

**CHRONOLOGY OF THE
10TH MOUNTAIN DIVISION
IN WORLD WAR II**

6 January 1940 — 30 November 1945



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Battle diagrams modified from those made by Armand Casini in 1945

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CHRONOLOGY OF THE 10TH MOUNTAIN DIVISION

NOTE: Entries in italics describe military events that occurred in Europe before the 10th Mountain Division arrived in Italy.

By the end of the 1930s, expansionist policies of Germany, the Soviet Union, and Japan had forced the United States to prepare, secretly, to fight a global war. Then, on November 30, 1939, the USSR invaded Finland with a force of a million men supported by tanks, aircraft, and naval forces. The vastly outnumbered Finnish army fought back valiantly. Soldiers in white camouflage uniforms and mounted on skis contributed much to early victories over the invading Soviets. These ski troops moved swiftly and quietly through forests deep in snow where Soviet troops—unprepared for winter warfare—could not follow. They ambushed Soviet convoys, cut Soviet supply lines, and destroyed several Soviet divisions before surrendering in mid-March 1940. By then, millions of Americans had seen ski troops in action on the big screen. Many began to wonder if the U.S. Army was prepared to fight a winter war in the mountains. Some suggested that the United States train its own ski troops.

6 Jan 1940 **Louis Johnson, Assistant Secretary of War**, asks **Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall** what consideration has been given to special clothing, equipment, food, transportation and other essentials necessary to field an effective force under conditions like those of the campaigns in **Finland** and northern **Russia**.

General Marshall replies that winter warfare was always important to the Alaskan command, and that for several years winter exercises have been conducted by troops at **Fort Snelling, Minnesota** and elsewhere. He adds that “Winter maneuvers on a larger scale than yet attempted are desirable, but to date money for this purpose has not been available.”

May 40 The **American Alpine Club** urges the **War Department** to introduce mountain warfare training in the U.S. Army. (By the end of the war, the German Army will have fielded 14 mountain divisions, two of which saw combat in Italy.)

18 July 40 **Charles Minot Dole**, Chairman of the **National Ski Patrol Committee** (of the **National Ski Association**) writes a letter to **President Roosevelt**, offering to recruit experienced skiers to help train troops in ski patrol work. Citing the effectiveness of ski troops in Finland’s defense against the Soviet invasion, Dole points out that “in this country there are 2,000,000 skiers, equipped, intelligent, and able. I contend that it is more reasonable to make soldiers out of skiers than skiers out of soldiers.” FDR’s reply refers the matter to the War Department for study.

12 Sept 40 Perhaps unaware that the U.S. Army has been quietly working along these lines, and worried that his suggestions are going nowhere, Dole secures an interview with Chief of Staff Marshall, presents his views, and follows this with a paper on Winter Training. Dole asks for and receives funds to improve his office and staff.

25 Sept 40 Minot Dole writes to General Marshall stressing the importance of obtaining the correct equipment for mountain troops, and urging that no decisions on equipment be made “without the full approval of those experienced and able to advise.”

Members of the American Alpine Club, cooperating with the National Ski Patrol committee, are already at work advising the Army on equipment for winter and mountain warfare. **Adams Carter** writes a report that anticipates many of the elements eventually incorporated into the 10th Mountain Division. **Robert Bates**, working with **Capt. Albert Jackman**, designs a new style of mountain boot that can be used for skiing, rock-climbing, and hiking. Eventually, a talented group in the Quartermaster Corps develops and tests items of equipment that are

familiar today, including nylon climbing ropes, pile clothing, down sleeping bags, and dehydrated food.

- 5 Nov 40 The War Department issues a directive forming ski patrol units in the **1st, 3rd, 5th, 6th, 41st and 44th Divisions**. U.S. Olympic captain **Rolf Monson** leads the first patrol to start training (1st Division Patrol at Plattsburg Barracks and Lake Placid, NY).
- 5 Dec 40 The War Department sends a memorandum to the commanding generals of divisions having ski patrols informing them that accredited representatives of the National Ski Association will be visiting their units conducting research and preparing a report on problems with “equipment and camping techniques.”
- 12 Dec 40 Lt. **John Woodward**, noted skier and mountaineer and formerly captain of the University of Washington ski team, enters active duty with a ski patrol in the **3rd Division’s 15th Regiment**, at **Fort Lewis, WA** (see MAP 1). The patrol spends the winter of 1940-41 at **Longmire**, near **Mt. Rainier**. At the end of the winter, Woodward leads a patrol that circumnavigates Mt. Rainier. In March he is temporarily assigned to the **41st Division Ski Patrol**. There he leads a two-week winter expedition into the Olympic Mountains.
- 1 Mar 41 The National Ski Association’s role as an advisor to the War Department is formalized in a contract.
- Apr 41 The Army orders **Colonels Nelson Walker** and **Charles Hurdis** to investigate sites capable of housing a division of 15,000 men and suitable for year-round training of mountain troops. **Robert Monohan** of the U.S. Forestry Service accompanies them. Their first choice, a site in Yellowstone Park, turns out to be a breeding ground of the almost-extinct trumpeter swan, and has to be abandoned.

MAP 1. 87th REGIMENT LOCATIONS IN WASHINGTON
Fort Lewis: November 1941 – November 1943



- 15 Nov 41 Mountain warfare training on a scale larger than a single patrol begins with the activation of **1st Battalion, 87th Mountain Infantry Regiment** at **Fort Lewis, WA**, Lt. Col. **Onslow S. Rolfe** commanding. A West Point graduate with cavalry and artillery experience, Rolfe creates the first American regiment of mountain troops, from scratch.

At the same time, the **Mountain Winter Warfare Board (MWWB)** is formed to provide advice on equipment and training.

Personnel for the mountain battalion are men with previous ski and mountaineering experience. Many come from the 3rd, 41st, and 44th Divisions and have participated in the winter warfare programs of 1940-41.

Over the coming months, the **National Ski Patrol** under the terms of a revised contract with the War Department **will recruit civilian volunteers**. Minot Dole establishes a system in which the NSP obtains three letters of recommendation attesting to a recruit's competence in mountaineering or skiing—the only time in our nation's history when a civilian sports organization recruits, screens, and approves volunteers for the military. By mid-1944, Dole and a small group of Ski Association helpers will have recruited over 7000 men for the division.

- 7 Dec 41 **The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor** pushes the U.S. into a war for which it is not ready. Astounded Americans unite behind President Roosevelt. Enlistments exceed the capacity of the armed forces to handle them. The barracks at Fort Lewis fill rapidly, and soon the Army is considering activating another two battalions of the 87th Mountain Infantry.
- Feb - Jun 42 To provide his battalion with opportunities for military ski instruction not available at coastal Fort Lewis, Col. Rolfe rents **Paradise and Tatoosh Lodges**, two resort hotels high up on Mt. Rainier. The Mountain Battalion's experiences there inspire new verses for an old western ballad quickly adopted by the ski troops. In the song, trooper Sven's heavy weapons company trains on snowshoes and thus spends "two months in Paradise and never learned to ski," while "the Winter Warfare Board waited anxiously about." (Actually, the Board is busy testing new winter rations, clothing, equipment, and over-snow transportation.)
- In May, an expedition climbs to the summit of Mt. Rainier, an event filmed by Lt. **John C. Jay**, who has already produced ski-training films for the U.S. Army. After the war, Jay will become a legendary maker of ski films.
- 9 Mar 42 The War Department is reorganized and the training of all ground troops in the continental U.S. placed under the command of Lt. **Gen. McNair**, a key figure in the activation of the 87th Mountain Infantry Regiment in 1941. Various plans for expanding mountain training are discussed and abandoned because of the shortage of men and equipment. However, the decision is made to activate a mountain division in the spring of 1943. And contracts are let for the construction of a divisional training site.
- Apr 42 Construction of **Camp Hale** begins in the high Rockies near **Pando, CO**. The camp is named in honor of General Irving Hale, who had been chief of the Colorado National Guard.
- 1 May 42 **2nd Battalion 87th** is activated at Fort Lewis.
- 1 June 42 **3rd Battalion 87th** is activated at Fort Lewis.

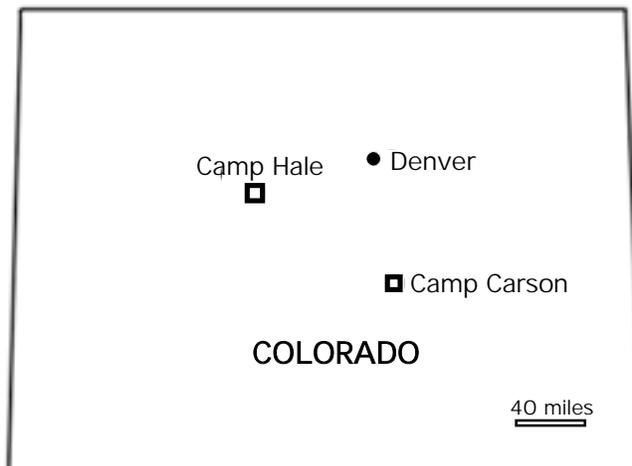
MAP 2. ALEUTIAN BATTLEGROUND
June 1942 – August 1943



- 7 Jun 42 Japanese forces invade **Attu** and **Kiska**, small undefended American islands near the end of the Aleutian archipelago that stretches westward from Alaska. Enemy occupation of American soil makes the residents of Alaska and the Pacific Northwest uneasy. Eventually, the Joint Chiefs of Staff will decide that the 10,000 Japanese troops in the Aleutians will have to be ousted.
- Jul -Aug 42 A detachment from the 87th consisting of 40 men and 5 officers under the command of **Major Robert Tillotson** mounts an expedition to the **Columbia Ice Fields** in the Canadian Rockies near Lake Louise. There they test snow vehicles (“Weasels”) manufactured by the Studebaker Corporation.
- 3 Sept 42 The **Mountain Training Center (MTC)**, with **Col. (later Brig. Gen.) Rolfe** in command, is activated at **Camp Carson, CO**. As the provisional command of a new mountain division, the MTC’s mission is to develop procedures and manuals, test equipment, and conduct training in mountain warfare.
- Lt. **John Woodward**, now at **Fort Lewis**, is ordered to form an **MTC Training Detachment** by picking 100 experienced skiers and mountaineers from the 87th.
- Sept 42 The **126th Engineer Mountain Battalion**, with **Lt. Col. John Parker** in command, is activated at **Camp Carson** and now becomes part of the MTC. Initially, two companies are authorized. Company A is to do experimental work on the construction of aerial tramways. Company B is to experiment with the construction of suspension bridges in mountainous terrain. One consultant to both groups is **Maj. Frederick Roebling**, a member of the famous family of engineers.
- 2 Nov 42 **10th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop**, recently formed as a cavalry unit at **Fort Meade, SD**, arrives at **Camp Carson, CO**, for training under the command of the MTC. Before long, the troop will be known as the “**10th RECON.**”

- 15 Nov 42 The 1st and 2nd Bns 87th Regiment move from Fort Lewis to Hunter Liggett Military Reservation in Jolon, CA, where they participate in maneuvers. The site is about 70 miles south of Monterey.

MAP 3. 10th DIVISION LOCATIONS IN COLORADO
Camp Hale: November 1942 – June 1944



- 16 Nov 42 The MTC command moves from Camp Carson to Camp Hale. Currently, the Mountain Training Center command contains only one infantry regiment, the 87th. By next July, it will include the 86th Infantry Regiment and two artillery battalions in addition to several specialized units.
- 17 Nov 42 The 601st Field Artillery Battalion (Pack) arrives at Camp Hale from Camp Carson, thus providing the MTC with artillery.
- 18-21 Nov 42 3rd Bn 87th moves from Fort Lewis to Camp Hale.
- 26 Nov 42 1st Battalion of the 86th Inf. Regiment is activated at Camp Hale. Lacking financial authorization for 2nd and 3rd Battalions, the MTC command creates two provisional battalions. The first company in the provisional Second Battalion, for example, is called A' (A Prime). That for the Provisional 3rd Bn is called A'' (A Double Prime). As recruits arrive, they are assigned to these Prime Companies.
- 14 Dec 42 The 99th Infantry Battalion (Norwegian), 770 strong and composed of 1st and 2nd generation Norwegians, arrives from Camp Snelling, Minnesota for mountain warfare training alongside the 10th. Next August, the battalion will depart for overseas duty and see action in France on D-Day + 11.
- 31 Dec 42 1st and 2nd Bns 87th move from Jolon to Camp Hale.
- The 602nd Field Artillery Bn (Pack) arrives at Camp Hale from Camp Carson and joins the MTC, which now has two artillery battalions.
- 4-13 Feb 43 Minot Dole visits Camp Hale, after which he sends a report to Col. Ridgely Gaither (in Washington) that expresses grave concern with the low state of the 87th's morale, the inadequacy of tactical training, and the high daily sick rate—including many cases of the "Pando Hack," caused by breathing smoke produced by coal-burning furnaces and trains.

- 25 April 43 The **10th RECON**'s combat mission is re-defined as mechanized reconnaissance in mountain terrain. To accomplish its training mission, cavalrymen will be replaced with expert skiers and mountaineers, and the animals by mechanized equipment. The troop will provide instructors for training others in the MTC, and will soon provide mountain and winter-warfare training to the **10th Light Division** and other units throughout the country.
- 26 Apr 43 The **2nd and 3rd Battalions of the 86th Mountain Infantry Regiment** are authorized and activated at Camp Hale. For the Prime and Double Prime companies of the two Provisional Battalions, nothing has changed except their designations. For example, Companies A' and A'' are now called 86-E and 86-I.
- 7 May 43 The **7th Infantry Division** lands on **Attu** (see **MAP 2**). The landing is unopposed, but the defenders put up a fanatical resistance that lasts 18 days. Casualties include 2351 Japanese and 539 American soldiers killed.
- 12 May 43 **Captain John Woodward** is designated commander of the **10th RECON**.
- 12 Jun 43 The **602nd Field Artillery Bn** leaves Camp Carson and moves to Fort Ord, CA, where (along with the **601st**) it trains as artillery support for the coming invasion of Kiska. Shortly after their return to the States, these units will see combat in Italy, France, and Germany.
- 13 Jun 43 The 87th Regiment moves to **Fort Ord, CA** for amphibious training as part of the 30,000-man **Amphibian Training Force 9**. Fort Ord is located about five miles north of Monterey, CA. ATF-9's mission is to recapture the Aleutian island of **Kiska**, now occupied by Japanese troops (See **MAP 2**). Supporting the 87th will be two artillery battalions (**601st** and **602nd FA**), the **133rd Signal Company** (derived from the 110th Signal Company), and the **229th Engineer Company** (derived from the 126th Engineers).
- 10 Jul 43 The organization of the 126th Engineer Mountain Battalion is again shaken up when 126-A is renamed the **226th Engineer Motorized Company** and given service tasks at Camp Hale. A year later the unit will move to A. P. Hill Military Reservation in Virginia, where it will experiment with techniques to remove mines.
- 5-15 Jul 43 The **604th Field Artillery Bn** (Pack) marches 170 miles on foot and by mule from Camp Carson to Camp Hale (see **MAP 3**). Asked how many cattle and troop cars would be needed to make this move, **Gen. David L. Ruffner** (artillery commander) answered, "None! My men are tough. We'll walk it!"
- 15 Jul 43 The **10th Light Division (Alpine)**, with **Brig. Gen.** (later **Maj. Gen.**) **Lloyd E. Jones** in command, is activated at Camp Hale, thus replacing the MTC. Jones has previously commanded a task force that occupied Cold Bay and Amchitka in the Aleutians.

The **85th Mountain Infantry Regiment** and the **90th Infantry Regiment** are activated at **Camp Hale** and are assigned to the 10th Light. Personnel for the new regiments come from the 86th, from the ranks of volunteers recruited by the National Ski Patrol, and from other units of the Army Ground Forces. A cadre of noncoms and some officers come from the 27th Infantry Division on duty in Hawaii.

With the 87th away in the Aleutians, the division's infantry units now include the **85th**, **86th**, and (temporarily) the **90th** Infantry Regiments. Other combat units now include the **604th Field Artillery Bn** (which arrives at Camp Hale on this date); **605th FA** (which will soon make the trek from Camp Carson to Camp Hale); and the **616th FA**, which is activated simultaneously with the 10th Light at Camp Hale. Other units in the division include the **110th Signal Company**; the **10th Medical Bn**; three **QM Pack Companies**; the **576th Antitank**

Battery; the 727th Antiaircraft Artillery MG Battalion; and the 126th Engineer Mountain Battalion.

As a light division, the 10th's three infantry regiments have no heavy weapons companies. Those formed previously are now disbanded, but their mortar sections are attached to battalion HQ companies.

- 19-27 Jul 43 The 605th Field Artillery Bn (Pack) marches on foot and by mule from Camp Carson to Camp Hale, by way of Cripple Creek, Hartsel, Fairplay, Leadville, and Tennessee Pass (see MAP 3).
- 21 Jul 43 32 rock-climbing instructors of the 10th RECON are sent to Elkins, WV. Other detachments are soon sent to Fort Lewis, WA, Watersmeet, MI, Camp McCoy, WI and other locations.
- 28 Jul 43 Using radar salvaged from British vessels in Hong Kong, the 5300 Japanese defenders of Kiska find a hole in the American naval blockade and slip away.
- 29 July 43 ATF-9, including the 87th Mtn Infantry, embarks from San Francisco and sails for Adak, in the Aleutians, where it will prepare for the invasion of Kiska (See MAP 2).
- 4-11 Aug 43 The 87th, with Col. Roy V. Rickard now in command, lands on the beach at Adak and bivouacs on the island. On 4 August the 10th suffers its first overseas death when Pvt. Kenneth L. Hintze of 87-C drowns during a landing exercise.
- 9 Aug 43 Minot Dole sends a telegram to leaders in the National Ski Patrol noting that the War Department has authorized the recruiting of 2000 additional qualified volunteers for the ski troops and asking them to redouble their efforts. Despite this, it proves impossible to fill out the Division with volunteers. The Army then resorts to recruiting "the old-fashioned way." Pfc. Tony Ragazine (85-G) recalled that when he was in training in a tank destroyer unit, "At reveille one morning the non-coms were told to fall out and the rest of us were told we'd just volunteered for the ski troops." (Ragazine was later KIA in Italy.) Large drafts of men are recruited the same way from the 30th, 31st and 33rd Divisions, then stationed in Tennessee, and from other units.

**MAP 4. 87th REGIMENT LANDING SITES
on the ALEUTIAN ISLAND of KISKA
August 1943**



- 15 Aug 43 Through the morning fog, the 87th lands at two coves along Kiska's north shore, and quickly climbs precipitous cliffs to occupy positions along the ridge. Unknown to ATF-9, the enemy has left the island; but 11 men are killed by friendly fire, seven others will die of various causes, including booby traps and accidents; and a U.S. Navy destroyer hits a mine and is lost with all hands.
- 30 Aug 43 10th RECON establishes a rock climbing school for the 10th at Homestake Creek.

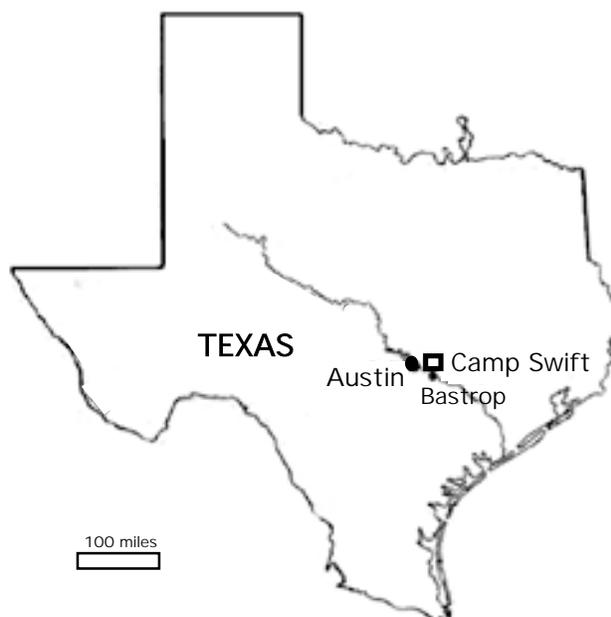
MAP 5. THE ALLIED CAMPAIGN IN ITALY
September 3, 1943 – May 2, 1945



- 3 Sep 43 *The Allied invasion of Italy begins when British and Canadian troops cross the Straits of Messina and land on the toe of the Italian boot.*
- 9 Sep 43 *Four infantry divisions of the U.S. Fifth Army (36th, 45th, 46th, 56th) force a landing at Salerno, in the ankle of the Italian boot. Italy had just surrendered and Allied hopes were high. But Hitler had rushed reinforcements across the Alps and declared: "The Führer expects the most bitter struggle for every yard." Twenty months of hard fighting lie ahead before victory is achieved, in what correspondent Eric Sevareid called a hard campaign of "slow, spasmodic movement" from one stony height to another. The Apennines, ranging from 2,500 to 6,000 feet in height, dominate the boot from the toe to the Po Valley. There are few roads and multitudinous rivers.*

- 1 Oct 43 *Allied forces enter Naples. On the 15th, the Americans make a bloody crossing of the Volturno River thirty miles north of the city.*
- 26 Oct 43 **Back at Camp Hale, the Mountain Training Group (MTG) is formed. For the next five months, the MTG and the 10th RECON will share the task of providing mountaineering training.**
- Nov 43 *German Field Marshal Albert Kesselring is given command of the Italian theater. All winter his troops will hold the Gustav Line—a chain of fortifications including Cassino and running clear across the boot, blocking Allied progress. But in the spring, Allied troops will puncture the Gustav Line, break out of the Anzio beachhead and open the way to Rome.*
- 7 Dec 43 **An MTG detachment is sent to Italy to give instruction in rock climbing at the British Mountain Warfare School. It remains in Italy until the war is over.**
- Late Dec 43 **The 87th and attached units return from Kiska and arrive at Camp Carson around Christmas.**
- 21-25 Feb 44 **The 10th RECON makes a long trek on skis from Leadville to Aspen Crossover, one of several such mountaineering exercises conducted during the winter of 43-44 (see MAP 3).**
- 23 Feb 44 **The 87th returns to Camp Hale, joins the 10th Light Division, and reorganizes as a light infantry regiment.**
- Later the same day, the 90th Infantry Regiment leaves Camp Hale and moves to Camp Carson. But most of the men who trained in the 90th at Camp Hale are first transferred to the other mountain infantry regiments.**
- 21 Mar 44 **The 10th RECON is inactivated. Its seven officers and 142 EM are transferred to the MTG, which, in turn, transfers most of its personnel to line companies in the division.**
- 24 Mar-6 May **D-Series maneuvers, designed to test the division's ability to operate in the mountains in sub-zero weather, push men, mules, and machines to the limit of their endurance.**
- 10 May 44 **One result of D-Series is an Army Ground Forces recommendation to Chief of Staff George Marshall that the 10th Light Division be reorganized as a regular infantry division. The report concludes that such changes would be needed to "to correct deficiencies in personnel and equipment."**
- 4 Jun 44 *In Italy, the Fifth Army enters Rome.*
- 6 Jun 44 *D-Day. With the Allied assault on the Normandy beaches, Italy becomes the "forgotten front." North of Rome, the Germans fight rearguard actions to allow time for the fortification of the Gothic Line, which stretches from coast to coast across the crest of the Northern Apennines, just north of Pisa and Florence. Breaking through this mountain fortress and gaining the Po Valley is a daunting prospect.*
- 15 June 44 *Allied plans for an attack on the Gothic Line are dealt a severe blow. Three U.S. divisions, Ranger battalions, the Japanese-American 442nd Regimental Combat Team, and four French divisions are withdrawn from the Italian campaign for the August 1944 invasion of southern France. To make up for these losses, troops from the 45th Antiaircraft Battalion, retrained as infantry, are designated as Task Force 45. And two other divisions join the Fifth Army: the 92nd Infantry Division, and the 1st Brazilian Infantry Division of the Brazilian Expeditionary Force (BEF).*

MAP 6. 10th MOUNTAIN DIVISION IN TEXAS
Camp Swift: June 20, 1944 – December 21, 1944



- 20-24 Jun 44 In Colorado, the 10th Light Division leaves for Camp Swift, Texas for flatland training. The aim is to prepare the division for maneuvers in Louisiana. But with the Army's attention now on the European battlefield, these maneuvers are canceled. Rumors that the 10th will fight in SE Asia are fueled when some units are given maps of Burma to study. Others receive Japanese language phrase books.
- While in Camp Swift, recruits approved by the National Ski Patrol continue to join the division. But now their basic training takes place at locations other than Camp Hale.
- 10 July 44 Officers and men recently arrived from the mountains of Colorado are asked to march 10 miles with full field gear in Texas heat, on a "medical march" intended to provide practice in handling simulated wounds. Instead, the exercise provides unwanted experience in handling large numbers of real heat-exhaustion cases.
- But as training at Camp Swift proceeds, weekly forced marches of as much as 25 miles in 8 hours are conducted. The resulting buildup of physical stamina will play an important part in the division's success in combat.
- 26 July 44 The 10th Light Division gets its own biweekly newspaper, temporarily called "*SKIZETTE, Texas Edition*".
- 2 Sept 44 After a competition for names, publication begins as the *Blizzard*. The first issue has a summary of war news from Italy, dominated by reports of attacks the U.S. Fifth and British Eighth Armies are making on the **Gothic Line**.
- 25 Sept 44 *Headlines in the New York Times highlight the breakthrough of the **Gothic Line**, achieved at great cost by the Fifth Army fighting along Highway 65 and through Futa Pass. The article hints that a breakthrough to the Po Valley is near. In the central sector, the penetration is in fact carried to within 8 miles of Bologna (see MAP 5). But the weather is horrible, troops are exhausted and low on supplies,*

and American commanders are fearful of the artillery defenses that Gen. von Senger has massed around Bologna.

Between 10 September and 26 October, four U.S. divisions will suffer over 15,000 casualties, with the U.S. 88th Division alone losing over 5,000 men. The Gothic Line phase of the war in Italy will come to a halt in mid-December, along positions known as the **Winter Line**. On December 23rd, the *New York Times* will refer to the Gothic Line for the last time.

7 Oct 44 In Camp Swift, 575 mules from Oklahoma arrive to join others already carrying burdens for the division. Many troopers find it hard to control the frisky beasts. By 4:00 PM, 400 mules are stalling traffic on the state highway to Bastrop and milling around camp (see MAP 6).

Oct 44 The 226th Engineer Company returns from its training at A.P. Hill Military Reservation and becomes **Company D** of the **126th Mountain Engineer Bn** (which now has A, B, C, and D companies).

6 Nov 44 The 10th Light Division is renamed the **10th Mountain Division** and reorganized as a “Modified Triangular Division,” i.e., each of three infantry regiments now has 12 line companies, including one heavy weapons company in each battalion (D, H, or M).

Our artillery units, under the command of **Brig. Gen. David L. Ruffner**, still include the **604th, 605th, and 616th Field Artillery Bns (Pack)**. But with only three battalions of light artillery (75-mm and 105-mm), and no fourth battalion of medium artillery (155-mm), the 10th is not classified as a regular infantry division. To make up for this, one British unit (the **178th Lowland Medium Artillery Regt**) and one U.S. unit (the **1125th Armored Field Artillery Bn**) will be attached to the 10th in Italy. In addition, heavy artillery from the next higher command level, IV Corps, will be brought to bear as needed.

The **10th Mountain Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop** is re-activated—but unlike the unit with the same name at Camp Hale, the newly formed unit is mounted on horseback (as it will be in Italy).

The 727th AAA Machine Gun Bn and 576th Antitank Battery are reorganized as an infantry unit called the **10th Mountain Infantry Antitank Bn**, which will go into combat in Italy as *infantry*, by the side of our other infantry units.

The 680th Medical Collecting Co becomes **Company C** of the **10th Mtn Medical Bn**, which now has four medical companies (A, B, C, and D) plus a veterinarian company (E).

17 Nov 44 The division’s assistant commander, **Col. Robinson E. Duff** (later Brig. Gen.), arrives in Naples to make plans for the movement of the 10th to Italy.

23 Nov 44 **Brig. Gen. George P. Hays** arrives at Camp Swift and takes command of the division. (He will soon be promoted to Major General.) Twelve days earlier he had been in command of the 2nd Infantry Division’s artillery in France. A few days later he has the officers and noncoms assembled at the field house “so as to give them a chance to look at their new commander.” He first tells them, “We are going to have good times as well as bad times in our combat overseas and as far as possible it will be my policy to make everyone as comfortable and to have as good a time as possible as long as we accomplish our mission.” He concludes, “If you’re going to risk your life, you might as well do it in good company.” In their next edition, the editors of the *Blizzard* echo this sentiment and express the view that “The General will be good company.”

- 24 Nov 44 *In Italy, three infantry battalions of the Fifth Army's IV Corps, supported by tanks and artillery, make an unsuccessful attack on **Mt. Belvedere** (see **MAP 7**). These are: (1) the 435th Antiaircraft Bn, retrained as infantry; (2) one battalion of the 92nd Infantry Division's 370th Regiment; and (3) one battalion of the Brazilian Expeditionary Force's 1st Infantry Division. After briefly gaining the summit, the 435th is forced off by accurate artillery fire directed from an overlooking terrain feature later named "Riva Ridge."*
- 29 Nov 44 *On this date, and on December 12, the **1st Brazilian Infantry Division** mounts a second and a third unsuccessful attack on **Mt. Castello**—a promontory with steep cliffs which juts out from the northern portion of the Mt. Belvedere massif and "acts as a watchtower of the German defense."*
- After the repulse of these Fifth Army attacks, General von Vietinghoff directs that the German defensive position on Mt. Belvedere be redesigned and improved. Mines, trip wires, and concertina wire are laid across every attack approach; farmhouses and small towns are fortified; artillery and mortar fire are planned and aiming coordinates registered. Counterattack plans are developed and practiced. Nothing is to be left to chance along this portion of the Winter Line.*
- 29 Nov 44 The 86th Regiment departs Camp Swift by train, arriving at the Port of Embarkation, **Camp Patrick Henry, VA** on 2 Dec.
- 3 Dec 44 An advance party of six from Division HQ arrives at Naples airport (**Lt. Cols. Robert Works** and **Jefferson J. Irvin**; **Maj. Wade Watson**; **Sgts. Reamer A. Bolz, Thomas E. Hilliard** and **Bruce R. Snow**).
- 9 Dec 44 A headline in the *Blizzard* announces "The Tenth Gets Mountain Patch." However, the "mountain rockers" will not actually be issued until May 1945.
- 11 Dec 44 The 86th Regiment embarks for **Naples, Italy**, on the USS *Argentina*, arriving 22 December. As soon as the troops are aboard ship, their pay is increased by 20%. Monthly pay of a Private First Class, for example, is increased from \$54.00 to \$64.80.
- 21-24 Dec 44 The 85th and 87th Regiments move by train from Camp Swift to Camp Patrick Henry, VA.
- 24-27 Dec 44 The division's three artillery battalions move by train to Camp Patrick Henry.
- 4 Jan 45 The 85th and 87th embark from Hampton Roads on the USS *West Point*, bound for Naples, Italy. The ship was formerly the USS *America*, largest and fastest of the U.S. commercial fleet. Too fast for any convoy, it sails alone until near the Straits of Gibraltar.
- 6 Jan 45 The rest of the division, including the 604th, 605th, and 616th Artillery Bns, embarks on the USAT *General Meigs*, arriving Naples on the 18th.

MAP 7. 10th MOUNTAIN DIVISION BATTLE ROUTE
December 1944 – May 1945



At the 86th's staging area at Quercianella, south of Pisa, eight men including Chaplain Clarence J. Hagen and four medics are killed and four men are wounded by mines exploding near the rail line running along the border of the training area.

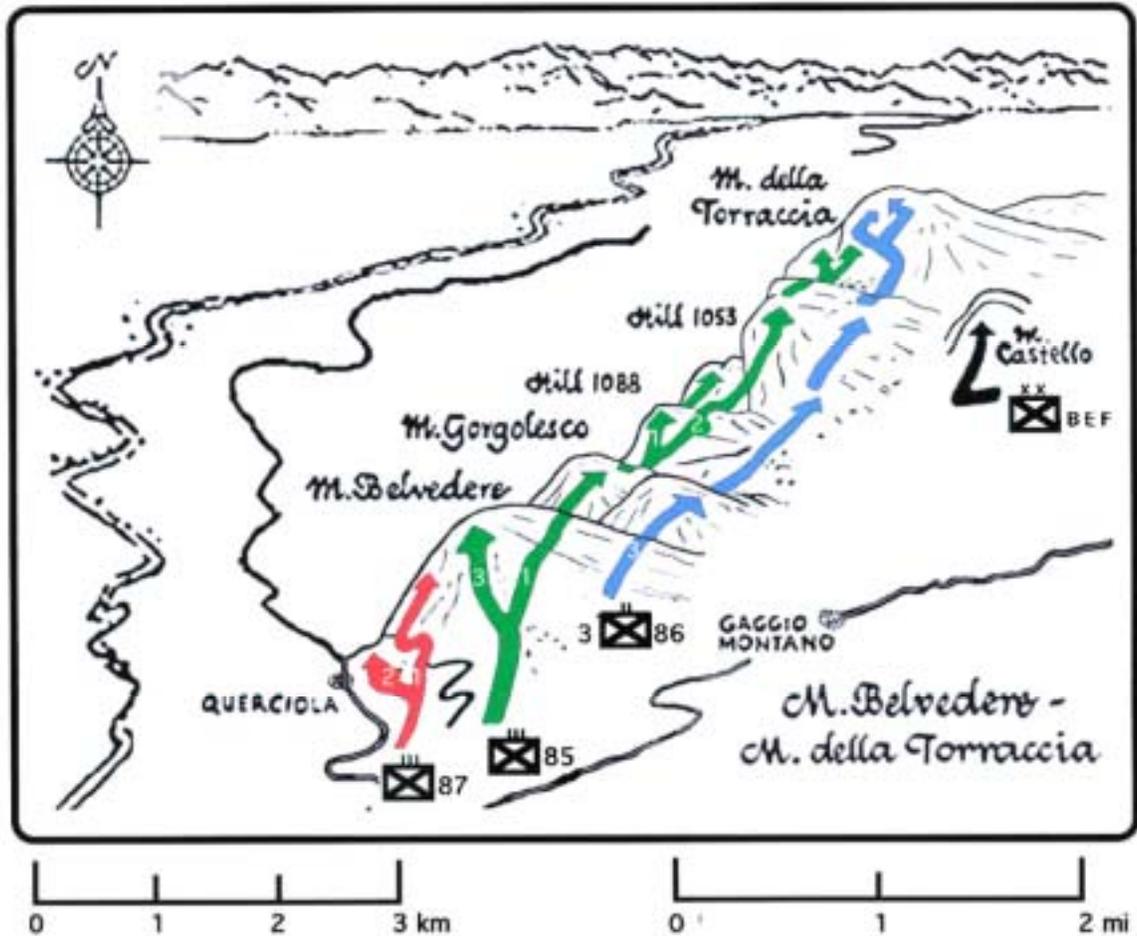
- 8-9 Jan 45 The 86th Regiment enters the front lines north of Bagni di Lucca, relieving Task Force 45 in the Mt. Belvedere area. The Brazilian 1st Infantry Division protects the right flank. The left flank is essentially open, with 25 miles of mountains between the 86th and the next Allied unit.
- 8-11 Jan 45 General Hays flies to Naples and immediately travels to Traversa. There he confers with Lt. Gen. L. K. Truscott, Jr., recently given command of the **Fifth Army**. Truscott says, "My plan is to have your division first capture Mt. Belvedere, then proceed by stages to capture all the high ground to a position east of the town of Tolè." Hays replies, "Who is going to share the bullets with us when we attack?" Truscott answers, "No one." The capture of Mt. Belvedere is important because it provides the enemy with artillery observation on Route 64, one of two main approaches to the Po Valley in the Fifth Army sector.

General Hays soon decides that an attack on Mt. Belvedere would be successful only if German positions on **Riva Ridge**—which overlooks Mt. Belvedere and provides German artillery observers a clear view of Mt. Belvedere—are captured. He assigns that task to the 86th Mtn Infantry Regiment (see MAP 8). [**"Riva"** is a code name for a ridge that, from north to south, includes peaks called **Pizzo di Campiano**, **Mt. Cappel Buso**, **Mt. Serrasiccia**, **Mt. Riva**, **Mt. Mancinello**, and **Le Piagge**.]

- 13 Jan 45 The USS *West Point* arrives in Naples, Italy, at 4:30 PM.
- 14 Jan 45 Companies of the 85th embark on LCIs [Landing craft, infantry] and sail northward on an overnight trip along the coast to Livorno, thence by truck to Pisa. Troops of the 87th move to Pisa, some by rail, others on the Italian freighter *Sestriere*.
- 15 Jan 45 The 85th and 87th bivouac in a staging area known as the King's Hunting Grounds, 3 km west of Pisa (see MAP 7).
- 86-B sends a patrol of five expert mountaineers led by **S/Sgt Carl E. Casperson** to scout enemy positions on **Pizzo di Campiano**, the northernmost peak of Riva Ridge. The trail is covered with snow and ice. Skis are used but cached partway to the summit. After a firefight, the patrol returns safely. Five weeks later, Casperson will be KIA during a German counterattack on Riva Ridge.
- 20 Jan 45 By this date, all three of the 10th's regiments are on or near the front line between the Serchio Valley and Mt. Belvedere. **Col. Raymond C. Barlow** commands the 85th Regiment, **Col. Clarence M. Tomlinson** the 86th, and **Col. David M. Fowler** the 87th.
- The 10th is part of **Maj. Gen. Willis Crittenberger's IV Corps**, which now includes the **Brazilian 1st Infantry Division**, the **92nd Infantry Division**, and the **1st Armored Division**; later it will include the **85th Infantry Division**.
- For the next three weeks, the line companies conduct reconnaissance and combat patrols, some of them on skis, while higher echelons make plans for an assault on Riva Ridge and Mt. Belvedere.
- 21 Jan 45 A ski patrol from the 86th HQ I&R Platoon and consisting of **1st Lt. Donald E. Traynor**, **Sgt. Stephen P. Knowlton**, **Cpl. Harry Brandt**, and **Pfcs. Cragg D. Gilbert** and **Harvey Slater**, reconnoiters the regimental front in camouflage whites.
- 28-29 Jan 45 Troops of the 85th and 87th Regiments relieve the 86th, which now moves behind the lines to Lucca. There the 86th prepares for the coming attack on Riva Ridge. Although 30% of the 1st Bn 86th's assault force for this operation have not trained at Camp Hale, the battalion commander, **Lt. Col. Henry J. Hampton** decides that "There will be no hand picking of men for the assault." Instead, each platoon trains as a unit in rough terrain around Lucca. Hampton concludes that "This increased the morale and spirit of the men, as they all now considered themselves mountaineers."
- 16 Feb 45 General Hays discusses his plans for the coming battles for **Mt. Belvedere** and its sister peak **Mt. Gorgolesco** with a group of men from 1st Bn 85th. Among them is **Sgt. Dan Kennerly** of 85-D, who recalls: "The general starts his talk by telling us that he has never before discussed a combat plan with troops at our level. He says that because he has complete confidence in our ability, intelligence and *esprit de corps*, he feels that he can reveal the plan and discuss it openly with us. 'You are the finest troops I've ever been associated with,' he adds. He now has our unfailing loyalty."

While the assault on Riva is in progress, six battalions picked for the initial attack on Mt. Belvedere move into position and dig in along the road east of Querciola. All the next day troopers wait nervously, hearing the sounds of battle and pondering Gen. Hays' order. Until first light, there was to be "no small arms fire. . . only hand grenades and bayonets."

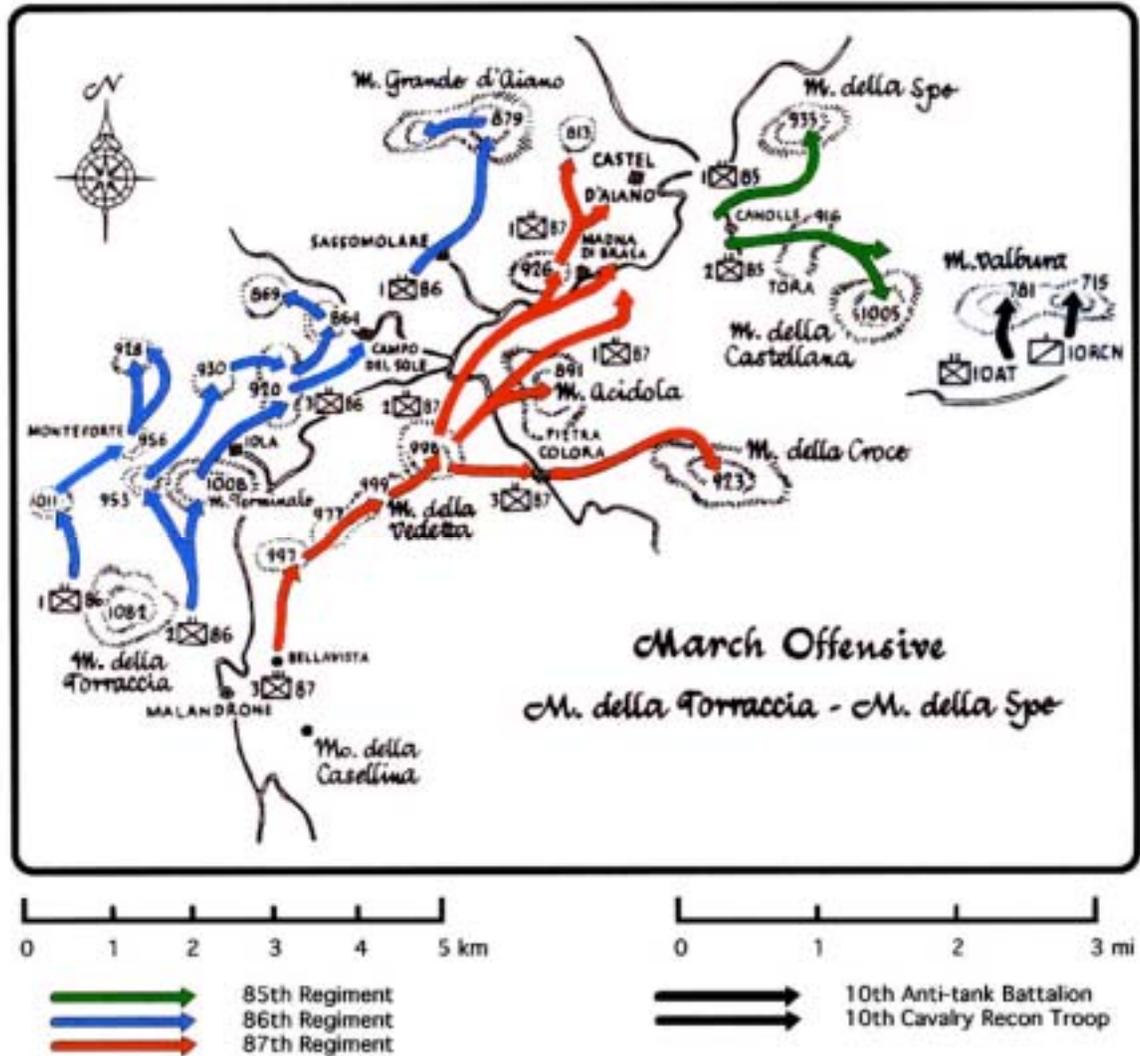
MAP 9. MT. BELVEDERE
February 19 - March 2



III 87	1 2	→ →	87th Regiment, 1st Battalion 87th Regiment, 2nd Battalion
III 85	1 2 3	→ → →	85th Regiment, 1st Battalion 85th Regiment, 2nd Battalion 85th Regiment, 3rd Battalion
3 86	3	→	86th Regiment, 3rd Battalion

- 19 Feb 45 At 11:00 PM on February 19, without artillery preparation, Hays' mountaineers—waiting in darkness along the line of departure—obey the command to “Fix bayonets! Move out!” On the left, the 87th's 2nd Battalion advances toward the fortified towns of Polla and Corona, while the 87th's 1st Battalion moves onto the western slope of Belvedere and along the Valpiana ridge. In the center, the 85th's 3rd Bn heads directly for the summit of Mt. Belvedere, while 85th's 1st Bn attacks Mt. Belvedere's sister peak, Mt. Gorgolesco. On the right, 86th's 3rd Bn moves along the side of the ridge toward Mazzancana. Two battalions in reserve await orders to join the fight.
- 19-20 Feb 45 By dawn of the 20th the objectives of the initial assault have been taken. 1st Bn 85th then carries the attack northeast along the Mt. Gorgolesco portion of the Mt. Belvedere ridge. Late in the day, 2nd Bn 85th passes through the 1st Bn 85th and initiates its attack towards the 10th's final objective of this phase of the campaign: Mt. della Torraccia. By 9:00 PM, G Company has captured Hill 1027, a narrow ridge adjacent to Mt. della Torraccia.
- 21 Feb 45 After an all-day assault, four battalions of the **Brazilian Expeditionary Force** capture **Mt. Castello**, thus securing the 10th Division's right flank.
- 21-23 Feb 45 Counterattacks and heavy shelling cause many casualties and slow the 2nd Bn 85th's attack.
- 24 Feb 45 3rd Bn 86 passes through the 2nd Battalion's position and renews the assault. By 3:00 PM the last enemy stronghold on Mt. della Torraccia is in our hands.
- 25 Feb 45 The final counterattacks on Mt. della Torraccia are repulsed.
- These battles for control of the Mt. Belvedere-Mt. della Torraccia ridge cost the division 923 casualties: 192 KIA, 730 WIA and 1 POW.

MAP 10. MARCH OFFENSIVE
March 3 – March 6



3 Mar 45

With Mt. della Torraccia secured, the division is ready to take the next step in its march to the Po Valley. After a preliminary (and costly) thrust to the northeast by 87th's 3rd Bn on February 27, the main attack of the March Offensive jumps off on March 3 at 7:00 AM from a line of departure on the flanks of Mt. della Torraccia—86 1st Bn and 86 2nd Bn on the left, 87 3rd Bn on the right. The objective is a line of hills about five miles to the northeast, near the road junction town of Castel d'Aiano. These new positions will lie along a line from Mt. Grande d'Aiano on the west, through Mt. della Spe, to Mt. Valbura on the east. General Truscott believes that this line will serve as a jump-off for an offensive that will put our troops "into a terrain leading downhill to the Po Valley." But German resistance is determined, and among other casualties this day, legendary ski jumper T/Sgt Torger D. Tokle (86-A) is killed in the village of Iola.

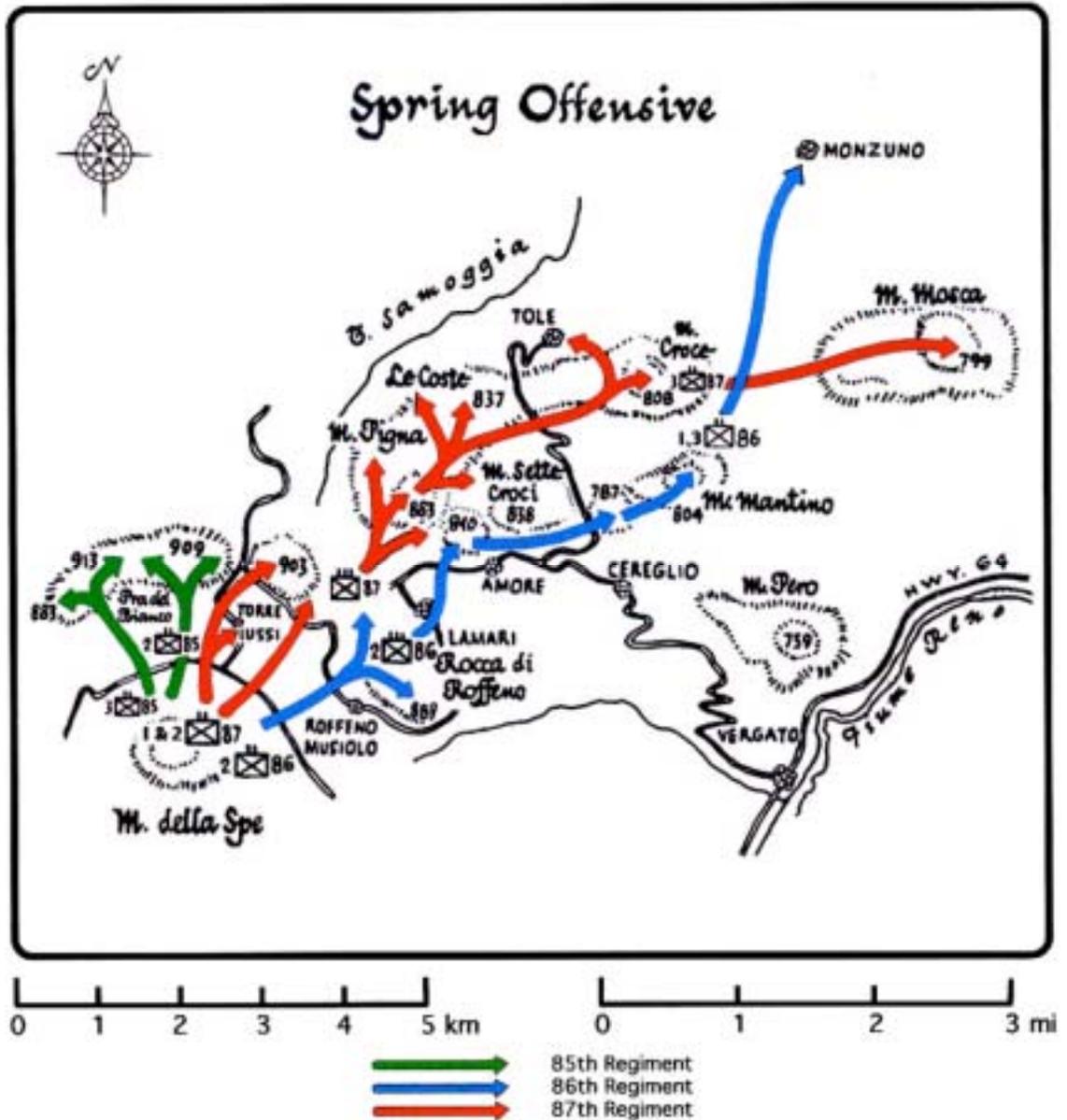
5 Mar 45

While the 87th captures the crossroads town of Castel d'Aiano, the 85th Regiment captures Mt. della Spe, a key ridge just to the east, and hangs onto this gain in spite of counterattacks that come immediately, and intensive shelling that batters the position over the next two weeks. The taking of Mt. della Spe cuts the main German line of communication and supply to the Po Valley, and gives the Fifth Army control of Route 64 to within 15 miles of the Po Valley.

The veteran 1st Armored Division, in reserve all winter, now clanks up the highway and digs in on the right flank of the 10th.

The March Offensive and the following period of consolidation through 13 April, has cost 1012 casualties: 214 killed, 794 wounded and 4 prisoners of war.

MAP 11. SPRING OFFENSIVE
April 14 - April 16



14 Apr 45

On the first day of the Spring Offensive, and 24 hours ahead of the other Allied forces, the 10th assaults German positions on the hills north of Mt. della Spe. The 85th attacks on the left (Hills 909, 913), the 87th in the center (Torre Iussi), and the 86th on the right (Rocca di Roffeno).

This time there is no surprise, and the division has its bloodiest day in spite of an extensive preparatory bombardment by our artillery and aircraft. 2nd Lt. Robert Dole (85-I) is seriously

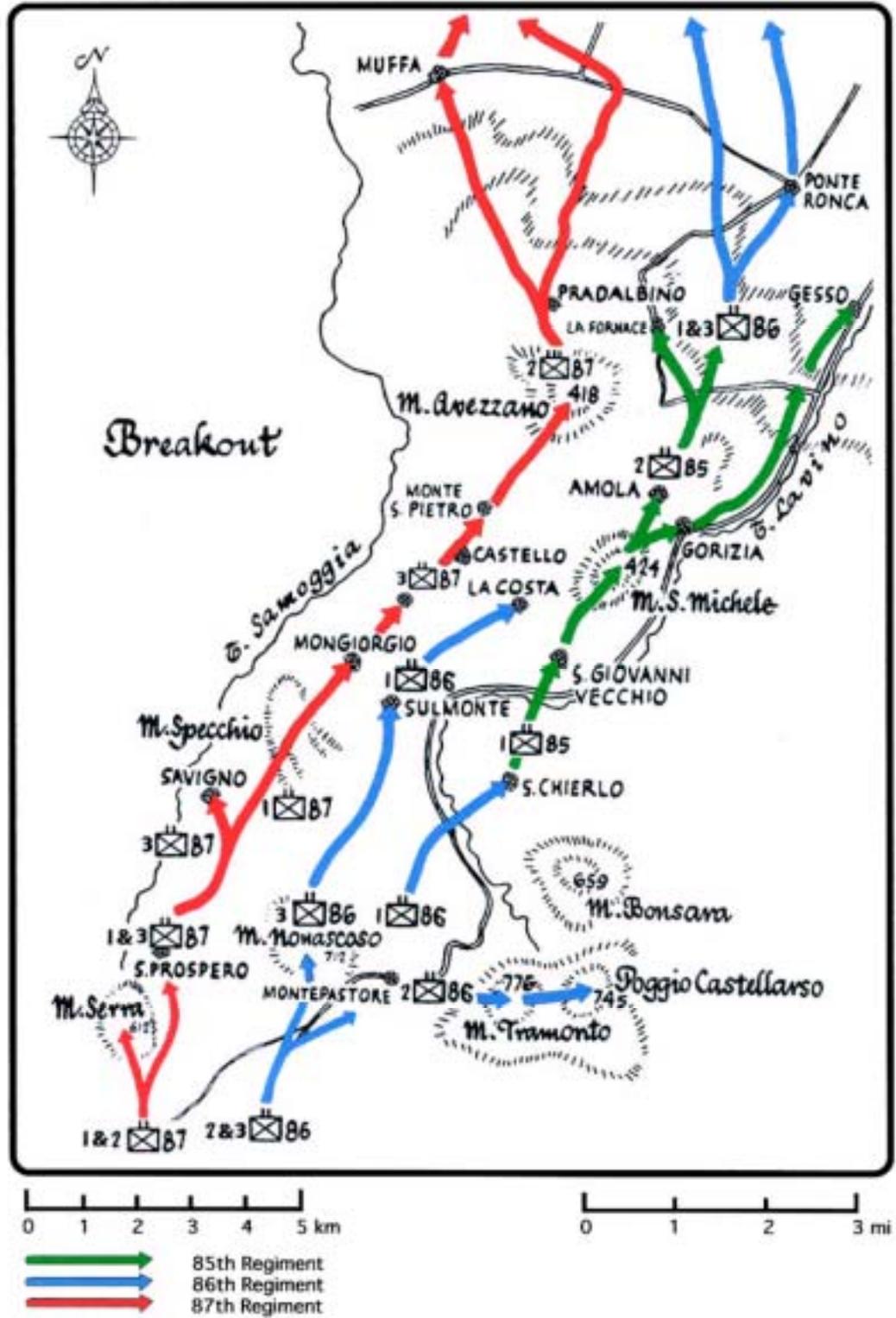
wounded on Hill 913. Pfc. **John Magrath** (85-G) knocks out four German machine guns on Hill 909, and then volunteers for another mission in which he is killed by mortar fire. For these heroic acts, Magrath will receive the posthumous award of the 10th Division's only Medal of Honor.

16 Apr 45

Late in the day, the 87th captures **Tolè**, four miles northeast of Mt. della Spe. From Tolè it will be downhill all the way to the Po Valley, with opportunities for American armor to operate in the Samoggia River Valley. The opportunity for a breakout into the Po Valley is at hand.

The three days of the Spring Offensive are the costliest of the 10th's war in Italy. The division suffered 1336 casualties: 286 killed, 1047 wounded, and 3 prisoners of war.

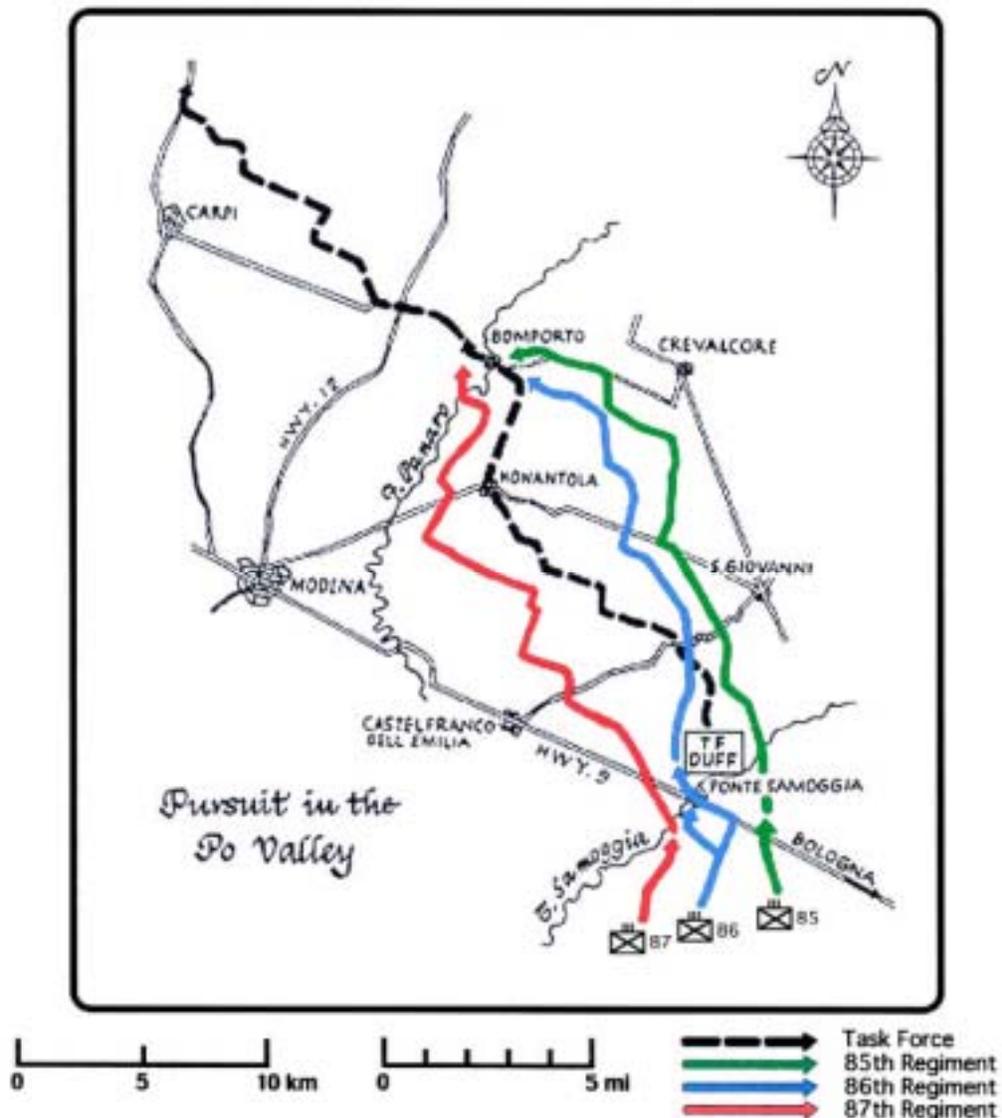
MAP 12. BREAKOUT INTO THE PO VALLEY
April 17 - April 20



17-20 April 45 Moving rapidly north along the high ground east of the Samoggia River, advance elements of the division capture positions on Mt. Avezzano and Mt. San Michele and soon occupy spurs overlooking the Po Valley. By 18 April the 1st Armored Division has completed its move into the Samoggia valley on the 10th's left. The 85th Infantry Division attacks down Route 64 on the 10th's right. By 20 April all three of the 10th's regiments are moving ahead rapidly. At 8:30 AM on the 20th, at Viacava, troopers from 85-A break out into the Po Valley—the first Fifth Army unit to do so.

The breakout into the Po Valley has cost the division 485 casualties: 84 KIA and 401 WIA.

MAP 13. PO VALLEY SOUTH
April 20 - April 22



20 April 45 General Hays orders his assistant division commander, Brig Gen. Robinson E. Duff, to organize a task force consisting of tanks, tank destroyers, a signal platoon, a company of engineers, and 2nd Bn 86th. Task Force Duff then spearheads the drive north to the Po River, with the rest of the division following and mopping up. In a struggle to keep up with one of the fastest drives of the war, German trucks, cars, horses, wagons, carts, bicycles, motorcycles,

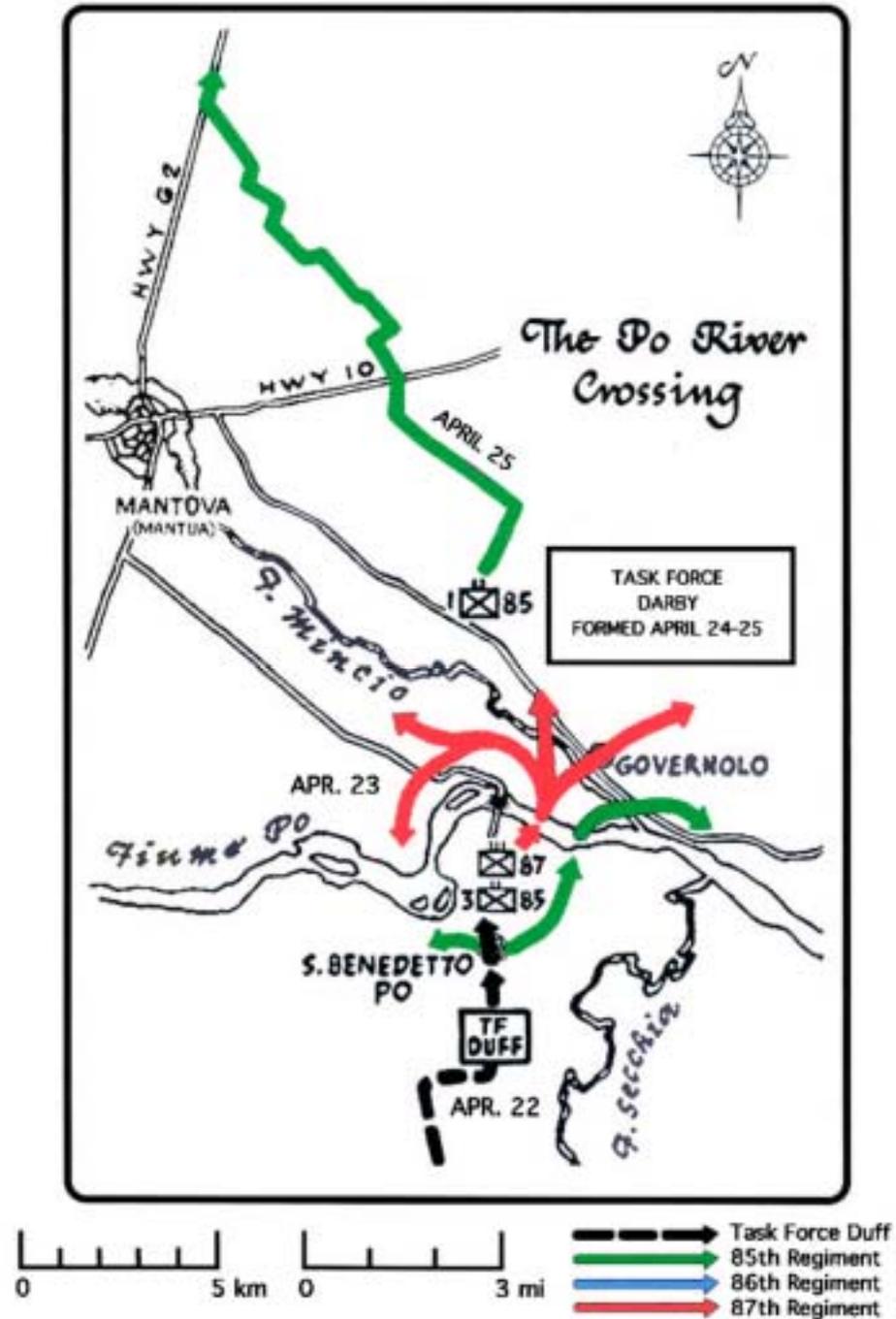
and Italian Fiats are pressed into service to ease aching backs and tired feet. By nightfall the Task Force has captured the bridge across the Panaro River at Bomporto.

21 Apr 45 The rapid dash continues across the Po Valley with both flanks exposed.

22 Apr 45 Just before the Task Force reaches the Po River, the 3rd Battalion 85th, replaces the 2nd Battalion 86th, as the striking infantry unit in Task Force Duff. This force is now the spearhead of the Fifth Army drive to reach the Po River and seize an area for a crossing.

Determined to reach the Po by nightfall, General Duff roams the column “like an anxious sheep dog,” hurrying men and vehicles through occasional small arms fire. About an hour before the task force reaches the banks of the Po River at **San Benedetto**, the main crossing point in the 10th Mountain Division sector, Gen. Duff is seriously wounded by the explosion of an antitank mine. Brigadier General David Ruffner, commander of the 10th’s artillery, takes over command of the spearhead.

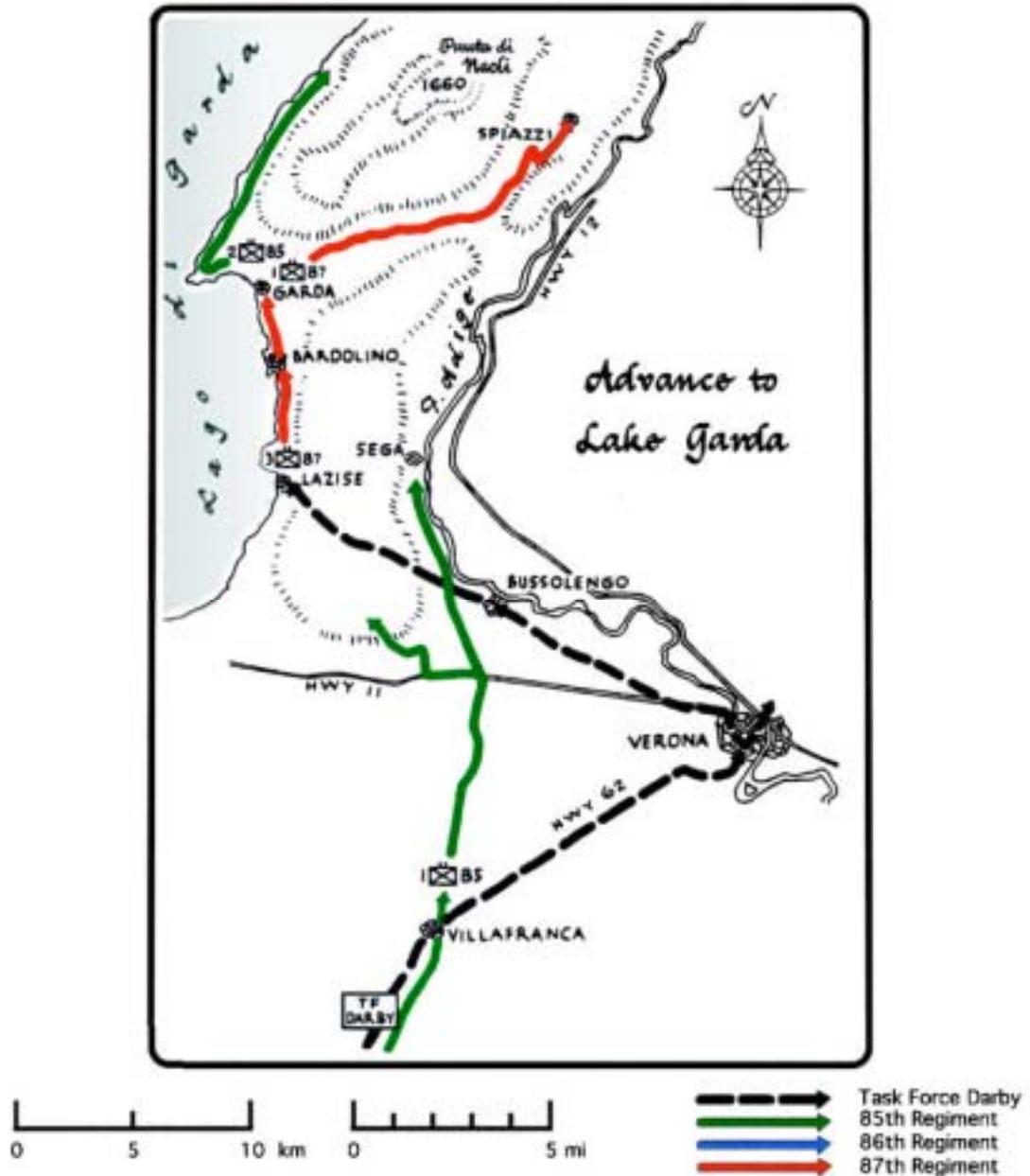
MAP 14. PO RIVER CROSSING
April 23 - April 24



- 23 Apr 45 At noon, the 1st Bn 87th crosses the Po River, under fire, with men from D Company of the 126th Engineers manning the assault boats. By midnight the 85th Regiment and rest of the 87th have crossed the river.
- 24 Apr 45 The 86th crosses the Po as the Division expands its bridgehead and reconnoiters routes north.
- 25 Apr 45 Early in the morning, 1st Bn 85th heads for the airport at Villafranca di Verona. Meanwhile, a Task Force led by Col. William O. Darby, famed commander of the First Ranger Battalion, is

given the mission of capturing Verona, 10 miles NE of Villafranca. His force consists of the 86th Regiment, the 13th Tank Bn, B Company of the 751st Tank Bn, B Company of the 701st Tank Destroyer Battalion, the 1125th Armored Field Artillery Battalion, and elements of the 126th Engineers. Late in the day, Darby catches up with the 85th Mtn Infantry in Villafranca.

MAP 15. ADVANCE TO LAKE GARDA
April 25 – April 29

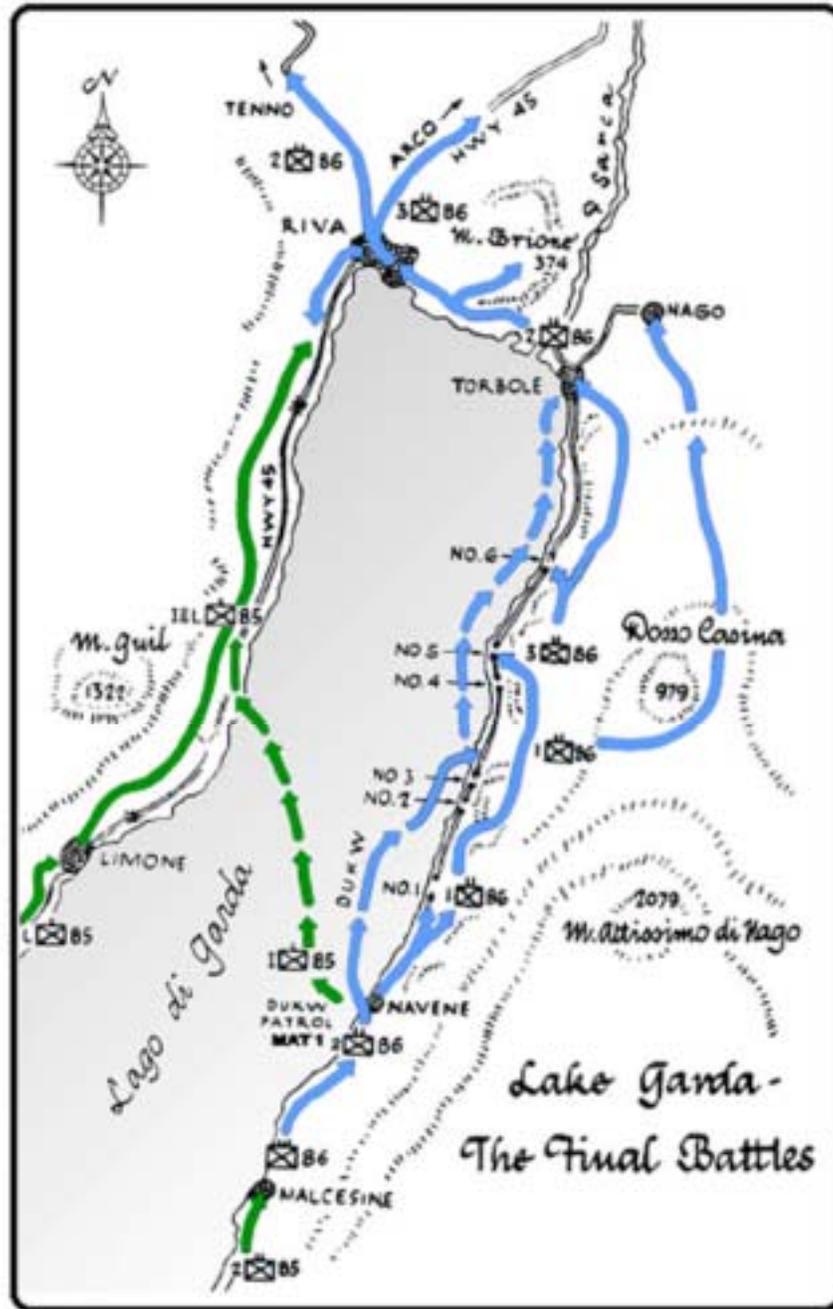


26 Apr 45

Task Force Darby arrives in Verona to find that elements of the 85th Infantry Division have already entered the town and largely silenced German opposition there. By evening, the task force accomplishes its final mission, the capture of Lazise, a town on the SE shore of Lake Garda.

The Po Valley campaign has cost the division 506 casualties: 91 KIA, 414 WIA, and 1 POW.

MAP 16. THE FINAL BATTLES
April 28 – May 2



- 27 Apr 45 General Hays now continues the division's advance northward along the east shore of Lake Garda by means of a leap-frog operation in which battalions of all three regiments participate.

- 28-29 Apr 45 Although the German Army is now in full retreat, the 86th's advance is slowed because the Germans have blown the first of six tunnels through which the road along Lake Garda's east

shore passes. On the 29th, direct enemy fire into tunnel number five kills five and wounds many.

30 Apr 45 Our troops take the town of **Torbole**, and head for **Riva**, three miles away at the north end of Lake Garda. The same day, an assault force consisting of **85-K** and one platoon of heavy machine guns from **85-M** cross the lake in amphibious vehicles called **DUKWs** and enter **Mussolini's** villa and office in **Gargnano**. Another DUKW carrying 25 men from the 605th Field Artillery capsizes with all hands lost but one: **Cpl. Thomas E. Hough**.

A German 88-mm artillery shell explosion in Torbole kills **Colonel Darby** and **Sergeant Major John ("Tim") Evans** of the **86th**. Two weeks later, **President Truman** will approve Darby's promotion to **Brigadier General**.

1 May 45 On 1 May an 85-I patrol crosses Lake Garda by DUKW and heads toward Riva on the west shore road.

2 May 45 **The German Army in Italy surrenders.** In northern Europe the Germans fight on.

The Lake Garda campaign has cost the division 333 casualties: 63 killed and 270 wounded.

A total of 19,780 men served in the 10th in Italy—13,365 who went overseas together, plus 6,415 replacements. Of these, our total casualties were 4,866: 975 killed, 3871 wounded, and 20 prisoners of war.

4 May 45 Moving rapidly north, **Lt. Col. John Hay's 3rd Bn 86th** reaches **Resia Pass** in the **Alps** on the border between **Italy** and **Austria**. Two days later, they meet with troops from the **44th Infantry Division** on their way south after the **Battle of the Bulge**.

7 May 45 **Germany surrenders.**

15 May 45 General Hays treats his troops to cognac and champagne that our forces have liberated from German warehouses.

20 May 45 The 10th moves to **Udine** in northeastern Italy, near **Trieste** (see **MAP 7**). Its mission is to join with troops of the British Eighth Army in preventing further westward movement by Yugoslav forces.

14 Jul 45 The 10th is ordered back to the U.S. for further training in preparation for the invasion of Japan. Plans call for the division to attack Kyushu on November 2, 1945.

26 Jul 45 The **86th Regiment** sails from **Livorno** on the SS *Westbrook Victory*, arriving Newport News, VA on 7 Aug.

28 Jul 45 The **604th** sails from Livorno on the USS *Blue Ridge*, arriving Newport News, VA on 9 August.

31 Jul 45 The **85th Regiment** sails from **Naples** on the SS *Marine Fox*, arriving New York harbor 11 Aug.

2 Aug 45 The **87th Regiment and most of the rest of the Division** sail from Naples on the *Mt. Vernon*, arriving 11 Aug at Newport News, VA.

6 Aug 45 News is received that an atomic bomb has been dropped on Hiroshima.

15 Aug 45 **Japan surrenders.**

15 Sep 45 **Men report to Camp Carson, CO after 30-day furloughs.**

30 Nov 45 **10th Mtn Division is inactivated.**

10TH MOUNTAIN DIVISION CASUALTIES IN ITALY

Total casualties. On January 6, 1945, the 10th Mountain Division suffered its first casualties in Italy when seven men were killed by mines in Quercianella, near Livorno. By the time the war in Italy ended, on May 2, the division had suffered a total of 4866 casualties – 975 killed, 3871 wounded, and 20 taken prisoner.

Casualty percentages. Of the 19,780 men (including 6,416 replacements) who served in the 10th Mountain Division in Italy, 25% became casualties. Of these, 20% were wounded and 5% killed. More than 30% of the men in the three infantry regiments who landed in Naples became casualties.

Casualty rate. The average casualty rate was 1216 per month, for four months.

COMPARISON WITH OTHER INFANTRY DIVISIONS

Ten other U.S. infantry divisions fought in Italy. Of these, the highest number of casualties were suffered by the 34th Infantry Division.

<u>Division</u>	<u>Total Casualties</u>	<u>Deaths</u>	<u>Interval</u>	<u>Casualty Rate</u>
34th Inf	16,401	3,408	20 months	820/month
88th Inf	13,111	2,606	14 months	937/month
10th Mtn	4,866	975	4 months	1216/month

10TH MOUNTAIN DIVISION CASUALTIES IN PARTICULAR BATTLES

JAN 6 THROUGH MAY 2, 1945							
<u>CAMPAIGN</u>	<u>DATES</u>	<u>KIA & DOW</u>	<u>NCD</u>	<u>WIA</u>	<u>POW</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>NO OF DAYS</u>
1. EARLY PATROLS	JAN 6 - FEB 18	23	1	54	8	86	44
2. RIVA RIDGE	FEB 18 - FEB 25	21	0	52	3	76	8
3. MT BELVEDERE	FEB 19 - MAR 2	192	0	730	1	923	12
4. MARCH OFFENSIVE	MAR 3 - MAR 6	146	0	512	3	661	4
5. CONSOLIDATION	MAR 7 - APR 13	56	12	282	1	351	38
6. SPRING OFFENSIVE	APR 14 -APR 16	285	1	1047	3	1336	3
7. BREAKOUT	APR 17 -APR 20	84	0	401	0	485	4
8. PO VALLEY	APR 20 -APR 26	91	0	414	1	506	7
9. LAKE GARDA	APR 26 -MAY 2	62	1	270	0	333	7
	UNKNOWN DATES	0	0	109	0	109	
TOTALS		960	15	3871	20	4866	

ABBREVIATIONS:

KIA = Killed in action

WIA = wounded in action

DOW = Died of wounds. The date assigned to a DOW is the date of wounding.

NCD = Non-combat death

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The battle diagrams published here are modified versions of original drawings made by Armand Casini. The diagrams were published in late 1945 in the first combat history of the division, *Mountaineers*, with a text by Theodore D. Lockwood. Both men had served in 10th Division Headquarters. Sgt. Casini was chief draftsman for the G-3 Section. His duties were to keep the division war map up-to-date at all times. The locations of all units were drawn on a large transparent overlay so positions could be erased and re-positioned as the units moved. From this overlay Casini and the other draftsmen made maps all day and nearly all night for the officers of General Hays' staff.

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