

sion, in the process of arriving in France, was soon to join the XIX Corps for commitment either east or west of the Vire, depending upon the development of the offensive. It was rumored that Corlett was also to receive an armored division for employment west of the Vire, but no confirmation had come through by 7 July.<sup>25</sup>

To bring up his right, General Corlett had to take a large and difficult step. His forces had to advance about nine miles across moist bottomland rising gradually toward the ridge west of St. Lô. The operations were to take place in an area six miles wide, between the Taute and Vire Rivers, which flow north in parallel channels to Carentan and Isigny, respectively. Connecting the two rivers was the Vire et Taute Canal, a shallow east-west waterway joining Carentan and Airel. The canal marked the forward positions at the beginning of July.

The 30th Division, which held these positions, had arrived in Normandy in mid-June. Most of the division was still untested in battle. Its commander, Maj. Gen. Leland S. Hobbs, who had led the division since 1942, was known to be intensely intolerant of persons he suspected of inefficiency.

All three regiments of the 30th Division were in the line and deployed in an arc along the Vire et Taute Canal and the Vire River. The 120th Infantry held the north bank of the canal, the 117th and 119th Regiments the east bank of the river near Airel. The first problem facing General Hobbs in the forthcoming attack was how to get across the



GENERAL CORLETT

water barrier and establish a bridgehead easily reinforced and expanded.

The gently sloping banks of the Vire et Taute Canal were only twenty feet apart, and the water in some places was shallow enough to be waded. Nevertheless, a muddy bottom made fording treacherous, and the adjacent terrain was completely open marshland. North of the canal the soft ground between Carentan and Isigny was not suitable for concentrating heavy equipment and large numbers of supporting troops. Two roads had originally crossed the canal, a country road near the Taute River and a tarred highway closer to the Vire, but the bridges had been destroyed.

The Vire River south of the juncture with the canal, at Airel, had steep banks eight feet high. The river in July was 60 feet wide and the water from 9 to 14 feet deep. Low, flat, and exposed fields

<sup>25</sup> Telecons, Corlett and Hobbs, 7 Jul, 30th Div G-3 Jnl and File; [Garth], *St.-Lô*, pp. 6-7.

400 yards in width bordered the Vire on each side, but the land was relatively dry. East of the river the ground was firm and had a well-surfaced road network. Where a highway crossed the river near Airel, an arched stone bridge was only slightly damaged.

Although the size of the canal made it a less obvious obstacle, the river offered several positive advantages for an assault crossing. Getting across the 60-foot river in assault boats was likely to be quicker and less costly than wading the canal. The Germans had flooded both waterways, but their efforts at the Vire were less efficacious. The road network east of the river was better than that north of the canal, and the damaged stone bridge at Airel could be easily repaired. There was little cover and concealment in either of the two areas.

The logical immediate objective of forces establishing a bridgehead was a road intersection near St. Jean-de-Daye, a crossroads equidistant—about three miles—from the canal and the river. The fact that artillery and infantry weapons could support a crossing of either the river or the canal with equal effectiveness influenced General Hobbs' decision to make a two-pronged attack across both water barriers. The division was to move from the north across the canal and from the east across the river to seize a bridgehead defined by the roads that intersected south of St. Jean-de-Daye. Once in possession of the bridgehead, the division would move south to the high ground west of St. Lô.

To cross the Vire River in the division main effort, General Hobbs selected the 117th Infantry (Col. Henry E.

Kelly), a regiment that had demonstrated river crossings at The Infantry School, Fort Benning, Georgia. The 117th Infantry was to move across the open terrain at the edge of the river just before daybreak and at dawn was to embark in assault boats several hundred yards north of the Airel stone bridge. Three assault waves were to be ferried across the river on a 400-yard front while bridges were being prepared to accommodate the rest of the troops. If the bridges were not ready at the end of the third assault wave, the infantry was to continue crossing in boats until enough bridges were placed to permit foot and vehicular passage. Upon reaching the far shore, the infantry was to clear the hamlet at the western end of the Airel bridge, get astride the road leading west, and move uphill toward the St. Jean-de-Daye crossroads. As soon as the entire regiment was across the river, Col. Alfred V. Ednie's 119th Infantry was to follow.

At the canal, Col. Hammond D. Birks was to send the 120th Infantry across the water on foot in the early afternoon of the day of attack. The crossing site was to be at the destroyed bridge on the highway leading south to St. Jean-de-Daye. The land was sufficiently dry for about 400 yards on each side of the bridge site to permit deploying two battalions abreast. After wading the canal, the battalions were to drive south. In the wake of the infantry, Col. William S. Biddle's 113th Cavalry Group was to cross and turn west toward the Taute River to protect the 30th Division's right flank. The third battalion of the 120th Infantry was to remain on the north bank of the canal at the country road near the Taute

River. Designated as the corps reserve, the battalion was to support the regimental crossing by fire, make a crossing feint of its own, and check any German attempt to make a countercrossing.<sup>26</sup>

As in almost all opposed bridgehead operations, much depended upon the work of the division engineers, in this case the 105th Engineer Combat Battalion (Lt. Col. Carroll H. Dunn). In addition to assisting the infantry with demolitions, flame throwers, and mine removal, the engineers had major assignments at both the river and the canal.<sup>27</sup>

At the river the engineers were to blow gaps for infantry passage through the last hedgerow before the water. They were to supply 40 assault boats and crews of four men per boat. Three men of each crew were to paddle the boats across while the fourth remained on the east bank to pull the boat back by rope for the next wave. To help the infantrymen mount the steep bank on the far side, the engineers were to build scaling ladders with special hooks.

In addition, the division engineers, with the help of corps engineers, were to span the river with a variety of bridges. First priority was given to a footbridge; next, a ponton infantry support bridge was to be placed across the river to permit the organic division vehicles to cross. Afterwards, a floating treadway was to be installed and the stone bridge at Airel was to be repaired for the heavy vehicular traffic of the armor and artillery units. When all

<sup>26</sup> Field orders of the division and the regiments in the 30th Div G-3 Jnl File.

<sup>27</sup> 105th Engr C Bn Plan "C," 29 Jun, 30th Div G-3 Jnl File; 105th Engr C Bn Traffic Circ Plan and Overlay, 5 Jul, AAR, Jul; 105th Engr C Bn Hist, Feb 42-15 Nov 45, Vol. II.

three vehicular bridges were in operation, General Hobbs planned to use the stone structure and the treadway for one-way traffic moving west into the bridgehead, the ponton bridge for traffic moving east out of it.

At the canal the engineers were to lay duckboards as footbridges for the men of the heavy weapons companies and also for the litter bearers evacuating casualties. Medical planners expected long hand-carry hauls at both the river and the canal because the lack of existing vehicular bridges and the absence of cover in the areas bordering the water precluded the use of jeeps fitted with litter racks.<sup>28</sup> For eventual vehicular passage at the canal the engineers were to install a section of treadway bridging and repair the destroyed structure at the crossing site.

American G-2 officers expected both crossings to meet strong resistance. Intelligence indicated three regimental-sized organizations deployed between the Taute and Vire Rivers: a regiment of the 17th SS *Panzer Grenadier Division*, three battalions of the 275th *Division* formed into *Kampfgruppe Heinz*, and elements of the 266th *Division* supported by troops of the 352d *Division* organized into *Kampfgruppe Kentner*—all under the local operational control of the panzer grenadiers, which in turn functioned under *LXXXIV Corps*. German tanks had not been noted in the region, but an assault gun battalion with about three dozen 75-mm. and 105-mm. pieces in support of the infantry had been observed. Occupying ground that rises gradually toward the south, the Germans had good observa-

<sup>28</sup> XIX Corps Office of the Surgeon AAR, Jul.

tion of the entire area. They had rested, reorganized, and increased their supply levels during several weeks of inactivity, and had maintained a strong counterreconnaissance screen that inhibited American patrolling. Their probable course of action, as judged by intelligence, was to be a tenacious defense employing strong local counter-attacks.<sup>29</sup>

This estimate, in marked contrast with the optimistic appraisals made several days earlier by the VII and VIII Corps, was in error. Whereas the two U.S. corps on the First Army right had underestimated the opposition, the XIX Corps overestimated the German strength.

The XIX Corps had actually faced strong German forces on 3 July. An attack between the Taute and the Vire on that date would have met a considerable force of German reserves. The SS panzer grenadier regiment in full force, supported by *Kampfgruppe Heinz*, would have opposed the water crossings; the 353d Division would have contributed units for a counterattack; and the 15th Parachute Regiment near Périers and the 2d SS Panzer Division near St. Lô would have been available for commitment.

By 7 July, however, almost the entire SS panzer grenadier division was fighting on the Carentan-Périers isthmus. The 353d Division and the 15th Parachute Regiment were engaged on Mont Castre and at la Haye-du-Puits. The 2d SS Panzer Division was largely committed at la Haye-du-Puits and north of Périers. *Kampfgruppe Kentner* was east of the

Vire and a part of the II Parachute Corps. Thus, the only units ready to oppose the 30th Division between the Taute and the Vire were *Kampfgruppe Heinz* and a small part of the SS panzer grenadiers. These forces nevertheless possessed positive advantages in superior observation and terrain readily adaptable to defense.<sup>30</sup>

To overcome the expected resistance, General Hobbs called upon a tremendous amount of fire power. Dive bombers were to blast the German positions and potential routes of reinforcement. An elaborate artillery plan (drawn by Brig. Gen. George Shea, the XIX Corps Artillery commander) utilized the division artillery, the corps artillery, and the artillery of a nearby armored division. In all, eight field artillery battalions, including one of 8-inch howitzers, were to augment the organic division artillery. In addition, the 92d Chemical and the 823d Tank Destroyer Battalions were to deliver indirect fire. All buildings suspected of housing enemy strongpoints were to be destroyed. A rolling or creeping barrage was to precede the foot troops, the fire to advance 100 yards every five minutes. "Hug the artillery barrage," General Hobbs instructed his subordinate commanders, "it will carry us through."<sup>31</sup>

In preparing to execute the plan, the division applied itself to perfecting the techniques of getting across the water. The 117th Infantry conducted practice

<sup>29</sup> Hodgson, R-54.

<sup>30</sup> 30th Div, Notes for Div and Unit Comdrs, 2 Jul, 30th Div G-3 Jnl File; 30th Div AAR, Jul; 30th Div Arty AAR, Jul; the division and the regimental field orders; 3d Armored Div G-3 Per Rpt 13, 7 Jul.

<sup>29</sup> XIX Corps AAR, Jul, G-2 Per Rpt 22, 6 Jul, and Intel Annex to FO 5, 7 Jul.

crossings, and each officer and noncommissioned leader in the regiment studied the terrain and the plan on a large sand table model of the area. The engineers practiced the details of bridge construction, made ready the assault boats, and assembled the required equipment. At the same time, the bulk of the division studied and practiced hedgerow tactics. General Hobbs emphasized the necessity of achieving close infantry, armor, and engineer co-ordination. He stressed the need to keep moving. Since bunching up or building up a firing line along a hedge or a landmark was an "invitation for casualties," he insisted on extended formations.

During their training period the men found that the light machine gun was not the best weapon to support infantry attacks in the hedgerows. They discovered that two 15-pound charges of TNT in burlap bags opened a gap in a hedgerow bank large enough for a tank. Learning that without demolition 50 percent of the hedgerow dikes could be breached by engineer tank dozers, the division attached dozers to the tank units. The men were reminded that the Germans particularly feared white phosphorus shells, which were highly effective against hedgerow positions. They were instructed to use the bazooka as more than a antitank weapon since its rocket head, when employed in high-angle fire and against a hard object, was almost as effective against personnel as the 60-mm. mortar shell.

The division also studied the lessons of its first minor combat action a few weeks earlier. The troops determined that the proper way to advance was to locate the enemy's main line of resistance, then drive to it and roll it up from

the flank, neutralize it, or bypass it. This would eliminate the necessity of feeling out every hedge in the kind of slow deliberate advance that increased the effectiveness of the enemy's prearranged fires. But applying the technique was not easy. The excellent German camouflage made it extremely difficult to find the enemy positions. So inclement was the weather between 25 June and 7 July that not one aerial photographic mission could be flown.<sup>32</sup>

The 30th Division completed its attack preparations during the first days of July. The attached 743d Tank Battalion reported all its tanks—52 mediums and 17 light—ready for combat; the engineers made known their readiness; the infantry seemed to be set. General Hobbs was satisfied that the division would make a good showing.<sup>33</sup>

On the morning of 7 July it rained. All air strikes were canceled. The artillery observation planes remained on the ground.

At 0300 one battalion of the 117th Infantry moved out of its assembly area one mile east of the Vire River.<sup>34</sup> Low

<sup>32</sup> 30th Div Memo, Inf Tk Coordination, 2 Jul, 30th Div G-3 Jnl File; XIX Corps Draft Memo, 4 Jul, XIX Corps G-3 Jnl File; G-2 Sec, German Organization of Defense, Villiers-Fossard, 4 Jul, XIX Corps AAR, Jul; [Garth], *St.-Lô*, p. 7.

<sup>33</sup> 743d Tk Bn Msg, 2 Jul; 105th Engr C Bn Rpts, 1 and 2 Jul; Telecons, Corlett and Hobbs, 4 Jul. All in 30th Div G-3 Jnl File.

<sup>34</sup> The following account is taken from the official records of the division. The division G-3 Journal is a rich source of recorded telephone conversations and has been used extensively. [Garth], *St.-Lô*, pp. 9-14, and Hewitt, *Story of 30th Division*, pp. 26ff, give good detailed accounts of the action, the former from the point of view of the small units involved, the latter from that of the division headquarters. Also of use were: XIX Corps Msgs to FUSA, 7 Jul, FUSA G-3 Jnl File; 30th Div AAR, Jul; and CI 94 (30th Div).

clouds obscured the moon. A drizzling rain fell. Fog hovered over the ground. The brush dripped moisture, and the earth became mud. The corps artillery began its preparation at 0330 by firing on distant targets. Forty-five minutes later the division artillery, tank destroyers, and 4.2-inch mortars began to fire at close-in enemy installations and troop concentration areas. At the line of departure—the last hedgerow before the river—engineer guides met the two infantry assault companies at 0430. Picking up their rubber assault boats and scaling ladders, the infantrymen and engineers moved through holes already blasted in the hedgerow and walked along prepared paths to the water. Organized into groups of twelve, the men carried their craft in addition to their weapons, ammunition, and combat packs. They slid down the slick clay bank and lowered their boats into the stream. Because of the sharp angle of launching, most of the craft shipped some water. The riflemen climbed aboard; the men of the weapons platoons placed their mortars and machine guns in the boats and swam alongside to avoid swamping them.

Shortly after 0430, as artillery shells slammed into the ground ahead, the first assault wave of thirty-two boats crossed the Vire River. Ten minutes later the men were scrambling up the bank on the far side and heading for the first hedgerow in enemy territory. A single hostile machine gun opened fire. As the engineers on the east bank of the river began pulling on their ropes to haul the boats back, enemy artillery and mortar shells began crashing into the stream. Under this shelling the second

and third infantry assault waves paddled across the river.

As the first assault wave pulled away from the near shore, the first critical task of the supporting engineers began—installing a footbridge. Having carried preconstructed sections of the footbridge to the edge of the water, a platoon of engineers had installed six bays when enemy artillery struck the bays and a group of engineers carrying additional duckboard sections. The shells killed four men and wounded four. Though the platoon repaired the bays and set them in place again, enemy artillery tore the bridge loose from its moorings and wounded several more men. Doggedly, the engineers swam into the river to secure the bridge again. About 0600 the footbridge at last was in. Assault boats no longer were needed for the crossing. In the process, the engineer platoon had lost about twenty men, half its strength.

On the far shore, the two leading rifle companies moved quickly to the southwest across the hedgerowed fields for a thousand yards. A rifle company that had landed in the second wave moved south against the hamlet on the west side of the Airel bridge and took it after a short, sharp engagement. By about 0830, the first battalion of the 117th Infantry to cross had met strong but scattered resistance and was astride its axis of advance, ready to drive west to the St. Jean-de-Daye road intersection.

On the near bank of the Vire, engineers continued their bridging efforts. At 0700 they removed bodies and a wrecked truck from the Airel bridge and began demining the stone structure and its eastern approaches. Harassing rifle



STONE BRIDGE AT AIREL

fire ceased after American infantrymen cleared the hamlet across the river. An engineer officer and six men began to repair the two large holes in the bridge roadbed. Though this provided sufficient space for jeeps to make a careful crossing, the bridge had to be capable of bearing heavier traffic—the tank battalion attached to the division had been given first priority for use of the bridge. Under fire from enemy mortars and artillery, which smoke shells fired by the division artillery failed to discourage, a small engineer group maneuvered two trucks fitted with special Brockway bodies to the river. These vehicles not only carried treadway sections but also had hydraulic booms to lift the tread-

ways off and set them in place. Heaving and prying six tons of steel into place, the engineers laid the treadways over the damaged span and by 0900 had covered the gaps in the roadway. The operation took thirteen minutes. Five minutes later a bulldozer crossed the stone bridge and cleared rubble from the streets of the hamlet while engineers swept the western approaches for mines. Vehicles soon began to cross.

At 0730 another group of engineers had started constructing an infantry support bridge for the vehicles organic to the division. They completed it in an hour at a cost of fifteen casualties from enemy artillery fire. Another engineer crew commenced work at 0845 on a

floating treadway bridge, which was in place by noon.

The efforts of the engineers gave the division one footbridge and the three planned vehicular entrances into the bridgehead, two of which were capable of sustaining heavy traffic. Without these bridges, the infantry on the far bank might have been unable to sustain offensive operations for long.<sup>35</sup>

All three battalions of Colonel Kelly's 117th Infantry were across the Vire River before 1000 on 7 July. Meeting scattered delaying action from *Kampfgruppe Heinz*, the regiment advanced west toward St. Jean-de-Daye.<sup>36</sup> At 1015 a battalion of Colonel Ednie's 119th Infantry crossed the Airel bridge and moved to protect the left flank of the bridgehead. Tanks and tank destroyers began rolling across about noon.

As the Vire River bridgehead broadened, Colonel Birks prepared to launch the 120th Infantry across the Vire et Taute Canal at 1330. When artillery turned an increased volume of fire on the German positions along the canal just before the scheduled jump-off time, plans temporarily went awry. Instead of wading the canal as instructed, the assault companies decided to wait for engineers to install footbridges. The engineers, having miscalculated the width of the waterway, found it difficult to lay their duckboards. Confusion developed at the line of departure, an occurrence furthered by incoming enemy artillery, mortar, and small arms fire.

<sup>35</sup> Engr Sitreps and Engr Sec Jnl, XIX Corps AAR, Jul; 105th Engr C Bn Annual Hist, 1944, Incl 3 (photographs of typical bridge installations); ETOUSA Engr Hist Rpt 10, Combat Engineering (Aug 45), pp. 106-08.

<sup>36</sup> Seventh Army KTB (Draft), 7 Jul.

About fifteen minutes late, the leading men of the two attacking battalions finally plunged into the canal to launch their advance south along the highway toward St. Jean-de-Daye.

During the afternoon all six battalions on the far side of the water obstacles—three from the 117th Infantry, one from the 119th, and two from the 120th—attempted to establish mutual contact and set up a consolidated position at the crossroads. New to the hedgerow fighting, the men of the 30th Division found that attaining their objectives was no simple task. The men soon discovered how difficult it was in actuality to locate the enemy positions, how hard it was to maintain communications, how easy it was to get lost, how much depended on the individual initiative of the commanders of small units.

Rain added to problems of restricted observation in the hedgerows, and there was little effective infantry-artillery co-ordination on 7 July. Early in the morning General Hobbs himself canceled the rolling artillery barrage when he noted that the infantry could not keep pace with it. Inspection later revealed that the barrage was wasteful. Firing for five minutes each on lines arbitrarily drawn a hundred yards apart meant that rounds struck the enemy hedgerow positions only by chance. The 4.2-inch mortars, participating in the barrage, fired about 2,100 shells, so much ammunition that expenditures were restricted for the remainder of the month.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Although there had been some discussion of attaching heavy mortar companies to the infantry regiments for better close support, the use of chemical mortars to support an infantry attack was judged to be "a most unusual role." The

All afternoon Colonel Birks kept calling for commitment of the third battalion of the 120th Infantry into the bridgehead. The corps commander would not release the battalion from reserve positions on the north bank of the Vire et Taute Canal until Colonel Biddle's 113th Cavalry Group had crossed the canal and secured the 30th Division right flank. The cavalry could not cross the canal until the engineers spanned the water with a treadway bridge. The engineers could not put in the bridge because the site was under constant enemy artillery fire. After waiting impatiently for several hours, General Hobbs finally commanded the engineers to disregard the enemy fire and set the bridge in place. Less than an hour later the bridge was in. Pleased, General Hobbs remarked that he "knew it could be done if they had guts." He ordered Colonel Birks to "pour that cavalry over."<sup>38</sup>

Before the cavalry could cross, a traffic jam developed as three tank platoons entered the bridgehead to support the infantry. Not until two hours later, at 2030, could Colonel Biddle begin to move his 113th Cavalry Group across the bridge, an operation that took five and a half hours. Enemy harassing fire and intermingling vehicles of several units impeded the crossing. The nar-

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heavy mortar companies remained for the moment under artillery control, but by August opinion definitely characterized the heavy mortar as an area weapon that "should be employed in close support of infantry troops." 30th Div Arty AAR, Jul; XIX Corps Cml Sec Jnl, XIX Corps AAR, entries 8, 13, 14, 18 Jul; 12th AGP Immed Rpts 26 and 29, 10 and 28 Aug.

<sup>38</sup> Telecons, Corlett, Hobbs, Birks, and Dunn, 7 Jul, 30th Div G-3 Jnl File; 120th Inf S-3 Rpt, 7 Jul; Msg from Lt Col Walter M. Johnson, 2215, 7 Jul, XIX Corps G-3 Jnl and File.

row roads, originally in poor condition, worsened under the rain and the weight of the heavy vehicles. The single bridge across the canal was inadequate for the main supply route where reinforcements and supplies flowed in one direction while casualties moved in the other. Using bulldozers to fill the canal with earth, the engineers completed a second vehicular crossing site just before midnight.<sup>39</sup>

The traffic congestion at the Vire River was worse. The division had planned to use the stone bridge and the treadway for one-way traffic into the bridgehead, the infantry support bridge for casualties and traffic moving east. Early in the afternoon, as a half-track and trailer were crossing the infantry support bridge, an enemy shell scored a direct hit. The half-track and trailer sank and fouled the ponton structure, and efforts to raise the vehicles and repair the bridge during the afternoon and evening were unsuccessful. This left but two vehicular bridges at Airel, both targets of interdictory shelling. Under the direction of impatient commanders, personnel and supplies trickled across the structures while the roads became more and more congested and the bridge approaches jammed. As engines labored, tires churned and men cursed.

The six battalions in the bridgehead paused to rest and reorganize several hundred yards short of the crossroads in the late afternoon of the rain-soaked day. During the evening they established mutual contact, a continuous line, and a consolidated position overlooking the

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<sup>39</sup> XIX Corps Engr Sec Msg, 2230, 7 Jul, and 113th Cav Gp Msg, 0245, 8 Jul, XIX Corps G-3 Jnl and File.

road intersection. Although General Corlett wanted the division to continue the attack after nightfall to secure the crossroad objective, General Hobbs persuaded him that exerting pressure by active and aggressive patrolling would suffice.<sup>40</sup>

The 30th Division had failed to take its objective, but it had made a significant advance on its first day of attack with less than 300 casualties.<sup>41</sup> So successful was the river crossing that even before the assault was made across the canal it was rumored that the armored division earlier predicted for the XIX Corps would be forthcoming for employment in the bridgehead. That afternoon General Corlett thought that if he did get the armored division, he would put it across the Vire, pass it through the infantry, and direct it south to the corps objective, the ridge west of St. Lô.<sup>42</sup>

That evening the rumor became fact. General Bradley had decided that if

<sup>40</sup> Telecon, Corlett and Hobbs, 7 Jul, 30th Div G-3 Jnl File.

<sup>41</sup> Lt. Col. Arthur H. Fuller of the 117th Infantry received the DSC.

<sup>42</sup> Telecons, Corlett and Hobbs, 1255 and 1725, 7 Jul, 30th Div. G-3 Jnl File.

only a light enemy screen protected the ground between the Vire and the Taute Rivers, as seemed likely, armored commitment in the bridgehead was in order.<sup>43</sup> Ten minutes after General Corlett learned that General Bradley had attached the 3d Armored Division to XIX Corps, Corlett was telling the armored division commander to cross the Vire River at Airel, move southwest through the 30th Division, and make a "powerdrive" toward the high ground west of St. Lô. The 30th Division was to follow rapidly in support.<sup>44</sup>

Not long afterwards, contingents of armor were moving toward the stone bridge at Airel. Although the two corps on the First Army right wing appeared halted, it looked as though the XIX Corps between the Taute and the Vire had only begun to advance. If this development were exploited adroitly, the entire First Army offensive might pick up speed.

<sup>43</sup> Telecon, Col Charles W. West and Col Richard W. Stephens, 1750, 7 Jul; FUSA Msg to XIX Corps, 1815, 7 Jul, XIX Corps G-3 Jnl File; [Garth], *St.-Lô*, p. 17.

<sup>44</sup> XIX Corps FO 5, 1900, 7 Jul (confirming verbal orders), and Special Map "A"; Ltr, Corlett to OCMH, 19 Jan 54, OCMH Files.