

8 December 1959

Mr. Jesse A. Remington  
Director, Historical Division, OGE  
Department of the Army  
P. O. Box 1715  
Baltimore 3, Maryland

Dear Mr. Remington:

Thank you for your letter of 13 November 1959 acknowledging my comments on Chapter XI of the Engineers in the War Against Germany and your remarks concerning my approach.

I am glad to know that your office has available the 36th after-action reports and the unit history accounts. After reading Chapter XI and failing to find mention of the 36th in connection with the planning for and the Salerno operation, I could only conclude that your people who wrote this Chapter either did not have them, or else that they gave such small credence to them that they decided the reports were not worthy of use.

With reference to my comments on the day-to-day operations of the 36th during the Salerno period, they were based on the 36th historical accounts corrected and supplemented in light of my personal experience. I can appreciate your views as a historian on the soundness of recollections after the passage of a number of years. As you may know, I served in the Judge Advocate General's Corps from 1946 until my retirement in 1956 as The Assistant Judge Advocate General of the Army, and I believe our views as lawyers as to the value of such evidence are somewhat similar to yours as historians. However, from the lawyer's viewpoint greater acceptance is given where the recollections are based upon personal participation in unusual events, with consideration also being given to maturity, caliber and position of the person involved. It was from this standpoint that I wrote.

With particular respect to the history of the 36th, it is my understanding that this was written in Germany after V-E Day by an officer who wasn't personally acquainted with the

operations of the regiment at Salerno who pieced it together on the basis of the best information that he could assemble. Under the circumstances, I think that he did a very commendable job, but there are gaps in the history and also some comments that are misleading or even contrary to my personal knowledge as a participant in the events. In writing the detailed comments it was my purpose to present matters of my personal knowledge as a participant so they might be considered by your Division. In this connection I am enclosing a copy of my Comments on Chapter II with marginal notes on pages 3 - 7 indicating matters which are of my personal knowledge.

I am sorry to have taken so long in getting my comments in on all the chapters, but my job as Assistant to the President of Solar Aircraft Company has kept me quite busy. I hope to have a little free time over the Christmas Season, and will try to get on with my review at that time.

Sincerely,

George W. Gardes  
Brig. Gen., USA (Ret.)

GW:am  
Enclosure

on The Engineers in the War Against Germany

C H A P T E R   X I

GENERAL

The first two sections of this chapter entitled "Preparations for  
(SALERNO)  
AVALANCHE" and "The Invasion" omit all reference to the 36th Engineer Combat Regiment. Apparently this is one of the blank spots in your records so I will describe briefly the Operations of the 36th Engineers during this period to provide a bit of background for the amplification of these sections by bringing the 36th into the picture in appropriate places. Further information on the 36th Engineers' operations on the Beach-head can be obtained from the text and situation maps appearing in the publication entitled, as I recollect, "Salerno" which was published by the Army Historical Division around 1950.

Turning now to the 36th during the period in question. The regiment had landed in Sicily with the 3rd Infantry Division Task Force and turned in an outstanding performance as will be evidenced by the endorsement to a citation for my Executive Office, Colonel Chubbuck, written by Colonel Caffee (Now Maj. Gen. USA, Ret.)\* who commanded the 1st Amphibion Brigade during that operation. A copy of this endorsement is forwarded herewith as enclosure "A". On 18 August 1943 the 36th's operations were scattered through Southern Sicily when it received urgent orders to assemble at Licata for embarkation. On 19 August 1943 it sailed from Licata for Biserte, Africa, where it was assigned to the Fifth Army and attached to VI Corps.

The morale of the 36th was high when it returned to Biserte. As a result of nearly a year's operations in North Africa and Sicily,

\*  
*Now deceased*

we had developed a cohesive, close knit, capable organization with a number of very fine Non-Coms. However, it was at reduced strength as a result of losses in Sicily from battle casualties, sickness and injuries. We were over two hundred men under strength and averaged only slightly more than two officers per letter company. In addition to our personnel shortages, much of the organizational equipment was in need of replacement or extensive overhaul as a result of hard usage and casualties from mines, bombing and shell fire on the beaches and during subsequent operations in Sicily.

Our equipment was reasonably well taken care of at Biserte but the personal situation was not. No officer replacements were received. About 200 enlisted replacements arrived a few hours before embarking; however, knowing from experience the chaotic conditions that exist on invasion beaches during an assault, I decided to leave the replacements behind for the follow up and to stick with the veteran team that had come out of Sicily, all of whom had been through the Sicily Assault landing and many had also experienced the Moroccan landing. When we reached Salerno I was happy for this decision as the regiment was landed piece-meal on different beaches amidst the anticipated confusion which was worse, if anything, than what we had experienced in Morocco and Sicily. Despite this, individuals, squads, platoons, and companies who found themselves separated from their larger units searched around for the nearest elements of the regiment and joined up with them with the result that the regiment became an effective operational team in a comparatively short period of time. This result could not have been accomplished nearly as effectively if the units were encumbered with a large number of green men who had not been assimilated into the organization.

The assigned mission of the 36th Engineer Combat Regiment for the Salerno landing was to form part of the infantry reserve for the 36th Division. During D-day (Sept. 9) two companies plus some smaller units (squads and platoons) from other companies were landed and were used as a screen for armor along the Sele river that night. On the night of D-day the remainder of the regiment was ordered ashore.

For sake of clarity I will note below the highlights of the regiments' operations during the ensuing eight days, D+1 to D+8, chronologically day-by-day.

D+1 (September 10). The regiment closed in its assembly area on the morning of D+1. Reconnaissance was made of the blown bridge over the Calore river on Route 18. That evening H Company was assigned to the Rangers for a landing near Analfi with the mission of assisting the Rangers over the beach and then acting as their Combat Engineers. This Company not only gave the Rangers engineer support, but also fought with them as infantry for more than a week and entered Naples with them.

D+2 (September 11). 1) Company A worked on the construction of a by-pass around the blown Route 18 bridge over the Calore.

2) Company B worked on the emergency runway behind the beaches.

3) Companies C and E assisted the 531st Engineer Shore Regiment in the beach operations.

4) Company F worked in the Ammo dump.

5) At about 2100 the 3rd Battalion was given the infantry mission of occupying a position astride Route 18 on a small rise about three miles north of the Sele River.

