



Blocking Kampfgruppe Peiper: The 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment in the Battle of the Bulge

Frank van Lunteren

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In December 1944 an enormous German army group crashed through the thin American line in the Ardennes forest. Caught by surprise, the Allies were initially only able to throw two divisions of paratroopers to buttress the collapse—the 82nd Airborne, which was rushed to the area of St. Vith, and the 101st, which was trucked to Bastogne.

After their successful campaign in Holland, Colonel Reuben Tucker's elite 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment was resting and refitting in France when news came of the German breakthrough. Most dangerous to the Allies was the German spearhead of the 1st SS Panzer Division led by Jochen Peiper, which aimed to sever the Allied front. The 504th was committed to block the SS advance, and within 48 hours of their arrival Colonel Tucker's paratroopers were attacking the SS-Panzer grenadiers of Peiper's battlegroup, eventually forcing them to withdraw.

More ferocious fighting ensued as follow-up German units forced a U.S. retreat from St. Vith. In adverse weather conditions against the German 9th SS Panzer and 3rd Fallschirmjäger Divisions, the 504th lived up to its regimental motto--Strike and Hold. Although some rifle companies were whittled down to less than 50 paratroopers, the Americans doggedly fought on until victory was achieved.

Moving quotations of letters to the next-of-kin provide insight into the impact of their deaths both on the battlefield and homefront.?

In this work Van Lunteren provides a fascinating, close-in view of the 504th P.I.R. during the Battle of the Bulge as well as its gallant sacrifice. Using never before published diaries, letters, battle reports and interviews with over 100 veterans, a comprehensive account is painted of a triumphant U.S. regiment in one of the fiercest fought campaigns in the history of the U.S. Army.

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