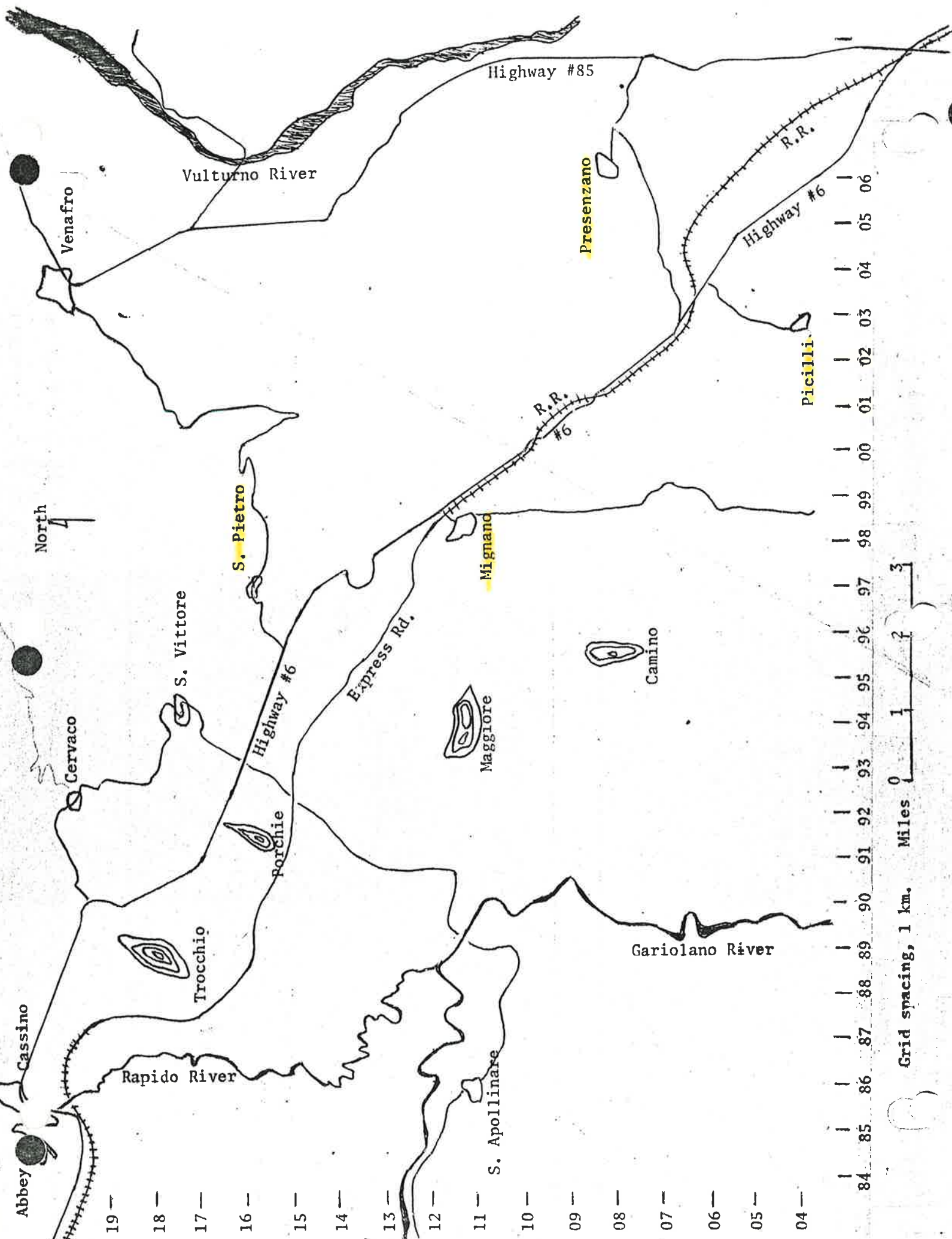


NAPLES TO LIRI VALLEY, ITALY

11/11/43 to 1/19/44

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11/11/43 to 1/19/44



Grid spacing, 1 km. Miles 0 1 2 3

The 532nd AAA AW Bn. disembarked at Bagnoli, Italy on 11 Nov 43 and moved to a bivouac area in the vicinity of Pagnatori, Italy on 17 Nov 43.

On 15 Nov 43 the front line, east to west, was an approximate line from Mr. Camino, Mignano (on Highway #6) and the mountains above Venafro (on Highway #85).

On 18 Nov 43, D Btry moved to Presengano to protect the 77th Field Artillery from air attack. There were no bombing or strafing of gun positions by German aircraft. However, German reconnaissance planes did fly over and were fired at.

On 19 Nov 43 at 1530 hours, fired 25 rounds of 40 mm ammo at one ME-109 flying at 8,000 feet. No hits.

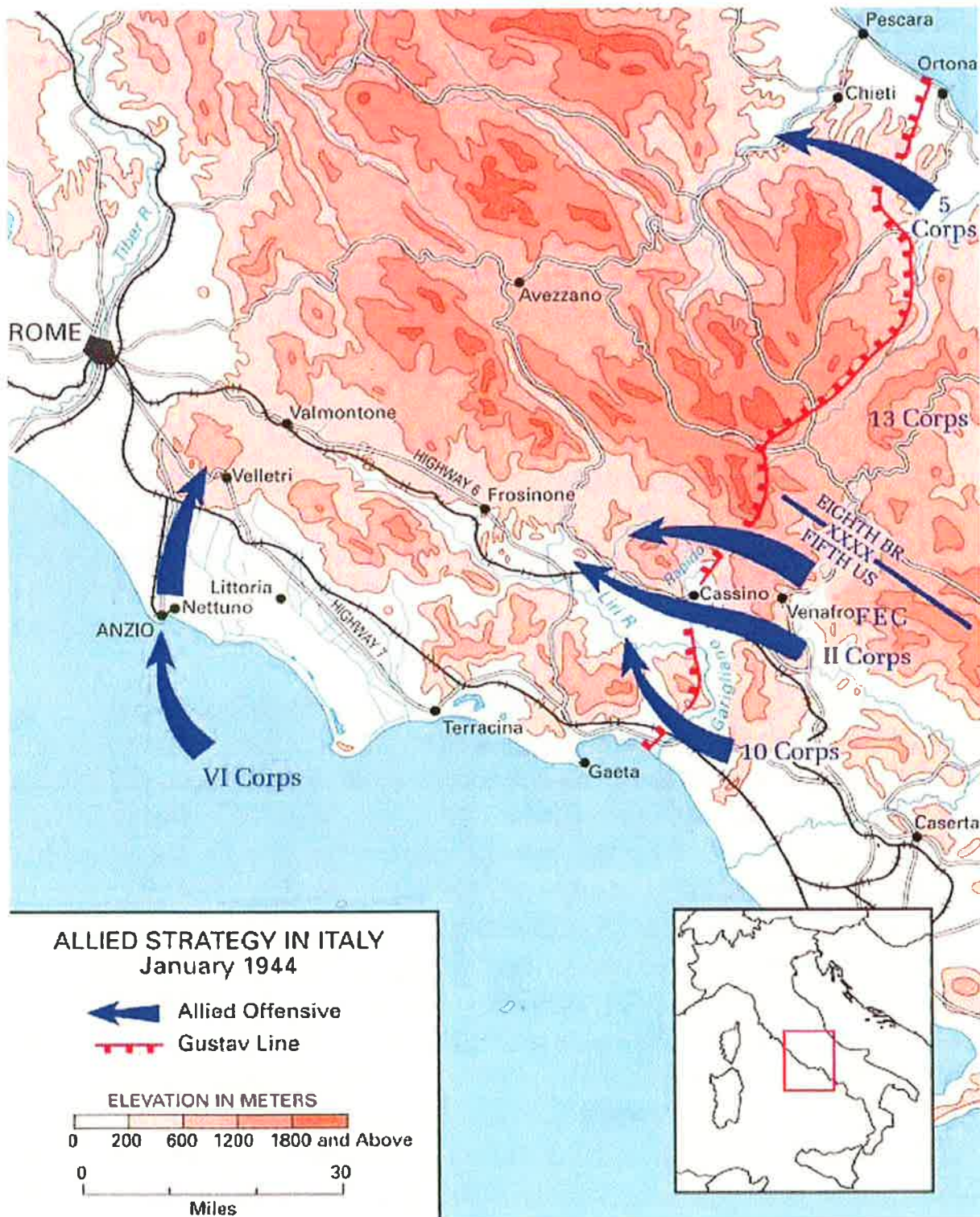
On 22 Nov 43 at 0900 hours, fired 93 rounds of 40 mm ammo at three ME-109's. One possible hit. Same day at 1200 hours, fired 10 rounds of 40 mm ammo at one ME-109. No hits.

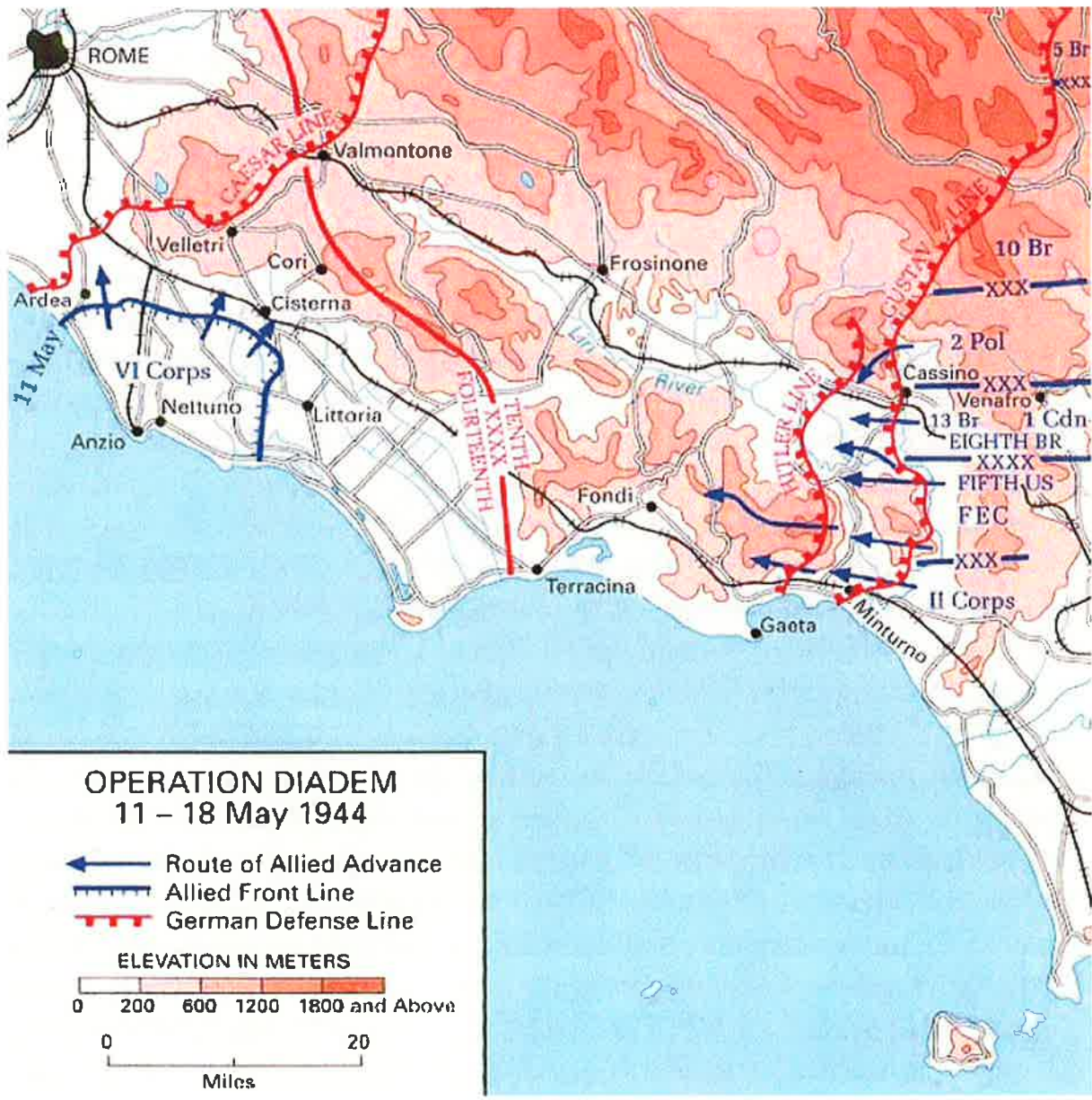
We did impress the field artillery that we were protecting. The C.O. of the 77th F.A. wrote a citation commending Capt. Maxfield and Btry D for its air defense of their positions.

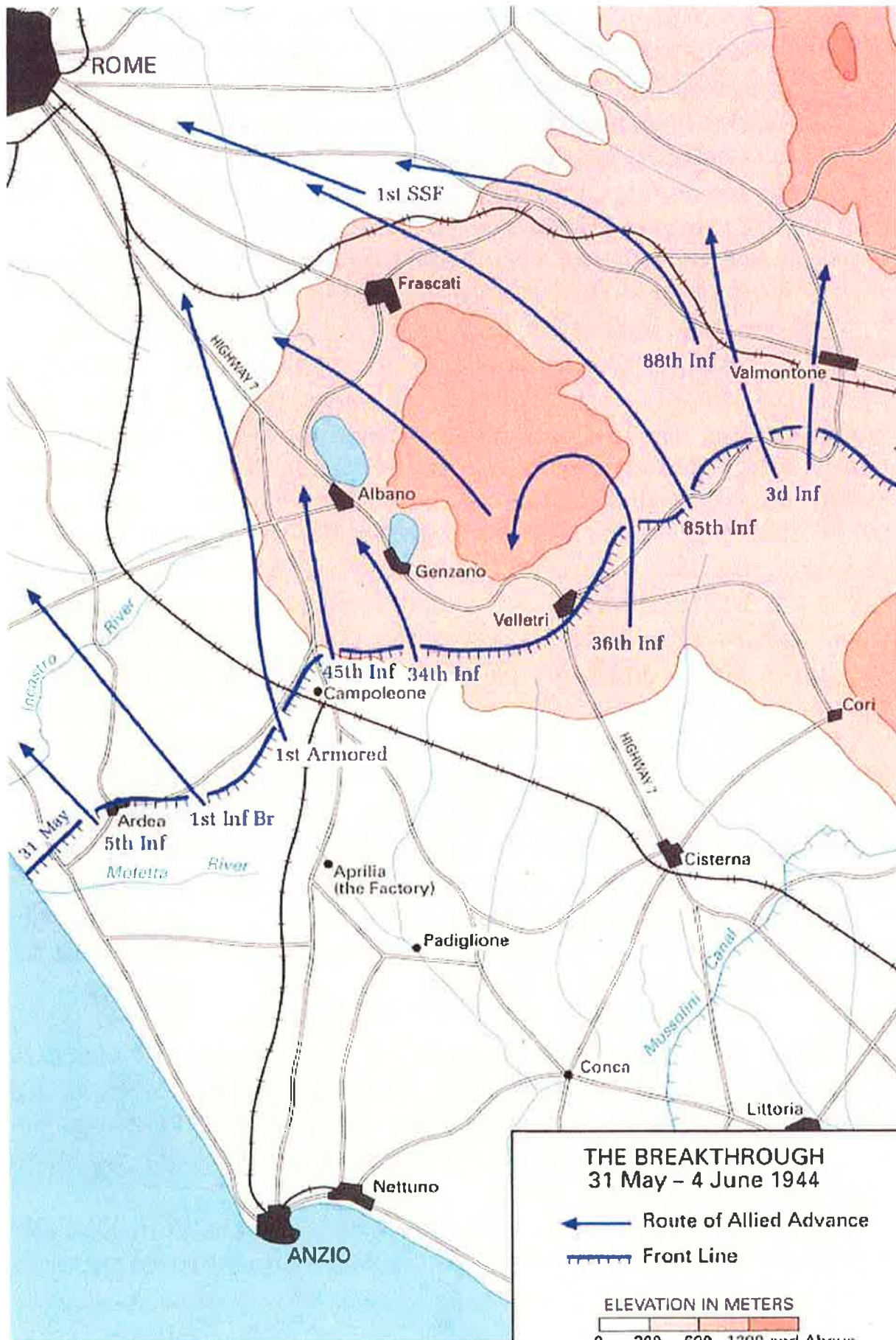
Life at the front was not easy. The weather at best could be described as cold duck hunting weather. Three alert men were required at the gun station at all times during daylight hours. The first order of business at a new gun position was the digging and sandbagging of the gun pit. This was mostly accomplished at night so the gun could be in place at daybreak. Moves were usually made after dark. The success of the move depended on a good reconnaissance of the new positions by the Btry & Platoon C.O.'s. The effectiveness of the gun position depended on the gun section sergeant. The success of the mission depended on the private who was willing to walk, dig and live in mud and man the gun in cold, inclement weather.

A quantity of large salvage tents had been procured (stolen) just before the Btry shipped from the Bizertia, Tunisia, staging area. Each gun section had at least one large tent and was provided with a gasoline fed stove (made from $\frac{1}{2}$ of a 55 gal drum). An issue of mattress covers and straw provided a mattress that would hold body heat. The other alternate was to live in a unheated pup tent (2-shelter halves) as many had done in North Africa.

At the time of D Btry's move to Presengano, good bivouac areas were scarce due to many support units in the vicinity. The kitchen truck was located just off a side road in a grain field. The location was fine until we tried to move the truck to a better location. All wheels went axle deep in mud. It took the $4\frac{1}{2}$ ton Bn. maintenance truck to pull the kitchen truck out. The lesson was obvious. Gun positions were selected by Capt. Maxfield for safety from shelling and access.







The kitchen and Btry C.P. were moved to an abandoned rock quarry near Highway #6, about 6 km south of Mignano so that the kitchen could better serve the gun positions with hot meals. The rock quarry was an ideal location; close to highway #6 with a rockie floor and high sides. Both coming and going artillery shells passed harmlessly overhead.

Lt. (Dr.)^{H.S.} Witten was our guest and was available for any medical emergencies. He was not a pleasant person. He was still harboring a grudge against the Army for inducting him on 2 weeks notice at the rank of 1st Lt. Capt. Maxfield was still smarting from an unfair kitchen inspection report (Btry D) turned in by Lt. Witten in North Africa. If a phone call came in for the doctor and Capt. Maxfield answered the phone, the first thing Max would say was "Why do you want to talk to that dam Quack ?" If the caller said "I'm sick", Max would say "You'll probably die if he treats you", and if the caller insisted, he would hand the phone to Lt. Witten and say "for you doctor". Our good doctor was known on several occassions to have speeded up his short arm inspections by lining up personnel in advance and driving by, inspecting, while leaning out of a seat in a jeep.

He was quick to realize that he needed to change his public image and his demeanor quickly changed. He was the only doctor with a sergical kit. It soon became evident that he was in fact a very compentent doctor. Yes, he and Max became good friends.

On 1 Dec 43 the big offensive to enter the Liri valley started. It had the greatest artillery support of the compaign up to that time - some 500 guns. Mr. Comino was nicknamed the "million dollar mountain" - an understatement. The mountain heights were taken by the IX Corp. (36 & 3rd divisions). A Special Service Force captured the adjacent mountain to the right, Mt. La Difensa. A regiment of the 36th went on to capture Mt. Maggiori, the last barrier to entering the Liri valley in front of Cassino. All of this bitter fighting took place in the worse kind of weather and terrain.

On 23 Nov 43, Bn Hdq moved to Paccilli, Italy.

On 6 Jan 44, D Btry moved from 2 km south of Mignano (highway #6) to Highway #85 just east of Presenzanto.

On 10 Jan 44, D Btry moved to 7 km west of Alife for training with the 36th Division. The division was making a practice crossing of the Volturno river using a pontoon bridge and boats. The Btry and Platoon C.O.'s attended the training exercise. I and Capt. Maxfield attended the meeting which was held later by Gen. Walker, 36th C.O., where the results of the training exercise were discussed. It is my recollection that the exercise was not successful and that there was confusion among the supporting units as to responsibilities.

On 14 Jan 44, D Btry moved to a bivouac area 3 km SE of the Jct. of #6 & #85.

On 15 Jan 44, the battle front ran along the general line of the Rapido and Garigliano rivers.

On 19 Jan 44, D Btry, less kitchen & supply, moved to a bivouac area 1 km SE of San Pietro. The forward C.P. of Bn Hdq moved to the south side of Mr. Trocchio (E 093175)