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16 Dec 1945

Siegfried Von Waldenburg

Brigadier General

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MS # A-873

COMMITMENT OF THE 116th PANZER DIVISION IN THE ARDENNES 1944/45

(First part from 16-19 Dec 1944)

MS # A-873

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Siegfried von WALDENBURG

St. Germain, 16 Dec 1945

Brig, Gen.

Commander of the 116th Panzer Division

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On 1 May 47, Waldenburg submitted corrections to MS # A-873. These corrections have not been incorporated in the following translation.  
Capt. J. F. Scoggin. 27 Oct 48.

COMMITMENT OF THE 116th PANZER DIVISION IN THE ARDENNES  
1944/45

(First part from 16 - 19 Dec 1944)

This report was made:

1. According to the questionnaire,
2. From memory, because no records were available,
3. Using the map 1 : 100000.

Organization of the 116th Panzer Division:

2 Panzer Grenadier Regiments	(each of 2 battalions)
1 Panzer Regiment	(2 battalions)
1 Reconnaissance Battalion	(4 troops)
1 Tank Destroyer Battalion	(1 assault gun company and 1 anti tank gun company)
1 Artillery Regiment	(2 light and 1 heavy battalions)

1AAA Battalion (2 heavy and 1 light battaries)  
1 Engineer Battalion (2 companies)  
1 Signal Battalion (2 companies)  
Rear Services.

Temporary assigned:

1 Mortar Battalion and for the start of the attack  
Elements of a Volks-Artillery Corps.

I. The First Day (16 Dec 44)

1. The Division had the task to break through the American positions in the sector of the LVIII Pz Corps between HECKUSCHEIDT and LUTZHAMPEN, to seize the OUR crossings in the sector BURG REULAND - OBERHAUSEN as soon as possible and to thrust from there in a general north-western direction to the MEUSE.

For this purpose the troops were committed as follows:

60 Pz Gren Regt on the right side. Mission: to break through between HECKUSCHEIDT and KESFELD and to capture the crossing point at BURG REULAND.

156 Pz Gren Regt placed the TD Bn. on the left side.  
Mission: to break through on both sides of LEIDENBORN and to seize the crossing points at STOUBACH and OBERHAUSEN.

Schedule: 0530 hours an assault company of each regiment, which had been especially organized was to jump off without artillery preparation. Approximately an hour later the bulk of the regiments were to follow the

assault companies and to penetrate where the assault companies had broken through.

Searchlights which were projected against the sky illuminated the terrain.

The objective was to be reached without regard to time, adjoining units or boundaries of the sector.

Stronger enemy resistance was to be outflanked and was to be eliminated by the rear elements of the Div or by the Army Corps.

2. The development of the situation the morning of the first day of the attack made a new decision necessary. The assault company of 60 Pz Gren Regt had been contained in the forests west of BERG by some enemy pockets of resistance and the company was nearly destroyed. The assault company of the 156 Regt, however, succeeded rapidly in penetrating the first line of the enemy, and the company reached the vicinity of OBERHAUSEN. The attack of the Division was decisively influenced by the undestroyed tank obstacles of the West Wall which made it impossible to commit and to deploy the tanks in the direction which had been ordered. Therefore the Division recommended to the Corps that it exploit the success of the 156 Pz Gren Regt and seize next the crossing point at OUREN. The Corps approved this recommendation and at noon the Div received the order to veer to the west.

### 3. Reserves:

a. The Pz Regt, reinforced by one engineer company. In the early hours of the morning the regiment had been brought up to the HOFSWALD in order to be committed for support of the 60 or 156 Pz

Gren Regt according to the situation.

b. The Reconnaissance Battalion reinforced by one panzer one engineer and one mortar company. The Battalion was situated in the south part of the HOFSWALD waiting for the orders of the Corps.

At daybreak the Panzer Regiment was brought up past KESFELD and committed between 60 and 156 Pz Gren Regt in order to reinforce the shock power of the attack of the two Panzer Grenadier Regiments.

The Reconnaissance Battalion remained as reserve.

4. When the attack jumped off the entire artillery of the Division and element of the Volks Arty Corps had occupied positions in the area of MASTHORN - HILL 568 - UTTFELD - EUSCHEID. We had resorted to preparation fire, because the enemy had to be taken by surprise. But a great number of artillery observers were attached to infantry and tanks in order to participate in the breakthrough and to direct fire against enemy resistance during the attack. A strong artillery group was at the disposal of the Division in order to engage enemy resistance appearing during the attack. After the start of the attack intense harrassing fire was laid on the crossing points of the OUR and combined surprise fire covered the positions of enemy reserves, approaching routes, staffs, etc. The congomerating wood and hill terrain made the observation difficult. Everything for the rapid displacement of the Division Artillery was prepared.

5. The composition and organization of the Division was as usual. The personnel was nearly complete, but not sufficiently trained. The continual preceding commitment of the Division had caused the loss

of irreplaceable experienced officers and EM. The engineer battalion had personnel for only two companies. The Panzer Regiment had approximately 50 - 60 tanks ready for commitment. The number of all types of infantry weapons was sufficient. The artillery was complete.

Most of the motor vehicles were not in good condition. They were too old and we were short of spare parts. The Division had about 60% of the complete number of vehicles.

(For composition and organization of the Division see page 2.)

6. The main effort of the attack was on the left wing of the Division in the sector of the 156 Pz Gren Regt, where the terrain was more favorable for the attack. Therefore one AG and one AT of the TD Bn were committed in this sector.

7. Adjoining units: On the right side LXVI Army Corps (Gen. Lucht) with 18 and 62 VG Div; on the left side 560 VG Div (only half of this Division had arrived when the attack started.)

8. The jump-off positions of the attacking regiments were situated in the old MRL northeast and east of LEIDENBORN. The reserves were situated in the HOFSWALD. (For positions of the artillery see Par. d). After the Division had veered towards the west the intermediate objective was to cross the OUR near OUREN and to build up a bridgehead.

9. We used the roads LUNNEBACH, EUSCHEID, UTTFELD, LEIDENBORN, LUTZKAMPEN, OUREN.

10. As already mentioned in Par. b) the 60 Pz Gren Regt could only overrun the enemy first line but not seize the enemy pockets of resistance in the wooded area in the vicinity and west of BERG. Only

some small assault detachments penetrated deeper into the forest. The contact between the regiment and the assault company, which was almost entirely destroyed, was lost.

However the attack of the 156 Pz Gren Regt and its assault company made good progress. The assault company outflanked LUTZKAMPEN and pushed to the vicinity of OBERHAUSEN. LUTZKAMPEN was captured by the regiment which followed quickly behind the assault company. After the breakthrough of the assault company the enemy resistance north and north-west of LUTZKAMPEN increased. The continuation of the attack in the ordered direction did not seem to promise much success, because the tanks could not be deployed in the unfavorable terrain. And it was possible that the attack of the 156 Regiment would also freeze in the conglomering terrain.

West of LUTZKAMPEN the reconnaissance forces located an enemy resistance line which seemed to be occupied by weak forces only and extended to the vicinity of SEVENIG, from where the Division received fire in the flank. In consideration of the reports and suggestions of the Div, the Corps ordered the Division to discontinue the attack in the old direction and to veer past LUTZKAMPEN towards the west in order to seize the bridge at OUREN. The 156 Pz Gren Regt carried out this order supported by elements of the tank regiment, which had passed the tank obstacle west of LEIDENBORN, broken through the American positions west of LUTZKAMPEN and by evening reached the OUR sector on both sides of OUREN at some points. Enemy infantry and mortar positioned in the vicinity of SEVENIG were outflanked to the north, contained by artillery and heavy infantry weapons.

The 60 Pz Gren Regt covered the east flank of the attack against OUREN in the area of BERG, and was afterwards brought up to the 156 Pz Gren Regt with the exception of some weak elements, which were left there as covering parties.

In general the American resistance was weak except in the woods west of BERG where the enemy fought very bravely and fiercely. The commitment of German tanks west of LUTZKAMPEN soon forced the enemy to withdraw from this position. Weak enemy harrassing fire was reported from KESFELD, UTTFELD and LEIDENBORN and from the road UTTFELD - LEIDENBORN - LUTZKAMPEN. LUTZAMPEN itself was more intensively shelled by the enemy artillery, where we had the first serious casualties. Approximately 150 men, some mortars and MGs, a few vehicles and one ration supply depot were captured on the first day.

11. Losses: The two assault companies sustained heavy losses. The assault company of the 60 Regt was nearly destroyed, the assault company of the 156 Regt was seriously weakened and joined the regiment the next day. The other losses during the first day were small. Two or three tanks were knocked out by the enemy during the fighting between LUTZKAMPEN and OUREN.

## II. The Second Day (17 Dec. 44)

1. The Division had the task to seize the undestroyed bridge at OUREN and to resume the attack past WEISWAMPACH in a west northwestern direction.

Consequently the 156 Pz Gren Regt was ordered to capture the bridge at OUREN and to thrust forward to WEISWAMPACH.

The 60 Pz Gren Regt which had arrived in the meantime was committed on the left side of 156 Pz Gren Regt in order to clean out the terrain east of the river and to eliminate the enemy pockets in the forest west of SEVENIG and to continue the advance past LIELER. During the night the artillery had changed positions to the area of LUTZKAMPEN. During the forenoon we succeeded in mopping up the area on the east bank of the OUR river on both sides of OUREN. After the troops had passed the very difficult terrain, the bridge at OUREN was assaulted at noon and a small bridgehead was built up. Now it proved that the bridge was too small and too weak for tanks and heavy artillery and a reinforcement of the bridge by the Division engineers would have required 12-15 hours.

2. Because of the situation the Corps ordered the Div in the early afternoon to stop fighting near OUREN, to disengage and to bring it up past IRRHAUSEN - DASBURG to the vicinity of HEINERSCHEIDT. The reinforced reconnaissance battalion (up to this time corps reserve) was committed against the new objective before the arrival of the Division.

3. The artillery situated in the area of LUTZKAMPEN supported the fighting for OUREN by observed fire. Enemy movements north of OUREN and on the other bank of the river were successfully interdicted by fire. After the division had received the new order the artillery was displaced in echelons and joined the different march columns.

4. For the movement to the area of HEINERSCHEIDT 3 march

columns were formed:

1st Column: Panzer Regiment

1 Battalion of the 60 Pz Gren Regt

1 Engineer Company

1 Artillery Bn

2nd Column: 156 Pz Gren Regt

Tank Destroyer Bn

1 Artillery Bn

3rd Column: 60 Pz Gren Regt (1 Bn)

Left Artillery

Left Engineers

Division Hq and the signal battalion were distributed or moved in front of the Division to the new assembly area. The AAA Bn was given the order to protect (continually) the march route and was emplaced for the most part near DASBURG and later in the area of HEINERSCHEIDT.

5. The adjoining unit on the right side of the division (26 VG Div) was fighting in the area of HECKUSCHEIDT with alternating success. The adjoining unit on the left side took over the sector of the 116 Pz Div and swept the area of SEVENIG.

6. The Division was to march to the area of HEINERSCHEIDT, while the reconnaissance battalion was to thrust in the direction of HOUFFALIZE as far to the west as possible.

7. Reads: LUTZKAMPEN, LEIDENBORN, ATZFELD, IRSHAUSEN, DASBURG, FISCHBACH, HEINERSCHEIDT, HUPPERDINGEN, ASSELBORN.

8. The disengagement of the Division near OUREN was carried out without being harrassed by the enemy except by weak mortar and artillery fire and was accomplished until the evening. Weak artillery elements covered the disengagement and remained in their positions until the evening. The reconnaissance battalion which had been committed by the Corps in order to advance before the division, encountered in the area of HEINER SCHEIDT - HUPPERDINGEN armored enemy forces which were surprised and forced to withdraw to the north and northwest. Nearly all American tanks were knocked out. The reconnaissance battalion succeeded in passing the CLERF sector, and its advance elements reached the area of ASSELBORN.

The tanks and mortar reinforcement of the reconnaissance Battalion proved to be successful. The mortars especially on their armored cars, which were very mobile and quickly placed in firing position had great value and success.

Besides the number of knocked out tanks the Division captured 200 men, ammunition, some fuel and a number of vehicles. One had the impression that the enemy front was broken through and that a further rapid advance would be possible.

9. Our casualties were very small, losses of material not worth mentioning.

### III. The Third Day (18 Dec 44)

1. The Division had the task to assemble all the combat forces as quickly as possible in the area of HEINERSCHETUT and to thrust from there past HOUFFALIZE to the vicinity of L ROCHE. The reconnaissance battalion gain subordinated to the Division was to advance as far as

possible in the direction of HOUFFALIZE.

The supply of fuel and the obstructions on the road passing DASBURG (XXXXVII Panzer Corps) delayed the movement. Nevertheless in the evening of 18 Dec the Division was assembled in the area of HEINERSCHIEDT, which was temporarily shelled by weak enemy artillery from a northern direction. After continual skirmishes with the withdrawing and dissipated American forces the reconnaissance battalion reached the area southeast of HOUFFALIZE past HACHIVILLE - TAVIGNY. Almost without losses the reconnaissance battalion dissipated and destroyed a number of enemy groups, knocked out some enemy tanks, captured a lot of personnel and all types of vehicles. Furthermore a great ammunition dump (chiefly artillery ammunition) was seized.

The former adjoining unit on the left side (now on the right side of the Division) the 560 Div, cleaned out the area south of OURLEN and started the construction of a bridge. Elements of this division were advancing towards the west.

Contact was established with the new adjoining unit on the left side, the 2 Pz Div near BOEVAGNE.

#### IV. The Fourth Day (19 Dec 44)

1. The task of the Division remained unchanged. If HOUFFALIZE was still occupied by the enemy it was to be outflanked.

The Division issued the following orders:

a. The reinforced reconnaissance battalion was to occupy the road junction at HOUFFALIZE and to prepare the further advance of the Division. If HOUFFALIZE was still occupied by the enemy it was

to be outflanked to the south in order to reach LAROCHE past BERTOIGNE. Reconnaissance in northwestern, western and southwestern direction.

b. The march columns (formed according to the order of 17 Dec) were to continue the advance close behind the reconnaissance battalion, and to be ready for commitment at any time on the left or right side of the reconnaissance battalion, wherever the situation required. The advance started at dawn.

2. On the east edge of HOUFFALIZE the reconnaissance battalion received fire. Enemy movements on the road from HOUFFALIZE towards north were observed. The terrain south of the town was reported to be apparently occupied by only weak forces.

Therefore the Division decided that the reconnaissance battalion was to outflank HOUFFALIZE to the south in order to push forward past BERTOIGNE to LAROCHE. HOUFFALIZE - if necessary - was to be captured by the rear elements of the Division.

3. ----- (no information here)

4. The artillery according to the order was attached to the march columns. Artillery elements advanced by leaps and bounds always covering the advance of the forward echelon.

5. Formation of the combat groups: See organization of the march columns.

6. ----- (no information here)

7. Adjoining units: Elements of the 560 Div followed the advance of the 116 Pz Div and secured to the north. The 2nd Pz Div was advancing towards NOVILLE.

8. First objective HOUFFALIZE; second objective LAROCHE.
9. Roads: HEINERSCHIEDT, HUPPERDINGEN, ASSELBORN, HACHIVILLE, TAVIGNY, VISSOUL, BERTOIGNE, SALLE.
10. Weak enemy resistance south of HOUFFALIZE (apparently stragglers) was rapidly overcome by the Reconnaissance Battalion, which reached Bertogne in steady advance and without further enemy contact, then veered northwest in the direction of LAROCHE, but could not cross the OURTHE because the bridge had been blown up. Lengthy attempts to find another crossing point were without success.

The first march column which followed the reconnaissance battalion reached the high ground of HOUFFALIZE during the morning, and elements of it were able to support successfully the fighting of the 2nd Pz Div. In the forests and on the high ground east of VISCOURT some enemy tanks were knocked out and approximately one enemy battalion - among them one staff officer and 10-15 other officers - were captured. After this short fight, the advance past BERTOIGNE was resumed and rear elements of the Division occupied HOUFFALIZE which was evacuated by the enemy in the meantime. Because the bridge across the OURTHE northwest of BERTOIGNE could not be reconstructed by the Division engineers the Division intended to reach the main road MARCHE - BASTOGNE past SALLE, in order to push from there directly to MARCHE or past the multiple road junction west of CHAMPLON to LAROCHE. It was also possible to attack BASTOGNE from the rear, if the Division was covered against the northwest. Which of the different operations was to be carried out had to be decided by the higher commands. In any case the Division intended to exploit the success and

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COMMITMENT OF THE 116 PZ DIV IN THE ARDENNES

(1944-1945)

Chapter II

Dec 20 - Dec 26, 1944

the good morale of the troops and to push during the night to the road junction west of CHAMPLON. After the short resistance of some enemy elements (mostly stragglers and rear services) the advance guard of the first march column reached SAILE in the evening.

Armored reconnaissance cars of the Division observed enemy traffic on the road MARCHÉ - BATOËNE and attacked it during the dark. Burning vehicles showed the results. Some American vehicles were captured in the BOIS DE CHABRY. In the late hours of the evening, the Division received the unexpected order of the Corps to stop the advance toward the road junction of CHAMPLON, to withdraw and to thrust past HOUFFALIZE across the line SAMBREE - LAROCHE on the north bank of the OURTHE river toward SOYE - HOUTTON. The reasons for this order were unknown to the Division. Unwillingly and against all principles the Division had to stop the advance and to issue the respective orders, which veered the Division out of its direction, which seemed to be very successful, and caused a considerable waste of time. I cannot estimate the consequence of this decision, which became fatal for the Division, on the general situation.

11. Our own losses on this day were also very small. When we by-passed HOUFFALIZE we lost in the difficult terrain a few vehicles, which could easily be replaced by the captured enemy vehicles.

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20 Dec 44:

1. In regard to a Corps' order, which was received in the late evening of 19 Dec, the Division's mission was to operate further on the Curthe's north bank, and secure the line Samree-Laroche, as its first objective.

The Division's forward movement, which was still in full swing, was halted in the evening of Dec 19. Simultaneously orders were issued, to regroup and for new reconnaissance for a return march to Houffalize, and a new forward march toward Samree. Of course the supply system too had to be halted and detoured. The Division's main interest also was in regard to its order, to lose as little time as possible. Therefore, the difficult maneuver had to be executed during the night. The Div intended its combat units toward the vicinity of Samree - Laroche, by Dec 20, in disregard of its difficulties.

The situation in which the Div found itself during that night was anything but pleasant. Troops didn't understand the necessity of those orders, which resulted in numerous counter questions. The road for the forward march was overcrowded with traffic, and was in many places choked, due to the turning points by the troops to the rear. Supply vehicles were unable to locate their units in the dark, and remained stuck in the traffic. In some cases, on the uncleared northwest flank, contact with enemy forces had resulted. But still, regardless of all its difficulties, the Div was, during the early morning of Dec 20, on its new move again. Units were reorganized, and were mostly well supplied. Serious disturbances by enemy forces, which would have been disastrous, did not take

place.

The orders issued by the Div after the reorganizing were as follows:

a. To the Combat unit Pz Gren Regt 156 (which was in the vicinity of Houffalize), advance to Laroche, via Pte Marmont, Nadrin, Berismenil. Proceed as soon as possible.

b. To the Armored Combat Unit (Pz Regt, Pz Gren Regt 60 and units of Engineers and Artillery), Advance to Samree, via Houffalize, Wibrin and Nardin.

c. To the reinforced Rcn Det: First, to secure the Return march of the Div to the Bertogne area, up to the morning of 20 Dec. Then to follow as Div's reserve behind the Armored Group.

To 2, Part I: ----- (no information here)

To 3, Part I: Division Reserve was the Rcn Det which in the course of the morning followed the armored Group.

To 4, Part I: The artillery had been divided among the combat units. Artillery units in the combat group 156, guarded the Division's movement across the open country by Nadrin. Laroche was shelled with a harrassing fire.

To 5, Part I: See 1) Last part.

To 6, Part I: The Division's main body was with the Armored Group, which made in the afternoon the attack on Samree.

To 7, Part I: Units in the flanks: The 560 VGDIV encountered in the course of the day heavy enemy forces, with tanks, along the road from Samree to the northeast. They were in no position to push the enemy back or to make a break with their own forces. The 2 Pz Div took Noville and was advancing through Bertogne.

To 8, Part I: See 1.

To 9, Part I: Routes: Bertogne, Houffalize, Nadrin, Berismenil, Samree, Dochamps.

To 10, Part I: The area between Houffalize and Samree was taken without much enemy opposition.

Our reconnaissance, as well as these from the 560 VG Div reported heavy enemy resistance with tanks on both sides of Samree. Enemy forces occupying Laroche were small, and the terrain in this area was for tanks practically impossible. To block this terrain was an easy task. Apparently, the Americans had not noticed our Div movement, and my personal reconnaissance in the Samree area showed that the area was favorable for the massing of tanks and for an attack.

With this information, the Div decided to make a surprise attack and a breakthrough to Dochamps. It was also the Divs belief, that the enemy would evacuate Laroche as a result of this attack.

After a short preparation began the Armored Combat Group, to attack Samree in the afternoon. The artillery was in position in the vicinity of Berismenil. Tank attacks were launched along both sides of the Nardin, Samree, Dochamps road. The infantry attacked simultaneously from the forest south of Samree. One Infantry unit went with the attacking tanks in S.P.Ws? During the course of the tank battle, we succeeded in breaking into the American positions, in and around Samree, and in several instances we were able to roll up their positions. With another swift attack on the same evening, Dochamps fell. During this action, about 10-12 American tanks were either destroyed or captured. Prisoners

and some vehicles also were brought in.

The Division's gas supply was at that time very critical. The Pz Gren Regt 156, the Rcn Dt and the Artillery had run out of gas and could not be moved, because all available fuel was issued to the Armored Group. It has been already described that the change of the situation and the choked roads interfered with our supplies, and this was like a God-sent gift: A large fuel dump was found in Samree, which was large enough to service every motar in the Div and all combat units gased up during the same night. Americans told us that the gas had been rendered useless, because sugar had been added. But in any case, this gas suited the German motors very well. Besides the large amount of fuel, large quantities of other supplies fell in our hands. During the night came a brisk, American harrassing fire upon Samree.

To 11, Part I: Our own losses were not so high. About 2 tanks and 1 self-propelled weapon were lost. During the night, artillery caused the loss of a few more vehicles which were set afire by the artillery.

21 Dec 44: Since there are no records available, the following daily engagements are from here on based on a general description of the battle course, without considering the separate numbers of the questionnaire. The Division's mission was to take the road-net-intersection and bridge toward Hotton, and to push from here further toward the Durbuy-Baillonville road.

Therefore, the Div gave orders to:

1. To the armored combat group, to continue its advance from the Dochanmps area, toward Beffe and to secure the road Soy-Hotton.

2. The Pz Gren Regt 156 was to follow the Armored Group to the vicinity of Beffe, and to act from there according to the situation.

3. The Rcn Det was to comb the large wooded area between Samree and Laroche. To occupy Laroche, but a battle for this town was to be avoided. Reconnaissance in the left and right flanks.

The area between Dochamps and the road Soy-Hotton was taken without much trouble, and without much disturbance by the enemy. Very unpleasant was the situation along the long, open right flank. The 560 VG Div was situated eastward of Samree and was more or less tied down. Nothing was to be seen of the long awaited SS (II SS Pz Corps) which was further to the east. They were at that time still in the Salm-sector. Also the neighbor to the left, the 2 Pz Div, was still in the vicinity of Champlon. During the course of the afternoon, the armored Gr succeeded to advance over Melines-Muehle, and to penetrate the forest east of Hotton, further to push the enemy back and to cross the road and to advance to the forests' northern edge, between Soy and Hotton. An attempt to take Hotton in a bold stroke failed, as the enemy resistance grew from hour to hour.

The enemy artillery fire became ever increasing, from dominating heights by Soy. Very often came effective flanking fire against the Division's right wing. The Rcn Det detected a strong enemy armored Combat Group, which was completely inactive, in the wooded terrain east of Marcourt. During the night this group withdrew to the American lines, and left all of its vehicles behind.

In this situation made the Div the decision to send

the Pz Gren Regt 156, which had just moved up to the Armored Group's left flank, to support them in their attack to take Hotton. The attempt made by this Regt to take Hotton, and especially the bridge, failed on account of the bravery of the enemy Engineers and of their stubborn defense, which was apparently supported by dug-in tanks, well camouflaged. The Division's urgent call for air support, which had been so often promised and would have in this case played a major factor was, as usual not answered. The tired grenadiers in the darkness, under the personal command of their commander, made another attempt to take this town and the bridge. They succeeded in advancing within the first buildings of the town where the attempt broke down during the heavy hail of enemy defensive fire.

In the meanwhile, the enemy evacuated Laroche which was occupied by our troops. The bridge was slightly damaged. Weak rcn units were sent in the area of the Ourthe's West bank. Only a few prisoners were taken during that day. Several vehicles were destroyed or captured. Important written military documents were found in Laroche. Our own casualties for the battle of Hotton were heavy. Several of our tanks were lost through enemy artillery, others were damaged. The troops were tired, they had been without interruption from 16 Dec, on continuously engaged in actions and marches in cold, wet winter weather. Vehicles broke down, due through continuous use in bad weather and roads. The troops began slowly to realize that the planned decisive plan must have failed, or that no victory could be won. Morale and efficiency suffered under their acknowledgment.

22 Dec 44: I had during the night a conference with several unit commanders, in my advance CP of the Pz Gren Regt 156, which was located in a forest east of Hotten, where we discussed the continuation of attacks on Hotten. At about 0400 hours, I received from the Corps a radio message with the instructions to proceed to the Ourthe's west bank, and to break out from the area east of Marche, and force an advance in a north-western direction. Apparently the Corps made this decision upon the outcome of the battle for Hotten. The Div was now probably ordered to proceed in the very same vicinity, where it could have been on 20 Dec, had the Bretagne-Salle advance not been called off. (19 Dec). This meant the loss of three important days, which undoubtedly played a large part during the coming battles east of Marche, and resulted in tactical and operational disadvantage for the German attacks.

As the first unit to cross the Ourthe, ordered the Div, the whole Rcn Det. on the mission to reconnoiter the west bank and the area toward Hotten-Marche. The Div was to cross later, while the Rcn Det secured our safe crossing. The Div intentions were to occupy the dominating heights south of Menil-Verdenne, as soon as possible. The Rcn Det observed apparently a thin occupied enemy position, which continued close to a line from Hampteau-Menil-Earenne-Verdenne, to Hollogne. The Div ordered the main body of troops to be moved to the Griembemont area, where preparations for a break through Verdenne to Baillonville were carried out.

23 Dec 44: The Div managed to disengage itself from the Hotten Battle

area, 22 Dec, and to bring the troops back, during the night to 23 Dec. The Div was then furnished with fresh supplies. By noon, 23 Dec, also the Pz Gren Regt 156, and the Artillery main body arrived in the area east of Griembieumont. The damaged bridge in Laroche was repaired just before the movement began and did not interfere with the troop movements.

The Rcn Det observed and reported that the enemy had begun to dig in and was being constantly reinforced. Luckily, the enemy remained quiet. No enemy disturbances had been reported. The Pz Gren Regt 156's mission for 23 Dec was to attack Verdenne, from a forest south of the town. If necessary, the town could be by-passed, but the important highway between Hotton-Marche should be reached, cut, and occupied. Also it was their mission to prevent the enemy from building Defense system. The attack was launched in the late evening and succeeded in piercing the enemy positions, southwest of Verdenne. The first wave of the 156 forced a penetration in the forest northwest of Verdenne. Prisoners who were taken during this engagement, were identified as belonging to the newly arrived American 84 Inf Div, which was now operating between Hotton and Marche. During the further course of the battles the arrival of this fresh Div was a decisive factor.

During 23 Dec, all Div units moved in this newly won area, east of Marche. In the vicinity of Harsin the contact was established with our left flank neighbor (2 Pz Div). Supplies arrived, in spite of all the difficulties. A shortage of certain artillery ammunition was reported. The troops condition, after nearly 10 days of continued fights, was serious. They were tired troops.

24 Dec 44: For 24 Dec, the Division's mission was to force a break through the American 84 Inf Div, in a general direction to Marche. Then to proceed through Baillonville, Pessoux to Ciney, where the 2 Pz Div was to make contact and protect our left wing. With this mission began the bitter and ever changing battle in the Verdenne sector. Attacks were followed by counter-attacks, defenses with break throughs. The terrain changed hands several times during these bitter, fierce raging battles. Upon the Division's success rested the whole success for the Operation plan. While the enemy forces were fresh troops of the 84 Inf Div, it also received further additional air support, as the weather began to clear. Of the German Luftwaffe nothing was to be seen or heard during this decisive moment, nor did additional reinforcement arrive for our troops, so that the dead tired soldiers could have been relieved. About at this time the Div units were situated as follows: (For details see sketch). To the right in the Hampton sector was the Rcn Det. In the middle south and southeast of Verdenne, the Pz Gren Regt 156, and units of the Pz Gren Regt 60, and the Pz Regt (as assault and main body). To the left, in the Bois de Spiroux, and along the Griembieumont-Marche road the Engineer Bn.

The main body of Artillery was in the Cheoux-Lignièrs sector. The order for the Battle was given in the afternoon. The incomplete refueling of the tanks delayed the Order of the Battle. The order of the Div was:

1. Attack, breakthrough and proceed with the main body through and on both sides of Verdenne, Bourdon to Baillonville.

2. Rcn Det will protect and secure the Div right wing in the area south of Hampteau-Sur Waha.

3. Engineer Bn will secure and protect the Div left wing in the wooded terrain and the road west of Griembimont. After a successful breakthrough, the Rcn Det and Eng Bn were ordered to follow closely behind the assault forces.

The main assault forces, supported by tanks, succeeded during the bitter raging battle in piercing the American lines south of Verdennes. The town itself was taken after a bitter house to house fight, from where the forces advanced toward an area just north of Verdennes.

At about the same time the enemy launched an assault, which was supported by tanks, against the combat group of the Pz Gren Regt 156, which had the evening before (23 Dec) succeeded in penetrating in the wooded area northwest of Verdennes. This enemy attack kept the Combat Group continuously engaged. Thus the Combat group was unable to join, and support the Div in its engagement. On both sides casualties were very high. Units of the 156, which previously had penetrated the wooded area northwest of Verdennes, suffered especially under the tank and artillery fire. Prisoners were taken during the day.

The same evening one more effort was made to carry the assault further beyond Verdennes. The dead tired troops gave their last effort and succeeded in driving deep wedge into the enemy positions, north of Verdennes. Several prisoners were taken during the action. The highway Hotton-Marche was now under direct fire of the German guns.

A strong Rcn unit crossed this highway and advanced into the wooded area northwest of Bourdon, from where they reported the assembling of an American artillery unit.

With this came the end of the first bloody day for the battle of Verdennes. A breakthrough had been forced upon the enemy, but not as it had been planned, or ordered. The price was paid with heavy losses.

25 Dec 44: To-day's mission for the Div was the same as yesterday. (24 Dec). The early morning began with an American counter attack from the Bourdon area, which was aimed against our wedge north of Verdennes, and against the town itself. The enemy succeeded in breaking through to Verdennes, and to cut off the Pz Regt's Combat Group, under the personal command of its commander, in the woods north and northwest of Verdennes. The sea-saw battle for Verdennes continued almost throughout the whole day. Divisional units which fought in this battle, were nearly completely wiped out. (1 Bn Pz Gren Regt 156, and units of Pz Gren Regt 60). The Commander of the Pz Gren Regt 156, along with a few men succeeded in fighting his way back.

It was a lucky thing the American 84th Div did not push beyond Verdennes. At this moment there was hardly any opposition left, and an attack and breakthrough would have resulted in the mopping up of our front. But the thought of an attack in a northwestern direction was never given up by the Div. Therefore the cut-off Combat group (parts of Pz Regt and Pz Gren Regt 60) was ordered to remain and to hold its positions. It was hoped to be able to relieve them the following day

and to strike with the planned attack. The Div had even more reasons to believe in the success of this attack, since the Fuehrer Begleit Brigade (Col Remer) had come up along the Division's right wing, from where it was to operate in the Hotton area. Because of this the Div felt a great relief and believed a decision could now be forced.

26 Dec 44: The Division's mission was to make contact with the surrounded combat group, and as soon as the Fuehrer Begleit Brigade's assault was well under way, to open up our own attack.

However, the enemy had apparently decided to wipe out this small cut-off group, and continuously placed heavy artillery and mortar fire into the combat group's small area. Its situation began to get more and more difficult, as their ammunition supply was getting lower. Our own artillery supported the small heroic unit's fight, as far as our munition situation permitted. Our radio communications with the group were good.

The next morning the Div ordered the employment of the last reserves, in an assault to reach and free the surrounded combat group. But the American forces too launched a sudden attack against the cut-off unit, which was only halted after every available weapon was opened up on them. Then the enemy began to withdraw. After a short but effective artillery barrage, at 0700 hours, we began our assault which was carried out by the 1 Bn Pz Gren Regt 60, units of Pz Gren Regt 156, and the Pz Regt. The assault was launched from the southern sector of Verdennes, but was caught half-way in very heavy, concentrated enemy artillery fire, which blocked any further advance. Only after another heavy counter-

barrage, were some of the units able to make another gain of a few hundred yards. Then the Infantry was caught in a very heavy enemy cross-fire, and could not move any further. A tank force loaded with supplies, fuel, ammunition, medical supplies and others, succeeded in making a break through the heavy fire and reached the combat group with the badly needed items.

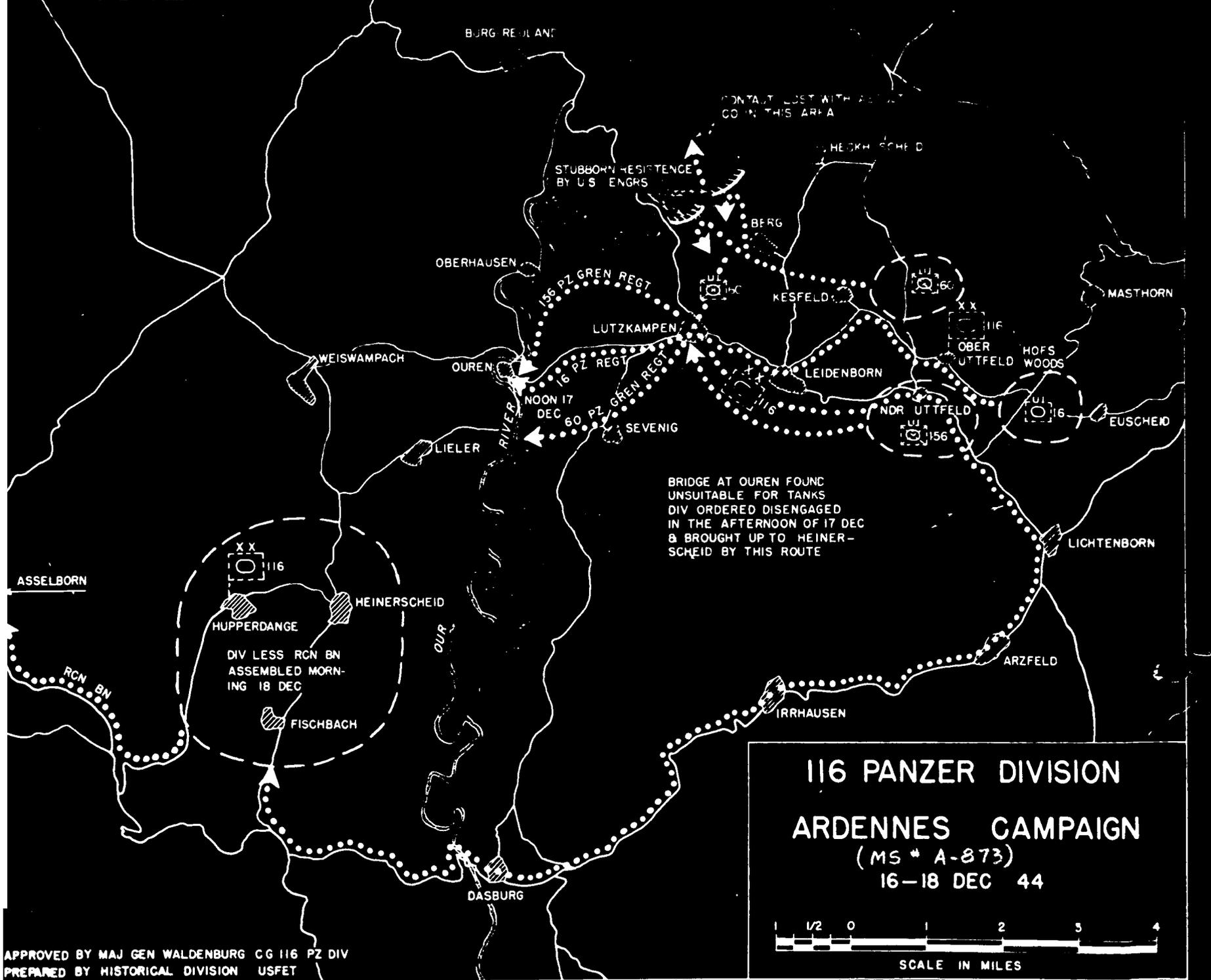
But the attempt to relieve the surrounded group failed. Hardly was this battle over than the enemy renewed its effort with fresh, strong forces, to take the German pocket. Their attempt was beaten back in a long and bitter battle, which resulted in high, bloody losses and losses of materials. About this time information reached the Div that the Fuehrer Begleit Brigade had to break off its assault for Hotton (Hamptau had already been taken) and that it was being moved for other duties. For the Div this was a bitter disappointment. The expected relief, due to the FBB's actions, was now gone, and a further continuation of the attack with our own forces was now no longer possible. Because of this, the Div made the decision to go over to the defensive. The surrounded group was ordered to make a break during the night back to our lines. To support them, and to divert the enemy attention, the Div ordered a local assault toward Menil, which was carried out the same night. Our forces succeeded in penetrating the enemy lines creating confusion and bringing back some prisoners. After this mission was completed, the forces returned to their starting point. But this undertaking against an alerted enemy had to be heavily paid in blood and material losses.

In the meanwhile, the combat group succeeded in preparing

for the break through without being observed, perhaps because the enemy did not expect this to happen. With the infantry mounted on the tanks, throwing a hail of hand grenades and firing all weapons, the rest of the combat group succeeded in breaking in the darkness through Verdennes, and to our lines. Its commanding officer, the Commander of the Pz Regt reported the same night back to me.

With this, the heavy bitter battles came in vicinity of Verdennes to a temporary end. Two gallant enemies of which both knew what was at stake, had done here their full share of duty. The German offensive, which began with so much hope for a successful undertaking, and with great successes at the beginning, came to an early end through its superior conquerer.

Signed: v. Waldenburg.



BRIDGE AT OUREN FOUND UNSUITABLE FOR TANKS DIV ORDERED DISENGAGED IN THE AFTERNOON OF 17 DEC & BROUGHT UP TO HEINERSCHIED BY THIS ROUTE

**116 PANZER DIVISION**  
**ARDENNES CAMPAIGN**  
 (MS \* A-873)  
 16-18 DEC 44

1 1/2 0 2 3 4  
 SCALE IN MILES

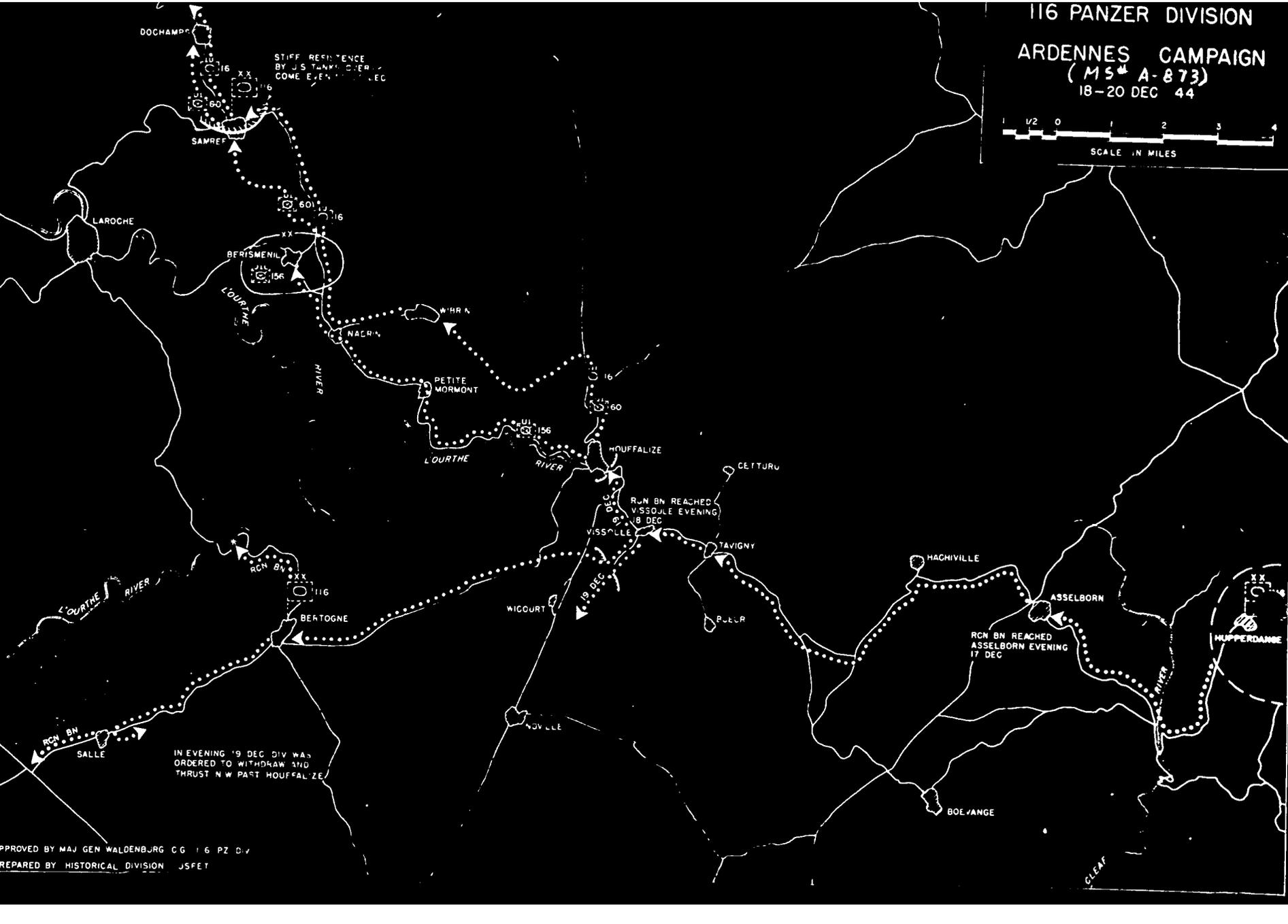
APPROVED BY MAJ GEN WALDENBURG CG 116 PZ DIV  
 PREPARED BY HISTORICAL DIVISION USFT

# 116 PANZER DIVISION

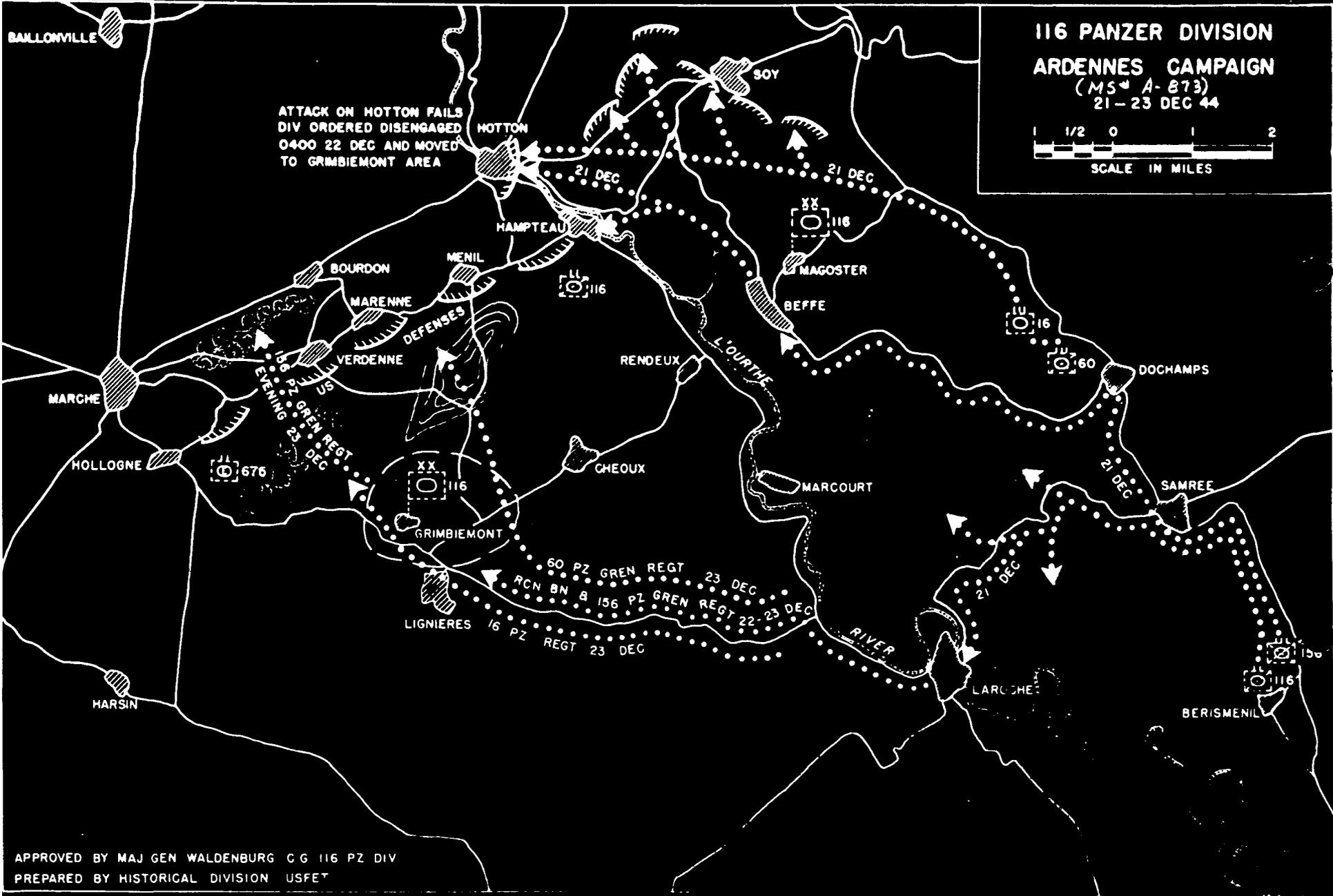
## ARDENNES CAMPAIGN

(MS# A-873)

18-20 DEC 44



IN EVENING 19 DEC DIV WAS ORDERED TO WITHDRAW AND THRUST N.W. PAST HOUFFALIZE



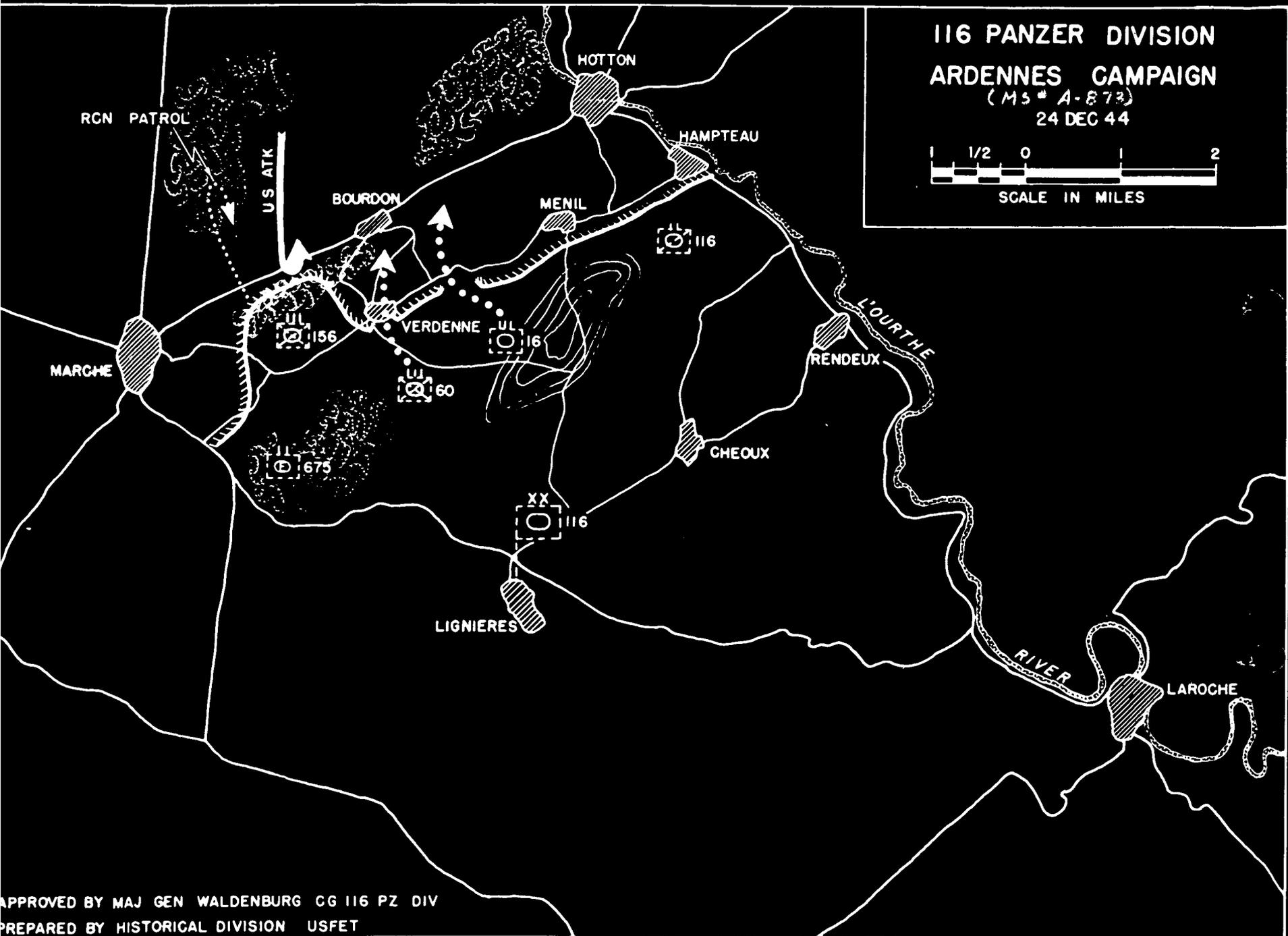
**116 PANZER DIVISION**  
**ARDENNES CAMPAIGN**  
 (MS# A-873)  
 21-23 DEC 44



ATTACK ON HOTTON FAILS  
 DIV ORDERED DISENGAGED  
 0400 22 DEC AND MOVED  
 TO GRIMBIEMONT AREA

APPROVED BY MAJ GEN WALDENBURG CG 116 PZ DIV  
 PREPARED BY HISTORICAL DIVISION USFET

116 PANZER DIVISION  
ARDENNES CAMPAIGN  
(MS # A-873)  
24 DEC 44



APPROVED BY MAJ GEN WALDENBURG CG 116 PZ DIV  
PREPARED BY HISTORICAL DIVISION USFET

# 116 PANZER DIVISION

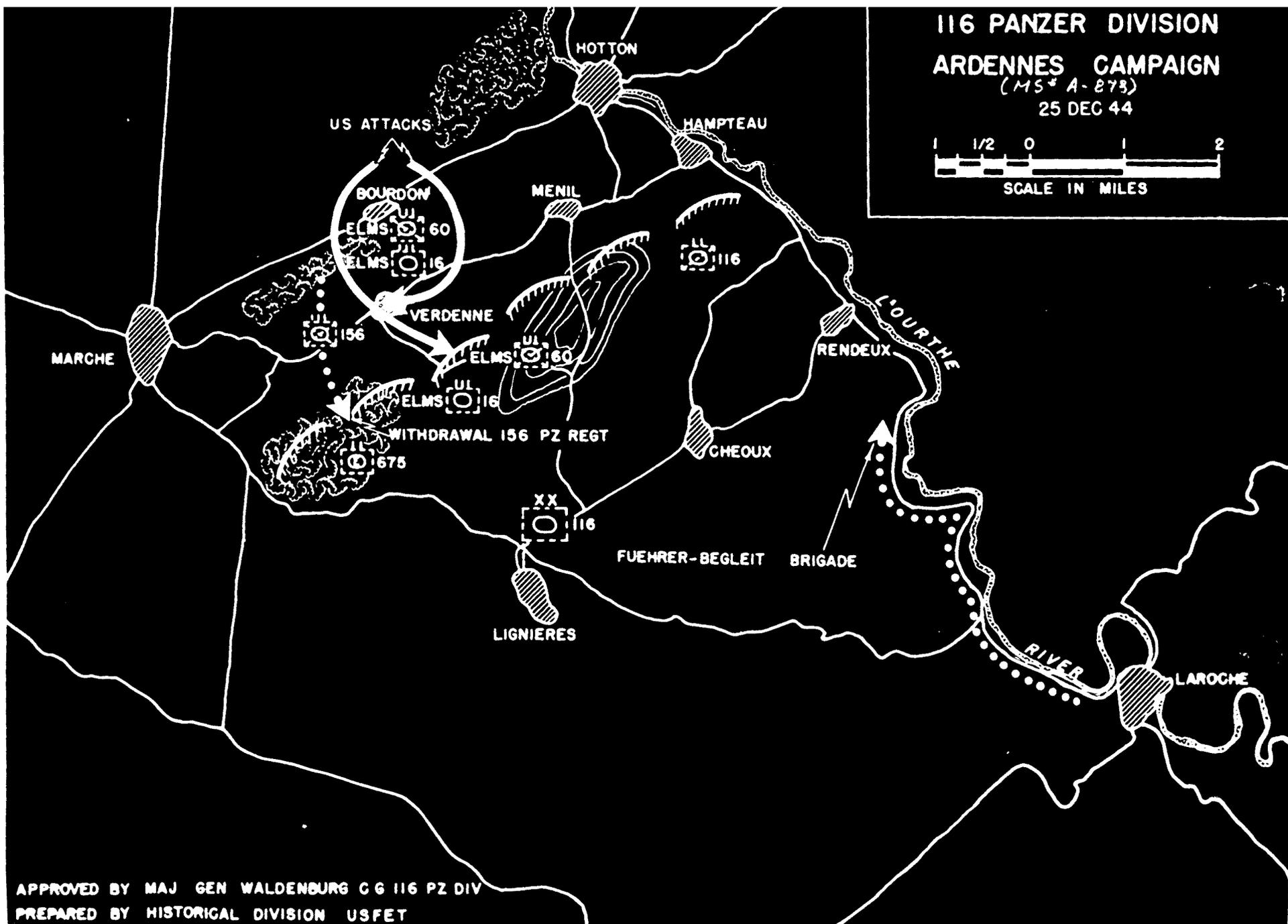
## ARDENNES CAMPAIGN

(MS<sup>+</sup> A-873)

25 DEC 44



SCALE IN MILES



APPROVED BY MAJ GEN WALDENBURG C G 116 PZ DIV  
PREPARED BY HISTORICAL DIVISION USFET

# 116 PANZER DIVISION ARDENNES CAMPAIGN (MS# A-873) 26 DEC 44

