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STRATEGY Research Project

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THE BATTLE OF THE ARDENNES: ANALYSIS OF STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP AND DECISIONS

BY

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

The Battle of the Ardennes:

Analysis of Strategic Leadership and Decisions

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ABSTRACT

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Few confrontations are dissected and analyzed to the extent as the Battle of the Ardennes - The Battle of the Bulge. The intent of this case study is to summarize events from the strategic perspective. Though the chronology of the battle is presented, the focus of the study is to identify and analyze strategic considerations and decisions that influenced the inception and eventual outcome of the event. In doing so, it illustrates the strategic imperatives outlined in the USAWC Strategic Leadership Primer and the implications of the strategic process. In short, the study presents lessons learned in the application of strategic tasks and competencies. The benefit is outlined in the USAWC Advanced Warfighting Studies Program directive, "From detailed and objective analysis of historical cases, future high level commanders can learn from the successes and failures of those who have preceded them."

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THE BATTLE OF THE ARDENNES: ANALYSIS OF STRATEGIC

LEADERSHIP AND DECISIONS

Soldiers of the West Front! Your great hour has arrived. Large attacking armies have started against the Anglo-Americans. I do not have to tell you anything more than that. You feel it yourself. WE GAMBLE EVERYTHING! You carry with you the holy obligation to give everything to achieve things beyond human possibilities for our Fatherland and our *Fuhrer*.¹

Generalfeldmarschall Gerd von Rundstedt

INTRODUCTION

On the flip of a coin, Ivan Peterman, correspondent for the Philadelphia Inquirer, decided to drive from Luxembourg City through St. Vith to Spa to file several stories at the headquarters of First Army. The road, nicknamed "Skyline Drive" by American soldiers overlooked the front line to the east. During the ride, Peterman noticed movement behind the German lines along a normally quiet sector, routinely referred to as "the ghost front." He noticed bridging equipment being moved to the Our river along the German side of the line, as well as numerous trucks moving north and south. Three artillery rounds exploded on the hillside above the jeep. Startled, Peterman's driver quickly left the area and made his way to First Army headquarters. An old friend of the Commanding General, Courtney Hodges, he related the tale of his close encounter and observations along the ghost front. Hodges, appearing concerned, indicted that he would try to get some reinforcements to the area but doubted that it would be much. He soon retired for the evening... the night of 15 December 1944.²

The next morning witnessed the greatest land battle in American history. By many accounts considered the climax of the European campaign, the Battle of the Ardennes is compared to Gettysburg in its importance and impact in the outcome of the war. From the time the "bulge" was contained and subsequently eliminated, the outcome of the European campaign was no longer in doubt.³

The intent of this case study is to present and analyze the Ardennes counteroffensive, specifically focusing on strategic considerations and decisions that influenced the inception and eventual outcome of the battle. Though centered at the strategic level, operational factors are also presented to clarify and illustrate the implications of strategic decisions. The content of the analysis inevitably leads to leadership assessments, recognizing the influence strategic leadership competencies play in the outcome of major campaign events.

Though the chronology and mechanics of the campaign are a significant portion of this paper, it is included only as a mechanism to illustrate strategic processes and outcomes. In

short, the study identifies lessons learned in the application of strategic tasks and competencies.

ALLIED OPERATIONS

Allied Command and Strategy

Appointed as the Commander, Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF), General Dwight Eisenhower exercised significant political as well as military influence within the European theater. He reported to the Combined Chiefs of Staff, consisting of the chiefs of all services from both the United States and Great Britain. In this capacity, however, Eisenhower reported directly to neither government and though he would normally communicate through the U.S. Chief of Staff, General Marshall, "there was no single individual who could issue him operational orders."⁴ Roosevelt did not attempt to influence military operations within the theater and though Churchill was more incline to offer operational advice, he respected the position and authority of the Supreme Commander concerning military strategy. Churchill's support would be a key element in containing political friction within the coalition command structure. This, along with Eisenhower's experience of coalition command in Operation Torch and the autonomy of his authority over military matters resulted in effective unity of command.

John Strawson writes,

... it was Eisenhower who was effectively in charge of strategy. There had been a time when Churchill had a major, even decisive, influence on both British and Allied strategy. ... By 1944 Churchill's influence had greatly declined because by then in comparison to the United States and Russia, he no longer spoke for a great military power. In any event, it was Eisenhower as Supreme Allied Commander who did in fact exercise without interference this command from either Roosevelt or Churchill. He had almost as much strategic influence as Hitler himself.⁵

After the Normandy landing, Eisenhower remained in London and in effect field command belonged to Field Marshal Montgomery commanding the 21st Army Group. This was comprised of the 1st U.S. Army, commanded by Omar Bradley and the 2nd British Army, commanded by Miles Dempsey. After the breakout at St.-Lo, however, pre-established changes in the command structure were implemented. These changes were predicated on the number of forces in theater and the expanded geography of the operation. The 12th Army Group (commanded by Bradley) was established, consisting of 1st Army (Hodges) and 3rd Army (Patton). Though decided before the Normandy landings and based purely on military considerations, the appointment of Bradley appeared to be a demotion of Montgomery.⁶

General Eisenhower felt the secrecy in all these moves necessary; indeed the keeping of command arrangements under wraps he believed essential to the success of the overall deception plan. But up to this time the public had considered the invasion a single army group operation with Montgomery acting as the overall land commander. ...it appeared to much of the press, British

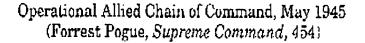
in particular, that the most prominent British general had been "demoted." 7

Montgomery continued to coordinate land operations of the two groups, however, until Eisenhower moved from London to a tactical command post on the continent.⁸ Frictions surrounding the coalition command structure would continue and played a major role in Hitler's counteroffensive plan as well as Allied actions during the Ardennes operation.

Eisenhower was given very broad strategic objectives from the Combined Chiefs of Staff. "You will enter the continent of Europe and, in conjunction with other Allied nations, undertake operations aimed at the heart of Germany and the destruction of her armed forces."⁹ From this Eisenhower had the latitude to determine strategic operations within the theater. He embraced, from the beginning, a "broad front" strategy.

The whole philosophy behind Eisenhower's broad-front policy was that it would keep the Germans occupied and stretched everywhere, oblige them to go on committing reserves as soon as they were created or, if not commit them, hold them back in readiness and sufficient depth to be committed in order to counter yet one more dangerous salient. In other words, by keeping up the pressure everywhere, Eisenhower would keep the Germans off balance, keep them firmly on the defensive, retain the initiative securely in Allied hands and give the Germans no chance of getting it back.¹⁰

This was often contested by the British, especially Montgomery and the British Chief of Staff, Field Marshal Alan Brooke who believed that a concentrated "single thrust"



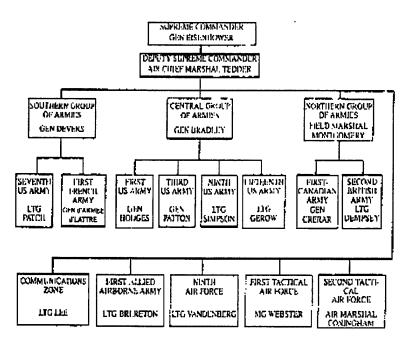


Figure 1

offensive offered the greatest opportunity for quick success. These conflicting positions impacted on command relationships and the posturing of Allied forces along the Siegfried line on the morning of 15 December.¹¹

Actions Leading to the Ardennes

By late fall 1944, most Allied leaders were extremely frustrated. Earlier optimism of victory by Christmas had diminished and the recognition of a probable winter stalemate was beginning to form. The rapid success and advance of Allied forces following the Normandy landing created a perception of inevitable victory and the indication the Wehrmacht (German Armed Forces) could not mount significant offensive operations.

The initial July breakout of the Normandy beachhead was hindered by stiff German defenses and the progress of General Miles Dempsey's Second British Army was extremely slow; an advance of only thirty-four miles in several days. However, Operation Cobra supported by General Omar Bradley's First U.S. Army resulted in a breakthrough at St.-Lo with a succession of victories that cleared the Brittany Peninsula, defeated a German counter-offensive at Mortain and advanced Allied forces towards Paris which was liberated on the 25th of August. On 15 August, Operation Dragoon in Southern France defeated seven German Divisions on the first day and advanced 150 miles in a week. By September, the momentum of pursuit had carried Allied advances across the Meuse River. Antwerp was taken on 4 September. Optimism reigned. On 17 September, however, three airborne divisions dropped into Holland in an effort to secure a bridgehead across the lower Rhine River. The ensuing battles

affirmed the culmination of Allied pursuit and the reorganization of German forces.¹²

Posture Prior to Battle

For the most part, the winter of 1944 found Allied positions along the formidable defenses of the West Wall. Though stalled by severe weather and resilient German defenders, logistical limitations most impacted the tactical pause.¹³

Even with the capture of Antwerp, the enormous logistical requirements of the allies bottlenecked continued operations. The million gallons of gasoline and 2,000 tons of artillery ammunition used daily were road-hauled 350 miles from Cherbourg harbor. Almost 95% of all supplies shipped to France remained stacked upon wharves and beaches far to the rear awaiting transport.¹⁴ There was a theater-wide shortage of infantrymen. Planners had miscalculated the balance of infantry and technical or service troops, resulting in divisions with significantly reduced combat power. Exacerbating these personnel problems, the delayed shipment of cold-weather clothing resulted in almost epidemic levels of trench foot.¹⁵

Recognizing these constraints, Eisenhower still insisted that maintaining the initiative through the winter was paramount to wearing Germany down. Battles of attrition in October and . November inflicted estimated German casualties of 9000 soldiers

a day, or almost five divisions a week. Renewed optimism concluded that the enemy could break at any minute and that he did not have the capacity to mount any type of major offensive.¹⁶ There ensued significant discussions on strategy to be used for an attack into the heart of Germany. Interpreting the center of gravity to include the industrial base, Eisenhower identified the northern approach into the Ruhr valley (Montgomery's sector) as the main effort. A supporting attack through the Saar valley (Bradley's sector) was included, with the intent of rapid reduction of German forces and the opportunity for an envelopment of the Ruhr.¹⁷ Montgomery continued to favor a single offensive thrust, with two army groups under his command, along the best avenue of approach in the north. Remaining elements would conduct defensive operations. Though willing to weight Montgomery's attack, Eisenhower remained committed to the broad front strategy that he felt would provide more latitude and better achieve the objective of "destruction of German forces."

The divergence of the two commanders' viewpoint did not lie in the direction of the main effort; both were agreed that maximum practical force should be brought to bear in the north. The point at issue was still whether there should be, in addition to the northern thrust, a secondary thrust in strength south of the Ardennes.¹⁸

Underlying the discussions of broad vs. single thrust strategy was Montgomery's contention that there should be a single ground commander (other than Eisenhower), and that he was

the likely choice. He believed that national parochialism was precluding the optimal operational command structure and strategy. Though dismissed by Eisenhower as unsound, it too would impact the Ardennes operation.¹⁹

Forces were repositioned. The 9th U.S. Army (Simpson) would be chopped from Bradley and given to the 21st Army Group to weight the attack. The 3rd U.S. Army (Patton) would conduct the attack into the Saar in the south of the 12th Army Group sector, and Bradley's remaining forces (1st U.S. Army under Hodges) would primarily defend the center sector. To successfully conduct this level offensive, significant risks were taken.

In order to concentrate forces for these front wide attacks, the entire Allied reserve in Europe had to be reduced to only two understrength U.S. airborne divisions, and other parts of the 500-mile line had to be stripped of troops. By far the weakest area was the 100 mile sector along the Ardennes forest, which by December had become so quiet that soldiers stationed there called it the "ghost front." One mechanized cavalry regiment and six untried or battleweary divisions, some newly assigned to the region and all defending fronts up to five times wider than normal, were the only Allied forces in the Ardennes.²⁰

Though not totally dismissing the possibility of attack in this sector, it was considered unlikely. Though historical precedence identified this as a possible area for attack, it was considered an obstacle more than an avenue of approach. It was viewed as having no operational objectives. In addition, with the level of attrition being inflicted, the *Wehrmacht* was

considered unable to conduct anything more than local counterattacks. Though frustrated by the relative stalemate, there was a dangerous degree of overconfidence. Bradley openly wished for a German counter-offensive: "I'd welcome a German counterattack. We could kill many more Germans with a good deal less effort if they would only come out of their holes and come after us for a change."²¹ This optimism discounted even the intelligence clues gathered by various organizations. The identification of heavier rail traffic, the location of the 6th Panzer Army, intercepts of radio traffic ordering air reconnaissance of Meuse River bridges and even the capture of a German message requesting English speaking soldiers and captured American equipment did not convince Allied leaders that a massive assault was pending.²²

In the final analysis, Eisenhower was faced with a choice between risking a thinly defended center sector, or give up the winter offensives. He chose to attack.

GERMAN OPERATIONS

All Hitler wants me do is cross a river, capture Brussels, and then go on and take the port of Antwerp! And all this in the worst time of the year through the Ardennes where the snow is waist-deep and there isn't room to deploy four tanks abreast let alone armored divisions! Where it doesn't get light until eight and it's dark again at four and with re-formed divisions

made up chiefly of kids and sick old men - and at Christmas! $^{\rm 23}$

Oberstgruppenfuhrer Joseph Dietrich

German Command and Strategy

By the winter of 1944, the empire of the *Third Reich* had been reduced to almost its prewar boundaries. Her allies had been defeated and the likelihood of annihilation was profound. The Russians were moving into East Prussia and the Western Allies had made limited penetrations of the Siegfried Line, delayed only by supply shortages. Conventional wisdom among the most experienced of the German General Staff was to conduct a fighting withdrawal and reconsolidate to the east of the Rhine River.²⁴ Reserves could then be allocated against the Russians in the East.

As the situation deteriorated, Adolph Hitler tightened the reins on his control of military operations. Though always at the heart of military strategy and certainly the decision-maker, Hitler now saw himself as the only man capable of saving the Fatherland. An assassination attempt on 20 July had taken its toll. Though recovering somewhat from the physical wounds, the psychological effect was significant and effected his overall health.

Hitler gave a shocking appearance...He was fighting a stomach ailment, which some of his advisors regarded as the effect of his personal physician's medical

treatment. It had recently become increasingly noticeable that his left hand and leg made spasmodic movements. He was stooped, his gestures normally slow. His eyes, except when he was excited, were lusterless; they seemed to lack the startling blueness that previously transfixed anyone permitted to come close to him.²⁵

The attempt on his life also heightened his existing distrust of the German General Staff, which he considered arrogant and conservative bureaucrats. Dismissing those that disagreed with his military strategy, he surrounded himself with only the most loyal and trusted officers who would take orders and not question his judgement. His isolation was almost complete, rarely leaving his headquarters at Rastenburg, East Prussia, commonly referred to as the *Wolfsschanze* (Wolf's Lair).

...his life had narrowed down to the manipulation of symbols on a map, representations that progressively were less associated with units made up of human being. Reality was rapidly being replaced by a sort of dream. 26

On 19 August, confident in the power of his will and intuition that had reaped enormous success in the early years of the war, Hitler ordered the establishment of a reserve for an offensive in the West. Hoping to cripple the already precarious logistic capability of the Allies, Antwerp was identified as the objective. He was convinced a significant defeat would split the Western Coalition. Trapping the bulk of British and Canadian forces in a pocket cut off from their logistic base he promised " the offensive would set the stage for the annihilation of

twenty to thirty divisions. It will be another Dunkirk."²⁷ This would leverage Hitler to negotiate separate armistice agreements with each nation and allow the *Wehrmacht* to concentrate their forces against the Russians in the east.²⁸

Between 6-25 September, Hitler conferred with Generaloberst Alfred Jodl, his trusted Chief of Wehrmacht Operations, and fleshed out the general concept. With an excellent intelligence picture of Allied positions, he identified the Ardennes as the weakest sector in the Allied line, held by only four infantry and one armor division. The heavy fir forests of the Ardennes would also permit the concentration of forces out of view of the numerous reconnaissance flights, enhancing the element of surprise. Hitler considered the terrain in this area an operational advantage. Though the numerous steep-banked cutback streams would almost relegate tanks to the road networks it would lead the allies to lightly defend the sector and never expect a major operation along this avenue. The attack, led by infantry to breach defenses and exploited by panzer units capitalizing on shock and speed, would assault northeasterly across the Meuse River between Liege and Namur and then on to Antwerp.

The plan required at least thirty divisions, of which ten would be *panzer*, to provide the key element of speed. Capitalizing on allied confusion, lead elements would secure

bridges before they could be demolished. The window for the attack was identified between 25-30 November to take advantage of poor weather that would negate Allied air superiority. The entire operation was to take a week. Field Marshal Walther Model would command Army Group B and was given responsibility for the attack. He reported, at least theoretically, to the OB West Commander, Field Marshal Gerd Von Rundstedt.

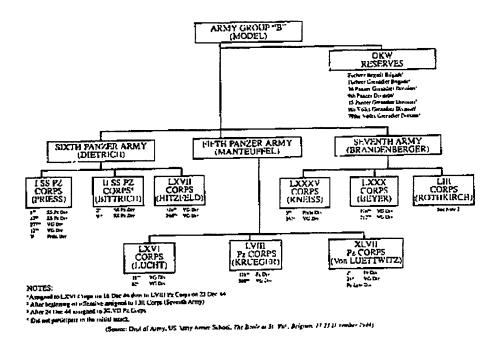
The key was catching the Allies off-guard. Surprise and confusion would collapse the sector. The cumbersome nature of a coalition would preclude quick response until the full extent of the attack could be realized. By then, it would be too late.²⁹

The Plan -- Wacht am Rhein

The offensive would be across a sixty-mile front through the Ardennes forest. The newly formed Sixth Panzer Army would conduct the main attack along the northern flank. It was commanded by Josef "Sepp" Dietrich, a loyal Nazi and longtime associate of Hitler. Somewhat resented by fellow general officers for his high position in the political *Waffen SS*, he was considered to have limited talent at the operational level. Along a 25-mile front between Monschau to the north and Prum to the south, it was to cross the Meuse on both sides of Liege by the fourth day, with Antwerp as the ultimate objective. Consisting of nine divisions with 800 tanks, it was weighted with the two most capably equipped *SS Panzer* Divisions. The 1st

SS Panzer Division (actually a "task force") commanded by the Jochen Peiper, a fanatical Nazi known for his ruthlessness and professional competence, would spearhead the attack.³⁰

The Fifth *Panzer* Army, commanded by Hasso von Manteuffel was the next army south and the supporting attack of the main effort. Manteuffel, though a member of the Junker aristocracy vehemently mistrusted by Hitler, was respected as an extremely capable front-line commander. The Fifth, with seven divisions and 600 tanks, was to advance between Prum and Bastogne,



German Order of Battle, 16 December 1944



bypassing Bastogne on the south. It was to turn northwest crossing the Meuse at Namur, bypassing Brussels en route to the English Channel. A synchronized advance with the Sixth was critical for mutual flank security.³¹

Supporting attacks would be conducted to the north and south. The Seventh Army, more a reinforced Corps of only four infantry divisions, would attack to the south of Fifth Army with the intent of establishing defensive blocking positions for anticipated counterattacks from 3rd U.S Army. In the north the Fifteenth Army with 700 tanks would launch a limited offensive near the city of Aachen, taking advantage of Allied defenses inevitably weakened by the diversion of troops to counter the main attack.³²

Hitler included several additional operations in support of the overall offensive. Operation *Grief* was the special operating forces element of the attack. It consisted of a 3,300man brigade that included some English-speaking soldiers wearing American uniforms. Otto Skorzeny commanded the Brigade. A lieutenant colonel in the *Waffen SS* and a favorite of Hitler, he was an accomplished commander who had rescued Mussolini from a "veritable fortress manned by superior numbers of Italian guards" and prevented, at gunpoint, the Hungarian government from signing a separate peace with the Allies.³³ His feats

prompted Allied intelligence to consider him the "most dangerous man in Europe."³⁴

The mission would be two-fold. In a more conventional role, he would act as advance guard for 6th Army and utilizing American equipment and uniforms seize intact bridges across the Meuse to facilitate the timeline of the main effort. In addition, nine small commando groups would infiltrate Allied lines and spread confusion throughout the rear area. Though given the mission on 21 October, Skorzeny encountered significant difficulty in obtaining an adequate amount of American equipment and identifying sufficient numbers of German soldiers fluent in English. His soldiers, not briefed on the specifics of the mission and accustomed to more daring strategic operations, thought the true objective was the assassination of Eisenhower. More than anything else, this perception would impact the actual value their efforts played during the offensive.³⁵

Almost as an afterthought, Hitler also included an airborne assault. Only eight days before the start of the offensive, Colonel Freidrich von der Heydte was given the mission of a battalion-size assault into the Allied rear to seize vital road junctions for the 6th Army advance. With no time to recruit or train, his 1,250 man battalion consisted of many soldiers who were not parachute qualified, had never jumped with weapons or had any experience in airborne operations.³⁶ Known as Operation

Stosser, Heydte complained to Model that his unit was not properly prepared for the operation. When questioned by Model as to whether he would give the operation a ten-percent chance of success, he answered "yes." Model concluded:

Then it is necessary to make the attempt, since the entire offensive has no more than a ten-percent chance of success. It must be done, since this offensive is the last remaining chance to conclude the war favorably. If we do not make the most of that tenpercent chance, Germany will be faced with certain defeat.³⁷

These comments illustrate the perception and feeling of most of the senior German leaders. To this point only the most senior planners were aware of the operation. Hitler's paranoia and distrust precluded inclusion or input of field commanders. On 22 October, Rundstedt and Model were initially briefed. Army commanders were not briefed until 2 November. Once aware of the offensive, each commander concluded that the objectives could not be achieved. Though not necessarily against an offensive operation, they believed the scope and intent was too broad for the level of resources available.³⁸

Rundstedt complained that "all, absolutely all conditions for the possible success of such an offensive were lacking," and that taking Antwerp was simply beyond the Wehrmacht's capabilities. "Antwerp!" he cried. "If we reach the Meuse we should get down on our knees and thank God - let alone trying to reach Antwerp!" Model lamented that "this plan hasn't got a leg to stand on..." Dietrich who was to lead the offensive stated..."I can't do it. It's impossible."³⁹

Several alternative plans were presented, hinged on enhancing feasibility; linking objective with resource. Rundstedt proposed a pincer operation along a 25-mile front linked with the attack of a more robust 15th Army near Aachen. Model favored a single, more concentrated attack along a fortymile front with a "second-wave" positioned to exploit initial success.⁴⁰ Manteuffel, the Fifth Army commander, using a "bridge" analogy stated:

What we are planning is a 'grand slam' in attempting to go all the way to Antwerp. I do not think we hold the cards. I would like to see the bid reduced to a 'little slam.' After a penetration of the thin American lines in the Ardennes, the two panzer armies could wheel north. My own left flank would be protected by the Meuse in the west and we could cut off all of the First American Army north of the penetration. We could inflict tremendous damage.⁴¹

In the end, all adjustments to Hitler's detail vision of the offensive were dismissed. His perception of himself as an "authority in all spheres of life" combined with his distorted view of reality on the front drove him to adamantly maintain the plan as he first envisioned.⁴² In fact, to ensure compliance he attached a handwritten note to the final plan that read, "not to be altered."⁴³ Driven by professionalism and the recognition that this was the last hope for the *Wehrmacht* and the Fatherland, commanders adopted the plan as their own and feverishly worked to try and achieve the impossible.

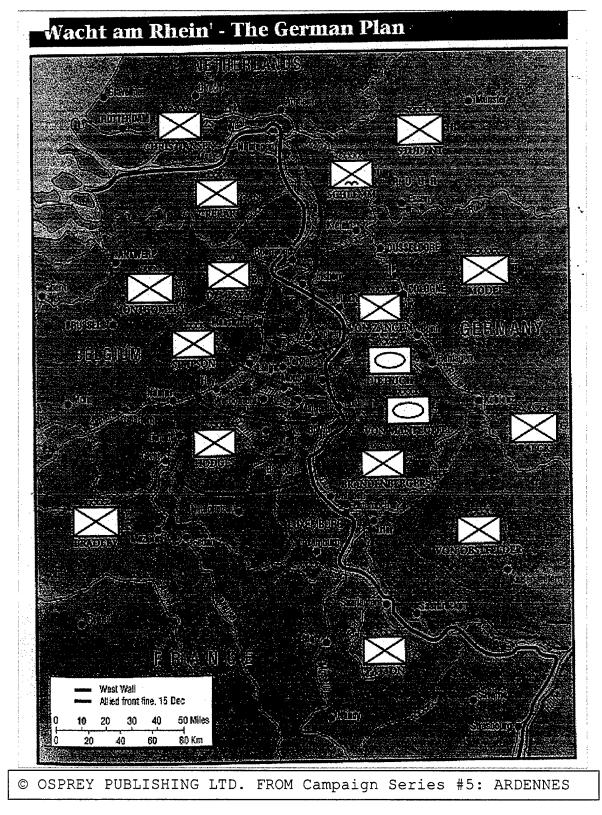


Figure 3

Posture Prior to Battle

Possibly the greatest accomplishment of the operation was the accumulation of resources to even attempt this level offensive. Though never reaching the 32 divisions initially identified by the plan, Hitler fielded 26 divisions, consisting of 300,000 troops, 1,800 tanks and over 1,900 artillery pieces. This was a truly remarkable feat. The preceding six months witnessed the decimation of the once powerful Wehrmacht. The war had cost Germany four million men; its finest divisions were almost totally destroyed. Losing almost 2,000 armored vehicles in the battles for France, the western front had only 130 tanks and a 2-to-1 deficit in manpower.⁴⁴ Implementing drastic, inflexible procedures, Hitler amassed a tremendous force. Thinning defensive sectors, divisions were pulled from the line and refitted. Recruiting efforts included men age 16 to 60 and manpower moved from garrisons, the Luftwaffe and other rear area elements to flesh out new divisions. Collaborators and recruits from occupied countries were also utilized to meet the needed manpower requirements.

In spite of relentless Allied bombing, German industrial output was almost at an all-time high. Priority for new equipment shifted from front-line defenses to the new "reserve."⁴⁵

...in September 1944 the Wehrmacht lost almost 27,000 machine guns, yet less than 1,500 replacements for these weapons arrived at the front while 24,000 were set aside...300 mortars replaced 2,000...not one new Tiger or Panther tank went to Russia. More than 70% of the tanks and assault guns which rolled off German production lines...were sent to the west.⁴⁶

Though the time necessary to accumulate these resources prompted Hitler to delay the operation several times, finally putting *null-day* at 16 December, he had accomplished what the Allies had viewed as impossible. Of course, men and materiel provide for only two-thirds of the equation for success. In addition to logistic limitations and insufficient air support, training this force to the level necessary could not be accomplished and proved to be the Achilles heel.⁴⁷

With potential success heavily weighted on the element of surprise, remarkable efforts for deception were also applied. The Allies had become overly reliant on their ability to intercept and decode Nazi transmissions through Ultra intelligence systems. Though Hitler was unaware of this and convinced that communications remained secure, he knew critical classified information was being revealed. Attributing this to spies and traitors, he directed there would be no electronic traffic and that officers escorted by *gestapo* agents would handcarry all orders and plans. The name for the operation, "Watch on the Rhine," implied the anticipated defense of the German heartland along the Rhine River. The location of the 6th Army

was intentionally exposed to appear positioned to counter the planned Allied offensive into the Ruhr valley. The Fifth Army stayed in the defensive line and pulled out appearing to re-fit for continued defense. Trains moving the vast quantities of men and materiel moved only at night and hid in tunnels during the day. Troops staged in the concealment of the Ardennes were issued smokeless charcoal to preserve the secrecy of their location. Movements into attack positions were carefully orchestrated to minimize observation and Allied concern. Reconnaissance and patrols were forbidden. Unit commanders were threatened with execution if information was compromised. Finally, Hitler counted on and received the predictable bad weather than precluded much of the aerial reconnaissance that played a huge role in the Allied intelligence picture. All of this played on Allied perceptions and confidence that the Wehrmacht had become incapable of a major offensive.⁴⁸ On 16 December 1944, untried or battle-weary American divisions, along a sector up to five times wider than normal faced the brunt of a desperate German army grasping for one last decisive victory that would change the outcome of the war.

THE BATTLE

Split seconds before 5:30 a.m. on Saturday, December 16, an American soldier from Company K, 110th Infantry, manning an observation post atop a concrete water tower along the Skyline Drive in the village of

Hosingen, telephoned his company commander. In the distance on the German side of the Our, he could see a strange phenomenon: he could see flickering points of light. Moments later both he and his company commander had the explanation. They were the flashes of German guns, for at Hosingen, along the rest of Skyline drive, and at many another point along what had been the quiet front in the Ardennes, the morning darkness suddenly came alive with a maelstrom of bursting shells.⁴⁹

Initial Assault - 16 December

The artillery preparation signaled the German assault across the entire 80-mile front. Dietrich's 6th Army, the main effort, needed a quick breakthrough of the Elsenborn Ridge and committed two Volksgrenadier infantry divisions to provide the "crack" through which the *panzer* spearheads would penetrate. The 99th Division, a "green" untried unit that had arrived in theater in November, defended the area. Road networks into the twin cities of Rocherath and Krinkelt became critical objectives for the assault. Though surprised, overwhelmed and isolated by the attack, small unit heroics in the 99th were successful in holding the cities. Dusk came at 1630 without the critical breakthrough needed for Peiper's 1st SS Panzer Division to exploit.⁵⁰

The 5th Army was not scheduled to begin its assault until 10am. With approval from Hitler, however, Manteuffel began the assault before dawn to take advantage of limited daylight. Creating his own moonlight by bouncing searchlights off of low-

lying clouds he began the crossing of the Our River in the south. This sector was defended by the re-fitting 28th Division with three regiments forward. The 110th Regiment in the center of the sector faced the brunt of the assault. Defending the eastwest road networks, they established pocket strongpoints leading to critical junctions within several villages. Most critical were the near the cities of Marnach and Hosingen, which provided high-speed approaches toward Bastogne. Utilizing two companies of tanks from the division reserve, the unit commander employed them as "penny-packets" across the defense to attempt to bolster each of the pocket defenses. By the end of the day, Manteuffel had successfully bridged the Our but had not broken the defenses of the 110th; the towns were held.⁵¹

The story was different in the northern part of the 5th Army sector, an area known as the Losheim Gap. It is an east-west corridor, almost seven miles wide, that had been successfully used as an avenue of approach in the past. This also happened to be the area most lightly defended by American forces; only 900 men from the 14th Cavalry Group occupied a five-mile sector. The newest division in theater, the 106th had two regiments on their right flank along the Schnee Eifel. They arrived in sector on 12 December. This is the only place the anticipated breakthrough occurred on the first day. The sheer numbers of the assault overwhelmed the cavalry. Lines broken, the 5th Army almost

encircled the elements of the 106th, conducting a pincer from the south towards the elements that had broken the 14th Cavalry in the Gap. The inexperienced soldiers on the Eifel, not realizing the magnitude of the encircling enemy, were content with their successful defense in sector.⁵²

The Germans achieved surprise across the entire front, but had broken through only at the Losheim Gap. The limiting nature of the terrain forced the assault to focus on roads, cities and road junctions. This allowed a pocketed, disjointed and uncoordinated American defense to be successful. The lack of training in the initial German assault forces was also a significant factor.

Led by men seemingly ignorant of even the fundamentals of small unit tactics, numerous German platoons and companies were decimated because they tended to remain fully erect and to bunch together when attacking; these veritable human wave assaults made the Germans easy targets for American gunners. Even many veteran formations, which after years of defensive action had become rusty at attacking, struggled to gain ground.⁵³

The tightly managed timetable was now irrevocably derailed. The linchpin of the assault was the quick breakthrough facilitated by surprise. This did not happen and the Americans had time to react.

Most American commanders, however, were confused or did not recognize the magnitude of the assault. The commander of the 99th Division reported at the end of the day, "situation in hand and

all quiet."⁵⁴ Hodges, the 1st Army commander still intended to continue the attack on the Roer River dams as scheduled for the next day. Bradley, visiting SHAEF headquarters in Versailles, also thought it was the anticipated spoiling attacks. Patton concurred. He told Eisenhower, "Goddamit, that's no major threat up there! That's just a goddamn little spoiling attack. They want to throw us off balance down here-make me stop my offensive - you'll be playing into the hands of the Hun!"⁵⁵ Only Eisenhower recognized the scope of the assault. He "suggested" to Bradley to take the 7th division from Ninth Army in the north and the 10th Division from Patton's Third Army in the south and immediately reinforce Hodges. Bradley reluctantly complied. These divisions would be critical in stemming the momentum of the assault.

Breakthrough - 17-19 December

That evening, with Dietrich's Army stalled, Heydte's parachute drop was ordered. Only 11 of the 106 transports, manned by inexperienced pilots, made it through Allied air defense to the drop zones. With some of his battalion dropped behind German lines and in Holland, only 350 of the original 1.250 made it to the designated assembly area. Out of contact because of damaged radios, the unit was forced to focus on its own survival and was totally ineffective. Though they had failed

to accomplish their mission, the psychological impact of an airdrop in the rear area had proved of some benefit in causing panic and confusion. On 22 December, they broke into small teams and tried to infiltrate back to German lines.⁵⁶

However, 17 December also witnessed the weight of the assault and the front-wide breakthrough needed the previous day started to take form. Manteuffel, desperately trying to get back on schedule, attacked through the night. Infiltration, under cover of darkness, compromised much of the American direct-support artillery and left infantry defenders without the benefit of indirect fires. Panzer elements were across the Our in force and by dusk, the bulk of the 28th Division's defenses in the Marnach-Hosingen area had collapsed. The Clerf River was crossed and by the evening of the 18th, the roadblocks of the 110th Regiment were virtually destroyed.⁵⁷ The Panzer Lehr Division, arguably Manteuffel's best unit, continued to advance on Bastogne and was within two miles by 2a.m. on the 19th. The town was virtually undefended at this time but the division commander, fearing encirclement by a rumored U.S Armored Division, decided to halt and consolidate his forces. Continuing again at 5:30am his lead tank hit a mine and still cautious of being isolated, he decided to wait for first light.58

As this occurred, the encirclement of the Schnee Eifel was complete; the 9,000 men of the 106^{th} Division were cut-off and

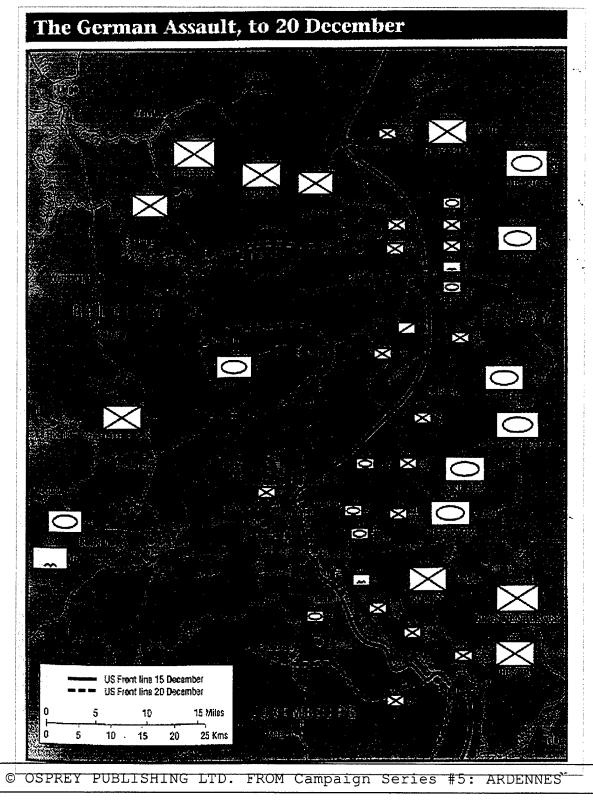


Figure 4

isolated, resulting in the largest American surrender since the fall of Bataan in 1942. The German column rushed toward the road junctions at St Vith. Initially defended by only 500 engineers and an infantry platoon, the 7th Division redirected by Eisenhower and traveling all night, arrived soon after the initial German assault providing necessary forces for a credible defense.

Unlike the 5th, the 6th Army did not attack through the night and resumed its assault on the twin cities at first light. The 99th Division, now reinforced by elements of the 2nd Division began a coordinated withdrawal to better defenses along the Elsenborn Ridge. Frustrated at the slow advance, however, Dietrich ordered attacking German forces further south to take advantage of the Losheim Gap breakthrough. This allowed the 99th and 2nd Divisions to consolidate and join the defenses of the 1st Division on the 19th of December. Supported by significant artillery, this three-division "shoulder" would not be moved throughout the battle.⁵⁹

Also taking advantage of the breakthrough in the Gap was the 29-year-old commander of the 1st SS Panzer. The spearhead of the entire operation, Peiper was concerned and frustrated with the delay and on the 17th moved past the forward infantry division to make his own "crack' in the line. Taking advantage of the thin defenses in this portion of the 6th Army's sector, he

ordered an infantry battalion to ride his tanks and at 4am led the assault almost unchallenged to Bullingen. If he had continued north, he could have cut-off the 30,000 soldiers of the 2nd and 99th Divisions along the Elsenborn Ridge but given his strict orders, he refueled and pushed west to Malmedy. Capturing about 130 soldiers after a short battle, there ensued the most famous atrocity of the battle: the Malmedy massacre.

Machine guns opened fire at point blank range, first killing those who did not fall to the ground quickly enough then began raking back and forth over the prostrate forms. ... gradually the groans and moans ceased. When the machine guns finished, several Germans walked among the bodies laughing and shooting in the head those who still showed signs of life.⁶⁰

In all, the ruthless *Kampgruppe* (Battlegroup) Peiper was involved in a dozen different war crimes that claimed the lives of 111 Belgian civilians and 353 American soldiers.⁶¹

They continued their advance, covering over 30 miles in 12 hours and reaching Stavelot by sundown on the 17th. The next morning, he took the town of Stavelot and crossed the Ambleve River continuing to Trois Ponts. Delayed by blown bridges and a rare fighter attack by U.S. P-47 Thunderbolts, he redirected the column to La Gleize the night of the 18th. Here too, he was frustrated by a small group of engineers who blew the bridges and precluded his westward advance across the Salm River. Low on fuel and ammunition, boxed by channeling terrain and stalled by the engineers, Peiper soon found himself isolated by a U.S

counterattack that retook Stavelot. By dusk on the 19th, Peiper was cut from his logistics and the spearhead of the German main effort was immobilized.

Though assault forces made significant advances during this phase, several key events and decisions would significantly shape the final outcome of the battle. The successful defense of the Elsenborn Ridge was arguably the most decisive factor in the battle.⁶² It provided the "shoulder containment," doctrinally needed for the successful response to a significant enemy penetration.

If the enemy's drive can be contained between two unyielding shoulders, his next objective - that of widening the breech, preparatory to exploiting the advance - will be forestalled. In the Ardennes offensive some of the fiercest fighting was the heroic efforts of the American forces to hold the two shoulders, commonly thought of as the Elsenborn in the north and the Echternach in the south. These were to prove critical to the prevention of an Allied defeat⁶³

The delaying actions of the 28th Division, though decimating the 110th Regiment, bought the time needed to strengthen defenses at Bastogne. These hours proved decisive in denying the Germans the critical high-speed road network towards the Meuse.

Timely strategic decisions proved definitive. In addition to redirecting divisions from the Ninth and Third Armies, Eisenhower also released the SHAEF reserve (the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions) to Bradley on the 17th. The 101st, traveling over icy roads in cattle-trucks, arrived at Bastogne early on

the 19th, just as the *Panzer Lehr* Division finally made a coordinated assault. The arrival of the 101st along with elements of the 10th Division ("suggested" by Eisenhower to be provided by Third Army) was truly decisive; Bastogne would have been quickly overrun had they not been in place. The 82nd was successfully employed to assist in containing the rapid penetration of Peiper's *SS* Division and later proved critical in the defense of St Vith.

Eisenhower convened a meeting of senior commanders on 19 December at Verdun and outlined the Allied response. Recognizing the opportunity the attack had provided, he stated, "... the present situation is to be regarded as one of opportunity for us and not disaster. There will be only cheerful faces at this conference table." Patton responded, "Hell, let's have the guts to let the son's of bitches go all the way to Paris! Then we'll really cut'em up and chew'em up."⁶⁴

Eisenhower had already requested the accelerated movement of new divisions from the U.S. and was bringing forward an additional division just arrived in France. Though allowing commanders the flexibility to give ground in order to fight a mobile defense, he identified the Meuse as the no penetration line. Dever's 6th Army Group would shift to free some of Patton's units in the south; Simpson's 9th Army would do the same in the north to assist 1st Army. With Hodges containing the

penetrations, Patton was ordered to initiate a counterattack in the south. The intent was to limit the "bulge" between St Vith and Bastogne. First Army would latter counterattack south and link up with Patton, effectively cutting-off penetrating forces. When asked when he could begin, Patton boasted, "The morning of the 21st...." In fact, he had anticipated the possibility and already prepared the necessary contingency plans. Eisenhower, however, concerned that 48 hours would be insufficient time to disengage, reposition and conduct a coordinated attack in force, instructed Patton to begin the attack on the 22nd with three divisions, followed by an addition three the next day.⁶⁵

After returning to his headquarters that evening, Eisenhower made probably the most controversial decision of the battle. Concerned with the location of Bradley's headquarters in Luxembourg and his ability to adequately command and control elements north of the German penetration, he decided to move Ninth Army and the bulk of First Army under the command of Montgomery; Bradley would retain control of units to the south. This, in effect, left Bradley very few assets. Only Patton's Third Army (operating somewhat independently) and the elements in Bastogne remained. In addition to communication concerns, Eisenhower recognized that the only sizeable reserve was the refitting Thirtieth British Corps in the north. With command of all forces north of the penetration, Montgomery would have the

Ardennes Command Arrangement from 20 December 1944

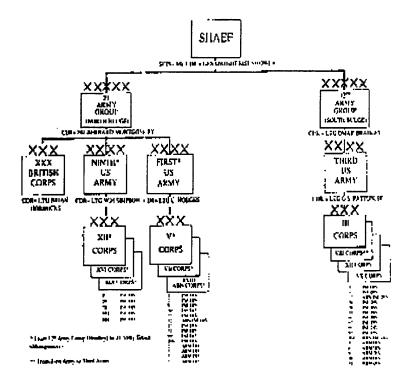


Figure 5

flexibility to react as well as counterattack as required by the unfolding situation. As such, over the adamant concerns expressed by senior American commanders (Bradley and Patton), the change was implemented on 20 December.⁶⁶

German commanders were also reacting to the results of the initial assault. Rundstedt, correctly anticipating Allied repositioning decided that the supporting attack by the German 15th Army near Aachen should be initiated. If successful, it

would hold American divisions identified to reinforce the Ardennes and possibly encircle the Allied forces in the protruding salient. Though ordered to begin on 19 December, Hitler who believed the penetrations in the Ardennes needed to be exploited canceled it. He relegated the 15th Army to the defense and pulled two *panzer* divisions to the OKW reserve. Model, hoping to facilitate the penetrations of Manteuffel's 5th Army provided the coveted *Fuhrer* Escort Brigade for an in-force assault on St Vith. Dietrich, at the reluctant recommendation of Skorzeny, approved the cancellation of the Meuse Bridge portion of Operation *Grief*. Skorzeny's 150th Brigade now became just another conventional element of the 6th Army. Operation *Grief*, other than the insertion of several commando teams had failed to materialize.

Containment - 20 -23 December

Though elements of the German 6th Army pounded the defenses of the Elsenborn Ridge for three additional days, they made no advances and lost an additional 100 tanks. *Kampfgruppe* Peiper was now truly on its own. Airdrops had failed to sustain the unit and on 23 December, Peiper abandoned his equipment, his wounded and his prisoners and with 800 men began infiltrating back to German lines. The main effort had failed.

Determined to take St Vith, Manteuffel (coordinated with elements from 6th Army) mounted an all-out assault. Though reinforced by the Fuhrer Escort Brigade, the traffic jams along the limited roadways precluded the attack until 21 December. Montgomery, concerned for the isolated divisions in the St Vith salient (the 7th and one Regimental Combat Team of the 106th), ordered the XVIII Airborne Corps to drive south and provide a corridor for a withdrawal. After a fierce three-pronged assault, the town fell the evening of the 22nd. At Montgomery's insistence and over the objections of the American commanders, on the 23rd the units withdrew from their established position known as the "fortified goose-egg" to new positions behind the Salm River. In a message to the commanders, Montgomery commented, "you have accomplished your mission-a mission well done. Its time to withdraw."67 Indeed, the defenders of St Vith had delayed the only major breakthrough forces for six days.

As per the initial plan, Manteuffel bypassed Bastogne and proceeded toward the Meuse. Leaving only a blocking force, his three *panzer* divisions crossed the Ourthe River on the 20^{th.} Though low on fuel they were within five miles of the Meuse by Christmas Eve.⁶⁸ The defenders of Bastogne found themselves surrounded on the evening of the 21st. Though the Germans had

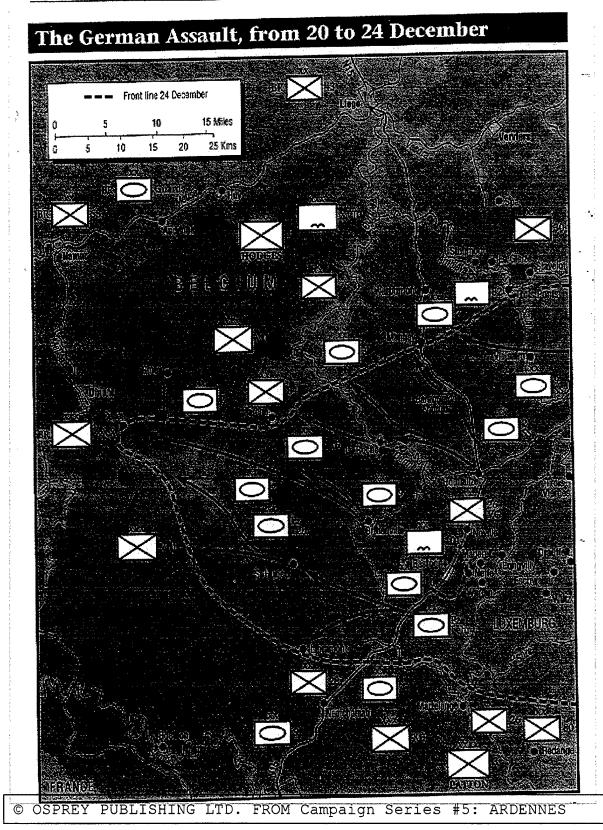


Figure 6

insufficient strength to breach the defenses, they issued an ultimatum and demanded surrender. Brigadier General McAuliffe, the American commander, offered his response...NUTS!

The untranslatable response was not understood by the German negotiators. Colonel Bud Harper explained: 'If you don't understand what "Nuts" means, in plain English it is the same as "go to hell". And I will tell you something else - if you continue to attack we will kill every goddam German that tries to break into this city.'⁶⁹

Though certainly a gallant response, the actual situation was very grim. Ammunition, gasoline and medical supplies were all but depleted. Sleet and snow hampered aerial resupply. Four heavy assaults were repulsed on the 22nd and the men of Bastogne were in dire need of the promised help from Patton's Third Army.

As directed, Patton initiated the three-division counterattack on the 22^{nd.} The progress along the 20-mile front, however, was slower than expected. The same weather conditions that hampered the resupply of Bastogne had precluded the needed air support for the attack. The German 7th Army had been specifically positioned to counter the expected advance. Though somewhat surprised at how quickly the counterattack had been initiated, they nonetheless mounted a fierce defense. The spearhead 4th Division was delayed until the 23rd when clear skies permitted the much needed air attacks. The defenders of Bastogne also looked to the skies. For four hours, 260 C-47 transport planes dropped 344 tons of supplies. By 27 December, either

parachute or glider had delivered over 1,000 tons of ammunition, gasoline and equipment.⁷⁰

Defeat - 24 December to 5 January

By Christmas Eve, senior German leaders recognized that any hope of achieving Hitler's objectives was gone. As early as 18 December, Model had told Rundstedt that the Offensive had failed and that the "small solution" of turning north at the Meuse was the only reasonable alternative. Rundstedt, even more pessimistic, recommended a reconsolidation and defensive posture. Of the senior leadership, only Hitler remained optimistic and refused to alter the initial plan.⁷¹

The lead element of Manteuffel's 5th Army had bypassed Bastogne and raced to close on the Meuse. Pausing at Celles to widen the spearhead and bring up additional units to force the crossing, they became victims of good weather and clearing skies. The weight of Allied air-superiority took a devastating toll. Immobilized by air attacks, the lack of fuel and the fatigue of six straight days of continual combat without rest, the 2nd Panzer Division (at the tip of the assault) was counterattacked by the 2nd U.S. Armored Division and was virtually annihilated. As with the Jochen Peiper and the spearhead of the 6th Army, "the German division died at the point of its furthest penetration." Other German divisions were

withdrawn, the initiative was lost and the penetration was contained. $^{72}\,$

Weathering a major German assault on Christmas Day that had the German attackers within one mile of the city, the defenders of Bastogne were barely holding on. Even with overwhelming air support, the relief efforts of Patton's Third Army were only progressing at about a mile per day, the bloodiest fighting of the war for these soldiers. The 4th U.S. Armored Division would lose 200 of its 242 tanks. Finally on 26 December, at the same time the last elements of 2nd Panzer were being defeated near Celles, the lead elements of the 4th Division, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Creighton Abrams, penetrated a weak spot in the German lines and linked up with BG McAuliffe's defenders.⁷³ Even then, the lifeline to Bastogne, only 300 yards wide, looked like a "balloon on a string."⁷⁴ The next several days would witness intense fighting and an all-out push by the Germans to take the city. With two additional divisions released by Eisenhower on the 28th, Patton widened the relief corridor and successfully launched counter attacks into the encircling German forces.

Hitler continued to pursue the western offensive. Unwilling to accept failure, he ordered two additional offensive operations with the intent of distracting and desynchronizing the efforts of the Allies in the Ardennes. Operation Nordwind

(planned before the Ardennes offensive began and initiated at 11p.m. on New Year's Eve) was a nine-division attack in the south against Dever's Sixth Army Group. It was intended to occupy some of the units that might otherwise be available to Patton in the relief of Bastogne. In addition, it was to retake the French town of Strasbourg, putting into question Allied resolve to hold French territory, further weakening the coalition. Although Eisenhower was initially willing to give ground to preserve forces, he succumbed to pressure from General Charles de Gaulle. Adamant of the symbolic value of Strasbourg to the French, he insisted that the town be defended. He even threatened to pull French troops from Allied force structure, if necessary, to conduct an independent operation. Though infuriated by the ultimatum, Eisenhower was unwilling to risk complications with his "lifeline" through France. As such, he compromised and left sufficient troops to defend a line east of the town.⁷⁵ The German divisions, significantly understrength, poorly equipped and compromised by Ultra intercepts advanced only 15 miles in two weeks, most of which was due to voluntary American withdrawals to consolidate their defense. Though causing some friction between the Allies, the operation failed.

Hitler also mounted Operation *Bodenplate*, a massive air campaign intended to cripple the Allied air forces while still on the ground. Though achieving surprise in the New Year's day

attack as well as the destruction of 206 allied aircraft at sixteen airfields in Holland and Belgian, the loss to the *Luftwaffe* of 277 irreplaceable planes and pilots spelled the end of the once feared air arm of the *Wehrmacht*.⁷⁶

The final blow came from the north. Montgomery, having taken command of the northern components of First Army on 20 December, immediately felt the need to "tidy the battlefield." In doing so, he ordered the 82nd Airborne Division to withdraw from poor defensive positions along a fifteen-mile sector blocking the road to Liege. Strongly disputed by the American commander who argued that the "82nd had never retreated in its history and should not begin it now", it proved decisive in holding the northern shoulder.⁷⁷

Here was military science displayed by a master grand tactician overcoming the unthinking, bulldog tenacity that characterized most American combat decisions. When a ferocious German attack hit the 82nd two days latter (26 December) it was repulsed after bitter fighting. The outcome would have been different had not Monty insisted upon the retreat.⁷⁸

This situation highlights the difference in the American and Montgomery method of war. This differing philosophy resulted in, arguably, the greatest danger of the conflict - a rift in the coalition.

On 28 December, Eisenhower made the trip to Brussels to meet with Montgomery. Seeing the opportunity the extended penetration had presented, Eisenhower ordered Montgomery to

counterattack and link-up with Patton near Houffalize. This, in effect, would cut-off and isolate the bulk of German forces. The attack was to begin as soon as possible but no latter than 3 January.

Montgomery was extremely reluctant. Though most considered the 26th of December as the high-water-mark of the German offensive, Montgomery felt the worst was still to come. He became openly critical of the American situation. He felt that First Army would be unable to counterattack for three months and latter commented in a letter to the British Chief of Staff, "It was useless to pretend that we were going to turn this guickly into a great victory; it was a proper defeat and we had better admit it." He further implied that if his "single-thrust" strategy had been adopted, they wouldn't be in this situation.⁷⁹ He also used the current circumstances to rekindle his argument for an overall ground commander; specifically himself. In a letter to Eisenhower, he stated that the defeat illustrated the need to appoint him as overall ground commander. Eisenhower interpreted this as an ultimatum. The British press had already characterized Monty's control of First Army assets as his "bailing out of the Americans" and Montgomery's attitude was dangerously compromising Bradley's credibility. Eisenhower, confidant in his position and exhausted by the continual challenges presented by the British Field Marshal, drafted a

letter to the Combined Chiefs of Staff outlining that either he or Montgomery would have to be relieved. Fortunately, the intervention of Montgomery's Chief of Staff, Major General Freddie de Guingand resulted in a Montgomery apology and the appeasement of Eisenhower. The letter was never sent. The crisis had been averted. Most important, it had not impacted at all the conduct of operations⁸⁰

Montgomery's counterattack was delayed until the last possible moment but began as directed on 3 January. Weather, the worst of the campaign, significantly limited the advances of both First and Third Army. The likelihood of catching the bulk of the Germans "in the bag" had slipped away. A link-up did not occur until 16 January.

An attack from the north, however, what Hitler had considered impossible, rocked the *Fuhrer* into reality. Upon hearing of Montgomery's attack he conceded that, "...the originally planned operation is no longer promising of success."⁸¹

On 5 January, Hitler suspended the attacks against Bastogne; four days latter he withdrew the four SS Panzer Divisions from the fighting. Hitler's attention shifted to the Eastern Front on January 12th when the Soviet winter offensive jumped off. The Russians immediately ripped a gaping hole in the German lines and covered over 200 miles in 11 days....⁸²

STRATEGIC ANALYSIS

Strategic leadership is the process used by a leader to affect the achievement of a desirable and clearly understood vision by influencing the organizational culture, allocating resources, directing through policy and directive, and building consensus within a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous environment which is marked by opportunities and threats.⁸³

USAWC Definition

The intent of this analysis is to identify and discuss strategic factors and decisions that influenced the inception and outcome of the battle. Inevitably, this will lead to an assessment of the strategic leaders, specifically Eisenhower and Hitler.

There are several paradigms to identify as a backdrop for the analysis.

- The core of strategy is the calculated relationship of ends and means.
- ...strategy formulation is an intensely political process...
- Strategic leaders must conceptually envision a desired future state for their organization and then direct the flow of internal and the influence of external events toward that end.
- The environment at this level is characterized by the highest degrees of uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity, as well as tremendous volatility due to the compression of time in which the leader must act.⁸⁴

It is from this perspective that an evaluation of "competency" of leaders and their decisions will be presented.

German Assessment

On the surface, the operation may appear to be a foolhardy action on the part of a desperate madman. An effort that merely accelerated the demise of the German war machine. It was, however, the product of exceptional intuition, which at the time may have been the best hope for the *Third Reich*. Hitler's strategic aim was to influence the only element that may have had an impact on the inevitable outcome of the war - the cohesion of the Allied coalition. What other viable options were available? In his book, "The Battle for the Ardennes," John Strawson writes,

Given that Hitler's choice was between defense and attack, given too that it was not so much a precise strategic objective that was at stake but a general one of seizing the initiative in order to be able to bargain from a stronger position in the business of keeping Germany whole...was he right to attack with his very last reserves which he must have known to have been inadequate in relation to the much stronger forces opposed to them...had the thing been worth doing?⁸⁵

At the Nuremberg trials after the war, General Jodl, Chief of Wehrmacht Operations commented on Hitler's gamble in conducting a final massive offensive, "Before any of us, he sensed and knew that the war was lost. But can anyone give up a

nation, particularly his own people, for lost if there is any way out?" 86

John Elstob writes in his book "Hitler's Last Offensive," "Hitler made many wrong military decisions, particularly during the last years of the war, but the Ardennes offensive was not one of them." He argues that an offensive at this time was strategically correct and that the objective chosen was appropriate to achieving the strategic goal of disrupting the coalition. He contends that the timing, location and operational objective were all sound decisions. ⁸⁷

There is in fact significant historical precedent on the inherent weaknesses of coalition warfare. Hitler routinely cited Frederick the Great's experience at the end of the Seven Years War, where against all advice he held out and subsequently defeated the disintegrated coalition set against him.⁸⁸ He perceived that a crushing operational defeat would be the catalyst for fracturing the cohesion of the coalition, thereby posturing Germany for negotiating a favorable armistice in the west. Even in retrospect, assessing relative strengths and weaknesses, the essence of the coalition itself appears to be the strategic center of gravity for the Allies. Though the strength of the political alliance appears unshakeable, rifts at the strategic military level were certainly possible.

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If Hitler's strategic vision was sound, (though certainly debatable) was the mechanism to achieve it correct? Was the commitment of all reserves in a massive offensive in the west, with an objective of Antwerp, the necessary means to fracture the coalition?

Strawson's analysis concludes that the timing, constrained by circumstance, was almost perfect. With the threat of a massive Russian offensive at one end and the need to amass significant resources to conduct the operation at the other, the window for the offensive is realistic and viable.

Similarly, the location for the offensive appears to be the best of the options available. The massive Red Army, with hundreds of divisions and a significant operational area, made an offensive effort in the east virtually impossible; it would have almost no impact. There was relative fewer forces in the west spread out over a wide front, which made the Western Front the best location to attempt a strategic offensive. Selecting the Ardennes as the operational focus for the attack was similarly sound. Though often attributed to Hitler's remarkable intuition, its selection was actually based on precise intelligence. The German picture of the battlefield was extremely accurate and properly interpreted. Hitler knew the Allies would have to pause and mass at the West Wall before conducting coordinated attacks into the heart of Germany.

Intelligence identified the weak center of the Allied lines, correctly templating unit locations postured for offenses into the Ruhr and Saar valleys. In identifying the "soft center," focusing the point for penetration on the Ardennes was sound.

The weakness of the plan was the objective in relation to the resources available. Antwerp was never feasible. The "means to ends" correlation just wasn't there. Resources - men, materiel and supplies were never sufficient to reach Antwerp.⁸⁹ Strawson writes:

Antwerp was probably always beyond the reach of Models' Army Group - the distance was simply too great to ensure the security of the flanks even had the panzer divisions quickly reached and crossed the Meuse, capturing all the fuel they needed on the way. The *idea* of capturing Antwerp was essentially sound...but it was just too far in relation to forces available.⁹⁰

The real issue is whether reaching Antwerp was even necessary. The answer is no. The alternative plans presented by Rundstedt and Model had the same propensity for achieving the strategic goal. These alternatives, however, took into consideration tactical realities and recognized limited resources. This is where Hitler's state-of-mind may have been the decisive factor. The imbedded distrust of his generals combined with his isolation and paranoia precluded him from recognizing the benefits of these alternatives and the unfeasibility of his plan. In fact, the "small solution"

presented by Manteuffel, could have triggered the crisis Hitler was banking on. With devastating results, a penetration moving north along the Meuse would have cut off the bulk of 1st Army on the Elsenborn Ridge.

This conclusion is certainly debatable in terms of strategic impact. Though the defeat of First Army would have been critical for the Americans, it may not have had the same effect on the coalition as splitting U.S and British forces and inflicting heavy casualties on the British. Only Hitler's plan offered the latter possibility.⁹¹

Hitler also viewed this operation in the same context as previous engagements in the same sector; and therefore anticipated the same results. He erroneously correlated the conditions in 1940 with those of 1944. In "The Bitter Woods," J.

D. Eisenhower notes:

It is not difficult to understand Hitler's frame of 1940 offensive mind...The was executed over the objections of many of his professional military yet culminated in an overwhelming defeat for the Anglo-French forces, strengthening his determination to gamble again. (However,) Hitler's most grievous error was dreaming that the German troops, leadership and supply situation were in any way comparable to those of 1940. Five years of warfare had taken a grim toll of the Wehrmacht particularly in trained leaders and pilots.⁹²

Strawson concurs in stating, "the basic cause of failure was simply Hitler's belief that the *Wehrmacht* could under the wholly different conditions of 1944 do what it had done in 1940."⁹³

The bottom line is that strategic failure was predicated in the selection of an unattainable operational objective.

However, there were certainly other factors that shaped and influenced the operational outcome of the offensive. One of the most significant is the impact of terrain. Hitler viewed the canalizing terrain as an advantage because it encouraged the Allies to lightly defend an area relatively unsuitable to massive armor attacks. In fact, this was a good decision by Eisenhower and Bradley. Without minimizing the impact of heroic efforts of small groups of soldiers on the outcome of the battle, it was the terrain that allowed a light infantry platoon to hold off an armor-supported infantry battalion. It was an economy of force sector for good reason. Issues of terrain highlight the inflexibility of the German plan. Had operational commanders (Rundstedt and Model) been given the latitude to adapt the plan to terrain considerations, the chances for success would have been much greater.

Flexibility, or the lack of it, was indeed the "death blow" for the entire operation. Numerous opportunities to exploit were not exercised due to the "not to be altered" orders Hitler imposed. Stawson notes that "opportunism adds to surprise." Peiper's opportunity on the second day to turn north and sever forces on the Elsenborn or redirecting Manteuffel's spearhead 2nd *Panzer* Division to implement the "small slam" could have

resulted in tactical victories that altered the overall outcome. Hitler expressly forbade consideration of these situational realities and opportunities.

His perception of infallibility precluded Hitler from making adjustments and resulted in his reinforcement of failure. The early success of 5th Army could have been immediately exploited by the use of strategic reserves. Hitler, however, fixated on the primacy of his "will," reinforced the stalled 6th Army as per the plan. The implementation of *Nordwind* and *Bodenplate* well after defeat was imminent illustrate his unyielding reliance on the inherent soundness of the plan he initially envisioned.

Strawson summarized:

Hitler broke almost every rule. The objectives were so distant ... they were unattainable in terms of troops allotted to the tasks and unholdable in terms of the flanks, which would be exposed even if they were reached. By doubling his purpose, Antwerp and Brussels, Hitler necessarily halved the resources for reaching either; by doubling his frontage, he halved his concentration; by insisting on absolute conformity, he robbed himself of adaptability; by attacking the allied shoulders, he denied himself strength at the weak center...94

Allied Assessment

Success for Hitler hinged on two assumptions concerning a coalition enemy. First (strategic), that coalitions are inherently vulnerable and can be split by a significant negative event; and second (operational), that coalition forces are slow

to react due to the cumbersome nature of the political alliance. In both instances --- at least in this case --- he was wrong.

Hitler believed that Eisenhower would need approval of both British and American War Departments, if not Roosevelt and Churchill themselves, to alter the disposition of forces postured for the upcoming Allied offenses. He felt he needed only 48 hours of indecision to achieve a massive breakthrough.

Indeed, the basic premise for striking at this unexpected time in such an unexpected place was the presumption that the American and British leaders, divided by "nationalistic fears and rivalries," would haggle for days over the nature of the offensive and how to respond to it.⁹⁵

As previously presented, however, Eisenhower was empowered with almost total authority within the theater. The trust and credibility he had established, especially with Churchill, gave him the authority and autonomy to dictate theater strategic operations. In every sense, he was the "Supreme Commander." The day after the start of the offensive, Eisenhower committed his strategic reserve and within three days cancelled Patton's attack into the Saar Valley. As such, decisiveness at the strategic level played a key role in defeating Hitler's offensive instead of facilitating its success.⁹⁶

The essence of the coalition, what Hitler saw as the "Achilles heel," was in fact strained by the resurgent German initiative. It was Eisenhower, however, that minimized the

impact on military operations. His credibility, his strength of character, his mindset to operate as an Allied commander instead of an American commander proved critical at the time of crisis. Considered America's most successful practitioner of coalition war, he masterfully integrated political realities and considerations with strategic military necessities.⁹⁷ Refining the intricacies of SHAEF from its inception, he built a headquarters that emulated his objective perspective.

...Ike had created a truly integrated staff in which a staff officer could act for the general Allied good without regard for the petty national interests of the officer's nation of origin. ...in (Ike's) insistence, that no one should be able to determine when examining a decision of SHAEF whether it was given by a British or American officer rested Eisenhower's decisive contribution to Allied victory.⁹⁸

This is not to imply that he attempted to insulate military decisions from political considerations. To the contrary, he integrated them to preclude the displacement of sound military decisions because of coalition politics. His decisions on command structure illustrate this. Sensitive to the implications of public opinion as well as the power of nationalistic pride within respective militaries, he successfully manipulated these to achieve optimal command structure. The decision to keep secret the predetermined two-army group structure until after an operational breakout of the Normandy lodgment is a prime example. Decisions to make Montgomery's attack into the German

heartland through the Ruhr Valley the main effort and to defend forward of the French city of Strasbourg, though militarily sound, are laced with necessary political considerations. This is what postured Eisenhower to shift two American Armies to Montgomery in spite of American resentment and "face down" Montgomery in his relentless challenges for overall land command and a "single-thrust" strategy. The egocentric nature of Montgomery as well as differing British and American perspectives of warfare added to the challenges within the coalition. Here again, Eisenhower's recognition of these factors in developing operational response during the crisis minimized the inherent weaknesses of coalition warfare. His appointment of Montgomery as the commander of the northern sector was certainly the most controversial decision of the battle. J. D. Morelock highlights in his book, Generals of the Ardennes:

This decision, more than any other action Ike took during the battle proved his greatness as an allied ...(Bradley's) refusal commander. to move his headquarters to a headquarters better suited to managing and coordinating the defensive phase and subsequent counter-offensive gave Eisenhower no choice. ... It was not only simply the correct course of action for the Supreme Commander to take given the circumstances at that point in the battle, but transfer of command...placed Eisenhower in a category by himself as a genuine coalition commander.⁹⁹

Though the German offensive certainly "ruffled" relationships within the military hierarchy, it never directly impacted on the conduct of operations. In that respect,

Eisenhower had insulated the command. Hitler did not get the 48 hours he needed.

Strategic vision and reaction to the attack was key. Again, it was Eisenhower who dominated. As the Allied leaders gathered on 16 December, only Ike recognized the magnitude and intent of the day's encounters. Bradley considered it a "spoiling attack" designed to pull Patton's troops out of the Saar. Patton, obsessed with his own attack plans, commented that reaction to the attacks would be "playing into the hands of the Germans." Only Eisenhower recognized that "this is no spoiling attack," and immediately implemented the most important decisions of the battle.¹⁰⁰ Shifting the 10th and 7th Armored divisions to the Ardennes, over the reluctance and open resistance of his subordinate commanders more than any other act minimized the effectiveness of the offensive.

The timely arrival of these two mobile, powerful units at the two key road junctions of St-Vith and Bastogne prevented the German attack from swiftly overrunning the towns and allowed the Allies to gain control of the rate of German advance.¹⁰¹

He committed the strategic reserve (82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions) on the 17th and dispatched the 11th Armored and 87th Infantry on the 28th; each played a critical role in the defense and subsequent counter-offensive. Morelock comments that though this was the obvious course of action (to commit reserves to the threatened sector) it was the speed by which Eisenhower reacted

that made the difference.¹⁰² Only three days after the attack, Eisenhower outlined the operational response of counterattacking to "pinch-off" German forces in the salient, thereby achieving the strategic goal of eliminating the last vestige of German mobile reserves. He saw this as a strategic opportunity that would facilitate attacks into the German heartland.

"Decisiveness was perhaps the predominant characteristic of the Ardennes offensive and had the greatest impact on the outcome of the battle." 103

Though reaction to the offensive can be considered an Allied success, the circumstances that permitted the operation in the first place cannot. Here, Eisenhower's "broad-front" strategy can be questioned. Though the strategy is in part based upon the commander's assessment of meeting the mission requirement of *destroying enemy forces* and predicated on the presumption that an *outnumbered enemy cannot be strong enough everywhere to resist a breakthrough somewhere*, it does not appropriately consider the ends to means imperative. Setting aside whether a single-thrust versus a broad-front strategy is best, it is more important to identify the feasibility of Eisenhower's strategic approach. The real question is if he had the resources to support his plan. The Ardennes highlights that he didn't. The disposition of forces and the lack of significant reserves

dictated by the strategy allowed Hitler to attempt a strategic offensive. Russell Weigley comments in Eisenhower's Lieutenants:

It was not the broad-front strategy was wrong; the more basic trouble was that the alliance had not given Eisenhower the troops he needed to carry it out safely.¹⁰⁴

He infers that this somehow lifts responsibility from Eisenhower; it does not. The linkage of means to achieve the desired end-state is fundamental in the strategic process. Eisenhower failed to adapt to that reality and as a result postured his forces vulnerable to Hitler's initiative.

National strategists gambled that 90 divisions would be sufficient to conduct the global conflict. Though up to 200 divisions was discussed, advantages of an extremely mobile force were considered to be sufficient in compensating for fewer soldiers. Of this, Eisenhower knew he would get about 60 divisions in Europe. The campaign through November, however, had certainly taken a toll and units were exhausted and significantly short of infantrymen. Morelock points out that "The thinness of the Allied line in the Ardennes was the inevitable consequence of Eisenhower's chosen strategy for prosecution of the war on the western front and the American gamble that 90 US divisions would suffice to win a global war."¹⁰⁵ Exacerbating the situation were the battles of attrition waged in the late fall by the Allies (such as Hurtgen Forest). Sensing

that German forces were deteriorating, Eisenhower hoped that probes across the front would identify a soft spot that would allow a penetration of the West Wall to the Rhine. He refused to remain static for the winter considering even minor advances better than static defense. The end-state was almost no reserve, exhausted or "green" divisions and manpower shortages along an over extended frontage.¹⁰⁶ Weigley states:

There were not enough Anglo-American divisions or enough replacements for casualties in the existing divisions. Eisenhower could not create a reserve unless he abandoned the broad-front strategy. ...The American army in Europe fought on too narrow a margin of physical superiority for the favored broad-front strategy to be anything but a risky gamble.¹⁰⁷

The linkage of strategy to resources rested with Eisenhower; the gamble opened the door for the assault. Ironically, the same factor that contributed to the failure of Hitler's plan (insufficient resources to achieve the objective) made the Allies vulnerable to attack in the first place.

Eisenhower can also be criticized for failing to anticipate the attack; a failure in strategic vision. It appears that he and Bradley discussed the thinness of the Ardennes sector and recognized its vulnerability. Though acknowledged as an historical avenue of approach, it did not appear to hold any operational objectives. As such, the token Ardennes defense was considered an acceptable "calculated risk" to facilitate the upcoming offensive. If accurate, then they never developed a

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contingency for an event they foresaw as a possibility. In essence, it was wished away.¹⁰⁸ There is debate, however, on the recognition of this vulnerability. Primarily criticizing Bradley, Strawson comments:

If Bradley was really taking a "calculated risk," it is strange that neither he nor Eisenhower nor any members of their staffs ever mentioned it to Montgomery; stranger still that Bradley should have no plan ready to meet a German counter-stroke in the Ardennes, and should have reacted so slowly when the risk became a reality.¹⁰⁹

Regardless, it is clear that most senior leaders were totally surprised by the location, timing and weight of the attack. Eisenhower admitted to Marshall "all of us, without exception, were astonished."¹¹⁰ They had failed to anticipate the enemy commander; failed to get into the decision cycle. Considering Rundstedt as the strategic decision-maker most intelligence analysis concluded that German operations would be localized and conducted in a cautions and conservative manner. This was extremely narrow-sighted and reflected the overoptimistic veil that tainted Allied perspectives. It was clear, at this point of the war especially, that Hitler pulled the strings and that strategic operations rested with the *Fuhrer*. Sound strategic vision would anticipate operations from Hitler's perspective of "rational." Strawson writes:

It is strange that after all this time... they [Allied leaders] should assume that military calculation and reason would be the order of the day. It seems that

the lessons of Moscow, Stalingrad, Kursk, Cherbourg and Mortain had gone for nothing.¹¹¹

Had the intelligence indicators been assessed from this perspective, the picture would have been clear. Failing to recognize the irrational as the likely course of action, strategic initiatives failed to be adjusted. "They had looked in the mirror for the enemy and seen there only the reflection of their own intentions."¹¹²

The greatest strategic failure of the battle was in not eliminating the last credible mobile reserve of the *Wehrmacht*. Though certainly Eisenhower's intent, he failed to ensure that operations achieved what could have saved thousands of Allied lives and further shortened the war. His intent was clearly stated; he wanted "immediate action to check the enemy advance and to launch a counter offensive without delay on each side of the enemy salient with all available forces."¹¹³ Montgomery, however, had a different perspective of the operation. He saw it as the sideshow and not the main event. He considered it a temporary distraction from *his* main attack. Weigley comments:

Montgomery was not thinking about the Ardennes in terms of an offensive. His whole interest was in eliminating the Ardennes involvement to permit a prompt return to the offensive in the north...Eisenhower had something more in mind...[he] wanted to exploit the opportunity created by the enemy in the Ardennes to destroy the enemy west of the Rhine.¹¹⁴

Eisenhower, knowing Montgomery, should have recognized that "it would require more than just stating his intentions to get Monty moving."¹¹⁵ Morelock contends that Eisenhower was influenced by the need to maintain the consensus command environment that facilitated and benefited the coalition environment and thus did not want to dictate specifics. Though a possibility, this seems unlikely. Eisenhower often made operational decisions regardless of popularity or fiat. The command structure decisions discussed earlier are a good example. Regardless, by not ensuring compliance with his intent, Eisenhower failed to achieve what would have been the most significant strategic outcome of the offensive.

CONCLUSION

On 16 December, about 200,000 Germans attacked 83,000 Americans. At their spearheads, they mounted at least a six-toone advantage in infantry, a four-to-one advantage in superior armor. Numbers of casualties significantly vary, but American loses of 81,000 compare to almost 104,000 German dead, wounded or missing. In the end, only a month after the assault, the front line had changed very little.¹¹⁶

By most accounts considered an operational/tactical victory for the Allies, the Battle of the Ardennes also had far-reaching strategic implications.

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- The Germans were spent. Loses in men and materiel could not be regenerated. The *Wehrmacht* was militarily bankrupt and the once feared war machine of Germany was relegated to defensive delays. Instead of delaying the inevitable, it most likely accelerated the demise of the *Third Reich*.
- The nature of Allied counterattacks postured forces for the final assault into Germany. Montgomery was no longer the main attack. It to some degree dictated Eisenhower's final phase of the war.
- It reinforced, through adversity, the strength and resolve of the coalition.
- The most significant outcome was the final lines of advance for Allied forces. By mortgaging the eastern front for his attack, Hitler facilitated the advance of Soviet troops and established the subsequent lines that defined forty-five years of division and world tension. John Eisenhower comments that "had Hitler sent his mobile reserves to the east rather than to the Ardennes, it is entirely possible that the Western Allies and Russians would have met somewhere in Poland."¹¹⁷

The endless discussion surrounding the Ardennes is whether Allied victory resulted from what they did or what the Germans failed to do; American heroics or German blunders. At the strategic level, however, the issue becomes mute. The only hope for German success rested on the disintegration of the western alliance and though strategic military cohesion was frayed, the political alliance was never even tested. The strategic center of gravity was never in jeopardy. Had Eisenhower not masterfully handled military relations, it is still doubtful that Hitler's strategic vision of a collapse would have been realized. An operational victory for Hitler in the Ardennes would not have

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affected the Russian offensive; it would not have precluded the eventual reorganization and advance of western forces. It may have altered the means but certainly not the inevitable end result.

Word Count = 13,618

CHRONOLOGY

• 16 December 1944

- 0530 German assault begins
- 6th SS Panzer Army stalled at the twin cities of Rocherath and Krinkelt
- 5th Panzer Army attacks through the night and penetrates the Losheim Gap
- Eisenhower "recommends" 7th and 10th Armored Divisions (AD) be moved too reinforce 1st Army
- 17 December
 - 1st SS Panzer Division under Peiper (spearhead of 6th Army) breakthrough to Stavelot
 - Elements of U.S 106th Infantry Division (ID) isolated on the Schnee Eifel
 - 5th Panzer Army advances on St Vith
 - Eisenhower releases the strategic reserve 82nd and 101st Airborne (ABN) Divisions
- 18 December
 - Peiper blocked at Trois Point
 - 10th U.S. Armored Division delays 5th Panzer Army advance at Bastogne
- 19 December
 - Peiper cut-off by U.S. counterattack at Stavelot
 - 101st ABN Division stiffens defense at Bastogne
 - 7th Armored Division stiffens defense at St Vith
 - Eisenhower outlines Allied response and counterattack
- <u>20 December</u>

- Eisenhower restructures command at the salient to a northern component under Montgomery and a southern component under Bradley
- 21 December
 - St Vith falls
- 22 December
 - Bastogne defenders reject offer of surrender "NUTS"
 - 82nd ABN and 7th AD pulled from St Vith area and repositioned as northern blocking force
 - Patton's 3rd U.S. Army begins counterattack from the south. 4th AD at spearhead
- 23 December
 - First day of good flying weather
 - Peiper out of fuel and cut-off; abandons equipment and begin infiltration to German lines
 - Bastogne resupplied by air
- 25 December
 - 5th Panzer Army spearhead (2nd Panzer Division) destroyed
 5 KM from the Meuse River
 - Bastogne holds after major German assault
 - Rundstedt requests change to operational objectives ("small solution"); rejected by Hitler
- 26 December
 - "high water mark" of the German offensive
 - Patton breaks through to Bastogne with 4th AD
- <u>28 December</u>
 - Eisenhower releases 11th AD and 87th ID to Patton to further weight counterattack and defend Bastogne
- <u>31 December</u>

- Hitler launches Operation Nordwind
- 1 January 1945
 - Hitler launches Operation Bodenplate
- <u>3 January</u>
 - Montgomery counterattack with 1st U.S. Army from the north
- 5 January
 - Attacks on Bastogne cancelled by Hitler
- <u>8 January</u>
 - Hitler withdraws 6th Panzer Army
- 12 January
 - Russian Offensive begins in the east
- 16 January
 - U.S. 1st and 3rd Armies cut-off salient and meet at Houffalize
- 28 January
 - Official end of the battle

ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Charles B. MacDonald, A Time for Trumpets (New York: W.
Morrow, 1985), p.97. Message from Field Marshal Rundstedt,
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    <sup>2</sup> John S.D. Eisenhower, <u>The Bitter Woods</u> (New York: Putnam,
1969), pp. 27-28.
    <sup>3</sup> Ibid.,p. 19.
    <sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 62.
    <sup>5</sup> John Strawson, <u>The Battle for the Ardennes</u> (New York:
Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972), p. 158.
    <sup>6</sup> Eisenhower, pp.38-46.
   <sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 47.
    <sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 47.
   <sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 89.
   <sup>10</sup> Strawson, p. 155.
    <sup>11</sup> Eisenhower, p. 90.
    <sup>12</sup> Ibid., pp.36-84.
    13 Thomas W. Dworschak, Hitler's "Watch on the Rhine": The
Battle of the Bulge (Arlington: Association of the United States
Army, 1992), p.8.
    14
       Ibid., p.8.
    <sup>15</sup> James R. Arnold, <u>Ardennes 1944: Hitler's Last Gamble in the</u>
West (London: Osprey Publishing, 1990), p.28.
   <sup>76</sup> Ibid., p. 6.
    <sup>17</sup> Eisenhower, p. 89.
    <sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 96.
   <sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 94.
   <sup>20</sup> Dworschak, p. 9.
   <sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 10.
   <sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 11.
   <sup>23</sup> MacDonald, p. 37.
   <sup>24</sup> Dworschak, p. 2.
   <sup>25</sup> Eisenhower, p. 107.
   <sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 107.
   <sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 115.
   <sup>28</sup> Dworschak, pp. 2-3.
   <sup>29</sup> Eisenhower, pp. 112-117.
   <sup>30</sup> Dworschak, p. 5.; Eisenhower, p. 119.; Arnold, p.31.
   <sup>31</sup> Dworschak, p. 5.; Eisenhower, pp. 105-106,119; Arnold,
p.31.
   <sup>32</sup> Dworschak, p.6.
   <sup>33</sup> Eisenhower, p. 122.
   <sup>34</sup> Dworschak, p. 7.
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<sup>35</sup> Eisenhower, pp. 124, 138-139.
   <sup>36</sup> Dworschak, p. 6-7.
   <sup>37</sup> Eisenhower, p. 153.
   <sup>38</sup> Ibid., pp. 122-143.
   <sup>39</sup> Dworschak, pp. 7-8.
   <sup>40</sup> Eisenhower, pp. 122-143.
   <sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 132.
   <sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 133.
   <sup>43</sup> Dworschak, p. 5.
   <sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 3.
   <sup>45</sup> Ibid., pp. 3-4.
   <sup>46</sup> Ibid., p.5.
   <sup>47</sup> Arnold, p. 14.
   <sup>48</sup> Eisenhower, pp. 144-145.; Arnold, pp. 25-26.
   <sup>49</sup> MacDonald, p. 102-103.
   <sup>50</sup> Arnold, pp. 33-45.
   <sup>51</sup> Ibid., pp. 36-41.
   <sup>52</sup> Ibid., pp. 41-43. There was also significant confusion
between Jones (Division Commander) and Middleton (Corps
Commander). Jones had twice requested that the Regiments be
permitted to withdraw. Initially Middleton instructed the units
to hold but latter gave permission to pull the forces.
                                                                        Jones
misunderstood this because the commanders were communicating
through unsecured lines and were utilizing "riddles and code
words." Consequently, the Regiments remained until it was too
late. p.44.
   <sup>53</sup> Dworschak, p. 14.
   <sup>54</sup> Arnold, p. 44.
   <sup>55</sup> Dworschak, p. 17.
   <sup>56</sup> Ibid., pp. 15-16.
   <sup>57</sup> Arnold, pp. 47-48.; Dworschak, pp. 17, 19.
   <sup>58</sup> Dworschak, pp. 19-21.
   <sup>59</sup> Arnold, pp. 48-50.
   <sup>60</sup> Dworschak, pp. 18-19
   <sup>61</sup> Ibid., p.19.
   <sup>62</sup> Walt Malinowski, More Decisive than Bastogne: Hitler's
"Bulge" Dream for Dunkirk II Exploded. Green GI's and Vets on
Elsenborn Ridge and on the North Shoulder Did It (Indiana:
Halldin Publishing, 1994), pp. 1-33.
   <sup>63</sup> Eisenhower, p. 192.
   <sup>64</sup> MacDonald, p. 420.
   <sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 420.
   <sup>66</sup> Eisenhower, pp. 268-269.; MacDonald, pp. 422-423.
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<sup>67</sup> Eisenhower, pp. 288-300.
   <sup>68</sup> Dworschak p. 25.
   <sup>69</sup> Arnold, p. 69.
   <sup>70</sup> Dworschak, p.27.
   <sup>71</sup> Arnold, p. 76.
   <sup>72</sup> Arnold, pp. 76-80.; Dworschak, p. 31.
   <sup>73</sup> Arnold, pp. 76-81.; Dworschak, p. 29.
   <sup>74</sup> Eisenhower, p. 409.
   <sup>75</sup> Ibid., pp. 393-404.
   <sup>76</sup> Dworschak, p. 31.
   <sup>77</sup> Arnold, p. 77.
   <sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 77.
   <sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 84.
   <sup>80</sup> Eisenhower, pp. 379-388.
   <sup>81</sup> Ibid., p. 415.
   <sup>82</sup> Dworschak, p. 32.
    <sup>83</sup> Dr. Roderick R. Magee II, <u>Strategic Leadership Primer</u>,
(Carlisle: United States Army War College, 1998), p. 3.
    <sup>84</sup> Ibid., pp. 4-11.
   <sup>85</sup> Strawson, pp. 145-146.
   <sup>86</sup> Ibid., pp. 147-148.
   <sup>87</sup> Ibid., 148.
    <sup>88</sup> Arnold., p. 7. The public bickering of Allies over strategy
and command issues reinforced this belief.
    <sup>89</sup> Strawson, pp. 147-150.
   <sup>90</sup> Ibid., p. 149.
    <sup>91</sup> Discussion with Dr. Sam Newland, USAWC professor, 5 April
1999.
    <sup>92</sup> Eisenhower, p. 458.
   <sup>93</sup> Strawson, p. 141.
   <sup>94</sup> Ibid., p. 154.
    <sup>95</sup> J.D. Morelock, <u>Generals of the Ardennes: American</u>
Leadership in the Battle of the Bulge, (Washington D.C.:
National Defense University Press, 1994), p. 39.
    <sup>96</sup> Eisenhower, pp. 461-462.
   <sup>97</sup> Morelock, p. 40.
   <sup>98</sup> Ibid., p. 71.
    <sup>99</sup> Ibid., p. 75.
    <sup>100</sup> Strawson, pp. 156-157.
    <sup>101</sup> Morelock, p. 71.
    <sup>102</sup> Ibid., p. 72.
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       Ibid., p. 71.
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¹⁰⁴ Russell Weigley, Eisenhower's Lieutenants. The Campaign of
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¹⁰⁵ Morelock, p. 58.
¹⁰⁶ Ibid., pp. 27-28.
¹⁰⁷ Weigley, p. 464.
¹⁰⁸ Eisenhower, pp. 100-101.
¹⁰⁹ Strawson, p. 156.
¹¹⁰ Morelock, p. 77.
¹¹¹ Strawson, p. 171.
¹¹² MacDonald, p. 79.
¹¹³ Morelock, p. 79.
¹¹⁴ Weigley, 544-546.
¹¹⁵ Morelock, p. 79.
¹¹⁶ Weigley, p. 574.
¹¹⁷ Eisenhower, p. 469.
Ersennower, p. 409.

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