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701ST TANK DESTROYER BATTALION
c/o Postmaster

1 January 1944.

SUBJECT: Operations Report

TO : Adjutant General, U. S. Army, Washington, D. C. (thru channels)

1. In compliance with the requirements of paragraph 10, AR 345-105, dated March 10, 1943, the following operations report of the 701st Tank Destroyer Battalion covering the period 1 December 1943 to 31 December, 1943, is herewith submitted.

2. The operations covered in this report are statements from the Unit Journal and the Battalion Diary, and supporting evidence for said statements is on file in the records of this Battalion.

3. Previous operations report submitted to and including 30 November 1943.

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BY AUTHORITY OF TAG J.E.S.

William H. Bateman Jr

WILLIAM H. BATEMAN, JR.
Capt., 701st TD Bn.
Adjutant

S-Brig 45
Date

HSB
Initials

OPERATIONS OF THE 701ST TANK DESTROYER BATTALION

Period - 1 Dec. - 31 Dec., 1943

Active operations were to take place in the Mt. CASINO - MURANO area of Italy, in which the 701st Tank Destroyer Bn. was to take part. The Battalion was to be attached to Div. Arty., 1 AD for the operation in support of the 36th Infantry Division. Each company of the battalion was to fire its missions through the FO's and the FOC's of 1 AD artillery battalions ("A" Co. through the 91st F.A. Bn., "B" Co. through the 68th F.A. Bn., and "C" Co. through the 27th F.A. Bn.).



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The area was mountainous, the terrain difficult. The frequent rains had made all vehicles roadbound. The area assigned to the Battalion was to the right and left of the small unimproved road running generally north from the village of LE CAVE (map Italy 1/50,000, sheets 160-II and 161-III) (009-062 to 006053), and all positions were along a narrow ridge line. Howitzers could have occupied the ravines below, but due to the flat trajectory of the 3" gun, it was necessary to place all guns near the crest of the ridge; this gave our guns no 'flash' defilade and little protection. The counter-battery of the enemy was expected to be heavy, thus the Battalion Commander deemed it necessary to dig all our guns into position. The entrance road also needed improvement in order to withstand the 32 ton load of the M-10. The latter days of November were, therefore, spent in the preparation of this area for our guns, and in building up a supply of ammunition near the gun positions (all this was satisfactorily completed in time to receive the guns, in spite of the fact that the prospective area was in full view of the enemy).

The Battalion moved forward to occupy the new positions on the night of 31 Nov. - 1 Dec., and arrived in the Le Cave area at 2330 hours. All "C" Company M-10's satisfactorily proceeded down the entrance road and halted near their positions (due to the heavy rains and the blackness of the night, the company commander decided to keep his guns on the road until first light of dawn, then move into position). "B" Company's guns proceeded down the entrance road, and the company commander began taking his guns into position. The last two M-10's of "B" Company, however, threw tracks on the road, and for some hours blocked the road so that "A" Company could not enter. Pioneer

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construction work remained this, and by 0800 hrs. 1 Dec. all but three of the Battalion's 36 guns were in position (the "D" Co. registration gun was mired, and although "A" Co. succeeded in getting one of their two 3-10's with thrown tracks into position, another gun became mired in the mud).

The 1st of December was spent in camouflage of guns, further preparation of positions, and in getting the mired guns out. By evening 35 of the 36 guns of the Battalion were ready to fire (one "B" Co. gun was still out of action), and the gun positions had become veritable "pill boxes". The guns were so well dug-in, and reinforced with sandbags, that only the barrels of the 3-10's were in any way exposed.

On the night of the 1st, the Battalion Commander informed all company commanders that the first artillery fires by our guns were to be laid down at 1830 hours, 2 December ("D" Day). The British and Canadians to our south and west had moved forward on 1 December (D-1).

Registration of base pieces had not been completed for either "A" or "C" company. A further attempt was made to do this on the morning of the 2nd, but was not a complete success. This proved something that we had long suspected - the need of a smoke shell for the 3" gun. If Tank Destroyer Battalions are to be called upon to perform missions of self-propelled artillery, they must be provided with an adequate smoke shell (this especially holds true in hump-covered country).

On December 2nd the "B" Co. gun was finally placed in position at 1600 hrs. and, by 1830 hrs. this date, all guns of the Battalion were ready to fire.

Fire missions by all companies began at 1830 hrs., and during the next 24 hours the bn. fired a total of 5367 rounds in support of the Infantry attack (more than the total expended throughout the entire Tunisian Campaign when the Battalion was employed as a T. D. unit).

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Ammunition and supply trucks made roads through the area impassable, and as the severe rains continued, Recon. Co. was used for the continued repair and upkeep of the roads. Yet, the roads through "C" Co. remained impassable, and it was necessary to requisition mules and oxen from the nearby village to haul ammunition to the gun positions.

With the rains and fire missions continued for the next several days. On the 4th of December the road between Le Cave and the main highway washed out, and remained so for a day. On the same day all bridges on entry roads to Battalion Trains washed out. Thus it was necessary for the same supply trucks to remain ^{IN} the forward area over-night.

All fire of our guns being directed by the 1st Armored F.A. Bn., difficulty was experienced by the Bn. Hq. in securing facts concerning the fire missions or the results therefrom. Most of the Battalion Missions, however, were on pre-arranged concentration areas; a few counterbattery missions were fired.

Rains continued on the 5th, and this day it was necessary to put all available personnel working on the road system. More oxen and mules were requisitioned for use by "C" Co. Fire missions continued through the day.

Movement to new forward positions, vicinity MIGNARD, was contemplated. The company positions were surveyed by the respective F.A. Bns., and gun emplacements were constructed with the use of a Bulldozer.

On the night of the 6th, the 1st Platoon of "A" Co. moved forward into their new positions (Base Piece 99336-111423; sheet 161-III, Italy 1/50,000). One M-10 of 1-A threw a track in the old area, and could not

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move with the balance of the platoon. The remainder of "A" Co. moved the following night. A new infantry attack was planned for the 8th, and at 0530 hrs. the artillery preparation began, and during the day the Bn. expended 1832 rounds.

"A" Company's new positions were as follows: Base piece locations, 1-A-95347 - 111224; 2-A 99520 - 109824; 3-A 99590 - 110794.

During the next 24 hours some 3002 rounds were expended by the Bn. On the 10th, the 2nd and 3rd platoons of "A" Co. reconnoitered for CP positions, and early the next morning an CP was established by Lt. Rithman, 2nd "A", at 996145. On this date "C" Co. prepared for movement to the forward positions, and at 1630 hrs. began movement (new positions vic. 996145).

On the 11th the "A" Co. located several enemy guns, and acted as CP for the fire missions. Only 1144 rounds of ammo. were expended during the 24 hour period.

Again on the 13th, little firing was done. Five rounds were expended in registration. At 1530 hours the 1st platoon of "A" Co. was shelled by enemy artillery, 10 rounds falling in the area. Personal equipment was damaged, but there were no casualties.

On the 14th, Lt. Rithman established an CP at 992217 to direct the fire of "A" Co. (said company now being fired under Bn. control). At 1710 hours this date the "A" Co. area was shelled by enemy artillery - 25 rounds landed in the area. Two men were killed and 12 wounded.

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The next day the Acc. Co. acted as F.O. for two missions fired by the 68th S.A. Bn. and one mission fired by "B" Co., 701st. This mission by "B" Co. was the last firing to be done by the 701st in the operation, for orders from II Corps prevented any more firing due to the shortage of 3" ammo, and the desire to conserve existing ammo.

The Acc. Co. nevertheless remained out the following day, and Lt. Withman directed 5 fire missions for the 68th S.A. Bn. - 4 on enemy guns, and one on enemy troops.

A 400' beam on the 17th and "C" Companies moved back to old positions in the La Cava area. This day Lt. Withman directed one fire mission for the 68th on an enemy gun position.

The operation had been extremely hard on the equipment of the Battalion. The guns, however, had held up extremely well. An average of around 400 rounds per gun were fired, and only a minor maintenance and part replacement was needed. The weather had taken its toll on the vehicles, though, and on the 19th a check-up on all vehicles began. This continued for the next several days.

On the 19th, Lt. Withman attempted to establish an O.P. on Hill 1205 at 981178, but was unable to do so because of heavy enemy shellfire. He was still unable to do so the following day.

A forward ammo. dump for coming operations was established at 980119, and by the 20th some 4750 rounds of 3" ammo. had been placed in this dump.

The Acc. Co. on Hill 1205 was tentatively established on the 21st, and Lt. McKnight relieved Lt. Withman on the 21st, but rains on the 21st, 22nd, and 23rd prevented any observations due to the poor visibility, and on the afternoon of

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the 23rd the OP was relieved, pending better weather. The rains continued through the 24th.

Church services were held in the Battalion area on the 25th (Christmas Day) and Great Turkey was served for the noon meal in the Company kitchens. Guard duty and other necessary duties were performed during the day.

On the 26th of December, the Battalion Commander was ordered to report to Headquarters, Combat Command "B", 1st Amer Div. Upon his return a meeting was held of the company commanders and Co. Staff officers. The following information was given: The 701st was to be attached to Task Force Kilo, commanded by Brig. General Allen, for a coming operation - the mission of the Battalion to be essentially anti-tank. Details of the operation were explained to the company commanders.

On the 27th the Bn. C.O. and Company Commanders of "A" and "C" Companies went to vicinity of 9413 to reconnoiter for routes and gun positions for the coming operation. The reconnaissance, however, was incomplete and was continued on the 30th. On the latter date, the "B" Company Platoon Leaders reconnoitered for positions vicinity 950165.

On the night of the 29th a message was received which notified the Bn. of activation of TFA, the 701st being included among the troops of the organization. A Liaison Officer was sent to Hq., TFA.

On the 30th, gun positions and an assembly area for Hq. Co. were selected. Lt. Boerning was sent to the 15th Inf. Regimental C.O. for the purpose of accompanying the infantry night patrol on reconnaissance.

Lt. Lewis conducted a survey of the proposed "C" Company positions to establish an orienting line on the 31st, and "C" Co. gun positions were dug with the aid of a Bulldozer. There were heavy rains throughout the day

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changing to snow during the night of 31 Dec. The month ended with the Bn. occupying identical positions it occupied at the beginning of December with preparation being made for movement forward for future contemplated operations upon receipt of orders from IV.

Albert B. Morrison
ALBERT B. MORRISON
Capt., 701st T.D. Bn.
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APPENDIX -

Total Amco. expenditure for month of Dec. 1943 - - - - - 14625

Battle Casualty Report -

Farovick, Chas. I	Sgt.	36022518	KIA
Buonett, James E.	Pvt.	34281734	KIA
Rice, Fred W.	Sgt.	6661048	3MA
Kietl, Charles S.	Opl.	32033603	2FA
Silwan, Gordon B.	Col.	35003525	1FA
Jokerst, Leonard L.	T/S	37132139	1FA
Bradley, George T.	Pfc.	25213692	1FA
Bushkie, Alfred J.	Pfc.	36204644	3MA
Moll, Arthur F.	Pfc.	2471746	1FA
Mallen Sr., John W.	Pvt.	3104483	1FA
Wounded, etc.			
Giles, Correll	T/S	6856403	1FA
Ferris, William	Pvt.	13064298	1FA
Dixon, William	Pvt.	314088201	1FA
Henry, Louis	T/S	33067362	1FA

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