

UNCLASSIFIED

U.S. ARMY MILITARY HISTORY INSTITUTE

MS # B-230

D  
739  
.F6713  
no  
.B-230  
Fgn MS



English Copy

708TH INFANTRY DIVISION

(10-19 Aug 1944)

**RECORD COPY**

TO BE RETIRED WHEN NO LONGER NEEDED

HISTORICAL DIVISION  
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES ARMY, EUROPE  
FOREIGN MILITARY STUDIES BRANCH

PROPERTY OF US ARMY.

MS No. B-230

GERLOCH, Bruno

12 October 1946

Oberst

31 6/5, 140331

40100  
90782555

R E P O R T

About the Battles of the 708. Infantry Division during the Period  
from the 10. to 19. 6. 1944 in Normandy.

Translated by: Fred Wartell

Reportabout the Battles of the 708. Infantry Division during  
the Period from the 10 - 19. 8. 1944 in Normandy.

On the 6.8, 1944 I arrived as Artillery Commander 117 at the LXXXI. A.K. coming from Cantaleu (near Rouen) over Paris in Normandy. I had not been committed as Artillery Commander.

On the 9.8 in the afternoon I received an order from the A.K. to take command of the 708 Inf. Div. until further notice.

10.8.44: Situation of the 708.I.D. at the time I took command (see sketch). Troops on the division's front line: 1 km. west of Domfront, about one company of dispersed elements of all types of arms.

On the Dom front, 1 landconstruction engineer battalion with very little fighting strength (stomach troubles, deaf, one-eyed, and people with artificial limbs). The vicinity to the south of the Dom front to about Cigne was held by the armored reconnaissance battalion. (Pz.A.A.9).

Adjoining this outfit in the vicinity of Ambrieres was a battalion assembled of dispersed elements of all types of arms.

To the north of Mayenne to the boundary line of the left division, 1 infantry regiment (later the two infantry regiments of the Division). The missing infantry regiment was in a pocket behind the American lines. These were Infantry Regiments Nos. 728 and 748.

The Division possessed only 2½ batteries of artillery, of which 2 batteries were mounted and ½ motorized. (9.Pz.Div.?) Our own artillery Regiment No. 1708. On the Donfront were 3 - 8, 8-cm. antiaircraft guns and 2 2-cm. antiaircraft guns. Armor-piercing weapons were only scarcely available with the infantry regiments. On the whole front line we had only a few bazookas (about 5 or 6).

On 10 - 11 August 1944 the situation remained unchanged.

On 11 August the infantry regiment that had been locked in behind the American lines returned in closed ranks (Commander Obst v. Wisben).

On the night of the 11.8. the left flank of the division had to be withdrawn because the left neighbor was moving back (9.Pz.Div.); this opened the left flank of the 708 Infantry Division.

The returned infantry regiment is committed at the left flank of the Division.

3 enemy tanks were disabled.

Telephone communication to the individual Staffs of the forces of the Division functioned only partly and was very often disturbed. Radio contact was maintained.

12.8.44: No contact to the left to the 9 Pz. Div.

Radio communication by the 9.Pz.Div. to the 708 Inf.Div. on the night at 2400, that the 9.Pz.Div. had to be withdrawn further to the line, road Fre en Pail - Alencon.

No radio contact to the LXXXI.A.K. since the 11.8. Telephone contact was already broken previously and therefore I decided to

withdraw the whole 708. Inf. Div. to the line Domfront - Pré en Pail.  
This movement had still to be completed during the night of the 12.8.

13.8.44. Only parts of the Division arrived at the given line  
since American armored forces followed close behind.

Enemy tanks attack the Domfront; the garrison withdraws to the  
heights 214 and 201 to the northern edge of the city.

The security line of the 9. Pz. AA. constructed near Perrouse  
is penetrated to the north by the enemy.

At noon Carrouges is taken by the enemy. Continued strong enemy  
pressure against the 708. Inf. Div.

14.8.44. Under enemy pressure own forces retreat to the line  
La Haute Chapelle (north of the Domfront) - La Ferte Macé - Bagnolles.  
At 16.30 enemy tanks break through into La Ferte Macé, also into La  
Sauvagère.

The whole 708 Inf. Div has now only very weak elements available.

The 708. I. D. is subordinated to the LVIII Pz. Corps.

15.8. Right flank of the Div. 3 km. southwest Dompierre on the  
Heights 226. During the night of the 14.8. the 708 Inf. Div. was to  
relieve the 10. SS. Div; considering the weak elements of the 708. I. D.  
this seemed impossible. Therefore the Corps cancelled this order.

Remnants of 2 battalions of the 708. I. D. undertake a counter-  
thrust from Faverolles at Lonlay. La Coulonge and eastwards of it -  
Lonlay le Tessin - is covered by the Pz. AA. 9.

Pz. AA. 9. is immobile as there is no gasoline. There is no  
gasoline available anywhere.

The battle strength of the Division has been reduced to 60 men.

The enemy continues his attacks on both sides of the road Domfront - La Chatellier. The heights 249 and 231 (1 km. southeastwards St. Romer les Forges) were occupied by the enemy.

16.8.44. Advance patrols of the enemy reached Le Menil le Briouze.

The Division receives an order from the LVIII.Pz.Corps to transfer its remaining infantry forces to the 10th SS. Division. The 2 batteries are subordinated to the 352d Infantry Division. The Staff of the Division takes over regulation of traffic at the road crossing in Fromental and at the Orne-bridges near St. Croix, Palanges and Mesnil-Mermei. This action completely dissolves the 708th Inf.Div.

During the night Fromental and all the Orne-bridges came under enemy harassing fire. Nevertheless continuous river crossings by our own troops over the bridges are still taking place; even early and during the forenoon of the 17.8.

17.8. During the night of the 17.8 no further crossings over the Orne bridges by our own troops are taking place. The bridge officers committed there did not any more return to the Div.Staff.

18.8.44. In the morning of the 18.8. the road west of Trun was jammed with vehicles of all kinds. The Div.Staff 708 bogged down at that point and was forced to seek shelter in a small forest near the road. With dawn approaching the road was attacked by

Jabo's and the vehicles were set on fire. During the forenoon Trun was captured by the Canadians advancing from the north.

During the night of the 18th.8. the Div. Staff started a forced march by foot in order to escape to the south of Trun. On the 19.8. early at 0800, while resting at Magny, the Staff was captured by Canadians after having gone astray during the whole night.

Supplementary: Beginning of August the Division was ordered to move from Southern France near the vicinity of the mouth of the Gironde, where it had been committed to coastal defense duty, to Normandy.

Only 2 batteries of the artillery regiment of the Division were able to reach the duty sector. Part of the batteries were overtaken by American tanks while marching to the front south of the Loire. The fate of the rest of the artillery regiments was unknown.

For the most part the howsers of the Division were also either on the march or being transported to the front. Nobody knew anything about their whereabouts.

Signed: GWRLOCH.

Enclosed: 1 sketch.

Om fronts: 708.I.D. from 9.-15.8.lh

Mortain

14. and 15. VIII.

13.VIII.

Donfront

La Porte Mace

13.VIII.

9.-12.VIII.lh

Pré en Pail

Villaines

Mayerne

12.VIII.lh