

INTRODUCTION

ACT 3, SCENE 2. Location: Second floor of 3d Army Headquarters Building, European Theater of Operations, Germany. Date: December 1944. Players: General George Patton and Army Chaplain Colonel James H. O'Neill. Patton speaks . . .

“Chaplain, write me a weather prayer.”

This prayer was subsequently issued, along with a Christmas card, to all 3d Army troops on December 22, 1944. In part, it read:

“Almighty and merciful Father . . . restrain these immoderate rains . . . grant us fair weather for battle . . .”

And, of course, as history has so well recorded, “December 23 dawned bright and sunny.” A miraculous 5-day break of clear weather followed, which permitted the Allied forces to take maximum advantage of their air superiority. This tremendously successful air support effort was one of the key factors that led to the German failure to attain its major objectives in the Battle of the Bulge.

Other historical accounts state that General Patton actually ordered his Chaplain to write this prayer in support of an earlier operation against the Siegfried Line. Nevertheless, it wasn't used until December 22, 1944.

This dramatic acknowledgment of the importance of weather on military operations is from the book Lucky Forward - The History of Patton's Third U.S. Army by Colonel Robert S. Allen (Vanguard Press, New York, 1947).

A half century later the same urgent concern about weather is reflected in FM 100-5 where weather is listed among the imperatives of battlefield operations. In addition, FM 100-5 states that weather and visibility conditions create advantages and disadvantages for combat forces. To fight effectively, commanders must acquire weather information about their entire areas of operations (AO) and areas of interest (AI).

As the S2, that is your job. Because we cannot count on a weather prayer to always supply this essential information to the commander, we need procedures that will provide accurate, timely, and tailored weather data to the commander.

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Since we cannot control the weather, the best alternative is to develop a thorough understanding of weather effects and their impact on friendly and threat military operations. Then we use this knowledge and information to our advantage.

Chapters 1, 2, and 3 provide background information on weather and its effects on Army systems and operations. Chapter 4 explains the use of the WTDAAs contained in Appendixes B through N.