

**Battle of the Bulge:  
The Impact of Information Age  
Command and Control on Conflict**

Richard E. Hayes, Ph.D.

Kristi Sugarman

22 June 2006

2006 CCRTS

Coronado, CA

# Battle of the Bulge

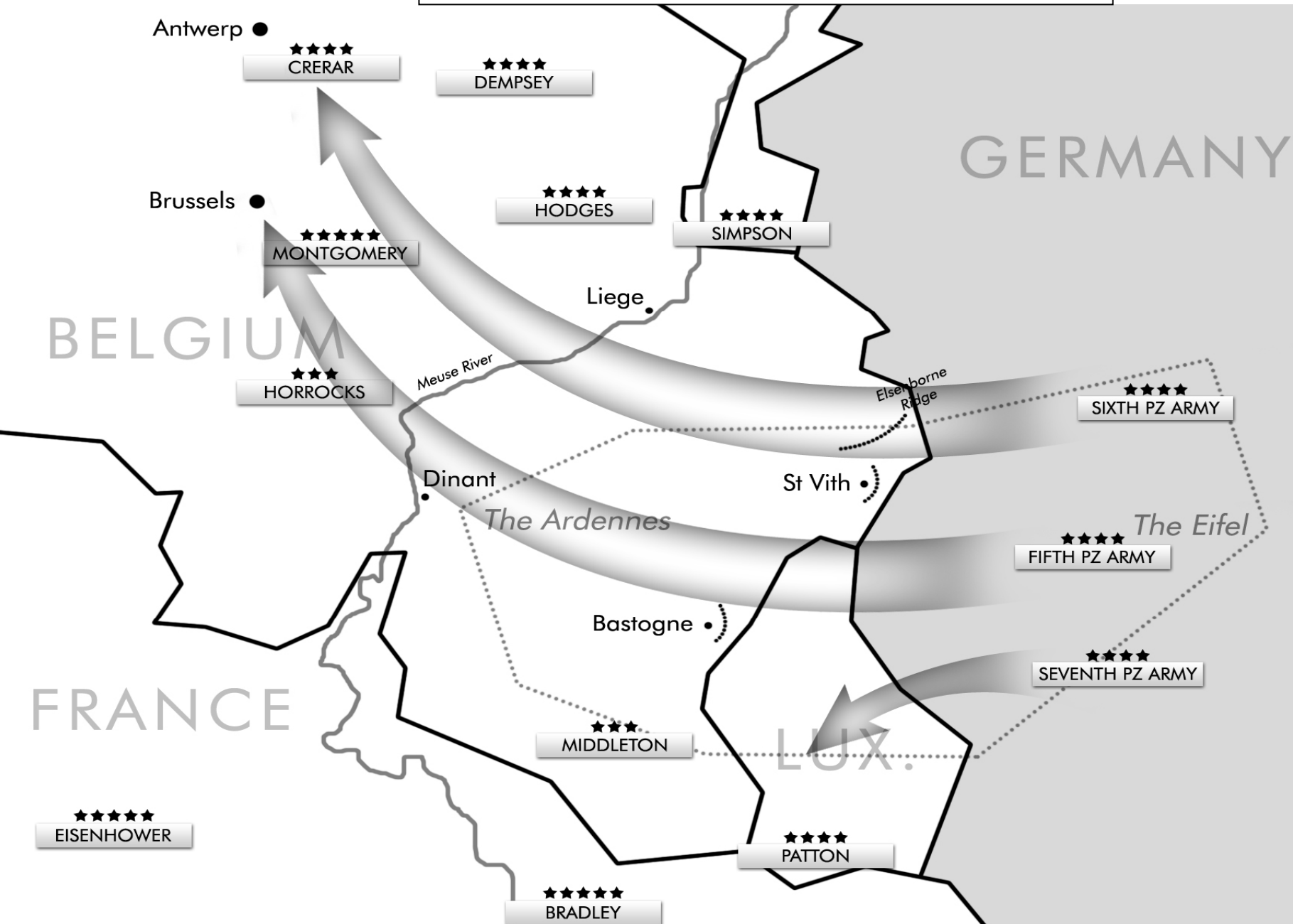
The decisions made by the allies illustrate:

- effective Industrial Age decisionmaking
- situations where the adoption of network-centric and Edge decisionmaking would have made a difference

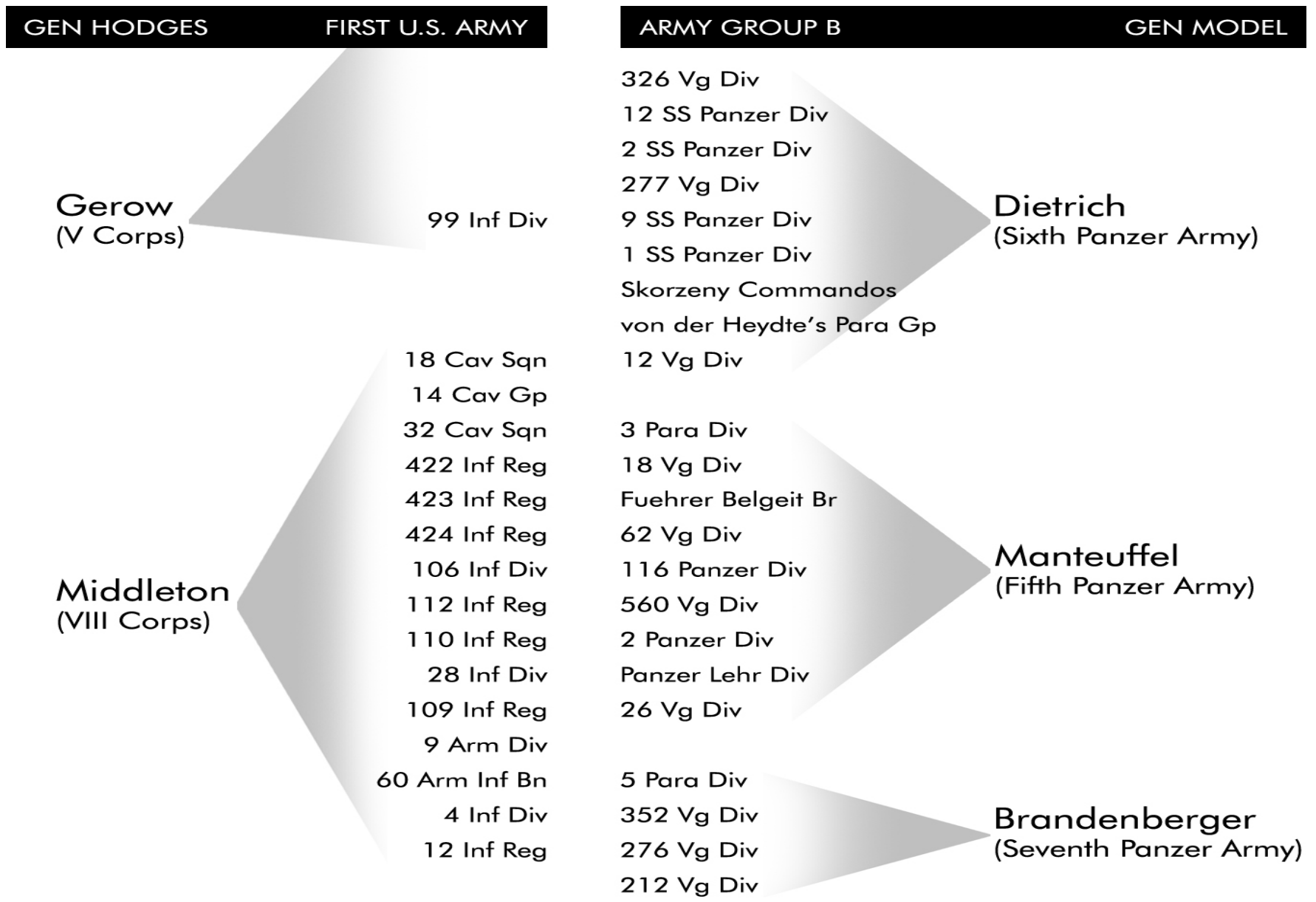
The decisions made by the Germans:

- were dominated by Hitler insisting the entire plan be followed down to its last detail
- were closely followed by senior German generals out of fear or loyalty

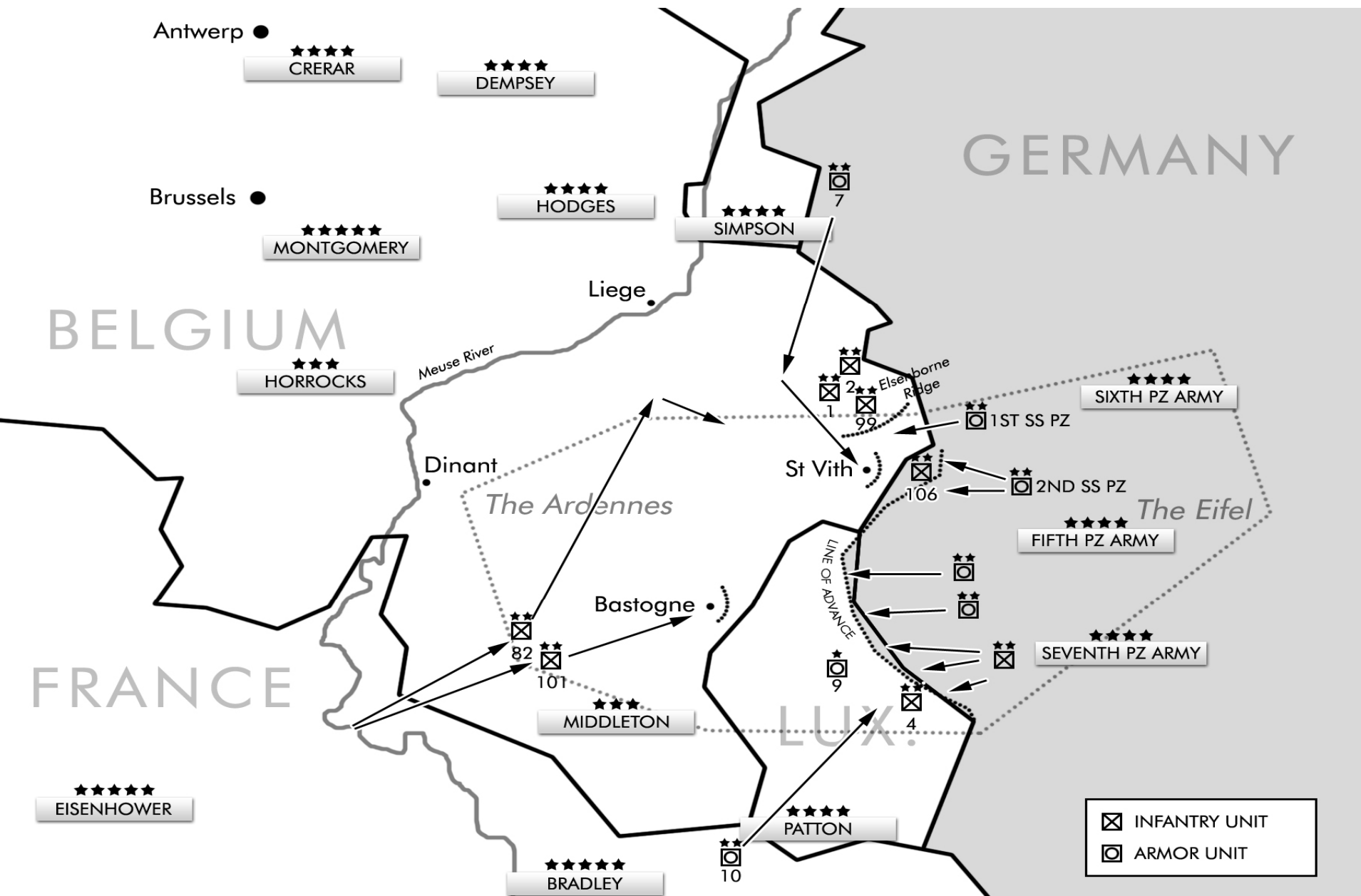
# The German Plan



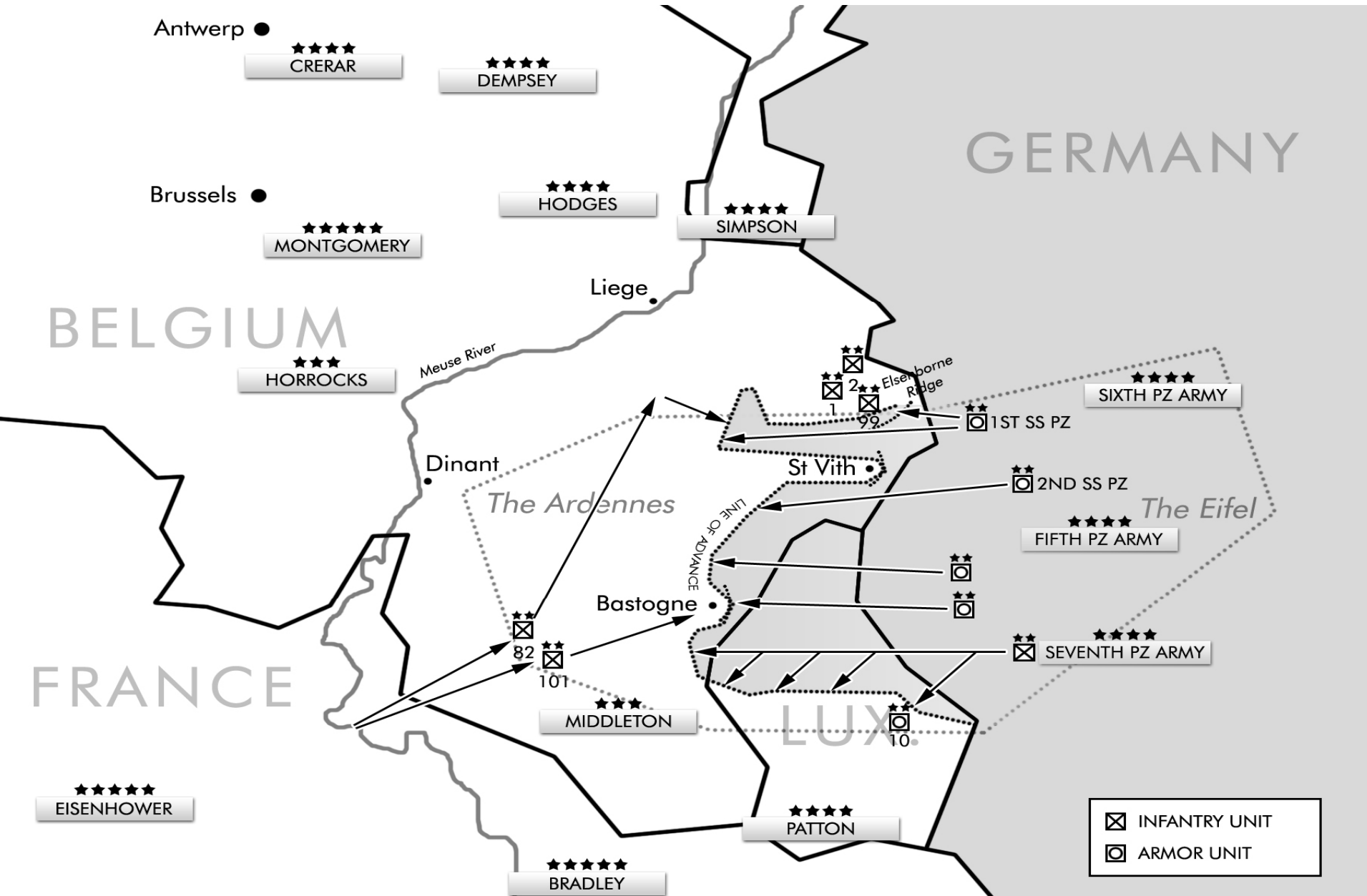
# The Order of Battle



# The German Advance December 16



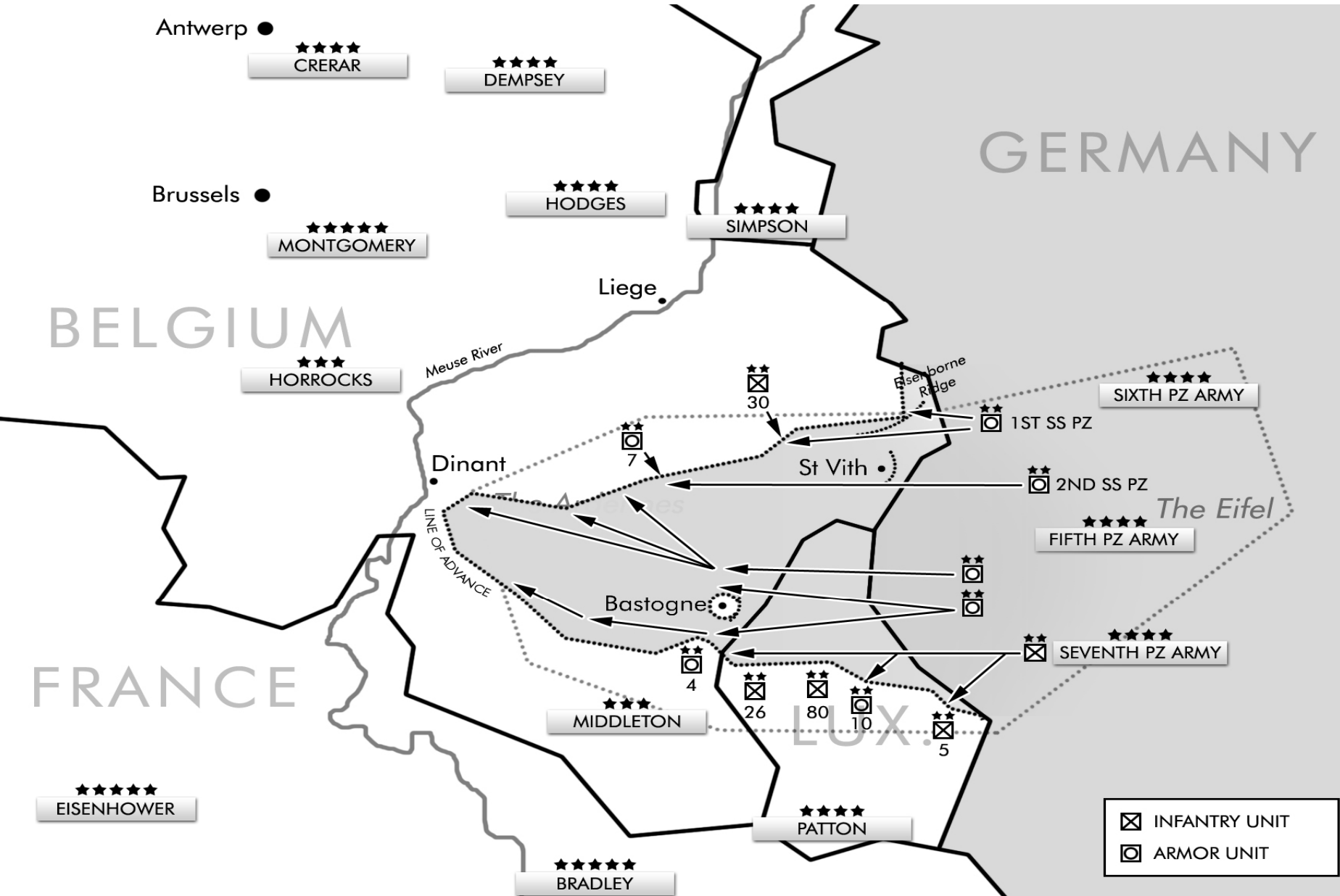
# The German Advance December 20



# Three Allied Options

- If the German Fifth Panzer Army continued to advance and either captured or by-passed Bastogne, then Patton would move northwest of the current fighting to throw a screen across the crucial Meuse River crossings;
- If the German effort continued to stall, then Patton would move directly north to relieve Bastogne, and then turn to retake St. Vith; or
- If SHAEF [Eisenhower] approved, then Patton would attack directly toward St. Vith to cut off and trap most of the German attacking forces.

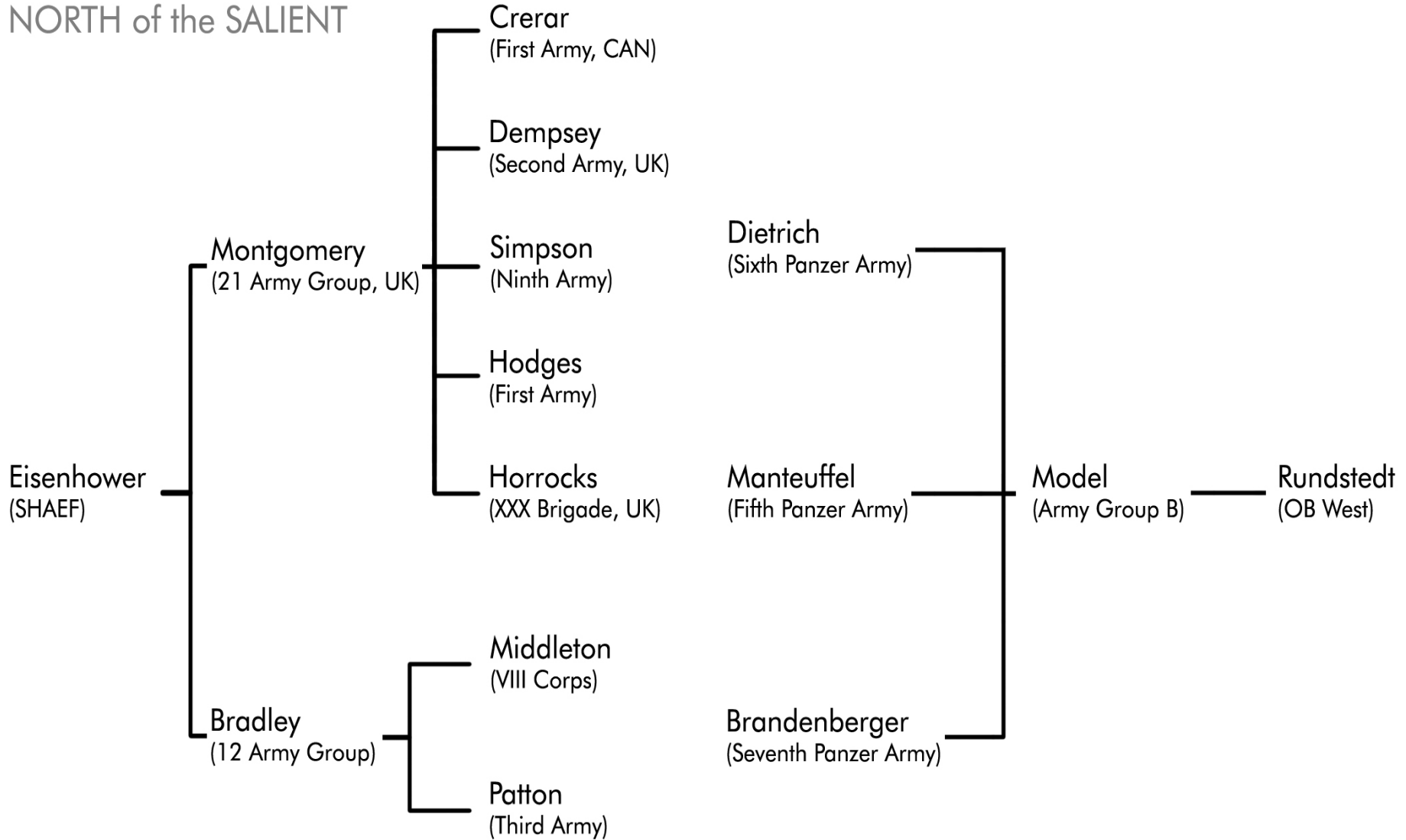
# The German Advance December 25





# Command Arrangement After December 19

NORTH of the SALIENT



SOUTH of the SALIENT

# General Bradley (Patton)

- Made the decision to commit
- Most aggressive commander
- Focused on Bastogne rather than St. Vith
- Sent in reserves from SHAEF and then releases them to Patton, positioned to keep them away from Germany

# General Montgomery

- Very cautious commander
  - He positions long stops to protect Brussels and Antwerp
  - Sends armor to Dinant
- If Germans were to break through flanks, they would have run into him
- Asks for control of US forces north of the Bulge
- Slow at launching attacks—built up combat power before using it

# General Eisenhower

- Responded promptly
  - Dispatched 7<sup>th</sup> Armor and 10<sup>th</sup> Armor
  - Committed SHAEF reserve (82<sup>nd</sup> and 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne)
- Reconstitutes reserves
  - 87<sup>th</sup> Infantry and 11<sup>th</sup> Armor
- Reorganizes command to correct problem and puts a US & UK senior commander on both sides of the Bulge
- Great diplomatic skills

# Dots not connected

- The Allies received the following intelligence :
  - Sept. 4: ULTRA intercepts message of the formation of a million men set to strike in the west in November
  - Sept. 25: ULTRA decodes a message that all SS units on the Western Front must be withdrawn and assigned to a new Sixth Panzer Army.
  - Early November: ULTRA broke the German rail network codes—400 trains moving men and materiel toward the Ardennes front
  - Early November: SHAEF's Chief of Intelligence mentions the existence of the new Sixth Panzer Army, Fifth Panzer Army disappeared from the line in Lorraine
  - Nov. 18-19: Pilots from IX and XIX Air Commands report heavy rail movements in the Eifel.
  - Nov. 23: ULTRA intercepts indicate German air forces being moved west to protect large troop movements into the Eifel

# Continued

- Dec. 7: Patton remarks the Germans failed to follow doctrine and standard counter-attacking against Third Army operations in the Saar region
- Dec. 7: ULTRA reported German Army Group B wanted fighter cover for the Eifel area and aerial reconnaissance of the crossings over the Meuse River
- Dec 12: ULTRA noted all SS units were observing radio silence.
- Dec. 14-15: The American 28th Division reports the sound of large numbers of iron rimmed wheels of horse drawn vehicles and engines in low gear during the night
- Dec. 15: An 106th Infantry intelligence officer reports the sound of major enemy movements
- Dec. 15: A Pole was captured by the 106th Infantry and reported that he was glad to be out of the war because a large-scale offensive was about to start.

# Information Sharing & Collaboration

- ULTRA material was distributed to relevant commands but was not discussed between headquarters, nor could it be shared with other staff at any command center
- Collaboration episodic and required face to face meetings

# Consequences of Improved Information Sharing & Collaboration

- Greater emphasis would have been placed on gathering intelligence about the forces gathering in the Eifel.
- The Ardennes defenses would not have depended on a combination of green troops and forces withdrawn from the line for resupply, equipment refitting, and personnel reinforcements.
- Allied air forces would have made serious efforts to strike at the large numbers of rail supply and troop convoys moving into the Eifel in November and December.



# Continued

- The First Army would have carried out serious patrolling and reconnaissance in force on the ground, increasing their awareness of the adversary in their sector.
- While Montgomery and Patton might well have been tasked to prepare major attacks across the Rhine, their timing and composition would have been altered to ensure that the Ardennes sector was properly defended.
- In essence, the defenses in the Ardennes would have been much stronger and more coherent.