

Battle of Hatten-Rittershoffen during Operation Nordwind: Alsace, eastern France January 1945



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Cover: Shermans from 48th Tank Battalion advancing from Rittershoffen towards Hatten on 9 January 1945 (NARA)

BATTLE OF HATTEN-RITTERSHOFFEN DURING OPERATION NORDWIND: JANUARY 1945

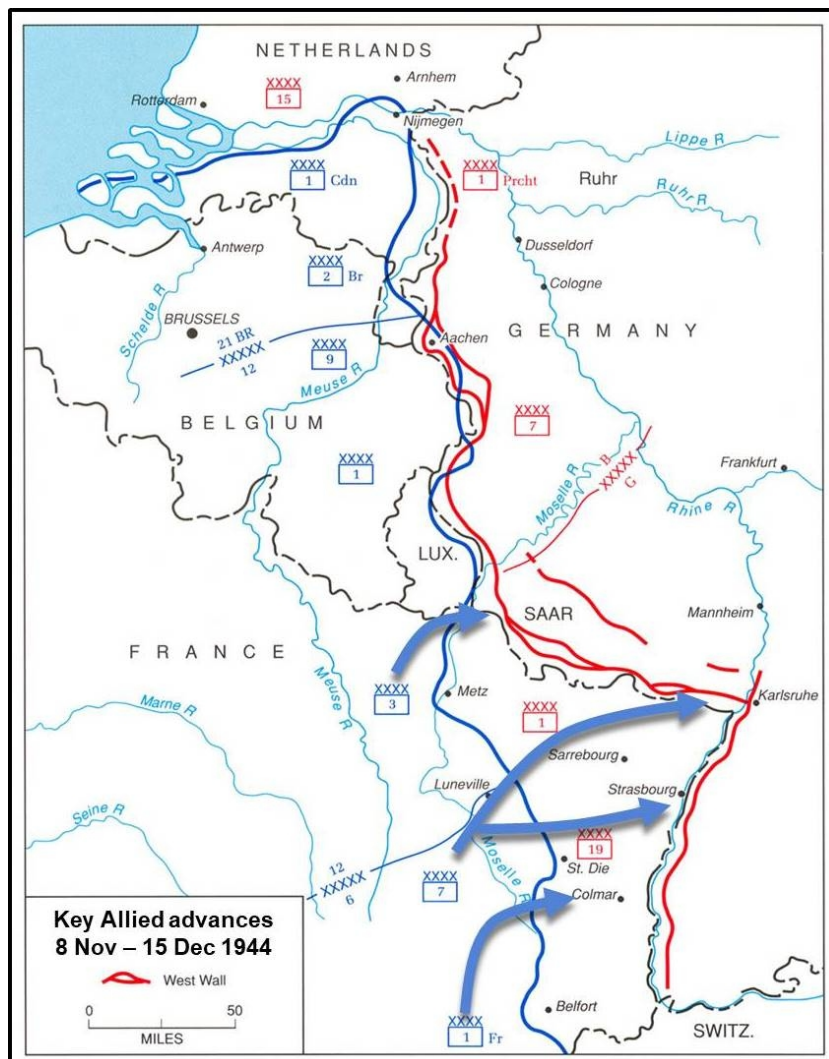
OPERATION NORDWIND

Operation Nordwind strategic background: Alsace province, France – late 1944

Operation Nordwind, the ambitious German campaign during January 1945 to trap the US 7th Army in the upper reaches of the French province of Alsace, had its origins as a result of the offensive Allied operations over the six weeks to mid-December 1944. During this period, the 6th Army Group of General Devers (*left*), consisting of the 7th Army and the 1st French Army led by General de Lattre, pushed aggressively north of the large French city of Strasbourg. The US Army moved deeper into Alsace and the French forces focused on reducing the Colmar pocket further to the south.



This axis of advance created a prominent bulge in frontline, with US units from the 7th Army occupying the towns at its most north-westerly tip where the Rhine River meets the east-west running Lauter River (*below*). The successful offensive operations by US forces in Alsace began to ease by mid-December, while French efforts against the Colmar pocket ground to a halt.



Defending this extended front would prove more problematic. On 16 December, the German launched Operation Watch on the Rhine (often referred to in English-speaking countries as the 'Battle of the Bulge'), and the more well-known German counter-offensive through the Ardennes, forced US generals to realign key units. To the west of 7th Army commanded by General Patch (left) was the 3rd Army led by General Patton. As the German Ardennes campaign during late December continued to enjoy success, Patton's men were ordered northwards to slow the advance.



In response, the 7th Army had to occupy positions further to the west to cover for the 3rd Army units as they departed northwards towards the Ardennes. The defence of the 'bulge' for Patch's units became thinner, with six infantry divisions guarding a 200 kilometer front across the Alsace province. Further, supplies were prioritised away from this front towards the defence of the Ardennes campaign. To compound this situation, the neighbouring First French Army had to redeploy key divisions to west France as part of Operation Independence, the campaign to clear this part of the country from residual German occupation elements.

After the first week of the Ardennes campaign, the German advance began to slow and German High Command began to look for '*operational alternatives*' (Clarke p493). After several days of discussions, the German commanders settled on Operation Nordwind, consisting of two main thrusts against the northern portion of 'bulge' of the US defensive positions in Alsace, and a mobile reserve of panzers ready to take advantage of any success. The overall goal of the plan was ambitious, which included the recapture of large portion of Alsace and the potential trapping of



large portions of the US 7th Army. Commencing around 1 January 1945, the proposed German offensive would be conducted by the *First Army* led by Gen von Obstfelder (left), with the first thrust targeting the Sarre Valley and, soon afterwards, the second thrust through the more mountainous area in the Low Vosges. A smaller attack would occur just north of Strasbourg against US 7th Army units guarding the east portion of the front line, if the initial thrust was successful.

In the week leading up to Nordwind, US intelligence revealed a build-up in German forces in front of the 7th Army. Additional, and highly accurate, intelligence was also gathered through ULTRA, the Allied capability against German military signals encoded through the Enigma machine. It would be unlikely the Allied forces would enjoy much respite after Christmas 1944 (*below*).



**Christmas celebrations, Alsace, 1944
(History of the 79th)**

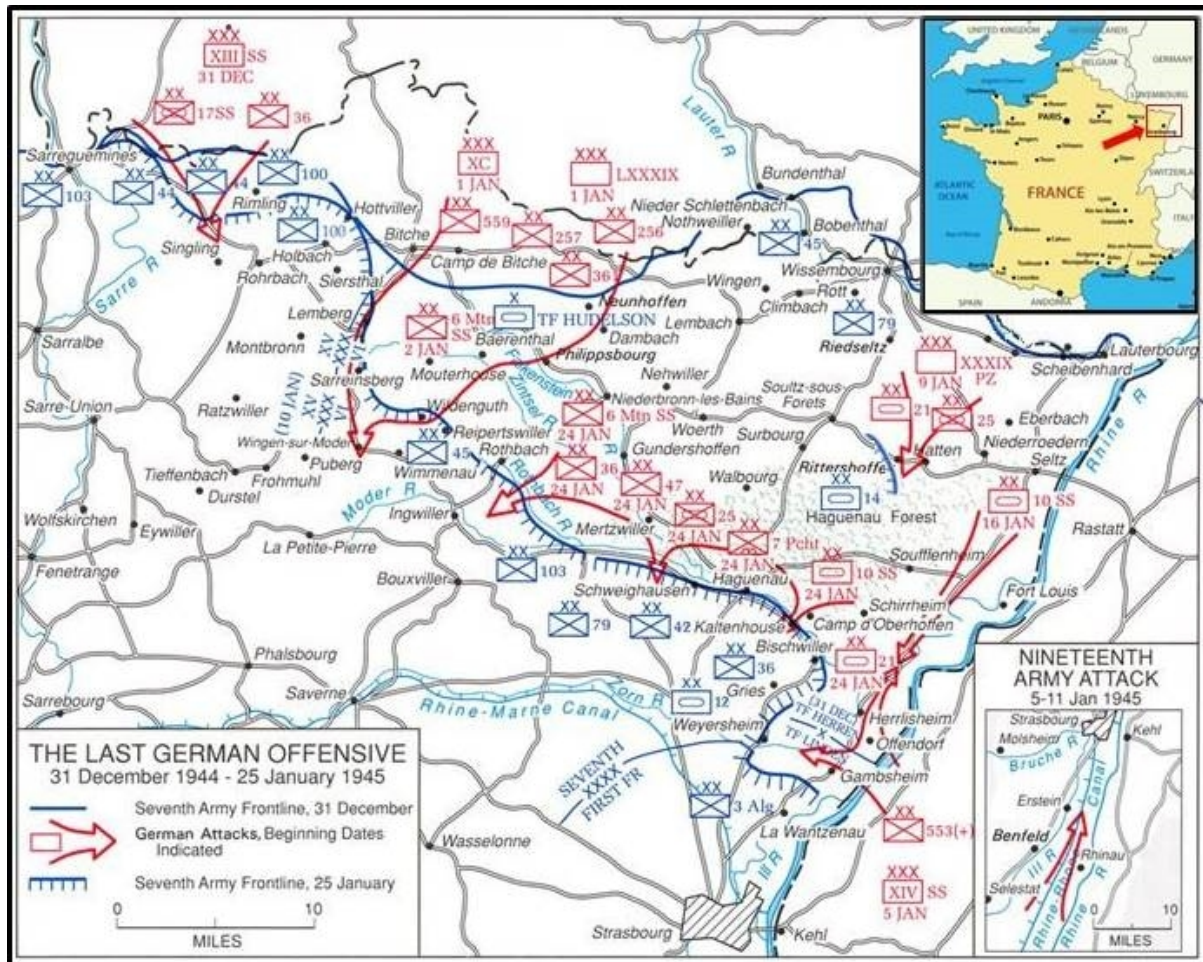
General Eisenhower became nervous. Strong German units still occupied the Ardennes which required attention, the 'bulge' in Patch's defence in the Alsace was guarded by a thinned out force and German forces were building up against them. On 28 December, a highly contentious plan was formulated by SHAEF, the senior Allied command body, which almost immediately became a huge political issue. Eisenhower strongly considered pulling back the whole of the 6th Army Group in response to the German build up for Nordwind, including abandoning Strasbourg, the second largest French city.

The French senior commanders, including those from the First French Army currently guarding Strasbourg, objected virulently and even threatened to pull out of the SHAEF command structure altogether. US commanders on the ground in Alsace supported French concerns. They did not want to abandon Strasbourg and, just as importantly, did not want to give up solid defensive positions in northern Alsace, that included portions of the Maginot Line. These positions were hard won during the northern sweep in the earlier part of December 1944.

The political angst and the ensuing confusion worked to the advantage of Dever's 6th Army Group. In the end no formal orders to withdraw were issued by Eisenhower through SHAEF. By the time Nordwind commenced, the US defence, although thin in parts, was well prepared and committed to defend the terrain they occupied. However, US divisions available in reserve for the 7th Army were being shuffled around and untested infantry units were being rushed from Marseille to the anticipated battlefield without supporting elements, such as artillery and armor. Fortunately for the Allies, the Germans were also shuffling elements of units across the battlefield up to the launch of Nordwind and reinforcements and replacement continued to arrive in an ad hoc manner.

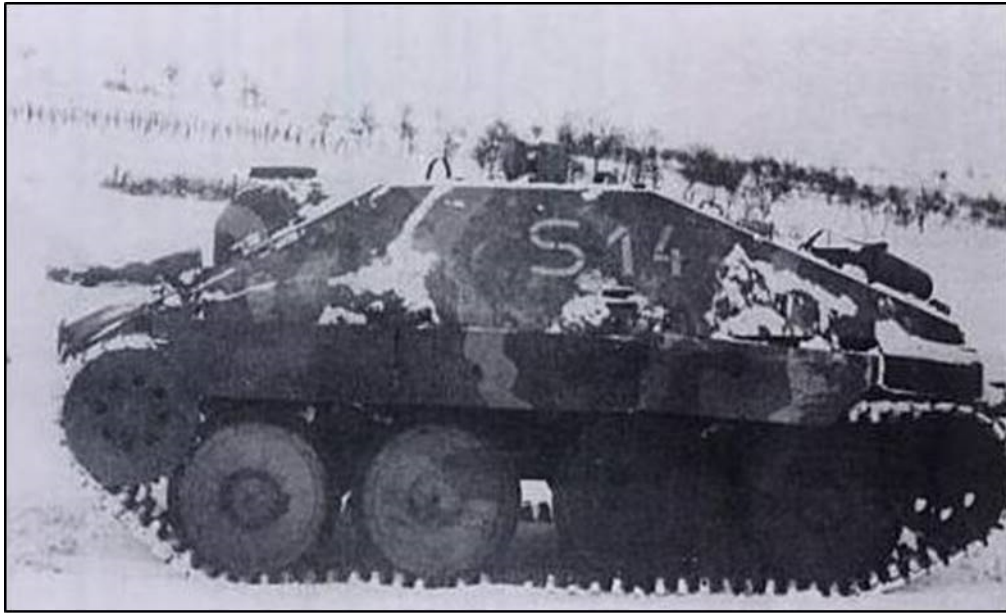
Nordwind – initial assault on New Year's Eve

As anticipated, during the early hours of New Year's Eve, the initial German *First Army* thrust came through the Sarre Valley on the left flank on the 7th Army, to the west of the mountainous Low Vosges (*below*). The attack was consisted of the 17th SS Panzer-Grenadier and 36th Volksgrenadier Divisions.



(Original map: Clarke p506)

These German units were supplemented by super heavy tank destroyers 'JagdTigers', Hetzer 'Flamm-Panzers' (*below*) and an extra company of Panthers seconded from the 21st Panzer Division. Many of the SS troops appeared drunk and attacked the well-prepared US positions manned by elements of the 44th and 100th Infantry Division in 'suicidal open waves'. (Clarke p505)



Flamm-panzer, January 1945 (NARA)

The initial ferocity of the attack, supplemented by additional supporting armored units, forced the defending Americans back a few kilometres and opened up a small gap in the defences. However, after few days of fighting, the American defence solidified and the Germans called off their efforts on this portion of the Alsace battlefield. Without a solid breakthrough, the German *First Army* did not commit its armored reserve in the form of the *XXXIX Panzer Corp*, consisting of the *21st Panzer* and *25th Panzergrenadier Divisions*. A senior German commander overseeing the assault '*caustically observe, the Sarre assault had shown only that the German soldier still knew how to fight and how to die, but little else*'. (Clarke p505)

Nordwind – through the mountainous Low Vosges in early January 1945

The second German effort started late on 1 January was well concealed and better prepared. It targeted a portion of the US 7th Army the American defenders did not anticipate, the mountainous Low Vosges. Between the villages of Bitche and Neunhoffen, four *Volksgrrenadier* Divisions advanced during 1 January. The mountainous region was the defended by a taskforce led by Colonel Hudelson (*right*) and consisted of only a screening force of armored reconnaissance and armored infantry. These men, from the 14th Armored Division, were ill-suited to operating in this type of terrain and to the task of defending.



Through the Low Vosges mountain passes and forests, the Germans made greater progress than their more westerly counterparts who earlier attempted to punch their way through the Sarre Valley. The attack was supplemented by the elite *6th SS Mountain Division*, relatively fresh from its long transfer from the Finnish front. The screening elements of Taskforce Hudelson did little to delay the German infantry advance and abandoned a number of vehicles during its retreat. The Germans sorted to gain access to the village at the base of the southern portion of the Low Vosges to enable the *panzer* reserves access to the Alsace plains beyond.

By 5 January, a mixture of American infantry units from the 45th and 79th Infantry Division (*symbol right*) had been rush to this area in and around the Lower Vosges. A number of



local counterattacks by the US units managed to bottle up the Germans and the Axis forces were unable to secure a route out of the Low Vosges. On 7 January, the 6th SS Mountain Division was fought to a standstill at the village of Wingen. The German *First Army* would have to look elsewhere to secure their breakthrough.

Nordwind – eastern probe across the Rhine in early January 1945

With the left flank of the US 7th Army relatively secure, German attention turned to the US right flank north of Strasbourg. The Germans probed from bridgeheads on the west bank of the Rhine towards the towns of Gamsheim, Herrlisheim and Offendorf. The Americans were forced to counter with one of the two mobile reserves, the inexperienced 12th Armored Division (*below*). This unit did not fare very well, but managed to slow the German probe over four days of fighting.



12th Armored Division – Alsace province, January 1945 (NARA)

Nordwind – the battle for Hatten-Rittershoffen during mid-January 1945

During the first week of January, the Germans had not obtained the breakthrough they planned to enable their armored reserves to exploit. However, they were aware that the three previous thrusts had greatly reduced north-easterly American defences along the Lauter River between Lauterbourg through to Wissembourg. On 7 January, permission was given to release the reserves, the XXXIX Panzer Corp commanded by General Decker (*left*), to push through this area. The goal was to sweep aside the weakened Americans and to manoeuvre through the gap to the west of the Haguenau Forest and to the east of mountains of the Low Vosges towards Saverne. Standing in the German way was an American defence anchored on a handful of French villages, including the neighbouring villages of Hatten and Rittershoffen (hereafter 'Hatten-Rittershoffen').



The US 7th Army guarding the Lauter River were well intermingled and consisted of infantry from the inexperienced 42nd Infantry Division and the experienced 79th Infantry Divisions. They fell back from the German *panzers* from the villages of Aschbach-Stundwiller on 7 January and began to solidify at

the village of Oberroedern, just a mile north of Hatten-Rittershoffen. Oberroedern was the scene of a single day of fierce fighting on 8 January. A number of German *Panthers* were destroyed or damaged (*below*) through the valiant defence of the 3rd Battalion, 313rd Infantry Regiment from the 79th Infantry Division. This effort earned the battalion a Presidential Unit Citation.



Panther, Alsace - January 1945 (History of the 21st Panzer)



US defensive positions were also set up in and around Hatten-Rittershoffen by the inexperienced men from the 42nd 'Rainbow' Infantry Division (*symbol left*). After the failed attack at Oberroedern, it became clear a significant German effort would now center on these villages. The American defences from the Rainbow men were forced operate thinly across a wide front but were helped by the presence of Maginot Line fortifications located to the east of Hatten.

With the US defences stretched and the main German thrust being delivered, the US 7th Army committed its final reserve, the 14th Armored Division and a handful of battalions from the 79th Infantry Division, to this sector (*below*).



Rittershoffen, January 1945
(History of the 79th)

The battle over Hatten-Rittershoffen was fought in two stages, each roughly a week long. The first stage, from 7 to 13 January, the *panzers* and *panzergrenadiers* from the XXXIX Panzer Corp fought aggressively to obtain the breakthrough. The villages were held by, at times, by largely isolated American infantry battalions from the 42nd and 79th Infantry Divisions and supported by the counter-attacking tanks and armored infantry from the 14th Armored Division (*symbol right*). The first stage was marked by thrust and counter-thrust from mobile elements of each side and tanks losses were severe (*below*). The second stage, from 14 to 20 January, was more a war of attrition. German *panzergrenadiers* moved to the defensive and a fresh regiment from the 7th Fallschirmjäger Division provided the main effort. Increasing concentrations of artillery were brought into the engagement as more divisional supporting elements committed to the fray.



By 20 January large portions of Hatten-Rittershoffen were in ruins. Both sides were exhausted and the American began to pull back southwards 15 kilometres to the Rothbach River. This position was anchored by the town of Haguenau and the surrounding forest.



MarkIV, Hatten, January 1945 (Patton Museum)



M18 'Hellcat' & Sherman, Hatten, January 1945 (NARA)

During the battle for Hatten-Rittershoffen Germans often used jet-propelled aircraft in bombing runs in this sector. An American anti-aircraft unit from the 79th Infantry Division was credited with the first ground-based unit to bring down a jet plane (*below*).

'For the past week enemy aircraft had been very active over the Division sector; bombing and strafing small towns and main roads immediately back of the Division's front lines. A large number of these sorties were made by the new German jet-propelled ME-262 plane. These swift, silent planes presented an exceptionally difficult target for our gunners. Their tremendous speed made it almost impossible to track them in the guns' sights. However, on January 13th, the 463rd Anti-Aircraft Battalion had the distinction of being the first anti-aircraft battalion to officially down a jet propelled plane'

History of the 79th Infantry Division (p101)



Anti-aircraft battalion, Alsace, 1945 (History of the 79th)

Nordwind – the final German thrust towards Haguenau in late January 1945

The Germans attempted one last effort against the US 7th Army during late January. The final German reserve, the 10th SS Panzer Division (*symbol left*), was released to engage the Americans on 16 January. Positioned on the west bank of the Rhine in the vicinity of Gamsheim, the SS *panzers* met the US 12th Armored Division head on. Again the US tankers lost heavily, their second defeat in this campaign and were forced to retreat.



Sherman, Herrlisheim, January 1945 (MHI)

Now well into the third week of Nordwind, the German pressed their advantage on the right flank of the US 7th Army. However, the pull back of the American line to Haguenau and the Rothbach River had greatly improved the defending unit density. The local numerical advantage the Germans had enjoyed disappeared by the fourth week of the campaign. The final main German thrust on 24 January in the vicinity of Haguenau (*below*) was repulsed, effectively ending the Nordwind.



10th SS Panzer Division (German archives)



42nd Infantry Division, Hagenau, late January 1945 (History of the 42nd)

BATTLE OF HATTEN-RITTERSHOFFEN

Hatten-Rittershoffen: the lead-in

The main German *panzer* reserve was released into action during the second week of Nordwind. The 21st Panzer Division (symbol left) from this reserve initially probed for weakness in the thinly held US lines around the villages of Stundwiller and Oberroedern in the north-easterly sector. The attack against Oberroedern was successfully rebuked by the 3rd Battalion, 313rd Infantry Regiment. Their actions earned the unit a Presidential Unit Citation. German efforts then settled on attacking the neighbouring villages of Hatten and Rittershoffen (hereafter 'Hatten-Rittershoffen'), located just to the south of Oberroedern.



The more easterly of the villages, Hatten, was guarded by the men of 1st Battalion, 242nd Infantry Regiment. This regiment was part of the inexperienced 42nd Infantry Division, who had only been in France for a handful of weeks and had barely seen any combat. For the initial thrust into Hatten, the German allocated men from the 25th Panzergrenadier Division (symbol left), a unit whose combat strength was little more than a brigade but did contain a strong armored component.



During late 8 January, the *panzergrenadiers* probed the Hatten defences and softened the village up with artillery. From the US perspective, A Company and B Company manned Maginot Line positions to the east of the Hatten and C Company stood in reserve in the village proper. They were spread across a broad frontage and the US lines were thin. The 1st Battalion command post from the 242nd Infantry occupied a house near the main church of Hatten.

The initial German push into Hatten and the Maginot Line positions just to the west of the village, came from *Kampfgruppe Proll*, a largely unarmored unit, and *Kampfgruppe Huss*, a fully armored unit. These two *kampfgruppen* were all drawn from the 25th Panzergrenadier Division.

The 14th Armored Division was assigned to help counter this new threat and their Shermans were sent to Hatten-Rittershoffen.



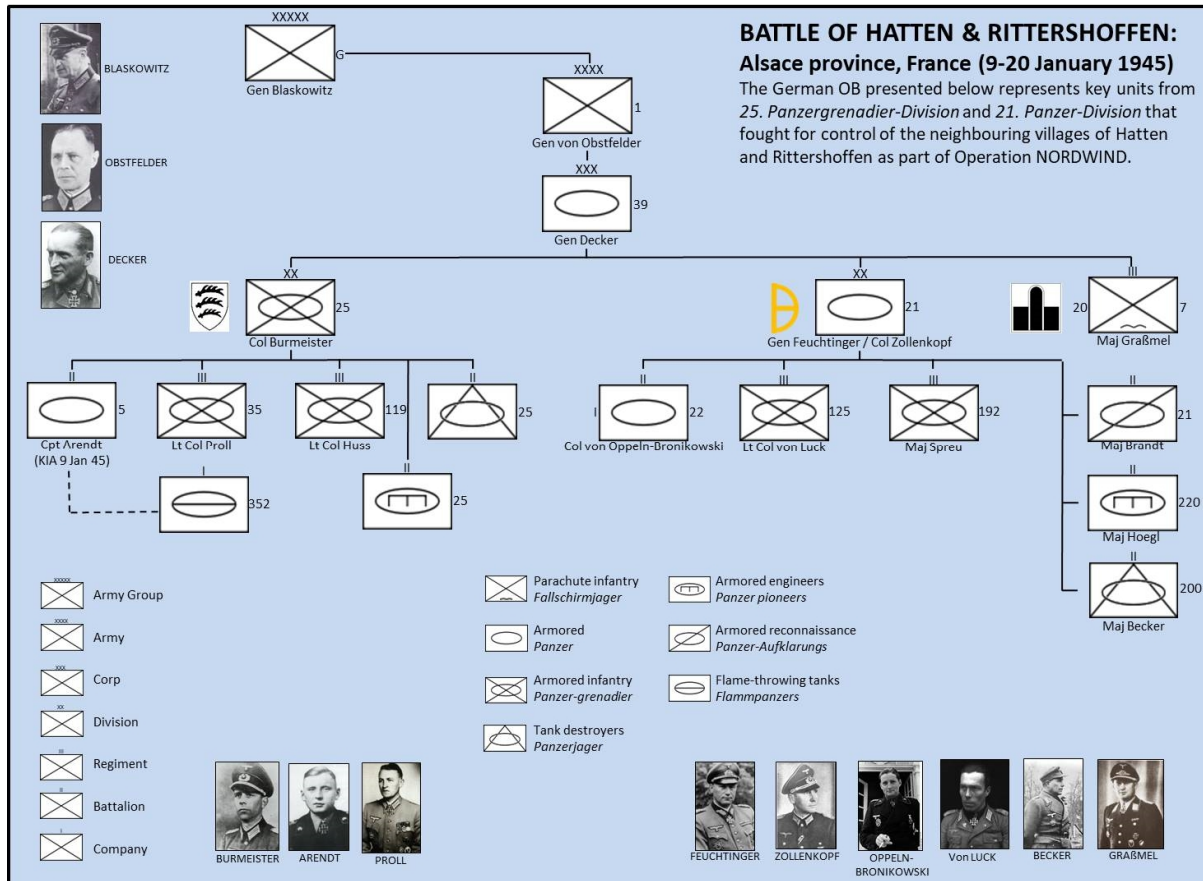
Alsace - January 1945 (History of the 14thAD)







Alsace - January 1945 (History of the 14thAD)

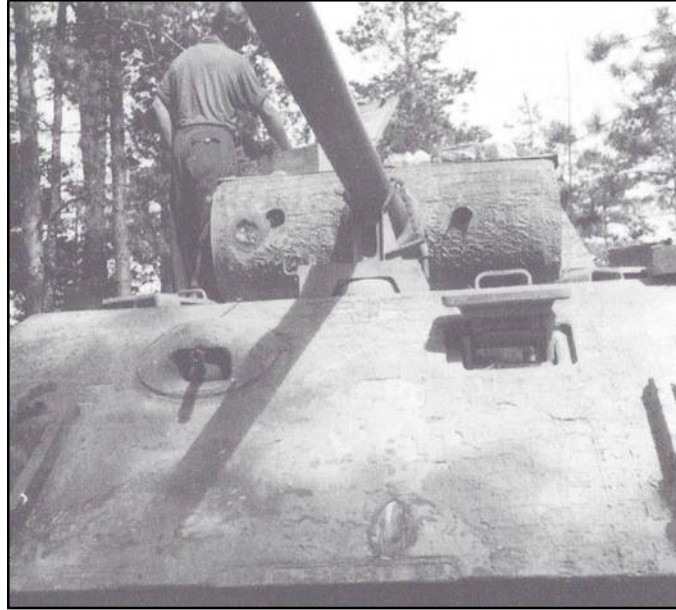
Hatten-Rittershoffen: German Order of Battle

During the first week of the Battle of Hatten-Rittershoffen, the main German units were drawn from the 21st Panzer and 25th Panzergrenadier Division. During the second week, an additional parachute regiment from the 7th Fallschirmjager Division reinforced German efforts against the villages.

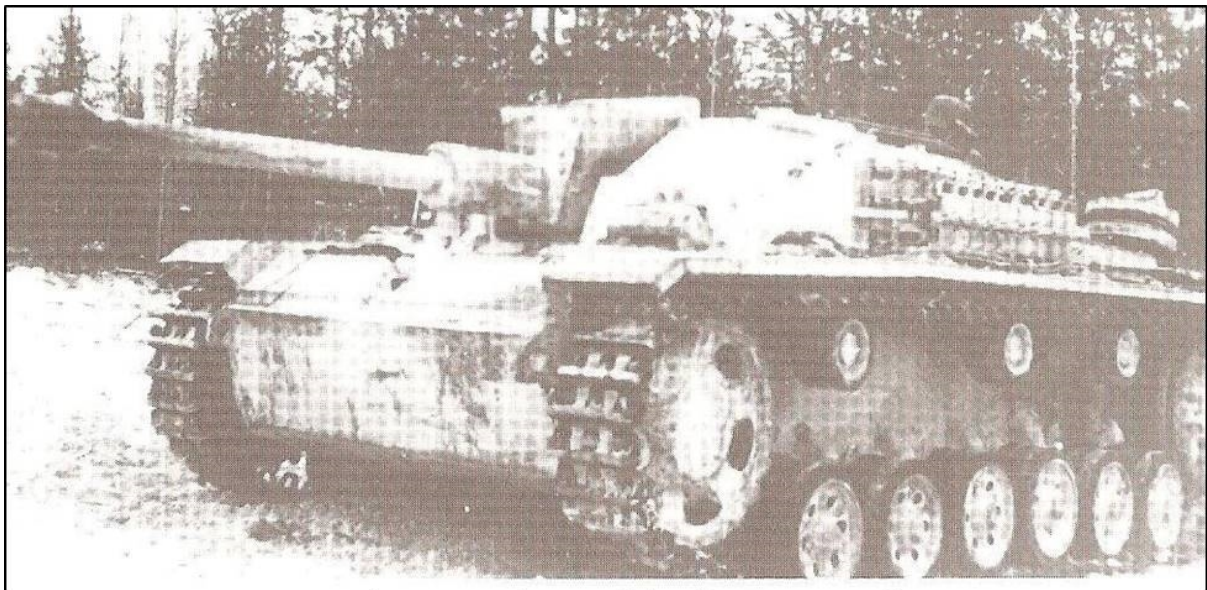


UNIT /SUB-UNITS	
<p>25TH PANZERGRENAДИER DIVISION</p> 	<p>Commanding officer: Colonel Burmeister</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authorised strength was little more than a brigade at approximately 6500 personnel • Just prior to the commencement of Nordwind, late-war replacements brought the unit close to the personnel number • Very limited artillery support with the regiment missing up to three of its four battalions and this unit not being brought up to strength until February 1945 • Armored units, including an attached <i>flamm-panzer</i> company, used to spearhead the assault into both Hatten (9 January) and neighbouring Rittershoffen (11 January)





<p>5TH PANZER BATTALION</p> 	<p>Commanding officer: Cpt Arendt (KIA - 9 January)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was the part of the armored punch that helped to break into Hatten (9 January) and Rittershoffen (11 January) • Early January reinforcements indicated this unit was reinforced with up to two full companies of <i>Panthers</i> (approximately 36) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ However, battlefield reports suggests that it was probably equipped with one company of <i>Panthers</i> and one company of <i>Panzer IVs</i> • The 4th Company consisted of 10 <i>Jagdpanzer IVs</i> • Missing one company of <i>panzers</i> (the 3rd), but the unit was well equipped with supporting softskin vehicles
<p>35TH PANZERGRENADIER REGIMENT</p> 	<p>Commanding officer: Lt Colonel Proll</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fought in Hatten and was utilised extensively in the initial assault against the Maginot Line positions and took heavy casualties • Missing one out of three battalions (the 2nd) • 1st Battalion equipped with unarmored vehicles • 3rd Battalion equipped with bicycles • 1st and 3rd Battalion were understrength <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ These units suffered large casualties taking Maginot Line positions during the early 9 January and were assigned a defensive role during battle ○ Only 100 men survived from 1st Battalion assault Casemates to the west of Hatten and Hatten itself
<p>119TH PANZERGRENADIER REGIMENT</p>	<p>Commanding officer: Lt Colonel Huss</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was the armored infantry punch that helped to break into Hatten (9 January) and Rittershoffen (11 January) • 1st Battalion was close to fully equipment with armored personnel carriers (111 allocated out of a theoretical total of 132), with the bulk of the unit consisting of men formerly assigned to <i>Panzer Brigade 107</i> • 2nd Battalion was hastily recruited in the lead up to Nordwind and consisted a lightly trained late-war replacements and only softskin vehicles; they lost many men assaulting Casement #2 located to the south-east of Hatten on the morning of 9 January • 3rd Battalion was missing
<p>25TH PANZERJAGER BATTALION</p>	<p>Commanding officer: Not known</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supported the unarmored <i>Kampfgruppe Proll</i> during their initial assault into Hatten • By early January, reinforcements increased the unit to probably a company of 17 <i>Stug IIIs</i>, a reduced company of 12 <i>Jagdpanzer IVs</i> • The 3rd company consisted of up to nine towed Pak 40 guns (75mm)




**Panther, late 1944
(History of the 5th Panzer Battalion)**



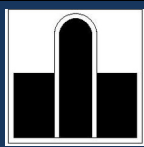

StugIII, late 1944 (History of the 5th Panzer Battalion)

UNIT /SUB-UNITS	
<p>21ST PANZER DIVISION</p> 	<p>Commanding officer: General Feuchtinger (left) / Colonel Zollenkopf (right)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The unit was 2,500 short of its authorised strength of 14,600 personnel • Crucially the unit lacked a second panzer battalion and did not have any one of its four <i>panzergrenadier</i> battalions equipped with armored personnel carriers • The <i>panzer</i> reconnaissance battalion was well equipped in terms of personnel and fighting vehicles • The artillery regiment possessed three of its four artillery battalions • General Feuchtinger was often missing during this period in rear areas and was arrested in late January 1945 and charged with dereliction of duty. Colonel Zollenkopf has been assessed as the actual divisional commander during this campaign
<p>22ND PANZER REGIMENT</p> 	<p>Commanding officer: Colonel von Oppeln-Bronikowski</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided armored overwatch to the <i>panzergrenadiers</i> within Hatten and to the north of Hatten • Late December 1944 replacements brought the 1st Battalion up to four full companies of 17 <i>panzers</i>, 2 each of <i>Panthers</i> and two companies of <i>Mark IVs</i> • The 2nd Company of 17 <i>Panthers</i> was reassigned to the 17th SS <i>Panzergrenadier Division</i>; only four <i>Panthers</i> were returned prior to the battle • The 2nd battalion was missing and the shortage of softskin vehicles impacted on the ability of the unit to sustain combat readiness
<p>125TH PANZERGRENADIER REGIMENT</p> 	<p>Commanding officer: Lt Colonel von Luck</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided follow-up support to the initial assaults into Hatten and Rittershoffen with one battalion allocated to each village <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ 1st Battalion predominantly operated in Hatten and the 2nd operated in Rittershoffen • The 1st and 2nd Battalion were equipped only with softskin vehicles and close to full personnel • The 3rd Battalion was missing, along with most of the regimental support elements
<p>192ND PANZERGRENADIER REGIMENT</p>	<p>Commanding officer: Major Spreu</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The regiment suffered heavy casualties in the lead up to the attack on Hatten. Predominantly operated to the north of Hatten on a defensive posture • The 1st and 2nd Battalion were understrength and equipped with only softskin vehicles

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The regiment was missing its 3rd Battalion
21ST PANZER-AUFKLARUNGS BATTALION	Commanding officer: Major Brandt <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The reconnaissance battalion was well equipped with armored cars and armored personnel carriers The personnel levels were high and approached 75% Played a peripheral role in the battle over Hatten and Rittershoffen
200TH PANZERJAGER BATTALION 	Commanding officer: Major Becker [as of late December 1944] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The <i>panzerjager</i> battalion probably provided support to the assault on Rittershoffen on 11th January The 1st company was equipped with up to 17 <i>Jagdpanzer IVs</i> and the 3rd company consisted of a full complement Pak 40 anti-tank guns (75mm) and some additional 88mm Russian made guns The battalion was missing one company (2nd)

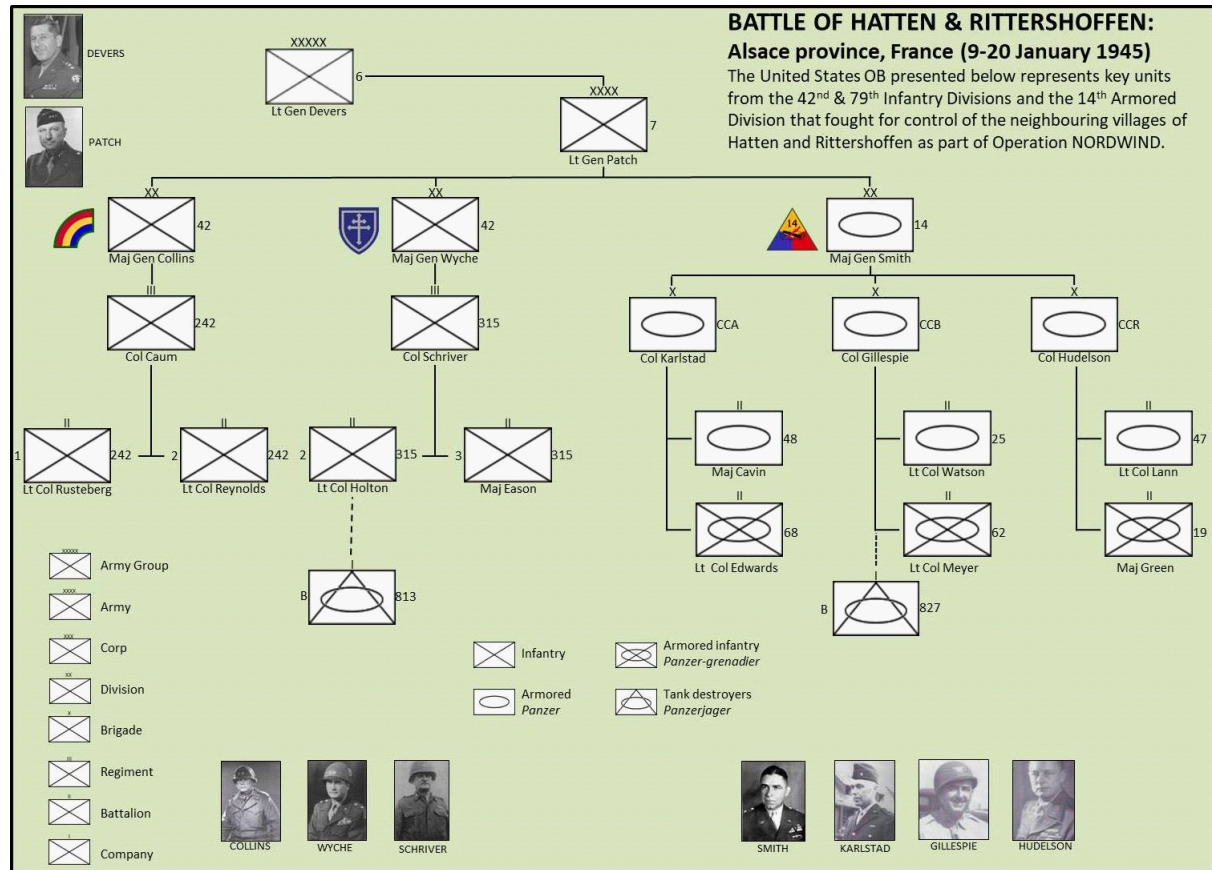




MarkIV, late 1944 (History of the 21st Panzer)

UNIT	
20th FALLSCHIRMJAGER REGIMENT 	Commanding officer: Major Graßmel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 20th <i>Fallschirmjager Regiment</i> formed part of the 7th <i>Fallschirmjager Division</i> The regiment was relatively well rested when it's experienced troops entered the area during the latter part of 13 January The 1st and 2nd Battalion probably initially engaged American forces in Hatten on the night of the 13th The 3rd Battalion of the regiment operated in Rittershoffen These units, unlike their panzergrenadier counterparts, were more capable of offensive operations at night

Hatten-Rittershoffen: United States Order of Battle

During the Battle of Hatten-Rittershoffen, the main American units were drawn from the 42nd Infantry, 79th Infantry and 14th Armored Division.



UNIT /SUB-UNITS	
42nd INFANTRY DIVISION	
	Commanding officer: General Collins <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This unit was not activated until July 1943 and landed in Marseilles, France, in early December 1944 The 42nd 'Rainbow' Infantry Division had previously fought in France on the Western Front during the brutal campaigns in mid-to-late 1918 (<i>below</i>) The Nordwind Campaign was the first taste of combat for this inexperienced unit
242ND INFANTRY REGIMENT	Commanding officer: Colonel Caum <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 1st Battalion under Lt Colonel Rusteberg was at full strength and provided the initial defence of Hatten and the Maginot Line fortifications just to the east of the village (<i>below</i>) The 2nd Battalion under Lt Colonel Reynolds was understrength after vicious fighting two days earlier at Gamsheim. It reinforced

Hatten late on 9 January before both depleted battalions were pulled out late on 10 January

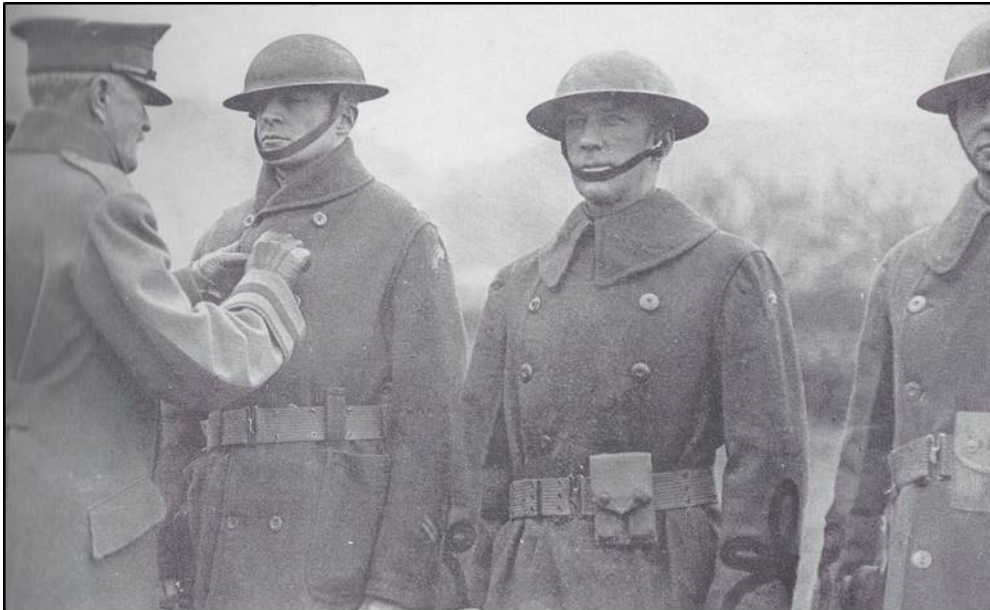
- The 1st Battalion was awarded a Presidential Unit Citation






Maginot Line, Hatten - January 1945 (History of the 42nd)



Rainbow Division, Meuse-Argonne Offensive 1918
(History of the 42nd)



**BG MacArthur, Rainbow Division, Meuse-Argonne Offensive 1918
(History of the 42nd)**

UNIT /SUB-UNITS	
<p>79th INFANTRY DIVISION</p> 	<p>Commanding officer: General Wyche</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 79th 'Cross of Lorraine' Infantry Division was formed in June 1942 and landed in Normandy, France, soon after D-Day • The unit has previously fought in France during the brutal Meuse-Argonne Campaign in 1918 (below) • This experienced unit provided strong defence during the German Nordwind offensive
<p>315th INFANTRY REGIMENT</p> 	<p>Commanding officer: Colonel Schriver</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two infantry battalions from this regiment proved crucial in the defence of the two villages and were at a high degree of combat readiness at the start of the battle • Lt Colonel Holton's 2nd Battalion was central in the defence of Hatten, relieving soldiers from the Rainbow division from 10 January onwards • 3rd Battalion led by Major Eason successfully defended Rittershoffen from 11 January onwards • Both battalions received a Presidential Unit Citation



Alsace, December 1944 (History of the 79th)

The commander of the 79th Infantry Division, General Wyche, escorted Churchill and General Montgomery across the Rhine River during March 1945.



Rhine crossing, March 1945 (History of the 79th)







Madeline Farm, 1918 (History of the 79th)




Meuse-Argonne Offensive, 1918 (History of the 79th)



3rd Battalion, 315th Infantry Regiment, France 1918 (History of the 315th)

UNIT /SUB-UNITS	
<p>14th ARMORED DIVISION</p> 	<p>Commanding officer: General Smith</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This armored unit was formed in late 1942 and arrived in Marseilles, France, November 1944 • The unit operated in and around the French province of Alsace from late November throughout December 1944 • Individual units from the 14th Armored Division provided support during the first three days at Hatten-Rittershoffen. By the 12 January, the division was fully formed in defence of this sector
<p>COMBAT COMMAND A</p> 	<p>Commanding officer: Colonel Karlstad</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This brigade consisted of the 48th Tank Battalion and 68th Armored Infantry Battalion and was at a high level of combat readiness at the start of the Nordwind campaign • Tanks from the 48th Tank Battalion provided critical defence on the first two days at Hatten and one of its platoons was awarded a Presidential Unit Citation • Subsequently, the majority of this brigade worked successfully in defence of Rittershoffen
<p>COMBAT COMMAND B</p> 	<p>Commanding officer: Colonel Gillespie</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This brigade consisted of the 25th Tank Battalion and 62nd Armored Infantry Battalion and its combat readiness had been impacted by the casualties taken by the 62nd during its delaying actions in the initial part of the Nordwind campaign • The brigade operated to the north of Hatten-Rittershoffen and attempted to break into Hatten during a large assault on 12

	January. This effort resulted in substantial casualties in the open fields on the approach to the village
COMBAT COMMAND R 	Commanding officer: Colonel Hudelson <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This brigade consisted of the 47th Tank Battalion and 19th Armored Infantry Battalion • It was at a good level of combat readiness at the start of this engagement, although the tank battalion was missing one of its three main tank companies • The Reserve Combat Command was fully deployed in the successful defence of Hatten from 13 January onwards



25th Tank Battalion, Alsace 16th December 1944 (NARA)



25th Tank Battalion, February 1945 (NARA)



68th Armored Infantry Battalion, February 1945 (NARA)

Hatten-Rittershoffen: 9 January (early morning) - attack on the Maginot Line



42nd Infantry Division, Hatten, January 1945 (NARA)

'At 5 o'clock it seemed that all hell broke loose. "They're coming", my gunner shouted. He fell into position behind his gun. Crouched white shapes moved toward us across the snow-covered field ... The roar of their guns was deafening. Fire was coming from two tanks at very close range ...'
S/Sgt Raymond E Hodde, 2nd Platoon, D Company, 242nd Infantry Regiment (Pommois p247)

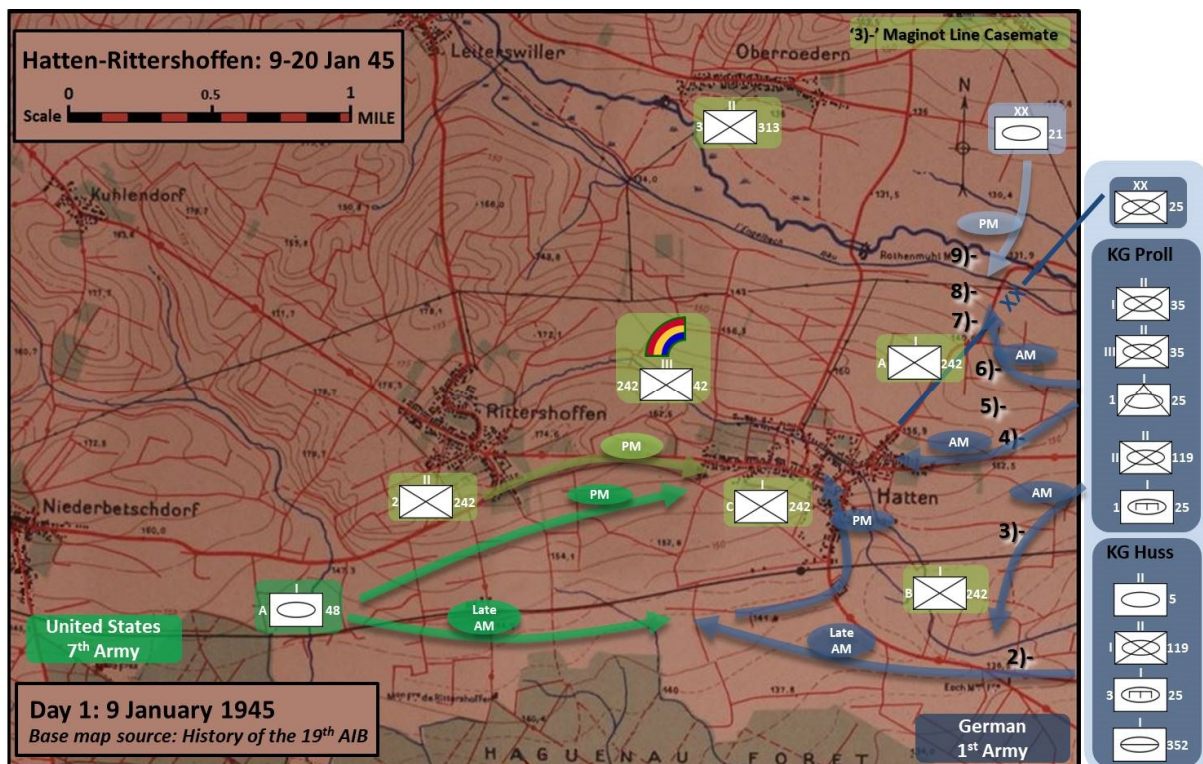
'(Our) order to attack came at 0500. The Germans came out of the woods and they were greeted by an intense artillery barrage. They were pinned down and they suffered their first casualties almost

immediately. At dawn, they could see the pillbox (ED: Casemate #2) still 250 meters away ... at the end of the day, the 6th company had suffered 54 wounded and 9 killed.'

Hans Weiss, 6 Company, 119th Panzergrenadier Regiment (first combat at 19 years old) (Pommois p250)

'In the early hours of January 9 I awoke to the sound of heavy firing and Sgt Whitaker and myself were directed to leave the pillbox and see if the men in the surrounding foxholes were all right. Outside was a maze of bullets and tracers and the heavy machine gun in the pillbox was firing ... We determined that it was a very serious situation and we ended up behind a small mound just outside the pillbox ...'

Don Segel, B Company, 242nd Infantry Regiment (Pommois p247)



During the early hours of 9 January the German assault began, initially led by *panzergrenadiers* from the unarmored *Kampfgruppe Proll* and supported by flamethrowers from the engineer company (the 1st). The latter proved very effective against the Maginot Line encasements and pillboxes, the target of the initial German effort just to the east of Hatten. The German assault was aggressive and, despite losing many casualties, succeeded in suppressing many supporting US weapons around the Maginot Line positions, and destroying most of the anti-tank guns of the defending US battalion. Casemate #4 and #5 were taken. Communications between the US battalion headquarters and the Maginot Line positions occupied by A Company and B Company were cut.

'Directly to the front of my positions, all we had to contend with was infantry attacks and we turned them all back with heavy losses to them. We had excellent fields of fire and I thought at the time, "What a waste of manpower and how strange that they even attempt to attack over such wide openly exposed terrain".'

Al Cahoon, A Company, 242nd Infantry Regiment (Pommois p250)

'KG Proll was committed to the first assault to take Hatten and suffered heavy casualties. 1st Battalion, 35th Panzergrenadier Regiment made to back to the woods with only 100 men surviving.'

(Pommois p250)

'Our steady fire cut the enemy down but they came so fast and recklessly that they began to overrun our positions. Hand grenades were bursting close to the guns. The pressure became intense. We were ordered to withdraw to the edge of town to more favourable positions.'

S/Sgt Hodde, 242nd Infantry Regiment (Pommois p249)

By mid-morning, the German *panzergrenadiers* had the upper-hand but *Kampfgruppe Proll* had suffered many casualties. An American counterattack by C Company had dislodged the Germans from their foothold in the village of Hatten itself but Casemate #4 and #5 remained in German hands. All told, many of the Maginot Line fortifications had been suppressed, most anti-tank guns were out of action and the defender's ammunition began to run low. The second phase of the German attack was about to commence.

Hatten-Rittershoffen: 9 January (late morning) – panzers enter the battle

During the late morning, the Germans committed their armored assault troops of the 25th *Panzergrenadier Division* in the form of *Kampfgruppe Huss*.

'We could see large numbers of enemy troops advancing and Lt Michaud instructed my brother and myself to back to the company CP (ED: located near the main church in the town of Hatten) ... The firing was quite intense and the enemy advanced in spite of his heavy casualties ... My brother and I reported the situation to Captain Montague ... we saw at least ten tanks and thirty armored personnel carriers approaching ... confusion reigned in the CP ... (and) all escape routes were covered.' **Pfc Don Segel**, 242nd Infantry Regiment (Pommois p252; ED: Don Segel and his twin were soon captured)

'At 1118hrs, Cpt Montague of B Company, 242nd Infantry Regiment, reported that "18 tanks and 20 halftracks approaching pillbox No1." (ED: this position is located to the south of the map above)

At 1237hrs, a message from 1st Battalion, 242nd Infantry Regiment ... "5 tanks coming out of woods followed by infantry. Getting fire on them. Would like to have tank support. Ammo low on bazooka and mortar. Cannon Company doing good job. Tanks are pouring from woods using flame throwers".'

AAR 242nd Infantry Regiment (Pommois p251)

With the help of *flamm-panzers*, the *Kampfgruppe Huss* took Casemate #2 located south-west of Hatten. They then pushed towards the railway line to the south of Hatten. Consisting of over a dozen panzers and twenty halftracks, the Germans decided to reorientate the attack of the armored infantry column towards to northern portion of the town. The German infantry then decamped around the railway station and the majority of the panzers pushed on towards Rittershoffen from the south of Hatten. These panzers crossed the path of the Cannon Company situated along the wood line of the Haguenau Forest.

'The tanks were right on us and firing point-blank and a lot of men were going down. Our captain just went berserk. He rushed out and started throwing snowballs at the tanks. He was cut down quick. A sergeant brought us out with most of our vehicles. I thought he was taking us in exactly the wrong direction. But he got us out of there. Later we went back and retrieved the guns we'd left.'

PFC Altneu, Cannon Company, 242nd Infantry Regiment (Engler pp149-150)



Hatten-Rittershoffen, January 1945 (NARA)

American artillery caused significant damage to *panzergrenadiers* during the early hours. It also suppressed the efforts of the self-propelled assault guns from the 25th *Panzergrenadier Division*. As the morning wore on, the artillery became less of a factor due to the loss of the US observer in the main church building in Hatten (*above*).

'... Captain Bunch, the artillery liaison officer, left the Battalion CP when he could no longer support the Battalion. The Artillery Observer had been knocked out of his position inside the church steeple.'

AAR 1st Battalion, 242nd Infantry Regiment (Pommois p258)

The German *panzers* pressing towards Rittershoffen were met by and then rebuffed by A Company, 48th Tank Battalion, 14th Armored Division. This tank company was led by Cpt 'Ace' Ory. The timely deployment of this unit, occurred only after Cpt Ory has personally visited the 1st Battalion CP during mid-morning. Cpt Ory was present when word of the late morning German attack by *Kampfgruppe Proll* reached this command post. The decision to commit his tanks became an easy one. A corporal and a Lieutenant from Cpt Ory's company reveals what happened next.

'A peep and a recon car darted into view, streaking from Hatten. The peep halted, an officer bounced out, artillery was dropping close now. "Tanks on your right – German tanks – in the valley – Get'em ... you can't miss, hurry".'

'German tanks? In the valley? To our right? They couldn't be there; the front was some kilometers to our East of North.... Captain Ace (Ory) must be mistaken. They are our tanks, no doubt, our flank protection. The alarm flew from tank-to-tank. My platoon swung to the right of the road toward a position overlooking the valley.'

'Five gunners and five tank commanders ... eyed the squat tanks crawling half hidden along the railroad track that creased the valley's lower side. These were ours, of course – they weren't ours. "Fire, Gunner! Fire! Five tanks spat flame ... It was a two-minute job".'

Cpl McGrane, a radio tender and loader, A Company 48th Tank Battalion (Engler p151)

'We took up positions just in front of town and waited for the attack we knew was coming. We didn't have to wait long. Six German tanks began moving along the railroad track from Hatten. They were on our left, and they apparently didn't see us, so we let them go within 600 yards. Then we let go. A Mark IV was leading the advance. One of our tanks opened fire, and before the Krauts knew what was coming off, had poured four rounds into the hull. The tank went up in flames.'

'The other tanks in my platoon had opened up, and within five minutes, all six of the German tanks were knocked out. They were so damned surprised they didn't fire a shot back at us.'

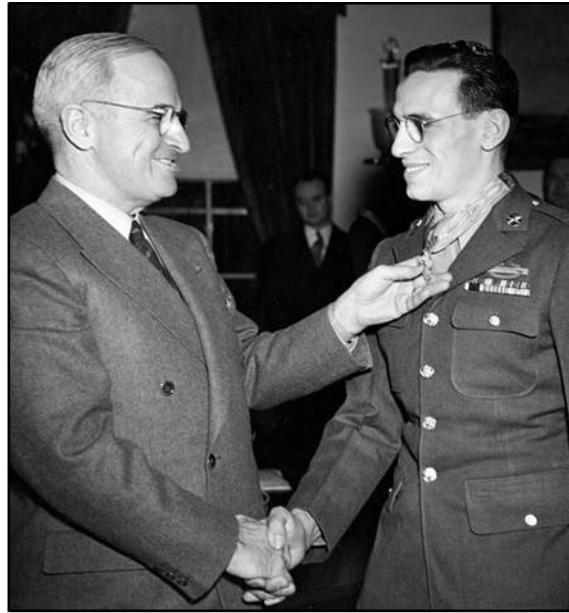
Lt Edgar D. Woodard (CO), 1st Platoon, A Company, 48th Tank Battalion (Carter pp176-7)



48th Tank Battalion, Rittershoffen, 9 January 1945 (NARA)

However, in the centre of Hatten, the German *panzergrenadiers* with the support of a handful of *panzers* pushed well in the town, despite the efforts of the defending C Company and supporting battalion HQ units.

The Germans were slowed by the heroics of Pfc Vito Bertoldo (*below*). His efforts in the eastern part of Hatten around the main church were rewarded with a Congressional Medal of Honor. During the engagements around the main church, Bertoldo, managed to slow the advance of the *panzergrenadiers* as they sought to capture the battalion HQ. Despite point-blank fire from the main armament of the *panzers*, Bertoldo held firm. Manning a machine-gun, he would hold his fire until the last moment, waiting until the *panzergrenadiers* left the protection of the halftracks. His actions allowed the HQ elements of 1st Battalion, 242nd Infantry Regiment, to successfully withdraw to the village school located in a more central part of Hatten.



Pfc Bertoldo, 42nd Infantry Division, was awarded the Medal of Honor for conduct at Hatten on 9-10 January 1945

Hatten-Rittershoffen: 9 January (late afternoon) - American counterattack

As dusk approached, US command committed the 2nd Battalion, 242nd Infantry Regiment. Coordinating with Cpt Ory, the commander of A Company, 48th Tank Battalion, they were ordered to restore the main line of resistance to the east of Hatten. The mission was partially successful, but with significant cost in terms of US casualties, and both sides rested for the night in either half of Hatten.

The 2nd Battalion 242d had just fought at Gambenheim and their readiness to fight were summed up below.

'(We were) totally exhausted, totally demoralized, without any spirit left to fight what we were going to face, a group of zombies.'

Joe Neilson, H Company, 242nd Infantry Regiment (Pommois p240)

'As we approached the outskirts of Hatten, we were attacked from the north by three tanks from the 21st and 25th Panzer Grenadiers and a German half-track. Bob Spearing made contact with Major Reynolds, who in turn called in armored support bringing in three tank destroyers. They knocked out one of the panzers and the half-track before losing one of our tank destroyers, just inside the edge of town ...'

Norman Thompson, H Company, 242nd Infantry Regiment (Pommois p262)

'We left our commanding ground and eased down past the Jerry tanks, burning like still torches to guide our way in the darkness. Doughboys walked behind us, five to a tank ... from out of Hatten came a vehicle; we wet our chilled lips. One tank fired, two and three and the Jerry vehicle burst into flames. Strange and ghostlike was the scene as flare lit up the country in the back-ground. The gravestones glittered at us through the fire.'

Cpl McGrane, A Company, 48 Tank Battalion (Carter p178)

To the east of Hatten, the remaining casemates occupied in the more northerly positions by A Company, 242nd Infantry Regiment, were finally reduced, aided by the support of the 21st Panzer Division late in the afternoon.

'I reported to him (Cpt Carson) that we had very little ammo left and had about a dozen wounded men that needed to be gotten to the Battalion aid station The enemy fire soon became so intense I couldn't see the sense any more of asking men to stay out in positions close to the pillbox since we could cover most of the areas without weapons from apertures in the pill box. Anyway (the men) had little to no ammo ... Finally we could hear the Jerry engineers on top of the pill box stuffing nitro-starch down the ventilating tubes ...'

Al Cahoon, A Company, 242nd Infantry Regiment (Pommois p254)

'... over a hundred other fellows from A, B, D and AT companies, were captured at approximately 1900 hours Jan 9, in pillbox no 9.'

Pfc Glenn E Schmidt, A Company, 242nd Infantry Regiment (Pommois p253)



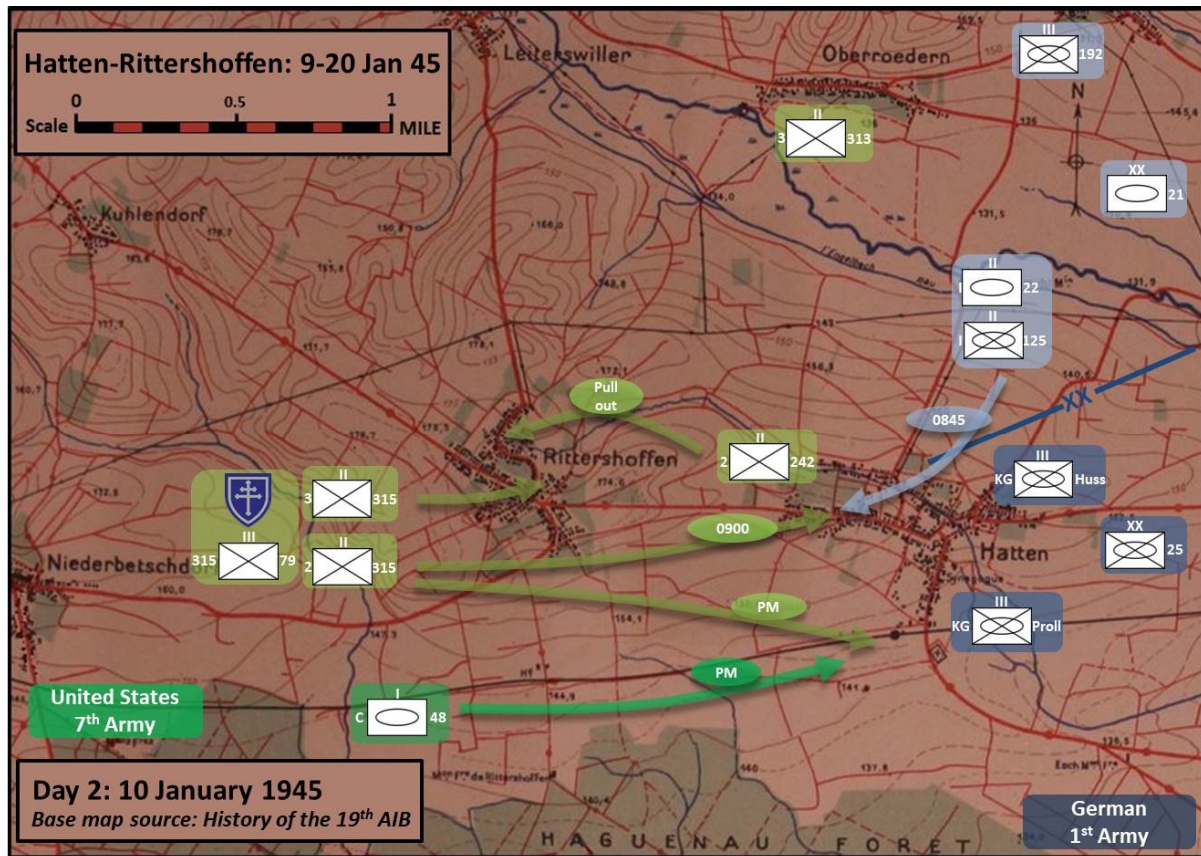
Sherman, Hatten-Rittershoffen
January 1945 (History of the 21st Panzer)

Hatten-Rittershoffen: 10 January (early morning) - German jump-off

During the night of 9 January, the headquarters of the 1st Battalion, 242nd Infantry Regiment was moved further into town in response to the initial German assault on the eastern portion of Hatten.

'While we fired from the various vantage points, the CP was quietly moving a few houses up the street – to the largest house in town that served as city hall, school house, and, I think butcher shop. By the middle of the night or by dawn we were well established in that building – the vacated CP building was in shambles (ED: near the main church in Hatten). The (German) tank was still there and operative.'

T/5 Vornbrock, 242nd Infantry Regiment, reflecting on the night of 9 January (Engler p156)



On paper, the Americans now had two battalions of troops from the 242nd Infantry Regiment in Hatten. However, they had been already mauled sufficiently at Hatten over the last 24 hours, and a few days previously at Gambenheim, to render them ineffective for further offensive combat. The 1st Battalion had only a third of its strength remaining. In response another battalion of more experienced troops from the 79th Infantry Division was committed.

On the morning of 10 January, the 2nd Battalion, 315th Infantry Regiment commanded by Lt Colonel Holton positioned themselves to drive through the northern portion of the Hatten. This attack planned for 0900hrs. However, as this message (*below, dated: 0810hrs, 10 January*) revealed, the Germans just beat them to the punch.

THESE SPACES FOR MESSAGE CENTER ONLY		
TIME FILED	MSG CEN NO.	HOW SENT
MESSAGE (SUBMIT TO MESSAGE CENTER IN DUPLICATE) (CLASSIFICATION)		
No.	DATE 10 8 10	
To	CO 48TH TKBN. (1)	
ENEMY COUNTERATTACK NORTH		
OF HATTEN STRENGTH 200 INF.		
THIS ATTACK VERY STRONG		
HAWN		
SUNRAY MINOR OFFICIAL DESIGNATION OF SENDER		TIME SIGNED
AUTHORIZED TO BE SENT IN CLEAR	SIGNATURE OF OFFICER	SIGNATURE AND GRADE OF WRITER
☆ U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE : 1942 16-27305-1		

14thAD responds to German morning assault - Hatten, 10 January (NARA)

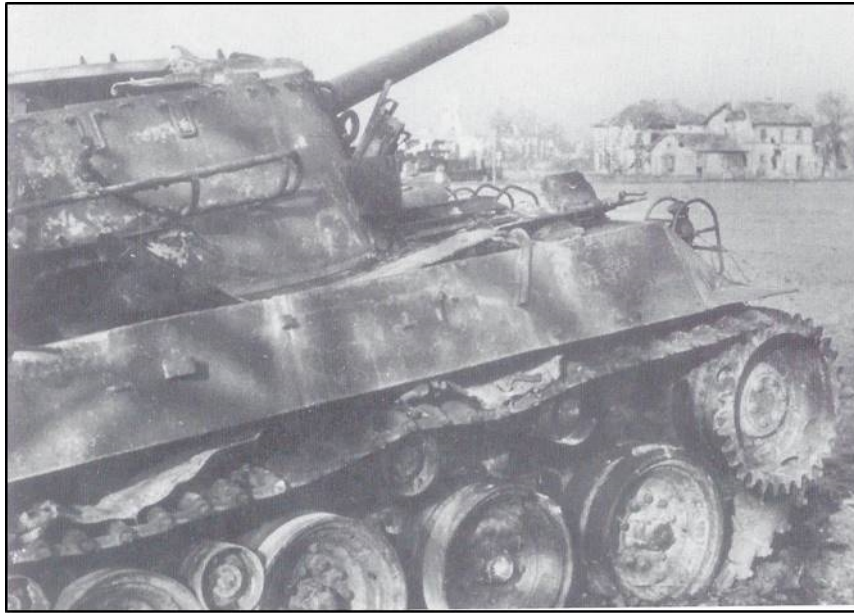
*'The Second Battalion (ED: from the 315th Infantry Regiment) sent F and G Companies into Hatten. (These units) got a foothold on the town and sent out patrols where friendly troops were supposed to be and found Germans everywhere. But we found scattered and disorganized groups from that original battalion and put them in our platoons and managed to get a patrol to the center of the town, where the battalion CP was still holding out, with one company fighting like hell to protect it.' Combat diary of **Lt Goodwin** (History of 79th Infantry Division, p108)*

At 0845hrs a sizeable force of 200 men and six panzers hit Holton's men as they formed up at their own jump-off point. These Germans sought to drive the US defenders out of Hatten. The Americans buckled, but with the support of a handful of tank destroyers from the (segregated) 827th Tank Destroyer Battalion, managed to cling on to a small portion of houses at the west end of Hatten.

'(On 10 January) when we started to try to clean up the town, E Company and four tank destroyers came in. Several of those colored boys really were wonderful, standing right there swapping punch for punch with Tiger tanks. Their platoon leader, 2d Lt. Robert F. Jones, of Casper, Wyo., deserves the Silver Star. They found an abandoned M-10 tank destroyer there in good condition and decided to use it instead of one of their own. At our forward positions, the main street bent so that they could not see German tanks coming-particularly at night. Jones took a machine-gun for signalling and laid it on the steps of the forward house, with a tank destroyer farther back and zeroed on the bend.'

'Jones was supposed to trip the machine-gun trigger with a string, but when the first Tiger poked its snout around the bend at night he just didn't have any sense. He got right out on the steps and held the trigger down, spraying the Tiger. The tank opened fire and blew the steps right out from' under Jones, but he wasn't hurt. His gunner, S/Sgt Harry Johnson, of Philadelphia, opened fire and drove the Tiger back. At dusk on the tenth, remnants of the battalion originally overrun at Hatten were ordered to withdraw, but, about 20 refused to leave and another score stayed at Rittershoffen, where they fought determinedly with a third battalion of the 315th Regiment. They stated flatly, "We've run 'as far as we're going to run".'

*Combat diary of **Lt Goodwin** (History of 79th Infantry Division, p108)*



**M18 'Hellcat', Hatten-Rittershoffen
January 1945 (History of the 21st Panzer)**

Hatten-Rittershoffen: 10 January (afternoon) - American counterattack

To relieve the pressure in the northern portion of Hatten, Lt Colonel Holton ordered a counterattack by his men from the 2nd Battalion, 315th Infantry Regiment, towards the railway station in the southern portion of the town. The attack was again supported by the Shermans from the 48th Tank Battalion. Commencing as the light faded in the late afternoon, the Americans made good progress against some inexperienced infantry from the 25th *Panzergeradier Division*. As the American attack unfolded, the German anti-tanks guns found their range.

'The attack order came down and we were on our way toward the left of Hatten. Lt John A Stair spotted three medium tanks as we inched our way over the final ridge before Hatten, near the north edge of Hatten, their right sponsons toward us. I fired at the center one and all hell broke loose. Our whole company must have seen the Kraut tanks at the same time – within two minutes the Panzers were flaming coffins. Then the Heinies struck back. Anti-tanks guns took three of our tanks before we could pull back.'

Cpl Darrell E. Todd, gunner, C Company, 48th Tank Battalion (Carter p178)

Despite some success, after a number of Shermans were knocked out, the afternoon American attack was called off.

'We were to move south across the railroad track, then due east across the 'pool table' – the flat, treeless land around Rittershoffen and Hatten. Our objective was the Hatten-Seltz road ... As we moved out into the open the Germans began laying artillery in but we received no direct fire from Rittershoffen. When we reached the point where we were to cross the tracks, my section went across in line, covered by the other section ... As my section crossed the track we were fired on from somewhere on the south or the west edge of Hatten. My section apparently got out of the traverse of these guns but as we moved up 100 yards further two more German flat trajectory guns opened up on us. Behind me, Cpt Elder's tank was hit twice in quick succession. Four more tanks were hit and still we couldn't pick up the flashes. It's a strange feeling to see a shower of sparks cover the turret of the tank in front of you. Your whole body goes tense, you are scared to your fingertips.'

"Drive, back! Hard right! Move out straight! Straight! See that knocked-out Kraut tank? Get behind it, kick hell out of it". Communications went out. You're helpless then. Darkness came down like a blanket.'

S/Sgt Robert M. Winslow, 3rd Platoon, C Company, 48th Tank Battalion (Carter pp178-9)

Artillery request – 48th Tank Battalion
Hatten, 1648hrs 10 January (NARA)

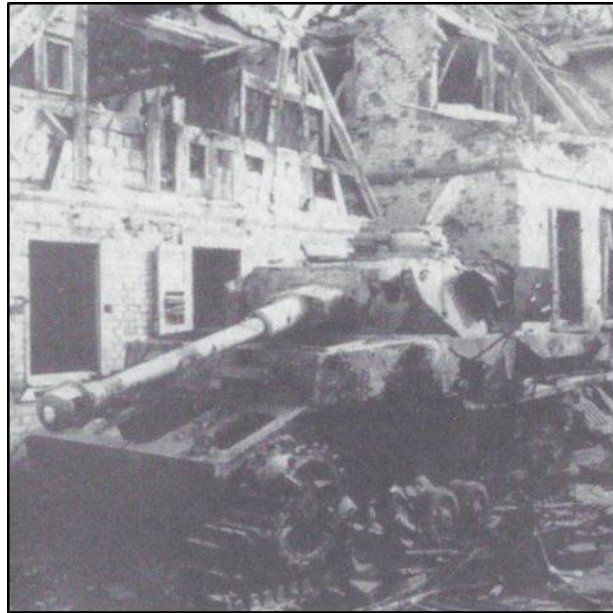
The Americans decided to fall back by late afternoon. They ordered artillery in the vicinity of the railway station to cover the retreat (*above*).

As night fell on 10 January, the Americans completed their withdrawal of the 242nd Infantry Regiment. The 3rd Battalion, 315th Infantry Regiment was ordered to defend Rittershoffen, while its sister battalion, the 2nd, clung onto the western end of Hatten. Shermans from the 14th Armored Division provided overwatch in Rittershoffen, while US tank destroyers remained on station at Hatten. During the night of the 10th, the Germans planned to attack Rittershoffen, with an assault led by *panzers* and armored infantry from *Kampfgruppe Huss*.

The 1st Battalion 242d was awarded a Presidential Unit Citation. It's starting personnel of 33 officers and 748 enlisted were reduced to 11 officers and 253 enlisted in two days of fighting.

'... Our mission was to hold at all cost; this we did, even though surrounded and cut to pieces by an enemy superior in number and supported by armor. During this attack there was not one man who shirked his duty – not one man left Hatten until relieved.'

Lt Colonel Rusteberg (CO) 1st Battalion, 242nd Infantry Regiment (Pommois p268)



Hatten-Rittershoffen - January 1945
(History of the 14thAD)



Panther, Hatten-Rittershoffen
January 1945 (History of the 21st Panzer)



Mortar team, Alsace
January 1945 (History of the 79th)

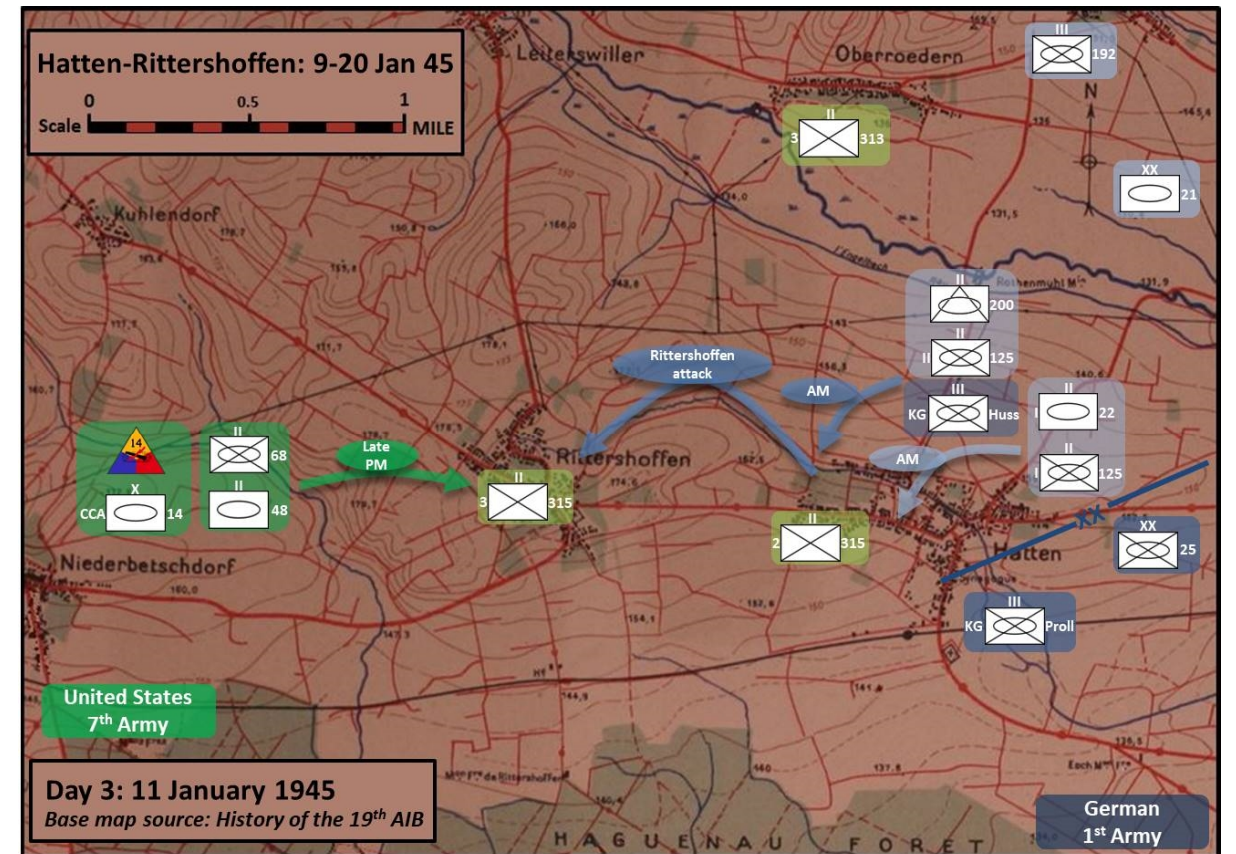
Hatten-Rittershoffen: 11 January – fury comes to Rittershoffen & Hatten besieged

'At 5am on the morning of January 11th, the attack of the armored Battle Group (ED: Kampfgruppe Huss) started north of Hatten. Only the fires in Hatten lighted up their reconnaissance during the night. However, the reconnaissance was hindered by ground fog and smoke. Rittershoffen was reached shortly before dawn and the Battle Group broke into the north side of the town ...'

Wilhelm Schrode, 25th Panzergrenadier Division (Pommois p274)

'For the next 48 hours three companies were isolated in Hatten. The Germans attacked incessantly with tanks, flamethrowers and bazookas, literally blasting the Americans from the houses. But the Americans mowed down the Germans by the scores, and when the enemy paused to reorganize the Americans counterattacked and reoccupied the rubble of the houses they had lost.'

Combat diary of **Lt Goodwin** (History of 79th Infantry Division, p108)



A small snow-covered creek ran from the German controlled north-east corner of Hatten to American defensive positions at the north-west corner of Rittershoffen. With the early morning mist, the creek proved an excellent route to transfer vehicles and troops between Hatten and Rittershoffen. At 0500hrs on 11 January, the German lines came to life with the sounds of many engines. Taking advantage of the creek route the Germans, led by *Kampfgruppe Huss*, attacked American defences along the outskirts of Rittershoffen.

To ensure the defenders in Hatten did not interfere with the German thrust into Rittershoffen, spoiling attacks were made against key positions in the American positions in the north-west of Hatten. From the attack column, a number of *panzers* and *panzergrenadiers* peeled off to dislodge the men from the 2nd Battalion, 315th Infantry Regiment from their positions in the western half of Hatten. These men were supported by a platoon of Hellcats from B Company, 827th Tank-destroyer Battalion, led by Lt Robert F. Jones. This segregated unit had performed admirably in the earlier days.

This early morning spoiling attack against the defenders in Hatten proved costly from a German perspective in the terms of men and vehicles. The Hellcat tank-destroyers ably led by Lt Jones were so well positioned they quickly dispatched three *panzers* before they had a chance to react.

'Three tanks of the German force swept close around the west end of the south main street of Hatten. One of Jones' tank destroyers, commanded by Sergeant Spencer Irving, was hidden by houses in the 'spur' at the southwestern corner; and Irving could see the unsuspecting panzers coming. The crossed the Hatten-Rittershoffen road and Sergeant Irving brought his tank destroyer out of hiding and lined up his targets before the panzers could swing about into firing position. Men of G/315th swore that Irving, standing up in his turret, turned and called to them, "How do you want then? One, two, three, or three, two, one?" He then picked off the three panzers "one, two, three".'

Recollections of the men of the 315th Infantry Regiment (Engler p171)

Despite the losses, the attack ensured the Americans in Hatten did not intervene in support of their comrades who were attacked in Rittershoffen. Furthermore, Lt Colonel Holton's men from the 2nd Battalion were forced to cede a little more ground and the remaining links to other American units outside of Hatten were severed. By the evening of the 11 January, the situation had eased and attention for next two days focused on Rittershoffen.

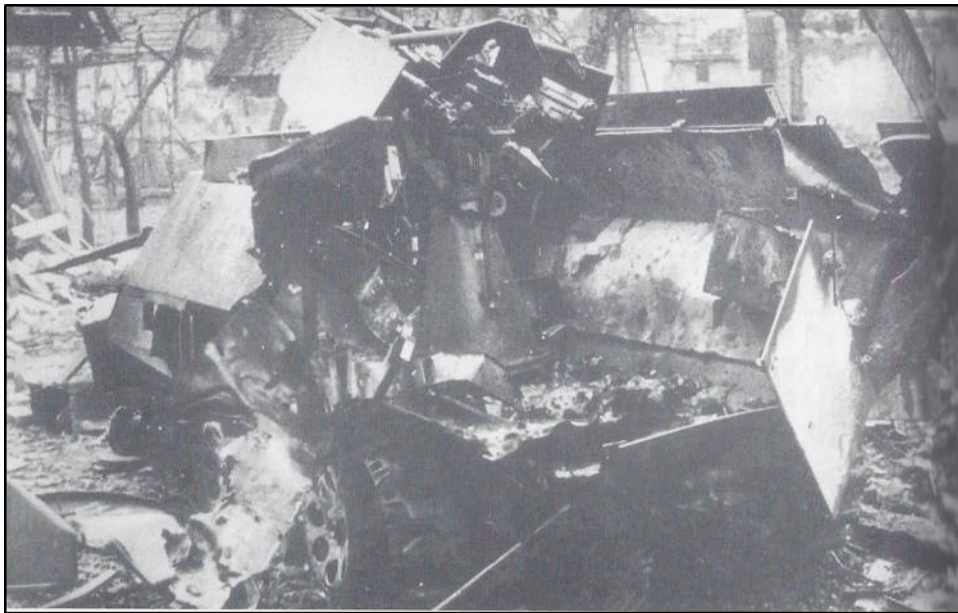
The initial German attack at Rittershoffen was launched at the point where the creek entered the village at its north-east corner. The Americans were caught unprepared due to the relative stealth of the German approach along the creek in the early morning haze and the fact the defenders focus had been on collecting the 'Rainbow' stragglers from the 242nd Infantry Regiment that continued to emerge from Hatten as a result of the earlier German assault.

The impact of the German assault on the 3rd Battalion, 315th Infantry Regiment led by Major Eason was similar to that experienced by American defenders on the first day at Hatten. 9 out of 12 battalion anti-tank guns were lost and casualty rates approached 50% across the three defending companies. The difference was that the defending Americans were veterans of many combats and largely maintained their composure. Although the outer perimeter of Rittershoffen was broken through, a second defensive line was formed in the south-west corner of the village.

Towards the end of the afternoon, a counterattack by Combat Command A (CCA), 14th Armored Division, was launched. This helped bolster the remaining infantry from the 315th Infantry Regiment. Critical defensive support in the form of additional bodies came from the armored infantrymen of the 68th Armored Infantry Battalion from CCA.



Hatten-Rittershoffen, January 1945 (History of the 14th)



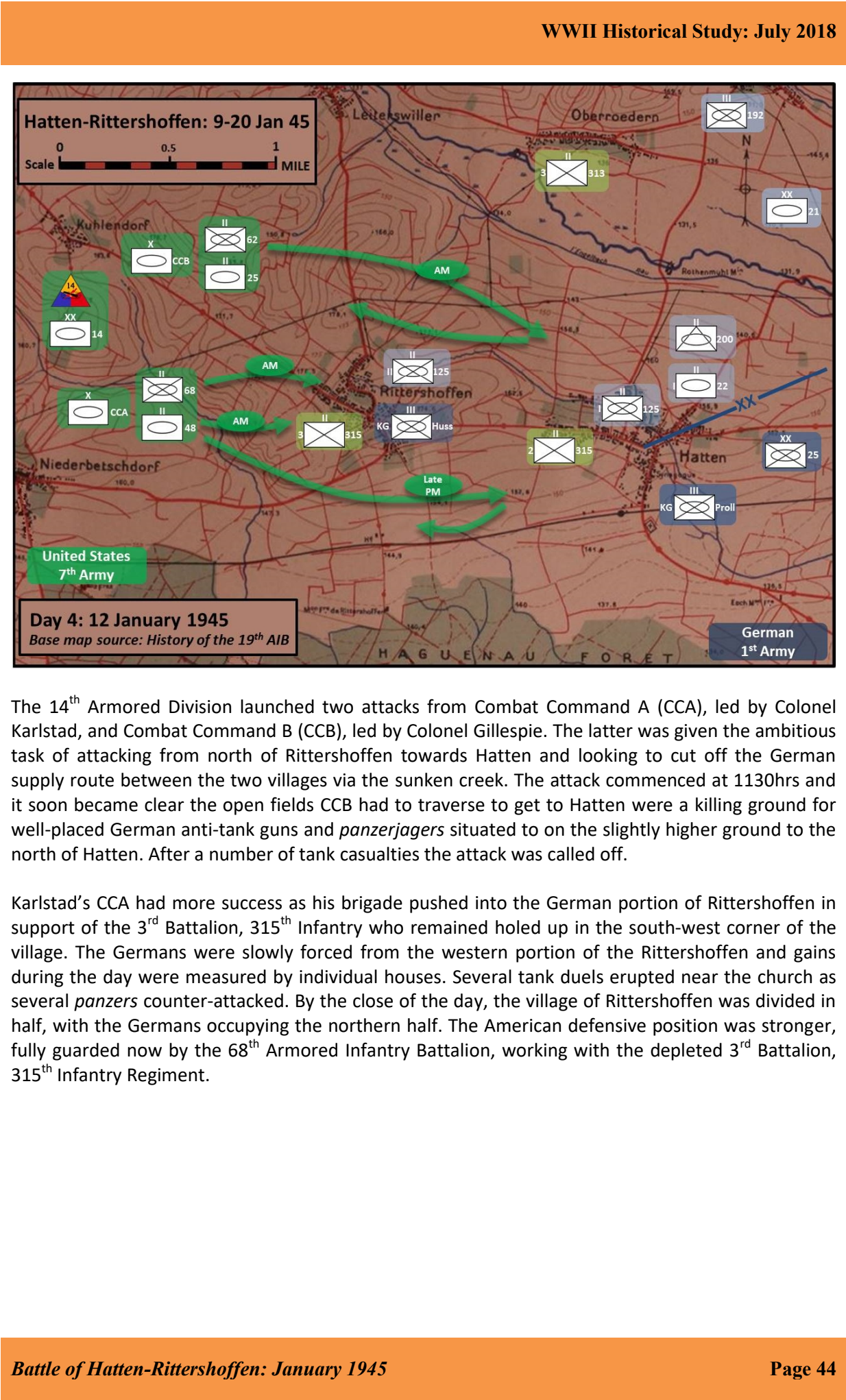
SPW251/21 'Drillings', January 1945 (History of the 21st Panzer)

Hatten-Rittershoffen: 12 January – the full force of American armor

With the Germans now occupying significant portions of Hatten and Rittershoffen, the Americans fully committed the 14th Armored Division.

'This powerful force (of Germans) had struck, all along the line, drove back men of the 42nd Infantry Division, and cut off men of the 79th Division. The 14th Armored Division was ordered to counter-attack to restore the MLR.'

History of the 14th Armored Division (Carter p176)



Hatten-Rittershoffen: 9-20 Jan 45

Scale 0 0.5 1 MILE

United States 7th Army

Day 4: 12 January 1945
Base map source: History of the 19th AIB

German 1st Army

The 14th Armored Division launched two attacks from Combat Command A (CCA), led by Colonel Karlstad, and Combat Command B (CCB), led by Colonel Gillespie. The latter was given the ambitious task of attacking from north of Rittershoffen towards Hatten and looking to cut off the German supply route between the two villages via the sunken creek. The attack commenced at 1130hrs and it soon became clear the open fields CCB had to traverse to get to Hatten were a killing ground for well-placed German anti-tank guns and *panzerjagers* situated to on the slightly higher ground to the north of Hatten. After a number of tank casualties the attack was called off.

Karlstad's CCA had more success as his brigade pushed into the German portion of Rittershoffen in support of the 3rd Battalion, 315th Infantry who remained holed up in the south-west corner of the village. The Germans were slowly forced from the western portion of the Rittershoffen and gains during the day were measured by individual houses. Several tank duels erupted near the church as several *panzers* counter-attacked. By the close of the day, the village of Rittershoffen was divided in half, with the Germans occupying the northern half. The American defensive position was stronger, fully guarded now by the 68th Armored Infantry Battalion, working with the depleted 3rd Battalion, 315th Infantry Regiment.

Battle of Hatten-Rittershoffen: January 1945

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Hatten-Rittershoffen: 9-20 Jan 45

Scale 0 0.5 1 MILE

United States 7th Army

Day 4: 12 January 1945
Base map source: History of the 19th AIB

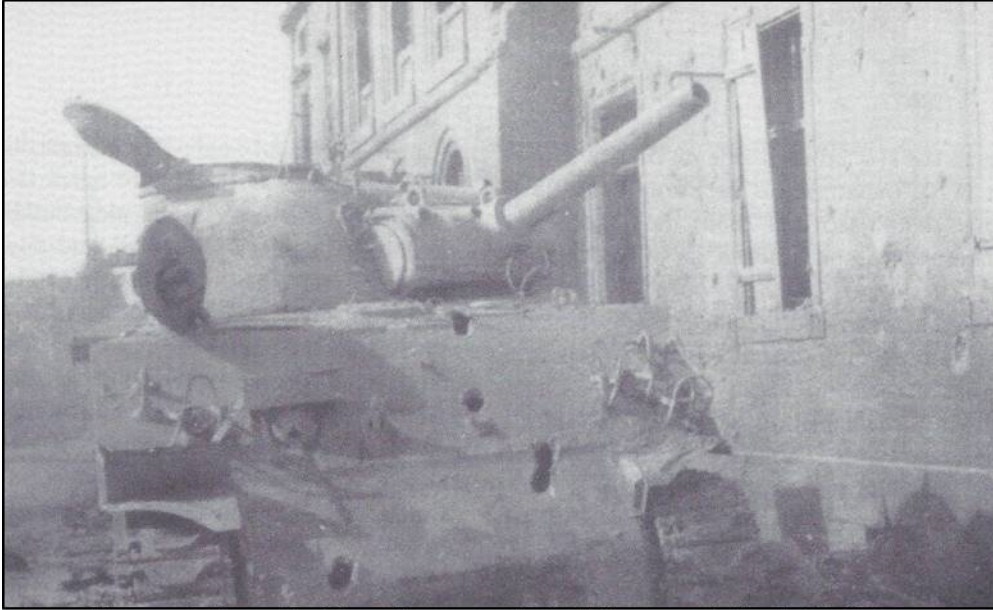
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Battle of Hatten-Rittershoffen: January 1945

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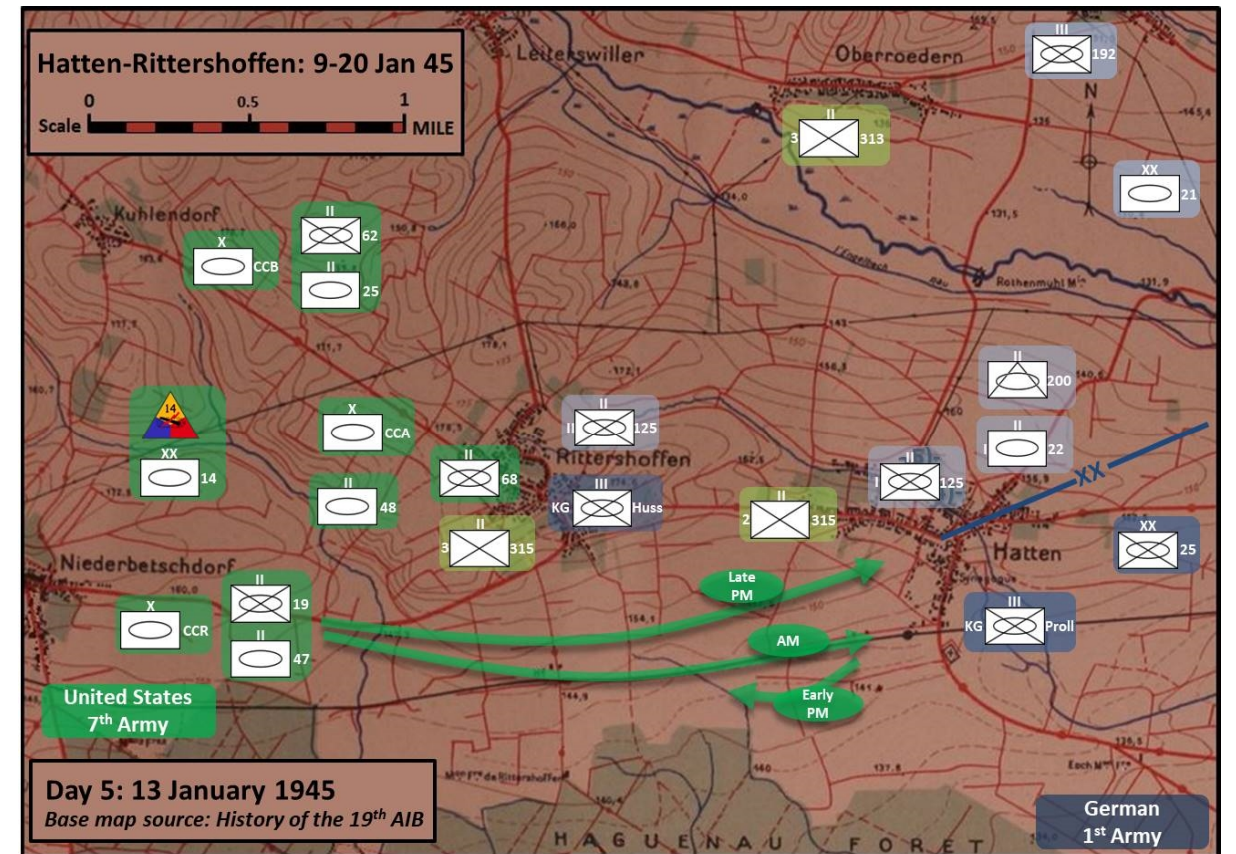


Hatten-Rittershoffen - January 1945 (History of the 14thAD)

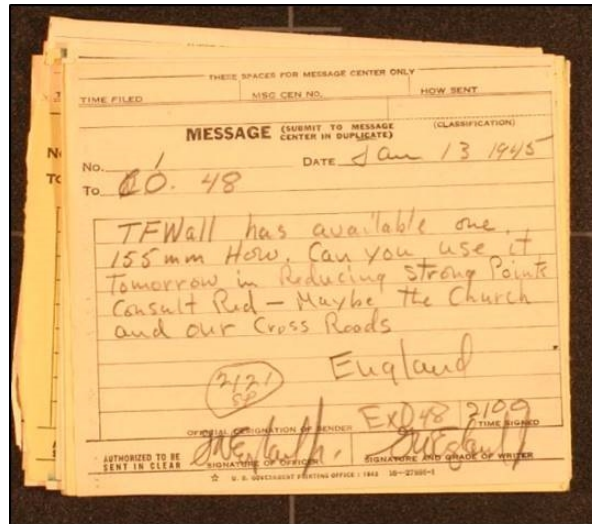
Hatten-Rittershoffen: 13 January – vicious fighting across both villages

'For three days of incessant attack the two battalions in Hatten and Rittershoffen clung to the slim wedges in each town, neither larger than a baseball park. They fired mortars at 'impossible' ranges of 75 to 150 yards. They fired bazookas over housetops, lobbing them like mortars. They fired bazookas at the blistering rate of 40 rounds every five minutes, with loaders stoking each 'stovepipe' and diving to the ground to escape the blast. They even pulled pins from mortar shells and fired them at the Germans a la Commando Kelly.'

Combat diary of Lt Goodwin (History of 79th Infantry Division, p108)



At the start of the 13 January, the entire sector was formally given to the command of the 14th Armored Division. All US supporting arms could be more fully brought into the engagement. Inside Rittershoffen, CCA along with the men from the 315th Infantry Regiment were to clear the village. Combat Command R (CCR) under control of Colonel Hudelson was to attack Hatten from the south-west. The church at Rittershoffen again proved the focal point of both forces. For two days the battle raged around this key point and the Americans managed to gain a handful of buildings around this location. However, the Germans used *flamm-panzers* in the counter-attack, forcing the Americans to relinquish their meagre gains. So desperate the Americans became to dislodge the German from the strongpoint at the main church at Rittershoffen, they brought up a 155mm howitzer to fire over open sites at this position (*below*).



Request for close support by 155mm howitzer
Rittershoffen – 13 January 1945(NARA)

By mid-morning on 13 January, the assault on the southern portion of Hatten by CCR was underway, targeting the railway station and the cemetery.

'It will be a gray, cold, miserable day. The mist is falling on the fields, freezing on the ground. At 0913 heavy enemy artillery fire (is heard) ... Where is it? ... Don't know ... Can't see, visibility poor. All I know is that it's coming!'

Lt Sprague (CO), 3rd Platoon, C Company, 47th Tank Battalion (Carter pp184-5)

Emerging from the dead ground along the northern edge of the Haguenau Forest, the men from the 19th Armored Infantry Battalion made it to 250 meters of the railway station. At this point, German positions in and around the railway station delivered accurate small arms fire. Tank support was requested and received in the form of five Shermans from the 47th Tank Battalion. Moving up to support the attack, the tankers also receive accurate fire from well-positioned anti-tank guns. Soon three tanks were destroyed, two catching fire. The remaining Shermans withdrew, along with one of infantry companies from the 19th Armored Infantry Battalion. The remaining elements of the 19th soon followed suit.

'Under the cover of smoke, Companies A and B moved out across the bullet and shell-swept field, flat and level for 3000 yards, with C Company following. Slow but fairly steady progress was made until the companies got within about 300 yards of the southern edge of town, where a devastating hail of automatic weapons to the front and left front pinned them to the ground and stopped them cold. The tank platoon attached was called up to engage the enemy automatic weapons but three of the tanks were immediately hit by direct anti-tank fire and knocked out ... The companies were ordered to withdraw at 1055hrs.

'It was 1530 before complete withdrawal could be effected back to the original line of departure.'
AAR 19th Armored Infantry Battalion (Carter pp184-5)

The men of the 19th Armored Infantry Battalion redeemed themselves late in the day, when they mounted Shermans and repositioned to themselves into the western portion of Hatten guarded by the increasingly tired 2nd Battalion, 315th Infantry Regiment and became immediately engaged in house-to-house fighting.

'The tanks dashed into Hatten at top speed. The infantry dismounted and was engaged in a bitter house-to-house fight within a matter of minutes. All but one platoon of medium tanks were ordered out of Hatten after discharging the armored infantry they were carrying. No tanks were lost during this trip ... 73 casualties were incurred by the armored infantry during the house-to-house fighting. Three of the five tanks that had been left in Hatten were knocked out. 126 Germans were captured. 91 dead Germans were found in that portion of Hatten held by CCR at 2400hours.'

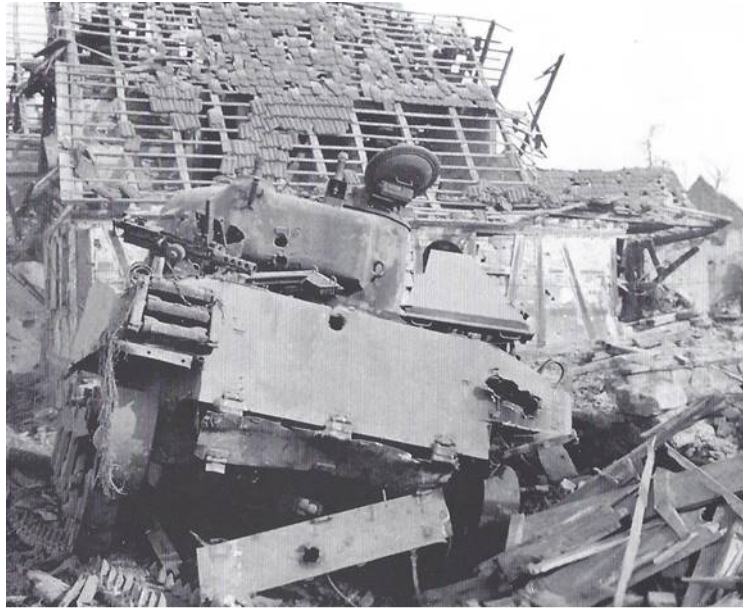
Colonel Hudelson (CO), Combat Command B (Pommois p278)

'The 19th Armored Infantry Battalion had an OP in a building located on the southern side of the main street just east of the Y intersection where the 242nd Infantry had had its CP. This building was nicknamed "the Fort".'

'It had been hit by artillery, tank and mortar fire. It looked it. Gaping holes were in the eastern and northern sides of the walls. Snow covered the blasted floors within the edifice. The roof was a thing of the past as were the windows, shutters and black-out blinds. B Company and a platoon of C Company occupied the Fort's three undamaged rooms on the western side of the building. From the shattered upstairs section of the Fort, a constant vigil was maintained for enemy activity. In the cellar aid men worked over the many wounded who could not be evacuated. Between the Fort and the first street to the east which ran north, outpost of twelve men occupied the heaping ruins of each building' AAR 19th Armored Infantry Battalion (Pommois p286)



Hatten-Rittershoffen - January 1945 (History of the 14thAD)



Sherman, Hatten, January 1945 (NARA)

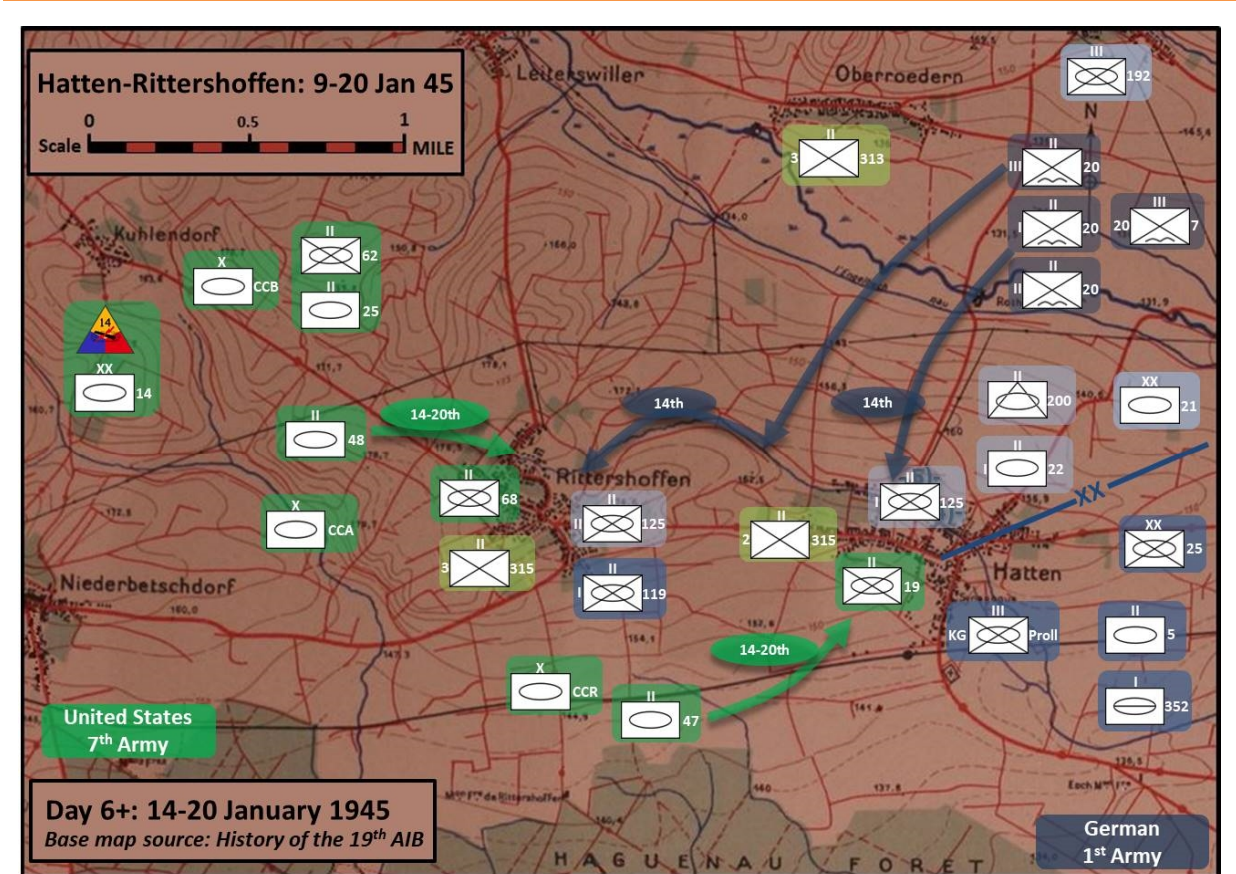
Hatten-Rittershoffen: 14-20 January – war of attrition

Bitter house-to-house fighting continued in Hatten during 14 January. A combined infantry-tank assault by the Americans attempted to clear the Germans from the north-west of the village and sever the supply line to Rittershoffen. This portion of the attack was led by A Company, 19th Armored Infantry Battalion.

'They met intense small arms, sniper, bazooka and direct tank fire. Houses were taken one by one by firing bazookas to make holes in the walls, throwing hand grenades and mouse-holing from house to house. The two tanks fired into the houses and sprayed the street with machine gun fire. Lt Robert M Donovan and Pfc Edward J Pahel threw grenades at exposed members of a German tank crew, then Pvt Benjamin J Hendrickson and Pfc Pahel moved in with a bazooka and put the tank out of action.'

The attack continued slowly and under heavy fire.... The Germans counter-attacked with tanks and infantry.'

AAR 19th Armored Infantry Battalion (Carter p187)



A further attack by E Company, 315th Infantry Regiment attempted to push down the main road and clear the section of the road known as the 'Bend'. Each attack was met by fierce German resistance, including tanks and flame-throwers. Each hotly contested area involved exchanges of individual houses, point-blank tank fire and bazooka teams manoeuvring to take out opposition tanks. By the end of the day, the front-line had barely changed. In Rittershoffen, most of the fighting continued around the church and, again, little changed in the position of both sides.

The second phase of the battle began to develop; systematic of the style of fighting emerging on 14 January. It was house-to-house, a limited attack 'here and there' and constant artillery. In short, it was a war of attrition. On 15 January, the Germans had fully relieved their tired *panzergrenadiers* with the elite parachute infantry from the relatively fresh 7th *Fallschirmjager Division*. These Germans again led the assault, sometimes at night where they could operate more comfortably than their *panzergrenadier* brothers. Despite fresh troops and night-time activity, the results remained largely the same with no decisive knock-out blow delivered.

'(The enemy had five tanks) The tanks were methodically destroying all of the remaining houses one by one this trip. They would sit back and, with machine guns and 88's going full blast, hammer holes through what walls were still standing. The flame throwers would follow for the kill pouring Satan's brimstone through the apertures. Or they would follow HE shells by tracers setting fire to the hay in the numerous barns.'

AAR 79th Infantry Division (Pommois p285)

'A German tank would move up a wreck-strewn street, climbing over piles of rock and timbers and an American tank would move to meet it. The German tank would stay just short of a curve and the American tank would wait, just around the corner. And so they would both sit. They would try to

get in a shot without being hit – blowing holes with HE through the walls of the house to fire through. And then the other would manoeuvre out of the way.'

History of the 14th Armored Division (Carter p189)

Soon after the battle, Cpt Joseph Carter, 47th Tank Battalion, gave an accurate description of the atmosphere in Hatten during the second week when combat became a war of attrition:

'The morning of January 15, the objective was a limited attack. We were being hurt but so was the Kraut. We are losing tanks and men; but so was he. A prisoner of war stated that more than a hundred men in his unit were killed in a single day.

The tenseness and the fighting went on. The artillery still came in its endless scream and whoomp! And the small arms chattered endlessly, and the Krauts were in the next houses.

You would be on one side of a wall and Krauts on the other and you would try to lob hand grenades over to get them; and the infantry would set up a mortar and take off all the increments except one and try to lob shells over one house and onto the next. And the dead lying in the streets began to get on your nerves; and the tenseness of always looking down the sight, always waiting; and the artillery was always going and you knew it was only a question of time before one landed on the house you were in. The fighting had reached such a vicious pitch that they tried to range in eight-inch howitzers on a single house, which I something like trying to hit a fly with a shotgun.

The fighting went on and on. That day and the next day and the next day and the next day and the next.'

Recollections of Cpt Carter, 48th Tank Battalion (Pommois pp286-7)

16 January through to the 18 January was little different and the contest for the twin villages had finally bogged down. The Hatten recollections of the men from the 79th Infantry Division, differed little from those of their armored comrades from the 14th Armored Division.

'When tanks and armored infantry reached them, ending their isolation, this group of Yanks went over to attack, enlarging their holds on each town (during) each day. But the tanks were ordered to leave by dusk each night, and huge German tanks then left the ruins of the houses in which they were hiding and prowled the streets, driving the Americans back with the support of fanatical German infantry.'

Combat diary of Lt Goodwin (History of 79th Infantry Division, p108)

On 17 January, reflecting the intensity of the combat, armored vehicles available from the two tank companies defending Hatten was 8 Shermans out of 34. For the three tank companies defending Rittershoffen, approximately 18 operational vehicles out of 53 were available.

Surprisingly, a massive artillery barrage was launched by the German against Hatten on 19 January. It was estimated '3000 rounds were fired from 60 artillery pieces' (Pommois p291). This did not signal a new beginning, but merely the end of the battle. The intense barrage was probably a spoiling attack used to cover the repositioning of German units and to, probably, fool the Americans into thinking this sector was to remain a priority for the Axis command.

'The Germans made a final try the morning of the 19th, preceding a full regimental assault with a half-hour barrage of 3,000 shells into the tiny holdings of the 15th in Hatten. Then the Americans rose from their burrows, and when the Germans came in too close for mortars and machine-guns and bazookas, the Yanks used pistols, carbines, grenades and bayonets. In two hours they stopped the attack. The enemy finally gave up the two towns.'

Combat diary of Lt Goodwin (History of 79th Infantry Division, p108)

German objectives had clearly begun to change when the 10th SS Panzer Division arrived at the Rhine. The new effort would be on the right flank of the US 7th Army, around Gombsheim, close to the Rhine. At Hatten, only local attacks were authorised with the goal to tie the American defenders up in this area. To this end, the 47th Volksgrenadier Division was deployed to relieve the 7th Fallschirmjäger Division and 21st Panzer Division. Once the Americans realised German efforts had shifted, on 20 January, they withdrew from the villages of Hatten and Rittershoffen to a more southerly position anchored on the large town of Haguenau. This repositioning tightened their defensive position and greatly improved American unit density.



Sherman - Alsace, January 1945 (History of the 14thAD)



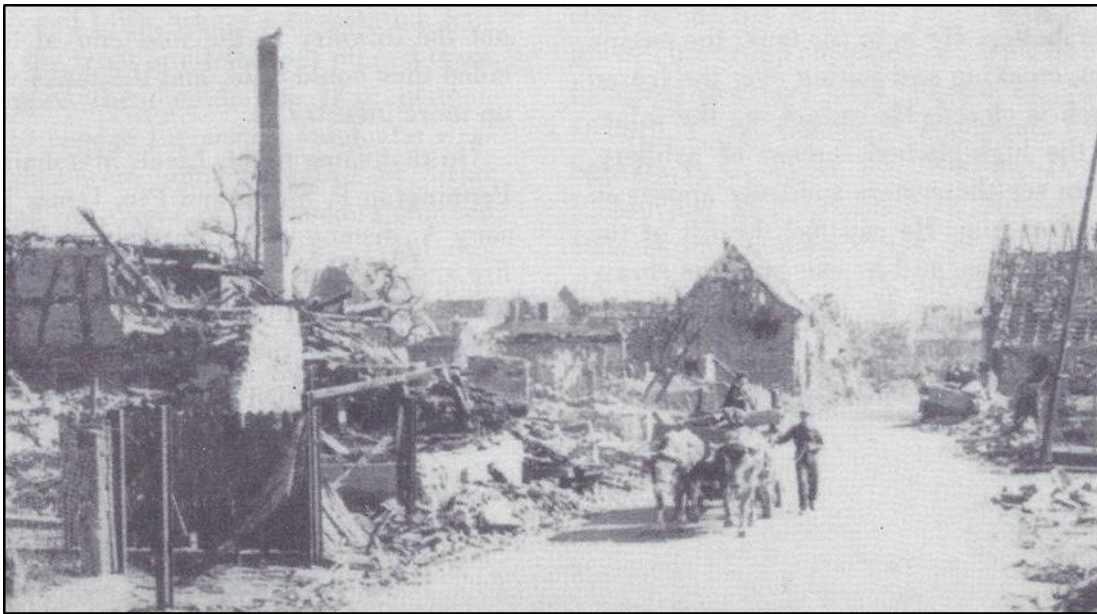
SPW251/21 'Drillings', Rittershoffen
January 1945 (History of the 21st Panzer)

Hatten-Rittershoffen: civilian losses & the destruction of the villages

'To say at the least the American forces were hampered because in any piece of planning, the welfare of the civilians had to be considered.'

AAR 79th Infantry Division (Pommois p285)

A large portion of the civilian population of Hatten was trapped in the village due to the unanticipated German counterattack in this sector. Some civilians were also trapped at Rittershoffen. The number of civilian casualties in Hatten was high, estimated at 83 killed. Approximately 40 civilians died at Rittershoffen. Most of the villagers had been trapped in the cellars during the battle. Nearly all of the approximately 350 houses in Hatten were damaged, most of them significantly.



Hatten-Rittershoffen - January 1945 (History of the 14thAD)



French civilians, January 1945 (History of the 42nd)



French civilians, January 1945 (History of the 42nd)



French civilians, January 1945 (History of the 42nd)



Hatten-Rittershoffen, January 1945 (NARA)



Hatten-Rittershoffen, January 1945 (NARA)



Hatten-Rittershoffen, January 1945 (NARA)

Hatten-Rittershoffen: Citations

CITATION: Presidential Unit Citation

The **Third Battalion, 313th Infantry Regiment**, is cited for the extraordinary heroism and outstanding performance of duty exhibited during the period from 31 December 1944 to 21 January 1945 in the vicinity of Oberroedern, Alsace, France.



This unusual fighting battalion, which had for days held a sector of regimental frontage, was faced again and again by determined enemy troops and armored vehicles but utterly refused to yield ground, holding against almost overwhelming odds with a tenacity possessed only by the most courageous. Although depleted heavily in effective strength, the intrepid infantrymen of the Third Battalion met the onslaught of the enemy and repelled each assault with heavy losses to the attackers. When the main effort of the German attack was launched against the sector defended by the Third Battalion, the Battalion not only held the onslaught but by sheer determination and dominant fighting spirit virtually destroyed the infantry element of the *21st Panzer Division*. Headquarters personnel, cooks and other men normally found in the rear areas, worked feverishly and without rest to improve the defensive positions, laying additional wire entanglements and hasty minefields. Finally, the enemy, discouraged by the losses sustained in the Third Battalion area, shifted his main effort and succeeded in penetrating the positions of an adjacent unit. Despite an increased frontage, repeated enemy attempts to widen the shoulder of the salient were smashed by the Third Battalion without allowing the slightest penetration. By holding its positions, the battalion limited the enemy's penetration in the adjacent sector to a narrow corridor and denied the enemy the terrain necessary for manoeuvre in order successfully to exploit the penetration, thereby preventing a major breakthrough. Had the enemy succeeded in effecting the breakthrough, repeatedly attempted in spite of prohibitive losses, it is almost a certainty that a major withdrawal would have been necessitated. The courage and fighting determination of the officers and men of the Third Battalion, 313rd Infantry Regiment, reflect the finest traditions of the Army of the United States.

CITATION: Presidential Unit Citation



Awarded to the **1st Platoon, A Company, 48th Tank Battalion** for outstanding performance of duty in action on the 9th of January 1945 near Hatten.

Assigned to the mission of repulsing an enemy attack, the 1st Platoon, consisting of four medium tanks, moved rapidly and decisively to support of friendly infantry already partially overrun by enemy armor. Displaying great skill and superior marksmanship, the platoon engaged sixteen Mark IV tanks in a deadly firefight, and without loss of men or equipment, destroyed six enemy tanks and forced the remainder to flee.

(Note: **Troop C** and **3rd Platoon, Troop E, 94th Armored Reconnaissance** also received a Presidential Unit Citation for timely intelligence reports in support of the defence of Hatten-Rittershoffen.)

CITATION: Presidential Unit Citation



The **1st Battalion, 242nd Infantry Regiment**, is cited for extraordinary gallantry and outstanding performance of duty in action against the enemy during the period 9-10 January 1945, inclusive, at and near Hatten, France.

On the morning of 9 January 1945, the 1st Battalion was occupying a front of 4000 yards when it was attacked by three regiments from the 21st and 25th German Panzer Divisions, supported by heavy armor and artillery. Ordered to hold its position at all cost, the Battalion withstood repeated

onslaughts of enemy flame-throwing tanks, self-propelled guns, and infantry. Time after time positions had been overrun by hostile tanks in order to stop the foot soldiers that followed. Cooks, clerks, mail orderlies, and supply personnel fought side by side with riflemen, completely disregarding their personnel safety. In spite of the loss of over five hundred officers and men, the Battalion tenaciously held its position in the face of overwhelming odds for more than fifty-two hours until relieved, exacting a heavy toll of men and equipment from the enemy. The courage and devotion to duty shown by the members of the 1st Battalion, 242nd Infantry Regiment, are worthy of emulation and exemplify the highest traditions of the Army of the United States.

CITATION: Congressional Medal of Honor – **Pfc Vito Bertoldo**



He fought with extreme gallantry while guarding 2 command posts against the assault of powerful infantry and armored forces which had overrun the battalion's main line of resistance.

On the close approach of enemy soldiers, he left the protection of the building he defended and set up his gun in the street, there to remain for almost 12 hours driving back attacks while in full view of his adversaries and completely exposed to 88-mm., machinegun and small-arms fire. He moved back inside the command post, strapped his machinegun to a table and covered the main approach to the building by firing through a window, remaining steadfast even in the face of 88-mm. fire from tanks only 75 yards away. One shell blasted him across the room, but he returned to his weapon.

When 2 enemy personnel carriers led by a tank moved toward his position, he calmly waited for the troops to dismount and then, with the tank firing directly at him, leaned out of the window and mowed down the entire group of more than 20 Germans. Some time later, removal of the command post to another building was ordered. Bertoldo voluntarily remained behind, covering the withdrawal of his comrades and maintaining his stand all night. In the morning he carried his machinegun to an adjacent building used as the command post of another battalion and began a day-long defense of that position. He broke up a heavy attack, launched by a self-propelled 88-mm. gun covered by a tank and about 15 infantrymen.

Soon afterward another 88-mm. weapon moved up to within a few feet of his position, and, placing the muzzle of its gun almost inside the building, fired into the room, knocking him down and seriously wounding others. An American bazooka team set the German weapon afire, and Bertoldo went back to his machinegun dazed as he was and killed several of the hostile troops as they attempted to withdraw.

It was decided to evacuate the command post under the cover of darkness, but before the plan could be put into operation the enemy began an intensive assault supported by fire from their tanks and heavy guns. Disregarding the devastating barrage, he remained at his post and hurled white phosphorus grenades into the advancing enemy troops until they broke and retreated.

A tank less than 50 yards away fired at his stronghold, destroyed the machinegun and blew him across the room again but he once more returned to the bitter fight and, with a rifle, single-handedly covered the withdrawal of his fellow soldiers when the post was finally abandoned. With inspiring bravery and intrepidity Bertoldo withstood the attack of vastly superior forces for more than 48 hours without rest or relief, time after time escaping death only by the slightest margin while killing at least 40 hostile soldiers and wounding many more during his grim battle against the enemy hordes.

(ED: he received the Medal when he had the rank of M/Sgt)

CITATION: Presidential Unit Citation

The **Second Battalion, 315th Infantry Regiment** is cited for the extraordinary gallantry, indomitable courage, tenacity of purpose and high esprit de corps displayed in the accomplishment of an unusually difficult operation during the period 9 January 1945 to 20 January 1945, in the vicinity of Hatten, Alsace, France.



When enemy forces had effected a penetration, and a breakthrough appeared imminent, the Second Battalion, 315th Regiment, was committed to halt the enemy onslaught. Despite enemy encirclement for a considerable portion of the period, and resultant shortages of food, medical supplies and certain types of ammunition and equipment, this inspired battalion repulsed repeated fanatical enemy tank-infantry attacks, inflicting almost prohibitive losses on the numerically superior attackers. The sheer courage, fortitude, and indomitable will displayed by the Second Battalion, 315th Regiment, was in keeping with the highest traditions of American infantry, and reflects great credit on the armed forces of the United States.

CITATION: Presidential Unit Citation

The **Third Battalion, 315th Infantry Regiment**, is cited for the extraordinary gallantry, indomitable courage, tenacity of purpose and high esprit de corps displayed in the accomplishment of an unusually difficult combat operation against the enemy during the period of 9 January 1945 to 20 January 1945 in the vicinity of Rittershoffen, Alsace, France.



When enemy forces had effected a penetration through friendly lines and a breakthrough appeared imminent, the Third Battalion, 315th Infantry, was committed to halt the enemy onslaught. Although confronted by the elite of the enemy's forces, this inspired battalion repulsed repeated fanatical tank-infantry attacks, inflicting severe losses on numerically superior attackers, despite the handicap of shortages in certain types of ammunition and equipment. The sheer courage and invincible will displayed by the Third Battalion, 315th Infantry, is in keeping with the highest traditions of the American infantry and reflects a great credit on the armed forces of the United States.

CITATION: Presidential Unit Citation

The **310th Field Artillery Battalion** is cited for extraordinary heroism and outstanding performance of duty in action against the enemy in the defense of Rittershoffen and Hatten, Alsace, France, during the period from 7 January 1945 to 20 January 1945.

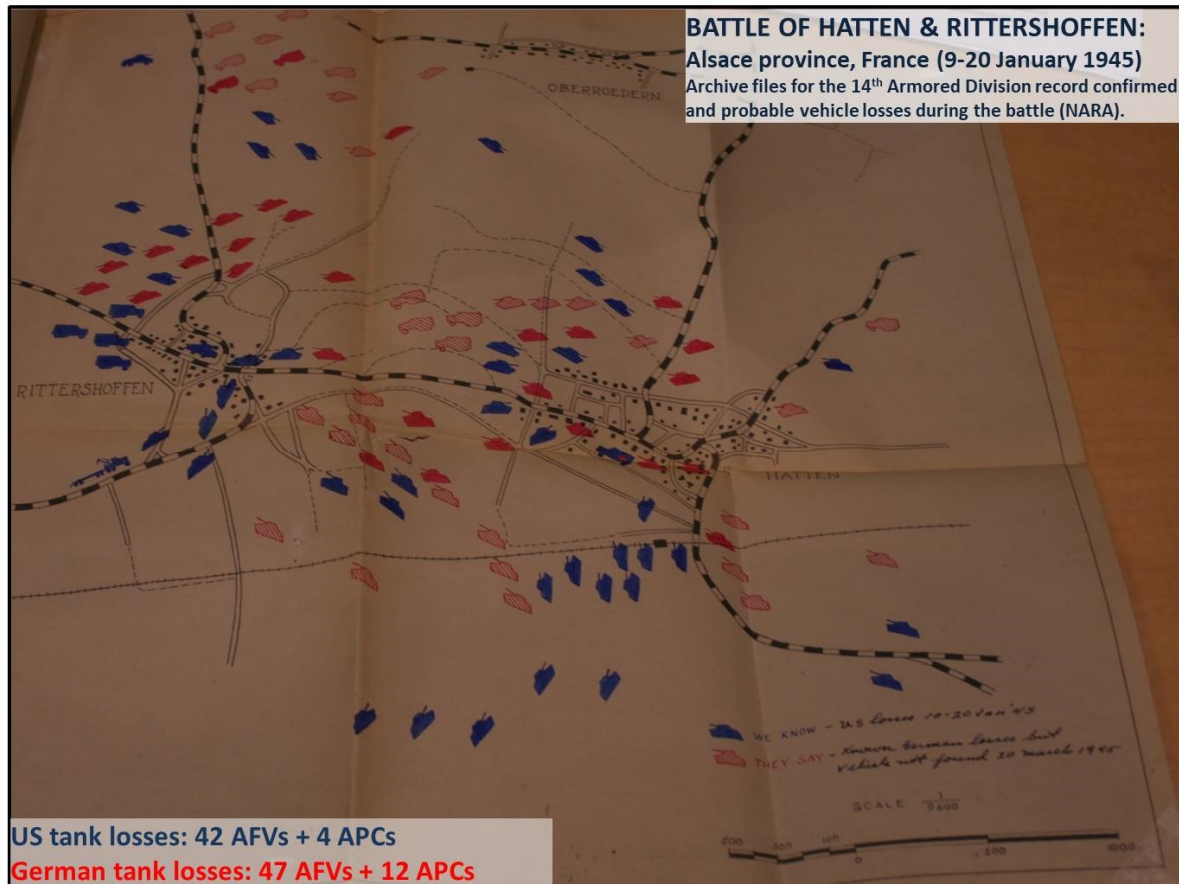


Repulsing almost continuous enemy attacks by a thunderous volume of fire, this inspired battalion rendered unusually effective support to friendly infantry for a period of 12 successive days; interdicted and harassed enemy supply routes, communication centers, assembly areas and greatly aided in the dispersal of attempts by enemy armored and infantry units to overrun the sector and to effect a decisive breakthrough. Despite adverse weather conditions, the mission of supporting four widely dispersed infantry battalions and the coordination of the fires of eight additional field artillery battalions, all duties were performed unhesitatingly to accomplish each successive fire mission scheduled or called for. During this period, the battalion was subjected to intense enemy counterbattery fire and attacks by enemy jet-propelled planes, but continued to inflict almost prohibitive losses among enemy troops and materiel. The performance of all members of the battalion, the number of missions fired and the effectiveness of all support fires over an extended period of time, were such as to distinguish this battalion above all other artillery battalions who participated in the same action. The gallantry, professional skill, and initiative exhibited by the


310th Field Artillery Battalion contributed directly to the repulsing of repeated fanatical enemy attacks and will remain forever in the annals of history of warfare


Hatten-Rittershoffen: Operational losses

The following document from the 14th Armored Division NARA records vehicle losses during the battle for Hatten-Rittershoffen.





German armored vehicles losses were well documented by the United States 14th Armored Division. These were substantial, at close to 60 vehicles. Infantry losses were harder to determine. That said, by the middle of the battle on 14 January, six *Panzergranadier* battalions did not appear capable of offensive operations. The men from the 20th *Fallschirmjager Regiment* were utilised from this point onwards for offensive operations during the battle for Hatten-Rittershoffen.


UNIT /SUB-UNITS	
25TH PANZERGRENAДИER DIVISION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A high proportion of the 47 German tanks and 12 armored personnel carriers that were confirmed destroyed were from this unit. • The commanding officer of the 5th <i>Panzer Battalion</i>, Cpt Arendt, was killed in action on the first day of combat. • Also on the first day of combat, the 1st Battalion from the 35th <i>Panzergrenadier Regiment</i> were left with only 100 fit soldiers after their assault on Maginot Line positions. Similarly, the 2nd Battalion, 119th <i>Panzergrenadier Regiment</i> suffered high casualties. • Assault guns from the 25th <i>Panzerjager Battalion</i> suffered from American artillery in the early hours of 9 January as they attempted to support the fellow infantry in the attack on the Maginot Line fortifications. • By the evening of 9 January, the majority of the unit was on the defensive. Only the armored 1st Battalion, 119th <i>Panzergrenadier Regiment</i> was capable of offensive activities and this unit, along with supporting armor, undertook the initial successful assault on Rittershoffen on 11 January.

UNIT /SUB-UNITS	
21ST PANZER DIVISION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The attack on Oberroedern on 8 January and the subsequent battle at Hatten-Rittershoffen had inflicted substantial damage on the armored units from this division. • The 192nd <i>Panzergrenadier Regiment</i> was only capable of limited offensive operations after significant losses at Oberroedern. • The war of attrition fought in Hatten-Rittershoffen by the 125th <i>Panzergrenadier Regiment</i> meant that by 14 January the unit could only operate on the defensive. • The 20th <i>Fallschirmjager Regiment</i> was the main offensive unit in Hatten-Rittershoffen from 14 January onwards.

American losses were well documented in unit histories and in National Archive (NARA) records. 42 Shermans were lost, along with a handful of armored personnel carriers. Some light tanks had also been lost during operations in the southern portion of Hatten. At one point in the battle, the five tank companies available defending Hatten-Rittershoffen could only muster 26 operational Shermans out of 87 Shermans they started with. Significant casualties were suffered by the six infantry battalions that fought in Hatten-Rittershoffen. The most significant damage was inflicted on the men from the Rainbow division.

UNIT /SUB-UNITS	
242ND INFANTRY REGIMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 1st Battalion had an effective strength of 33 officers and 748 other ranks. After two days of combat at Hatten, the unit was reduced to 11 officers and 253 other ranks. The 2nd Battalion has suffered 300 casualties out of 750 personnel during its first four days of fighting during the Nordwind campaign.

UNIT /SUB-UNITS	
315th INFANTRY REGIMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 2nd Battalion suffered approximately 200 casualties during its defence of Hatten out of 750 personnel. The 3rd Battalion suffered approximately 350 casualties during its defence of Rittershoffen out of 750 personnel.

UNIT /SUB-UNITS	
COMBAT COMMAND A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Company, 48th Tank Battalion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Starting: 17 Shermans (9 January) Lowest: 10 Shermans (15 January) Finish: 10 Shermans (20 January) B Company, 48th Tank Battalion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Starting: 18 Shermans (10 January) Lowest: 7 Shermans (15 January) Finish: 17 Shermans (20 January) C Company, 48th Tank Battalion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Starting: 18 Shermans (9 January) Lowest: 2 Shermans (15 January) Finish: 13 Shermans (20 January) The 68th Armored Infantry Battalion suffered approximately 200 casualties in the defence of Rittershoffen
COMBAT COMMAND R	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Company, 47th Tank Battalion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Starting: 16 Shermans (12 January) Lowest: 3 Shermans (17 January) Finish: 8 Shermans (20 January) C Company, 47th Tank Battalion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Starting: 18 Shermans (12 January) Lowest: 5 Shermans (17 January)

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Finish: 5 Shermans (20 January)• The 19th Armored Infantry Battalion suffered 200 casualties in the defence of Hatten |
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