

Chapter 1 : Operation Plunder - Wikipedia

Operation Plunder was a military operation to cross the Rhine on the night of 23 March , launched by the 21st Army Group under Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery. The crossing of the river was at Rees, Wesel, and south of the river Lippe by the British Second Army under Lieutenant General Sir Miles Dempsey, and the United States Ninth Army.

Developments from summer to autumn The Allied invasions of western Europe, June–November The German Army high command had long been expecting an Allied invasion of northern France but had no means of knowing where precisely the stroke would come: The fortifications of those stretches were consequently improved, but Rundstedt and Rommel still took different views about the way in which the invasion should be met: The Germans had 59 divisions spread over western Europe from the Low Countries to the Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts of France; but approximately half of this number was static, and the remainder included only 10 armoured or motorized divisions. Normandy Invasion Overview of the Normandy Invasion. Library of Congress, Washington, D. Eisenhower launched the greatest amphibious invasion of all time against German defenses on the coast of Normandy, France. From The Second World War: Though the heavy fighting at Caen attracted most of the German reserves, the U. The Allies could not have made such rapid progress in northern France if their air forces had not been able to interfere decisively with the movement of the German reserves. Allied aircraft destroyed most of the bridges over the Seine River to the east and over the Loire to the south. The German reserves thus had to make long detours in order to reach the Normandy battle zone and were so constantly harassed on the march by Allied strafing that they suffered endless delays and only arrived in dribbles. He also forbade the German forces already engaged in Normandy to retreat in time to make an orderly withdrawal to new defenses. There was something else, besides the progress of the Allies, to demoralize the German commanders—the failure and the aftermath of a conspiracy against Hitler. Alarmed at the calamitous course of events and disgusted by the crimes of the Nazi regime, certain conservative but anti-Nazi civilian dignitaries and military officers had formed themselves into a secret opposition, with Karl Friedrich Goerdeler a former chief mayor of Leipzig and Colonel General Ludwig Beck a former chief of the army general staff among its leaders. From this opposition canvassed the indispensable support of the active military authorities with some notable success: General Friedrich Olbricht chief of the General Army Office and several of the serving commanders, including Rommel and Kluge, became implicated to various extents. On July 20, therefore, Stauffenberg left a bomb concealed in a briefcase in the room where Hitler was conferring at his headquarters in East Prussia. The bomb duly exploded; but Hitler survived, and the coup in Berlin miscarried. The Nazi reaction was savage: Kluge committed suicide on August 17, Rommel on October Fear permeated and paralyzed the German high command in the weeks that followed. On August 7 a desperate counterattack by four panzer divisions from Mortain, east of Avranches, failed to seal the breach , and American tanks poured southward through the gap and flooded the open country beyond. Though some of the U. The town of Caen, France, after being taken by Allied forces, July 17, On August 1, two army groups were constituted: The clandestine French Resistance in Paris rose against the Germans on August 19; and a French division under General Jacques Leclerc , pressing forward from Normandy, received the surrender of the German forces there and liberated the city on August French Resistance fighters in training, Allied forces securing Paris Newsreel of Allied forces securing Paris following the surrender of its German commander on August 25, It was his folly that enabled the Allies to liberate France so quickly. The fragments were incapable of further resistance, and their retreat which was largely on foot was soon outstripped by the British and American mechanized columns. More than , German troops were taken prisoner in France, and 1, German tanks had been destroyed in the fighting. When the Allies approached the German border at the beginning of September, after a sweeping drive from Normandy, there was no organized resistance to stop them from driving on into the heart of Germany. Both armies then moved swiftly northeastward into Alsace. In the north, however, some discord had arisen among the Allied commanders after the crossing of the Seine. Montgomery nevertheless attempted a thrust to cross the Rhine River at Arnhem, the British 1st Airborne Division being dropped ahead there to clear the way for the 2nd Army; but the Germans

were just able to check the thrust, thus isolating the parachutists, many of whom were taken prisoner. By this time, indeed, the German defense was rapidly stiffening as the Allies approached the German frontiers: In early September the U. They were therefore not prepared, mentally or materially, to exploit it by a rapid offensive into Germany itself. The Germans thus obtained time to build up their defending forces in the west, with serious consequences both for occupied Europe and the postwar political situation of the Continent. Minsk itself fell to the Red Army on July 3; and, though the Germans extricated a large part of their forces from the Soviet enveloping movement, the Soviet tanks raced ahead, bypassing any attempts to block their path, and were deep into Lithuania and northeastern Poland by mid-July. The Polish underground in Warsaw thereupon rose in revolt against the Germans and briefly gained control of the city. But three SS armoured divisions arrived to suppress the revolt in Warsaw, and the Soviet Red Army stood idly by across the Vistula while the Germans crushed the insurrection. The halt on the Vistula was to last six months. On August 20, however, two Soviet thrusts were launched in another direction—against the German salient in Bessarabia. A new government came to power in Romania on August 23 and not only suspended hostilities against the U. The Germans could only try to hold the threatened centres of communication long enough for the withdrawal of their forces from Greece and from southern Yugoslavia. Budapest, however, was stubbornly defended: By mid-October the remnants of those forces were cornered in Courland, but the subsequent Soviet attempt to break through from Lithuania into East Prussia was repelled. By the end of the 8th Bomber Command alone could mount attacks of planes, and early in regular 1, bomber attacks became possible. Even more important was the arrival in Europe of effective long-range fighters, chief of which, the P Mustang, was capable of operating at maximum bomber range. Carl Spaatz, commanding general of the U. The RAF Bomber Command launched nearly 10, sorties in March and dropped some 27, tons of bombs, about 70 percent of this effort being concentrated on Germany; but in the following months its offensive was largely diverted to the intensive preparation and, later, to the support of the Allied landings in France. Nevertheless, it joined usefully in the U. By early, the unending Allied bombing and strafing raids on bridges, roads, rail facilities, locomotives, and supply columns had paralyzed the German transportation system. His faith in them had indeed been a major motive for his insistence on holding the sites, in northernmost France, from which they were initially to be aimed at London. The V-2 offensive was maintained until March V-2 missile Wernher von Braun holding a model of the German V-2 missile that he helped to develop beginning in London had already proposed to Moscow in May that Romania and Bulgaria should be zones for Soviet military operation, Yugoslavia and Greece—whose royalist governments in exile were under British protection—for British; and Roosevelt had approved this proposition in June. The Polish question, moreover, was still unresolved, and in July the Soviets established, at Lublin, a Committee of National Liberation independent of the London Poles. Averell Harriman also present at most of their talks. Disagreement persisted over Poland. The timing of the next western and Soviet offensives against Germany was also agreed, and some accord was reached about the scale of the eventual Soviet participation in the war against Japan. The initial steps toward the Philippines were taken almost simultaneously, in mid-September. Already by mid-September the Americans had discovered that the Japanese forces were unexpectedly weak not only on Mindanao but also on Leyte, the smaller island north of the Surigao Strait. With this knowledge they decided to bypass Mindanao and to begin their invasion of the Philippines on Leyte. On October 17–18, American forces seized offshore islets in Leyte Gulf, and on October 20 they landed four divisions on the east coast of Leyte. Newsreel of American forces invading the Philippine islands, Though in the case of Leyte the Japanese Army and Navy air forces in the immediate theatre numbered only planes, it was hoped that the dispatch of four carriers under Vice Admiral Ozawa, with planes, southward from Japanese waters would lure the U. Kamikaze pilots deliberately crashed their bomb-armed planes into enemy ships. At the same time, however, a Japanese naval force from Singapore was to sail to Brunei Bay and there split itself into two groups that would converge on Leyte Gulf from the north and from the southwest: On October 25, however, Kurita made his way unopposed through the San Bernardino Strait, since the commander of the U. Three groups of U. These losses amounted to three battleships, one large aircraft carrier, three light carriers, six heavy cruisers, four light cruisers, and 11 destroyers, while the United States lost only one light carrier, two escort carriers, and three destroyers. The

battle reduced the Japanese Navy to vestigial strength and cleared the way for the U. Defeat in the gulf, however, did not prevent the Japanese from landing reinforcements on the west coast of Leyte. They put up so stubborn a resistance that the Americans themselves had to be reinforced before Ormoc fell on December 10, ; it was not before December 25 that the Americans could claim control of all Leyte—though there was still some mopping up to be done. Altogether, the defense of Leyte cost the Japanese some 75, combatants killed or taken prisoner. From Leyte the Americans proceeded first, on December 15, to the invasion of Mindoro, the largest of the islands immediately south of Luzon. Kamikaze counterattacks made this conquest more costly; and they were to be continued after the Americans had surprised the Japanese by landing, on January 9, , at Lingayen Gulf on the west coast of Luzon itself, the most important island of the Philippines. The local Japanese commander, Lieutenant General Yamashita Tomoyuki , with no hope of reinforcement, opted for tying the enemy forces down as long as possible by a static defense in three mountainous sectors—west, northwest, and east of the Central Plains behind Manila. Launched in salvos from landing craft, rockets smothered Japanese beach defenses as U. Manila was then invested, and during the siege the bay was cleared by the occupation of the southern tip of Bataan Peninsula on February 15 and by the reduction of Corregidor Island in the following fortnight. On March 3 Manila fell at last to the Americans. Allied forces recaptured Manila, PhilippinesManila, Philippines, in the aftermath of its recapture by Allied forces in early Douglas MacArthur striding ashore in the liberated Philippines, October 20, Mindanao, meanwhile, was likewise being reduced. The last phase of the U. Tarakan Island , off the northeast coast, was invaded on May 1; Brunei on the northwest coast was invaded on June 10; and Balikpapan, on the east coast far to the south of Tarakan, was attacked on July 1. The subsequent collapse of the Japanese defenses around Balikpapan deprived Japan of the oil supplies of southern Borneo. Wedemeyer became commander of U. Launched under Sultan, the triple drive was at first only partially successful: He did indeed effect the Chindwin crossings, but in mid-December he saw that the Japanese were in any case going to withdraw altogether to the left bank of the Irrawaddy. Thereupon, he changed his plan: To conceal his new intention, he allowed one of the corps already directed against Mandalay to continue its eastward advance, but the other corps was surreptitiously moved over a circuitous route of miles southward to Pakokku , which lay south of the Chindwin—Irrawaddy confluence and northwest of Meiktila. While the crossing of the Irrawaddy by the former corps on both sides of Mandalay distracted the attention of the Japanese, the latter corps took Meiktila on March 3, , and held it against fierce counterattacks. When the action was over, two Japanese armies had lost one-third of their fighting strength. It remained for Slim to capture the Burmese capital, Rangoon. Allied ground forces advanced on Rangoon along two routes from the north: The monsoon, however, was imminent , and to forestall it a small combined operation was undertaken:

Chapter 2 : Ludendorff Bridge - Wikipedia

Across The Rhine () American soldiers working on the Ludendorff Bridge across Rhine at Ray-Margen. Several shots of the troops tanks and vehicles passing over Lui Ludendorff Bridge.

You can help by adding to it. January Preparations such as accumulation of supplies, road construction, and the transport of 36 Royal Navy landing craft , were hidden by a massive smoke screen from 16 March. The operation commenced on the night of 23 March The landing areas were flooded, deserted farmland rising to woodland. Battle[edit] British Commandos on the outskirts of Wesel Four thousand Allied guns fired for four hours during the opening bombardment. British bombers contributed with attacks on Wesel during the day and night of 23 March Bridge construction started at 9: One "funny" was the "Buffalo" operated by the 4th Royal Tank Regiment , under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Alan Jolly , an armed and armoured amphibious tracked personnel or cargo transporter able to cross soft and flooded ground. These were the transports for the spearhead infantry. At first, there was no opposition, but later they ran into determined resistance from machine-gun nests. The British 1st Commando Brigade entered Wesel. The local resistance had been broken by artillery and air bombardment. American casualties were minimal. German resistance to the Scottish landings continued with some effect, and there were armored counter-attacks. Landings continued, however, including tanks and other heavy equipment. Operation Varsity started at Despite heavy resistance to the airdrops and afterward, the airborne troops made progress and repelled counterattacks. The hard lessons of Operation Market Garden were applied. In the afternoon, the 15th Scottish Division linked up with both airborne divisions. Fierce German resistance continued around Bienen, north of Rees , where the entire 9th Canadian Infantry Brigade was needed to relieve the Black Watch. The bridgehead was firmly established, however, and Allied advantages in numbers and equipment were applied. Although this formation was considered to be the most effective German force in the area, it was severely depleted from its previous action in the Battle of the Reichswald. Unable to withstand Allied pressure, the 1st Parachute Army withdrew northeast toward Hamburg and Bremen , leaving a gap between it and the German 15th Army in the Ruhr. On 24 March, he began his diary entry with, "The situation in the West has entered an extraordinarily critical, ostensibly almost deadly, phase. Blumentritt and his superior, Generaloberst Johannes Blaskowitz , both recognised that the situation was lost. Communications were weak, indeed, one corps was never contacted. The reinforcements were so poor that the generals decided against using them, to avoid needless casualties. Although Blumentritt had strict orders from Supreme Command to hold and fight, from 1 April, he managed a withdrawal with minimal casualties, eventually withdrawing beyond the Dortmund-Ems Canal to the Teutoburg Forest. Within a week of the start of Plunder, the Allies had taken 30, prisoners of war north of the Ruhr. Subsequently, Churchill and Montgomery watched the Varsity air landings on 24 March. After lunch and a briefing, the party went to a sandbagged house overlooking the Rhine and a quiet, undefended stretch of the German-held riverbank. They next visited the destroyed railway bridge at Wesel, departing when German artillery appeared to target them. Military rivalries[edit] The Plunder crossings in the third week of March were planned as the primary assault across the Rhine, but at the Malta Conference in early February , it was decided to add another crossing to the south of the Ruhr. The additional crossing was intended to draw off any concentration of forces in opposition to Plunder. On 7 March, U. Within the next 10 days six divisions and 25, troops established a bridgehead on the eastern side of the Rhine. On 22 March, General George S. Patton sent his Third Army across the Rhine, at Nierstein , to form another bridgehead.

Chapter 3 : 20 best Rhine River Crossings images on Pinterest | Daddy, Optimism and Positivity

The Ludendorff Bridge (sometimes referred to as the Bridge at Remagen) was in early March one of two remaining bridges across the river Rhine in Germany when it was captured during the Battle of Remagen by United States Army forces during the closing weeks of World War II.

Combat engineers of 17th Armored Engineer Battalion helped the French by building docks, depots and laid rail lines. As the US enter front line operations the 17th built trench systems, wire fence lines, and bridges. We young and inexperienced officers and enlisted much training was needed to do the job of a combat engineer soldiers. After organizing the new battalion, training in engineering skills started. The battalion average age of the enlisted men was 22 years. Then men had two and a half months of basic training behind. M1 carbine Rifle marksmanship , mines, minefields , Demining fixed dry gullies bridge construct, floating Pontoon bridge construct, road repair-making, Military engineering vehicles - DUKW use, and other field combat problems. Training include Live fire exercise and live mine exercises, to make the men battle ready. Patton was in charge of training the new 2nd Armored division. The major task in North Africa was landing clear and mine removal. In Morocco the landing was in Safi as part of Operation Blackstone. Before the landing the 17th used M4 Sherman tanks with Scorpion Mine flail exploder to clear the way. After Sicily the 17th moved to England to train and prepare for D-Day. Normandy Edit M4 Sherman Tank Mounted with a M1 Bulldozer makes its way through a hedge, gun pointed down, ready to fire, in France On 9 June , D-day plus 3, along with other battalions, the 17th battalion landed on Utah Beach in Normandy as a part of the Normandy landings and Operation Overlord. They cleared lanes for landing craft by destroying the mine-bearing steel structures that the Germans had implanted in the intertidal zone. They bulldozed roads up the narrow draws through the cliffs lining the beaches. To clear barricades, mine fields, fill in caters and break through thick hedgerows the 17th used M4 Sherman Tanks mounting with M1 bulldozer. Also used was Caterpillar D7 with armor plates added to the engine and cab. The tank bulldozer broke through the hedgerows in France. Germans learned to wait until the tanks cross with infantry following on foot then fire on both. To counter, forces started with their main guns loaded with canister and pointed to the rear and to the flanks. The first try failed as the bridge fell into the canal. On 15 September with the help of a boat for support the bridge was completed. Albert canal functioned as a defense line for the retreating enemy. All the bridges across the Geleenbeek stream around Schinnen were destroyed by the retreating army. During construction machine gun fire came from woods, missing the engineers. A tank fired some HE-grenades towards the woods and machine gun fire stopped. Two 60 feet Beam bridges where completed one at Kathagermolen and one at Schinnen. Collier in command was ordered by Gen. The 17th Armored Engineers was ordered to secure Merzenhausen and Barmen to cut off communication lines to the Roer as part of Operation Queen. Then moved on to blow up the enemy ammunition dump there along with four enemy vehicles. Battle of the Bulge Edit During the Battle of the Bulge , quick thinking and action of the engineers destroyed key bridges in the path of advancing German forces, slowing and diverting them while Allied forces regrouped. Battle of the Bulge was fought in the bitter cold from 16 December to 25 January Approaches to the bridge were made of sommerfeld mat over chespaling mat, with three inches of gravel. Bridge construction started at 9: Over feet of M2 treadway and 93 pneumatic floats were used in just six hours and fifteen minute construction project, record setting for the size of the bridge. A steel treadway bridge needed floating pontoons. A saddles on top of the pontoon put the weight of the bridge on the pontoon. A foot sections of treadway track was bolted to the saddles. The treadway sections were put together on the spot unloaded for many truck. The sections were taken out to the end of the bridge in construction. The sections were connected together with large steel pins. The 17th was experienced with treadway bridges, but this was the largest one. To cross the Rhine would need 80 or 90 sections to complete the bridge. Moving the sections then pounding in the large pins was hard work. These bridge could carry a heavy load including a 66, pound M4 tanks. The floating pontoon was a ton pressurized rubber bag. The saddle was the metal and plywood frame was placed on the float and supported the treadway tracks. To prefabricate the bridge the pontoon had to be inflated; the saddles had to be assembled and lashed to the to of

the pontoon. On 5 April , the 17th Engr. On 8 April division engineers constructed a pontoon bridge across the Weser Elbe Canal, west of, Harsum allowing Company "A" to continue its drive northeast to Braunschweig. Elbe River Edit Elbe River bridge, abandoned at Westerhusen after enemy shellings The engineers ferried two battalions across the Elbe river before starting the construction of the floating bridge at Westerhusen. In the night spanning 12 to 13 April a bridge across the river was made. It was a very dark night making it difficult even with the use two search lights. In the dark the bridge quickly came together. As day light came, engineers put smoke pots , for smoke screen , on both sides of the bridge to hide the construction completions from the enemy. But, at 6am enemy shells destroyed five bridge pontoon floats, work was stopped. By 7am work started again to complete and repair the bridge. By 2pm the bridge was also most complete with 25 feet to complete. But so much enemy artillery fire was raining in the engineers were ordered to abandoned the bridge and load up their trucks and pull out, to prevent further damage. The unit moved to Grunewalde were a ferry would move them across. The construction team came against enemy fire and once a Luftwaffe attack. Caterpillar D7 armored bulldozer.

On March 7, , Cologne fell to the Allies; however, that city's link to the eastern bank of the Rhine, the 1,foot segment of the Hohenzollern Bridge, had been destroyed the previous day, making a Rhine crossing at Cologne impossible for Hodges's First Army.

It would have been a leaping off base for a mainland invasion. Americans retake Legaspi , Albay in the eastern Philippines was helping the Philippine Commonwealth troops and Bicolano guerillas, one of the original Japanese landing sites in December, Soviets launch Vienna Offensive against German forces in and around the Austrian capital city. German armies are surrounded in the Ruhr region. Bratislava, the capital of the Slovak Republic , is overrun by advancing Soviet forces. Ohrdruf death camp is liberated by the Allies. Po Valley Campaign begins in northern Italy. Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer is executed at Flossenburg prison. Buchenwald concentration camp liberated by American forces. Spain breaks diplomatic relations with Japan. Japanese kamikaze attacks on American naval ships continue at Okinawa; the carrier Enterprise and the battleship Missouri are hit heavily. Truman becomes president of the United States. Vienna Offensive ends with Soviet victory. Large-scale firebombing of Tokyo. Bergen-Belsen concentration camp is liberated by the British Army. Switzerland closes its borders with Germany and former Austria. Allies continue their sweep toward the Po Valley. The Soviet advance towards the city of Berlin continues and soon reach the suburbs. William Robertson and Lt. Hitler celebrates his 56th birthday in the bunker in Berlin; reports are that he is in an unhealthy state, nervous, and depressed. The ragtag units of " Army Detachment Steiner " are not fully manned. In response to the news concerning Steiner, Hitler launches a furious tirade against the perceived treachery and incompetence of his military commanders in front of Wilhelm Keitel , Hans Krebs , Alfred Jodl , Wilhelm Burgdorf , and Martin Bormann. Wenck launched an attack , but it came to nothing. He proclaims that if he gets no response by 10 PM, he will assume Hitler is incapacitated and assume leadership of the Reich. Furious, Hitler strips him of all his offices and expels him from the Nazi Party. Albert Speer makes one last visit to Hitler, informing him that he ignored the Nero Decree for scorched earth. Meanwhile, Himmler, ignoring the orders of Hitler, makes a secret surrender offer to the Allies, led by Count Folke Bernadotte , head of the Red Cross provided that the Red Army is not involved. Forces of the 1st Belorussian Front and the 1st Ukrainian Front link up in the initial encirclement of Berlin. Allies encircle last German armies near Bologna, and the Italian war in effect comes to an end. While flying into Berlin, von Greim is seriously wounded by Soviet anti-aircraft fire. Head of State for the Italian Social Republic , Benito Mussolini , heavily disguised, is captured in northern Italy while trying to escape. Mussolini and his mistress Clara Petacci , are shot and hanged in Milan the next day. Other members of his puppet government are also executed by Italian partisans and their bodies put on display in Milan. Dachau concentration camp is liberated by the U. All forces in Italy officially surrender and a ceasefire is declared. Allied air forces commence Operations Manna and Chowhound , providing food aid to the Netherlands under a truce made with occupying German forces. Hitler marries his companion Eva Braun. Hitler and his wife commit suicide, he by a combination of poison and a gunshot. Before he dies Adolf Hitler dictates his last will and testament.

Chapter 5 : The Remagen Bridgehead, March ,

Chapter Eleven. Crossing the Rhine: March , THE RHINE was by far the most formidable of the rivers the GIs had to cross. It rises in the Alps and flows generally north to Arnhem, where it makes a sharp turn to the west.

This was about 12 miles north of the site of the first bridge ever built across the Rhine at Neuwied. This bridge fought the river current by being built on timbers which were driven into the bed at a slant. A second bridge was likewise destroyed by the builders once they were through with it. The fort was one of a series built by Drusus , commander of the Roman army along the Rhine. Other Roman construction survived the centuries, including a gateway and Remagen became a tourist destination, popular with history buffs. Remagen appears on the 4th century Peutinger Map. Local legend says that a ship carrying various relics from Milan to Cologne was stopped in the river in , unable to move despite the strong current, until it mysteriously edged in toward the shore. The remains of Saint Apollinaris were put ashore, and the ship was then able to sail onward. These remains were interred in a chapel which had been part of the Roman fort, which became the basis for a church which bore his name, and was rebuilt several times over the years. Bridge at Remagen[edit] Main article: The bridge was designed by Karl Wiener, an architect from Mannheim. The bridge was designed to be defended by troops with towers on each bank with machine gun slits in the towers. The bridge carried two railway tracks and a pedestrian walkway. During World War II , one track was planked over to allow vehicular traffic. Capture of the bridge[edit] Main article: It was the last of 22 road and railroad bridges over the Rhine still standing after German defenders failed to demolish it. The Allies were able to get six divisions across the bridge before it collapsed on 17 March , ten days after it was captured. The collapse killed 18 U. Wolper produced an American motion picture, The Bridge at Remagen. The film depicts historical events, but is fictional in all other aspects. The negotiations with the German Federal Railways alone lasted seven years before the city could finally acquire the former railway property. Announcements sent to government officials concerning the intended preservation of the bridge towers and the construction of a Memorial to Peace stirred no interest. In the summer of , it was necessary to remove the still intact bridge support pilings in the river. The mayor had the stones deposited on the Remagen river bank, with the idea in mind of selling small pieces of the bridge stones enclosed in synthetic resin and containing a certificate of authenticity. On 7 March , he went public with his idea and achieved such an unexpected degree of success, that he had realised more than , DM around 50, EUR in sales profits. There has not been another bridge built across the Rhine here, mainly due to opposition from the people of Remagen and surrounding areas , contending that a bridge located at this point along the Rhine would spoil the view. The camps were used by the Allies to house captured German soldiers. Several thousand prisoners are estimated to have died in the various camps, including 1, who are now buried in the Bad Bodendorf Cemetery.

Chapter 6 : Operation Lumberjack - Wikipedia

V-Mail titled "Across the Rhine - 3/30/45 (March 30,)" Dear Ruth and Willis, Received your V-mails of March 14th and 20th yesterday along with 2 from Nellie.

These facts were well known to the Allied commanders as their forces continued their assault toward the German interior in March. The crossing of the Rhine would be a difficult and costly task. The bridge across the Rhine at Remagen. As the Allied armies approached, Hitler ordered the destruction of all the bridges that spanned the Rhine. By March 7, they all had been, except one - the Ludendorff railroad bridge at the little resort town of Remagen a few miles to the southeast of Cologne. On that day Lady Luck smiled on the Allies. At about 1 PM an American reconnaissance patrol reached the wooded hills overlooking the river at Remagen, and to their surprise, discovered the bridge still intact. Then the race began. The Americans quickly launched a full-scale assault on the bridge while the defending Germans scrambled to detonate the explosive charges that had been set to destroy it. The fighting was fierce as both sides realized what was at stake. By 4 PM - approximately four minutes after the assault began - the Americans had reached the other side of the river and secured the bridge. When informed, 1st Army commander Omar Bradley responded: Shove everything you can across! I spotted this lieutenant, standing out there completely exposed to the machine gun fire that was pretty heavy by this time. He was cutting wires and kicking the German demolition charges off the bridge with his feet! He describes what happened as the American force approached the bridge: The bridge ran to the village of Erpel on the east bank and across it lay two railroad tracks. Other American forces had come up against the same sort of thing before, but always, as they came to the Rhine crossings, the bridges went up in great explosions before their eyes, set off by German demolition engineers. Traffic was still moving across the Ludendorf Bridge. On the other side locomotives puffed, awaiting orders to pull out. Leonard Engemann of Minneapolis, in command of a reconnaissance party, was determined to save this bridge if it was at all possible. Emmett Burrows of New York City, sped down the slope to the bridge entrance. There was a flurry of shooting as the Germans, taken completely by surprise, scurried about trying to organize a defense. A German gun was knocked out, some German soldiers killed. Then the Yanks, crouching low against machine gun fire coming from the bridge towers, ran out onto the bridge. Just as they stepped on the span, an explosion occurred three-quarters of the way down the bridge. The Germans were setting off demolition charges, and the men thought surely their chance was gone. But no, only slight damage was done. Drabik, a tall, lanky former butcher from Holland, Ohio, was the first American across the Rhine, the first invader to reach its east bank since the time of Napoleon. But he wanted all the honors passed on to a young lieutenant of the engineers, John W. Boy that took plenty of guts. Gingerly they detached detonators and lifted boxes of explosives from the piers. But the German officer assigned the demolition job was drunk when the American tanks reached Remagen. The German lieutenant signaled the plunger down. Two small explosions occurred, but the bridge only shuddered and remained standing. Several of the fuses had been faulty. By nightfall scores of tanks, trucks by the hundreds were moving up and across the Rhine. All roads leading to Remagen were packed with American troops and trucks and armor and guns. Soldiers who had been ready to drop from fatigue stepped on the accelerator, broad grins splitting their begrimed faces. The Ludendorf bridge had become a one-way street, east-bound. How To Cite This Article: The Germans built the Ludendorff Bridge in . The Germans mounted an attack to regain the bridge 48 hours after its capture. The attack was repelled. The bridge collapsed shortly after as a consequence of German artillery and air bombardment. One escaped the sentence because he had been captured by the Americans.

Chapter 7 : This week in the War, 5â€“11 March The bridge at Remagen | Second by Second

Tom Tucker was one of the first men from Patton's Third Army to cross the Rhine River, the last natural barrier to the heart of Germany. Although the U.S.

Facebook Twitter Throughout history, rivers have divided countries, territories, and armies. Of course, rivers have also been lines to cross â€” the challenging obstacle to conquer in order to successfully gain more territory and crush the opposition. In order to successfully execute a river crossing, Operation Varsity was developed. On the night of March 23, , the Allied forces that had gathered along the Rhine launched their invasion. Hours later, the attack multiplied as the ground troops were aided by an impressive airborne operation that brought planes, paratroopers, and more soldiers. With more than 16, paratroopers and thousands of aircraft taking to the sky, this was Operation Varsity. In just one day, this airborne effort helped the Allied troops secure victory on the ground, and take control of crucial German towns, villages, and strongholds. Operation Varsity was more than a success; it was a historic event, full of interesting strategy and impressive moments. Here are 10 facts you may not have known about this large-scale effort to bring World War II to an end. Crossing the Rhine 24 March C transport planes release hundreds of paratroops and their supplies over the Rees-Wesel area to the east of the Rhine. This was the greatest airborne operation of the war. Some 40, paratroops were dropped by 1, troop-carrying planes and gliders. The actual crossing of the Rhine River was led by the British; Operation Varsity was an Allied air attack meant to aid those on the ground. That ground-based effort was conducted under a different name: More than 16, American, British, and Canadian paratroopers and thousands of aircraft came together to help the ground troops secure the all-important land surrounding the Rhine. Operation Varsity followed different orders and different plans than Operation Plunder, though the two were a combined effort. The plan was to disrupt a variety of German defense in order to secure territory quickly. Operation Varsity was meant to support and help the Allied ground forces accomplish their goals. Churchill, Brooke, and Montgomery on the German-held east bank of the Rhine. Two divisions of the U. Once these airborne targets were secured, the airborne divisions were to hold them until the Allied ground troops joined them. The Allied disposition in western Europe by March The combined efforts of Operation Plunder and Operation Varsity marked the first time any invading army crossed the Rhine in over a century â€” the last attempt to do so was led by Napoleon Bonaparte in , and his crossing was a success. General George Patton was specifically ordered not to cross the Rhine River. Bradley, Eisenhower and Patton in Europe, Patton, however, was hopeful that the Americans would be the first to cross the river and announce their success, so he gathered his men and took matters into his own hands. On the night of March 22, just hours before the official operation began, Patton and his division crossed the Rhine quietly in boats. With no ground or air bombardments, they captured 19, German troops and created a six-mile bridgehead in the process. The Allied Forces faced prepared and waiting German troops on the other side of the river â€” but they met less resistance than anticipated. When the troops participating in Operation Varsity and Operation Plunder were gathering along the Rhine, not much was hidden from the German forces waiting on the other side. The German military knew that the Allied troops were doing more than simply increasing their presence; they knew an invasion was soon to come. So, not surprisingly, the Allied forces believed that the Germans would be quite prepared for the coming Rhine crossing. The city of Wesel lies in ruins after Allied bombardment. It was expected that mortar and artillery guns were already trained and waiting at every potential river crossing location, and that elite troops would be manning these sites. However, when Allied troops took to the river and the sky, they met weaker resistance than they expected; even in heavily protected areas like the northern Ruhr River region, the German response was less destructive. In an effort to reduce losses, the airborne troops dropped after the ground forces successfully crossed the Rhine River. Additionally, the airborne troops landed quite close to the troops on the ground â€” they dropped not far behind German lines, allowing them to connect with ground forces quickly. British paratroopers in Hamminkeln, 25 March Some of the airborne divisions that participated had seen relatively little action in the war. In the planning stages, three airborne divisions were selected to perform the operation: Only one of these, the British 6th

Airborne Division, had any wartime experience; the men participated in Operation Overlord at Normandy a year prior. Men of the U. The other two divisions had far less experience. Operation Varsity was the largest single day airborne drop in history. After Operation Plunder charged across the Rhine and secured multiple crossing sites along the eastern bank of the river, the efforts of Operation Varsity took off from England and France. As this incredibly large group made its way through the sky, it stretched across more than miles and, of course, it was accompanied by 2, Allied fighters. The already-exhausted German forces were wiped out thanks to the air attack. Operation Varsity was successful, and allowed the Allied troops to secure crucial areas within Germany all of the original objectives of the operation were captured and held, and the entire effort was conducted in the span of a few hours. British Commandos in the outskirts of Wesel. Though German troops were gathered in the area and prepared for a coming Allied invasion, they had no idea just how large and fast it would be. The Germans were taken aback by the two airborne divisions, and it was the speed with the divisions landed their troops that overwhelmed the defenders. Casualties occurred but far fewer than expected. Out of their original 7, troops, the 6th Airborne Division lost 1, men who were either killed, wounded, or missing in action. The losses of the 17th Airborne Division were similar, at 1, out of 9, The two divisions together captured about 3, POWs as well. Though the operation was successful, notable mistakes were made. Pilot errors were the most prevalent and the biggest mistake occurred when a pilot led a group of paratroopers into the wrong drop zone. The th Parachute Infantry Regiment, commanded by Colonel Edson Raff, was assigned to be the lead assault formation for all of the U. These paratroopers were to be the first American airborne unit to land on German territory, instead, things got a bit complicated. The regiment and the troops it was leading into Germany were all meant to drop in Zone W, a clearing just a couple miles north of the town of Wesel. However, when the group arrived near Zone W, they met cloudy haze covering the ground, and the pilots were confused as to where to execute the drop. With little direction, the regiment split into two groups and the drop was performed in two different sites. Half of the paratroopers landed in Zone W, but Colonel Raff and nearly paratroopers landed near the town of the Diersfordt. This was supposed to be a British drop zone; fortunately, no troops collided and the paratroopers were able to regroup and adjust quickly.

Chapter 8 : The Capture Of The Bridge Over The Rhine At Remagen, 7 March

This is a nostalgic review from IE (Interactive entertainment) episode 18, a CD-ROM game magazine. Across the Rhine: - Armored Combat in Western Europe is a mix between strategy and.

Thus far in that operation, the battalion had lost 12 of its tanks, and 11 others were damaged. Now, as the 43rd was resupplying and refueling its remaining 29 operational tanks, the battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Nicholas Novosel, felt uneasy about what was to come. He was overheard telling another officer from the division: January was a tough time for the soldiers of Lt. The 12th Armored Division, commanded by Maj. Allen, was relatively inexperienced. On December 15, the 12th Armored became part of the reserve of Lt. When the Germans launched their attacks in the south, the Seventh Army was spread paper thin, holding a mile-long front line with only eight divisions. On the left, the U. On the right, Maj. The Germans initially established the bridgehead with the rd Volksgrenadier Division and the th Infantry Division. That same day, units of the U. Another task force from the 79th triedâ€™with little successâ€™to clear the Germans out of the Steinwald, a patch of woods just to the north of Gamsheim. The following day, the 79th Infantry made several more unsuccessful attempts to clear the bridgehead. The Germans continued to build up the Gamsheim bridgehead. That same day, the XXXIX Panzer Corps started shifting elements of the 21st Panzer and 25th Panzergrenadier divisions from west of Bitche to the Lauterbourg area in preparation for a major push down the west bank of the Rhine. By January 8, the Gamsheim bridgehead was about 12 kilometers wide and 5 kilometers deep. On its north flank, the Germans held the town of Drusenheim, situated near the Rhine. The southern anchor was Gamsheim, about one kilometer from the river. Herrlisheim, about four kilometers west of the river, was at the center of the bridgehead. The Germans also held Offendorf, about one kilometer from the Rhine, southeast of Herrlisheim and northeast of Gamsheim. American forces held Rohrwiller, one kilometer north of and across the Zorn River from Herrlisheim. Terrain and weather totally dominated the fighting around Herrlisheim. In January , snow and heavy ground fog blanketed the region, neutralizing Allied air superiority. The west bank of the Rhine River was poor tank countryâ€™flat and open with small clusters of woods and crisscrossed by many small waterways swollen with snow and ice. There was very little concealment, and many of the bridges in the area had been destroyed. Those still standing were well-protected and under observation by the Germans. On the northern edge of the bridgehead, the Moder River ran along the southern edge of Rohrwiller and then cut north through the center of Drusenheim. The Zorn River ran northeast along the western edge of Herrlisheim, joining the Moder about meters northeast of la Breymuehl, a small cluster of buildings between Rohrwiller and Herrlisheim. Kleinbach Creek roughly paralleled the Zorn and ran through the center of Herrlisheim. The Landgraben River ran somewhat perpendicular to the Zorn, along the northern edge of the Steinwald and then through Offendorf. In a two-lane road, the D, ran northeast through the area, connecting Gamsheim, Herrlisheim and Drusenheim. Another fairly good road ran from Bischwiller through Rohrwiller and la Breymuehl, joining the D just north of Herrlisheim. A small secondary road connected Herrlisheim and Offendorf and then snaked south along the Rhine River to Gamsheim. A railroad line also ran along the eastern edge of Herrlisheim, roughly paralleling both the D and the Zorn. The railroad embankment provided perfect defilade positions for German anti-tank guns facing west, and the Steinwald, due north of Gamsheim, dominated the flat ground south of Herrlisheim. The flat, open plain bounded by Herrlisheim in the north, Offendorf and the railroad embankment in the east, and the Steinwald in the south formed a textbook-perfect armor kill zone. Bromley, was offered the opportunity to attack from the south through French lines, with the Rhine on its right flank. Bromley, however, decided to attack from the northwest, from Bischwiller and through Rohrwiller, which were still held by the 79th Infantry. Combat Command B attacked with two task forces in column. The armor-heavy rear element, Task Force Rammer, reached its assembly areas in Rohrwiller at about 2 p. Meanwhile, elements from the leading infantry-heavy Task Force Power advanced southeast from Rohrwiller to scout the bridge over the Zorn at la Breymuehl. The scouts found the bridge intact in front of the la Breymuehl waterworks complex, and they radioed back for the tanks to advance. The American tanks quickly jammed up at la

Breymuehl, and CCB had to hastily modify its plan of attack. Deploying the tanks along the west bank of the Zorn for support, the 56th Armored Infantry Battalion moved across the swollen river to take up positions along Kleinbach Creek. The axis of attack ran perpendicular to the railway line on the far side of Herrlisheim. The advancing GIs were subjected to heavy German mortar and small-arms fire from their front, as well as enfilading fire on their exposed left flank from Drusenheim. The American attack stalled as infantry units bunched up and became tangled. Although Company B of the 56th Armored Infantry Battalion reached the Kleinbach at about dusk, they were later ordered to pull back to la Breymuehl. That night there were at least four infantry companies packed into the waterworks buildings. At about 3 a. German troops infiltrated the buildings, and close-quarters fighting raged until daylight. After some prisoners were rounded up, the attack began at The lead elements of the 56th Armored Infantry reached the outskirts of Herrlisheim at about Once inside the town, the Americans ran into a German assault gun and heavy small-arms fire. Still held up on the west bank of the Zorn, American M4A3 Sherman tanks lined the banks of the river and provided fire support. Around dusk, German anti-tank guns started picking off the lined-up Shermans like targets in a shooting gallery. The American armor quickly withdrew back into Rohrwiller, leaving the infantry in Herrlisheim to fend for itself. The VI Corps was now fighting for its life on three sides. Brooks committed his final remaining reserve, the 14th Armored Division, to the fierce fighting that followed in the towns of Hatten and Rittershoffen. The Germans in Herrlisheim, meanwhile, continued to fight back. That night, the Germans slipped more armored vehicles and white-cloaked infantrymen into the town. At dawn that morning, CCB attempted to move up several M-8 self-propelled assault guns, but the vehicles crashed through the ice on the waterways and could not be recovered until after nightfall. Several light tanks made it into Herrlisheim that day, but they proved useless in the heavy building-to-building fighting. Later that day, the Bailey bridges finally arrived and the Shermans of Company C, th Tank Battalion, 14th Armored, prepared to charge across the Zorn to relieve the 56th Armored Infantry. The attack was preceded by an artillery bombardment along the northern edge of the Steinwald. Just as the barrage started, however, German artillery fired back in response. The armored attack was canceled. The 56th Armored Infantry in Herrlisheim was now down to an effective strength of only men. Colonel Bromley protested, arguing that it would be more effective to contain the bridgehead and let the Germans wear themselves out trying to sustain it. Allen relieved Bromley of his command, but later that night the general also ordered the evacuation of Herrlisheim. For the next several days, both sides tried to build up their forces while glaring at each other across the fogbound fields and frozen streams. The 12th Armored planned to renew its effort to take Herrlisheim on January 16, this time with two combat commands. Unless the woods were cleared of Germans, the plan would be doomed to failure. The combat command organized into three task forces. Both had Offendorf as their final objectives. Task Force 2, consisting of the 66th Armored Infantry Battalion and a tank platoon from the 43rd Tank Battalion, had the vital mission of clearing the Steinwald. Prior to the attack, Allied Intelligence estimated that between and German infantrymen and Volksgrenadiers held Herrlisheim. In the Steinwald, the Germans had one company of well-dug-in infantry, a mortar company, three anti-tank guns and at least six other armored vehicles. The American attack went badly from the start. Almost simultaneously, the Germans launched a drive down the west bank of the Rhine from Lauterbourg, attempting to link up with the Gambsheim bridgehead. The 79th Infantry Division, to the north of the bridgehead, took most of the brunt of that attack, but CCB also came under heavy artillery fire and again was unable to get its tanks across the river. There they were pinned down by heavy German fire. When the attack was called off at noon, Companies A and C of the 66th Armored Infantry were reduced to a combined strength of only 65 survivors. The Steinwald was supposed to have been cleared by that time— but it was not. Caught in that perfect tank kill zone, the 43rd Tank Battalion started taking fire from the Steinwald to its south, from Herrlisheim to its north and from Offendorf to its east. To make matters worse, the 43rd could not return fire into the Steinwald because the tankers believed American troops were still trying to take it. After 12 of his tanks were knocked out and another 11 were hit, Colonel Novosel finally ordered a withdrawal two kilometers to the west and requested airstrikes on the Steinwald. Logan, also took heavy fire during its advance. Some of the light tanks attached to the battalion managed to reach the railroad embankment, but they were quickly torn to pieces by German anti-tank fire from Offendorf

and the Steinwald. Even the normally dependable 3rd Algerian Infantry Division failed to get anywhere close to Gamsheim that day. Trying to extend the tenuous bridgehead east of the Zorn, the combat command ran into heavy artillery, mortar and small-arms fire. After several hours of slugging it out, CCB pulled back to the Zorn. That effort went no better than the day before, and by 7 a. At dawn, meanwhile, both the 17th and the 43rd started moving across the northern edge of the Steinwald toward the D and then the rail line leading north into Herrlisheim. Although their movement was partially screened by heavy ground fog, the 43rd Tank Battalion still lost four tanks to fire from the Steinwald before it reached the southern outskirts of the town. Running into American fire from the town, he lost one tank and his 3rd Company commander, who was wounded. Faced with an uncertain situation in very limited visibility, Tetsch withdrew to his regimental assembly area in Offendorf. At about 10 a.

Chapter 9 : Remagen - Wikipedia

The 83rd Infantry Division has virtually cleared the town of Neuse, just across the Rhine from DÃ¼sseldorf. Doughboys say the Rhine looks like any other river wide, deep and wet. All in all, advances generally ranged from 4 to 10 miles on the 9th Army front yesterday last night.

Construction[edit] American troops on the Ludendorff Bridge in Remagen is located close to and south of the city of Bonn. The town of Remagen had been founded by the Romans about 2, years earlier. The town had been destroyed multiple times and rebuilt each time. Under the Schlieffen Plan , a bridge was planned to be built there in , as well as bridges in Engers and Rudesheim. German General Erich Ludendorff was a key advocate for building this bridge during World War I and it was named after him. Constructed between and , using Russian prisoners of war as labour, it carried two railway lines and a pedestrian catwalk on either side. Design[edit] The railway bridge had three spans: It had dual tracks that could be covered with planks to allow vehicular traffic. Since the bridge was a major military construction project, both abutments of the bridge were flanked at either end by stone towers with fortified foundations that could shelter up to a full battalion of men. Protection[edit] The designers built cavities into the concrete piers where demolition charges could be placed. It was one of the four bridges that were guarded by Americans during the U. In , after the Germans reacquired the Rhineland and control of the bridge, they attached 60 zinc-lined boxes at key structural points to the bridge girders, each capable of containing 3. The system was designed to detonate all 60 charges at once. The engineers connected the charges in the piers and the zinc boxes by electrical cable protected by steel pipe to a control panel inside the rail tunnel under Erpeler Ley where engineers could safely detonate the charges. They believed they could destroy the bridge when necessary with minimal preparation. German leader Adolf Hitler reacted by demanding that demolition charges on bridges could only be set when the enemy was within a specific distance, and only exploded by written order. He ordered those "responsible" for the destruction of the Mulheim Bridge court-martialed. This left officers responsible for destroying bridges in the event that the enemy approached nervous about both blowing it too soon and the consequences if they failed. Although this bridge was wired with demolition charges, the weak civilian-grade "Donarite" explosives failed to bring the bridge down, and Allied engineers risked their lives manually removing the remaining charges before the bridge was captured. However, a pontoon bridge had been built across the river by then. The main bridge was out of use for repairs at the time of its collapse. Eisenhower to alter his plans to end the war. Parts of the land used for the approaching railway lines are now used as an industrial estate on the western bank and a park on the eastern bank. In middle , the two eastern towers of the bridge were announced to be for sale. Three bids were submitted, but due to the bad shape of the building and expected costs of roundabout 1. The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich.