neutralized. (Machine gun and other small arms fire was coming from the German side).

The problem was to obtain observation and adjustment of artillery and mortar fire on the enemy positions. By 1645 hours Lieutenant R. E. Smith, D Company mortar section, had worked his way forward to one of the buildings taken by B Company. (16) This building faced the street leading to the bridge and here Lieutenant Smith located his observation post. Assisted by Lieutenant McLean he was successful in adjusting mortar fire and driving away one of the 88 gun crews. The Battalion Artillery Liaison Officer, Captain George Ingram, used the same observation post and succeeded in adjusting his artillery fire. Major Hamilton was in the building on the corner near the bridge. Here he issued his plan of action to the Platoon Sergeant of the 1st Platoon, Company A, 315<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion. There was to be a ten minute preparation by the artillery, mortars, and cannon from Cannon Company. At the cessation of fire, Company B was to assault and cross the bridge closely followed by the tanks, which would approach the bridge from the right, wheel around the corner and cross the bridge. One squad of engineers with mine detectors would search out the path to be followed by the tanks. Major Hamilton contacted Lieutenant Lombardi of Company C, 712th Tank Battalion and then Lieutenant Stevens from Company B. The preparation would be fired between 1750 and 1800 hours, with the first elements crossing at 1800. The preparation was begun and very shortly succeeded in hitting an 88 ammunition caisson on the street leading from the bridge. The resulting explosion and pall of smoke blanketed a portion of the street. This was an unexpected piece of luck and Major Hamilton immediately realized the possibilities created by the partial smoke screen. Deciding to cancel the balance of the preparation and send Company B into the assault, he immediately gave orders to Lieutenant Stevens to attack, and waited for the coordination to have it's effect. (17)

The leading tank was in position and prepared to wheel onto the bridge. Lieutenant Stevens led the assault with one of the squads from the left platoon. Upon leaving the corner and looking back, he discovered that the squad had failed to follow him. Only a short time was required to go back and get the squad moving behind him. The assault was being supported by small arms fire from the 1st platoon, minus one squad on the left, and the 2d Platoon on the right. They were firing from windows or any other point that might afford them vantage. Captain Gibson of Company D was now supporting the assault with his machine guns emplaced in and on buildings from where they could fire across the river. As the engineers and tanks headed for the bridge, two men were hit with what appeared to be a rifle grenade, later determined to be a 20 mm shell. One man was killed and the other's leg blown off. Lieutenant Steven's squad, accompanied by one tank, assaulted the bridge in a hail of machine gun and rifle fire and lost no time in getting across. The fire was so intense that once they had started, the men were anxious to get across, and apparently the tank crew had no intentions of becoming casualties while they were on the bridge. Once across the bridge, the squad was deployed around the end of the bridge and Lieutenant Stevens went back to get his 2d Platoon, as it had apparently failed to move out as scheduled. While making his second trip, Lieutenant Stevens cut the wire to the eight airplane bombs that had been placed to blow the bridge. Meanwhile, Lieutenant Smith from Company D had crossed the street and was assisting in pushing the men out of an alleyway. Lieutenant Stevens quickly gained control and once more led elements of his company across the bridge. Major Hamilton had joined the company and was assisting in getting other elements ready to cross. Sergeant Chisholm moved down the other side of the street and took his first platoon across. A bullet bounced off his helmet and a soldier beside him was killed. Meanwhile, the tank that had first crossed the bridge advanced up the street in the direction of the 88's, and proceeded some three to four hundred yards to a street which paralleled the river. Here the tank took position and with it's turret revolving, proceeded to throw fire in any and all directions. It knocked out a German gun on one of the side Street's and forced others to move out minus certain T/O & E equipment. (18)

Company B was across the bridge but now it was necessary to get the balance of the battalion across. Major Ben Russow went after the 2d Platoon of tanks and brought them forward. Captain Redman, the S-3, went to get Company A so



that they could cross and reinforce Company B. This company was pushing on past the bridge, up the street that led to the eastern section of town. The 2d Platoon of tanks at this time joined with Company B. One section turned left and the other right from the direction of attack to protect the flanks and seek out any remunerative targets. The anti-tank guns were rushed across to protect the north and south entrances to the city, Company A was now across the bridge, one platoon was sent south and the balance to the left of Company B, covering the northern section of the city. Company C remained on the western side of the river as battalion reserve and to guard approaches into the city from the rear. (19)

By 2030 hours the town, with the bridge, was in complete possession of the 1st Battalion. The other two battalions had crossed the river south of town and were now ready to link up on the outskirts east of the city. Company A was attached to the 3d Battalion and Company B was put in an assembly area in the southern section. The 3d Battalion was to cover the northeastern section of the bridgehead and the 2d Battalion was guarding and clearing out the southeastern portion. Company C remained on the western side of the river and covered the roads leading in from the northwest. (20)

At 2215 hours, two vehicles came rolling up to the forward Command Post of the 1st Battalion. Due to the normal traffic, smoke, and limited visibility they went undetected. Three Germans got out but were immediately fired upon. One was wounded and they quickly surrendered. Then the Americans were fired on from behind by two "kraut" officers who had remained hidden, hoping they would not be discovered. During the firing a jeep with a .50 caliber machine gun mounted, swung around the corner and proceeded to riddle one of the vehicles at point blank range. Captain Sheehan and Captain Ingram ran to the side of the vehicles and "dumped" their tommy guns into the "krauts", killing one and wounding the other. The late officer was beyond the salvage point and took on all of the appearances of a sieve. (21)

General Weaver had ordered a halt for the night and all of the trains had moved up, mostly to the eastern side of the river. The Regimental Command Post was set up in a cafe on the north side of town, east of the river. As the captured German truck, used to transport the CP, was being unloaded, another German truck drove up and stopped. About fifteen Germans dismounted and prepared to spend the night at the cafe. They were a very bewildered group when they discovered that the Americans liked the location and in all probability would remain there. All through the night scenes similar to this were repeated in various sections of MAYENNE. It was a night of bedlam. The Germans continued to come into the town only to be captured or knocked out. The platoon at the Regimental CP knocked out four vehicles and captured a number of prisoners right in front of the CP. In the same manner, other groups on other roads piled up the score. Nothing got through. The 1st Battalion alone captured almost one hundred prisoners and killed their proportionate share. (22)

The next morning the Division Commander visited the CP and divided the force into two sections, Task Force Weaver and Task Force Barth. (23) One objective had been reached, many more were waiting there.

By General Orders No. 54, Headquarters, 90th Infantry Division, dated 5 September 1944, 1st Lieutenant Burrowes G. Stevens, Jr., O-25950, Infantry, United States Army, was cited for gallantry in action on 5 August 1944. An extract of the citation reads as follows:

"He reduced the effectiveness of the enemy fire and charging it at a run prevented the enemy from completing the demolition, secured the bridgehead intact enabling tanks and heavy material to cross." (24)

From a hole cut in the hedge above the MAYENNE RIVER a German machine gunner had been sitting, he could look down on the few dozen yards of gray cobblestones which were the MAYENNE bridge. He was one of the many that had been placed there for the purpose of defending the bridge and stopping the "Yanks". He had withstood the artillery, the mortars, the hammering yammer of the tanks and machine guns. He had killed American soldiers, but when he was unable to stop that first squad in it's mad dash across the bridge, he decided it was high time to pack up his gun and get out of there. Perhaps he could visualize what would follow on the heels of that squad. A platoon, a company, a battalion, division, corps, an army would cross on the march toward the destruction of the German Seventh Army at FALAISE.

So ended the battle for MAYENNE. The way had been opened and the Third Army was still "going like a bat out of Hell", with only General Patton himself knowing in how many directions.

#### ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

##### 1. ASSIGNMENT OF MISSIONS

The passage of the U.S. VIII and XV Corps through the narrow AVRANCHES axis of advance to the south, constituted a daring assumption of the initiative on the part of the Third U.S. Army Commander.

The resultant success of such initiative was relayed through all channels of command to the extent that all subordinate commands, however constituted, were imbued with the spirit of offensive action to the point that to sit and await orders could not be tolerated.

Corps and Division Commanders passed on to subordinates, missions which allowed and demanded the same degree of initiative entrusted to them by the Army Commander.

Had not this concept of offensive action been evidenced at the highest echelon of command it is highly probable that the attack against MAYENNE might well have developed into an ordinary attack operation.

Because it had been indoctrinated in the value of exploiting initiative, Task Force Weaver was assigned and successfully accomplished a mission far beyond that normally expected of a similar force.

## 2. ORGANIZATION

The attack of MAYENNE by Task Force Weaver tends to show the flexibility and teamwork that can be attained within an Infantry Division by the intelligent employment of combined arms. Had the entire division been employed, the attack might not have attained the complete success of the operation. Because of the lack of organic mobility of the division, the enemy would have gained additional time in which to prepare defenses. Likewise, it is improbable that a Regimental Combat Team would have accomplished the mission in the same fashion as Task Force Weaver, because of its lack of organic mobility and firepower.

## 3. MAINTENANCE OF DIRECTION

During the movement to the IP one of the companies became lost, which resulted in a slow down of the entire operation at a most critical time. The success of the operation was not affected by this situation, however had other comparable units of like size been subjected to equivalent loss of direction, the mission of the Task Force could not have been accomplished without undue delay and confusion. The quick action of the Battalion Commander following his estimate of the situation corrected what might have developed into a bad situation. Reconnaissance cannot always be accomplished by unit commanders. In this instance it was a lack of time, and Company B could not be held at fault when it followed the wrong road out of town. Route, markers and well oriented guides would have averted this situation.

## 4. USE OF EXPEDIENTS

The actions of Colonel Barth in pushing the 2d and 3d Battalions across the river warrants consideration. The rapid envelopment of the town might well have been delayed because of the major obstacle (the river). The rubber boats were as far forward in the column as the tactical situation would permit. There can be no criticism on this point. However, Colonel Barth's actions in deciding to start a crossing, using whatever material could be found in the area, constituted a calculated risk and resulted in the maximum exploitation of the surprise element.

## 5. CONTROL BY COMMANDERS

During the attack on MAYENNE, the position of the commanders in relation to the troops commanded, was a deciding factor. Control was maintained at all times. Subordinate commanders were not forced to wait for a decision from higher headquarters. The commanders placed themselves in position at all times from where they could best control the troops command, and observe the action as it developed.

## 6. PLANS AND ORDERS

All plans for this attack were well understood by those concerned. They were flexible to the point that the Battalion Commander was successful in halting an artillery preparation and launching an attack after the fires had been started.

## 7. COMMUNICATION

Maximum use was made of all communication throughout the entire operation. Coordination between the tanks and infantry was limited because of the type of communication in use at that time. Communication between the forward elements and those units supporting them by fire made possible the maximum employment of indirect fire weapons.

## 8. USE OF SUPPORTING FIRES

Supporting fires were available and wisely employed, therefore they could be considered a deciding factor in the attack. The employment of the direct fire weapons from forward positions not normally considered as position areas for that type weapon, (machine guns) assisted materially during and following the assault of the bridge at MAYENNE. Due to the fact the Artillery Liaison Officer was well forward and aggressively employed artillery fire, its impact was timely and accurate.

## 9. FAILURE TO DEMOLISH BRIDGE

After entering the city of MAYENNE the amount of enemy resistance encountered indicated that the enemy intended to defend that city. That bridge had been prepared for demolition. Failure to demolish the bridge indicated that the enemy's plan of defense had not included plans and instructions in detail to destroy a key approach to their otherwise planned defense of MAYENNE.

### LESSONS

1. Once gained, the initiative must be maintained to assure success in combat.
2. An Infantry Division can be subdivided and its elements teamed in combinations to allow a degree of flexibility not contemplated by its Tables of Organization.
3. Intelligent use of route markers and well oriented guides are necessary for the maintenance of proper direction during an extended approach march.
4. All units must be so indoctrinated during training to assure the unhesitant use of all expedients available with particular emphasis on use of expedients not organic to the units.
5. Commanders must place themselves in a position, in relation to the troops commanded, which affords control over the majority of troops commanded.
6. Plans must be clear, concise and simple and should provide for flexibility under all contemplated conditions.
7. Adequate communications simplify coordination and are necessary thereto.
8. Tactically wise employment of supporting fires constitute a deciding factor in attack operations.
9. Responsibility for demolition must be fixed.

Auth; CO 90th DIV  
Date: 5 Aug 1944  
Init: R.G.L.  
FO #19  
Maps: GSGS, 1/50,000

90TH INF DIV  
VIC LAUNAY  
050600B AUG 44

1. a. See Intelligence Annex

b. XV CORPS attacks 5 Aug to Seize and secure crossing of MAYENNE R from LAVAL to MAYENNE, both inclusive. 79th Inf Div attacks on the right of the 90th Div, securing that part of the Corps Obj within its zone. 5th Armd Div remains in present location prepared to support either or both the 79<sup>th</sup> or 90th Div.

2. 90th Inf Div:

Atchd: 173rd Field artillery group  
40th Field artillery group  
693rd FA Bn  
712th TK Bn  
537th AAA (AW) Bn (M)  
607th TD Bn

Attacks 5 Aug to seize and secure crossings of the MAYENNE R within its zone extended to the E and N to MAYENNE inclusive,

Routes, Objs, Bdy- See Overlay

3. a. Task Force Weaver- Brig Gen Wm. G. Weaver, Comdg.

|                                 |                    |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|
| Troops: Det Div Staff           | Co A, 315th Med Bn |
| 90th Rcn Tr                     | 1 Co, 607th TD Bn  |
| 712 Tk Bn                       | Det 90th Sig Co    |
| 357th Inf (Mtz)                 | Det 90th MP        |
| 343rd FA Bn                     | 345th FA Bn D/S    |
| Co A, 315 <sup>th</sup> Engr Bn |                    |

(1) Move by motor via route indicated on overlay. Seize, secure and bridgehead the crossings of the MAYENNE R from the Div right boundary to MAYENNE inclusive.

(2) Reconnaissance elements will cross IP (LA RICHARDIERE) at 050630. Inf elements will cross IP at 050800.

(3) Task Force Weaver will provide own flank security throughout its advance.

(4) 50 trucks each from 5th Armd Div and from Third Army are available for this move and will report to ST HILAIRE at 050630. The 50 trucks from 5th Armd Div will be released to that unit immediately 357th Inf detrucks.

b. CT8:

(1) Will advance by marching within its zone via route indicated on overlay.

(2) Will initiate movement by 050800 and will make such preliminary dispositions as necessary to insure that its columns will not interfere with the movement of Task Force Weaver.

(3) For march obj and alternate- see overlay.

c. CT 9:

(1) Will advance by marching within its zone via route indicated on overlay.

(2) Will initiate movement by 050800,

(3) For march obj - See overlay.

d. Div Arty (less CT atchmts):

Atchd: 73rd FA Gp  
40th FA Gp  
693rd FA Bn  
537th AAA Bn (- 1 Btry)  
607th TD Bn (- 1 Co)

(1) Arty Bns to be prepared to move by bounds in the zone of either CT 8 or CT 9 on orders this Hq.

(2) 1 Co 607th TD Bn will support the advance of CT 8 and CT 9 respectively,

e. 315th Engr Bn: (less atchmts): be prepared to move on orders this Hq.

x. (1) Foot elements will not be delayed for the passage of motor elements through the columns.

(2) CTs are responsible for security to both flanks.

(3) Advance will be pushed at all costs; resistance on route will be promptly by-passed.

4. Adm O #35

5. a. (1) 80I Index - G1-10

(2) Armored vehicles will display cerise fluorescent panels.

b. Div Adv CP opens LA RICHARDIERE (470025).

Time of opening - 050800.  
March CPs - Head of main body.  
Ax Sig Con - Route of advance.

McLAIN  
COMDG.

/s/ Stilwell  
/t/ STILWELL  
G-3

DISTRIBUTION: "I"

TASK FORCE WEAVER  
ORGANIZATION OF COLUMN  
FOR MARCH TO MAYENNE  
(Totally Motorized)

AIR SUPPORT SQUADRON

P-47's. (During daylight hours)

Discover enemy to front and flanks, report close in enemy, attack on orders in conjunction with ground forces.

RECON ECHELON

90TH RECON TROOP

Advance on route and parallel routes when practicable, or out and back at road intersections. On meeting resistance, close with fire, discover enemy position. Immediately find passages around flanks. Operate on foot as necessary.

CO D 712TH TK BN

DET 90TH MP CO (Route markers and guides implemented by units)

FORWARD COMMAND GROUP TASK FORCE WEAVER

ADVANCE GUARD

CO B 357TH INFANTRY AND CO A 712TH TK BN

For direct assault against enemy resistance.

DET CO A 315TH ENGR C BN (with bulldozers)

1ST RN 357TH INF (-)

Assist direct assault, envelop, initiate by-passing.

343RD FA BN AND BTRY A 537TH AAA BN (AW)

MAIN BODY

357TH INF REGT (-)

712TH TK BN (-)

CO A 315TH ENGR C RN (-)

Assault and rubber boats, bridging material on call to Division on short notice.

CO A 315TH MED BN

345TH FA BN

Follow route and in direct support

CO A 607TH TD BN

Distributed through column. Principal mission flank and rear protection of elements of column

SUPPLY

1. All units and vehicles inspected, equipped and serviced. Food, water and extra ammunition carried on vehicles.
2. Reviewing accomplished enroute by Division.

END NOTES:

- (1) A-1, p. 37
- (2) A-2, p. 90
- (3) A-1, p. 37
- (4) A-1, p. 39
- (5) A-1, p. 40; A-3, p. 19
- (6) A-1, p. 41
- (7) A-8
- (8) A-7
- (9) A-5

- (10) A-5
- (11) A-4
- (12) A-4
- (13) A-5
- (14) A-4
- (15) A-4
- (16) A-5
- (17) A-5
- (18) A-5; A-9

- (19) A-5
- (20) A-4
- (21) A-5
- (22) A-4
- (23) A-4
- (24) A-4
- (25) A-10