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Army War College
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N-8383

SUBJECT: Report, Army Ground Forces Board

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Number C-682

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Maj., Inf

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APC 887

23 February 1945

SUBJECT: AGF Report No. 682. Operations of the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron - 31 December 1944 to 3 January 1945.

SUBMITTED BY: Colonel George W. Coolidge, Cavalry.

Inclosed is an account of operations of the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron during the German offensive of 1 January 1945 in the Bitche area. It is forwarded with the thought that it might be of interest to the Cavalry School.

/s/ George W. Coolidge,
GEORGE W. COOLIDGE,
Colonel, Cavalry,
WD Observers Board.

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Acct of Optns of 117th
Cav Rcn Squadron.

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HEADQUARTERS
117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (Mecz)
APO # 758, U.S. Army

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8 January 1945

SUBJECT: Account of the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (Mecz)
Actions in the Bitche area 31 December 1944 to 3 January 1945.

The 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (Mecz) was attached to the Hudelson Task Force (HTF) of the 11th Armored Division 21 December 1944.

Lt. Colonel Hodge, Commanding the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (Mecz), reported to Colonel Hudelson 22 December 1944 at Oberseebach (186-405). There he received verbal instructions as to his orders and mission. The 94th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (Mecz) less two troops, was attached to the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (Mecz).

Orders as received by Lt. Colonel Hodge from Colonel Hudelson, was to contact the 106th Cavalry Group at Mouterhouse, and arrange the physical relief of that group of the positions they were occupying in the area southeast of Bitche. Lt. Colonel Hodge proceeded to Mouterhouse, accompanied by Lt. Colonel McCullum, commanding officer of the 94th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, and Captain J. M. Brown, S-3 of the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron.

At Mouterhouse Lt. Colonel Hodge contacted Colonel Wilson commanding the 106th Cavalry Group. Arrangements were completed to affect the release of elements of the 106th Cavalry Group on 23 December 1944.

The command posts of both squadrons moved to Mouterhouse on 23 December 1944. The plans and preparations were completed, and troops of both squadrons physically affected the release of all elements of the 106th Cavalry Group and elements of the 399th Infantry of the 100th Infantry Division, who occupied the area from the northern end of the lake (786-492) southwest to RJ (777-487).

Defensive positions were occupied (see map) by Troops "B" and "C" of the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, with Troop "A" in reserve at Mouterhouse. Troop "A" was attached to the 62d Armored Infantry Battalion 28 December 1944. Five light tanks were attached to both Troop "B" and "C" of the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron. Troop "E" (Artillery, Troop) supported forward elements from a position west of Mouterhouse (784-433).

Elements of the 94th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron occupied defensive positions to the right of the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (see map). In support was the 500th Armored Field Artillery Battalion, Company "A", 125th Engineers, one platoon of Company "B" 645th Tank Destroyer Battalion, one platoon of Company "B", 83d Chemical Mortar Battalion, and one battalion of the 540th Engineers also on call for support. (See map for positions).

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Enemy patrols operated each night in the sectors of both squadrons. On one occasion during the early morning of 29 December 1944, an enemy patrol of one officer and four men, cut through the wire defense of the third platoon of Troop "B", 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, and attacked the platoon CP killing the sentry, injuring three men and capturing Lt. Middlebrook, the platoon leader, who was undressed and asleep.

During the afternoon 31 December 1944, Major Samsel, Executive Officer of the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, accompanied by Lt. Colonel Meyers, Commander of 62d Armored Infantry Battalion, who was to relieve the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron by 0800A 4 January 1945, inspected each gun position of Troop "B" and studied the terrain in preparation to affect the relief by the 62d Armored Infantry Battalion. At the time of this inspection, Captain Barnaby Commanding Troop "B", was improving all positions of each platoon. Additional concertina wire was laid, fields of fire improved, connecting trenches between positions deepened, and in general the entire troop sector tightened its defenses. An additional platoon of light tanks was attached to Troop "B" and these were placed in position with the third platoon of Troop "B".

When leaving the sector of Troop "B", Major Samsel was completely satisfied that the defenses, in keeping with the difficult and hilly terrain, were superior. In reporting to Lt. Colonel Hodge later, Major Samsel stated that in all his combat experiences in Italy and France, had never seen a better defense combining maximum fields of fire, mutual support, and all around defense, employing every weapon of each platoon. Every automatic weapon was extremely well dug in, armored cars and tanks were hull defiladed, and communication was established by telephone to each platoon, supplemented by radio communication down to sectors. Telephone communication was also established with the elements to our left and outpost of the 399th Infantry.

Upon order from VI Corps, orders were issued to all troop commanders that there would be no New Year's celebration or drinking of any kind. Troops were to be especially alert, however this was hardly necessary, as our forward positions were constantly being probed by enemy patrols, and every man was particularly alert and sensitive. As a result, a constant vigil was maintained and little sleep acquired during the nights.

During the early evening of 31 December 1944, reports indicated that the entire squadron sector was quiet. At 2310 hours the first platoon of troop "B" reported hearing very heavy traffic on the road running due east from Bitche. Prior to midnight, reports continued to come in from all platoons of movement and noises along this road. Artillery fire was placed on pre-arranged concentrations along this road at midnight.

A few moments after midnight, a telephone report was received from Captain Barnaby, Commanding Officer of Troop "B", that the outpost of the 399th Infantry (776-492) was surrounded by an estimated sixty enemy. Telephone communication was still maintained with this outpost, even though surrounded. This information was called in to the 399th Infantry, who stated they would send reinforcements. In the meantime, the third platoon of Troop "B", 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, reported enemy attacking his position from his left rear. Shortly thereafter, both the two remaining

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platoons of Troop "B" reported heavy enemy attacks and fierce fire fight.

By 0100 1 January 1945, all platoons of Troop "C", 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, reported being engaged by the enemy. This was followed by reports from Troop "D" of the 94th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, who was also being engaged by the enemy.

The second platoon of Troop "B", 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, called for artillery fire from our support troop. S/Sgt Sherman in command of the platoon, directed this fire and stopped the initial enemy attack against his platoon position by directing fire to within 75 yards of his forward position.

By 0200A 1 January 1945, it became apparent that the enemy was attacking in strength. Lt. Colonel Hodge called "Hudelson Task Force" requesting that Troop "A", 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron be sent in support. However, Lt. Colonel Hodge was informed, that Troop "A" was already committed in the 62d Armored Infantry Battalion sector. Request was then made for support of Company "A", 125th Engineers, which was in reserve. Again he was informed that this company was also committed on the left of the 62d Armored Infantry Battalion. A final request was made for a company of the 540th Engineers. Permission was given to commit Company "B" of the 540th Engineers.

In the meantime, intense fire fights were continuing in all platoon sectors of the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, and also of Troop "D", 94th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron. The main attacks appeared to be against Troop "B" of the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron. The platoon leader of the second platoon of Troop "B", continued to call for artillery fire when a second and third attack was directed against him. He directed this fire to within 25 yards of his position, inflicting severe losses against the enemy. It was later ascertained that all tires on the vehicles of this platoon had been destroyed, by his own fire, including one A/C destroyed by a direct hit. All radio antennas were also destroyed, thereby cutting radio communication to this platoon.

At 0330A it was apparent from reports of each platoon, that the enemy's main effort was directed against the second platoon of Troop "B". The enemy was starting to infiltrate in this sector, and also that of the third platoon of Troop "B". Each of these platoons leaders reported it was no longer possible to defend their positions. The enemy was infiltrating and advancing from all directions toward the platoons.

Order was then given by Lt. Colonel Hodge at approximately 0330A 1 January 1945 to Captain Barnaby Troop "B", to have his platoon withdraw and if the equipment could not also be withdrawn, to destroy it if feasible. They were to withdraw to a line 772-463 east to 797-468 (see map), and establish new positions. At this time Lt. Colonel Hodge ordered Captain Zecca, assistant S-3, 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, to take the reserve company of engineers, Company "B", 540th Engineers, and establish a defense line generally along 772-463 east to 797-468. He was to be in command of this defense area. He was to employ all remaining elements of Troop "B" and "C", 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, and also the troops of the 94th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, in protecting his right flank.

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- 4 -

As the platoons of Troop "B", 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron commenced their withdrawal, the third platoon covered the first platoon, who found it necessary to withdraw without their vehicles, as the enemy had already infiltrated into their positions. The platoon leader ordered the vehicles abandoned, as it was impossible to remove them without having the entire platoon killed or captured. The breech blocks were removed from some of the 37mm guns on the light tanks and armored cars, and a majority of the light automatic weapons were taken by the members of the platoon. The second platoon of Troop "B", 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron withdrew next. The tires of their vehicles had been damaged thus making it impossible to withdraw in the vehicles. The third platoon followed last, with a platoon of light tanks covering the withdrawal.

In each instant as these platoons withdrew, it was necessary to fight their way back against intense small arms fire of the enemy, who had already advanced across their rear. The platoon of light tanks of Troop "F" with the third platoon, fired 18,000 rounds of thirty caliber ammunition in covering the withdrawal.

From reports of each platoon leader and responsible non-commissioned officers of Troop "B", they estimate inflicting in excess of 500 enemy casualties including 200 killed, during the attacks against their positions.

Troop "C", 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron was given the order to withdraw to the new defense line shortly after Troop "B". It was reported that the third platoon of Troop "C" was overrun, receiving intense enemy small arms fire and infiltration, which was heaviest on their left and center sectors. The withdrawal of the first and second platoons was executed successfully retaining the majority of their equipment, while the third platoon lost all equipment and automatic weapons. The platoon of 4.2 mortars, supporting Troops "C" and "B", were threatened to be overrun and it was necessary to destroy four mortars to prevent capture by the enemy.

At approximately 0430A word was received from "Hudelson Task Force" that the 19th Armored Infantry Battalion less one company, was being sent to support the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron.

Captain Zecca, arrived at 0415A in the area where the new defense line was to be organized, and took command of the situation. Troop "B" was employed on the left of the line with Troop "C" on the right. Company "B" 540th Engineers was intermingled with both troops, as this was their first close combat experience. The platoon of tank destroyers from the 645th Tank Destroyer Battalion was placed in position for close support. A new defense line was organized to the right and left of the road at 777-464 and 782-464 at 0430A. Two platoons of the 540th Engineers were initially employed, supported by the second platoon Troop "B", 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron. The remaining platoon of engineers was held in reserve 500 yards to the rear.

The enemy was less than 60 yards from these positions as our troops moved into this line. It was estimated the enemy force consisted of approximately 60-75 men supported with machine guns deployed in the draw at 779-465.

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Six light tanks of Troop "F", 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, were set up at 779-462. They covered the approaches leading to the cross-road.

Three tank destroyers of 645th Tank Destroyer Battalion were set in position at 778-463 and 779-462.

Thirty men of the platoon from Company "B", 83d Chemical Mortar Battalion, who had destroyed their mortars, took up security positions of rear installations at the cross-road (779-462).

The enemy continued his infiltrating tactics from the draw 779-465, maintaining heavy small arms and machine gun fire against our defensive line.

At approximately 0500A, Captain Zecca realized that his force could not contain the enemy in the draw. He then established a defense line on the high ground four hundred yards south of the cross-road (779-462). Platoons one and two of Troop "C", had withdrawn to this line and the third platoon Troop "B", 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, had also arrived. All of the above platoons were immediately employed in the line.

In this new defense line, Captain Zecca improved his position and protected his only remaining route of withdrawal. Reports were received from Troop "D", 94th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron on the right of this defense line, that strong enemy pressure was being maintained against that position.

An enemy patrol of 15-20 men was observed infiltrating southwest down the draw at 776-465. A strong combat patrol from Troop "C" was sent to observe and report the situation on the left flank where the above patrol was observed.

The enemy continued infiltrating toward this new position in an aggressive manner. Our troops engaged the enemy with all available weapons. Scattered rounds of enemy mortar commenced to fall into our positions.

By 0700A the remaining personnel of Troops "B" and "C" had successfully withdrawn to the new defense position and had been employed in the line.

At 0730A Captain Brown, S-3, 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, arrived at the forward position of Captain Zecca, accompanied by the S-2 of the 19th Armored Infantry Battalion, and one platoon of the 19th Infantry.

Persistent attempts by the enemy to infiltrate through our positions were continuously repulsed.

The balance of the 19th Armored Infantry Battalion under command of Major Green, less one company which was, detached, closed in by 0930A at 789-458. The 19th Infantry intelligence and reconnaissance platoon immediately reconnoitered the area for a line of departure, preparatory toward launching an attack. The attack by the 19th Armored Infantry was to be launched from a line 778-460 to 784-461. Their mission was to clear out the enemy and restore the original lines maintained by the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron.

UNCLASSIFIED -6-

The remaining elements of the "B" and "C" Troops, 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, and light tanks of Troop "F", would support this attack. It was planned that the 117th Cavalry elements would occupy the ground of intermediate objectives as the attack progressed.

Our Air OP reported at 1030A that approximately 60-80 enemy were observed moving southwest from 772-462. It was believed the intention of this enemy force was to cut the withdrawal route of our forces.

Enemy pressure against our right flank became more aggressive. Troop "D", 94th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron reported an enemy tank supported by approximately 30-40 dismounted enemy approaching from Stockbromm (811-479).

By noon no word was received from our patrol operating on our left flank. The situation was obscure on the left flank, heavy pressure was being exerted on the right flank, with small arms fire and intermittent mortar fire on our immediate front.

Troop "D", 94th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron on the right flank, was successfully withdrawing against increasing strong enemy pressure. It was now apparent that the enemy's intention was to advance toward the rear of our positions, cut our route of withdrawal, and then reduce our positions from the rear.

Troop "D", 94th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron reported an enemy tank supported by thirty dismounted men, approaching from the vicinity 794-462 on the immediate right flank of our position. One tank destroyer was dispatched by Captain Zecca and it engaged the enemy tank within 500 yards of Captain Zecca's CP. This area was heavily wooded, and the enemy tank remained under cover.

At the squadron command post the situation was well in hand, with complete information of the situation along the entire sector of "Hudelson Task Force". It was apparent that the right flank of "Hudelson Task Force" was falling back and reliable reports indicated that the enemy was holding the ground at Bannstein and controlled the road running southwest as far south as 814-440.

The squadron command post at Mouterhouse was under enemy artillery fire and it was decided to move the command post one mile south from Mouterhouse. Upon arriving there at 1330A, a report was received that Barenthal was under enemy small arms fire and Colonel Hudelson requested support.

When at 1400A 1 January 1945, it appeared that the right flank of "Hudelson Task Force" was collapsing and the possibility of the road between Mouterhouse and Barenthal being cut, Lt. Colonel Hodge issued the following orders.

"Troop 'D', 94th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, was ordered to Barenthal to support 'Hudelson Task Force'. Troop 'B', 94th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, was given the mission to keep open the road at 819-427, for a possible withdrawal south toward Reipertswiller".

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"Captain Zecca was ordered to withdraw to the main road running between Mouterhouse and Lemberg. Upon arriving there the elements of Troops "B" and "C" were to delay toward Lemberg. The 19th Armored Infantry was to withdraw to Mouterhouse and delay along the road from Mouterhouse to Sarreinsberg (744-418)".

Troops "B" and "D", 94th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, successfully disengaged with the enemy and withdrew to accomplish their new mission. Arriving at Mouterhouse at 1530A, the leading elements of Troop "D" were fired upon by direct fire from an estimated 88mm SP gun attempting to fight their way forward. They received enemy small arms fire on the eastern outskirts of Mouterhouse. A road block was then established at 794-426 by Troop "D", to keep the road open running southwest from Mouterhouse to Sarreinsberg.

The remaining elements of Troops "B" and "D", 94th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, withdrew along the road from Mouterhouse west toward Lemberg.

In the meantime Troop "C" followed by Troop "B" of the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, withdrew west toward Lemberg. The 19th Infantry supported by three tank destroyers, withdrew to Mouterhouse where they received heavy sniper fire.

At 1700A the 19th Armored Infantry set up a line astride the road southwest of Mouterhouse vicinity 776-426 southeast to 778-415. When word was received that Barenthal and Mouterhouse was in enemy hands it was decided to set up a line from Reipertswiller west to Sarreinsberg.

The 19th Infantry and Troop "C", 117th Cavalry, were withdrawn to Sarreinsberg. Our engineers had previously prepared two charges in the road between Mouterhouse and Sarreinsberg.

The squadron command post was established at Wingen 1700A 1 January 1945. Lt. Colonel Hodge and Captain Zecca reported to the Commanding General of the 11th Armored Division at Bouxwiller for instructions, since we were out of contact with "Hudelson Task Force". Lt. Colonel Hodge called G-3 of VI Corps, to bring him up to date on the situation.

Lt. Colonel Hodge ascertained the location of "Hudelson Task Force", and reported at Reipertswiller approximately 1700A 1 January 1945. Instructions were received from Colonel Hudelson to hold the present line between Reipertswiller to Sarreinsberg. This line was established and held by elements of the 94th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, Troop "C", 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron and the 19th Infantry Battalion.

Early 2 January 1945, elements of the 179th Infantry Regiment arrived to support our positions. The commanding officer, Colonel Murphy, was informed of the entire situation by 0800A 2 January 1945 at our squadron command post. He employed his battalions generally along our defensive line.

Late on 2 January 1945, "Hudelson Task Force" informed Lt. Colonel Hodge that the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron and the 94th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron were relieved. The squadron remained in position.

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until 0800A 3 January 1945, and then assembled in the vicinity of Ringendorf. Troop "C" of the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, and the 19th Infantry Battalion were engaged by the enemy at Goetzenbruck. Troop "C" was ordered to remain in position and was later attached to the 179th Infantry Regiment.

Troop "A", 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, attached to the 62d Armored Infantry Battalion, was held in reserve in the vicinity of Phillipsbourg. At approximately 0130A 1 January 1945, the troop was alerted and ordered to move up toward Bannstein (833-447). Captain Fitz-Randolph, the troop commander, received orders to set up defense positions with one platoon covering the road at 854-446, one platoon at Bannstein, and the remaining platoon held in reserve at Phillipsbourg.

The second platoon set up positions 400 yards southeast of Bannstein at 0145A. This area was already under enemy mortar, machine gun, and small arms fire. The third platoon moved into their sector at 854-446 at 0150A. The lead armored car was hit and destroyed by an enemy bazooka. Four of our men were wounded. It was determined that the enemy already held this ground. New positions were taken up at the road junction (854-444), already under enemy small arms fire. The first platoon, then in reserve, was ordered to support the third platoon in this sector near the road-junction.

The enemy maintained strong pressure against Bannstein, holding the high ground north and east, and infiltrating from the west. At 0500A a patrol was sent from Bannstein east to contact the third platoon at the road-junction (854-444), but it failed to return. A second patrol was sent out and it found the abandoned jeep riddled, and the road cut by the enemy at 845-442. The only route remaining open for the second platoon, was through Bannstein, then cut southwest. When it was apparent that Bannstein was in enemy hands and the platoon ammunition exhausted, the platoon withdrew (0600A) with their vehicles through heavy and very intense enemy small arms fire. Several of the bantams, were riddled and two men wounded.

The first platoon reached the road-junction at 0230A and supported the third platoon. Heavy firefights continued and the enemy started to infiltrate into "A" Troops positions. It was decided to withdraw the vehicles toward Bannstein. They found the road cut by the enemy, then orders were given to withdraw to the east toward Phillipsbourg. The friendly infantry had already withdrawn from the north of our positions.

The first platoon withdrew first, taking only the armored cars of both the first and third platoons. The route of withdrawal was covered with heavy enemy small arms, machine gun and bazooka fire, and the jeeps could not possibly survive the fire. One armored car of the first platoon was hit with a bazooka but was able to proceed to safety. The balance of the men of this platoon and those of the third platoon, were reorganized by Lt. Gauss, third platoon leader. When he found it impossible to mount these men in bantams, he had them withdraw dismounted across country. They came through several small streams with water up their waist. This dismounted group totaled about 25 men, completely without ammunition for their personal weapons. They arrived safely at Phillipsbourg around 0730A.

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The highest possible qualities of leadership were displayed by all leaders of the first and third platoons in withdrawing all their heavy equipment and maximum number of men, under the most intense enemy small arms, machine gun and bazooka fire.

At 1300A 1 January 1945, Captain Fitz-Randolph was informed by Colonel Meyers, Commanding Officer of the 62d Armored Infantry, that an enemy armored column was approaching Phillipsbourg. Captain Fitz-Randolph was ordered to take his remaining equipment and personnel, and delay this column southeast of Phillipsbourg. He was to allow the enemy column to pass through, then hit them from the rear.

Positions were organized by 1400A and maintained until 1600A. A new mission was then assigned Troop "A", as the threatening enemy column attack did not materialize.

New positions were taken up in an infantry role northwest of Phillipsbourg filling a gap between an engineer and a tank destroyer unit. In the meantime, the second platoon of Troop "A", had rejoined their Troop and was employed in this new mission. The above position was maintained until 1100A 2 January 1945 without enemy contact.

Troop "A" was relieved from attachment to the 62d Armored Infantry Battalion, and returned to the control of the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, at 1500A 2 January 1945.

It is estimated that Troop "A" inflicted in excess of 150 enemy casualties, not counting casualties inflicted by our mortars. Troop "A" losses were ten men wounded and nine men missing.

CONCLUSION

1. The sector assigned to the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (Mecz) and its attached units consisted of heavily wooded and hilly terrain. There was only one secondary road leading into the sector and a limited number of trails. In keeping with the limitations and capabilities of mechanized cavalry, it was found necessary to employ the maximum fire power of all weapons while engaged in an infantry role. The particular sector was of a definite infantry character, therefore the mechanized cavalry platoons, which consist of twenty nine men and one officer, organized their positions as strong points of resistance, mutually supporting each other by fire. None of the platoons employed were up to full strength.

2. Just prior to the heavy enemy attack at midnight on 31 December 1944, the entire squadron sector was defended by a double apron of barbed wire. A secondary line of concertina wire was installed with anti-personnel mine fields between the barbed wire and the concertina. In addition all probable enemy approaches leading toward our positions were booby trapped and trip flares were installed. Each platoon sector was organized as a strong point of resistance, automatic weapons dug in with alternate positions prepared. Connecting trenches to all gun positions were dug. Fields of fire were improved constantly up until the attack. Armored cars and light tanks were either dug in or placed in hull defilade position. Automatic fire of every weapon was

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-10-

coordinated to cover the entire area and to support elements of the right and left. Additional automatic weapons without crews were dug in position wherever possible to provide the maximum degree of sustained fire in the event of a heavy attack in force.

3. On the late afternoon of 31 December 1944, Major Samsel, Executive Officer, 117th Cavalry, accompanied by Lt. Colonel Meyers, Commanding Officer 62d Armored Infantry Battalion, and Captain Barnaby, Commanding Officer Troop "B", 117th Cavalry, personally inspected each gun position in Troop "B" 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadrons sector. Upon the completion of this inspection Major Samsel informed Lt. Colonel Hodge that in his opinion, the defense in the "B" Troop sector was excellent and that he had never seen a better position prepared since being in combat in Italy and France.

4. Direct communication by wire was established from squadron headquarters to all troop command posts. In turn each platoon was also in direct communication by wire to their troop command posts. All wire communication was supplemented by radio communication including down to section level. As a result, there was a constant flow of spot information which made it possible to exercise complete control of the situation along the entire sector. It further insured a coordinated successful withdrawal, permitting the maximum number of personnel to fall back, when ordered to do so.

5. The enemy's initial attack against the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (Mecz) sector consisted of a minimum of 1,000 enemy troops. From the manner in which the enemy attacked, in a most fanatical fashion, it is believed that the enemy personnel must have received a stimulating shot of some drug. The enemy attacked in waves, standing up, screaming and yelling, never faltering against withering automatic and artillery fire. A conservative estimate by responsible leaders indicated that the enemy suffered a minimum of 50% in casualties in his initial attack. The total enemy casualties inflicted by personnel of the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (Mecz) from the initial attack alone, midnight 31 December 1944 to 1200A 1 January 1945, is estimated at a minimum of 1,000 enemy. This does not include enemy losses by unobserved artillery and mortar fire.

6. Each officer and non-commissioned officer displayed the quality of leadership in a superior manner. Had this quality been lacking or had anything less than a superior effort been exerted, it would not have been possible to continue to defend their positions against overwhelming odds and against a fanatical enemy, nor would they have been able to inflict such severe casualties against the enemy's determined attack. When the order was given to withdraw, the platoons fought their way through the enemy who had infiltrated and surrounded their positions. The leaders again displayed remarkable control by withdrawing the maximum number of personnel to the new defense line being formed. This is attested by the light casualties suffered by all personnel of the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (Mecz). Killed: on EM, Wounded: one (1) officer, twelve (12) EM, Missing: One (1) officer, twenty four (24) EM. Total thirty nine (39) casualties.

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7. Leaders exercised keen judgment in endeavoring to withdraw with whatever equipment possible under the circumstances. Having fought to the point where it was no longer possible to physically defend their positions, the decisions were made on the spot when seconds counted whether to abandon, destroy, or remove equipment. Many decisions decree that to order the men to remove the lighter vehicles would have meant sure death in exposing personnel to the heavy enemy fire. The decision at hand, therefore, was either to bring out the maximum of personnel with the minimum of equipment, or the possibility of attempting to withdraw with the majority of the equipment with slim hope of surviving the enemy's fire, and living to fight the enemy another day. Specialized personnel of mechanized cavalry requires extensive training. Current replacements are unsatisfactory, therefore each seasoned and battle tested man lost would be exceedingly difficult to replace.

Vehicles losses sustained:

Armored Cars M8	- Twelve (12)
Jeeps, 1/4 ton	- Thirty eight (38)
Light Tanks M5A1	- Six (6)
Half Tracks M3A1	- Two (2)

8. The following amount of ammunition was expended by the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (Mecz) from the time of the initial attack at midnight 31 December 1944 to 1200A 1 January 1945. Ammunition expenditures of attached and supporting organizations not included.

30 Cal.	Belted	116,000 rounds
30 Cal.	Rifle	5,100 rounds
30 Cal.	Carbine	3,500 rounds
45 Cal.		14,220 rounds
50 Cal.		6,225 rounds
37 mm		1,080 rounds
60 mm (Mortar)		260 rounds
81 mm (Mortar)		90 rounds
105 mm (Howitzer)		800 rounds
Grenades		275

9. As a result of the above action the following number of citations are being submitted for personnel of the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron:

Distinguished Service Cross	- One (1)
Silver Star	- Seventeen (17)
Bronze Star	- Fifty three (53)

10. In conclusion it is considered that the actions of the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (Mecz) in the Bitche area 31 December 1944 - 1 January 1945 against a fanatical and overwhelming force of enemy was exemplary. The action of all personnel indicated a keen sense of duty and a high state of training and discipline.

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- 12 -

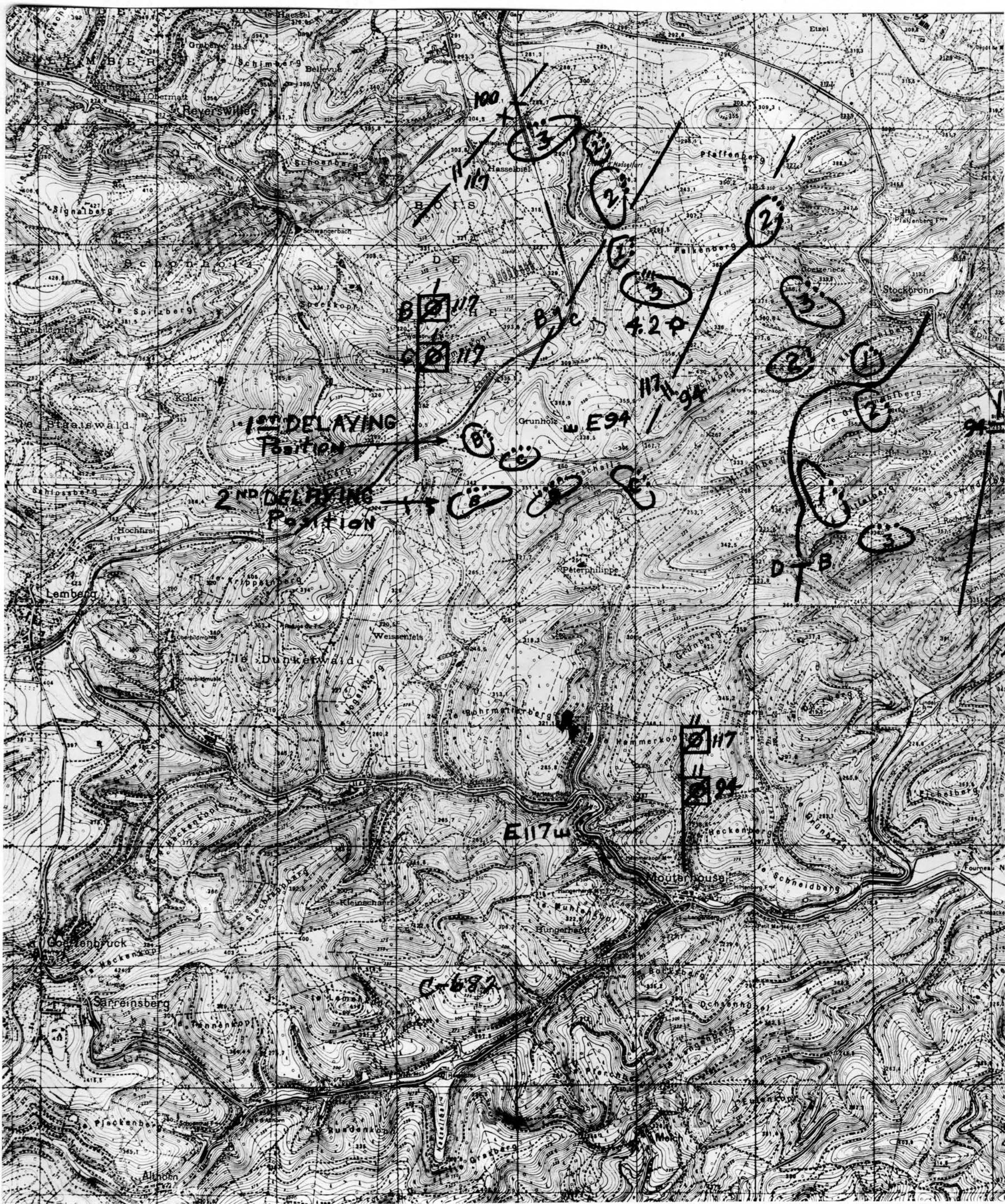
There remains no doubt but that the ultimate objective outlined in Lt. General Dever's Order of the Day #1 dated 1 January 1945, to Destroy the Enemy, was achieved.

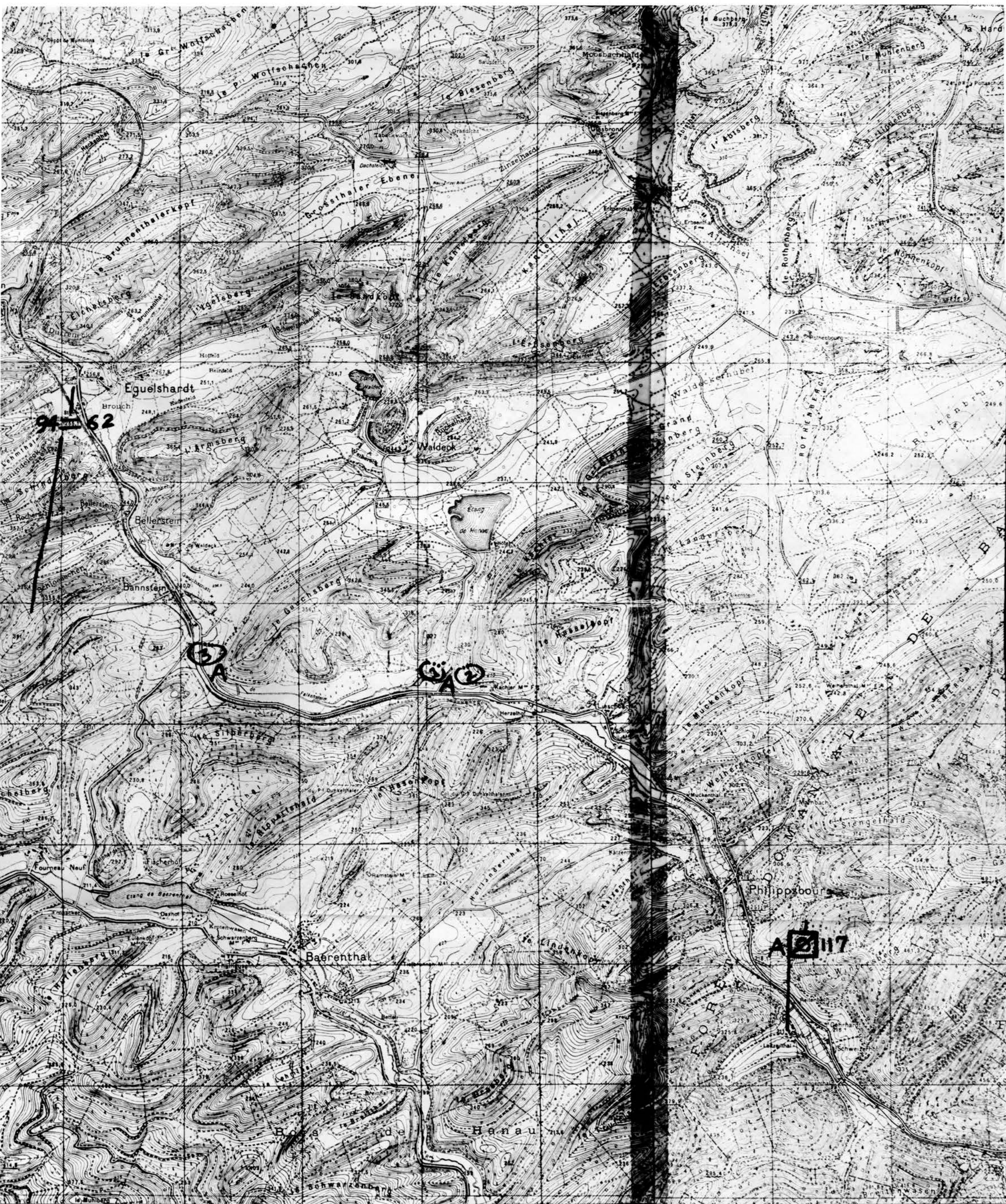
/s/ Harold J. Samsel;
HAROLD J. SAMSEL,
Major, Cavalry,
Commanding.

Ringendorf, France
8 January 1945

Attached: 1/25,000 map marked with positions of 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadrons positions, prior to the enemy attack.

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