

100th Division Headquarters— The Lifeline to Our Fighting Troops

by Burt Schuman, Div-HQ

Very often the valiant fighting men of the 100th Division have asked the question regarding the roll that Division Headquarters played during our training period and then our action in the ETO.

Let's define the units and then their responsibilities. Division Headquarters consisted of five units.

- Division Headquarters—Military Police, 100th Band, Signal Company, Defense Platoon, Postal Group, Chemical Warfare Unit
- G-1—Personnel
- G-2—Enemy Intelligence
- G-3—Combat Operations
- G-4—Transportation-Supplies

I was assigned to the G-3 unit under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth E. Eckland. The unit was comparatively small, with only 15 to 20 personnel. The primary responsibilities of our unit was to keep very detailed situation maps that included, obviously, the disposition of our troops as well as the supporting units on both their right and left flanks. G-2 would supply us with all the available German positions. The map complex was referred to as the "War Room."

The War Room was actually a two-and-one-half-ton truck completely equipped with the component parts to render it operational. It consisted of two sets of maps, a typewriter, two chairs, two small tables, and two cabinets to hold some necessary drawing materials and paper. The maps were mounted on 4-foot by 8-foot plywood on permanent stands that made them completely mobile. On occasion they would be moved to a secure house or building as our troops were making some strategic progress. The War Room was always a restricted area and guarded by our own MPs. Tim Wilkens seem to be the M.P. who spent the most time on duty there. I might add that the design for the truck originated at Fort Jackson. General Burress spent many hours alone and with staff members reviewing the maps before making his final decision on future attack orders. It was quite obvious that he was always very concerned about the troops he was ordering into harm's way.

After the decisions were formulated the attack orders were traced directly from the maps showing the various phase lines for each of the regiments and supporting units accompanied with written instructions. This included the artillery, engineers, medical, quartermaster, cavalry, and signal company units. Liaison officers would distribute the instructions to their respective units. The regimental commanders would place the overlays over their matching maps, pass their decisions on to their respective battalions who would, in turn, pass their decisions to their company commanders. This classic chain of command seems like a typical textbook philosophy, but it worked.

The "War Room" became my official home and after a while the steel floor of the truck felt like I was sleeping on a feathered mattress. This obviously was a lot more comfortable than the cold ground or foxhole you guys were sleeping on, but all of us were striving for the same goal: Beat the Nazis and let's get home.

After VE Day and during the period we served as occupying troops Colonel Eckland, G-3, assigned me to prepare a set of maps detailing the combat history of our Division. This assignment led me into another area that eventually took me three months to complete. First I had to familiarize myself with the method of printing that would be used and then locate some essential drawing material. My old buddies the maps, the overlays, and the daily reports put me in business. The Corps of Engineers introduced me to the German printer who obviously would be the link to the success of this project. The printer's establishment was in Stuttgart just a few miles from our headquarters. The paper and the paint were supplied by the Corps of Engineers.

Fifteen thousand copies were produced and distributed to all members of our Division and also to many units that had contact with the 100th.

I returned with several copies and gave them to Fort Jackson, Fort Benning, and Carlisle Barracks. One set I gave to my grandson, who guards it as if it were a bag of gold nuggets.

In closing I want to thank Professor Jeffrey Norwitz and the Navy War College in Newport, RI, for their assistance in producing the very colorful and accurate CDs of the maps.

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