



## Battle of the Bulge

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### THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE

(The German Offensive in the Ardennes)

On 16 December 1944, the German Commander on the Western front struck a gigantic counter offensive now known to history as "The Battle of the Bulge".

The attack was preceded by the dropping of German air-borne troops astride main allied supply routes. (Approximately 500 Nazi paratroops were reported on the arterial highway connecting Eupen and Malmedy during the night of 18 December 1944) and for brief moments the crippled German war machine stood up and rolled unchecked.

As was expected, a sudden and tremendous responsibility was placed on the Signal Corps. Positions were overrun, personnel and supplies were moved back, some equipment had to be hastily dismantled, ready for demolition, if required, as was the case for valuable devices such as Radar Sets. The shortage of supplies, scarcity of personnel, some of which had to be used for jobs other than those which they were trained to handle, and the equipment of reinforcement troops, imposed on the Signal Corps an all-out effort to maintain present facilities, to keep pace with the tactical situation, and to meet the requirements of the defending armies.

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At the beginning of the attack all the 1st Army supplies, with the exception of operating stock were moved from Verviers to Charleroi. The sub-depot remained at Verviers in order to supply the fighting units. The 1st Army stocks were seriously depleted. All radio repair telephone equipment, spare parts and all reserve Signal supplies of the 2nd Infantry Division had been captured. Many items, as well as losses of the 99th and 106th Infantry Divisions were replaced by available stocks. The consumption of field wire increased 500%. The 9th Army Signal Supply officer coped with this critical stage by furnishing the 1st Army with 500 miles of wire, 500 batteries BA-40, 1000 flash-lights TL-122, and 700 batteries BA-39.

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Because of the German thrust, two Airborne Divisions had to be hastily equipped and approximately 25 tons of Signal Supplies were furnished to the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions before their departure to combat area, with approximately 35 tons being delivered to them while they were on the line. Not much equipment was available at Depot S-855 which was supplied 30 tons from Depot S-851.

Due to shortage of Signal Corps personnel, the use of French civilians and Prisoners of War was ordered and complied with at Signal Depot S-855.

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On 15 December 1944, the First United States Army Command Post was located at Spa, Belgium and was using 100 pairs in an underground cable from Spa to Verviers. Circuits from 1st Army Command Post to 1st Army Rear Echelon at Chaudfontaine were working through this cable, and then through another underground cable to Chaudfontaine. These cables had been rehabilitated months before and when the 1st Army Command Post found it necessary to withdraw, they moved to Chaudfontaine. The 35th Signal Construction Battalion ran new local Spiral-four cables and field wire in the vicinity of Chaudfontaine and extended Corps Spiral-four cables. Work was immediately begun at Tongres, Belgium, west of Liege, to rehabilitate 128 pairs in an underground cable running from Liege to Brussels. Splicers were in charge of making these facilities available to the 1st Army. They cleared the trouble and then cut in a 102 pair and 26 pair terminal. By 23 December 1944, men of this organization had completed the placing of 1,000 feet of 52 quad lead covered cable between the terminal and the Site of the First United States Army Command Post near Tongres.

#### Communications

At the beginning of the enemy counter attack, the First Army Command Echelon was split into two sections, a command and a supply Echelon. While the Supply Echelon withdrew to the vicinity of Micheroux, where communication facilities were established to this echelon through Marco Switch (First Army

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Upon the completion of their task in the Ardennes battle, Signal units had to be refitted for combat. Signal equipment losses were heavy and replacements of these items from the Communications Zone was insufficient to meet demands. By the end of January 1945, the supply of Signal equipment, with the exception of field wire, had improved. Wire W-110 and W-130 was rationed to First Army and subordinate units except in cases of operational necessity.

Bad weather during this period also caused difficulties in the maintenance and operation of Signal equipment. Due to the absence of standard waterproof bags for radio sets, bags had to be improvised by "on the spot" means.

The supply of pole line equipment was decidedly inadequate to meet the increased requirements for this material. The delivery of radio sets SCR-300 and SCR-596 was very slow, and until the end of February 1945, the flow of Signal equipment left a great deal to be desired.

The Command Echelon of the 1st Army Headquarters moved back to Spa on 18 January 1945, and was joined the following day by the supply Echelon. Prior to this move, splicers of the 35th Signal Construction Battalion had begun rehabilitation of cables. Cables had been cut in the Central office by American troops for Security reasons, but these splicers had the entire system rehabilitated by 9 January 1945. Mobile telephone and teletype switching centrals were reestablished by the 17th Signal Operation Battalion, and all major units were transferred to the new switchboards without loss of contact. Work was started on the rehabilitation of underground cables, and the Army Communications Systems were rapidly brought to completion. The scale of communications increased sharply and even exceeded the level existing prior to the German counter-attack. Radio nets to 21st Army Group were closed down on 16 January 1945, and the lateral net to the Second British Army was closed on 21 January 1945.

The Battle of the Bulge was over.

Although circumstances cannot compare with the initial phase of landing

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