DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

Lineage and Honors

39th ENGINEER BATTALION

Parent unit constituted 15 July 1940 in the Regular Army as 39th Engineers

Activated 25 April 1942 at Camp Bowie, Texas

Redesignated 1 August 1942 as 39th Engineer Combat Regiment

Regiment broken up 1 March 1945, and elements reorganized and redesignated as follows:

2d Battalion as 643d Engineer Combat Battalion

(Headquarters and Headquarters and Service Company as Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 39th Engineer Combat Group; 1st Battalion as 404th Engineer Combat Battalion; separate lineages)

643d Engineer Combat Battalion inactivated 15 November 1946 at Fort Knox, Kentucky

Redesignated 29 April 1947 as 39th Engineer Combat Battalion

Redesignated 23 November 1954 as 39th Engineer Battalion

Activated 17 January 1955 at Fort Riley, Kansas

Inactivated 25 September 1956 at Fort Riley, Kansas

Activated 17 June 1962 at Fort Campbell, Kentucky

39th ENGINEER BATTALION

CAMPAIGN PARTICIPATION CREDIT

World War II
Sicily (with arrowhead)
Naples-Foggia
Anzio
Rome-Arno
North Apennines
Po Valley

Vietnam
Counteroffensive
Counteroffensive, Phase II
Counteroffensive, Phase III
Tet Counteroffensive
Counteroffensive, Phase IV
Counteroffensive, Phase V
Counteroffensive, Phase VI
Tet 69/Counteroffensive
Summer-Fall 1969
Winter-Spring 1970
Sanctuary Counteroffensive
Counteroffensive, Phase VII
(other campaigns to be determined)

DECORATIONS

Meritorious Unit Commednation, Streamer embroidered ITALY

Meritorious Unit Commendation, Streamer embroidered VIETNAM 1966-1968

Meritorious Unit Commendation, Streamer embroidered VIETNAM 1968-1970

BY ORDER OF THE SECRETARY OF THE ARMY:

VERNE L. BOWERS
Major General, USA
The Adjutant General

39th COMBAT ENGINEERS

HISTORY

In grateful appreciation to:

Mr. Charles Pettit of Akron, Ohio

Thanks to Mr. Pettit for loaning us his very treasured and rare editions of the complete ENGINEER HISTORY OF WORLD WAR II in order that we could copy and make up this book for the members of the 39th Combat Engineers Unit.

This book is dedicated to those men who gave their lives.

A cadre from the 19th Engineers formed the nucleus of the 39th Engineer Combat Regiment which was organized at Camp Bowie, Texas, 25 April 1942. Through out the summer and fall, it trained and took part in two Louisiana maneuvers. After refresher training, the regiment left from New York City on 13 January 1943, arrived at Mers-el-Kebir on 26 January and was assigned to the Fifth Army to build the Engineer Training Center in Morrocco. In July, it sailed from Algiers to Gela, Sicily, as part of the Seventh Army. For three days, the 1st Battalion served with Ranger Force, making the initial landing on 10 July, 1943. Later, the rest of the regiment arrived and continued in the campaign until 25 August. On 11 September the 39th Regiment was relieved from its assignment to Seventh Army and reassigned to the Fifth Army.

On March 1, 1945, when the Unit was near Pisa, the 39th Engineer Combat Regiment was reorganized and redesignated the 39th Engineer Combat Group. At the same time, the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the regiment were reorganized and redesignated the 404th and 643rd Engineer Combat Battalions, respectively.

TRAINING PROGRAMS AND SCHOOLS

The first major operation by the Fifth Army was not undertaken until 9 Sept, 1943. The time that elapsed between the Army's activation and that date was spent in planning and in training.

As part of a 5th Army program, the 5th Army Engineer Training Center was activated 12 March 1943. The school was started as a 7 day course for officers and non-commissioned officers and stressed the engineering subjects of mines, demolitions, and booby traps, with some additional training in camouflage, military courtesy and discipline, and physical conditioning.

This was not at all in accord with the Army Engineer's orginial plan, however. Colonel Bowman had desired to send one regiment at a time to the Center for at least a month of vigorous training in mines, demolitions and the building of bridges and roads. That this could not be accomplished was due to the Base Section's reluctance to release Engineer troops wanted for its construction program. From the time of the School's activation until the 5th Army relinquished control on 21 August 31 1943, 19 classes were held with a total attendance of 1,538, 222 French troops and 2 British are included in this total.

The site of the school was a barren, desolate area 10 miles from a main highway, about 40 miles west of Oujda, Morocco. There were a few stunted trees by the side of an old Arab well and an abandoned railroad line with its decrepit station, the the old Fortress of Ain Fritissa. There was also sand and heat. By this meager oasis, war was simulated—battles that must have seemed uncomfortabley realistic to the shades of Beau Geste, the English Legionnaire whose famed stand had been made at this very spot. Once again this stretch of desert took on the aspects of a battle ground, for realism was the Center's keynote. Again men drilled on the blistering sands; again a bugle's tone disappeared into the desert waste.

The School's culminating demonstration was the night removal of a mine field. One half of the class laid the field, the other half had the task of neutralizing it. Realism was achieved by the utilization of smoke and tanks. As the removal parties lifted the field (sown like wheat with anti-personnel mines and booby traps), 30 and 50 caliber weapons kept an erratic fire 3 feet above the sands in infiltration course style. For good measure, demolitions were set off from a control tower; ignited charges were thrown onto the field; and the demonstration tanks fired 37 millimeter shells across the area. To be effective, these demonstrations had to be dangerous; yet only 2 men were killed during the whole series of 7 day and later 9 day classes. Both these men were from the 111th Engineer Combat Battalion. Lieutenant Thomas A. McLeer was killed 24 June 1943, during the final night problem of the 11th course. The faulty trajectory of a 30 caliber machine gun was responsible. Sergeant Kenneth C. Swartz was instantly killed on 30 July while lifting an M1A1 mine. Few live mines were used in the fields; most of them were chargeless training mines containing only igniters. The Engineer Training Center was under the command of Lieutenant Colonel A. W. Wyatt (famed for his fatiguing "Wyatt's Run" at the Center), formerly the Executive Officer of the

20th Engineer Combat Regiment. He later left the school and went to Italy with the Engineer Section of Fifth Army. He was in command of the 141st Infantry Regiment of the 36th Infantry Division when killed by a shell near Cassino.

To establish the Center, four experienced officers were obtained from the British 8th Army; Major C. L. Stephenson, Major S. J. Hawkins, Captain E. H. Yeo and Captain R. R. Hoskyn. They had all been fighting with the 8th Army from El Alamein through Gafsa and were old hands with enemy mines, patterns and techniques. One company of Engineers was kept at the school for use as demonstration and administrative personnel, guards, etc.

The Army Engineer, after approving the curriculum, kept in close touch with the school through 3 Engineer Section officers stationed there and by frequent inspection trips—at least one each week—as well as inspection by others of his staff.

The officers from the Engineer Section were: Major H. E. Wetzel, the Executive Officer; 1st Lieutenant L. A. Caldwell; Warrant Officer (jg) S. D. Jones. Considerable difficulty was experienced in getting the Training Center into operation. Although Allied Force Headquarters had promised all kinds of help, no one, or nothing was available. To confuse the situation further, Allied Force Headquarters suddenly ordered the Army Commander to open the school as soon as possible. The Army Engineer had to make his own arrangements. The British officers were borrowed the site selected; and plans, sometimes rather fantastic, were made for supplies. For example: it was impossible to obtain any appreciable amounts of enemy mines or demolition equipment. Consequently, Lieutenant Caldwell was ordered to Tunisia for reconnaissance purposes. Next, permission to use General Clark's personal C-47 was granted. In this manner, enemy mines were conveyed to the school as soon as Lieutenant Caldwell had located caches of them in the Tunisian battle ground.

In addition to the Engineer Training Center, the Arzew Amphibious Training Center was constructed for 5th Army by engineer troops. The engineers also built instruction centers for other branches, such as the Battle Training School for Infantry and Artillery.

INITIAL PLANS

The first operational task on the Army's agenda was the preparation for an attack against Spanish Morocco. Later, plans were prepared for an attack on Sardinia. These two operations were known as "BACKBONE" and "BRIMSTONE". The Engineer Section wrote terrain studies and prepared map and supply plans for both. "BACKBONE" rapidly lost consideration as the Allied hold on North Africa became more firm. After the visit of General Orgez in June, it appeared the Spanish Government had no desire for a break with the United Nations. "BRIMSTONE", however, was long considered, and plans were carefully drawn up for G-2, G-3 and G-4. It was not until 20 July 1943 that the operation was discarded entirely. Two other operations, "GANGWAY", a landing in the North Naples Bay, and "BARRACUDA", a direct entrance into the harbor of Naples, were to be used in the event the Italians capitulated and no enemy resistance was found on the mainland. Less planning was done for these operations as the projects were considered for only a short period of time. The supply plans for "BRIMSTONE" were used as a basis for all other proposed operations, with modifications made to fit each new situation. Terrain studies, and map and supply plans were also made for "MUSKET", another proposed attack on Italy, this time near the port of Taranto (see Map #1).

Then came "AVALANCHE", the final plan, the plan that was to launch the Italian campaign, the plan that was to bring about the first successful landing by the Allies of World War II on the mainland of Europe. General Eisenhower discarded operation "MUSKET" on 29 June. On 20 July, he cancelled "BRIMSTONE" (Sardinia). On 26 July, the combined chiefs of staff, Washington, D.C., cabled General Eisenhower urging "AVALANCHE", a landing on the West Italian coast, somewhere in the vicinity of Naples. And on 27 July, General Clark was instructed to prepare to take Naples and the nearby airfields "with a view to preparing a firm base for further offensive operations".

THE FINAL PLAN

Planning for Operation "AVALANCHE" was started immediately. The heads of all 5th Army General and Special Staff Sections were formed into a planning group which left Oujda by plane during the last days of July, and flew to Bouzerrea, a suburb of Algiers. From 12 April until 17 August, Colonel M. M. Boatner was the Army Engineer. On 17 August, Colonel Bowman reassumed command. To assist him in the planning group were Colonel H. O. Paxson, Lieutenant Colonel J. G. Ladd, Major I. W. Finberg, 1st Lieutenant J. W. Graham, Master Sergeant J. R. Lackey, Staff Sergeant D. M. Hansen and Technician 4th Grade J. G. Duffy.

The first British Engineer Officer to join the Engineer Section was Major G. K. Benn, R. E., who reported for duty at Planning Headquarters, Algiers, on 20 Aug. 1943. He was joined a week later by Lieutenant Colonel B. B. Smith, R. E., who had been appointed Assistant Director of Works in command of the British Increment Engineers. On 1 September, the staff was completed by the arrival of Major H. R. G. Clements, R. E. In addition to the officer personnel, were four clerks, one a Staff Sergeant, one a Corporal, and two Lance Corporals.

Prior to the landing at Salerno, the staff was principally engaged upon clarifying the Engineer plan in respect to X Corps (British), particularly in respect to supply. There was no concrete plan from higher headquarters, and in the absence of any firm direction it was difficult to decide upon any definite plan of action. As the Chief Engineer, X Corps, had already submitted a request for supplies up to D plus 35, it was hoped that this would suffice until the situation became more clear. Major Benn left Planning Headquarters on 1 September to embark with the advance party, with which he landed on D Day at Paestum. The remainder of the section was engaged in collation of intelligence until 17 September, at which time it embarked at Oran for Italy. It landed on 21 September on the Paestum beaches.

From the start of the planning, the Supply Sub-section had been working on its own plans. As a new operation was considered, the previous supply estimate was retained and then revised. In this way, the plan for "AVALANCHE", which was completed by the end of August, was actually a continuation of the work begun in the spring. In the same manner, the requisitioning was little more than the routine work required by any moving condition. Varying with the troop list, enough equipment had to be on hand to supply all the engineer units. The terrain study dictated the probable amount of bridging and defense materials that would be needed, and also made possible the selection of future dump and depot sites.

The corrected Operations Plan was published 26 August. D Day was set for 9 September 1943, H Hour for 0330. G-2 had reported that the enemy strength at Salerno could be anticipated to be about 39,000 troops on D Day, and that by D plus 3 that number could be increased to 100,000. The Allied plan was to land 125,000 troops; the British X Corps north of the sele River, the American VI Corps south of the river. X Corps was to make the main assault towards Naples. Its immediate objective was Salerno, the Montecorvino Airfield, the rail and road center of Battipaglia and the Sele bridge. On the right, VI Corps was to take the mountain arc Altavilla - Albanella - Rocco d' Aspide - Mount Vesole - Magliano around to Agropoli at the southern end of the Bay of Salerno

The troops given to the 5th Army for "AVALANCHE" were as follows:

VI Corps (AMERICAN)	34th Inf. Div.
	36th Inf. Div.
	45th Inf. Div.
	1st Armored Div.
	82nd Airborne Div.
X Corps (BRITISH)	46th Inf. Div.
	56th Inf. Div
	7th Armored Div.
	1st Airborne Div.

Fifth Army Engineer troops for "AVALANCHE" were as follows:

531st Engineer Shore Regiment	VI Corps
540th Engineer Combat Reg.(-Co. F)	VI Corps
Company F	82nd Airborne Infantry Div.
10th Engineer Combat Battalion	3rd Infantry Div.
16th Armored Engineer Battalion(-Co. B) and Detachment Co. E	1st Armored Div.
Company B and Detachment Co. E	VI Corps
109th Engineer Combat Battalion	34th Infantry Div.
111th Engineer Combat Battalion	36th Infantry Div.
120th Engineer Combat Battalion	45th Infantry Div
307th Airborne Engineer Battalion	82nd Airborne Infantry Div
46th (Br) Infantry Div Royal Engineers	46th Infantry Div
56th (Br) Infantry Div Royal Engineers	56th Infantry Div
7th (Br) Armored Div Royal Engineers	7th Armored Div
X Corps (Br) Troops Royal Engineers	X Corps
36th Engineer Combat Reg(-Co. H)	VI Corps
Company H	82nd Airborne Infantry Div
39th Engineer Combat Reg(-2nd Battalion)	VI Corps
337th Engineer General Service Reg.	Fifth Army
343rd Engineer General Service Reg.	Fifth Army
Company A, 405th Engineer Water Supply Battalion (1 Detachment)	Fifth Army
Detachment, Company A	VI Corps
Company C, 405th Engineer Wat Sup Battalion	Fifth Army
427th Engineer Dump Truck Co.	Fifth Army
1202nd Engineer Fire Fighting Platoon	Fifth Army
1st Platoon, 451st Engineer Depot Co,	Fifth Army
Detachment (Reconnaissance) 696th Petroleum Distributing Company	Fifth Army
2616th Engineer Utilities Platoon	Fifth Army
661st Engineer Topographic Co.	VI Corps
2699th Engineer Map Detachment	531st Engineer Shore Reg

The Engineers in the Algiers planning group had the responsibility for making terrain studies covering beaches, airfields and maneuver spaces for armored units. Exhaustive research was undertaken and many information sources investigated. As in the case of the other projected operations, the Engineer Intelligence Subsection relied heavily upon ISIS (Inter Service Information Series) Reports supplied by the British through the Assistant Chief of Staff of Allied Force Headquarters. ISIS books were invaluable. The moment war was declared in 1939, the British War Office had gathered together every bit of information obtainable concerning countries in which the Empire might some day be forced to fight. Included in the ISIS Reports were the country's history, politics, culture, habits, communication systems, statistics on weather and rainfall, topography, population, business, and export products. Pictures were added, mostly scenic snapshots to illustrate the general terrain, or to show harbor installations, dams, etc.

Aerial photos were intently studied during the planning. Although they were very difficult to obtain--the flight to Italy was long and dangerous at that time-their impartnace was such that the actual choosing of the landing beaches was made from them. As the photographic supplies were critically limited, the emphasis was on pictures of the beaches and harbors, or on such points of interest as communication centers and important bridges.

After a preliminary study by his staff, the Army Engineer recommended that the "AVALANCHE" landing be made either in Salerno Bay or along the beaches just north of Naples, both feasible sites for an amphibious assault. Salerno had the advantage of being a relatively undefended bay, at least in regard to permanent fortifications. The Salerno beach was preferable to the one north of Naples because of better offshore beach slope conditions and because the sand dunes, which stretched

along the shores, were narrower and thus more convenient for exit routes. Also, Salerno was closer, easier to supply, and better for air support (which later became the deciding factor). Salerno's main defect was the mountainous perimeter of the beachhead arching from the shore inland, and back to the shore again. Themountains would certainly afford excellent observation posts and artillery positions for the enemy. Moreover, astride the route from Salerno to Naples was Sorrento Ridge which made a very difficult passage for any invader. The great advantage of the beaches north of Naples was a broad plain stretching inland, across which were numerous good roads for supply routes and movement. A foothold in this sector would cut Naples off from the German forces in Central and Northern Italy. To offset this, however, was the fact that the Germans expected that any attack by the Allies might likely be made between Naples and Gaeta and, therefore, the area was heavily mined and prepared for defense. More important, there were forces nearby to man these defenses. Also, in the event the Germans were forced to cede the territory, they could easily flood the area and seriously hinder the movement of any attacking army. Both the Naples and Salerno sites were approved by the Navy, which studied the coast line with a view to its part in landing the Army. The Army Commander favored the landing north of Naples, but the Air Force Commander stated that he could not guarntee air cover that far north. It was, therefore, decided that Plan "AVALANCHE" was to be executed at Salerno.

Fifth Army Headquarters and its personnel moved 480 miles from Oujda to Mostaganem while the planning group continued its labors at Bouzerrea. As soon as the exact site had been chosen, the planners went into much greater detail on "AVALANCHE". A large volume of material was assembled, evaluated and coordinated, and great cooperation was effected in integrating the varied activities within the Engineer Section, as well as between it and all other Army sections. The Intelligence Sub-section's terrain studies described the general nature of the area, the ridge system, drainage system, communications, water supply, ports and beaches. The land aspects that have a bearing on military operations were also stressed. Finally, the military significance of these facts was explained.

Accompanying the terrain study were specialized map series. These series had been annotated for concealment, communication, water lines and ridge lines. Map plans also had to be prepared. Coverage had to be provided for the geographical areas to be included in the initial operations, and it had to be decided which scales were to be used. Plans had to be made for depots and for destribution down through the normal communication channels. The initial supply of maps was furnished by Survey Directorate, Allied Force Headquarters. Maps with scales of one to twenty-five thousand, one to fifty thousand, one to one hundred thousand, and one to two hundred and fifty thousand were requisitioned, covering an area from south of Salerno to north of Anzio, and from the west coast east over most of the peninsula. In addition, one to five hundred thousand and one to one million scales from south of Salerno up to Rome and north were ordered. Finally, special outline and road maps of the Naples area were provided, as well as special beach defense overprints. Provision for a hundred per cent replacement stockage of initial issues had to be planned for by the Army Engineer for needed distribution on the assault beaches. This, of course, meant the establishment of a map depot on the beachhead. Any one, by merely glancing at map orders, the copies themselves, or by overhearing references to maps, can immediately arrive at a fairly accurate conclusion as to the location of planned operations. For this reason, all map and photo work had to be handled with utmost secrecy. To insure this, the Map Depot Detachment worked, ate and slept under guard in a building which the men were not permitted to leave until the landing at Salerno.

SALERNO AND NAPLES

Numerous peculiarities beset the landing at Salerno. At 1830 hours on 8 Sept. General Eisenhower had broadcast the news that hostilities between the United Nations and Italy had been terminated effective at that moment. The Italian representatives had met with the Allied leaders some months before, and the Italians had capitulated—but all news of the agreement was to be hushed up until the Allies decided to make it public. It was hoped that the coming of the announcement so shortly before the attack would cause the Italians to cease resistance and deprive the Germans of needed time to reorganize their defenses. Faces were tense as the moment of landing neared. Would the strategem succeed?

The moon went down just before midnight, yet the vessels could not enter the bay of Salerno—minefields blocked a close approach to shore. As a result, the ships were anchored twelve miles from the beaches until the mine sweepers had opened gaps into the bay.

The landing craft of the first wave neared shore without a shot from the enemy. Then, after a short, tense quiet, what sounded like a public address system was heard, "Come on in and give up. We have you covered!" With all possible dispatch the forces landed. The first amphibious attack on the Axis mainland was being made. But the landing was no surprise to the Germans, and within a matter of seconds the beaches were subjected to a withering fire. Rumor even has it that the German forces had staged a practice defense at this spot only the previous day. It was not too unlikely, as the invasion had been a rather poorly kept secret; all Algiers had buzzed and rumored for some weeks.

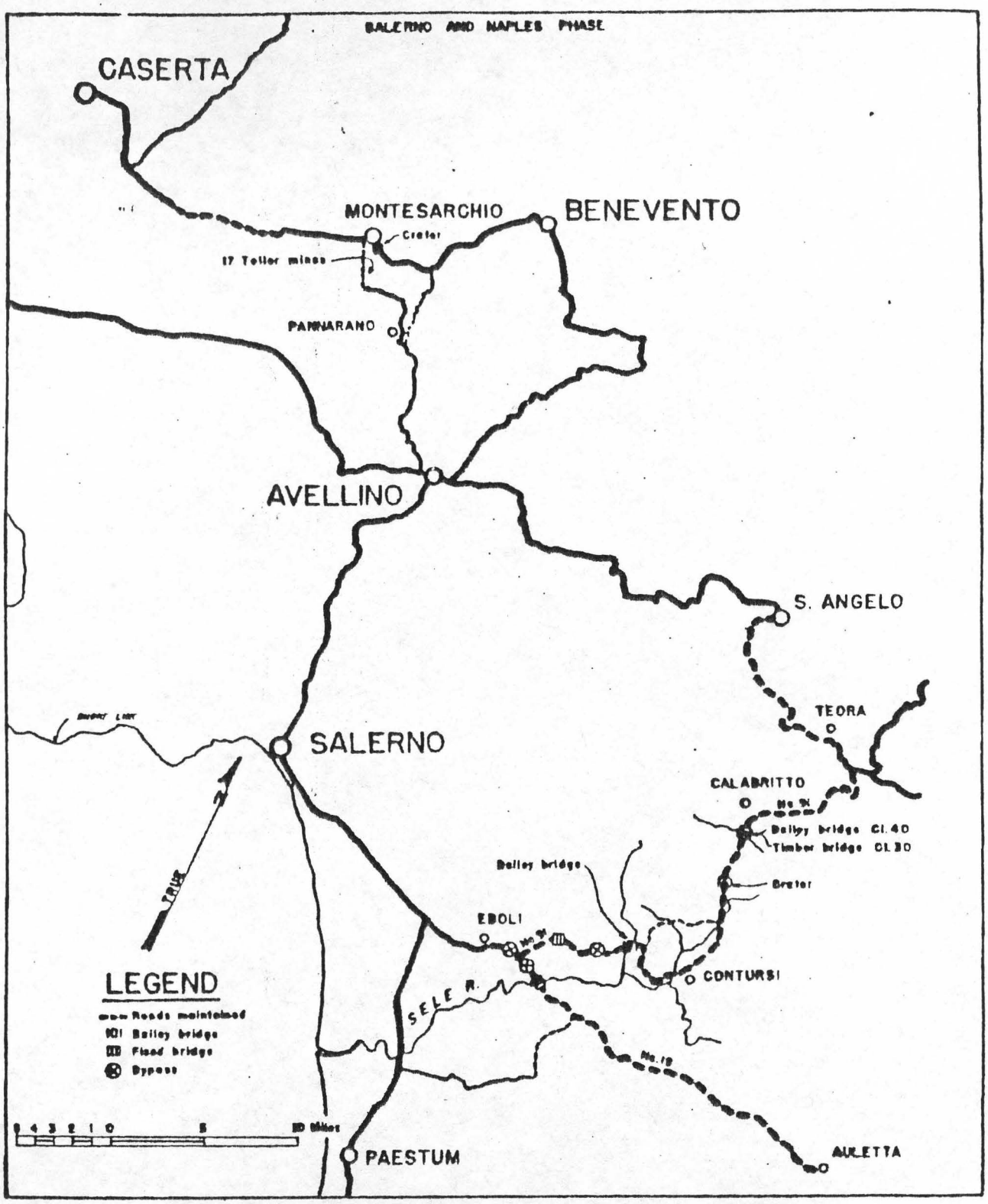
Both Corps quickly deployed and consolidated their gains throughout the first four days; both striving to gain their initial objectives, but against mounting enemy resistance. A curious situation existed on the beach. The Rangers had landed further north and were gaining the Sorrento heights above Naples. Their needed reinforcements and supplies were taken from the Salerno beachhead. Thus, there was a situation of landing supplies and troops and of loading them from the same beaches at the same time.

A decisive period was reached on 13 and 14 September, when the British and American forces went over to the defensive. They lost considerable amounts of previously taken ground under the pounding of heavy enemy counterattacks. The greatest danger was the threatened separation of the two Corps along the Sele River. It was at this time that the Army Command Post was forced to move back; the only occasion that this happened during the war in Italy. After landing on D plus 1, the Army Engineer and the Signal Officer reconnoitered for an Army Command Post area. A suitable site was located in the home of Baron Roberto Ricciardi. If it had not been for the battle drumfire, General Bowman might have been on one of those romantic pre-war Cook's tours of the Mediterranean. He made his bed under a rosebush in the Italian garden, where a bright moon reflected silver off the rose petals as they showered down around him. Faintly the air stirred; water splashed in the fountain. A rugged war!

The idyl was shattered on D plus 4. Army Headquarters, which was in front of the division command posts, moved back into the brush as the enemy approached to within 1000 yards of the site.

On 15 September, the crisis had passed, and the enemy changed to the defensive. The British Eighth Army had advanced rapidly the first half of September and had reached Sapri, a town only forty miles south of the beachhead.

Slowly at first, the Avalanche regained its strength and started towards Naples. It moved over pitted roads and blown bridges. The Germans had started their demolition work five miles north of Salerno and from there on to Naples and the north all bridges were down and all routes blasted with craters. On 26 and 27 Sept., the fall rains began and washed down dirt and rocks on the roads and damaged several key bridges that the two Corps were using. But Naples was reached. On 1 Oct. the damaged city was taken. Between Allied air-raids and German demolitions, most of the harbor installations were destroyed; ships had been wrecked and scuttled at piers and in the harbor; docks and warehouses were piles of crumbled stone and



39TH ENGINEER COMBAT REGIMENT
OPERATIONS

fire-twisted steel. The city had no electricity, no transportation, no sewage, little water.

But Naples was soon left behind as the fifth Army advanced to the Volturno River. Again road blocks, blown bridges and minefields were met in profusion. Booby traps were everwhere. The Fifth Army had sustained many losses—so when the Volturno was reached on 6 October, the advance stopped. Units had to be regrouped before the diffulct river crossing was attempted in strength. The first mission had been accomplished; the Army had seized the Port of Naples and the airfields in the Naples area; a firm base for further offensive operations had been secured.

The 39th Engineer Combat Regiment, commanded by Colonel Thomas C. Green, began landing at Paestum on 15 September 1943, and two days later started operations. Companies "A" and "B" furnished outguard patrols, emphasis being placed on the protection of the VI Corps Command Post. The regiment took over the repairing and clearing of Highway #19 from Eboli to Auletta and some of the smaller roads through and near Eboli. Bypasses were built over canals and streams using culverts for the passage of water. At the crossing of Route #19 over the Sele River, a Bailey bridge was replaced with the first timber bridge the regiment constructed in Italy.

By 25 September, the road net had been expanded to include Route #19 from Eboli through Contursi and north to Calabritto; bypasses installed along the route; and a 100 foot, Class 40, triple-single Bailey at Contursi replaced with a Class 30 timber bridge. On 4 October, the road net included the main route Avellino - S. Angelo - Pannarano - Rocca Bascherna. Mines had to be removed, abatis cleared, bypasses and culverts constructed. From the time the 1st Battalion landed in Italy until 6 October, the 39th erected two Bailey bridges and three fixed bridges (one of which had steel stringers; the others wood). Three culverts were built; three large craters filled; and seven by-passes totalling 1,900 yards constructed.

VOLTURNO TO MAY 11

Beyond the Volturno, the outlook for the Fifth Army was not very reassuring. To the north, stretched the most difficult terrain (tactically speaking) in Italy—about as fine a defensive sector as could be found in Europe. After reaching the river on 6 October, the Army spent a week regrouping for the attack. The British X Corps was on the left flank; the 46th Infantry Div. next to the sea; the 7th Armored Div. in the middle; the 56th Infantry Div. on the right flank next to the American VI Corps' 3rd Infantry Div. To the east of the 3rd Div., the 34th Infantry Div. held the center, and 45th Infantry Div. the right. Further east was the British Eighth Army.

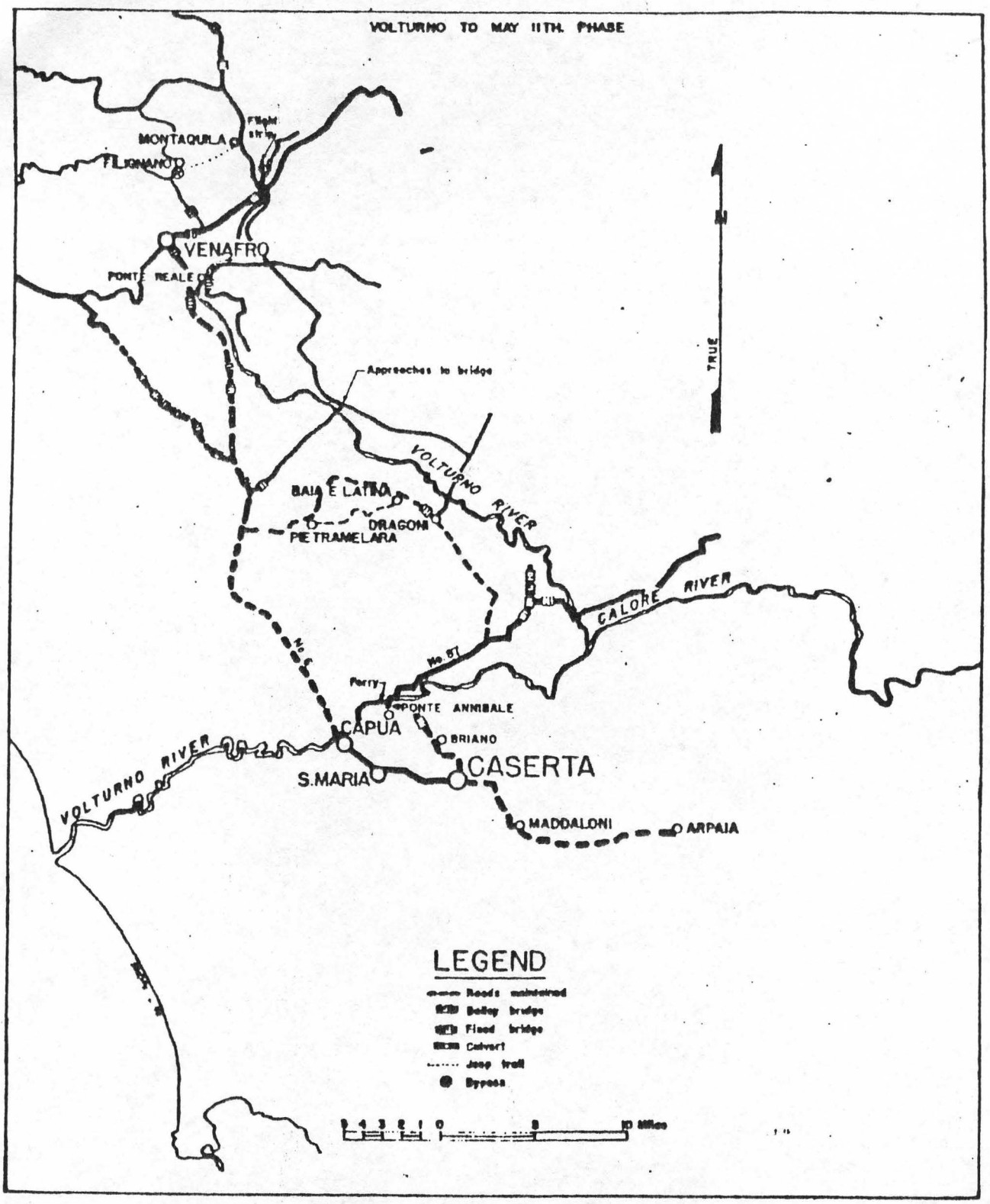
The attack was scheduled for the night of 12 - 13 October 1943, and at 2000 hours on the 12th six hundred guns along the 40 mile front started firing. The Germans were set on their heels. At first, they did not have time to set off their demolition charges. As their retreat became slower, however, they had much more opportunity for destruction and used it to the greatest advantage. Abatis, booby traps, "S" mines and Tellermines, new undetectable mines of concrete, wood and plastics were the order of the day. In many places, Tellermines could not be detected because of the highly mineral soil content and the abundance of shell fragments. Nevertheless, the Allies slogged on through the fall rains and mud and edged around the persistent and omnipresent obstacles.

Soon the Volturno was crossed a second time (in its upper reaches, the river flows south before it turns and goes westward to the sea). The rain continued, washing out temporary bridges and bypasses, flooding roads and bivouac sites. Naturally, the advance was slow; so again, as had happened so often in Italy, the Germans had time to construct a defensive line. The Winter Line, which the enemy was now finishing, was contacted early in November when Fifth Army forces reached the lower Garigliano River and the mountains above Mignano and Venafro.

The drive from Salerno to the Winter Line had progressed slowly but relentlessly. The position of the Fifth Army at the beginning of November, seemed an appropriate spot in which to stop, rest and regroup. The attack on the Winter Line was scheduled for 1 December, but before that time a third corps supplemented the Army's forces. II Corps was brought into the line between the British X and the American VI Corps on 17 November 1943. The Line-up then, from left to right, was as follows:

X Corps	46th Inf. Div
	7th Armored Div.
	56th Inf. Div
II Corps	36th Inf. Div
	3rd Inf. Div
VI Corps	34th Inf. Div
	45th Inf. Div

Later in November, the 1st Armored Division was added to II Corps. When the attack was made, the main force was exerted up the Liri Valley. The effort was begun with an even larger artillery concentration than the one which preceded the Volturno crossing. Eight hundred guns barked out as the Allies moved forward. The Fifth Army again advanced slowly, painfully. Often the terrain prevented the vehicular movement of supplies, so mules were used. Often the mule trains could not go forward, so pack trains of soldiers were formed. In this manner, food moved to the front and casualties were carried back to the hospitals, until Cassino was reached about 15 January. When the Fifth Army arrived below Mount Cassino, it had been still further augmented, this time by the French Expeditionary Corps, consisting of the 2nd French Moroccan Infantry Division and the 3rd Algerian Infantry Division. The Fifth had now become a cosmopolitan army with four nationalities: American, British, French and Italian.



39TH. ENGINEER COMBAT REGIMENT OPERATIONS

On 17 January, I Corps launched an attack along the lower Garigliano in an attempt to take the high ground across the river. The river was crossed and bridges erected, but the offensive force was not powerful enough to maintain the complete bridgehead and was forced to make a partial withdrawal. A synchronized attack across the Rapido by Combat Command "B" on 20 January met a similar fate. By 23 January, the Fifth Army units in both sectors were again in much the same positions that they had occupied before the attack began.

On the top of Mount Cassino, the aged monastery of the Benedictines kept a vigilant eye on the fortified town below and the Garigliano and Rapido River valleys. Cassino became the keystone of the entire operation. Spearheads dashed forward, only to be dulled and bent by German counterattacks. The enemy also successfully parried all out-flanking attempts. After weeks of fighting, the Liri Valley was renamed "Purple Heart Valley".

It was during this period that the operation on the beaches near Anzio was inaugurated and many Allied troops were diverted to that sector. The troops left on the Cassino front were, by now, dog-tired. They had worked and fought under the most difficult of conditions. In January and February, Cassino was rubbleized; from 15 February on, the monastery itself came under fire, as the Americans, and then the New Zealanders, continued to try to force the strong point.

On 15 March, the largest attack yet attempted was unleashed against Cassino. All the air power in the Mediterranean Theater was turned loose in an attempt to smash to bits the enemy's greatest strong point. A vicious bombing a month before had done the defenders no apparent harm. Now all along the front the war on the ground paused. This was the Great Experiment. On the one hand, the classic defense of commanding terrain, seemingly impregnable to ground attack; on the other, the greatest massed air onslaught of the war in direct tactical support of ground forces.

Below on the battlefield, doughboys waited hopefully; artillerymen, ammunition piled high beside their pieces, anticipated their turn; and engineers on the muddy roads laid down their tools and halted the dump trucks. Every ear in the valley was cocked to catch the sound. A locust-like drone came from afar. An uncertain murmur swelled gradually; a steady, pulsing throb came from the south, as the specks began to appear, high and small against the sky.

First came the mediums, B 25's and B 26's, in flights of a dozen or more. High above them the fighters flashed like quicksilver, trailing vapor. The bombers came over the target and the flights turned left. Bellies opened, the planes dropped their loads, then wheeled south once more and were gone, only to be replaced by another flight. After the mediums came the heavies, the Fortresses, and around and through them pierced the endless stream of dive bombers. All morning, the hill and the valley across theriver were livid with the bright orange of bursting explosives. The strikes of the first bombs were visible, but those that followed were hidden in the billowing ocean of grey and white smoke. There were more than three thousand sorties that morning, and it was hard to believe that any human being could survive such punishment and retain his sanity.

After the bombing, the connonade began. Every field piece in the valley (American, British, New Zealand, French) ranging from 75's to 240's, joined in one of the greatest concentrations of firepower ever directed on one target. For sheer intensity, the papers said, the barrage surpassed El Alamein, Sevastopol, Stalinrad. It was an artilleryman's dream. The target was in plain view, the range pointblank, the calibration exact, the registration perfect. For over an hour, the artillery continued, until the gunners dripped sweat in the chill air. Monastery Hill seemed to jump with the terrible detonation, seemed to writhe as if under the blows of a massive club. Great holes appeared in the 16 foot thick walls of the Abbey; its towers crumbled, and huge chunks of masonry flew through the shrapnel-laden air.

When the barrage ceased at noon, the doughboys moved in. Surely there were no defenders left with any fight in them; surely it would be but a question of bodies and prisoners, perhaps very few of either. But it did not turn out that way. Plenty of defenders remained; plenty of fight, plenty of guns, ammunition, OP's and plenty of perserverance. Machine pistols and Spandaus hemstitched patterns up and down the draws to greet the Allied infantry; the mortar crews brought out the nebelwerfers from sheltering caves; the 88's were once again ready for business as if nothing had happened. The resistance, if anything, was more spirited than before. On the night of 17 March, for example, a New Zealand captain, haggard and grey after two nights and a day of house-to-house, room-to-room fighting said, "I started out with one hundred and fifty blokes yesterday. I'm down to forty-seven now. One sniper got thirty-four of my men in a single day before we could reach him." Allied troops were still unable to capture the Cassino stronghold.

II Corps was now strengthened by the arrival of the 85th and 88th Infantry Div. The static period that followed was marked only by patrol activity probing the enemy defenses, and rest and preparation for a new assault. During the winter, the army had not moved north appreciably, but the terrain that was taken should not be measured by a milage scale. The weather had been miserable, both for personal comfort and for communication. The enemy had been strong and determined. The fighting had taken place in terrain that had served the Italian War College as an army maneuvering ground. The Italians had used this area and practiced defending it, for they considered it the ideal terrain for defense. It was impregnable. No one had ever penetrated this defense. The Germans were determined that no one should now. Those were the conditions which the Allied armies in Italy had to contend with; it was through such a defense that the Fifth Army had inched.

At the time the Volturno was reached, the 39th Engineer Combat Regiment, commanded by Colonel T. C. Green, was assigned the road net through Orpia, Maddaloni, Caserta, Briano and Ponte Annibale. Across the Volturno at Ponte Annibale, the 39th constructed a ferry on 15 October. On that same day, it began winterization of the 8th Evacuation Hospital. By the end of the month, the regiment had moved forward far enough to have its Command Post at Baia. Roads were still the main job and the net now included Dragoni - Baia - Pietramelara, the secondary route Latina - Roccaromana - Pietramelara, and Highway #6.

The maintenance of these roads included the building of culverts, the widening of bypasses for two-way traffic, the construction of Bailey bridges and timber trestle bridges and the removal of mines. No large fields were encountered in this area. The mines that were found, however, were often booby-trapped, anti-tank mines often being used as anti-personnel mines. Most of the mines removed were Tellers and "S" mines.

In a six mile stretch of Highway #6, fourteen road blocks were encountered, which had to be filled in, bypassed or bridged. Four Bailey and three timber trestle bridges were constructed on this section of road. Throughout the area west of the Volturno, there were many small streams and canals. These streams were customarily bridged by small masonry arch bridges or stone culverts. The Germans demolished practically all of these crossings and left a ceaseless job of reconstruction for the Allied engineers.

On Highway #85, the 39th Engineers first met the German box mines. Made of wood with no metal latches or nails, and buried about 6 inches deep, they were undetectable by American mine detectors. In the vicinity of Venafro, a number of fixed bridges were constructed using steel stringers. The stringers were prefabricated for use at the site by putting wooden nailing strips between the channel irons. When needed, they were sent out to the working site, thus saving space there and performing a neater job. The regiment maintained Highways #85 and #6 through Nov. and into Dec. On 4 December, a flight strip was constructed for the 13th Field Artillery Brigade. The next day, the 39th began strengthening the bridge at Ponte Reale. A Bailey bridge had been completed there on 1 Dec. It was now converted into a double-triple, the first 3-story Bailey the regiment had built in combat. Its span of 180 feet was also one of the longest constructed by the Allies.

Until Christmas, the 39th concentrated on roads, replaced Baileys with fixed bridges and increased the loads for other Baileys by adding stories or trusses. From 24 December to New Year's a jeep trail was worked on from Montequila to Filignano. The road was to be passable for ¼ ton vehicles and went through wooded and steep terrain, where only cow paths had previously existed. On 6 January, however, this road, together with all other work, was taken over by the newly arrived units of the French Expeditionary Corps.

After being relieved, the 39th Engineer Regiment moved to Afragola to rest, take inventories, and clean and repair equipment until 12 January. The next day, training was started in mine warfare and obstacle tactics. On 15 January, the 2nd Battalion went to Paestum for four days of training exercises with the 3rd Division. First priority vehicles were loaded and sent to the water-proofing area to be prepared for the over-water movement to Anzio. On 25 January, the 39th Regiment embarked at Pozzuoli.

SECTION IV

THE ANZIO BEACHHEAD

The Anzio Operation, known as "Shingle", was quite a shocker to the Germans. Quite a large area might have been taken after the landing on 22 January, if sufficient forces had been allocated. As it was, prudence dictated that the beachhead forces should not be overextended. The troops available were limited by shipping--the shortage of which was critical. The main purpose of the landing was to divide the Germans forces. The 8th Army was to make an attack in the east; the landing was to divert enemy troops from the southern front; the big push was to be made by the main 5th Army forces.

To insure the landing's surprise, an elaborate cover plan had been set up. A radio station was established on Corsica, which claimed to be the advance command post of VI Corps. All traffic was directed towards Leghorn, shipping was concentrated in Corsican harbors, and dummy dumps and landing craft were erected by camoufleurs.

After the landing, however, things began to go wrong. The Germans did not take as many units from the southern front as had been hoped. Instead, with astounding dispatch, a division was brought in from France, another from the Balkans, three from Northern Italy, two from the 8th Army front, and only one and a half from the 5th Army southern front. By D plus 11, the enemy actually outnumbered the Allied forces on the beachhead, with 98,000 troops to our 92,000. The 5th Army now was facing a stone wall on two fronts.

Allied bombing had caused a great deal of damage to the harbor at Anzio. The mole was completely unworkable and the road at the back of Yellow Beach was completely blocked. The mole and harbor had been extensively mined with sufficient explosive to wreck the sea walls of the quays. These charges were of mixed German and Italian origin and had been laid some months. They were removed intact.

The bridges over the Incastro River and Mussolini Canal were blown by the landing troops according to plan. All these bridges had been mined by the enemy with Italian charges but it was necessary to renew all the fuzes, as the originals had deteriorated. The VI Corps defense line followed the natural anti-tank obstacles of the Moletta River and the Mussolini Canal. An urgent request for concertinas was made, 4,000 of which arrived pre-loaded on trucks on D plus 10, having delayed by bad weather. Quantities of lumber also arrived on D plus 10, pre-loaded in trucks. The lumber had not been asked for, nor was it required.

As most roads were under shell fire, development of a road network became a matter of first importance. In depots, subsoil water was low enough to enable alluvial sand to be built up and packed by traffic. Anzio and Nettuno were honeycombed with tunnels cut in soft sandstone. These were normally used as wine cellars. One tunnel system was cleared, surveyed, and wired for VI Corps Headquarters all in 48 hours. Rumor had it that Nero built an underground tunnel from Rome to Anzio. The remains of an aqueduct were found which was several miles long, but which ran out by the Moletta River. No further trace of the Rome tunnel was found there.

The Anzio beachhead was forced to undergo a gruelling siege, especially for the first three weeks in February, when the Germans were trying to eradicate this constant threat to their right flank. Nearly all corps and division engineer units were employed as infantry troops, either to hold frontline positions or to act as reserves.

By 19 February, however, the beachhead was firmly established and the enemy accepted the fact and dug in. The stalemate continued until late in May. The initial force at Anzio consisted of Ranger Battalions, Commandoes, the 509th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 3rd Infantry Division and the British 1st Infantry Div. Later, the 45th Infantry Div., the 1st Armored Div., the First Special Service Force, the 34th Infantry Div., the 36th Infantry Div., and the 5th and 56th British Infantry Div. arrived as reinforcements.

Following the break-through of the Garigliano defenses on 11 May by the 5th Army southern front forces, and their subsequent northward advance, the beachhead troops attacked with renewed vigor, and on 23 May broke through the German defenses on the beachhead perimeter. One of the Anzio engineers from the 36th Engineer Combat Regiment met with another engineer of the 48th Engineer Combat Battalion from the southern American force two days later, on 25 May 1945. The 5th Army was reunited. The beachhead became history.

After their training near Paestum, the two battalions of the 39th Engineer Combat Regiment rejoined regimental headquarters and prepared for the move to Anzio. On 21 January, the first priority vehicles were loaded and sent to the water-proofing area near Pozzuoli, whence Company "A" embarked two days later. On 25 January, the remainder of the regiment, commanded by Colonel Thomas Green, followed Company "A". The regiment disembarked at Anzio and moved directly to a bivouac area near Nettuno.

The regiment constructed a triple-single Bailey bridge at La Ferriere during its first day of work on the beachhead (29January) and began the maintenance of roads, and the construction of mine and wire obstacles along the Canale di Mussolini. The 39th was relieved of this duty on the last day of January and attached to the 45th Infantry Div. to take the place of the179th Infantry Regiment in the right sector of the front line.

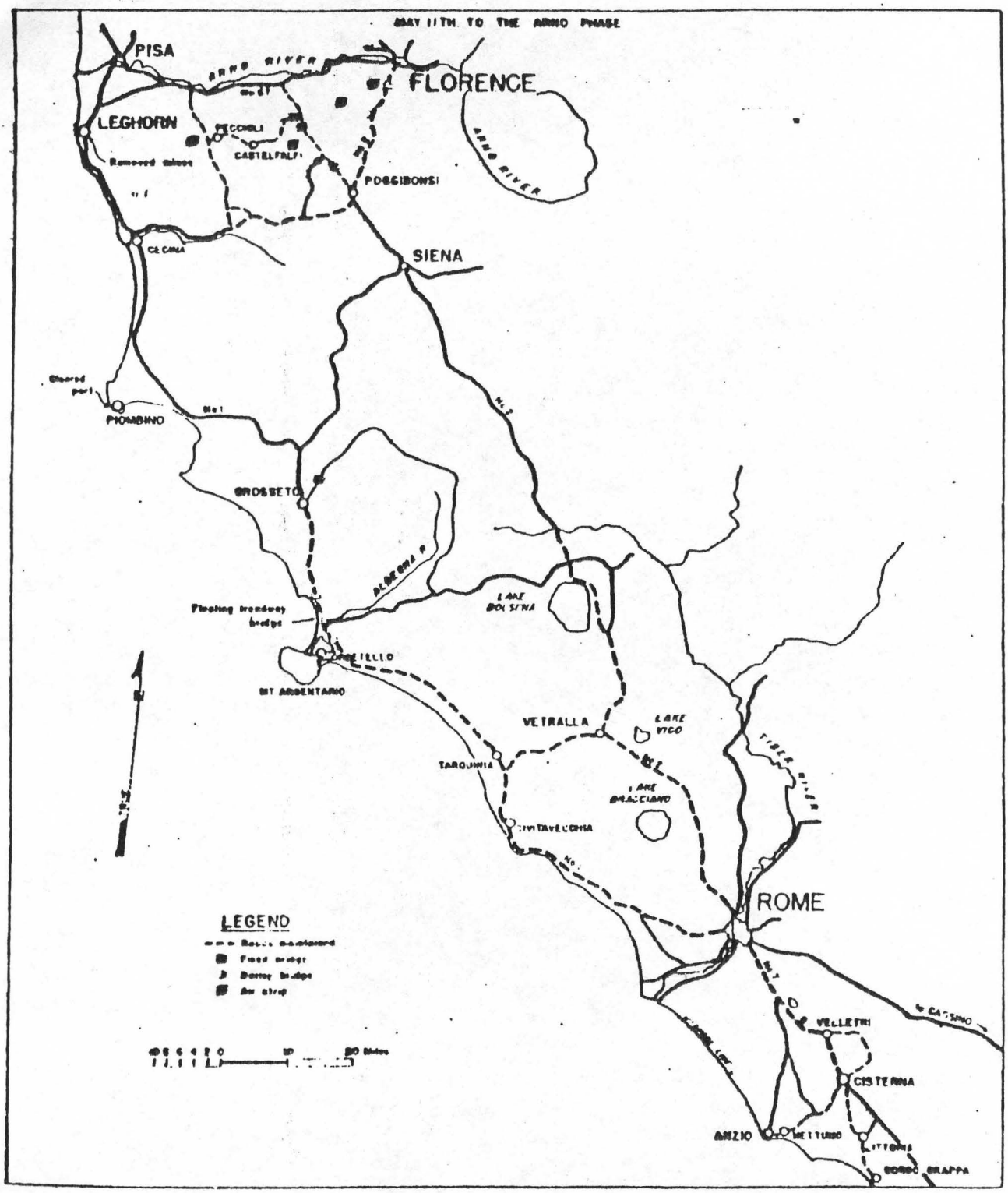
With about 8 companies attached, the 39th Engineers occupied an 8-mile front, from the sea inland towards the left along the Canale di Mussolini. For the four days that the regiment was in the infantry positions, it engaged in patrol activities, capturing a few enemy prisoners. Protection for the sector was installed, consisting mostly of mines and barbed wire. When relieved by the First Special Service Force, it returned to Nettuno to continue engineering operations under VI Corps.

Company "F" operated a rock quarry during this period, off the airport road east of Nettuno. Roads were maintained; foot bridges built over the Mussolini Canal; an more wire and anti-personnel mines placed in the First Special Service Force sector. On 10 February, the 2nd Battalion was designated as corps reserve for the Special Service Force by night. By day, the battalion continued obstacle work for the 3rd Division in support of the 10th Engineer Battalion.

During March, the road work was continued, as well as the organization of the ground for primary defense. Pill boxes of reinforced concrete were built near the overpass on the Anzio-Rome road. All the houses in the area were turned into forts by reinforcing them with timbers, steel rails and sandbags. A few slits were cut through the walls and obstacles placed before the positions. For utmost efficiency, fields of fire were carefully cleared, while care was taken to prevent the work from becoming obvious to enemy observers.

As April came and passed, this work went on and the hospitals on the beachhead were dug in. The hospitlas were partly sunk in the ground and protected by sandbags above the earth line. The 39th worked to install the 52nd and 47th Medical Battalions, and the 15th, 38th, 56th, 93rd, 94th, and 11th Evacuation Hospitals.

In addition, garbage, soakage and grease pits, latrines and roads were constructed for these units.



39 TH. ENGINEER COMBAT REGIMENT

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Meanwhile, the rock quarry operated to full capacity. The equipment in the quarry included five rock crushers, three shovels, two carryalls and four roadmix cement mixers. During all this time, the 39th was laying or removing friendly and enemy mines as the tactical requirements necessitated. Ranges were built for further troop training with rifles, sub-machine guns and machine guns, in addition to a sniper training range.

In the second week in April, the 39th built an aircraft beacon and prepared demolitions for the Special Service Force in the event of a withdrawal. Afterwards, training was begun on Bailey and treadway bridges, mine warfare, and scouting and patrolling. The training, which continued into the middle of May, was concurrent with an extensive anti-malaria program.

On 23 May, the offensive on the beachhead began. At this time, Company "D" was attached to the First Special Service Force to do engineer combat work. As the offensive broke out, new jobs had to be done, mainly in the Cisterna sector; bypasses, bridges, culverts, and an airstrip near La Ferriere, all had to be rapidly constructed. On 25 May, the final construction job for the joining of the northern and southern forces was done: a 45 foot treadway bridge. The bridge, which was located just northwest of Borgo Grappa, was built in thirty minutes.

SECTION V

On 15 April 1944, a cover plan was put into operation to insure surprise for the next offensive, which was scheduled for 11 May. The build-up of men and material was to be concealed from the enemy - a difficult task inasmuch as the 5th Army sector had been cut to a fraction of its former size and troops and dumps were being moved into front-line positions. The 8th Army had moved to the left (Cassino was now in its sector) and the 5th Army was concentrated between the Liri River and the Tyrrhenian Sea. The camouflage work had to make it appear that all old positions were still occupied while all new installatinn had to be carefully hidden. Movement was under cover of darkness and radio activity was carefully restricted.

By the morning of 11 May, the 5th Army was ready to strike. The day was a pleasant one, and the night that followed was very quiet--until 11 p.m. Then practically every gun in 5th Army joined in a barrage that announced the beginning of the attack. The French Expeditionary Corps on the right flank went forward into the "Impasaable" terrain, and continued right through it. The enemy's carefully prepared defense sectors were neutralized by 19 May. The Gustav Line was broken; the Hitler Line outflanked. Castelforte fell, then, in quick seccession, Scauri, Formia Itri, and Fondi. Gaeta was bypassed. The Allies pressed their enemy closely. At Terracina, the 310th Engineers with the 19th Engineers, assigned to II Corps, were so far forward that a sudden but short-lived reversal on 22 May forced crews of two D-7 bulldozers to abandon their machines.

Meanwhile, the Anzio troops had prepared a supplementary attack and opened it on 23 May. Two days later an engineer of the 48th Engineer Combat Battalion from the Garigliano front shook hands with a fellow engineer of the 36th Engineer Combat Regiment from the beachhead. Anzio was no longer isolated, but part of the main 5th Army front again. The Allies continued up to Rome on 4 June and headed north. By the end of June, the 5th Army had rolled on to Grossetto. Soon Piombino was taken. The advance continued northward, but at a slower pace. Cecina and Highway #68 were reached. Leghorn fell on 19 August, and now another port was in Allied hands.

At the end of August, the 5th had cleared the remaining land south of the Arno. Here the Army stopped. Before it was a situation comparable to the one that existed before 11 May. The Allies were on an open, flat plain. In front of them, in place of the Garigliano, lay the Arno, and beyond lay the Pisano hills and the Appennines. Troops were given a chance to rest and relax. As preparations were made for a new attack.

The 39th Engineers, commanded by Colonel Thomas C. Green, linked up with the southern front in the sector just northwest of Borgo Grappa, on 25 May. The next day, Company "D" was relieved of its combat duties with the 1st Special Service Force, and was attached to the 133rd Infantry for engineer work. There it remained for three days. By this time, the offensive was moving so rapidly that all companies were taxed to the utmost in the opening of bypasses, bridges and culverts, and in the clearing of mines.

The 39th Aided in the construction of the road through the mountains east of Velletri. Artillery, mortar fire and snipers, plus the solidly wooded mountains were all obstacles to the road's progress. Because of the nature of the terrain, it was impossible to bring air compressors into a position where they could be used, so all the trees too large to doze had to be cut with two-man saws. After Velletri was taken, the 39th constructed a 320 foot bridge over the Tiber River, on 2 June. Rome was entered three days later. Immediately afterwards, the maintenance of roads and bridges from Velletri to Rome was extended north to Routes #1 and #2.

Company "A" supported a stream crossing operation across the Albegno River, north of Orbetello. The operation was under way before friendly infantry troops had made a bridgehead. After twelve hours work, a 45 foot bridge was placed over the canal south of the river, a 315 foot floating bridge was built across the river, and a bypass was made which filled in a canal on the far side. As the infantry men arrived while the work was still in progress, Company "A" ferried them across the river. Company "B" opened the road through Orbetello to the island of Argentario, and was the first American unit to arrive there.

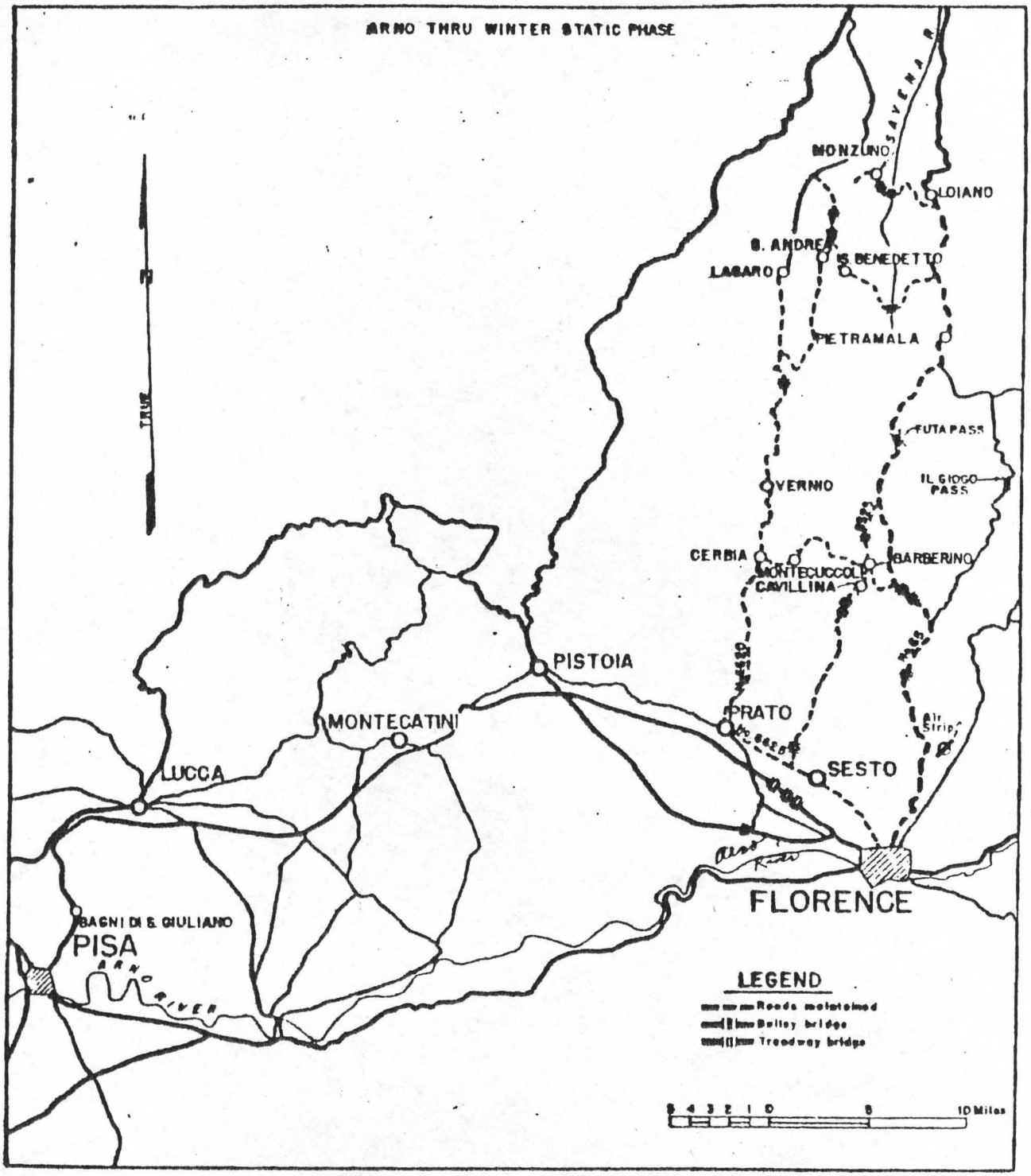
On 18 June, after the regiment had reached Grosseto, it was relieved of all work assignments. The next three days were spent resting at Rome; on 22 June it returned to Grosseto. The regiments new mission was to clear the port of Piombino in conjunction with the 540th Engineer Regiment. On a reconnaissance of the port on 25 June, the engineers preceded the advance elements of the infantry and were subsequently fired upon by Partisans, who mistook them for the enemy.

In Piobino, the port and all berths were completely demolished. Company "A" removed 5,000 tons of scrap steel and pig iron from the major pier in two days. Hundreds of pounds of demolitions were used to remove three 70 ton gantry cranes, railroad tracks, flatcars and engines, as well as buildings, from the pier and the approaching roads. Three cutting sets were in operation continuously on these obstacles. Pier cribbing and flooring was done and much work accomplished under water, using diving masks and air-powered tools.

Three days after the work had started, on 25 June, ten LCT's could be loaded and unloaded head-on in the port, and one coaster accommodated alongside. By 2 July, this capacity had been increasdd by space for fifteen additional LCT's and three DUKW's. 96,000 cubic yards of debris was moved in ten days. After the port was opened, the regiment continued working for the Port Operation unit for a month.

During the latter part of June, 400 blood plasma stands made out of 3/8 inch pipe were constructed for the 33rd Field Hospital. The motor pool constructed five water sprinkler systems and mounted them on 4 ton trucks for the spraying of the port roads, and three flag poles for military cemetries, as wellas various other items, such as a shaft for a GMC water pump, a carburetor needle valve and float pins, sector arm bushings for jeeps, trailers, and a wire rolling rack. These latter articles either required special construction or were not available through normal methods of requisitioning. About the largest item built was a 1500 pound pile driver which was mounted on a Buckeye crane.

As additional work, the 39th aided in the construction of the Red Cross Club in Piombino, and with two D-7 bulldozers made a 4 mile fire-break trail in the mountains outside of the city, where a large uncontrolled brushfire had been threatening the town. One platoon moved to Leghorn on 20 July and began removing mines in the town. A pier was built over a sunken ship in the harbor, a railroad spur was reconditioned, and four steam cranes were refitted and put into operation. On 27 July, the 39th was relieved by the 175th Engineer Regiment and attached to II Corps. While working on the ports, one platoon cleared an area for Army Headquarters Command Post at Cecina, and other troops built firing ranges near Piombino.



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OPERATIONS

When the regiment was attached to II Corps on 27 July, road work was again its assignment, mainly in the Peccioli, Montarno, and Castelfalfi sectors. This work continued through August, and September. From the time of the breakthrough from the beachhead, the 39th constructed twelve Class 40 Bailey bridge, totalling 1,230 lineal feet, fourteen Class 40 timber bridges totalling 632 feet, four treadway bridges totalling 675 feet, twenty-seven culverts, twenty-eight bypasses, two fords and five airstrips.

Company "B" spent the period from 17 August to 5 September in training. Bridges were stressed, and trestle treadway, floating treadway, infantry footbridges and Bailey bridges utilizing the Bailey pier were studied. As September arrived, Company "D" was occupied with the construction of a Class 40, 410 foot triple-double Bailey bridge across the Arno west of Florence, and Companies "D" and "F" were busy clearing the city of rubble and debris.

SECTION VI

Although the attack which was supposed to end the war in Italy came in Sept., the roots of it were based in the late summer months. It was at that time that the planning of the operation was begun and the participating units maneuvered into position. The 91st Division had reached the Arno River at Pontedera on 18 July; Leghorn had fallen the following day; the 34th Division had entered the southern half of Pisa on 23 July; the 8th Army had occupied Florence on 22 August. The British XIII Corps, with the 8th Indian, 1st and 78th British Infantry Divisions, and 6th British Armored Division, was put under 5th Army control.

The Arno was the barrier all along the 5th Army front, an obstacle which had been crossed at only a few points, an obstacle which had to be overcome before the Army could strike at the Germans in their strongly fortified natural defenses of the Gothic Line. Experience at Salerno, the Volturno, the Garigliano and Anzio, had proved that any assault on carefully prepared German positions had to be well planned, and had to be executed with an overwhelming superiority of arms. To achieve surprise, a deception scheme, showing a build-up in the Pontedera area was inaugurated in August by the engineers. Actually, the strong 5th Army forces were to attack from the Florence area, after a feint made by the 8th Army along the Adriatic coast.

The attack began as planned (the official starting date of the Northern Appennine Campaign was 1 September). The 5th Army engineers bridged the Arno at numerous spots, as the troops crossed the river the last days of August and the first part of September. Rapidly the drive went up Highway #65 until by 10 Sept. the Gothic Line had been reached, high in the Northern Appennines. Here the 34th, 85th, 88th and 91st Divisions ran up against the strongest defenses yet encountered in Italy. Artillery and direct tank and tank destroyer fire did little damage to the deeply dug-in paratroopers and infantry. But the Gothic Line was broken and the troops were beyond Futa Pass by 17 September (about the time the fall rains began again).

Yet the fighting was still hard. There were still 28 German divisions in Italy, and they contested every hill, fighting stubbornly until II Corps was stopped within sight of Bologna, the immediate objective. The wind, snow, rain and mud of the Appennines helped, but it was the German soldier who stopped the attack.

Trails were pushed the slippery slopes, the few highways in the sector were opened, demolished bridges gapped everywhere, and mud sloughs rocked until passable. The rains, which began in September, increased in October. By 3 November, all gullies were rushing rivers and the rivers virtual floods. Bridges were swept out throughout the 5th Army sector, but enough remained to prevent the crippling of communications. Waters of the Arno lapped the lower sides of Bailey bridges, as the river rose to a height unequalled in 99 years and 51 weeks.

The tactical situation became static, and combat was limited to artillery duels and patrol clashes. Preparations were made for an attack about the beginning of 1945, but was prevented by a German attack in the Serchio River Valley in IV Corps sector at Christmas time. Troops were rapidly switched to meet the threat, and it was soon stopped.

'45

In February, 2 limited objective attacks were made in the IV Corps area, one in the coastal sector north of Viareggio by the 92nd Division, and one by the 10th Mountain Division, in the Mount Belvedere-Mount Torraccio sector.

As spring approached, preparations were made once again for an attack. Supplies were built up, troops rested and re-equipped, units regrouped and artillery moved into position. As April came, the offensive was ready for the go ahead sign.

After the Arno River had been crossed and the forces were moving northward, the 39th Engineer Combat Regiment, commanded by Colonel Thomas C. Green, began to construct the longest bridge the unit had ever built. It was across the Arno River at Florence and was a Class 40 Bailey of triple-double construction, 410 feet long. There were 3 spans, 140 feet, 130 feet and 140 feet in length. The original piers were sound, so they were merely levelled off and Bailey crib-type supports put on top and cemented in place.

A cableway was constructed to get the necessary material from the shore out to the piers. A truck winch cable was run out to a pole near the stone pier. On this was a snatch block and line. The materials were moved out to the pier on the cableway, and lowered down to the pier by slackening the winch cable. The block was returned to the shore by means of the attached line. The tops of the Bailey cribs were finished off with the standard crib-capsill, over which was placed a deck of 8 X 8 timbers. Base plates were secured to this deck.

The approaches were cut into the banks, and the bridge launched at such a level that the ramp approaches were practically horizontal. The bridge was orginally launched as a triple-single bridge and the second story added later by two working parties. The launching was accomplished by the winch of a 4 ton truck. After the second story was completed, the span was broken over the piers, thus reducing the danger of too great stress or strain.

As this bridge was being constructed, the 39th had other units following the advance. Along with the 19th Engineers, it supported the progress of the II Corps divisional units. The 39th was generally west of the 19th, and followed up the main supply route, Highway #6620. From Prato, the unit moved up the highway to Vernio.

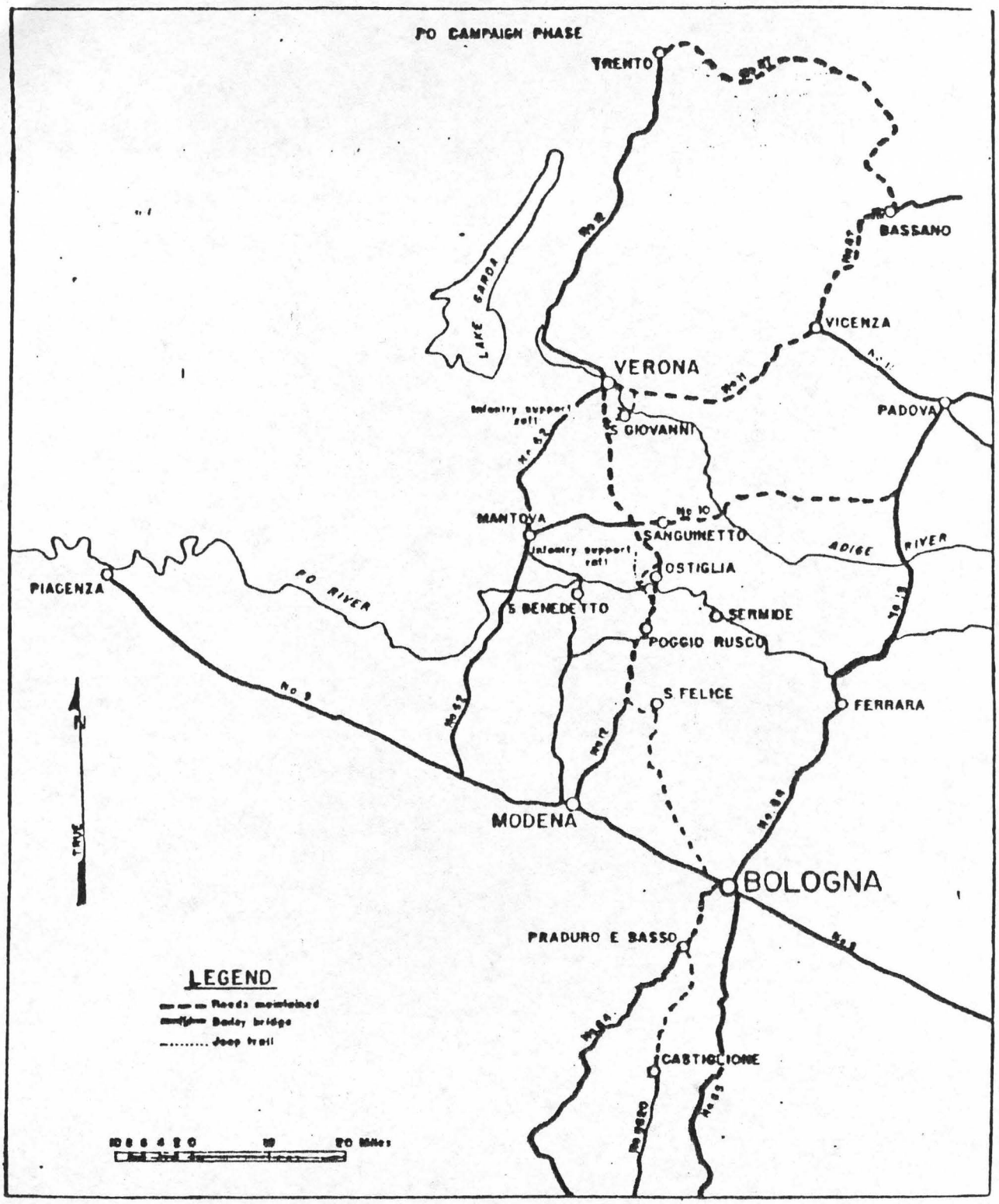
On 17 September, the 39th began the construction of a road designed to connect the main supply routes, #6620 and #65, as well as the secondary supply road, Route #6525 from Sesto through Barberino. From the town of Cavallino on Route #6525 to the town of Montecuccoli, there was a poor one-way road. From Montecuccoli on west to the village of Cerbia on Highway #6620, there was only a mule pack trail. Work was started on both ends of this system, and in 5 days a two-way road for 2½ ton truck traffic was completed.

Throughout September and October, the work of supporting the forward troops continued. Thirteen Bailey bridges were built totalling 920 feet, all Class 40. Twelve trestle treadway bridges, also Class 40, were constructed. Twenty-five steel culverts were placed, as well as a dozen wooden box culverts. Twenty-four bypasses were built, and one cub airstrip, as the 39th Engineer Combat Regiment moved up to its northernmost positions for the winter of 1944-45.

Work was done on Highways #6620 and #65, as well as the importnat and difficult connecting roads through S. Benedetto and Monzuno. On the road to Monzuno from Loiano, a 100 foot triple-single Bailey bridge was built in mid-November at the site of a civilian bridge, thus eliminating the low crossing of the Savena River. At this same time, the regiment began to prepare for cold weather. The command post moved back to a location 1½ miles south of Loiano, and all the units began building semi-permanent quarters.

To prepare the roads for snow, markers were erected, gravel stockpiled along the roads and two snowposts and one sub-snowpost set up and operated. Also in Nov., all personnel of the regiment were given 9 days of rest at Montecatini. On 15 Dec., Company "A" began constructing buildings and repairing roads in the II Corps Command Post area near Pietramala.

On 27 December, Company "A" with the rest of the 1st Battalion, was moved to the IV Corps sector near San Giuliano and was attached to that headquarters for operations.



39TH ENGINEER COMBAT GROUP

OPERATIONS

The battalion was given the mission of securing and holding all dumps in the vicinity of Pisa in case of an enemy breakthrough. The 39th placed charges for demolitions on all bridges and culverts and began regular engineer road work. Company "B" constructed a 210 foot trestle treadway bridge across the Serchio River near Lucca, which required the building of a 350 foot dyke to divert the stream. It was necessary to build a road to the bridge and approximately 5,000 cubic yards of gravel was moved.

The 1st Battlaion returned to the II Corps on 11 January and began transforming Route #6530 from S. Andrea to Highway #65 into a two-way road for future opeerations. The first 2 weeks of January had been cold, and about 30 inches of snow fell in the 39th Regiments area, which put a big work burden on the snow stations. Many disabled vehicles were recovered, and the snow plows, dozers and graders were in use continually to keep the assigned roads open.

Meanwhile, the 1st Battalion spent part of its time preparing defensive positions and preparing bridges for demolition. The road work was made difficult the last part of January because of the thaw. The snow posts were now engaged in pulling vehicles out of the mud. On 22 February, the regiment (less the 2nd Battalion) moved 3½ miles west of Pisa to the Peninsular Base Section Staging area #3, to train in river operations. Company "A" of the 1554th Heavy Ponton Battalion and 6 Brockway trucks with equipment and crews from the 1029th Engineer Treadway Bridge Company were attached to the regiment for duty.

On 1 March 1945, the 39th Engineer Combat Regiment was reorganized and redesignated the 39th Engineer Combat Group. The 1st Battalion of the regiment was named the 404th Engineer Combat Battalion and the 2nd Battalion the 643rd Engineer Combat Battalion. The 643rd remained in the II Corps area until 28 March, when the battalion moved down to join the rest of the 39th Group at the Arno River near Pisa for river crossing training.

The 404th, at the training area west of Pisa, trained with the 25 ton ponton raft, the infantry support raft, the stormboat, the assault boat and the Quonset barge, When finished with training, a night problem was staged on 19 March. The three letter companies of the 404th transported a mock infantry assault task force, consisting of the remainder of the regiment across the Arno River. The training completed, the 39th Engineer Combat Group, with attached troops, was prepared to train the 337th and 338th Infantry Combat Teams.

SECTION VII

The Tactical Situation

April brought the attack that ended the war in Italy. An engagement on the Comacchio split on 2 April raised the curtain. Three days later, the 92nd Div. drove into German positions in the coastal area. Massa was taken, then Carrara, the marble town. On April 9, the Eighth Army, which had been slowly advancing for some time, intensified its attack. On 14 April, IV Corps launched the beginning of the main 5th Army assault towards Vergato. II Corps jumped off 48 hours later. The line-up for the attack was as follows:

IV Corps - 1st Armored Division
10th Mountain Division
Brazilian Expeditionary Force

II Corps - 6th South African Armored Division
88th Infantry Division
34th Infantry Division
91st Infantry Division

Fifth Army - 92nd Infantry Division
442nd Regimental Combat Team

As the attack progressed, the 85th Division was committed in the center of the line in the IV Corps sector. The Germans retreated, fighting every inch. Beyond Vergato, the 5th Army made better progress as it reached the downward slopes of

the Appennines. On 20 April, Bologna fell.

Bologna had been the goal of the September attack. It had remained within sight of the Americans all winter. Its capture opened up a new and entirely different phase of the Italian campaign. Deprived of their mountain defenses, the Germans were forced to shift their retreat into high gear. The Po Valley road net was so large it was impossible to do much effective cratering or bridge demolition. Finally, the withdrawal became a rout. All of the bridges over the Po had been destroyed by the Allied Air Force and many Germans and vast amounts of German equipment were stranded on the river's south bank.

The first crossing of the Po by the 5th Army took place on 24 April at San Benedetto against only minor resistance. In the western Appennines, the Germans pulled out to avoid being trapped and La Spezia was occupied without opposition. Following the crippling losses sustained by the enemy before and during the river crossing, swift Allied thrusts were made to Verno, Brescia and Bergamo. The enemy forces were decisively split. The Germans were unable to muster enough force to try even a temporary stand in their well prepared positions along the Adige River.

There was nothing for the enemy to do now but surrender: full, final unconditional surrender of all German and Italian armies in Italy and the Austrian Tyrol. The possibility of a last-ditch stand in the Alps had been eliminated.

The surrender in Italy came on 2 May 1945. To the dirty, unshaven, dog-tired veterans of the Italian Campaign, Victory Day for all Europe (8 May) was only an anti-climax.

The entire 39th Engineer Combat Group, commanded by Colonel Thomas C. Green, spent the first days of April at the Peninsular Base Section Staging Area #3 near Pisa, training for river crossing. On 7 April, the 404th Combat Battalion returned to Castiglione in the II Corps sector, to be followed by the 643rd Combat Battalion and 39th Engineer Group Headquarters on 13 April. The remainder of the month was a series of long moves.

At the Po, the 643rd Battalion crossed the 88th Division and 757th Tank Battalion at Ostiglia by Quonset barges, and infantry support rafts, until the bridge by the 169th Battalion was constructed. An infantry support raft was built without clamps or side rails using rope and twenty-penny nails. This raft held up for six days and carried jeeps and 1½ ton trucks.

The 6th South African Division was crossed at Sermide, aided by Company "A" of the 643rd Battalion. The 404th Battalion crossed the 362nd Regiment, 91st Division using single and double assault boats. Troops crossed were supported by DUKW's. LVT's and infantry support rafts. Company "A" of the 404th was attached to the 1108th Group for barge operation at S. Benetto.

On the Adige River, the 643rd Battalion helped cross the 88th Division near S. Giovanni south of Verona. One Class 30 raft was made out of captured enemy material with prisoner of war labor. Vehicles were carried on Italian ferries and German barges powered by DUKW's. The 404th Battalion supported the 316th Engineers again and operated rafts for the 91st Division's crossing of the Adige.

On 2 May, the 39th Group moved from Vicenza to Bassano, and after one day there, went on to Fonasco. By 6 May, it was at Trento.

After the Adige River was passed, the main work was opening up the routes of supply in northern Italy. One Bailey bridge was built near Bassano, 150 yards from the river, and rolled down a narrow road with only one-inch clearance to the launching site. The other half of the same bridge was built in place and not launched at all.

On the termination of the British Increment's attachment to Engineer Headquarters, Lt. Col. B. B. Smith wrote: "The closing days of the section were chiefly occupied in preparing histories and reports for various headquarters, and in destroying evidence of many crimes committed in the name of operational necessity of maintaining the closest possible liaison with the American staff. It would have been impossible to secure any degree of coordinated effort between British and American engineer troops had the staff not worked as an integral part of the engineer Headquarters."

After the end of the war, the Adjutant General of 5th Army released figures of Engineer casualities incurred since the landing at Salerno. The following figures include both officers and enlisted men:

Killed in action	597
Died from injuries received in action	140
Non-battle deaths	94
Total killed	831
Seriously wounded in action	786
Lightly wounded in action	1,860
Total wounded	2,646
Taken Prisoner of War	36
Missing in action	30
Total casualties	3,540

PICK AND SHOVEL BOYS
COMBAT ENGINEERS PERFORM DOUBLE DUTY IN SICILY

WITH AMERICAN FORCES IN SICILY-- With an ever steady flow of American troops pouring into the island the combat engineers have resumed their jobs of dealing with the mine menace and repairing the damage done by enemy demolitions. But for four days after landing in the first wave of the invasion they were frontline fighters.

Not that mixing it with the Boche is new to them; they are trained to fight and each man is expected to be an expert with the rifle as with the bulldozer, as rugged with the antitank gun as with the pneumatic drill, they are proud of their title-combat engineers.

WITH THE RANGERS

A detailed account was revealed of how one battalion of 39th combat engineers, commanded by Maj. Stanley W. Dziuban, West Point graduate and native of Yonkers, N.Y. went in with the Rangers at Gela and fought side by side with them until the initial success of the operation had been assured. In four days of fighting this outfit knocked out six medium tanks with their light antitank guns and rifle grenades and forced some 30 other mediums to turn away from their objectives. In the first two days alone the combat engineers captured more than 800 prisoners.

Unfortunately there were no war correspondents with this outfit during their days of combat and therefore the fighting deeds of these Yanks are only recorded in the diary of the battalion adjutant, 1st. Lt. Carl J. Sterner. of Evanston, Ill. But even the bare facts written in cold military terms tell a story of heroic bravery that was not exceeded anywhere along the Sicilian coast that grey dawn of July 10.
Here is that story:

PRISONERS

"Sgt. Harold Gilbert of Manchester, Ky.: Took eight prisoners, including two officers, out of a pillbox at Gela. This pillbox had previously held up two companies.

"Lt. Dee Baker, Fairview, Oklahoma: Knocked out a tank in the streets of Gela. His crew were Cpl. George Baker, of West Virginia; Cpl. Paul Washburn, Loganspert, Pa. Pvt. Arthur Clifton, Bryan, Ohio; Pvt. Olaf Randahl, Camp Bridge, Wisconsin; and Pvt. Henry Pine of Orbisonda, Pa.

"Lt. Chestes Misiewicz, of Grand Rapids, Mich., commanded six half-tracks which on the second day advanced in the face of heavy mortars and mobile artillery, over-running Italian positions and rounding up some 500 prisoners. On the third they rounded up another 300 of the enemy.

"Cpl. Lester C. Hoffman, of San Antonio, Texas, single handedly stormed a pill box capturing its crew of five and all their supplies; S°Sgt. James Payne, of Owensburo, Ky.; and Pfc. John R. Serrin, of Kokomo, Ind. took over an enemy 75mm. field piece and three prisoners, killing one when he tried to escape.

J. F.

COPIED FROM THE STARS AND STRIPES WEEKLY, dated Saturday, August 14, 1943

(In possession of Arthur Clifton, Bryan, Ohio)

39th Combat Engrs. Act As Inf. In Emergency

WITH THE 5TH ARMY, Jan. 29—When the history of the Italian campaign is written with full attention to the factors contributing to its success units like the 39th Engineer Combat Regiment will gain additional laurels.

The organization is more than a construction unit. It is a double-threat outfit that can build bridges, repair roads, perform all other normal engineer functions, and then do a turn as infantry. Currently, it is keeping Highway 65 open. This is the route which serpentines through the Apennines between Florence and Bologna and which suffered the ravages of combat before undergoing attacks by snow and sleet

The task of keeping Route 65 open climaxes two years of front-line engineering and infantry service for the 39th Engineers. For their many accomplishments, they have won commendations from two armies, a corps and three infantry divisions. Commanded by Col. Thomas E Green of Austin, Texas, the 39th Engineers functioned as line infantrymen on three Mediterranean beachheads in addition to their other duties with bulldozers, picks and shovels.

DULL TASKS

For several months after landing at Oran, Algeria, during January, 1943, the regiment fulfilled prosaic assignments in Algeria and Morocco, but in July of that year it received an infantry mission. The regiment's 1st Battalion landed with the Rangers on D-day at Gela, Sicily, and soon was joined by the other two battalions. The regiment cleared six minefields, built 97 bypasses and shoved rubble from seven towns during the 38-day campaign.

At Salerno, the 1st Battalion was again employed as infantry, participating in the bitter beachhead fighting and subsequent action. The other two thirds of the regiment joined the 5th Army in time for the first crossing of the Volturno River. Assault boats carrying the attacking 3d Infantry Division were piloted across the Volturno by the 39th Engineers, who also built one of the first treadway bridges across this fire-swept, swift-flowing stream.

In the 1943 winter drive to Venafro and Mignano, the unit maintained a lively schedule of bridge-building, mine-sweeping and opening of damaged routes abreast of the advancing 5th Army infantrymen.

ACTED AS INFANTRY

The regiment again played an infantry role on the radio beachhead where it landed on Jan. 24, 1944 It held the right flank along the Mussolini Canal until relieved by the 1st Special Service Force. Reverting to engineer duties again, it strung 90 miles of concertina and planted a belt of 40,000 mines while the Krauts shelled and potshotted them from nearby positions. During one of many clashes with enemy patrols, 1st Lt. Stephen S. Sydlik of Dearborn, Mich., and a party of engineers liquidated 10 Germans and freed two captured comrades.

Bulldozers of the 39th helped to carve new roads at the beachheads. One bulldozer operator, Pvt. Richard W. Harlon of Pawhuska, Okla., interrupted his work to capture a patrol of 17 Germans who crawled too close to the engineering project. Another of the unit's accomplishments at the beachhead was the construction of an 80-foot Bailey Bridge across a canal in the "factory" area in among the first troops to enter the destroyed port of Piombino, which they opened in four days and operated for 30 days before returning to more familiar tasks—in the front lines.

Moving up to Florence after clearing the road from Prato, the 39th threw a 410-foot Bailey Bridge across the Arno while Germans were still holding the northern half of the city. Built under shellfire in five days, this bridge is still in use.

Col. Green's men kept Route 65 open while the Gothic Line was being pierced and surmounted many maintenance difficulties. When the upper route washed out in five localities the 39th patched up all five points and freed traffic in less than a day. Wading in mud and icy water to his hips, S-Sgt. Milton S. Hobbs of Detroit directed his platoon in another operation in constructing a two-way timber trestle bridge beneath a treadway bridge, employing an entirely original and ingenious method of switching bridges. As a result, vital traffic was stopped only for a matter of minutes.

The records kept by Maj. Grant K. Borg of Salt Lake City, regimental S-3, show that the 39th Engineers have to their credit, in Italy alone, 125 bridges, 77 bypasses, 123 culverts, 24 major roadblocks, 7 airstrips and one floating footbridge—along with approximately 450 Purple Hearts.

V-4 Is Real Thing, Swedish Reports Say

STOCKHOLM, Jan. 29 (AP)—Reports published here that a refugee German who claimed to be a V weapon engineer gave Swedish authorities details about the alleged Nazi V-4 projectile intended to strike against America were confirmed today by the official Swedish news agency. Later, an authorized spokesman said that he was no longer in Sweden, "but has disappeared eastward."

One Swedish newspaper carried the story that the engineer was Professor Hartmann, one of Hitler's outstanding armor experts, who supposedly came to Sweden after clashing with high Nazis.

New Governor General Arrives In Australia

SYDNEY, Jan. 29—The Duke of Gloucester has arrived in Australia to take up his duties as Governor General, Prime Minister John Curtin announced today.

The Duke, the Duchess and their children made the trip from England in a passenger liner carrying Australian and New Zealand troops

Captain James Eubanks of Bronte, Texas soothes th nerves of Uncle Bud II who didn't cotton to the ori tempered rooster even though it was stuffed. Helping tain, who smuggled the mascot of the "Fighting Cock ron into the country, are S-Sgt. Salvatore E. Noto of and T-Sgt. Charles J. Schlemmer of New York C

Son Of A Gun Of A Roo Carries On 57th's Trad

WITH THE 57TH FIGHTER GROUP, Jan. 29—Uncle Bud II came home today, the gift of Hal P. Monahan, Sr. of Lake Placid, N. Y., in memory of his son who was killed fighting with the "Fighting Cocks" [illegible]

Like his predecessor Uncle Bud is cocky, ill-tempered, fighting son-of-a-gun of a rooster and that's the way the boys like him.

When Col. Phil Cochran, former commander of the "Fighting Cock" Squadron asked Milt Caniff, creator of "Terry and the Pirates," to design the original Uncle Bud, he said, "I don't care what you come up with, Milt, just so long as he's a fighting son of a gun."

Caniff chose the rooster, and Uncle Bud the First came overseas with the squadron and followed it from the hectic days of the North African campaign until he was killed by a jeep last September. Lt. Col. Gilbert O. Wymond of Detroit, the squadron's present commander, wrote to Caniff and asked him to assist in finding a replacement.

Caniff passed the plea along to the readers of his comic strip and from the thousands of replies received, he chose that of Monahan, Sr., who asked that he be allowed to sponsor the rooster in memory of his son.

Republic Aviation Corp., whose P-47s the "Fighting Cocks" fly in combat, obtained the rooster and at a midafternoon ceremony during the employees' rest period, Monahan

—C rations and fruit officers managed to s

Uncle Bud II has alr himself a "Fighting first official act upon crated was to rout a r the kitchen.

At the officers club, troduced to Uncle Buc believed by members o ron to be the "mea alive," mounted in a in a glass cage. The immediately lashed ou truder with his long s to be pulled away from

Said one pilot, "He's that Old Bud himself.

Prosecution Ask In Bulgar Reg

SOFIA, Jan. 29—Th tence was demanded prosecutor today at th mer Bulgarian Regent Bogdan Filov and G Meichov, all charged the political interests many.

The prosecution a the death sentence fo isters Ivan Bagrian General Russen and anov, as well as Slav who died recently.

The prosecution bas