

# Battle Analysis: The Hammelburg Incident – Patton’s Last Controversy

by retired LTC Lee F. Kichen

LTG George S. Patton Jr.’s reputation as one of America’s greatest battlefield commanders is virtually unquestioned. He was a brilliant tactician, audacious and flamboyant. The infamous slapping incidents and the ensuing publicity firestorm hardly tarnished his reputation as a fighting general. However, his decision to liberate 900 American prisoners of war (POWs) confined in Officerslager (Oflag) XIII B near Hammelburg, Germany, was more than an embarrassment, it was the most controversial and worst tactical decision of his career.<sup>1</sup>

Central to the controversy are lingering questions:

- Was the decision to raid Oflag XIII B morally justifiable and tactically sound?
- What are the lessons for today’s mounted warriors when planning and conducting a deep raid?
- Did Patton order this raid based on credible intelligence that his son-in-law, LTC John K. Waters, was a prisoner in Oflag XIII B?
- Would he have ordered the raid if he had not thought that Waters would likely be there?
- Or was it intended as a diversionary attack to deceive the enemy that Third Army was attacking east, not north?

The answer to what truly motivated Patton to order the ill-fated raid on Hammelburg remains unsettled history. However, the evidence is incontrovertible that the raid’s failure resulted from flawed planning by Patton and his subordinate commanders.

## Personal background

Patton repeatedly avowed that he didn’t know for certain that Waters was in Oflag XIII B. Yet the evidence is overwhelming that Patton knew that Waters was at Hammelburg. After his capture in Tunisia, Waters was moved to Oflag 64 in Szubin, Poland. With the Red Army approaching Szubin, the Germans marched the POWs west.<sup>2</sup> In March 1945, three Americans escaped and notified the U.S. Military Mission in Moscow that Waters was among the POWs marching to Hammelburg. The mission’s commander, MG John Deane, sent this information to Eisenhower, who forwarded it to Patton.<sup>3</sup>

Patton then set his mind on a military operation of some kind, but what he told family members was different than what he said publicly. On March 23, 1945, Patton wrote to his wife, Beatrice: “We are heading right for John’s place and may get there before he is moved.” On March 25 he told her, “Hope to send an expedition tomorrow to get John.”<sup>4</sup> In his March 29 letter to his brother-in-law, Patton wrote: “I heard of an American [POW] camp. ... I sent an armored expedition. ... It is possible that John may be among the prisoners. ... I would be delighted to take the place.” The following day at a press conference, he stated: “There was a [POW] camp containing at least 900 Americans. ... I couldn’t sleep during the night if I got within 60 miles and not make an attempt to get to that place.” At the same conference, however, he branded the raid as a diversion: “I felt by hazarding a small force I would confuse the enemy completely as to where we were going. It did work, for they thought I was going to Nuremberg.”<sup>5</sup>

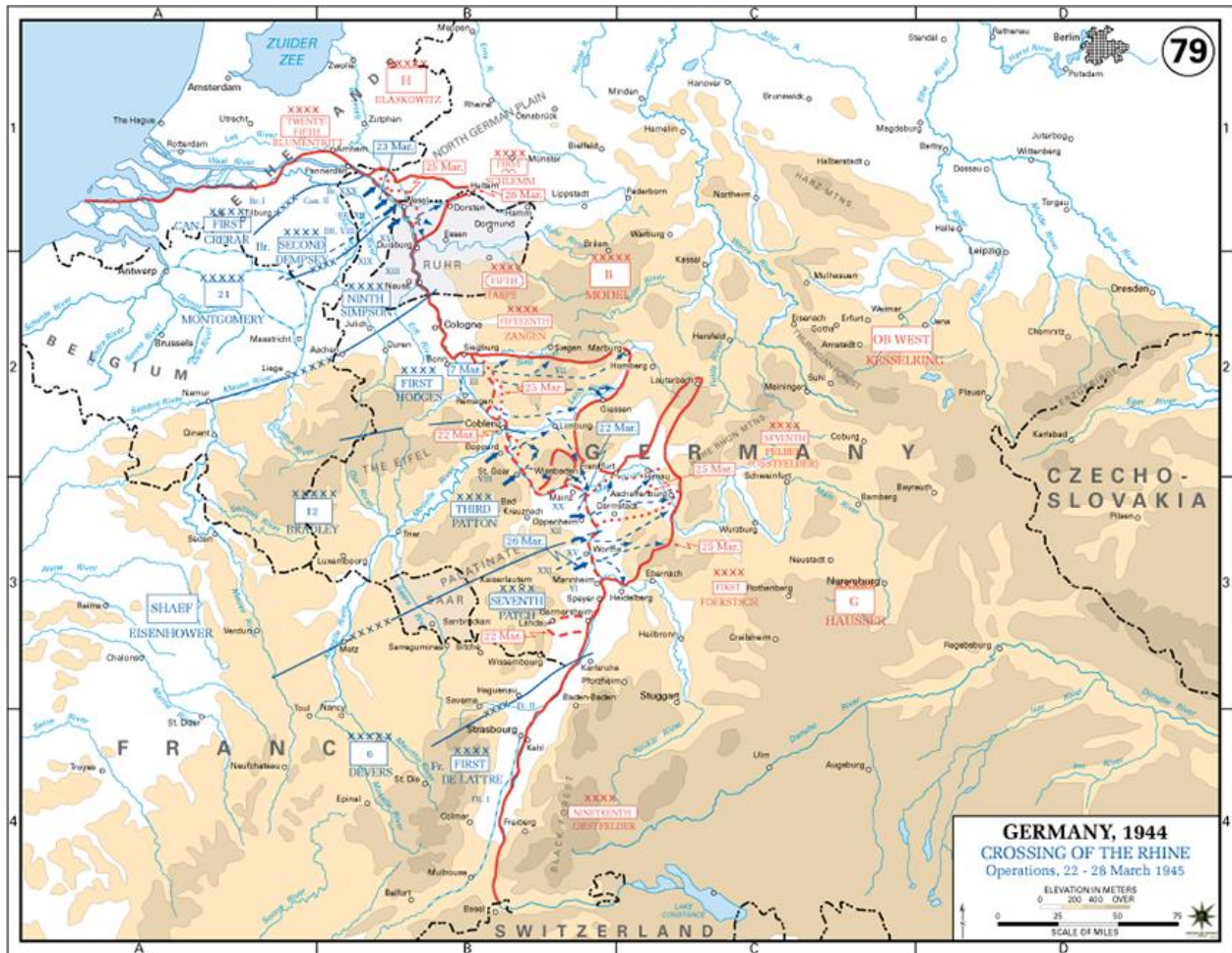


**Figure 1. LTG George S. Patton Jr. (left) speaks with BG Anthony McAuliffe Jan. 15, 1945. Patton, who commanded Third Army from 1944 to 1945, ordered TF Baum's raid. (U.S. Army photo by SFC Luke Graziani)**

Patton's military operation turned out to be Task Force (TF) Baum. TF Baum's raid on Hammelburg provides today's maneuver leaders invaluable lessons as to the costs of hastily planning a deep operation. Patton's failure to adequately resource the mission commander was inexcusable. Patton in his memoir invited critical analysis of his generalship with a half-hearted *mea culpa*: "[T]hroughout the campaign in Europe I know of no error I made except that of failing to send a combat command to take Hammelburg."<sup>6</sup>

### **Tactical situation**

Combat Command B, 9<sup>th</sup> Armored Division, commanded by then-COL William R. Hoge, stormed across the Rhine March 6, 1945, after capturing the Ludendorff Bridge at Remagen. The 5<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division conducted an assault crossing March 22, followed the next morning by 4<sup>th</sup> Armored Division.<sup>7</sup> After crossing the Rhine, 4<sup>th</sup> Armored Division conducted a forward-passage-of-lines through 5<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division and moved to the Main River, establishing bridgeheads late in the afternoon March 25 on the east bank near Hanau and Aschaffenburg.<sup>8</sup>



**Figure 2. Movement of armies March 22-28, 1945, across the Rhine. Patton’s Third Army was moving away from TF Baum while the task force was on its mission and thus did not have support. (Courtesy Department of History, U.S. Military Academy)**

These operations took a toll on Patton’s soldiers. CPT Abraham Baum, the S-3 of 10<sup>th</sup> Armored Infantry Battalion, considered 4<sup>th</sup> Armored Division’s soldiers “depleted and exhausted” after four days of continuous combat and little sleep.<sup>9</sup>

### **Patton’s order, formation of TF Baum**

On the night of March 25, Patton ordered the XII Corps commander, MG Manton S. Eddy, to organize a task force to liberate about 300 POWs in Oflag XIII B.<sup>10</sup> Nothing in that order discussed a feint or diversionary attack. That same day, MAJ Alexander Stiller, one of Patton’s aides, arrived uninvited at now-BG Hoge’s 4<sup>th</sup> Armored Division headquarters. Stiller said he was to “go along” on the Hammelburg mission, that Patton in no uncertain terms wanted Hammelburg liberated, and that Waters was one of the prisoners.<sup>11</sup> Hoge believed that Patton, who greatly admired LTC Creighton Abrams, the commander of the division’s Combat Command B, wanted Abrams to lead the mission.<sup>12</sup>



**Figure 3. Some of the major players in TF Baum's formation: LTG Omar Bradley, LTG George S. Patton and MG Manton S. Eddy are shown a map by MG John S. Wood during a tour near Metz, France, Nov. 13, 1944.**

The task force's size became an open debate. Eddy and Hoge originally showed little enthusiasm for a risky deep strike 60 miles into enemy territory. XII Corps, which would move north, could not adequately support a task force moving east. This mission would also reduce the corps' combat power during future operations. Hoge and Abrams recommended a combat command, contending that a larger force had a better chance of surviving. Eddy would later recommend a smaller-sized task force.

Patton claimed that he wanted to send a combat command: "[U]nfortunately, I was talked out of it of it by Eddy and Hoge. ..."13 In his diary Patton wrote, "I made the attack with only two companies on account of the strenuous objections of General Bradley to making (any effort) at all."14

Bradley in his memoir stated that he only learned of TF Baum "... after it had been on the road for two days. ... [H]ad George consulted me on the mission, I would have forbidden him to stage it."

However, Bradley's aide, CPT Chet Hanson, in his diary contradicted his boss: "When Patton ran off on his mission of liberation the other day, Brad told him he would allow it providing Patton did not become involved. He was ordered to withdraw if he did [sic] to prevent him from becoming entangled in the wrong direction."15

Regardless of who influenced Patton's decision on the smaller formation, he capped the number of personnel at 300.

Baum first learned of the impending raid on the morning of March 26 when he was called to headquarters.16 Patton arrived at Abrams' command post at 10 a.m. on the 26th and asked who was going to command the task force; Abrams responded, "I am, and I want to take Combat Command B."

Patton told Abrams that he wasn't going, nor was Combat Command B. "This is to be a small force. Now answer my question. Who is going to lead it?"

Abrams answered, "Hal Cohen, 10th Armored Infantry, if he is well enough."

After the battalion surgeon examined Cohen (and didn't clear him), Patton directed Cohen to select a task-force commander in his place. Cohen said that he had someone in mind and gestured toward Baum standing on the periphery. As Patton headed to the door, he turned to Baum and said, "Major Stiller will fill you in on the details."

Hoge asked Stiller what was special about Hammelburg. Stiller replied that "the Old Man" was "absolutely determined" to free the POWs and revealed that John Waters was one of the prisoners.17 Stiller briefed Abrams and Baum from a roadmap, tracing the road to Hammelburg 60 miles away. Stiller didn't know Oflag XIII B's exact location but said that Patton believed a German civilian could provide the information.18 Stiller at this point had

more knowledge of the mission than Abrams and Baum; nevertheless, it was clear that Baum would lead the mission, with Stiller along for the ride.

Abrams and Cohen organized a task force around Company C, 37<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion; a platoon from Company D, 37<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion; Company A, 10<sup>th</sup> Armored Infantry Battalion; and an assault-gun platoon and a reconnaissance section from 10<sup>th</sup> Armored Infantry Battalion. There were 53 vehicles in the task force: 10 M-4A3 medium tanks, six M-5 light tanks, 27 half-tracks, three 105mm self-propelled guns, six jeeps and one tracked medical vehicle – plus 307 soldiers.<sup>19</sup>



**Figure 4. Then-LTC Creighton Abrams sits on top of his Thunderbolt VI command tank. Abrams had wanted to lead the mission and take Combat Command B, but Patton ordered Abrams to choose someone else and to deploy a smaller force.**

Complicating planning and execution was a Third Army/Seventh Army boundary shift north March 26, placing TF Baum in Seventh Army's area of operation. With TF Baum moving east and 4<sup>th</sup> Armored Division moving north, it would be without support from 4<sup>th</sup> Armored Division. Baum considered the mission suicidal without support.<sup>20</sup>

## **Road to Hammelburg**

Intelligence estimates indicated that TF Baum would initially encounter little opposition. However, there were indications that two enemy divisions were somewhere between Aschaffenburg and Hammelburg along the Main River. Baum was to take the most direct route at top speed (under black-out conditions, top speed would have been no more than 15 miles per hour). The route was not conducive to high-speed movement. Running through heavily forested areas and the towns along the Main, it lacked maneuver space.<sup>21</sup> To facilitate Baum's initial movement to Highway 26, Abrams attacked Schweinheim at 9:30 p.m. with a tank company, an armored-infantry company and divisional artillery support.<sup>22</sup>

Although Baum was expecting to make a penetration in minutes, intelligence proved faulty. Heavy resistance from the German 413<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division delayed the penetration by eight hours.<sup>23</sup> Behind schedule, Baum – believing he could no longer wait – drove the task force through Schweinheim at around midnight.<sup>24</sup>

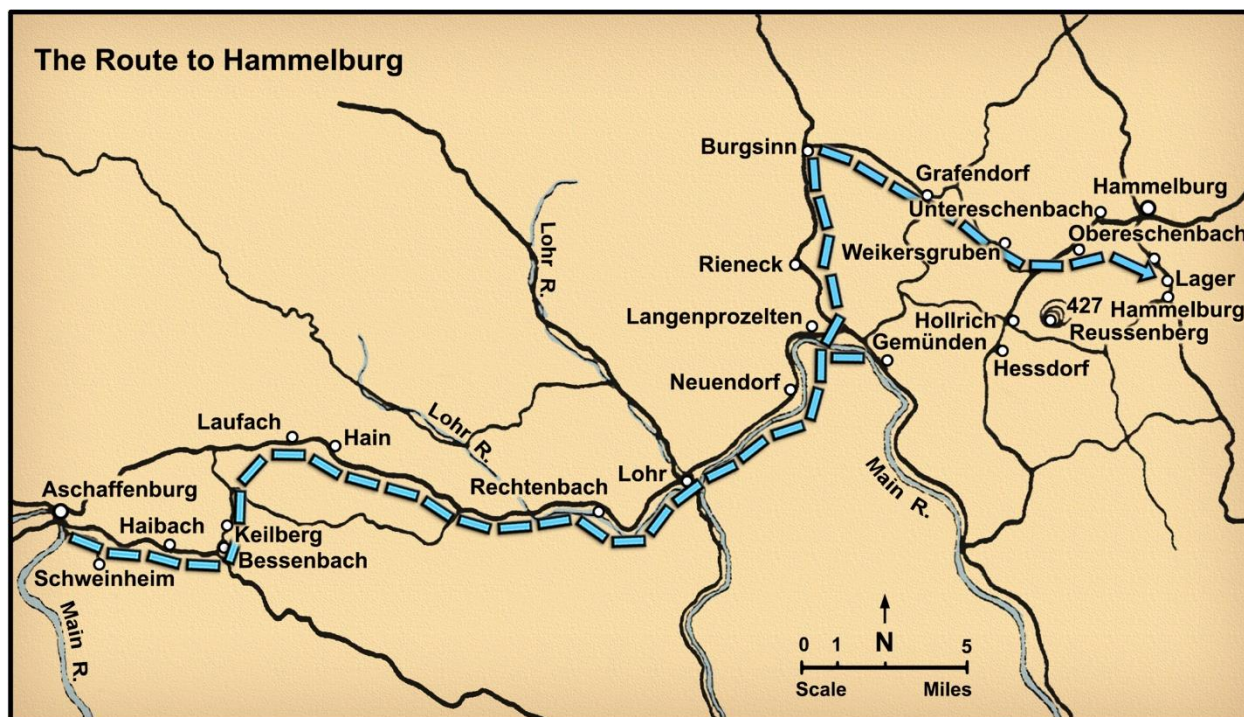


Figure 5. Road to Hammelburg.

After clearing Schweinheim, Baum believed that he lost the element of surprise, but the enemy was still unaware of his objective.<sup>25</sup> At 1 a.m., news of the Schweinheim fight reached the German high command, which believed that Patton made a "brilliant breakthrough."<sup>26</sup> Baum noted: "[W]e lost infantrymen in these various (small) towns (between Schweinheim to Lohr) from small arms and bazooka fire. We kept on going through that stretch of woods and got to Rechtenbach. ... During our trip we shot up various vehicles and Krauts in all the towns. ... Momentum of our column was too fast and too great ... so we went straight through."<sup>27</sup>

The task force at first light encountered its first organized resistance west of Lohr close to the command post of GEN Hans von Obstfelder's German Seventh Army. (Von Obstfelder was the Wehrmacht's General of the Infantry.) Not knowing Baum's objective, Obstfelder didn't know where to mass his scattered forces. Baum's force, without halting, engaged the lightly armed enemy and destroyed 12 vehicles. During this fight, Baum lost his first tank to a panzerfaust at a roadblock.<sup>28</sup>

Moving on to Gemunden, the task force encountered two lucrative targets of opportunity. The first was a stationary anti-aircraft train; Baum halted the column long enough to have his infantry disable the guns with thermite grenades, while tank main-gun fire destroyed the locomotive. The second target was 12 trains in a marshalling yard, which were destroyed with main-gun and machinegun fire.<sup>29</sup>

By the time it was daylight, the enemy hastily established roadblocks and strongpoints, and moved units to defend Gemunden and the bridge at the confluence of the Saale, Sinn and Main Rivers.<sup>30</sup> Capturing the bridge intact would hasten movement east on Highway 26 to its junction with Highway 27.<sup>31</sup>

Encountering small-arms and panzerfaust fire as it closed on the town, Baum ordered his reconnaissance platoon to determine if the bridge was intact. The enemy was beginning to bury land mines around the bridge.<sup>32</sup> Baum, wounded in the fight for the bridge, lost three tanks to panzerfaust fire. Baum's soldiers rushed the bridge, two of whom made it to the bridge but were killed as the enemy blew it. With the bridge lost, Baum requested close air support (CAS) for assistance in crossing the river. Rather than wait on the CAS mission, he considered his position in Gemunden untenable and backed out of town to find another crossing.<sup>33</sup> During this fight, the enemy captured an infantry platoon and the task force's recon platoon.<sup>34</sup>

Looking for an alternate route, Baum turned north, entering Rieneck at 8:30 a.m. An enemy paratrooper home on sick leave and tired of fighting told Baum that Burgisin to the north would be the best place to cross the Sinn.<sup>35</sup> Baum captured German Schutzstaffel General Oriol Lotz and two staff officers outside Burgisin. Outside Graffendorf, TF Baum liberated 700 Russian prisoners who were working on a chain gang. A German aircraft spotted the column after it crossed the Saale at Graffendorf.<sup>36</sup> Baum turned Lotz and other German POWs over to the Russians, but Lotz escaped from the Russians and telephoned Obstfelder as to the task force's destination. The Germans now had enough information on the composition and objective of the task force to consolidate their forces at Hammelburg.<sup>37</sup>

Baum's weakened column continued on Highway 27 as an enemy panzerjaeger company was moving into position near Obereschenbach east of the prison camp. On his own initiative, Technical Sergeant Charles O. Graham, the assault-gun platoon leader, moved to higher ground. The task force destroyed three panzerjaegers, six trucks and some ammunition carriers. Unfortunately, Baum fared worse, losing three Shermans, five half-tracks – including one loaded with gasoline – and three jeeps.<sup>38</sup>

## **Fight at camp**

Baum bypassed the town of Hammelburg and spotted Oflag XIII B on the high ground. His next task was to clear two enemy infantry companies as he approached the camp. The German area commander meanwhile organized his defense of the camp with two engineer companies. Outgunned by Baum's tanks and infantrymen, the engineers withdrew, while the task force took fire from the guard towers. Shortly thereafter, the task force breached the camp's fence.<sup>39</sup>

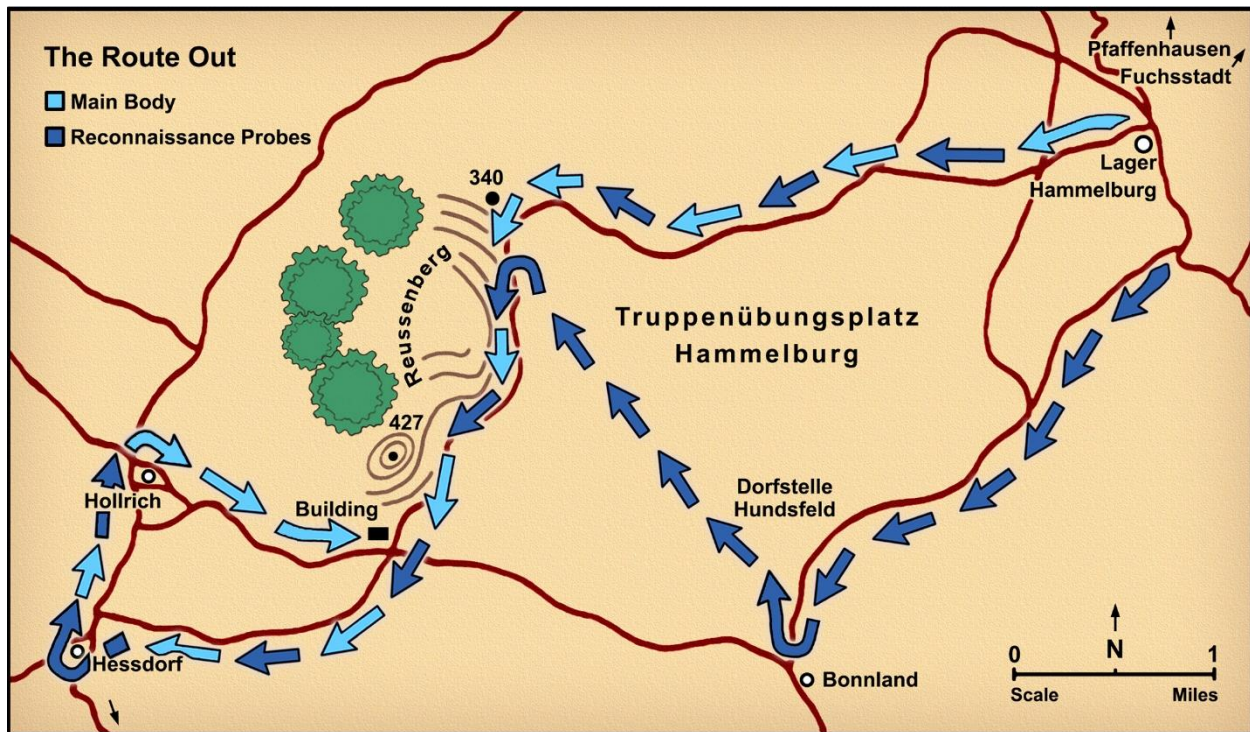
MG Gunther von Goeckel, the Oflag XIII B commandant, advised the commander of the American prisoners, COL Paul Goode, that he ordered only token resistance to prevent bloodshed among the prisoners. Goode then directed Waters, his executive officer, to contact the commander of the American force. After Waters and a small party left the camp administration building, Waters was grievously wounded by sniper fire and was carried back into the camp, there treated by a Serbian physician.<sup>40</sup> As soon as the Americans entered the camp, Stiller ran from building to building trying to find Waters. Stiller, realizing the severity of Waters' wounds, knew he was incapable of traveling.<sup>41</sup>

Baum, overwhelmed by the scene was "sickened. ... They [the POWs] were in terrible shape." With only two medics in the task force, there was no way to provide even the most primitive treatment to the POWs. Expecting to rescue 300 American officers and lacking transportation, liberating 1,500 POWs was impossible. The difference in the number of prisoners Baum expected to liberate and the actual number at Oflag XIII B reflected a lack of intelligence preparation of the battlefield. Had the task force brought extra weapons for the liberated POWs healthy enough to fight, they would have been an asset rather than a liability.

With order restored, Baum told the prisoners that he couldn't take them all. "Those of you who want to go will have to go on your own. ... When I left, the lines were about 60 miles back in that direction (pointing west) at the River Main." Those who "want to go may be able to walk along with the column. ... We'll probably have to fight our way out." Baum tearfully recognized that his task was impossible.<sup>42</sup> The POWs unfit for the 60-mile road march returned to the stockade, others decided to exfiltrate in small groups, and a smaller group jumped on the remaining task-force vehicles.<sup>43</sup>

## **Destruction of TF Baum**

Without a predetermined escape route, TF Baum became a "blind worm over the countryside."<sup>44</sup> During the confusion at the camp, the Germans, under the cover of darkness, organized a hasty defense that would, through a series of ambushes, reduce the task force's combat power. While still at the camp, Baum lost another medium tank to panzerfaust fire. Baum reformed the task force shortly before 11 p.m. and moved out on the same dirt road over which he earlier sent his light-tank platoon. As a recon element, it found a cross-country route to Hessdorf, which led to the main highway.<sup>45</sup> Running into two roadblocks in Hessdorf, Baum moved the column to the north to Hollrich, where he lost three medium tanks, many infantrymen, fuel, ammunition and precious time.<sup>46</sup>



**Figure 6. Road out of Hammelburg.**

Needing to reorganize his remaining force of three medium tanks, six light tanks, 12 halftracks, about 100 soldiers and 60 liberated POWs, Baum followed a trail to Hill 427. Seeing that he was surrounded, Baum decided to break out in the morning; he then ordered gasoline siphoned from eight halftracks, after which they were burned; redistributed ammunition; and left his seriously wounded in a large building marked with a red cross. The Germans attacked at daybreak as the task force began its movement.<sup>47</sup> An unknown number of assault guns moved from the south, six heavy tanks and two infantry companies from the southwest, while six Tiger tanks at the northeast were in position and firing.

After a 25-minute fight, TF Baum, with its equipment destroyed, ceased to exist. Breaking the remaining soldiers into small groups, Baum and the surviving platoon leaders told them to make their way back alone. German infantry patrols with tracking dogs rounded up most of the Americans still in the area. Baum (once again wounded), Stiller and an unidentified lieutenant were captured at 7:30 p.m. and remained in Oflag XIII B until it was liberated by 14<sup>th</sup> Armored Division April 6, 1945.<sup>48</sup>





**Figure 7. An M4 medium tank from 47<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion, 14<sup>th</sup> Armored Division, crashes into the prison compound at Oflag XIIIB April 6, 1945, two weeks after the failed TF Baum raid. Among the prisoners were Waters and Baum, both wounded.**

Of the 307 soldiers initially in the task force, nine were killed, 32 were wounded, 16 were missing and the rest were captured.<sup>49</sup> These casualties do not include the liberated POWs who accompanied the task force from Hammelburg.

The task force's destruction was a short-lived propaganda coup for the Germans, who claimed they destroyed an American armored division at Hammelburg.

### **Final analysis, lessons-learned**

Baum and his small task force fought heroically, audaciously and tenaciously with the knowledge that the Hammelburg mission was impossible. If Patton's real motivation for the raid was to rescue Waters, he egregiously abused his command authority and needlessly risked the lives of his soldiers.

If Patton intended the raid to be a diversion, it was a successful diversion. Von Obstfelder believed Baum was leading 4<sup>th</sup> Armored Division and possibly Third Army; consequently he committed the equivalent of several divisions to guard major crossroads and bridges to defend Hammelburg. The fact that 4<sup>th</sup> Armored Division, while it moved north, didn't fire a shot during its first 100 miles is partly attributable to Baum's raid. On the road to Hammelburg, the task force's destruction of enemy trains, trucks, ammunition and anti-aircraft guns was a psychological and tactical victory. It caused panic and fear in the enemy's civilian population that the Army was incapable of defeating an American attack deep into its territory.<sup>50</sup>

Seventy-two years after the Hammelburg raid, it remains the U.S. Army's deepest and unsupported mounted raid into enemy territory.<sup>51</sup> In future operating environments, special-purpose forms of attack such as feints, demonstrations, ambushes and raids may become more common.<sup>52</sup> Hammelburg demonstrated that mounted raids aren't "come as you are affairs."

With 4<sup>th</sup> Armored Division performing brilliantly throughout World War II, it is not surprising that Patton considered it most qualified to conduct the Hammelburg raid. Baum said it best: "We were the 4<sup>th</sup> Armored Division. ... It was an unpardonable sin to fail in a mission."<sup>53</sup>

However, it was not prepared to conduct a raid deep into enemy territory. Cavalry, armored and armored-infantry doctrine of the day did not address raids. Patton capriciously overlooked the complexity of an armored raid, thinking that an audacious and high-tempo "hell bent for leather cavalry charge" to Hammelburg and back would succeed.

The destruction of TF Baum validates the maxim that size counts. Patton issued a mission-type order but failed to adequately resource it. Commanders may possess the legitimate authority to task-organize their forces as they see

fit; however, the commander alone bears the responsibility for ensuring the force has enough combat power to complete the mission. Mission, enemy, terrain, troops, time and civilian considerations, not political or other considerations, should govern the size of the force.

Complex missions are inherently risky; insufficient planning time for commanders and staff increases risk to the mission and the force. Abysmal planning and time-constrained preparation portended the destruction of TF Baum. Stiller's briefing to Abrams and Baum concluded at noon, leaving only four hours until the task force was to move out at 4 p.m.<sup>54</sup> Baum had inadequate time for troop-leading procedures, pre-combat checks, rehearsal and rest for his exhausted soldiers. The fatigued soldiers in the task force – lacking thorough knowledge of the mission and uncertain of its final success – made confused and poor decisions at the objective and on Hill 427.<sup>55</sup> By underestimating the enemy's capability and compressing the planning and preparation cycle, the staff failed to plan for CAS, fire support, combat support, forward logistics, communications, reconnaissance and security and a withdrawal plan. Regrettably, neither Hoge nor Abrams requested a delay in the operation for more planning time.<sup>56</sup>

A raid has many purposes in addition to liberating prisoners or deceiving the enemy: capturing enemy prisoners and material; destroying enemy infrastructure; or forcing the enemy to prematurely disclose his intentions, capabilities and scheme of maneuver. TF Baum is clear and unambiguous proof that a raid is not a hasty attack. A raid is a small-scale but deliberate attack requiring detailed planning, real-time intelligence and preparation. Irrespective of the raid's purpose, common planning considerations were missing or deficient in TF Baum:

- The raid lacked a withdrawal route from the objective different from than that of approach-march route. Raid planning lacked a casualty-evacuation plan, plus rally and maintenance collection points along both approach and withdrawal routes.
- The scheme of maneuver must include criteria for engaging or bypassing the enemy. The planners wrongly assumed that speed would buy security and surprise. By attacking targets of opportunity, the task force lost both and became vulnerable from all directions. These "hip-shoots" led to early detection of the task force.
- Air support must be pre-planned, with aviation assets dedicated to the raiding force. Patton never consulted his air component on this raid.<sup>57</sup>
- Baum didn't know the exact location of Oflag XIII B. The area and route reconnaissance plan must include ground and air observation of the objective to ensure the enemy situation remains unchanged and the raiding force still possesses enough combat power to accomplish its mission.
- Baum lost significant combat power during the fight at Gemunden Bridge. There was no pre-planned criteria for aborting the raid such as loss of surprise, unacceptable loss of personnel and equipment, and damage to sustainment assets.
- With 4<sup>th</sup> Armored Division moving north and the task force moving east, it was soon out of range of supporting fires. Fire support must be planned and immediate. Using interdiction and deception fires can slow enemy reaction time and degrade his situational awareness.
- If Baum had been able to clear the enemy's hastily emplaced mines at Gemunden Bridge, the task force had a better chance of using it. Engineer assets are necessary for mobility and countermobility.
- The task force wasn't self-sustaining. It carried fuel in five-gallon cans on one half-track. It lacked enough transportation assets and medical resources for the liberated prisoners. Fuel, recovery and transportation assets and medical supplies must be abundant and readily available.
- Baum failed to "seal" the objective. By establishing a cordon around the objective, the raiding force regains a semblance of security, albeit temporary.
- The compressed planning cycle precluded rehearsals by the entire task force. Rehearsal and detailed road-march planning allows everyone on the mission to understand what he or she will do.

The Hammelburg incident forever tarnished Patton's reputation, while Baum and his soldiers were indomitable true heroes. Although Baum slipped into relative obscurity, he left the Army with a Distinguished Service Cross, two Silver Stars, two Bronze Stars and four Purple Hearts; he went home to New York and returned to the garment industry. When asked about Hammelburg, he responded, "They gave me something to do, and I did it."<sup>58</sup>

Retired LTC Lee Kichen served in command and staff positions in armor, armored-cavalry and mechanized-infantry units in the United States and overseas. He also served on the Army Staff and Training and Doctrine Command staff. LTC Kichen's military schooling includes Air War College (non-resident), Command and General Staff College, Armor Advanced Officer Course and Armor Officer Basic Course. He holds a bachelor's of arts degree in history from the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, a master's of social-sciences degree in sociology and political science from Pacific Lutheran University and a master's of arts degree in counseling psychology from Chapman College. His awards and honors include the Legion of Merit (one oak-leaf cluster) and Meritorious Service Medal (two oak-leaf clusters).

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Carlo D'Este, *Patton: A Genius for War*, New York. Harper Collins, 1996. The estimate of the number of American officers at Hammelburg before the raid vary. When Stiller briefed Abrams, Cohen and Baum, he indicated there 300 POWs in Oflag XIIB. Patton in his memoirs wrote that there were 900 prisoners.
- <sup>2</sup> Martin Blumenson, *The Patton Papers, 1940-1945*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1974.
- <sup>3</sup> John Toland, *The Last 100 Days: The Tumultuous and Controversial Story of the Final Days of World War II in Europe*, New York: Random House Inc., 1965.
- <sup>4</sup> Blumenson, *The Patton Papers*.
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>6</sup> George S. Patton Jr., *War As I Knew It*, New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1947.
- <sup>7</sup> Sheldon L. Thompson, *The Operation of Task Force Baum Between Aschaffenburg and Hammelburg, Germany*, U.S. Army Infantry School, unpublished, 1949. Thomas was a prisoner in Oflag XIIIIB. The 5<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division and 4<sup>th</sup> Armored Division were assigned to MG Manton Eddy's XII Corps.
- <sup>8</sup> After-action report (AAR), 4<sup>th</sup> Armored Division, March 25, 1945.
- <sup>9</sup> Richard Baron, MAJ Abe Baum and Richard Goldhurst, *Raid! The Untold Story of Patton's Secret Mission*, New York: Dell Publishing, 1981 (reprint). Baron was a prisoner in Oflag XIIIIB.
- <sup>10</sup> James B. Hickey, "The Destruction of Task Force Baum: The [World War II] 'Deep Strike' to Liberate a POW Camp Offers Lessons for AirLand Battle," *ARMOR*, November-December 1987.
- <sup>11</sup> Toland.
- <sup>12</sup> Tobin L. Green, *The Hammelburg Raid Revisited*, Johns Hopkins University, Strategic Studies Seminary Paper. A World War II armored-division combat command was the antecedent of today's modular armored brigade combat team.
- <sup>13</sup> Patton.
- <sup>14</sup> Blumenson, *Patton Papers*.
- <sup>15</sup> Jim DeFelice, *Omar Bradley: General at War* (book on-line), Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing Inc., 2011. "Involved" in this instance probably isn't a reference to Patton personally. Presumably, Bradley didn't want this operation to impact Third Army's main effort.
- <sup>16</sup> Abraham J. Baum, oral interview, 2013, the National World War II Museum, New Orleans.
- <sup>17</sup> Toland.
- <sup>18</sup> Baron, Baum and Goldhurst.
- <sup>19</sup> Martin Blumenson, "The Hammelburg Mission," *Military Review*, XXXV, No. 6. The exact number of soldiers in the task force ranges from 292 to 314 troops.
- <sup>20</sup> Baron, Baum and Goldhurst.
- <sup>21</sup> Hickey.
- <sup>22</sup> 37<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion diary entry, March 26, 1945.
- <sup>23</sup> Rudolf von Gersdorf, "The Final Phase of the War," typescript, Foreign Military Study A-893, U.S. Army Europe, March 20, 1946, cited in Green.
- <sup>24</sup> Baum AAR, 4<sup>th</sup> Armored Division, April 10, 1945, and Baum oral interview.
- <sup>25</sup> Baum AAR and Baum interview.
- <sup>26</sup> Baron, Baum and Goldhurst.
- <sup>27</sup> Baum AAR. At this point, Baum had run through Strass-Bessenbach, Keilburg, Frohenhofer, Laufach and Hain without halting.
- <sup>28</sup> Blumenson, "The Hammelburg Mission." Baum would later say in his oral history that panzerfausts were his greatest enemy.
- <sup>29</sup> Blumenson, "The Hammelburg Mission"; Blumenson, "The Hammelburg Affair," *ARMY*, October 1965; Baum oral interview; Baum, AAR. At the time, Baum was unaware an enemy division was to be loaded on the trains. Seeing these yards as a lucrative target, he requested an airstrike.
- <sup>30</sup> Richard B. Reppa, *That Raid on Hammelburg*, U.S. Army Armor School, unpublished, 1948. Reppa was a prisoner in Oflag XIIIIB.
- <sup>31</sup> Hickey.
- <sup>32</sup> Richard Whitaker, "Task Force Baum and the Hammelburg Raid," *ARMOR*, September-October 1996.

- <sup>33</sup> Frederick E. Oldinsky, "Patton and the Hammelburg Mission," *ARMOR*, July-August 1976.
- <sup>34</sup> Baum oral interview.
- <sup>35</sup> Oldinsky.
- <sup>36</sup> Baum AAR and Whitaker. When spotted by the German aircraft, Baum had 13 tanks, three assault guns and 27 halftracks.
- <sup>37</sup> Baron, Baum and Goldhurst.
- <sup>38</sup> Baum AAR; Baron, Baum and Goldhurst; and Blumenson, "The Hammelburg Mission."
- <sup>39</sup> Baron, Baum and Goldhurst; Whitaker.
- <sup>40</sup> Reppa.
- <sup>41</sup> Whitaker. Waters survived his wounds and was liberated April 6, 1945. In addition to the American officers, Serbian POWs were in Oflag XIII B.
- <sup>42</sup> Baum interview and AAR; Baron, Baum and Goldhurst.
- <sup>43</sup> Reppa.
- <sup>44</sup> Baron, Baum and Goldhurst.
- <sup>45</sup> Thomas.
- <sup>46</sup> Baum AAR and Reppa.
- <sup>47</sup> Blumenson, "The Hammelburg Mission."
- <sup>48</sup> Baum AAR.
- <sup>49</sup> Reppa.
- <sup>50</sup> Oldinsky.
- <sup>51</sup> Baron, Baum and Goldhurst.
- <sup>52</sup> Field Manual 3-90.1 lists the ambush, counterattack, demonstration, feint, raid and spoiling attack as special-purpose attacks.
- <sup>53</sup> Charles Whiting, *48 Hours to Hammelburg*, New York: iBooks, 1970.
- <sup>54</sup> Baum oral interview.
- <sup>55</sup> Reppa.
- <sup>56</sup> Green.
- <sup>57</sup> David N. Spires, *Air Power for Patton's Army: The XIX Tactical Air Command in the Second World War II*, Washington, DC: Air Force History and Museums Program, 2002. Patton as an operational-level commander failed his TF by ordering the operation without consulting his air commander.
- <sup>58</sup> Whiting.

## Acronym Quick-Scan

**AAR** – after-action report

**Oflag** – officerslager

**POW** – prisoner of war

**TF** – task force