



edited by Mad Dog
contains items from German language version

Hugo Seemueller
Lt Colonel

Frankfurt/M., 14 October 1950

Index for MS # B 109.

Report on combat operations of 353d Infantry

Division at the SIEG Front from 23 March to 8 April 1945.

(Hugo Seemueller)

13 pages

American

Americans successful in attack due to superiority 6/7

Execution of American attacks 9

Attack

American attack methods 9

Counter attack

Order for corps to counter attack, execution and failure
(reasons) 4

Terrain

Terrain unsuitable for defense 9

Transfer

Transfer of troop elements, Army group order to transfer
for ment
elements ~~XXXXX~~ committed elsewhere 5

Combat strength 6

Combat efficiency 2,6,9

Positions

Improvement of positions 2,3

Improvement of positions by civilian population 3

Organisation of troops (Assigned units) 1/2,6

Defense

Order to defend cannot be executed, reason 10

Terrain unsuitable for defense 9

Defense sector

Change of defense sector due to enemy pressure 4,5,6

Defense sector, too wide 6

Civilian population

Construction of positions by civilian population 3

HUMMEL

Allendorf

Oberst

12 Aug 45

MS # B-109

Report

on the Engagements of the 353 Infantry Division at the Sieg River
front from 23 Mar - 8 Apr 45.

Trans: Suelzenfass

Report
on the Engagements of the 353 Infantry Division at the Sieg-Front
from 23 Mar - 8 Apr 45

The report was made agree with the treatise of the Chief of Staff of the 5 'Panzer-Armee', Generalmajor v. Mellenthin.

A. Original Position.

I had taken over as deputy the command of the 353 Inf Div on 2 Mar 45. After the heavy fighting west of the Rhine, which had to be endured by the Division--most of all at the bridgehead south of Cologne--heavy casualties of men (eight per cent of the actual strength) and materiel (fifty per cent) had occurred. On the east bank of the Rhine, where the Division was employed as of 8 Mar to defend the line between Langel--confluence of Sieg and Rhine--Sieg to Buisdorf (east of Siegburg), it had been possible to reorganize and to reequip the Division to some extent; this reorganization process took place without any disturbance by the enemy, except for artillery harassing fire from the west bank of the Rhine.

The Division had the following organization on 23 Mar:

Divisional Staff

Signal Battalion (1 radio, 1 telephone company)

2 Infantry Regiments of 2 battalions each

each Infantry regiment: a) 1 Infantry gun company

(6 light guns (7.5 cm). 2 heavy guns (15 cm) had been subordinated to the artillery.

- b) 1 antiaircraft machine gun company,
12 machine guns (2 cm) for ground fighting.
- 1 Engineer battalion (2 engineer companies --newly formed)
- 1 Antitank battalion (2 companies (7,5 and 8,8 antitank guns)
- 1 Artillery Regiment consisting of 2 light battalions (10,5 cm)
and 1 heavy battalion (15 cm) (each battalion consisting of
3 batteries with 4 guns each)

Condition of the Troops on 23 Mar 45.

The fighting quality of these newly formed troops consisting of supply men, insufficiently trained replacements of the Siegburg district, and of 'Volkesturm' men was to be estimated very low. Only a few officers having combat experience and subordinate Commanders were at our disposal. Due to the great differences in the types and training of the men who were not at all ready for combat, the troops were also not fit for an attack which was again and again requested by the higher command. Armament and equipment had been procured from depots of the troops training grounds at Wahn.

The positions at the Rhine and Sieg fronts up to Buisdorf had been constructed in field strength until 23 Mar. Their improvement was being consecutively continued.

Siegburg and Friedrich Wilhelmshuette had been improved as local strong points. Improvement and defense were commanded by the acting commanding officer employed by the 'Heeresgruppe'.

Control of the works and training of the garrison was done under supervision of the Corps and the Division.

The garrisons consisted, without exception, of 'Volkssturm' units, to which only few trained and battle-trying officers and subordinate commanders could be assigned. The strength of each local strong point amounted to approximately 300 men.

The Sieg sector had been improved from the confluence of Sieg and Rhine up to Buisdorf by workmen of the Division and the civilian population, whereas the construction of barriers and blasting jobs were executed under supervision of the higher ranking engineer officers of the 'Heeresgruppe' or of the 'Armee'. The engineer battalion of the Division had to be made available for these works.

The Division was subordinated to the 58 Panzer Corps, this in turn to the 5 Panzer-Armee. Commanding General of the Corps: General of the Panzertruppe KRUEGER (see also comments to the sketch).

B. Engagements on and after 23 Mar. (see also sketch)

Since direct contact with the enemy had not yet taken place at the Rhine and Sieg fronts--i.e. from the mouth of the Sieg to Siegburg--but the overall situation had developed very unfavorably for the German forces committed south of the Sieg river, therefore, due to the American assault over Remagen, the Division was forced to enlarge toward the East along the Sieg. Therefore, the 353 Inf Div took over the sector from Buisdorf to Dondorf (half-way Blankenberg-Hennef)--see sketch--from the 62 Div which was still fighting east of Hennef, and south of the Sieg. In return, the 353 Div gave up to the 12 Volksgrenadierdivision the Rhine front up to the mouth of the Sieg. The divisional command post was displaced from Spich to Inger.

On 23 Mar, the Americans, hitherto still in the sector of the 82 Volksgrenadierdivision, had approached to the South of Doodorf as far as the Sieg. The 82 V.G.D. too, which was fighting south of Blankenberg, felt considerable enemy pressure. The 353 Div was ordered to attack the Americans while still south of the Sieg, and to beat them back. In execution of this order one regiment was detached while weakening the remaining front and committed for the attack toward the South on 24 Mar. However, the Division could not make any progress because the enemy pressure became stronger and stronger. Very difficult for this operation was the bringing up of supply, as there was only one bridge at Merten, whereas the bridge at Blankenberg and the railway bridges had already been demolished. Since really effective success was not being achieved at the neighboring Division to the left either and no further progress made, the regiment was again taken back across the Sieg on the night of 25 Mar.

On 27 Mar new changes took place again for the defensive sectors on the Sieg. The 353 Inf Div had to take over the sector up to Eitorf from the 82 V.G.D. In return it gave up the Sieg-front from the mouth of the Sieg river to the Rhine confluence up to Friedrich Wilhelmshütte, to the 3 Parachute Div. The latter had been forced to extend its frontline from the Cologne sector toward the south, because the 12 V.G.D. had been extracted by the Heeresgruppe from the Rhinefront and sent forward to the East to the American points of penetration in the Ruhr pocket. (The 12 V.G.D. was also committed on the Sieg, but further to the East.)

Starting on 28 Mar, the Americans tried to push on across the Sieg at Merten, Blankenberg, and Eitorf. Except for some minor gaps, the Sieg-front was still held. On 28 Mar, the divisional command post had been transferred to Hermerath, advanced divisional command post in a locality three kms north of Blankenberg. (See sketch.).

On 28 Mar, by order of the Heeresgruppe, the artillery of the Division (minus 1 battalion), the infantry regiment (minus 1 battalion), the antitank battalion (minus 1 company) were--platoon by platoon-- withdrawn from the front, and moved to the points of penetration in the encircled Ruhr pocket area and subordinated to other divisions. (The number of these divisions is no longer known.). First of all, the artillery still located near Siegburg and later on the artillery back of the Sieg-sector at Winterscheid was transferred. The artillery near Siegburg was replaced by the artillery of the 3 parachute Division. By 2 Apr, these changes were being carried through.

On 30 Mar, a new change had again taken place in the distribution of sectors. This time the division had to take over the Sieg sector from Siegburg (exclusive) to Wissen (exclusive). The 62 V.G.D. had again been moved toward the left, since the main pressure of the Americans came from the southeastern and eastern direction. The divisional command post was again moved to a village west of Heddinghausen.

Now, the Division had to defend a sector of 35 km, and for this task it had at its disposal:

1 Police battalion (2 companies) with no combat experience. These were employed east of Siegburg to approximately the Broelbrook.

- 3 Volksturm units (each had a strength of about 300 men)
- 1 Battalion of the Division (of a strength of about 250 men)
- 1 Artillery battalion (10.5 cm)
- 1 Antitank company
- 1 Engineer battalion (2 companies), which was not available

for defensive fight, since it was employed in constructing obstacles.

Because of the width of the sector, obstacles could only be constructed at the crossings over the Sieg and on big roads. The terrain between these could only be guarded by patrols.

Since the defense of the Sieg front, extending 35 km, could not be carried through with these small fighting forces, it was no wonder that an enemy like the Americans--having superior materiel as well as fighting power--continually achieved success in attacking. Therefore, points of penetration in the sector Blankenberg-Wissen could only be sealed off with great difficulty and no longer rectified by counter-thrusts.

By 8 Apr, the Americans had advanced on a wide front along the main roads, and his spearheads were now approaching Waldbroelbach.

At this moment, the divisional staff of the 353 Inf Div was relieved by the staff of the 59 Div, which, up to now, had commanded in the region of Siegen. The staff of the 353 Inf Div became a special construction staff and was moved to the region south of Wipperfuert.

The 353 Inf Div continued to fight with its remaining elements--from now on as 59 Div--until 13 Apr. On 13 Apr, the staff of the 59 Div was taken prisoner at Emminghausen (4 km south of Wermelskirchen) by Americans.

signed: HUMMEL
Colonel

MS # B-109

- 7 -

WAGENER

15 Aug 46

Generalmajor Chef of 'Heeresgruppe' B.

Report 353 Inf Div (Oberst HUMMEL)

Page 3: 12 'Volksgranadierdivision' was also committed on the Sieg
further to the East.

Supplement desired on: short estimate of the enemy (inclusive of
method of fighting and air situation), brief description of the terrain
(Sieg), morale of the troops, casualties, appointment to posts of divi-
sional staff, supply problems, state of mobility, attitude of the popu-
lation, summarizing estimate on the combat sector.

Very important.

signed: WAGENER

Most important signed: Bn.

Reviewed and OK 15 Jul 46.

SupplementSummarizing:

In all engagements it became obvious that every American attack-- even at very weak forces on the German side--was carried out with concentrated artillery fire and large use of ammunition. Moreover, in every case, tanks of the American infantry had cleared the way for the attack. Due to the effect of superior materiel, the fighting morale of soldiers and 'Volkssturm' men having only little combat training failed completely. Since the German front was thinly held, the casualties of wounded and dead was not even very high. The main losses were caused by the great number of men being captured.

At this time, the supply of the Division was still rather regular, since the warehouses (clothing, ammunition, armament) at Warm were at our disposal.

Mobility was still existing: Supplying and movement transports could be executed with the available fuel.

Part of the population, of course, objected to the fighting. It, nevertheless, assisted by providing for the troops in their quarters.

Estimate of Terrain: The Sieg River itself was no obstacle. It could be waded through by the infantry at many places where the banks were flat. More difficult for the defense with minor forces was the abundance of forests extending in the sector of the division.

Ia - Oberstleutnant im Generalstab WITTE

Summarizing Estimate on the Combat Sector

Owing to the width of the sector and the inferior forces at our disposal, the order to defend the region on the river Sieg to the last man, as well as later on the other defensive fronts, could not be executed.

signed: HUMMEL

MS # B-109

-a-

Skizze: 353.Inf.Div.

Heddinghen.

Zeit: 22.3.-8.4.1945.

Stanzenbach

Waldbroel

Inger

Hermerath

Spich

Troisdorf Siegburg

Wissen

Sieg

Buisdorf

Broel-B.

Sieg

Rhein

ab 27.3.

Stromberg

Blankenberg

nach Karte 1:100 000 Koeln u. Siegen.

Erlaeuterungen.

Zeitabschnitte

8.3.-22.3.45 (rechts 12.V.G.D., links 62.V.G.Div.)

23.3.-26.3.45 (rechts 12.V.G.D. - ab 27.3. 3.Fallsch.Jgr.Div.-
links 62.V.G.D.)

27.3.-29.3. (rechts 3.Fallsch.Jgr.Div., links 62.V.G.D.)

ab 30.3. (rechts 3.Fallsch.Jgr.Div., links 62.V.G.D.)

Div.Gef.Stand in der ~~entsprechenden~~ teiligen Farbe des Verteidigungs-Abschnittes.
vorgeschobener Div.Gef. stand.

Unterstellungsverhaeltnis.

bis 23.3. 58.Pz.Korps General d.Pz.Truppe Krueger

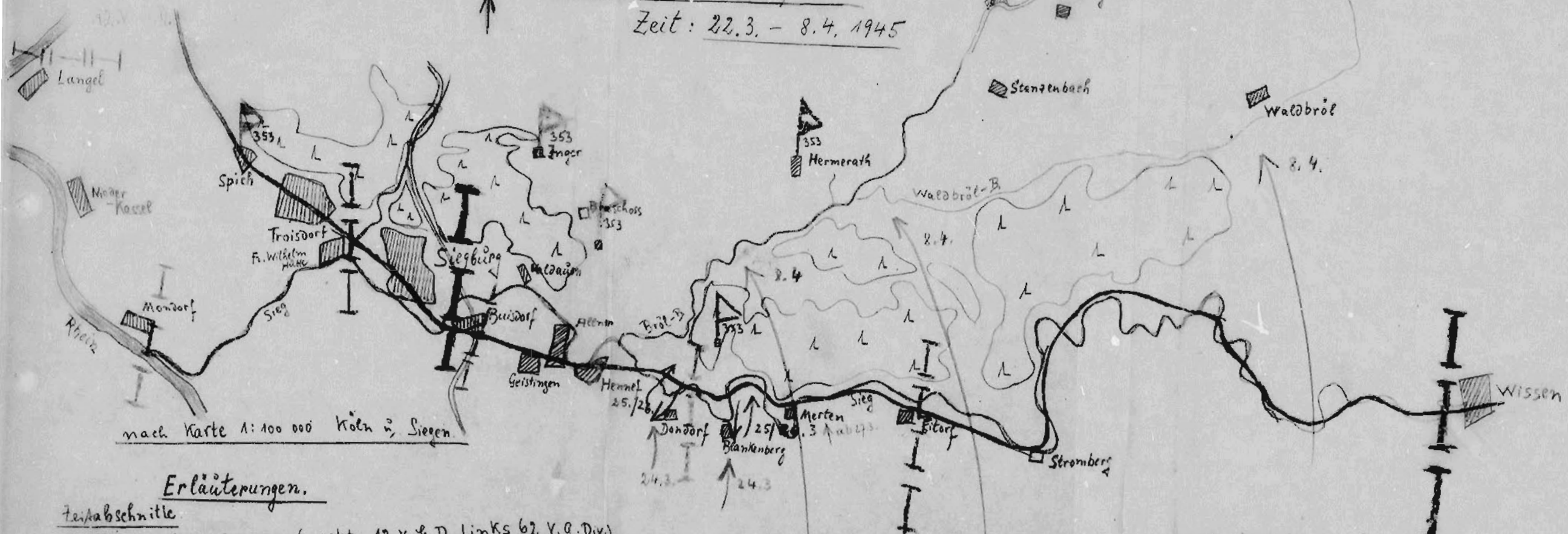
ab 24.3. " Generalltn. Botsch

ab 30.3. 81.Korps General d.Inf. Koechling.



SKIZZE: 353. Inf.-Dir.

Zeit: 22.3. - 8.4. 1945



nach Karte 1:100 000 Köln - Siegen

Erläuterungen.

Zeitabschnitte

- 8.3. - 22.3.45 (rechts 12. v. G. D., links 62. v. G. Div.)
- 23.3. - 26.3.45 (rechts 12. v. G. D. - ab 27.3. 3. Fallsch. Jgr. Div. - links 62. v. G. D.)
- 27.3. - 29.3. (rechts 3. Fallsch. Jgr. Div., links 62. v. G. D.)
- (rechts 3. Fallsch. Jgr. Div., links 62. v. G. D.)

- Div. Gef. Stand in der jeweiligen Farbe des Verteidigungs- Abschnittes.
- vorgeschobener Div. Gef. Stand.

Unterstellungsverhältnis.

bis 28.3.	58. Pz Korps	General d. Pz. Truppe Krüger
ab 24.3.	"	Generalleh. Pösch
ab 30.3.	81. Korps	General d. Inf. Köchling

Spumel