RE-REXAMINING THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE:

ASSESSING THE ROLE OF STRATEGIC

INTELLIGENCE AND COALITION

WARFARE AGAINST THE 1944

WEHRMACHT

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the

University of North Texas in Partial

Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

By

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Denton, Texas

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The 1944 German Ardennes offensive failed. It was overly ambitious, built on erroneous assumptions, insufficiently supported by logistics, and depended on the weather for success. Yet, the offensive achieved more than it should have given the strength and combat experience of the Allied armies in Europe. Previous attempts to explain the limited success of the German offensive have emphasized the failure of Allied strategic intelligence – Ultra. Intelligence is an accurate, but incomplete explanation for initial German success in the Ardennes.

Three conditions allowed the Wehrmacht, approaching its manpower and logistical end, to crush the US First Army. First, coalition warfare so weakened the First Army that it became vulnerable to attack. Second, the Allies failed to develop a unified intelligence network capable of assessing the information that indicated the timing and target of the German attack. Finally, a well-executed German security and deception plan surprised the Allies. The well-executed German offensive manipulated both Allied intelligence and the Anglo-American coalition.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The German offensive in the winter of 1944 failed. It was overly ambitious, built on erroneous assumptions, and depended on luck – the weather - for success. Yet, the offensive achieved more than it should have, given the strength of the Anglo-American Armies. To explain the limited success of the German offensive, students of World War II have emphasized the Allied intelligence failure. Intelligence failure, is an accurate, but incomplete explanation of the Battle of the Bulge. In the months prior to the German offensive, problems with coalition warfare weakened Allied dispositions. Germany employed an elaborate security and deception plan. Varying degrees of intelligence experience produced contradictory assessments of German intentions. These conditions, coupled with a well-executed attack, allowed the German army more success than previously thought possible.

The Ardennes offensive represented one of the low points in American and British military history. The German attack, executed by nearly 600,000 men, came as a complete surprise. Hitler sought to drive a wedge between the Allies, seize the port of Antwerp,
these deficiencies, German commanders effected terrible losses on American forces.

Three inter-related factors allowed the Germans to deliver a costly surprise.

Poor intelligence, the traditional historical explanation, is partly responsible for German success at the Bulge. Its context, however, has not been accurately assessed. Allied signals intelligence, or Ultra, represented a small proportion of the overall intelligence picture. Ultra allowed Allied commanders to exploit German weaknesses and counter their initiatives. Still, the Allied intelligence system lacked unity. Systematic deficiencies, not a lack of information, produced varying interpretation up and down the chain of command. Lack of standardization allowed gross discrepancies in intelligence reporting. Intelligence staffs de-emphasized alternative intelligence sources, such as human and aerial intelligence. Despite information that suggested a German offensive, a deficient intelligence system created a varied and incomplete picture of German intentions. The result of the deficient intelligence system was non-uniform assessment of German capabilities and intentions.

Second, Anglo-American coalition warfare contributed to initial German success in the Ardennes. The Allies failed to develop battlefield cohesion between American and British units. Coalition problems existed in all previous campaigns, and operations toward Berlin were no different. Britain and America differed in military tradition, doctrine and strategic goals. Conflicts between leadership styles further eroded combat effectiveness. Allied commander General Dwight D. Eisenhower advocated a "broad-

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front” strategy to exercise maneuver and challenge the limited resources of Germany. British Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery argued for a “dagger-thrust” strategy, concentrating the assets of the Allies in a singular operation toward Berlin. Tenuous command relationships compounded these differences. Hitler questioned both British and American dedication to the alliance and targeted the seam between these powers. Political considerations, or those directed at maintaining national equity, thereby preserving the coalition, not military considerations, dominated Allied planning and logistical support. Allied strategic priorities resulted in a front vulnerable to attack.

Finally, little credit has been given to the skill of German field commanders. While regrouping in support of Hitler’s ambitious plan, German leaders held advancing Allied units along the western front. Germany concentrated its forces and directed a devastating blow at the decisive point in Allied lines. Hitler’s obsession with security and the supporting deception plan maximized German surprise. Hampered by shortages in fuel, men, materiel, and lacking the level of leadership evident in the 1940 Wehrmacht, Germany inflicted severe casualties on an Allied force superior in numbers.

Three factors acted in concert to aid the defeated German army. Without any one of these forces, the German offensive would have produced far fewer Allied casualties and achieved much less ground. For Hitler, however, the Ardennes offensive resulted in an end to the Third Reich. “For his modest achievement, compared to his ambitious aim, Hitler paid an exorbitant price.”

Background

Throughout early December 1944, a beleaguered German army continued to give ground to the slow, but deliberate Allied push toward Berlin. Since the breakout from Normandy, the Nazi army suffered continual setbacks. German forces in the West, or OB West, narrowly escaped annihilation in the Falaise pocket. By the winter of 1944, defeat seemed certain for the exhausted Germans. The Wehrmacht possessed neither the leadership, men, nor materiel to conduct campaigns similar to 1940. Desperation set in. Throughout fall 1944, German commanders committed every available soldier to the line in an attempt to slow Allied momentum. German troop shortages were drastic. Six divisions of specially trained parachute troops fought as common infantry in the line. By December 1944, a mere battalion of 1,000 paratroopers remained on the Western Front. Forced to use special duty forces for defense, Germany approached the end of its manpower reserves.

After hiring then firing a string of commanders in the West, Hitler reinstated Field Marshal Gerd von Runstedt in September 1944. The appointment of von Runstedt alarmed Allied intelligence. In late 1944, he represented the best tactician the Wehrmacht possessed. Allied intelligence surmised that his operational leadership would further delay the end of the war. He was experienced, conservative, and possessed enough men to make the Allied run for the German homeland costly. His age, seventy years old, and his previous record indicated that von Runstedt would conduct an orthodox German defense.

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2 Ibid., 458.
of the West Wall. He was a master of the counter-attack, and conservative in his employment of his limited resources. Von Runstedt was an unappealing foe for the Allies.

After narrowly escaping defeat in August at the Falaise pocket, von Runstedt re-organized OB West. Of paramount importance to the coming offensive was Army Group B. Field Marshal Walter Model, the youngest of the German field marshals, commanded the expanding group. Model formed four armies in his sector, which ran from Roermond and Dusseldorf in the north to Trier in the south. The three armies tasked with the offensive were the 6th SS Panzer Army under SS Leader Sepp Dietrich in the north, General Hasso-Eccard von Manteuffel’s 5th Panzer Army in the center, and General Karl Brandenberger’s 7th Army in the south. These units formed under an elaborate security and deception plan that escaped detection until after the 16 December initiation of the Ardennes counter-offensive.

The Allied situation in fall 1944 was very different than the German situation. In September, Field Marshal Montgomery’s 21st Army Group husbanded the majority of Allied resources and captured the port of Antwerp. The condition of the port as a supply line was questionable until early December. To the south of Montgomery was General Omar N. Bradley’s 12th Army Group. Bradley’s front stretched from Maastricht in the north to Luxembourg in the south. The U.S. 9th Army occupied the northern section of the 12th Army Group. Its front was less than ten miles long. Under the command of General William Hood Simpson, 9th Army directed its operations toward the Roer dams, in support of Montgomery’s 21st Army Group. Being the flank to Montgomery’s operations resulted in better than average logistical support compared to Simpson’s
General Courtney Hodges' 1st U.S. Army defended a thinly held section of the front that stretched more than eighty miles. It occupied the 12th Army Group sector to the south of Simpson's 1st Army and north of Patton's 3rd Army. The southern-most command of Bradley's 12th Army Group was General George Patton's 3rd Army. As Simpson and Patton's armies conducted limited offensives, Hodges' 1st Army received exhausted units from other fronts and new units from England. The relative inactivity that characterized the Ardennes region suited training and resting. Caught between the ambitions of his neighbor, Patton, and the logistical priority given to Simpson by higher headquarters, Hodges made no demands on either Bradley or Eisenhower for increased numbers of troops or supplies.

Field Marshal Montgomery described operations for his 21st Army Group in the north as appealing. On 15 December he noted that the enemy was fighting a defensive campaign on all fronts and could not stage major offensive operations. Montgomery and his superior, Eisenhower, maintained a strained relationship throughout the war, owed largely to Montgomery's low opinion of Eisenhower's qualifications as supreme commander. Eisenhower, faced with preserving the coalition, refused to engage Montgomery in his frequent and near-insubordinate attacks on the supreme commander.

Nearing Christmas, Montgomery attempted to reduce the friction between he and Eisenhower. On 15 December, the field marshal light-heartedly called for the five pounds owed him by Eisenhower for failing to end the war by Christmas, and requested leave to visit with his son in England. Although deeply immersed in the complexities of Allied
warfare since North Africa, Montgomery allowed himself to enjoy the privileges associated with being England’s “Field Marshal.”

At SHAEF headquarters, Eisenhower and his staff likewise relaxed. On 16 December, Eisenhower attended the wedding of his valet at the Louis XIV chapel in Versailles and capped off the evening by celebrating his nomination to General of the Army. Eisenhower replied to Montgomery's call on their bet, claiming that he still had nine days. Although he recognized the war was far from won, Eisenhower appreciated the pressure Allied forces had put on the Reich on land, at sea, and in the air. There was room for celebration.

Courtney Hodges, spent 16 December in Spa, Belgium. He invited Bradley for breakfast and later they had shotguns custom made. The daily operations report for the Ardennes stated that 1st Army “continued to attack with little progress against fortified enemy positions.” The Germans had attempted a similar attack, but were repulsed without loss of ground.¹ The operations report was indicative of the Ardennes, a “cat and mouse” game where seasoned units rested and new units prepared for combat.

Unlike other areas rich with eventful periodic reports, the Ardennes was a low priority. Four American divisions, two in need of rest after action in the Hurtgen Forest and two divisions new to the continent, maintained a front of nearly 100 miles. The situation was not ideal for General Hodges, but tolerable. He spent the remainder of the 16th entertaining SHAEF G-5, Lieutenant General A.E. Grasett. Bradley also relaxed,

¹ Twelfth Army Group, G-3 “Report of Operations”, 15-16 December 1944, National Archives and Record Administration, Record Group 457, Entry 427, Box 1767.
traveling from Luxembourg to Paris to join in Eisenhower's celebration. Eisenhower, Hodges, and Bradley felt the strains of commanding so many young men and took advantage of the quiet periods.

Indicative of its commander, General Patton, the U.S. 3rd Army to the south continued to drive toward Berlin. It advanced despite shortages in fuel and undertook major offensive preparations, two conditions that would have stopped other Allied commanders in their tracks. Montgomery's 21st Army Group scaled back operations in preparation for an offensive, indicative of his conservative approach to war. Allied forces to the north and south of 1st Army waited for the ideal time to complete the destruction of the German Army. Hampered by poor weather that limited air support, a holiday spirit, and the view that Germany neared defeat, early December was a good time for the Allies to regroup.

Across the Ardennes were 600,000 German troops. For three months they quietly assembled, cloaked in secrecy. Hitler devised a last gasp attempt to end the war with the western Allies and then concentrate his forces on the Russian menace. At 0530 on the 16th of December, the German Army conducted one of the most successful surprise attacks in history.

The level of surprise thrust upon the Allies paralleled General Erich von Manstein's 1940 Operation Yellow. Army historian Hugh Cole recognized that two of the factors that appealed to Hitler in 1940 persisted, "a thin enemy line and the need for
protecting the Ruhr.\textsuperscript{5} Allied thinking in 1944, regarding the Ardennes, had not evolved much since French dispositions in the same region four years prior. The failure of the Allies to detect the Ardennes offensive "remains one of the unresolved questions of American intelligence historiography."\textsuperscript{6}

Historiography

Without the explicit knowledge of Ultra, historians analyzed the war for thirty years with incomplete evidence. Based predominantly on memoirs and reminiscences, a murky reconstruction of the situation produced accounts that largely damned intelligence staffs for failing to recognize German intentions. Memoirs further damned complacent commanders for losing the combat edge in the field and maintaining less than positive control on their staffs. These memoirs failed to recognize that the length of World War II produced varying levels of combat effectiveness in every area of the war. Recollections came in two genres: those who possessed the Ultra secret and were forced to write a history of the war without explicitly defining the source of intelligence failure and those not aware of Ultra, and therefore discussing the war with incomplete evidence.

Almost immediately following the German surrender, Eisenhower initiated a campaign that targeted historical interpretation of one of the most volatile relationships in warfare. "The chief protagonists - Eisenhower and Montgomery - strove to preserve the


appearance of Anglo-American cooperation in the immediate postwar years.\textsuperscript{7}

Eisenhower desired a perception of "the great Allied partnerships he cemented." He continued that it would be a "tragedy if the shameful realities should leak out."\textsuperscript{8} Works immediately following the war were influenced by the effort to preserve the appearance of unity.

As time progressed, the nature of primary historical accounts changed. Allied leadership and military historians diverged into two camps: those who supported the Eisenhower broad-front strategy and those who argued that the broad-front strategy was costly, ineffective and lengthened the war. Eisenhower and Montgomery desired the appearance of Allied cooperation, but more damning accounts of coalition warfare surfaced as time progressed. Regarding the Battle of the Bulge, Field Marshal Montgomery keenly stated, "The less one says about the situation the better, for whatever I do say will almost certainly be resented."\textsuperscript{9} General Bradley perpetuated the myth of Allied cooperation in \textit{A Soldier's Story}. It was not until the publication of \textit{A General’s Life} in 1983 that Bradley was openly critical of Patton, Eisenhower, and Montgomery.

The 1950’s was a period of increasingly biased memoirs. The 1960’s official histories minimized nationalistic agendas and produced balanced and scholarly accounts.


Official histories varied in quality and thoroughness. American accounts largely avoided criticizing Anglo-American relationships, while British histories typically maintained that American leadership prolonged the war by failing to support Montgomery’s strategy. Forrest Pogue’s *Supreme Command* dominated the study of Allied command relationships in the 1960’s, but was written without regard to Ultra. Hugh Cole produced the most complete history in *The Ardennes: The Battle of the Bulge*. Likewise, Cole’s work predated public knowledge of Ultra. British historian, Sir Basil Liddell Hart, properly summarized the study of the Bulge in the 1960’s. He noted, “The discovery of uncomfortable facts has never been encouraged in armies instead, their history has been treated as a sentimental treasure rather than a field of scientific research.”

These official histories are the most complete of any produced to date, but they lacked the overt knowledge of Ultra, and avoided controversial coalition issues.

F.W. Winterbotham’s 1974 work, *The Ultra Secret*, revealed the Allied ability to read German signal communications. Although he disclosed the Allied intelligence advantage, Winterbotham’s book was filled with inaccuracies. *The Ultra Secret* forced a re-evaluation of the Ardennes and a subsequent look at the abilities of Allied commanders. By demonstrating the skill with which the Allies cracked German codes, he unknowingly condemned the Allied intelligence system. As a result of Winterbotham’s book, amateur intelligence historians increasingly assigned blame for the failure at the Bulge on G-2’s. They used piecemeal recreations of intelligence estimates and obscure interrogation

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reports, but had no knowledge of the complexities of the intelligence cycle. The 1970’s produced little in the way of comprehensive World War II studies, but these efforts initiated a re-examination of the Western front incorporating the previously missing intelligence factor.


This decade presented a different opportunity for historians. The majority of Ultra decrypts became available allowing an understanding of not only the structure of intelligence, but the substance, in a manner not previously possible. The 1990’s offered a unique opportunity for the World War II historian. D.K.R. Corswell summarized:

> The passage of time, especially the demise of the Cold War, demands thorough re-examination of the first fifty years of scholarship. While Anglo-American discord was real, Cold War perspectives, the memoir literature, and national biases distorted historical accounts, giving political factors and personal quarrels emphasis missing in historical documents.12

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CHAPTER 2

GERMAN EXECUTION

Introduction

Successful execution of an elaborately conceived plan resulted in an unexpected counter-offensive by the defeated German Army. On 16 December 1944, the Wehrmacht staged one of the most surprising offensives in history. It emerged from the thickly carpeted forests of the Ardennes and quickly smashed through the advancing American lines. For a brief moment, the Wehrmacht displayed a level of professionalism similar to the campaigns it waged in years past. The German effort ended, however, in failure. German defeat accelerated the destruction of the Wehrmacht in the West and possibly on all fronts. Regarded by most historians as Hitler’s last gamble, the Ardennes offensive was operationally well-executed.

Field Marshal Gerd von Runstedt, the commander whom the Allied press wrongly identified as responsible for the surprise attack, said of Hitler’s offensive, “The operational idea can almost be called a stroke of genius.”¹ Von Runstedt, the reluctant field marshal who guided the Wehrmacht against the Western Allies in late 1944, and an ardent adversary of the Fuhrer, grudgingly acknowledged the operational merits of Hitler’s plan.

British Army Groups, and striking as these Groups reached the eastern-most limit of Allied logistical support, the Wehrmacht delivered a near-crushing blow. Allied accounts of the Battle of the Bulge describe the German offensive as an intelligence failure of magnificent proportions. Generations of historians and soldiers assigned various levels of blame but ignored the tremendous skill with which a retreating German Army executed an impossible plan.

The Strategic Situation

By fall 1944, the Reich struggled on all fronts. Russia’s drive from the east resulted in the most terrible expenditure of lives in history. The Eastern front epitomized the level of destruction achieved in the Second World War. The Soviet summer offensive against the Wehrmacht’s Army Group Center consumed over a million irreplaceable German troops. The West was an equally bad situation. Germany pitted fifty-five divisions against the weight of ninety-six Allied divisions. Allied operations in Europe quickened after the landings at Normandy. Disparities between actual strength and “paper” strength increased for the Wehrmacht. In Italy and the Balkans, terrain and diminished Allied attention created a far less critical situation for the Reich. Bare essential numbers defended the mountainous southern approaches through Italy. Germany cannibalized Italy and the Balkans for troops in the months prior to the December offensive.

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2 Ibid., 1.
To the north, nine German divisions oversaw Finnish nickel production, but maintained few operational objectives. This region, too, provided a rich source of men for the western front. American interrogators discovered “A P/W stationed in Norway up to September 1944 (revealed) all units are stated to have sent troop contingents for the Western front... whereabouts and existence were uncertain and the above P/W statement constitutes the first indication of [their] presence.”

Germany suffered a difficult 1944. The shortage of troops to sustain a basic defense of the Reich would have forced most leaders to seek alternative solutions for an end to the war.

Hitler, however, contemplated no such alternative. He regarded defeatist thinking as treason and severely dealt with proponents of negotiation. Hitler saw significant indicators that things were not as pessimistic as his generals believed. Under the clever leadership of industrial overlord Albert Speer, German production of most war items peaked in 1944. Transportation of equipment succeeded despite Allied air attacks. The combined bomber offensive had few effects on German war goods production and had the adverse effect of strengthening civilian resolve. Supporting material gains, SS Leader Heinrich Himmler, charged by Hitler to mobilize recruits, produced “eighteen new divisions, ten panzer brigades and nearly a hundred separate infantry battalions” in the months of July and August.

Historian Hugh Cole summarized the logistical and manpower situation and the effects these indicators had on Hitler’s thinking.

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1 VIII Corps, G-2 Periodic Report number 173, 7 December 1944, Annex 2, US First Army File, National Archives and Records Administration II, College Park, Maryland, Record Group 407, Entry 427, Box 1872.

2 Cole. The Ardennes, 7.
Hitler's optimism and miscalculation, then, resulted in the belief that Germany has the material means to launch and maintain a great counteroffensive, a belief nurtured by many of his trusted aides. Conversely, the miscalculation of the Western Allies as to the destruction wrought by their bombers greatly contributed to the pervasive optimism which would make it difficult, if not impossible, for Allied commanders and intelligence agencies to believe or perceive that Germany still maintained the material for a mighty blow.\textsuperscript{5}

The September 1944 reinstatement of Field Marshal Gerd von Runstedt as commander of OB West was an unwelcome addition to German defense of the homeland. Montgomery said of von Runstedt, "I used to think that Rommel was good, but [von] Runstedt would have hit him for six. [Von] Runstedt is the best German General I have been up against."\textsuperscript{6} Von Runstedt assumed control of OB West and inherited the plan designed by Hitler earlier in the month. Although the Allies wrongly credited the winter offensive to von Runstedt, he devoted most of the fall of 1944 to developing alternatives to Hitler's ambitious plan. After four months of unsuccessful negotiation with the Führer, von Runstedt reluctantly executed Hitler's final offensive.

Field Marshal von Runstedt's subordinate was Field Marshal Walter Model, who at fifty-three was the youngest field marshal in the Wehrmacht. He commanded Army Group B in the strictest manner, indicative of his general staff heritage. Although the winter campaign was labeled the "Runstedt Offensive," it was the product of Hitler's

\textsuperscript{5} Ibid., 5-6.
planning and Model’s efforts. Model tactically and operationally controlled units in the west, and he coordinated the reorganization period prior to December 1944. Von Runstedt served as little more than a liaison between Army Group B and OKW, a task he accomplished “without overly much interference or comment.” While von Runstedt developed alternative plans and recruited support for his “small solution,” Model controlled the movement and disposition of forces in the West.

In late 1944, the cornerstone of the German Army remained the General Staff. Staff efficiency was the only consistent asset of the German military. Five years engaged in world war did little to harm the professionalism with which staff members planned operations. They were “highly competent technicians, subordinating (themselves) to the common interest.” Standards of selection and training of the general staff were not altered throughout the war. By using the staff as a guide, Hitler possessed a distorted belief in the uniform proficiency of his forces. Not only numbers, but also the quality of soldiers serving in the Wehrmacht was a far cry from 1940.

Preoccupied with numbers, Hitler appointed SS Leader Heinrich Himmler commander of the Replacement Army. Himmler oversaw conscription of untapped portions of the Reich. He lowered the draft age to sixteen and raised the upper limit to sixty years of age. He scoured the hospitals for stragglers and cannibalized the bloated

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ranks of the air force and navy. Despite Himmler’s efforts, Germany approached critical manpower conditions in late 1944. Allied intelligence indicated that “The average daily capture in the West (since 28 October) has been 3,160, for the whole campaign the daily average is just over 4,000. After taking into consideration other casualties, it is estimated that each week the enemy is losing the equivalent of five divisions. That he should be able to maintain, and even increase, the number of divisions in the field, is the more remarkable in view of these figures. However, should such losses continue throughout the winter, they will more than compensate for Volksgrenadier production.” Over-optimistic Allied intelligence staff admitted the success of German conscription efforts. For the Wehrmacht, however, the most efficient conscription and training program could not sustain a rate of five divisions per week. German options in late 1944 were limited.

Hitler recognized that victory on the battlefield was the only means of accomplishing an end to the war. He refused to accept a prolonged defense of the Reich as an acceptable strategy for the war effort. Industrial and manpower numbers were not as foreboding as history indicates, for Prussian military tradition imbued the Army to outlast its opponents and manipulate the bonds that united “allies.” Germany possessed the numbers to continue a long and determined defense of the homeland, but Hitler insisted on the offensive. He envisioned no other form of warfare. These factors guided his decisions in the last winter of the war.12

11 VIII Corps, G-2 Periodic Report number 173, 7 December 1944, First US Army File, National Archives and Records Administration II, College Park, Maryland, Record Group 407, Entry 427, Box 1872.
The Plan and the Execution

The plan that Hitler devised in OKW headquarters was sent to OB West as a fait accompli. Without the consultation of his generals, Hitler spelled out the objectives. He planned to concentrate his forces under cover provided by the Ardennes forest and launch a counter-offensive through the thinly-held 1st US Army front. Terrain supported evasive movement and deception. The Allies characterized the Ardennes as "passable for infantry but difficult for vehicles. Roads are generally poor and not capable of sustaining continued heavy traffic." The relatively weak Allied dispositions in the Ardennes resembled those of both 1914 and 1940.

Maximizing surprise and relying on overwhelming local superiority in numbers, the drive sought to turn northeast toward Antwerp. By creating a second "Dunkirk," the German offensive aimed to remove the British from the continent and force the British and Americans to reappraise the coalition. According to Hitler, the ensuing chaotic period in the West would allow the Wehrmacht to focus on creating a stalemate in the East. Supported by optimistic logistical indicators, Hitler initiated planning for the winter offensive in September 1944.

Counter-offensive execution changed very little from its original form. Alfred Jodl, serving as Chief of OKW, created a small staff to oversee the details of the

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13 4th Infantry Division, G-2 Field Order #53: Engineer Annex, Tactical Study of the Terrain, 7 November 1944, National Archives and Records Administration II, College Park, Maryland, Record Group 407, Entry 427, Box 6433.
operation. Perhaps the product of the July attempt on his life, Hitler demanded extreme levels of secrecy. The cover name for the plan meshed with Allied predisposition's regarding German intentions. "Wacht am Rhein," or "Watch on the Rhine," supported Allied intelligence reports that the Germans were relegated to the defensive for the remainder of the war.

Hitler envisioned an attack designed to strike at the Allies when they approached what strategists define as the "offensive culminating point." The offensive culminating point is a period in operations that is easy to define in retrospect, but difficult to predict. The offensive culminating point is approached as advancing operations increase troop and material requirements. This offensive movement increases logistical distance for the advancing army. At the same time, the defending army devotes minimal efforts to the defensive, while husbanding forces for the counter-attack. At the "offensive culminating point" the offensive army yields the operational advantage to the defender. Simply put, it is "the point in time and location when the attacker's combat power no longer exceeds that of the defender."15 Hitler targeted his offensive at the time where Allied armies exceeded their logistical range and thereby became vulnerable to attack.

Whether Hitler recognized the significance of the "offensive culminating point" is difficult to ascertain. It was precisely at this point that Hitler sought to deliver the decisive blow. Hitler was an ardent student of Carl von Clausewitz, and often repeated the lessons von Clausewitz derived from the Napoleonic wars. Hitler was by no means a "strategic

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genius," but he was "an autodidact in every field, (and) had acquired remarkable military knowledge through reading books on military matters." It is reasonable to assume that Hitler recognized the concept of the "offensive culminating point," but to suggest Hitler possessed a thorough understanding of von Clausewitz is unrealistic. Late 1944, however, provided Hitler with an opportunity to maximize the benefits of defensive warfare. Hitler determined the timing and objective of Germany’s counter-offensive and was ultimately responsible for the concept of the operation.

Over a hundred years prior to the Battle of the Bulge, von Clausewitz defined the four benefits to the defense. These benefits applied to the Wehrmacht as they did all previous armies in history. The Wehrmacht first used terrain to move and hide the elements involved in the attack. Second, Germany maintained shorter lines of communication than the Allies. Third, Germany enjoyed the support of the indigenous population. Finally, and most importantly, Hitler had the advantage of timing. In the waiting process, the Reich produced and delivered troops and equipment to the front at rates that eclipsed the Allies. The operational advantage on the Western front in late 1944 belonged to the German Army in the defense.

In order to manipulate the German operational advantage and achieve an attack at the "culminating point," Hitler massed his forces in the western theater and supplemented these units with troops from other theaters. In this process, the Wehrmacht conceded

\[\text{15 Jehudah L. Wallach, The Dogma of the Battle of Annihilation: The Theories of Clausewitz and Schlieffen and Their Impact on the German Conduct of Two World Wars (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1986), 301.}\]
\[\text{17 Carl von Clausewitz, On War, Edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1993), 691.}\]
minimal amounts of ground; for the initiation of an offensive from the confines of Berlin
would have been futile. Hitler ordered units in the West to “gain as much time as possible
for raising and bringing up new formations.” Under the crafty, yet disciplined, leadership
of Field Marshal Model, entire divisions were removed from the line and sent to staging
areas for rest and refitting. As early as 13 September, SS panzer units vacated the line and
received new troops from Norway and the Balkans. Model employed bare essential
numbers of troops to maintain the West Wall, while allowing units earmarked for the
Ardennes time to reconstitute their ranks.

The refitting period continued throughout the fall of 1944. Reconstitution occurred
while the Wehrmacht fought Allied forces that previously made steady progress toward
Germany. The significance of conducting successful refitting operations in the midst of
the defensive cannot be overstated. Hitler ordered that “the Army in the West will dispute
every inch of ground with the enemy by delaying action.” Inexperienced German Air
Force and Navy personnel manned a static defense against attacking Allied units. The
Allies not only missed the opportunity Hitler’s gamble presented, but German forces
managed to stage a series of successful local counterattacks.

On 1 December, Field Marshal Montgomery reported “little progress against stiff
opposition.” He failed to recognize that forces against him diminished in size and
quality. Each day, experienced German soldiers left the line, while replacement troops,

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19 Ibid., 191.
20 12th Army Group, Liaison Report from 21st Army Group, 1 December 1944, National Archives and
   Records Administration II, College Park, Maryland, Record Group 407, Entry 427, Box 1756.
trained in only the most basic combat skills, assumed the defense. The only notable exception to German success was action in the U.S. 3rd Army sector. Patton’s drive toward Berlin forced resting units to remain in the line and new units to fill the holes created by his pincer movements and “end runs.” Logistical shortages proved to be the single factor slowing the advance of Patton’s 3rd Army. German efforts in late 1944 were remarkable and demonstrated the limitations of some notable Allied leaders.

German security and deception defeated Allied intelligence efforts. Phantom headquarters created north of the Ardennes supplied communications targets rich in number and absent in content. Units earmarked for the offensive were forbidden to transmit over the airways. Germany conducted deliberate train unloadings during daylight hours in areas not involved in the attack and moved these same troops under cover of darkness to staging areas for the offensive. The Wehrmacht deployed troops to false staging areas during daylight hours in areas frequented by Allied aerial reconnaissance, while re-embarking these same troops to the Ardennes under cover of darkness. The Gestapo patrolled marshaling areas to enforce night blackout conditions. German offensive forces exercised light and noise discipline, simultaneously creating volumes of signal and physical commotion in false staging areas. Germany constructed false billeting areas near the Ruhr, while housing troops for the offensive in the villages near the Ardennes. The result of German security and deception was Allied misinterpretation of German locations and intentions.

Troop movements dumbfounded Allied intelligence. The refitting program created a strategic reserve northwest of Cologne and another in the Eiffel. A “sham massing of
troops was ordered at Cologne."²¹ Allied intelligence predictably noted the phantom headquarters at Cologne and the construction of camps near the Ruhr, but failed to detect the movement into the Ardennes region. Intelligence analysts accumulated indicators of movement into the Ardennes, but failed to gain a consensus regarding these events.

The effectiveness of the German deception plan is evident in Allied assessments of German capabilities and intentions. Twelfth Army Group and 1st US Army agreed that "the enemy's defensive plan involves all-out defense at the Roer River, beyond which Allied advances would constitute an immediate threat to the Ruhr."²² Only the staff of the Third US Army and its subordinate corps opposed this view. Colonel Oscar Koch, 3rd Army G-2, regarded the 15 December information as an indication that "the enemy is reforming and refitting his battered Panzer Divisions, but at the same time is keeping them available for immediate employment... [and] is massing his armor in positions of tactical reserve presumably for a large-scale counteroffensive."²³ Lower echelons were further confused, noting "the organization of the enemy forces opposing the V Corps in its northern sector continued to remain obscure."²⁴

German security measures were similarly successful. Field Marshal Model ordered non-German soldiers removed from the line. Unlike the occupation of France, defending

²¹ First US Army, G-2, OI-SIR/39: Special Interrogation Report #39, Dr. Wilhelm Heinrich, OKW Historian, 30 April 1947, National Archives and Records Administration II, College Park, Maryland, Record Group 407, Entry 427, Box 1954G.
²² VIII Corps, G-2, Periodic Report number 173, Annex 3: Extract 12th Army Group Weekly Intelligence Summary, 7 December 1944, National Archives and Records Administration II, College Park, Maryland, Record Group 407, Entry 427, Box 1872.
²³ Third US Army, G-2, Periodic Report number 188, Annex 3, 16 December 1944, National Archives and Record Administration II, College Park, Maryland, Record Group 407, Entry 427, Box 2039.
the homeland resulted in fewer human intelligence problems for the Gestapo. Nazi propaganda taught that Allied soldiers shot surrendering Germans "with their own weapons and their bodies robbed of all possessions." Faced with retaliatory punishment on soldiers' families, German Army desertions declined in late 1944. These conditions combined to limit Allied human intelligence to prisoner of war interrogation reports.

The result of the combined security and deception plan was sporadic and infrequent reporting from all intelligence sources.

German intelligence efforts during fall 1944 were superior to Allied efforts. The U.S. 4th Infantry Division claimed, "The German attack came as a complete surprise to us, no previous indications whatever having been observed." The division G-2 found that "the Germans had extensive and accurate information of our strength and dispositions. Some of their captured men had all our forward positions marked. They knew the exact strength of the garrisons in our towns." German intelligence was accurate almost to the individual. "Men of the [German] 320th Regiment were told that the capture of Dickweiler would be easy since it was held by only two platoons - which was exactly correct."

The 4th Infantry Division evacuated the border of civilians and continued

\[24\] V Corps, G-2, Period Report: 1-12 December 1944, National Archives and Records Administration II, College Park, Maryland, Record Group 407, Entry 427, Box 3413.
\[25\] VIII Corps, G-2 Periodic Report number 177, 14 December 1944, 4th Infantry Division File, National Archives and Records Administration II, College Park, Maryland, Record Group 407, Entry 427, Box 6465.
\[26\] Stephen C. Duncan, "Intelligence and Defensive Culminating Point - Piercing the Fog" (Monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, US Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 1995), 24.
\[27\] 4th Infantry Division, "Battle of Luxembourg, December 16-24, 1944," National Archives and Records Administration II, College Park, Maryland, Record Group 407, Entry 427, Box 6433.
\[28\] Ibid.
\[29\] Ibid.
patrolling, but "the front was so thinly held that individuals could freely cross it, especially at night."\textsuperscript{30} The attacking German force possessed a clear intelligence advantage in the Ardennes.

The German plan was elaborately conceived and had specific objectives. One study concluded, "An aggressive, innovative, and persuasive Wehrmacht deception plan clouded Allied assessments of German intentions. The Germans provided a false picture for Allied viewing, and Allied intelligence reports reflected that picture."\textsuperscript{31} An after-action report indicated that "obscuring of the location of the offensive was largely due to new and elaborate deceptions staged by Germany."\textsuperscript{32} For a brief period of time, the German Army proved superior to Allied intelligence.

Conclusion

After more than fifty years of discussion, two obvious questions persisted. Considering the massive amount of material on the subject, why has German performance in the Battle of the Bulge been routinely downplayed? Second, if Germany demonstrated a significant level of professionalism, why did the Ardennes Offensive fail?

To answer the first question, it is necessary to remove contemporary perspective from the stranglehold of postwar interpretation. Generations of historians continued in the tradition of Bradley, Eisenhower, and Montgomery by assigning blame, while failing to

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{31} Brian A. Keller, "Avoiding Surprise: The Role of Intelligence Collection and Analysis at the Operational Level of War" (Monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, US Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 1992), 10.
tradition of Bradley, Eisenhower, and Montgomery by assigning blame, while failing to recognize a most capable German military. Human nature, as well as personal rivalry, assessed failure through the recognition of fault, rather than the appreciation of achievement. Escaping the stranglehold of postwar interpretation, a different perspective of the German military is not only possible, but justified.

In the late fall of 1944, the number of German divisions in the western theater and their subsequent armored complement suggested the possibility for offensive action. The number of divisions on the western front was high, but the combat troop numbers in the defending divisions was quite low. The quality of the German soldier deteriorated markedly from the 1940 level. Supported by a massive mobilization effort on the home front, these numbers indicated a range of possibilities. German divisions in the West could be reinforced to produce a costly Allied advance toward Berlin. These “hollow” divisions in the West could have indicated that counter-offensive forces loomed across the front from unsuspecting American divisions. Allied intelligence never achieved a consensus on German capabilities when analyzing these conflicting numbers. Allied interrogators described these soldiers as of “proportionally poorer quality,” but failed to define their role in future operations.

Considering German handicaps, two items deserve long overdue credit. First, the operational vision that predicted an Allied “offensive culminating point” was what von

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33 VII Corps, G-2, Prisoner of War Interrogation Periodic Report number 191, 13 December 1944, National Archives and Records Administration II, College Park, Maryland, Record Group 407, Entry 427, Box 3900, 2.
Runstedt grudgingly, but correctly labeled "genius." Second, and more notable, was the miraculous manner in which Field Marshal Model fulfilled Hitler's unrealistic expectations.

Hitler was an ardent student of Carl von Clausewitz. He studied and recited the lessons of the Napoleonic era, as well as the campaigns of Fredrick the Great. He recognized in September 1944 that the Allies would eventually approach the end of their logistical range. This vision stunned his generals, and all conceded the plausibility of a limited offensive directed through the Ardennes. A successful attack would restore a buffer around the West Wall, increase troop morale, and protect the Ruhr industrial region. In concept, a limited Ardennes offensive conducted at the culminating apex yielded numerous possibilities. The failure of Hitler's military education is properly summarized by historian Jehuda Wallach, who noted, "It is obvious that Hitler, in fact, had never permeated the depths of Clausewitz' philosophy."  

In support of Hitler's orders, Field Marshal Model carried out his duties in concert with his General Staff heritage. He removed essential armored units from the line, refitted their material requirements, deployed crucial elements to staging areas, and did so while eluding Allied intelligence "experts," and stagnating the Allied advance. By 1 December, morale within the ranks reached "a level not previously recorded."  

Field Marshal Model economically conducted preparations for the offensive. His efforts were on par with the

34 Wallach, The Dogma of the Battle of Annihilation, 301.
35 4th Infantry Division, G-2, Periodic Report number 127, 13-14 December 1944, National Archives and Records Administration II, College Park, Maryland, Record Group 407, Entry 427, Box 6465.
splendid feats of Fredrick and Napoleon. Considering the skill and efficiency that delivered three German armies to the western front, why did the German offensive fail?

Four factors contributed to the Ardennes failure. At the core of the German failure the operation lacked logistical support. Although Himmler and Model put every available body into the line, and Speer and Goebbels produced an exceptional number of tanks for the offensive, fuel was the logistical downfall. Allied strategic bombing, which failed to produce a tangible victory in its campaign against the will of the German people in 1944, “showed more immediate results” against the oil industry.36 The rapid breakthrough and advance of the panzer armies through Allied lines produced an “offensive culminating point” for Germany in a matter of days. The poor road network the Wehrmacht used to surprise the Allies haunted the advance by failing to support the enormous fuel requirements of mechanized warfare. Hitler’s operational vision was remarkable; however, he lacked the strategic understanding to realize the impossibility of reaching Antwerp. It was at the highest level of war, the strategic level, and the level that mustlogistically support the operational level, that Hitler failed.

The second, and most significant, failure was the inability of senior military leadership to convince Hitler to select a more suitable objective. Regarding Antwerp, von Runstedt testified that “all, absolutely all conditions for the possible success of such an offensive were lacking.”37 Time for preparation and assembly were inadequate, and the number of promised troops never materialized. Germany possessed the fuel to support

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37 Ibid., 25.
offensive operations on the scale of the Ardennes offensive for no more than two weeks. Both von Runstedt and Model recognized that a smaller solution was plausible, and even desirable, but months of pleading only reinforced Hitler’s resolve toward Antwerp. Beyond inspiration, Hitler’s participation proved fatal to the winter offensive.

Third, Wehrmacht troops in 1944 were a shadow of the highly trained, technically skilled, and emotionally charged soldiers that preceded them in the Ardennes four years prior. These troops were not of the caliber Hitler envisioned. Von Runstedt doubted “whether it would be possible to hold the ground won, unless the enemy is completely destroyed.” He recognized that these troops could conduct a surprise offensive against the weakened American line, but they would most likely fall during the Allied counter. Even the quality of elite special operations troops had been destroyed by years of misuse as average infantry soldiers.

Finally, great credit is due to the American response to the Ardennes offensive. To the south of the Bulge, General Patton’s US 3rd Army broke off offensive operations directed toward the east and delivered a crushing blow to the German southern flank. The level of professionalism required to turn an advancing army ninety degrees and maintain the offensive cannot be overstated. Patton’s 3rd Army achieved in four days what Montgomery’s 21st Army Group, augmented by portions of the US 1st Army, failed to achieve in three weeks. Complementing the skill of the 3rd Army in the Battle of the Bulge is the courage and tenacity displayed by individual divisions. The defense of

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38 Ibid., 28.
Bastogne by the 101st Airborne Division and the timely response of the 2nd Infantry and 2nd, 7th, and 11th Armored Divisions stagnated the German advance and cost the Wehrmacht precious time during their offensive. The American response ultimately defeated the German advantages gained through surprise.

History gauged the Battle of the Bulge in terms of numbers, leadership, or systems. The Battle of the Bulge must be correctly assessed on multiple levels. Hitler's strategic failure doomed the plan from the outset. Wallach produced the most accurate summary of Hitler's strategic failure:

This plan provides a striking example of lack of principles and theory in the conduct of war. The investigation of the German spring offensive in 1918 has already revealed the results that are expected from opportunistic gambling, and not based on sound political and military judgment. Since it is obvious that in 1944 the Germans had 1918 in mind, the repetition of the basic failures is indeed surprising, the more so since Clausewitz had so clearly established the relationship between the offensive and the defensive.40

A hastened end to the war in the West, at a high cost in lives on both sides, convinced Allied historians of the poor caliber of their opponents. Contrary to the poor image history gives the German Army of late-1944, the Wehrmacht was an organization capable of demonstrating professional execution of a flawed plan. As a result of postwar feuding between Allied leaders and their subsequent supporters, German military professionalism at the operational level has been frequently overlooked.

Introduction

The Allies possessed sufficient information prior to the Battle of the Bulge to preclude the effectiveness of the German offensive. Allied failure to develop a unified intelligence network resulted in a German attack that caught American forces off guard. The growing pains experienced by American intelligence in the early years were unique. "A newly created and unappreciated organization whose members are attached throughout the world, whose mission is secret, and whose product is seen by very few – is fated to have a greater number of peculiar problems than is the usual infantry."\(^1\) By assuming the role as leader in a global conflict, America faced the challenge of developing a massive intelligence network with limited resources and experience.

The Allied intelligence failure at the Battle of the Bulge resulted from three conditions. First, inadequately prepared American intelligence officers underwent Ultra training under the leadership of over-extended British allies. Second, as the United States assumed the lead in World War II, American inexperience yielded to British intelligence

\(^{1}\) SRH-107, "Problems of the SSO System in World War II," National Archives and Records Administration II, College Park, Maryland, National Security Agency Files, Record Group 457, Entry 9002.
evolving intelligence system failed to compensate for American training and experience
deficiencies, British complacency, and the coalitions inability to produce a unified
intelligence system.

Ultra dominated the intelligence cycle. The high-level source of Ultra targets
proved to be more significant to Allied assessments than other sources. The British
tradition of Ultra-reliance continued in American commands as a result of intelligence
training conducted by the British at Bletchley Park. Ultra proved reliable prior to the
Ardennes offensive and intelligence experts considered the months prior to the Battle of
the Bulge as no different.

A Brief Intelligence Cycle

Intelligence analysis is more art than science. The collection process of
intercepting communications, breaking codes, and determining order of battle is rooted in
science. Collection produces information, which after compilation and interpretation,
becomes intelligence. Historians assume, since the revelation of the Ultra secret, that
Allied intelligence read German communications on a consistent basis. The complexity of
the process, and the success Allied intelligence enjoyed by reading a small percentage of
German communications, is attributable to the meticulous and exhausting work performed
by all members of the Allied intelligence network. Allied success in breaking these codes
has been exaggerated. Given time and context, nearly every German transmission was

1 SRH-107, "Problems of the SSO System in World War II," National Archives and Records
Administration II, College Park, Maryland, National Security Agency Files, Record Group 457, Entry
eventually readable. The number of interceptions, however, produced a mountain of encrypted messages that became increasingly less significant as time progressed.
Allied ability to read German codes derived from a series of chance events. A Polish mechanic who worked on construction of the German Enigma cipher machine, defected to France and reproduced a copy of the machine for British intelligence. A copy of the machine was a useful tool, but its reproduction hardly guaranteed results.

Encryption, the process where a message in plain text is converted to code, yielded approximately 5,000 possible combinations. Encryption relied on a series of keys to set the order of letters in a message. The Wehrmacht changed keys daily, making decryption a never-ending challenge.

British, and later American, cryptologists, dedicated the entire war to analyzing patterns within a coded message. British mathematician Alan Turing paved the way for British code breakers.\(^2\) They examined these patterns in an effort to determine the proper encryption key. By determining the encryption keys, decryption was possible. Decryption was a hit-and-miss process. It relied on mathematical analysis of possible letter variations, but experienced cryptographers accelerated the decoding process. Once defined, the proper key allowed cryptologists to translate the message into plain-text German.

Determining the key allowed all messages intercepted within that period to be decoded. The Allies classified the decoded message “Ultra Secret,” or later “Ultra” for abbreviation. The difficulty in intercepting encoded German message eclipsed the complexity of the decoding process.

Allied cryptologists analyzed intercepted messages at their leisure, but interception relied on timing. Intercept stations targeted a frequency, time, and direction in an effort to
intercept a brief transmission. As the war progressed, Allied intelligence learned German communications procedures with great accuracy. Experienced radio operators reconstructed German radio networks, identified enemy radio operators, and defined frequencies used by various levels of command. Allied success relied on German adherence to established radio procedures, a condition absent prior to the Battle of the Bulge.

Bletchley Park, a facility outside of London, housed most intelligence functions. Hut-6 decoded intercepted messages. These decrypts went to Hut-3 for translation. Once translated, messages went to MI-14, the British analysis group. The analysis process integrated information from signals intelligence with other sources. Human intelligence derived from prisoner of war interrogations, espionage, and indigenous questioning. The Air Force contributed bombing surveys and aerial reconnaissance. Naval intercepts supported the intelligence process through communications intercepts and logistical assessments. All of these materials went into a comprehensive intelligence picture.

Bletchley Park reported to three recipients. First, Washington received a copy of Bletchley products. Second, the British Joint Intelligence Command received intelligence reports for their summary of events and assessment of German intentions. Finally, each days material went to Special Security Officers attached to Allied commands. The commands analyzed the intelligence using Ultra-trained officers. The timing, quality, and relevance of the material sent to both Washington and Allied field commands varied

throughout the war. America encountered considerable opposition from Britain in the dissemination process.

Other Source Picture

The revelation of Ultra focused intelligence on signals and the Enigma cipher. For the intelligence staff, however, the majority of intelligence came from other sources. Ultra dominated the intelligence cycle, but was not always reliable, nor was it always plentiful. Confronted with contradictory information, intelligence officers relied more heavily on Ultra decrypts. Ultra in late 1944 was limited. Hitler's obsession with security caused a dearth of breakable material. Allied intelligence staffs, confronted with conflicting information and lacking Ultra, failed to recognize signs that suggested a German offensive.

German U-boat traffic was a key source. Although the naval command was not privy to plans for the counter-offensive, they supported the Wermacht in alternative ways. Unable to employ the large numbers of sailors working around ports, the German Navy contributed men to the Western front for defense. Naval troops underwent three to five weeks of infantry training and allowed regular units time to rest and re-fit. The Navy increased weather reports as a secondary mission. The number of weather reports increased from two or three per day throughout the fall to fifteen per day by December 15. On 19 December, Berlin notified U-boat command that their reports “contributed decisively to determining the beginning of our great offensive in the west.”

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1 Hinsley, Vol III, pt 2., 430.
indicators provided minor, but tangible evidence of German attention toward the Western front.

Human intelligence provided mixed results. Prior to December 1944, Allied units evicted the Wehrmacht from occupied territories. German occupied territories were previously susceptible to infiltration and welcomed Allied intelligence efforts. Allied proximity to the Rhineland stopped all such activities. The British Special Operations Executive (SOE) and the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) did not have the troops or time available to exploit the rapidly changing lines on the Western front. The SOE "supplied no reports on German preparations or intentions. Neither, according to its post-war history, did the OSS." Human intelligence derived from espionage in support of Allied operations in the West disappeared in late 1944.

Human intelligence derived from enemy and indigenous interrogation, produced more than the OSS or SOE. In the month prior to the German offensive, Allied interrogators determined the location, composition, morale, equipment, and leadership of a majority of all units engaged in the Battle of the Bulge. Historians disagree on the intelligence picture prior to December 1944. The most notable misrepresentation of this period is contained in intelligence officer turned historian, F.H. Hinsley's series, British Intelligence in the Second World War. He stated, "The US histories find that the evidence from POW and deserters was otherwise unremarkable until First Army obtained at the last minute statements from a POW that a large offensive was coming, probably on 16 or 17

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December, and certainly before Christmas.\(^5\) However, First Army interrogation reports of a prisoner captured in late November stated “2 to 3 SS Panzer Divisions are distributed in the villages and the barns (to the front of First US Army). PW saw these divisions 2-3 weeks ago. A civilian, a trustworthy friend in whose house PW was hiding, saw these Divisions 10 days ago.”\(^6\) The civilian noted the troops were split up and billeted in houses and barns along the road leading to the front. Interrogation reports from First and Third Armies revealed similar information from mid-November on.

The format of the American G-2 report limited the effectiveness of prisoner of war interrogation reports. A typical interrogation report included the prisoners name, unit, circumstance of capture, training and action history, locations of tactical points of interest, personnel strength and armament, chemical warfare capabilities, and unit reserves. Only the last section, “miscellaneous,” being the shortest and most obscure, contained the slightest mention of enemy intentions. Statements such as, “Many members of PW’s unit believe in German victory; morale, quite high,” were not followed up with explanatory remarks.\(^7\) The failure of the American method resulted from the limited format of the reports. The British method that allowed for questioning and speculation about German intentions gave G-2’s greater latitude in predicting enemy actions.

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\(^6\) First US Army, PW Interrogation Report, number 5, 9 December 1944, National Archives and Records Administration II, College Park, Maryland, Record Group 407, Entry 427, Box 1952.
\(^7\) 2nd Infantry Division, PW Interrogation Report number 83, G-2 Periodic Report number 167, 8 December 1944, National Archives and Records Administration II, College Park, Maryland, Record Group 407, Entry 427, Box 6466.
XX Corps reported on 14 December, “Indications continue that the enemy is planning an operation that would employ the four divisions of Sixth SS Panzer Army (1 SS, 2 SS, 9 SS, 12 SS) to spearhead a counteroffensive, apparently in the Aachen-Duren sector... Another German reserve appears concentrated north of the Moselle, close to the First and Third US Army boundary, where 2 Panzer and 130 Panzer Divisions have been reported... Both divisions are strategically situated for rapid commitment against either the Third or First US Armies.”

XX Corps continued, “Another important source of armor reinforcement for the West which cannot be ignored are Panzer units fighting on the Eastern front. Reports have persisted for several weeks that 5 SS Panzer, 8 Panzer, and Panzer Division Grossdeutschland have come to the West.” Since the October extension of Ultra privileges to the Corps level, it is unknown whether the XX Corps G-2 based his assessment predominantly on communications intelligence or other sources. Regardless of the source, XX Corps demonstrated that some staffs accurately predicted the Ardennes offensive.

XIX Corps contradicted this report. A week earlier they found, “The longest-term problem (for Germany) is to find enough men and equipment to stand up to the present rate of attrition...this is something like three quarters of a German division a day, or up to five divisions per week. So far this rate has been met, partly by replacements, but to large extent by feeding the fat from the Ardennes and from Holland to the battle sectors. It

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8 XX Corps, Intelligence Summary number 127, 14 December 1944, 4th Infantry Division Files, National Archives and records Administration II, College Park, Maryland, Record Group 407, Entry 427, Box 6465.
cannot be met indefinitely, even by sending to the West all reserves becoming available.”

XIX Corps previously reported, "The enemy's defensive plan has been quite clear for some time. It involves all-out defense at the Roer River beyond which Allied advances would constitute an immediate threat to the Ruhr.”

The 78th Infantry Division reflected the XIX Corps assessment on 8 December. The division G-2 concluded that German capabilities “and indications are that a determined defense of the present line will be continued. The German system of defense is based on prompt offensive action to maintain the battle position and as further penetrations are made by our forces prompt counter-attacks with available reserves may be expected.” The difference between assessments was considerable. XX Corps estimated that an offensive through the Ardennes was the most probable course of action, while XIX Corps viewed the region as a replacement depot for action on more pertinent fronts.

Another perpetual myth is the argument that weather throughout early December prevented aerial reconnaissance. Contrary to this view, aerial reconnaissance delivered 361 sorties over the region in the weeks prior to the offensive. Mission priority, however, went to the Roer and Saar fronts. The US Third Army and the British 12th Army Group

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5 XIX Corps, G-2 Periodic Report number 175, 8 December 1944, 4th Infantry Division Files, National Archives and Records Administration II, College Park, Maryland, Record Group 407, Entry 427, Box 6464.
6 XIX Corps, G-2 Periodic Report number 129, 7 December 1944, 4th Infantry Division Files, National Archives and Records Administration II, College Park, Maryland, Record Group 407, Entry 427, Box 6464.
7 78th Infantry Division, G-2 Estimate of the Situation number 2, 8 December 1944, Reproduced with V Corps Estimate of the Situation number 16 (6 December 1944), National Archives and Records Administration II, College Park, Maryland, Record Group 407, Entry 427, Box 11729.
operated in these areas. The Eifel received only three reconnaissance sorties in the month prior to the German offensive. These missions revealed heavy rail and troop movements, accompanied by ambulance and salvage vehicle traffic. Priority conflicts and aircraft shortages precluded follow-on missions to determine the extent of activity in the Eifel. Analysts assumed that German traffic consisted of exhausted units entering the Ardennes for rest, and new units moving to more immediate conflict on other fronts. Contrary to perception, aerial reconnaissance performed its duty where and when it was tasked. Weather was poor, but not prohibitive. Similar to logistical dispersion north and south of the Ardennes, the US First Army lacked significant aerial coverage. Limited aerial reconnaissance resulted not from poor weather, but the low priority given the First US Army relative to its neighboring units.

Air intelligence went so far as to disagree with Ultra assessments of German capabilities. In mid-October, air intelligence claimed the German Air Force recovered “on a scale that could hardly have been foreseen two months ago.”12 Late 1944 German aircraft production elevated to a level not previously deemed feasible by the Ultra experts. Air intelligence concluded that the German Air Force positioned to aid a counteroffensive.

On 29 October, MI-14 and SHAEF disagreed with air intelligence. MI-14 reported that there was no evidence to support an attack “and any major German offensive operations would seriously interfere with the refitting program of the Panzer divisions.” SHAEF had two theories for the troops in Sixth Panzer:
Assuming it all remains at the disposal of the Commander-in-Chief, West, there is doubt whether it is to be used for counter-attack when the expected Allied offensive against the Reich has been developed, or whether the intention is, before that time, to launch an ambitious spoiling attack. The latter course is no doubt over-ambitious and considerably less likely of the two, but it would be very tempting to try to put the Allies off until winter is really here and so until next spring, by which time some miracle may have happened.\footnote{Ibid., 411.}

SHAEF amended the MI-14 assessment arguing, “there is no reason to suppose the oil situation could not support offensive fighting for, say, one week.\footnote{Ibid., 409-410.}

On 1 November, following the SHAEF and MI-14 assessment of the German situation, air intelligence contradicted itself. Air Intelligence predicted the German Air Force to perform defensive, not offensive operations. On 2 November almost all GAF fighter units, or what the Allies thought was the entire GAF of 300 fighters, moved to the western front, with completion expected by 12 November. On 9 November, air intelligence concluded that Germany could now muster “600-700 fighters for an unknown project that was nearing maturity.”\footnote{Ibid., 409-410.} On November 12, the number increased to 850 fighters complimented by specialized units trained for bad weather flight. Air intelligence staffs produced contradictory reports on German intentions throughout late 1944. The inconsistent quality of air intelligence assessments diluted their credibility.

21st Army Group developed its own appreciation for the German situation. On 10 November, they doubted whether Sixth Panzer Army “had either the will or the ability to

\footnote{Hinsley, vol. III, pt. 2, 408.}
commit it(self) as a unit; it is more likely that its divisions would be used for plugging gaps, as in Normandy.  The conclusions varied according to origin, and the allies maintained no unified system to reduce intelligence disparities.

After examining the information and assessments from various sources, the British Joint Intelligence Command concluded “we do not think that the evidence warrants the conclusion that the Germans are planning a spoiling offensive. It seems to us that this evidence is consistent with the movement forward of land and air forces to meet the expected Allied offensive. The Germans must realize that the failure to hold this offensive would involve decisive defeat in the field.” On 14 November, the British Chiefs of Staff and the Director of Intelligence endorsed this assessment. Over a month before the German offensive, the British Joint Intelligence Command developed the official Allied interpretation of German intentions on the Western front. The JIC restated their assessment on multiple occasions prior to the German offensive, but their conclusions or supporting evidence were not reexamined until after December 16. The Allies produced an official assessment of the enemy situation and intentions on 14 November and failed to amend their prediction in light of information.

On 3 December Prime Minister Churchill asked for an update on the situation. The JIC concluded they had nothing to add to their previous assessment. SHAEF noted on 10 December that there had been increased movement into and presumably out of the “quiet” Eifel sector. In the week prior to the German attack, SHAEF G-2, General

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Strong went to General Bradley’s 12th Army Group Headquarters to inform him of the commotion in his opposing sector. Strong diluted his prediction for potential action, arguing the Ardennes was “an area that should be watched.” Strong’s actions indicated the “besetting tendency in intelligence to become too wedded to one view of enemy intentions.”18 In early 1944, Allied Field commanders received contradictory analyses of identical information from subordinate and superior intelligence staffs. Even at the highest levels, Allied intelligence leadership refused to disagree with the official position of the geographically removed Joint Intelligence Committee in London.

Ultra Picture

In the months prior to the Ardennes offensive, sufficient Ultra indicators revealed German intentions. Ultra decrypted messages from numerous targets. Viewed in retrospect, these decrypts produced a clear perspective on German intentions. First clues came as early as 30 September, when the Germans ordered eight divisions from the line for rest and refitting. The Allies ignored, wrongly interpreted, or failed to appreciate these indicators until after the battle.

In early November, high-grade Ultra from Baron Hiroshi Oshima, Japan’s military attache to Berlin, reported German strategic intentions to maintain defensive operations until they could get newly mobilized troops into the line. He noted these measures supported Germany’s renewed interest in offensive operations. Oshima reinforced this view on multiple occasions throughout November and early December. The British

18 Ibid., 430.
Government Code and Cipher School discounted Oshima’s messages claiming, “the Japanese are less critical than some in believing what they are told.”

On 28 December 1944, while the battle was still in progress, the British produced a report on causes of the Ardennes offensive. British air intelligence and military intelligence concluded, “For some weeks prior to the attack, COMINT gave clear warning of the German counteroffensive in the West. The timing of the offensive was revealed only on short notice... General Strong, General Eisenhower’s British intelligence officer, warned on 13 December that a relieving attack in the Ardennes could be expected soon.”

British AI and MI continued, “General’s Bradley and Strong are both known to have agreed several times in December that an attack in the Ardennes was in the cards.”

The British did not condemn Strong or Bradley, but claimed the failure was “not from the amount of communications intelligence bearing on the Germans preparations for the western offensive, for it was considerable, but mainly from very elaborate security and deception measures.” They noted that intelligence staffs became “too rigid in their thoughts. This alludes to the mind-set of senior Allied officials and their staffs – emphasis on offensive rather than defensive operations.” They also encouraged intelligence officers not to “underestimate Germany’s offensive capability.” Further, they noted “optimistic local reports of the success of Allied offensives in November in weakening the

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20 SRH 112, “Postmortem Indications of the Ardennes Offensive” National Security Agency File, National Archives and Records Administration II, College Park, Maryland, Record Group 457, Entry 9002, Box 31.
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid.
Germans.” The British concluded, “tactical reconnaissance, active patrolling, capture for interrogation of prisoners of war and the like must, in spite of Ultra, still remain the surest guide to enemy intentions in the field.”

For Allied commands, the German Air Force provided a rich target for decrypts, but seldom provided concrete evidence. The GAF frequently ignored the ban on communications silence, and changed encryption keys less often than the Wermacht. Because of their lax security measures, Hitler delayed GAF incorporation in planning and movement. Their limited knowledge base made information from this source less obvious than non-GAF sources. GAF decrypts revealed that westward deployment of aircraft supported the army. The November decrypts revealed neither the timing nor the duration of German plans. By 25 November, a striking change evolved in the organization of the high command of the German Air Force. The GAF consolidated all indigenous functions into close air support for ground operations by 1 December. On 4 December, American intelligence staffs determined the timing and duration of offensive operations from statements of policy, logistical orders, fighter unit movement orders, training and equipping of fighter units and changes in the air force chain of command. From late November on, GAF priority shifted from defense of the Reich to protection of troop unloading on the Western front. Inexperienced American staffs failed to support their assessments provided through GAF clues.

24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
The British concluded that Luftwaffe Commander Herman Goering pulled his fighter units from the front for use in critical situations. They assumed the fighters would be used to counter an Allied breakthrough and the German Army considered a spoiling offensive. The British gave credit to German “deception and security measures... the decrypts gave a confused and confusing account of what was taking place.” Germany did not engage in a deliberate intelligence war with the Allies. They had “no reason to think that their ciphers were unsafe.” The Germans exercised elaborate security and deception measures to “distort gossip and prevent the facts from reaching the Allies through PR, POW’s, deserters, refugees and agents.”

For the Allies, German order of battle was particularly vulnerable to Ultra. As Hinsley noted “Though none of this was of spectacular interest, and little of it tactical value, the Sigint received during this fighting kept the Allies abreast of the changes to the enemy’s order of battle that were brought about by relief and reinforcements.” Allied intelligence accurately documented GAF order of battle in the period 8 November to 7 December 1944. Interpretation of this data was less impressive.

Allied intelligence possessed sufficient evidence prior to 16 December to warrant a closer examination of the First US Army front. The combination of air intelligence, human intelligence, naval intelligence, and Ultra provided a comprehensive picture of German capabilities. Allied assessments of those capabilities varied significantly. American and

27 Ibid., 420.
28 Ibid., 420.
29 Ibid., appendix 25.
British differentiation regarding German intentions resulted from a series of deficiencies in selection, training, employment, and cooperation amongst intelligence personnel.

Experience Problems

Years of inter-war neglect left America with only basic intelligence capabilities, and far behind the British. William Friedman, known for cracking the Japanese "colored" codes, maintained a small, but professional corps of code breakers in Washington. In 1942, the intelligence cycle lacked all other facets. The American intelligence network based its initial organization on the outdated designs of World War I. An inability to correct American intelligence deficiencies in a timely manner directly affected Allied capabilities prior to the Ardennes offensive. It was not until 15 December, the day before the German offensive, that the United States finalized the design of its intelligence system.

America played a minor role in the intelligence process during 1942 and 1943. U.S. soldiers manned intercept stations, interrogated prisoners of war, and presented briefings at commands below the Army level. In early 1944, a group of twenty U.S. captains and lieutenants went to Bletchley Park for Ultra training. These men were not permanently assigned to field commands until after the Allied invasion of Normandy in June 1944. Compared to their British counterparts, American intelligence officers lacked the requisite experience to make their assessments thorough and accurate.

Officers typically selected for Ultra training at Bletchley Park possessed a multitude of qualities. Intelligence officers required an understanding of foreign languages or mathematics. After completion of an Officers Basic Course these men went to
intelligence indoctrination training at Camp Ritchie, Maryland. The basic intelligence course lasted three months. After indoctrination, intelligence officers went to the Pentagon for training in German order of battle. At the Pentagon these men studied the "ill-reputed Pink Book on German order of battle, replete with errors and omissions. Nevertheless, work on this faulty basis gave (them their) first taste of order of battle research."\(^{30}\) Preparation in this manner insufficiently prepared American officers for training at Bletchley Park, an organization experienced in waging an intelligence war against the Germans. The British found, "U.S. military intelligence was becoming aware of how much it still had to learn about German order of battle, a subject in which the British had a long head start."\(^{31}\)

Inexperience is the most plausible explanation for discrepancies in American assessments prior to the Battle of the Bulge. Intelligence staffs failed to develop a comprehensive picture of enemy capabilities and intentions, the most difficult task for analysts. G-2’s combined what was known about personnel, strength, leadership, equipment and directives, and determined in what direction and time this force would be employed. American intelligence staffs were unfamiliar with changing German tables of organization and equipment, and they were in the process of learning German order of battle prior to the Bulge. Contradicting directives, phantom headquarters, and covered troop movements perplexed the inexperienced Americans.

\(^{31}\) Ibid., 74.
In late 1944, problems surfaced with American interpretation of German capabilities and intentions. Intelligence recognized that the constitution of new divisions coming onto the Western front were former German Air Force personnel, Navy sailors and young recruits. Non-Ultra sources provided the majority of this information.

"According to a PW statement, the men received about 10 hours training over a period of two weeks, and some of them did not even know how to load a rifle. Aware of their poor training, the men did their job unwillingly, and morale was definitely low." Allied intelligence noted the diminishing size of the division. The December 1944 German division consisted of 10,500 soldiers, as opposed to 12,700 per division in early 1944 and 17,000 per division in 1940-1943. American intelligence staffs predicted the new divisions would "relieve front line units for a certain period of time permitting those (Panzer) units to rest and refit." They correctly assessed these units for static defense, however their role was largely misunderstood.

Experience gave Britain an edge in more subtle ways. One history noted, "Much praise has been given to Bletchley Park, but none to the privates and NCO's who sat and intercepted messages. They, through experience, recognized the style of senders and could reconstruct the signal networks over time." British practice came in North Africa, the Mediterranean, and Europe, while the US had few units doing similar work. By Normandy, Britain overextended its intelligence role, and failed to give replacement

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32 HQ VII Corps, G-2 Periodic Report Number 185, 7 December 1944, in First US Army Files, National Archives and Records Administration II, College Park, Maryland, Record Group 407, Entry 427, Box 1872.

33 Noel Currer-Briggs, in Hinsley, ed., The Codebreakers, 225.
American troops practical experience. Inexperienced Americans assumed the majority of intelligence roles in late 1944, replacing the exhausted British.

America performed poorly providing intelligence assessments. They wasted their brief opportunities to exercise assessments by espousing rhetoric or propaganda. An example is the summary of prisoner of war interrogations for the week prior to the Ardennes offensive. “In general, however, most men feel that with the entry of the US into the war, the war was lost, inasmuch as the Germans cannot compete with our wealth of manpower and materiel... The soldier continues serving because he is a soldier, though disheartened and fully conscious that victory is impossible.”

Without commenting on German dispositions, capabilities, or intentions opposing the VII Corps front, the Corps G-2 engaged in a fruitless exercise of poetics. The Allied intelligence network suffered from an inability to smoothly transition from British domination to American control.

System Problems

History proved that sufficient intelligence existed to warrant a closer examination of the Ardennes region. The intelligence system, however, was plagued by inter-service and intra-service rivalries. Competition for resources made the intelligence process less efficient, more susceptible to error, and left little accountability for mistakes.

In December 1942, Colonel Telford Taylor reported, “both fatigue and increasing production from Hut-6 were stretching the Hut-3 staff to the limit, and that they would

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34 VII Corps, Periodic Report number 191, Enclosure 5, 14 December 1944, National Archives and Records Administration II, College Park, Maryland, Record Group 407, Entry 427, Box 3930.
welcome German-speaking American officers to be trained to join the British members.35 By breaking the Enigma cipher, the British accumulated an insurmountable amount of information. The increasing volume of messages assimilated into concise reports overwhelmed Bletchley Park. The number of trained people capable of contributing to the intelligence cycle never met the demand caused by the mountain of decrypts in Hut-3 and Hut-6. The British had meticulous security requirements that prevented large numbers of Ultra-trained people from being incorporated into the intelligence system.

Initial American intelligence system errors resulted from inter-war neglect. These problems evolved over the course of the war and had varying effects on the quality of intelligence collection, analysis, and reporting. A post-war study, “The Problems of the Special Security Officer System in World War II,” documented many of these deficiencies. The Special Security Officer normally served as the Ultra representative to a field command, however they were incorporated at different staff levels. The Americans corrected these systematic problems that resulted from inactivity prior to the war over time. Fluidity, however, was not achieved until after Germany surprised the Allies in the Ardennes.

“The Special Security Officer System was organized to provide operating commands with a means of rapid and secure dissemination of Communications Intelligence of the highest security classification.” For most of World War II, the Americans split Special Security Officer functions between the Deputy Army Chief of Staff, G-2, and the Chief Signal Officer. Not until February 1945 was “complete

35 Telford Taylor in, Hinsley, ed., The Codebreakers, 72.
responsibility for the administration of the SSO System vested in the office of the Deputy AC of S, G-2."

America encountered an initial production problem. The production of intelligence officers in a limited period of time challenged planners. Special Security Officers needed more training than typical officers, but the pace of the war strained manpower reserves. On-the-job training was standard practice, however, the British were not always anxious to, or capable of, training replacement Americans. "One officer emphasized that a more thorough prior training in enemy order of battle together with an understanding of tactics and strategy and some experience as a soldier would have been helpful. Several of the Special Security Officers who had served with air commands regretted their scanty training in ground order of battle."

These criticisms were accurate, however they were not realistic. By 1944, British manpower no longer supported the massive intelligence network that covered Africa, the Middle East, the Mediterranean, and Europe. America produced officers suited for intelligence training, but the pace and size of the war limited the number of officers available for intelligence training knowledgeable in order of battle, language, tactics, and strategy.

The length of time and geographical distance covered by Ultra demanded large numbers of Special Security Officers. Unlike the production of other officers, the Ultra training process took time. "The good SSO does not just happen. Rather, he must be

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37 Ibid.
trained, preferably prior to his initial assignment. It is difficult to end his training at the exact moment when he will be needed.” Filling a pool of trained Security officers proved difficult. Training was time-consuming. Qualified regular officers felt “they could rise more rapidly in other fields. Reserve officers were often unwilling to serve except in the event of national emergency.” Intelligence staffs struggled to process the massive amounts of information that Ultra produced. Special Security Officers “lacked the leisure for relaxed reflection so necessary to a good intelligence product. It is in the moments of relaxed reflection that intelligence officers discover valuable relationships, which otherwise would never occur to them.” It was prior to the Battle of the Bulge that exhausted British and inexperienced American intelligence staffs lacked the time for “relaxed reflection” necessary to interpret the voluminous indications of the pending German offensive.

Deputy Army Chief of Staff, G-2, Lieutenant General Thomas Handy reinforced the demand for intelligence officers prior to the Battle of the Bulge. On 23 November 1944, he stated “we have been meeting continuous and increasing demand for trained Air and Ground order of battle men, for Ultra specialists and for Special Security Officers... With 30 men per month under training, there will be necessarily a lag before these men can be moved out to their assignments or absorbed in the organization as replacements.”

The supply failed to meet the demand in late 1944, and created an environment of overwork that eroded assessment efficiency.

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38 Memo, Lieutenant General Thomas T. Handy, 23 November 1944, National Archives and Records Administration II, College Park, Maryland, National Security Agency File, Record Group 457, Entry 9002, Box 45, Page 223.
Compounding manpower shortages were shortages of equipment and requisite space. Space and equipment shortages, more than manpower, hampered efficiency and produced security problems. The cloud of secrecy that surrounded Special Security operations forced Chiefs of Staff to sacrifice space and equipment from other sections not privy to the use of Ultra. This arrangement eroded staff cohesion. Private rooms were an absolute necessity, but their limited number caused security concerns. Often non-Ultra officers and Special Security Officers worked in the same room.

Two recurrent scenarios haunted the Special Security Officer. G-2’s, not appreciative of Ultra contributions, faced with manpower shortages, tasked Special Security Officer’s with non-Ultra duties. The second condition isolated SSO’s from mainstream intelligence officers. “Some Special Security Officers were so burdened with non-Ultra duties that their Ultra work became extracurricular.” The secretive nature of their work left Special Security Officers out of the existing intelligence cycle or relegated them to non-Ultra jobs. One officer reported “Some Special Security Officers found that they didn’t have sufficient spare time to give to Ultra after spending eight hours a day on a duty desk in the G-2 section. The establishment of ideal working relationships depends almost upon the G-2 as upon the Special Security Officer.” American commands misused or neglected Special Security Officers in a multitude of ways.

“Almost every officer who wrote a general report on World War II Communications Intelligence activities at a particular command had something to say about the need for employing COMINT in conjunction with, rather than separate from,
other sources of information." Special Security Officers worked unobserved, demanding a disciplined individual that studied the Ultra picture in conjunction with other source information. Post-war studies indicated that the level of professionalism amongst Special Security Officers was not uniform. The source of information used by Ultra representatives inclined them to take shortcuts, more so than typical G-2 members. Being one of only a handful of people on staff privy to Ultra, this position wielded great power in shaping the intelligence picture. Officers who consistently assessed German intentions accurately, were esteemed members of a command staff, but officers with less-accurate records were relegated to a position of impotency.

"It is the epitome of understatements to say that Communications Intelligence was not given a chance at certain commands." G-2's varied in their relationships with subordinates. Some G-2's prohibited interaction with the general while others demanded raw Ultra intercepts. The Ultra process demanded time, interpretation and access. Raw intercepts allowed statements to be taken out of context. Access to the commanding general was essential. Ultra was an imperfect science and relied on interpretation of information, not the information itself. Some commands misused Ultra, reduced its credibility, and limited its impact. G-2's without training in the proper role of the SSO or Ultra, misused them both.

The security and format of the Ultra product varied between commands. The British system emphasized security; their primary success. Training at Bletchley Park imparted secrecy on American trainees. America did not copy the Ultra report format
used by the British. The nature of British intelligence reports complimented their elaborate security measures. British reports were more informal than American reports and allowed speculation. "Whereas the American estimates were restricted to capabilities, British reports allowed speculation on intentions, and it is through speculative sections that the skillful officer found it possible to guide the thinking of the non-recipient without his being aware that he was being given the advantage of Communications Intelligence." America wrongly restricted the content of intelligence reports rather than restricting distribution.

The American intelligence system never achieved a unified structure. Greater coordination and centralization within the Special Security System was necessary during the war, but never accomplished. Consultative tours from command to command were infrequent, and would have prevented one command’s duplicating the mistakes of its neighbor. The services and the coalition never achieved a unified method of communicating assessments. G-2’s never reconciled assessment differences. The resulting situation confused field commanders. "When a commander receives three separate reports of the same event, and especially if each service has made slight errors in its cryptanalysis, the commander is more likely to be more confused than if he had received no reports at all. He might even think that the reports refer to three separate events." Uncooperative deficiencies were most evident prior to the Battle of the Bulge, when both American and British intelligence staffs failed to consult each other when assessing German intentions.

Washington was the source of additional American problems. Because the Army Chief of Staff, G-2 and the Chief Signal Officer of the Signal Corps were at odds over control of the intelligence network, it was impossible to control the intercept target. The Allies maintained an arbitrary system of collection that designated a frequency and direction. As a result “sometimes an entire message – with addresses and signature were intercepted and deciphered. Sometimes only a fragment caught or could be decoded... There was no control over what messages could be intercepted and deciphered; the process was too laborious.”

Experience filled the gaps. Knowledge of German armed forces operations and order of battle was the only means of putting a message in its proper context. The danger of Ultra-reliance compounded the hit and miss collection approach. “Ultra could be dangerously misleading. It might decipher the message ordering an intended operation, but fail to intercept the message that cancelled or changed it.” Prior to the Ardennes offensive, the Germans produced countless plans and counter-plans that contradicted each other.

Cryptographers and analysts assigned to the Army Chief of Staff, G-2 depended on intercepts produced from the Signal Corps. These functions depended upon each other, but diverged by organization. Requests by the G-2 for increased or decreased intercepts in a designated frequency and direction were routed through the US Army Chief of Staff. Pending approval, these requests were ordered by General Marshall’s office to the Chief Signal Officer. The G-2 and the Signal Corps were at odds with each other over control of the intelligence network. The American systematic breakdown reached its climax in
late 1944. On 23 November 1944 the Deputy Army Chief of Staff, Lieutenant General Thomas Handy, stated “Manpower and space shortages dictate that every possible economy be made in order to obtain the maximum efficiency within limited resources. This cannot be done if the cryptographic function and the intelligence function are divided in several compartments. In order for the cryptographers to work effectively, they must perform certain intelligence activities to make the intelligent guesses necessary in decoding... If British and United States officers can be completely integrated in a combined staff, it should be possible for Signal Corps cryptographers and MIS Ultra intelligence workers to be completely integrated.”

On 27 November Signal Corps officer Colonel Carter Clarke objected to General Handy's proposal based on “its ambiguity... This perpetuates, with an ambiguous modification as to operational control and command, the present responsibility for what is a single, continuous operation.” The Assistant Army Chief of Staff, G-2 MG Clayton Bissell added on 30 November, “the optimum results cannot be obtained so long as... responsibility for what a single intelligence operation remains divided.”

On 7 December 1944, Major General Bissell stated “The Chief Signal Officer and the Army Chief of Staff, G-2 believe this is a definite improvement on the present

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41 Memo, Lieutenant General Thomas T. Handy, 23 November 1944, National Archives and Records Administration II, College Park, Maryland, National Security Agency File, Record Group 457, Entry 9002, Box 45, pages 220-221.
42 Letter from Colonel Carter Clarke to Major General Clayton Bissell, 27 November 1944, National Security Agency File, National Archives and Records Administration II, College Park, Maryland, Record Group 457, Entry 9002, Box 45, pages 224-225.
43 Letter, Major General Clayton Bissell to Lieutenant General Thomas Handy, 30 November 1944, National Security Agency File, National Archives and Records Administration II, College Park, Maryland, Record Group 457, Entry 9002, Box 45.
arrangement and is the best compromise solution which could be worked out at this time.”

44 The agreement, dated 10 December 1944, ordered “Effective 15 December 1944 operational command and control of the Signal Security Agency and the 2nd Signal Service Battalion is transferred to the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2...Liaison with friendly foreign powers, the Navy, other US Government agencies and with US Army theater commanders, on all matters in connection with signal intelligence activities, shall hereafter be a responsibility of the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2.”45

Historical examination revealed that sufficient evidence existed to warrant a closer examination of the Ardennes. Whether this information prepared in a concise and unified manner for Allied commanders would have changed perceptions of German capabilities and intentions is questionable. What is clear, is that the Allied intelligence system possessed significant flaws. In late 1944, the American military intelligence system was evolving. Faced with limited funds and input from theaters that covered the globe, it had not defined its most efficient operating posture. The German Ardennes offensive struck the American intelligence system in evolutionary process.

More than any other deficiency, America failed to develop intelligence system administrators. Those officers adequately prepared to organize and distribute the results of intelligence and ensure its presentation to the appropriate field commanders never materialized.

44 Memo from Major General Clayton Bissell, 7 December 1944, National Security Agency File, National Archives and Records Administration II, College Park, Maryland, Record Group 457, Entry 9002, Box 45, page 249.
Coalition Problems

Not all intelligence problems resulted from American system failures. Britain reluctantly incorporated the United States into its existing intelligence network. Beginning with training and continuing throughout the war, the same coalition problems experienced by commanders in the field existed in intelligence. Britain and America eluded cooperation in the confines of the small intelligence community like anywhere else.

The first indication of coalition problems started in 1942, more than a year before Americans went to Bletchley Park. America questioned the quality of intelligence delivered to Washington. In December 1942, Colonel Telford Taylor reported, "Nigel deGrey (and I think C for awhile) were much opposed to sending Bletchley Parks output to Washington." General Eisenhower's G-2, General Kenneth Strong went to Bletchley Park to negotiate a more favorable arrangement for the Americans. "When the G-2, General Strong, came to Bletchley Park, deGrey somehow succeeded in convincing the General that there was no reason to send the output of Hut-6, Hut-3, etc, to the Special Branch, or indeed anywhere else, since it was being sent directly to American commands in Europe as well as to British commands. All that was needed, said deGrey, was regular reports on the information gained from the German messages." American Colonel Telford Taylor, who served as a liaison between Bletchley Park and Washington noted

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47 Ibid., 72.
“that the Strong – deGrey agreement would not last.” Colonel Carter Clarke corrected the situation and had all the messages sent to Washington.\textsuperscript{48}

In the spring of 1943 the United States and the Britain negotiated a more formal agreement on the use of intelligence. “By terms of the agreement, the British assumed primary responsibility for the production and exploitation of German military Ultra, and the United States Army agreed to devote its attention to the production and exploitation of Japanese military Ultra.” This agreement, however, “did not prove to be wholly satisfactory.”\textsuperscript{49} Once America developed the basics of an intelligence system, they discarded their supporting role in Europe. The reluctant British found they could not support the requirements of running an intelligence war over such a vast geographical area.

Not until 10 July 1944 was dissemination of Ultra possible to the Corps level. Prior to this date, intelligence was dominated by the British in higher headquarters. Information from non-Ultra sources, such as human intelligence and reconnaissance shaped the intelligence picture at the Corps level and below. Gross discrepancies existed between intelligence assessments at levels below the Corps and the Army level and above. Contradictory intelligence assessments from the Corps level were discounted by higher commands that possessed Ultra. Special Security Officers, newly arrived at the Corps level and below in fall 1944, were less-experienced than their counterparts at higher

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 73.

\textsuperscript{49} SRH-unk, “History of the Operation of Special Security Officers Attached to Field Commands, 1943-1945,” National Security Agency File, National Archives and Records Administration II, College Park, Maryland, Record Group 457, Entry 9002, Box 41.
commands, and were in the process of gaining their first operational experience in the months prior to the Battle of the Bulge.

Another unresolved coalition problem was the extension of Ultra to newly created commands. Whether British, Canadian, or American, forming commands demanded Ultra service. “The extension of Ultra service to forward American HQ’s was almost uniformly forced by the extension of such service to British HQ’s of similar level, without waiting till the proper facilities existed.”50 The security of the Ultra product at new commands took second place to the needs of coalition warfare. The Allies maintained a secure intelligence network more often by chance and the limited intelligence resources of the Germany than Allied adherence to restrictive procedures.

Conclusion

The German Ardennes offensive capitalized on inexperienced American and exhausted British intelligence personnel. The Allied coalition failed to develop a unified intelligence collection, analysis, and dissemination system. As a result, British methods and analysis dominated the evolving American program that assumed control of the intelligence war. Allied leaders prior to the Battle of the Bulge absorbed the inaccurate predictions of the British Joint Intelligence Command.

“The JIC’s conclusion, especially as modified by the Chiefs of Staff, was the wrong one. At the time, the Allied authorities had no evidence that Hitler and his generals were

50 SRH-148, “General Information on Local Ultra Picture as Background for Signal Intelligence Conference, 6 March 1944,” National Security Agency File, National Archives and Records Administration II, College Park, Maryland, Record Group 457, Entry 9002, Box 30.
at odds on this issue... it is not a misuse of hindsight to hazard the judgment that the British Chiefs of Staff and the JIC made a fundamental mistake in mid-November in failing to allow that he (Hitler) might ignore the limitations on which they themselves set great store.»

Significant intelligence indicators provided some Allied staffs the required material to produce correct assessments of German intentions. The majority of Allied predictions reflected the incorrect assessment of the JIC on 14 November and allowed Germany an added advantage. The failure of the Allies to develop significant intelligence system administrators to organize and disseminate precluded the advances made by the code breakers in London.

CHAPTER 4

COALITION WARFARE

Introduction

Coalition warfare so weakened the 1st U.S. Army that it became vulnerable to attack. Competition for limited resources and differences in personalities broadened the existing gap between British and American leaders. Conciliatory actions, or those actions taken to maintain operational "equity," dominated the decision-making process prior to the Ardennes offensive. Troops and supplies diverted to support Montgomery's unsuccessful campaign in the north limited the successful actions of Patton's 3rd Army in the south, and relegated 1st Army to a position of unimportance. Hitler's winter offensive targeted the "seam" between American and British forces, and made exceptional gains as a result of competing visions and military practices.

The problems associated with coalition warfare are well-documented. The coalition that opposed Napoleon lacked an effective command structure and had "incomplete success in reaching agreement on war aims. The repercussions this had on their operational efficiency caused problems within their alliance through imperfect governmental control over commanders in the field."¹ In describing the coalition that opposed Napoleon, Gordon Craig defined the problems coalition warfare encountered in
Both Britain and America agreed on the central importance of defeating Germany, however, they failed to develop a universally acceptable strategy for this end. The Allied effort lacked unity and resulted in reduced operational efficiency.

Allied discontinuity created a situation ripe for exploitation. German planning for the winter offensive assumed the Allies would not react as a unified force and would fail to produce a timely counter. Hitler sought to manipulate the problematic relationship between America and Britain. History demonstrated the futility of Hitler's plan; however, a closer examination of his planning assumptions indicates they were not far off the mark. Clearly, if not the cause for initial success, alliance problems contributed to the width and depth of the winter offensive.

Background

Personality conflicts provided the basis for coalition problems in the Second World War. Far more important than differences in doctrine or strategy was friction resulting from individual conflict. Prior to the Ardennes offensive, British and American leadership achieved the pinnacle of discord. The problems of experienced by the coalition in the Second World War were unique. Prior to 1941, military command relationships were easily established. One historian noted that prior to World War II, “Debate (was) no more at a premium than persuasion: one obeys and one commands.”

may have previously sufficed, but the complexity of commanding multiple, unfamiliar, and often-competing systems required greater coordination at higher levels of command.

Allied wartime leaders possessed fundamental differences. Greater than differences in doctrine or strategy were discrepancies in leadership styles. Historian and political scientist Morris Janowitz defined two distinct and often-competing categories of military leader: the heroic leader and the military manager. He described the difference as,

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\text{a struggle between heroic leaders, who embody traditionalism and glory, and military "managers," who are concerned with the scientific and rational conduct of war. This distinction is fundamental. The military manager reflects the scientific and pragmatic dimensions of war-making; he is the professional with links to civilian society. The heroic leader is a perpetuation of the warrior type, the mounted officer who embodies the martial spirit and theme of personal valor.} \text{3}
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The Second World War marked a unique period in military history. The development of increasingly advanced technology demanded leaders capable of employing a great range of weapon systems. The size of the war, covering the entire globe, increased administrative and logistical planning. Finally, the size and diversity of the coalition that opposed the axis created an unparalleled reliance on multi-national cooperation. Resulting from the uniqueness of the Second World War was an environment where "the importance of the military manager increases. He does not displace the heroic leader, but he undermines the long-standing traditionalism of the military establishment."\text{4} It is this

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4 Ibid., 22.
fundamental conflict between the military manager and the heroic leader that eroded Allied operational efficiency.

American generals had different talents, priorities, and leadership styles. At one end of the spectrum were the military managers. SHAEF Commander Dwight D. Eisenhower and Army Chief of Staff George C. Marshall displayed those diplomatic and organizational skills necessary to focus the efforts of a coalition and direct large and complex organizations. Beyond defeating Germany, their primary war concern was the maintenance of a unified Allied effort. Omar Bradley failed fully to support the spirit of Allied cooperation but demonstrated his commitment to defeating the Germans at the smallest cost in terms of human lives. Opposite the war managers were the heroic leaders. George Patton and Joe Collins represented men driven to destroy the German army.

"Their fighter spirit is not easily defined; it is based on a psychological motive, which drives a man to seek success in combat, regardless of his personal safety."\(^5\) Frequently, they ignored protocol and were incapable of operating in a coalition. Their only concern was the destruction of the enemy. Indicative of their fundamental psychological differences, conflict between these two groups of leaders weakened Allied dispositions prior to the German Ardennes offensive and slowed the Allied response.

Reflective of the American way of war, these generals varied in temperaments and talents but shared a common professional bond. Competition during the inter-war years for limited resources, rare promotions, and recognition, produced a dedicated few

\(^5\) Ibid., 32.
survivors. Assignments and schooling crossed paths over the years. Educated together, or in successive years at the same institutions, these men learned similar lessons in the classroom and the field. The result was a group of officers who possessed different skills and abilities, but a group indoctrinated in the distinctly American approach to war fighting. They were American military “professionals,” sharing the bond of expertise, responsibility, and corporateness. At the outbreak of war, Marshall selected these men to fill the important positions in the military.

The British were likewise endeared to their way of war but hampered by differences in leadership styles. Assignments throughout the empire and education in military schools unified a diverse group. Bernard Montgomery, John Auchinleck, and David Alexander represented various personality types. They were keenly aware of the limited resources of the United Kingdom and bound by common experience and military history to adopt a uniquely British way of war. Historian B.H. Liddell-Hart recognized, “that there has been a distinctly British practice of war, based on experience and proven by three centuries of success.” In the years prior to the World War II he noted that the British practice of war “was stunted by shallow thought and deformed by slavish imitation of continental fashions. The consequences of that malformation are to be found in the

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7 For the most accurate definition of the military professional see Samuel Huntington, The Soldier and the State (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957).
years 1914-1918, and have been felt ever since.” Much like the Americans, the British employed both heroes and mangers in their uniquely British approach to war.

In 1942, as America geared up for the war in progress, coalition leaders agreed on the “Europe first” strategy. Allied strategic views were more compatible when America was still militarily weak and Britain had superiority in numbers and experience. President Roosevelt ceded to Prime Minister Churchill’s demands while America gained troop numbers and experience. British and American perspectives diverged as the war progressed and the scales favored America.

Allied command problems surfaced first in the Pacific. Agreements allowed British General Archibald Wavell to lead the American, British, Dutch, and Australian (ABDA) combined forces in the Pacific. Wavell commanded British, Dutch, and American generals, who demanded resources to protect national interests. By late February 1942, General Wavell recognized the futility of commanding a “unified force.” Eisenhower noted of Wavell’s position: “What a job to work with Allies... They announce results in advance in a flashy way and make big impressions, but the results often don’t materialize.” Wavell abdicated command of ABDA to the Dutch and removed British forces from the defense of Java. Eisenhower noted on 8 March 1942, “ABDA area is gone. Java is occupied almost completely. The task of reorganizing a command in SW Pacific is under study. Australians have made a proposal, through London, that the United States take

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command.” He further assessed the situation, "We spend our time figuring out how to keep from getting in each other's way rather than how to fight the war." World War II's first coalition failed. A mere three months into the war, America felt the bitter sting associated with Allied warfare.

Allied operations in North Africa were little better than the Pacific. They conducted operations toward a common goal rather than operating as a unified force. Inexperienced American units lost to seasoned Germans at Kasserine Pass. British units under Field Marshal Montgomery triumphed at El Alamein. Eisenhower disliked the politics of coalition warfare. In North Africa, two years prior to the Bulge, Eisenhower revealed to his aide, "If I could just get command of a battalion and get back into the bullet battle, it would all be so simple."

Montgomery found little encouragement in Eisenhower's command ability in North Africa. Eisenhower's British Deputy Commander-in-Chief, General David Alexander, said the Allied headquarters had "no policy, no plan, the front all mixed up, no reserves, no training anywhere, no building up for the future, so-called reinforcement camps in a disgraceful state, and so on." Montgomery regarded the American troops as "...disappointing; they were mentally and physically soft, and very 'green.' It was the old story: lack of proper training allied to no experience of war, and linked with too high a

10 Ibid., 50.
11 Ibid., 50.
standard of living.” North Africa in March 1943 healed none of the Allied wounds received in the Pacific.

Coalition tensions increased in Sicily. General George Patton, in command of the US 7th Army, broke away assignment protecting Field Marshal Montgomery’s flank. Patton’s Army delivered victory in an “end run” to Messina. In so doing, Patton changed the American image from support to an independent military force. The subsequent change in the American role came, however, at the expense of the British and Montgomery. Montgomery claimed that “we learnt a great deal in Sicily. In some cases possibly all that was learnt was how not to do certain things.” America assumed the role as war leader after the Sicilian campaign.

Similar to the operational level of war, Allied leaders differed strategically. The November 1943 Tehran Conference demonstrated the conflicting goals of the coalition. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill argued for delays in Overlord, the invasion of mainland Europe, in order to conduct operations in the Mediterranean against Italy, Rhodes, and the Balkans. “Inter-coalition strategic integration varied from theater to theater, campaign to campaign, and ally to ally... the expansion of the British campaign to control the Mediterranean and to eliminate Vichy France and Italy from the war did not strike the (American) Joint Chiefs of Staff as anything more than political and strategic

\[14\] Ibid., 142.

\[15\] Ibid., 167.
opportunism that would slow the eventual climactic campaign against the Wehrmacht.”

President Roosevelt refused to cede troops and materiel stockpiled in England for extraneous operations in the Balkans. Roosevelt believed that Joseph Stalin and Winston Churchill were concerned more with the postwar picture of the world than defeating the Nazis.

Prior to Operation Overlord, the Allies found little common ground on which to agree. The ADBA debacle highlighted the difficulty involved in employing multi-national forces. North Africa and the Mediterranean demonstrated the growing pains American and British commanders experienced in the learning stages. Finally, Tehran revealed that Allied cooperation alluded the highest level of war. Considering precedent, Operation Overlord represented one of history’s great gambles.

The Generals

Differences between Allied generals defined the root of the Allied problems. Individual conflicts flourished. Encouraging the discrepancies between these leaders was the previous success of Allied generals. Each was reluctant to change, arguing the proven effectiveness of their methods. Montgomery and Patton competed for the limited resources of the coalition. Eisenhower, caught between defeating the German threat in the most efficient manner and maintaining the coalition, often sacrificed battlefield

opportunities in an effort to appease Montgomery. Rather than throwing the weight of Allied logistical resources behind the successful campaigns of Patton, Eisenhower committed precious reserves of fuel and men to Montgomery's unsuccessful northern campaign.

The most reluctant to compromise was Montgomery. When comparing Patton and Bradley to Montgomery, the Americans "made coalition integration occasionally difficult, [but] neither had Montgomery’s power to shape ground operations at the theater level."\(^\text{17}\) It was "the power of Montgomery’s patrons - Churchill and CIGS Lord Alanbrooke - and his public reputation in Great Britain [that] forced the Americans to take him more seriously than he deserved."\(^\text{18}\) Not only Montgomery’s actions, but his influence damaged the Allies in late 1944.

A veteran of the First World War, he remembered the vision of wasted lives on the Western Front. His cautious approach to war reflected the lessons learned from the first war with Germany. Victory against the Germans at El Alamein brought Montgomery the praise he thought long overdue. He was a master of the counterattack. He turned the tide of most battles by predicting the thrusts of his opponent and countering maneuver with fire. He won battles using overwhelming firepower and numerical superiority. The British Field Marshal inspired soldiers under his command with his flamboyant dress and extemporaneous speaking. Montgomery exercised extreme caution while conducting the


\(^{18}\) Ibid., 67.
offensive. For the man on the ground Montgomery inspired loyalty from a generation of soldiers.

Aspects of Montgomery’s generalship deserve criticism. Offensive warfare, or his distorted perception of fire and maneuver employed in concert, was his weakest point. He could not, or would not, unleash the possibilities that mechanized warfare and modern weapon systems presented. Instead of manipulating weaknesses in enemy dispositions, Montgomery waited until the numerical and logistical conditions meticulously defined in his operations plan were met. He conceded initiative to the enemy through hesitation.

Like no other commander in World War II, Montgomery thoroughly understood the intricacies of supply and logistics. He demanded adherence to his logistical standards, regardless of the tactical situation. Montgomery planned and detailed operations to the individual battalion. In this respect, “few men were more enslaved by logistics.” Field Marshal Montgomery wasted time and energy that could have been better employed, and his caution cost lives in the process. Montgomery was a World War I general fighting an enemy that employed the weapons and tactics of modern war. Compounding his logistical and operational limitations, Montgomery further demanded accurate assessments of enemy intentions. Rather than exercising initiative to win a battle, Montgomery dedicated himself to not losing, a trait common to the British way of war. Montgomery was a military manager who fashioned himself as a heroic leader. His inability to seize the initiative and compromise with his allies compromised the war effort against Germany.

Montgomery placed the blame of his post-Africa failures on Eisenhower.

"[Montgomery] told Ike and Brad that when he commanded the war, it was a success, but since he has been relieved of Supreme (Ground) Command, it has become a stalemate."  

The infrequent successes enjoyed by the Field Marshal after North Africa evidence Montgomery's limited ability. His refusal to accept the constraints of coalition warfare severely damaged Allied cooperation and resulted in weakened Allied dispositions prior to the Ardennes offensive.

Montgomery's subordinates presented no better prospects for Allied unity. Most British generals, recognizing the limited resources of the United Kingdom and imbued with the British way of war, exercised caution. Few dared to counter the Field Marshal, while Montgomery directed near-insubordinate criticisms at his superiors. Montgomery did nothing to correct anti-American sentiments among his subordinates.

General David Alexander was notoriously anti-American. In North Africa, he "formed a low opinion of American soldiers and their generals. Once formed, [he] did not shed such an impression easily."  

Of the American soldier he noted, "Unless we can do something about it, the American Army in the European Theater of operations will be quite useless and play no useful part whatsoever."  

He said of Eisenhower, Patton, and Beddell Smith, "They are not professional soldiers, not as we understand that term."  

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22 Ibid., 114.
23 Ibid., 114.
From the top down, few Britons appreciated the American potential or their ensuing contribution to the war effort.

There were, however, exceptions to the rule. British General Kenneth Strong served as SHAEF G-2. One of the few truly "Allied" members of the coalition, he defended Eisenhower throughout the war. Another notable British outcast was General Brian Holden Reid Auchinleck. He recognized that "Montgomery's waspish attitude to his allies infuriated them and made them stubborn... By contrast, [Auchinleck] could get along with 'Vinegar Joe' Stilwell, something which even Americans found near-impossible." These few British generals proved that national interest and Montgomery's anti-American sentiments were surmountable. Their effects on Anglo-American cooperation, however, were limited.

Many American leaders harbored the same resentments as their British counterparts. With few exceptions, the United States fielded commanders who opposed the cautious and methodical British approach to war. The two most significant supporters of the coalition were at the top, General George C. Marshall and General Dwight D. Eisenhower. From Washington, Marshall made every effort to support British demands for consideration in strategic planning. He was diplomatic and at times drew great criticism from American politicians for appeasement. Historian Forrest Pogue noted, "Whatever the extent of Marshall's differences with the British, it is clear that no high-

\[24\] Ibid., 145.
level military chief was more consistently generous in his efforts to meet the request of foreign allies.\textsuperscript{25}

In the European Theater, SHAEF Commander General Dwight D. Eisenhower faced fighting a war while fighting his subordinates. Forging an unwilling alliance, Eisenhower demonstrated the firmness and tact to make the most of an impossible situation. He too was criticized from all angles. Montgomery consistently accused Eisenhower of failing to employ his "counter-proposals" to Eisenhower's plans. Monty described him as "nice chap; no general."\textsuperscript{26} The British further characterized Eisenhower as "not a strategic man, or as a planner, nor as one who could initiate strategy, but as a very able conciliator. For instance, although Britain had been two years longer in the war than America, the weight of arms in Overlord was predominantly American: this position led to friction at many levels, for experience and strength are not always good mixers."\textsuperscript{27} Eisenhower's "concern for Montgomery's views, which he forced on the over-diplomatic Eisenhower, complicated ground force operations throughout the European war."\textsuperscript{28} The British failed to recognize that Eisenhower took drastic actions to maintain the spirit of Allied cooperation.

Patton and Bradley likewise accused Eisenhower of poor generalship. They accused Eisenhower of failing to command his British subordinates. The SHAEF

commander was attacked at all angles. Eisenhower waged a war against multiple enemies and survived. Germany realized defeat, and the Allies remained a unified force, despite the complaints of top leaders. Eisenhower was not a proactive leader, but the questionable alliance between America and Britain made conventional command relationships unrealistic. The unique relationship between American and British participation in the European war forced Eisenhower to make concessions that he would not have made in more traditional command. The cost of his concessions to Montgomery is difficult to gauge in terms of men and length of the war. Eisenhower directed the Allied forces across Europe toward a common goal, a most difficult task, considering the personalities and systems involved. More importantly, Eisenhower preserved the coalition needed to defeat the German Army. At times Eisenhower made concessions to the British that were not operationally sound. Different than his counterparts who can be judged in purely military terms, Eisenhower took these actions facing extreme political pressures, something unique to war managers.

Twelfth Army Group Commander Omar Bradley and his subordinates in charge of 1st and 3rd Armies, were less cooperative than the SHAEF commander. They resented the British and despised Montgomery. When Montgomery was promoted in September 1944 Patton noted, “The Field Marshal thing has made us sick, that is Brad and me.” By mid-September 1944 Bradley and Patton went so far as to consider resignation. Patton

29 Blumenson, The Patton Papers, 535.
revealed in his diary, "Bradley said it was time for a showdown. I offered to resign with him, but he backed out."

The level of friction necessary to force an army group commander and his subordinate army commander to resign must have been incredible.

General Courtney Hodges’ 1st US Army suffered as a result of poor command relationships. Hodges, neither a heroic leader nor a successful military manager, allowed troops in his command to lapse into mediocrity. Without operational priority or significant logistical support, the 1st Army sector remained a training ground for new troops and a resting ground for weary divisions. Soldiers in Hodges’ 1st Army and Montgomery’s 21st Army Group occupied foxholes yards from each other, but took orders from division, corps, army, and army group headquarters increasingly separated geographically and ideologically.

The staff level proved equally difficult. Problems in Anglo-American staff cooperation seemed to have been completely unanticipated by planners after the last war. As a result, it was necessary for U.S. Army Chief of Staff G-2 to travel to London to make arrangements for Allied cooperation in intelligence, operations, personnel, and logistics. The result of the evolving and increasingly strained alliance proved disastrous in late 1944.

In December 1944, Montgomery’s forces rested prior to Christmas and prepared for a renewed offensive after the holidays. The Field Marshal requested leave in England to visit his son. Bradley’s 12th Army Group state of readiness varied. Two days prior to

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30 Ibid., 538.
the German offensive, the U.S. 4th Infantry Division reinforced "a high standard of discipline; the rendering of proper salutes will be emphasized; correct wearing of the uniform and the attendant requirements of cleanliness and neat appearance of individuals, clothing, and equipment will be carefully supervised. Daily close order drill is required for such units that can be made available."31 Prior to the German attack, British forces prepared for the holidays, while American units engaged in rest, training, and even offensive operations in some sectors.

Logistics

Following operation Overlord in June 1944, the Allies encountered stiff German resistance. It was not until the end of July that Allied forces broke away from the beachhead. The coalition destroyed almost the entirety of the German 7th Army in the ensuing battle. After two months of dogged pursuit, Eisenhower reconsidered his operational scheme of maneuver. "What is not always recognized is that Eisenhower's decision was based in large measure on logistical factors."32 The industrial might of the western powers could not be delivered through the post-Normandy ports in northwest France. The Allied supply system exhausted its resources by August 1944.

"The lines of communication could not be developed at the same speed with which tanks and other combat vehicles were able to race forward. The result was that the armies

31 4th Infantry Division, Letter of Instruction to Regimental, Separate and Attached Unit Commanders, 14 December 1944, National Archives and Records Administration II, College Park, Maryland, Record Group 407, Entry 427, Box 6558.
already had used up their operational reserves by the time they reached the Seine.”

By pursuing the German Army, the Allies risked reaching their offensive culminating point in a rapid and dangerous manner. Eisenhower’s broad-front strategy “carried with them a supply task out of all proportion to planned capabilities. With the supply structure already severely strained, these decisions entailed the risk of a complete breakdown.” A defeated German Army escaped from the pocket around Falaise, an error that prolonged the war in Europe by many months.

Three conditions allowed the German Army to escape the Falaise pocket. First, General Eisenhower failed to exercise positive control over his subordinates. He allowed Anglo-American differences in doctrine and strategy to interfere with sound tactical execution. Eisenhower allowed his subordinate, Montgomery, to attack at leisure. Instead of demanding results from his subordinate, Eisenhower demonstrated his unwillingness to command his subordinates. Second, the supply crisis failed to support the requirements of converging offensive armies. Finally, the Allies possessed inadequate command and control systems to minimize fratricide. Offensive coordination between the multi-national force, complimented by separate multi-national aerial support, put Allied forces at greater risk from each other than the German Army. The combination of these forces allowed Germany a respite, and unquestionably lengthened the war.


Ibid., 421.

Ibid., 422.
After the Falaise debacle, Eisenhower considered two plans. The first option, and the plan supported by Field Marshal Montgomery, was a single-thrust drive from the north, directed at the Ruhr industrial region. The destruction of the German industrial capabilities in the north allowed Allied access to Berlin. This plan appealed to the Field Marshal because of the significant increases in troop numbers required to accomplish an attack through the Ruhr. Eisenhower's second option was a multi-front advance to the bridgeheads into Germany followed by renewed offensives after the spring thaw. The second option allowed the logistical tail to catch up with mobile forces during the winter months and attacked the Germans from numerous angles. Eisenhower decided on the second plan. The second option reflected a more American approach to war. He challenged his subordinates to gain as much ground as possible before winter set in or supplies ran out.

The second plan necessitated a diversion of supplies to Montgomery's army group in the north to open the port of Antwerp. "It was clear that the maintenance of large-scale operations would remain unsatisfactory until the port of Antwerp and adequate rail lines of communication were made available."35 Once liberated supplies were directed south to the remaining armies. The diversion of supplies in order to support operations against Antwerp satisfied none of the belligerents. Montgomery felt ignored. Montgomery "believed that the experience of the past few months demonstrated the lack of sufficient

resources for both attacks, the difference was between success and failure - and therefore fundamental. Montgomery never reconciled his views with Eisenhower regarding this situation. Patton, conducting overwhelmingly successful attacks in the south, felt betrayed by the reduction in logistical support for Montgomery's operation. General Eisenhower, however, with control of the supplies that both Field Marshal Montgomery and General Patton desired, made his view prevail.

Bradley recognized the inherent shortage of supplies for his units in late 1944. "Since the Ruhr rather than the Saar was the most important objective, it was inevitable that the burden of sacrifice should be borne by those 12th Army Group forces operating south of the Ardennes in the direction of the Saar - General Patton's Third Army." Only the US 9th Army that protected the flank of Montgomery's 21st Army Group received sufficient fuel and men to sustain operations.

From mid-November on, "The outlook for the next six to eight weeks was, therefore, a depressing one, for there appeared no escaping the prospect that the forces which the 12th Army Group could maintain actively operational would either have to be reduced in size or continue on the starvation scales that had characterized their support for the past several weeks." Bradley's 12th Army Group was a low priority in the ensuing months. It operated on a "hand-to-mouth supply basis, a logistical situation that bypassed stockpiles and went immediately into combat. Most of the fuel and all of the troops

38 Ibid., 426.
coming into the theater went north of the Ardennes to appease the demands of the Field Marshal.

On December 23, 1944, Patton noted about the previous month, "ammunition and replacement prospects were cause for worry and in order to support the northern front, the 3rd Army was given only a small proportion of incoming ammunition and none of the replacements." After a visit to the US 7th Army, Patton realized that their supply situation was considerably better than his own.

Patton petitioned for replacements for months prior to the Ardennes offensive, claiming he approached a "40% shortage in each rifle company." Seventh Army success resulted from the port in Marseille, which the 12th and 21st Army Groups lacked. Montgomery seized Antwerp, but it was not operational until December 1944.

Competition for fuel, food, and men stoked the fiery animosity between American and British leaders. The battle over these limited resources diverted attention from the German threat and weakened the US 1st Army in the process.

The Battle

Personality conflicts, logistical difficulties, divergent objectives, and time conspired to nearly exhaust the Allied spirit of cooperation. Commanders at every level competed for the limited resources flowing through northern ports. Each felt slighted by
Eisenhower’s compromises. The ultimate result was a strategic and operational situation ripe for exploitation. Hitler targeted the wedge between American and British forces.

The air war was no different. "British and American air leaders found themselves consistently at loggerheads on the issue of transportation versus oil targets." America thought the rail systems were too complex to destroy in a reasonable amount of time, while oil targets remained concentrated. The British wanted to focus on more immediate targets, such as infrastructure. In the months prior to the Bulge, the Americans got their wish. The compromise plan, the combined bomber offensive (CBO), dedicated exorbitant numbers of men and planes to a campaign that produced few tangible results. Historian Allan Millett described American participation in the combined bomber offensive as a strategic failure so climactic, that it is equaled only by British diversion of Allied resources in the effort to control the Mediterranean. In essence, American compromises accepting the terms of the CBO, was the most costly of all war decisions. It produced drastically high number of Allied casualties in an effort that ignored the more appropriate uses of air power, such as interdiction or ground attack. The CBO produced an entire theater lacking adequate aerial fighter and reconnaissance cover.

Discontinuity between American and British leaders continued on the ground similar to the air war. Hitler believed "that a blow here (Ardennes) would strike the seam between the British and the Americans and lead to political as well as military disharmony.

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between the Allies."  

Ironically, Montgomery advocated the situation Hitler envisioned. Montgomery supported the notion of idle American forces to the south as he conducted a "dagger-thrust" into the heart of Germany. He wrote in his diary on November 30, "the Supreme Commanders failure to implement the directive of 28 October was responsible for this situation."  

Montgomery suggested that Eisenhower’s refusal to immobilize American troops in the south resulted in a lengthened war.

Montgomery advocated that adherence to his singular attack on the Ruhr would have produced more immediate results and perhaps an end to the war before 1945. He wrote to Eisenhower claiming, "We have achieved none of this, and we have no hope of doing so. We have therefore failed; and we have suffered a great strategic reverse."  

Insubordinately, he continued, "The theatre divides itself naturally into two fronts; one north of the Ardennes and one to the south of the Ardennes... Bradley and I together are a good team... things have not been so good since you separated us." Montgomery suggested that Eisenhower put the two back together under the Field Marshals command.

Eisenhower replied to Montgomery's disparaging remarks: "The Ruhr is an important place, but let us never forget for one second that our primary objective is to defeat the Germans who are barring our way into Germany... There is some question in

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44 Ibid., 17.
45 Pogue, The Supreme Command, 312.
46 Ibid., 312.
my mind whether the Ardennes or the Ruhr should mark the dividing line, if such a plan should be adopted.”

He added, “I have no intention of stopping Devers’ and Patton’s operations as long as they are cleaning up our right flank and giving us capability of concentration. On the other hand, I do not intend to push these attacks senselessly.”

Influenced by Montgomery’s demands from below and above, Eisenhower considered actions that were not always in the best interest of defeating the Germans.

When learning of Montgomery’s plans Patton noted in his diary, “Monty wants all the Americans to stop, so that he, Monty, can make a dagger-thrust with the 21st Army Group at the heart of Germany... to hell with Monty.”

He continued, “Monty is bitterly opposed to the operations of both Patch and myself. He still wants all available forces massed on the north and wants to command them.”

The 3rd Army Commander felt that Eisenhower caved in to Montgomery’s pressure. “Monty does what he wants and Ike says ‘yes, sir.’ Monty wants all the supplies sent to him and for the First Army and me to hold. Ike feels that he is selling us out, but he has to, as Monty will not take orders.”

Located between divergent, competing forces, Eisenhower executed the options that maintained the coalition, but not necessarily those options that accelerated the defeat of the Wehrmacht. More than any other period in the war, Eisenhower demonstrated prior

47 Ibid., 312.
48 Ibid., 313.
49 Ibid., 314.
51 Ibid., 590.
52 Ibid., 548.
to the Bulge those qualities that cemented his position among the war managers, and alienated himself from his subordinate heroic leaders.

Defining the root of coalition problems is difficult. There is little question that Eisenhower failed to exercise positive control over his subordinates. Considering the complexity of organizing an alliance that covered half of the globe, unified multiple nations, and unified competing and often divergent militaries, traditional evaluation of Eisenhower's command decisions is impossible. He made a series of compromises that weakened the effectiveness of the Allied effort against the Germans. Both the Falaise pocket and the Battle of the Bulge demonstrate the vulnerability of a commander forced to exercise a coalition resistant to unification. Eisenhower received, and rightfully deserved, a portion of the blame for failing to better control subordinates within his command. He dedicated logistical support to Field Marshal Montgomery's northern effort while stagnating Patton's successful southern offensive.

The exercise of command, however, within a coalition is ultimately a two-way relationship. Much to Eisenhower's dismay, and at great cost in terms of lives lost and a prolonged war, the SHAEF commanders subordinates failed in two areas. First, Eisenhower's subordinates refused to cooperate with each other in a manner consistent with the most efficient defeat of the enemy. Their egos interfered with sound operational judgment. Second, they recognized their relative importance to the war effort and often grudgingly accepted their subordinate position within the Allied hierarchy of command. This increased friction between themselves and their superior, Eisenhower, and eroded
combat effectiveness. Montgomery’s delayed response to the Ardennes offensive resulted from the combination of these two deficiencies in the Allied effort against Germany.

As Patton’s US 3rd Army and Bradley’s 12th Army Group competed with Montgomery’s 21st Army Group for the graces of the Supreme Commander, two commands became obsolete. The U.S. 1st and 9th Armies in the quiet Ardennes sector, were an after-thought. In December 1944, Simpson’s 9th Army occupied a mere ten miles of the front, but Hodges 1st Army covered between 75 and 100 miles. The coalitions quiet after-thought received the shock of the German surprise. The Wehrmacht slammed the weight of three German Armies against an ill-prepared and under-strength collection of divisions.

One historical study of command concluded, “It cannot be denied that failures in American leadership led to a situation that permitted Hitler...from attacking a weakened line.”\(^53\) Greater than American neglect, coalition forces relegated First Army to obsolescence. General Courtney Hodges administrated the Ardennes region, a resting ground for battle-fatigued divisions and “blooding” zone for green divisions. Hodges did not advocate increased action in the Ardennes region. Tactical terrain studies supported Hodges’ assessment of the region as “passable for infantry, but difficult for vehicles.”\(^54\) Supported by limiting terrain, Hodges accepted First Army’s minor role.

\(^{54}\) Cole, The Ardennes, 10.
Hodges commanded the U.S. 1st Army for numerous reasons. He was one of the "Marshall Generals," so regarded for impressing the Chief of Staff in the inter-war years. Hodges service record prior to 1944 was better than average. In late 1944, he was one of the seasoned generals who suffered no battle fatigue. Hodges, however, had a more sinister side. His primary fault was the "zero-defect" mentality that prevailed in his commands. He relieved division and corps commanders at the first sign of faltering. Hodges was insecure, excessively cautious, and possessed little imagination. He exercised no imagination in planning or executing operations. Patton said of Hodges, "even the tentmaker (Bradley) admits that Courtney is dumb." Bradley, in turn, directed his subordinates poorly. Bradley neither controlled the reins on Patton, nor sparked the fires in Hodges. Instead, Bradley occupied his time with U.S. and British relations.

The 1st Army was crushed on the morning of December 16. Three German Armies rolled through the green or wearied divisions on the line. Hitler gambled that Allied leaders would not react without consulting both Washington and London. Time delay afforded him three days of exploitation through the ill-prepared defenses of 1st Army.

Many of Hitler's basic assumptions materialized. Bradley, separated between the southern half of his Army Group and the northern half protecting the British flank, reluctantly gave operational command to Montgomery. The U.S. official history

56 Blumenson, The Patton Papers, 486.
concluded, "the decision to pass the U.S. 1st and 9th Armies to British command must have been hard to make, since both Eisenhower and Smith were acutely conscious of the smoldering animosity toward the British in general, and Montgomery in particular, which existed in the headquarters of the 12th Army Group and 3rd Army."\textsuperscript{57} Not tactical or operational, but strategic-political considerations topped Bradley's mind as his died in the Ardennes forest.

Montgomery, on the other hand, enjoyed the irony of the situation. Eisenhower, who previously disregarded the Field Marshals' proposed scheme of maneuver, asked Montgomery to command those American forces cut off from their commander. Montgomery noted, "Personlly, I am enjoying a very interesting battle; but one ought really to burst into tears at the tragedy of the whole thing. Possibly in years to come certain people will turn in their graves when they think back on the past. There are some good sharp rocks ahead even now. At the moment I do not see how this thing is going to turn into what Ike calls 'our greatest victory.'"\textsuperscript{58} Montgomery, the savior of El Alamein, enjoyed the limelight.

To the supreme command, Montgomery was anything but splendid in his reaction to the bulge. He had the unquestioned loyalty of his generals, but those serving Montgomery suffocated under his leadership style. Montgomery forced upon his subordinates strict logistical requirements. British leaders failed to seize battlefield opportunities. Montgomery's subordinates attacked after achieving numerical superiority.

\textsuperscript{57} Cole, \textit{The Ardennes}, 424.
and stockpiling supplies to sustain operations. Ten days after the German attack, the Field Marshal estimated the timing of his counter. Montgomery notified SHAEF on December 26th, “At present, I cannot pass to the offensive” and that he needed more troops to shore up the 1st Army shoulder. Once these troops arrived, Montgomery assured Eisenhower, he could reduce the salient.

American commanders differed from the British in their response to the bulge. The Americans attacked when weaknesses in German lines materialized. At times they suffered setbacks, but they produced victories in greater number and at lesser cost than the more cautious British commanders. The Battle of the Bulge represented the unique U.S. and British approach to combat. Eisenhower and Patton saw the Ardennes as an opportunity to exploit overextended German forces. Hitler’s offensive presented the first opportunity in months to manipulate the typically static German lines. Montgomery, conversely, saw the German offensive as little more than another American defeat.

Montgomery and Eisenhower’s differences reached their climax in late-December. “Eisenhower chaffed at Montgomery’s slowness to launch a counter stroke.”59 When Eisenhower received word that Montgomery planned offensive action, Eisenhower replied “Praise God from whom all blessings flow.”60 The Field Marshal wanted to concentrate his actions in a northern offensive, not a divergent attack to the south. “Monty sought a counterattack, not a counter-offensive; he would pursue a tactical victory and proposed

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58 Irving, The War Between the Generals, 371.
59 Weigley, Eisenhower's Lieutenants, 68.
60 Ibid., 541.
nothing larger. Timely reaction to the offensive depended upon a unified effort in assuming the counter-initiative. Poor command and control, compounded by absent supreme leadership allowed Germany to achieve great success in its attack.

On December 25, commanders of armies facing the German offensive met at Montgomery’s headquarters. Bradley thought the Germans were done. He told Hodges, “If we could seize the initiative, I believe he would have to get out in a hurry.” Bradley told Hodges to “attack as soon as the situation warrants.” Eisenhower assumed control over the operations of 1st Army for the remainder of December and early January. He demanded initiative in reducing the bulge. Third Army destroyed the southern flank of the salient and relieved American forces in the town of Bastogne, 1st Army survived, and 21st Army Group was minimally distracted from its on-going “dagger-thrust.”

Conclusion

The situation that allowed a defeated German Army to mount one of the most significant counter-offensives in history was deep-rooted in Anglo-American animosities, and compounded by differences in leadership styles. The complexity of coalition warfare further added to German chances for success. ‘For American armed forces in the Second World War, military operations in varying degrees required not just single-service integration [such as infantry-artillery coordination], but combined [inter-allied], and joint

61 Ibid., 544-546.
63 Ibid., 610.
[inter-service] force integration. The campaign against Germany required a high degree of Allied inter-operability within the already difficult problem of joint operations.\textsuperscript{64} These multiple forces conspired to give a German army nearing its manpower and logistical limits great advantages in the winter offensive of 1944.

Prior to December 1944, the Antwerp offensive allocated precious fuel and all replacement troops to Montgomery's 21\textsuperscript{st} Army Group, north of the U.S. 1st and 9th Armies. Patton's demand for consideration, compounded by accusations of caving in to British pressure, diverted few remaining supplies in Europe to 3rd Army in the south. Forced to operate with those troops and supplies deemed exhausted or inexperienced, 1st Army occupied a neglected portion of the Allied front between two giants.

Tenuous Allied relationships reduced the speed of the Allied response to the German attack. Individual initiative on the part of American commanders compensated for this slow response. What Hitler "failed to comprehend (was) the degree of initiative that training and tradition placed in the hands of American corps and army commanders. They also misunderstood American doctrine, largely unwritten, but universally accepted, that major formations, having no pre-battle relationship may, under fluid conditions, unite on the field after the battle is joined."\textsuperscript{65}

The German offensive capitalized on divergent Allied efforts but failed to compensate for individual initiative. It was not until the Supreme Commander exercised


\textsuperscript{65} Cole, \textit{The Ardennes}, 671.
an inordinate amount of control that the momentum of the battle changed direction.

"Bradley's uncharacteristic failure to exert aggressive, positive command of his army group at the beginning of the battle was effectively offset by Eisenhower's more active role in the actual conduct of the fighting." General Eisenhower took charge of the faltering US 1st Army, while Patton's 3rd Army decisively attacked the Germans from the south. General Patton "created battlefield success when Hodges' failures and bad decisions threatened to doom 1st Army." Patton relieved the salient with a rapid and violent offensive against the German flank. The end result, 1st Army "not only survived, it ultimately triumphed, despite the 1st Army's poor leadership."  

Strategic, operational, and tactical differentiation existed between the Allies. An unimaginative First Army Commander guided by the casual leadership of Omar Bradley, operated between the titanic personalities of Montgomery to the north and Patton to the south. Competition for supplies, troops, and operational priority placed these leaders at loggerheads with each other. Compounding this competition were gross discrepancies in leadership, demonstrated by the war managers and the heroic leaders. Anglo-American cooperation in December 1944 was as tenuous a relationship as any coalition in warfare, a situation exploited by Hitler's last gamble.

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66 Ibid., 346.
67 Ibid., 347.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The German Ardennes offensive produced 120,000 German and 77,000 Allied casualties. Although tersely calculated in numerical terms, the Allies quickly replaced their Ardennes losses and recovered lost ground, while Germany reached the end of its manpower reserves. Anglo-American armies raced toward Berlin and ended the “thousand year” Reich just five months after the winter offensive. Germany suffered its second devastating defeat in less than half a century.

Although an isolated event, the Ardennes offensive serves as commentary on far larger conditions. A struggling German Army mounted a damaging offensive against a superior Allied military, the result of conditions created beyond the limited front held by Hodges’ 1st U.S. Army.

Although the beleaguered 1st Army fell before the German offensive, Allied strategic priorities contributed to German success. Admittedly an army commander of limited potential and imagination, Courtney Hodges lacked the troops and equipment to defend the Ardennes sector that covered almost 100 miles. His managerial leadership methods only compounded 1st Army’s undesirable position. The Supreme Allied

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To the north of First Army, Field Marshal Montgomery’s 21st Army Group consumed disproportionate logistical requirements. Historian Russell Weigley noted that Eisenhower “did concentrate his logistical support behind Montgomery as much as he dared to.” He further stated, “The speed of the advance from Normandy had carried the Allies so far beyond their ports of entry and their depots and so overstrained the intervening transportation that for any of the armies to have advanced far into Germany was probably impossible.”

Montgomery contributed the most to Allied friction in the months prior to the Battle of the Bulge. He made excessive demands on his superior for operational priority and logistical support, refused to cooperate with his peers, and produced few tangible results from his campaigns.

General Bradley, facing limited supplies and the over-bearing demands of his subordinate, Third Army’s General George Patton, relegated the US First Army to static duties. Without the logistical support necessary for even limited operations, the Ardennes stagnated. Political, not sound operational, decisions guided senior Anglo-American military thinking prior to the Battle of the Bulge and resulted in an Allied line incapable of defense against the massive German attack.

The quality of Montgomery’s offensives with the majority of Allied logistical support remains questionable. Weigley further argued, “If with such a share of the available support, any general could have dealt the Germans a knockout blow, the man to do it was not Montgomery. He squandered Eisenhower’s logistical generosity in listless failure to push on across the Albert Canal and to the Rhine with the first momentum of his

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2 Ibid., 349.
advance into Antwerp, and then he blamed Eisenhower for the failures implicit in the whole logistical situation and aggravated by his own insufficiently aggressive generalship. Problems derived from coalition warfare and the resulting struggle for logistical support. Montgomery refused to acknowledge logistical support for operations outside of the 21st Army Group and failed to advance with the disproportionate supplies he received. In a difficult political situation, Eisenhower made unwise consolations toward the British and supported Montgomery's fruitless offensives in the north. Support for Montgomery's initiatives bankrupted Patton's previously successful drive toward Berlin.

Problems in Anglo-American cooperation damaged Allied effectiveness in the intelligence war. From the beginning, American officers selected for intelligence training encountered resistance from British instructors. At higher levels, changes in the evolving Allied intelligence system produced non-uniform methods of analysis and reporting. In the months prior to the Battle of the Bulge, inexperienced American officers assumed the lead in the intelligence war. American inexperience resulted from over-ambitious British control of a global intelligence network and inter-war neglect. The American intelligence system further suffered from a lack of standard operating procedures. Some commands integrated the collection and analysis of multiple information sources, while others relied heavily on Ultra. Lack of uniformity resulted in inconsistent intelligence reporting. The inability of both America and Britain to field quality system administrators minimized the success experienced by code breakers in Bletchley Park. Systematic deficiency resulted in

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Ibid., 350.
information that was not prioritized and disseminated in a timely manner to the proper recipients.

The poor performance of Allied intelligence is attributable to both American and British approaches to war. British military tradition relied heavily on attempting to defeat an opponents' plan. Limited manpower reserves traditionally forced Britain away from a war of attrition. Remembering the costly lessons of the First World War, Britain devoted great resources into defining, then countering German plans in the Second World War. Historian B.H. Liddell-Hart noted, "The historic British practice was based, above all, on mobility and surprise." This approach to the war was evident in almost every aspect of British strategy. Montgomery argued for the "single-thrust" offensive into Germany, arguing against the high cost in men and supplies necessary to support Eisenhower's "broad-front" strategy. In an attempt to preclude German efforts, Britain dedicated great time and expense to the intelligence war.

The war in Europe, likewise, reflected American military tradition. Eisenhower envisioned a war of annihilation. He supported the accumulation of military power on the European continent prior to a highly mobile, multi-front offensive. Although not completely neglected, American military intelligence took a secondary role in terms of manpower and equipment. America employed the most-competent, career-minded officers and men in support of the strategy of annihilation. Those concerned with defeating the enemy or those with career ambitions were directed toward the war fighting effort. Defining the enemy plan did not concern American military planners as much as
employing the most competent military leaders in support of the ground offensive.

America conducted the intelligence war with quickly trained reserve officers, failing to recruit the traditional regular officer from the lure of battlefield command.

Britain, forced by geographic necessity to be more prepared for war than the Americans, received years of intelligence training prior to the Second World War. Alan Turing appealed to Prime Minister Churchill in 1941, claiming the work of the intelligence analysts was “being held up, and in some cases not being done at all.” He continued, “in the long run these particular requirements will be met, but meanwhile still precious months will have been wasted.” Geography gave Britain numerous targets for interception and decoding. Following the First World War, America demobilized almost all of the intelligence capabilities of the United States. Maintaining the smallest possible army, America dedicated little to the interception and code breaking of signals. Geography and tradition both contributed to the slow start of American intelligence officers in World War II.

Finally, effective German execution of Hitler’s over-ambitious counter-offensive manipulated weaknesses in Anglo-American cooperation and intelligence systems. Lacking the men, and more importantly the armor and fuel, to defeat the Allies in the West, Field Marshal Model executed an operationally sound counter-offensive. German forces rested and refitted while simultaneously conducting a holding action. Units secretly massed under an elaborate cover and deception plan, and achieved total surprise against

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the First US Army. Had it not been for Hitler’s strategic vision of Antwerp that
bankrupted German logistics, the Ardennes offensive would be regarded as one of the
most effective counter-offensives in history. It was Hitler’s inability to grasp the
Clausewitzian connection between strategy and operations that bankrupted the German
offensive.

The Battle of the Bulge served as more than an isolated event. It demonstrated the
difficulties facing partners in coalition warfare then as they exist today. The Ardennes
demonstrated the differences between American and British military tradition. The often-
overlooked consideration of logistics limited field commanders, even when fighting against
a defeated German army. The Bulge further served to reveal the effects of political
decision-making on soldiers in combat. The titanic battles between the war managers and
the heroic leaders, at times, eclipsed the significance of the battle between German and
Allied forces on the ground. More than any of these indicators, the Ardennes offensive
provided evidence that the German army, despite years of irreplaceable losses, still
adhered to those basic principles of war that encouraged operational victory. The Battle
of the Bulge served then as it does today as a model battle.
APPENDIX
ADVANCE TO THE WEST WALL
GERMAN OFFENSIVE
12th Army Group generals confer at 1st Army Headquarters on 2 February 1945, one month after the Battle of the Bulge. From left to right, General's Bradley, Hodges, Simpson, and Patton.

General officers of the 12th army Group confer with General Eisenhower at Bad Wildungen, Germany on 11 May 1945. Front Row, from left to right: General's Simpson, Patton, Bradley, Hodges, Gerow; Back Row: Nugent, Weyland, Vandenburg, Sterling.  

1 Photographs courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration II, Still Pictures Branch, College Park, Maryland.
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