

THE BATTLEGROUND DEC 1944–JAN 1945



General Patton (right) awards Brig. Gen. Anthony C. McAuliffe and Lt. Col. Steve Chappuis the Distinguished Service Cross for their defense of Bastogne, 29 Dec 1944



Men of reserve 508th Parachute Infantry assigned to the 82d Airborne Division, wait in assembly area for battle assignment, 6 Jan 1945



Two soldiers from the 36th Armored Infantry Regiment, 3d Armored Division, in a foxhole at the edge of a snow-covered clearing near Ardennes Forest, 14 Jan 1945



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 UNITED STATES ARMY
 WASHINGTON, D.C.

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U.S. Soldiers received the Distinguished Service Cross

85

(dead, wounded, sick, injured, missing or captured)

Casualties

75,000

Artillery

394

Tank destroyers

182

Sherman Tanks

242

U.S. Soldiers

610,000

Facts:



Men of the 3d Armored Division sit around a fire cleaning their rifles during a lull in the fighting near Bastogne, 2 Jan 1945



BATTLE OF THE BULGE

German Counteroffensive (Battle of the Bulge). In December 1944, Adolf Hitler directed an ambitious counteroffensive intended to regain the initiative in the west and compel the Allies to settle for a negotiated peace. Hitler's generals were opposed to the plan, but the Führer's will prevailed, and on 16 December some 30 German divisions launched the counteroffensive against Allied lines in the Ardennes region. The Allied defenses there had been thinned to provide troops for the autumn defensive, as the Allied leadership felt that the region's difficult terrain would make it an unlikely location for enemy activity. The Allied units stationed on the Ardennes front line either were being refitted or were fresh units placed there to gain experience before going to more active areas. Hitler's object was to drive through Antwerp and cut off and annihilate the British 21st Army Group and the U.S. First and Ninth Armies north of the Ardennes.

Aided by stormy weather, which grounded Allied planes and restricted observation, the surprise German attack made rapid gains at first. However, firm resistance by various isolated units provided time for the U.S. First and Ninth Armies to shift against the northern flank of the penetration, for the British to send reserves to secure the line to the Meuse, and for Patton's Third Army to hit the salient from the south. Denied vital roads and hampered by air attacks when the weather cleared, the German assault resulted only in a large bulge in the Allied lines which did not even extend to the Meuse River, the Germans' first objective. The Americans suffered some 75,000 casualties in the Battle of the Bulge, but the Germans lost 80,000 to 100,000. German strength had been irredeemably impaired. By the end of January 1945, American units had retaken all of the ground they had lost, and the defeat of Germany would be only a matter of time. In the east, the Red Army had opened a winter offensive that would carry them through to Berlin and beyond.

All photos courtesy of National Archives.

Cover illustration – "Medics Moving in Near Bastogne/Relief Station at Bastogne"
World War II, Olin Dows, Jan 1945, Watercolor on paper, 9 5/8" x 21"
U.S. Army Center of Military History



THE U.S. ARMY CENTER OF MILITARY HISTORY

commemorates the 75th anniversary of the Second World War through outreach events and other mediums to educate and inspire all members of American society by honoring the selfless acts of courage and heroism performed by U.S. soldiers in the service of our nation.

Through this commemoration, we will:

- Remember the sacrifices of the more than 800,000 killed, wounded, or captured during the fighting of World War II.
- Honor the service of more than 11 million American soldiers who served in World War II.
- Educate current soldiers and the American public about the accomplishments that added new chapters to the proud history of the nation's premier fighting force.

To view the World War II 75th commemoration Web site and affiliated publications, please visit the U.S. Army Center of Military History home page:

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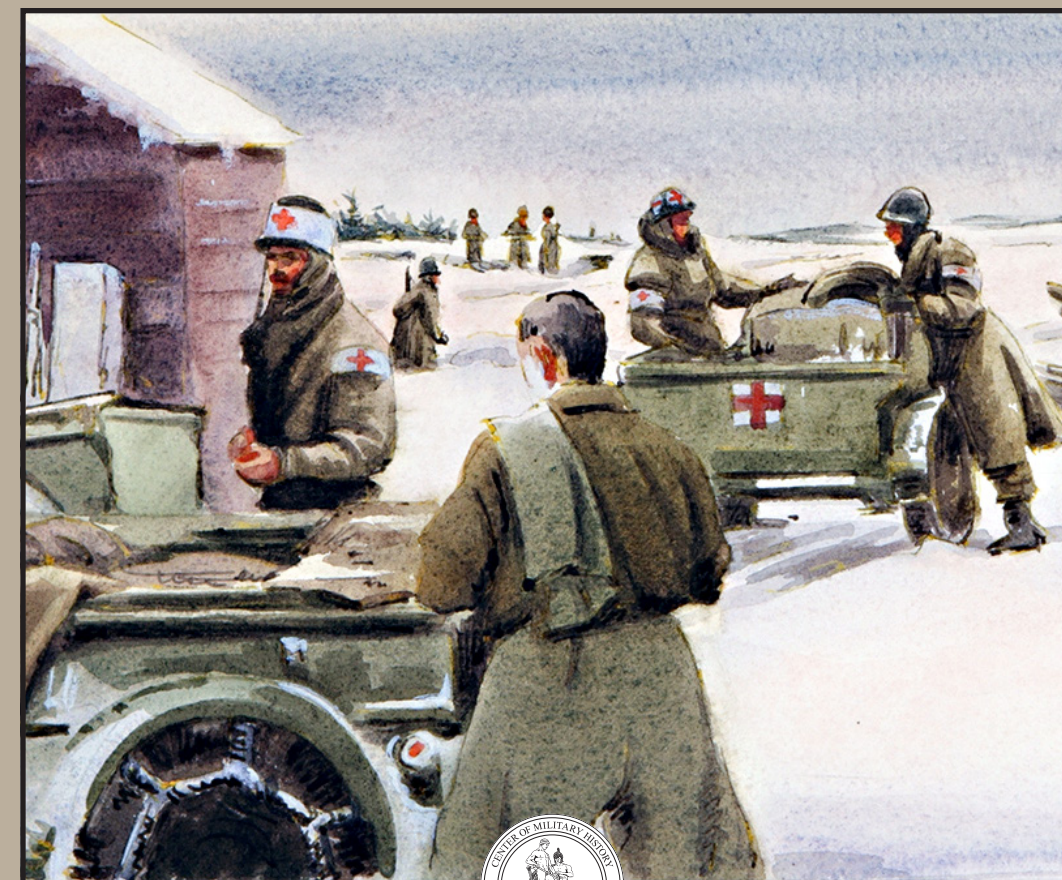
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