

HEADQUARTERS
703RD TANK DESTROYER BATTALION
APO 230

DWS/jgd

1 February 1945

OPERATIONS OF "C" COMPANY, 703rd TD Bn,
MONTH OF JANUARY 1945.

- 1st PLATOON -

Remained in Company Reserve vicinity Werbomont, Belgium from 3 January to 10 January 1945.

11 Jan - attached to 83rd Armored Reconnaissance Battalion whose mission was to protect the Division right flank on the Div attack to Vaux Cherain. 1st Platoon moved night of 10 Jan to Bihain, and after reporting to the Bn Comdr 83d Arm'd Ron Bn, set up road blocks covering approaches to the town from the south. There was no activity during the night.

12 Jan - At 0800 hours, 1 section moved out with "D" Co, 83rd Arm'd Ron Bn and set up road blocks at CR (627817). The second section remained at Bihain prepared to move on call. The first section on road block spotted an enemy tank and moved into an advantageous firing position. When in position, two rounds were fired and destroyed the Mk IV. Another unseen enemy tank (or gun) opened fire from the west and hit the TD on the hull, at the front right corner. The round penetrated the hull but lodged in the radio, injuring none of the crew. The TD which was still operational backed off into a covered position. The tank (or gun) that fired could not be spotted.

In the meantime, "A" Co, 83d Arm'd Ron Bn passed through "D" Co of the 83rd and continued to advance south to block the bridge at (631795). "B" Co, 83d Ron Bn followed "A" Co 83d Ron Bn to clear woods to the west. "B" Co 83d also blocked the trail RJ at (622792) and fell trees across the road from Aux Aiwes to Mont Le Ban. The 2nd Section of our 1st Platoon remained at Bihain and made reconnaissance of routes forward to "B" Co 83d, and was to move forward and join that company as soon as the road was clear and gun positions had been selected to cover the road to the south. As darkness fell it was decided to leave the section in Bihain for the night.

13 Jan - "A", "B" and "C" Co's, 83d Arm'd Ron Bn attacked to gain the high ground (636765) north of Sommeraine. This objective was gained early in the afternoon. While the attack progressed both sections of our platoon followed and occupied the objective. Plans were made by the Task Force Commander, to attack the town of Sommeraine at 1600 hours. Any movement however, was met by heavy small arms and AT fire. The attack was called off and operations consisted of setting up blocks on main road. The two sections were set up at (635765) and (638762) and stayed in those positions throughout the remainder of the day and the 14th. On 13 Jan a Mk IV tank was destroyed at (632756) at 1600 hours. One TD to rear for repair on turret.

14 Jan During the day the TF remained in position covering the road. It was found that the enemy was using a secondary road to the south to circumvent the road block. Plans were made to jump off after midnight to secure the high ground east of Sommeraine to cut the secondary road.

15 Jan - Two of the M-36's could not be started due to severe cold weather and therefore, only one TD jumped off at 0230 hours with the task force. This one M36 was the same one that had been damaged on the 12th and proved to be still quite capable of fighting. Shortly after daybreak the TD destroyed a Mk IV at (645753) but was fired on by another tank at (644752). This enemy tank fired three rounds into the TD which burnt but was not completely destroyed. The crew escaped without casualties but the enemy tank also got away before friendly tanks could be brought up to fire on it.

16 Jan - The TF took the town (Sommeraine) and the two TD's left in the platoon took up positions on the reverse slope on high ground south of the town. There was no targets to be fired at here.

17 Jan - On this date the TF was relieved by elements of 4th Cavalry Group - the platoon was detached from TF YEOMANS and attached to C Comd HOWZE, and assembled in vicinity of Mont-Le-Ban in Combat Command Reserve.

18 Jan - Platoon moved to Baclain.

19 Jan - Moved with Combat Command to Division Assembly Area.

- 2nd PLATOON -

On 2 Jan 45 all three (3) Platoons of "C" Company were assembled in vicinity of Werbomont, Belgium.

The Second Platoon was attached to TF HOGAN but had not joined the Task Force. Three (3) TD's operational.

4 Jan - At 1200 hours the platoon joined TF HOGAN and assembled in vicinity of Fays (504978). At 1700 hours the platoon moved to vicinity of Sur-les-Gottes arriving at 2100 hours. The Task Force was attacking to secure the main supply route. Progress was slow and enemy artillery and mortar fire was heavy.

5 Jan - Platoon was to follow TF to Manhay and set up road blocks as tanks continued attack south. The TD's set up road blocks upon their arrival at 1500 hours, there was no targets in the area throughout the remainder of the period.

6 Jan - The Task Force Commander's plans were for one Company of Medium Tanks to attack east of the main road to secure Malempre while another company of Medium Tanks attacked south on the main road. One company of Light Tanks in reserve. The TD Platoon was to follow the right force down the main road. The left company attacked at 0600 hours and the right company jumped off at 1000 hours. The platoon followed closely and carried infantry on the rear decks of the M36's. Upon arrival at (545882) the infantry dismounted and continued to attack on foot while the TD's occupied over-watching positions. When the infantry secured Belle-Hare the platoon moved up and took up road block position at (552870). Enemy artillery fire was intense throughout the night.

7 Jan - At 0730 hours the attack was resumed and at 0830 hours a road block which consisted of fallen trees was encountered at (560864). Engineers were brought forward to clear the road, and the Task Force closed up. Visibility was poor and limited to not more than two hundred yards, but an enemy AT gun firing down a long straight stretch of road knocked out four (4) medium Tanks and one (1) TD at 1400 hours. This gun could not be seen nor could the TD or tanks return fire as the destroyed vehicles blocked their field of fire. The entire crew of our TD were casualties and evacuated. The remainder of the crews dismounted and took cover a few yards off the road. When the firing stopped an attempt was made to move some tanks--the sound was a signal for the enemy gun to resume fire. The gun was not more than 600 yards away. Orders were received to assemble in vicinity of Corrie (547893) and arrived there at 1730 hours. One (1) TD was damaged by mortar fire before leaving previous location. The left force had also been stopped short of their objective and assembled in vicinity of the right force.

8 Jan - "G" Co 33rd Arm'd Regt attacked with seven (7) Med. Tanks at 0330 hours to vicinity of (575852) where the two (2) TD's joined them at 1400 hours. Road blocks were established at the CR at 1500 hours. The objective had been gained but was not too well secured. One enemy half track was fired at, at 2200 hours, but equaped in the darkness.

9 Jan - Enemy poured in heavy concentrations of mortar and artillery on the CR and every one prepared for a coordinated attack against the CR before dawn. No attack developed, however, and the infantry pushed out past the CR to secure it at 1630 hours. A Task Force consisting of 2 Platoons infantry, one tank, and one TD under command of our platoon leader moved out to support the infantry, and clear the road south. This force met a road block of fallen trees at (582848). The infantry continued the attack as the tank and TD backed off to allow the Engineers to bring in a "dozer". The tank backed into a friendly minefield and was disabled. The infantry secured the forward edge of the woods and dug in to hold it. The TD with a tank-dozer moved into supporting position on the south edge of woods at 0230 hours on the 10th.

10 Jan - TF was relieved at 1200 hours and assembled in the vicinity of Regne. Road blocks were established at (608856) with one TD and one Medium Tank. One TD remained in reserve at (610857). There was no enemy activity except harassing artillery on the town.

11 Jan - 2nd Platoon was relieved by 3rd Platoon and platoon moved back to vicinity of Company C.P. Orders were received at 2100 hours for 2nd Platoon to move to vicinity of Lierneux on the 12th Jan 45.

12 Jan - Moved to Lierneux arriving at 0900 hours. Orders were received to join TF KANE at 1200 hours and platoon moved to vicinity of Regne at 1400 hours arriving at 1530 hours, occupying positions as held on 10 Jan 45.

13 Jan - At 0430 hours moved from Regne via Hebronval and Bihain to vicinity N.W. of Mont-Le-Ban (638788). From this position the platoon fired 22 rounds of APC at targets of opportunity -- results not known. Received direct fire from Lomre and Mont-Le-Ban throughout period.

14 Jan - Tanks occupied Mont-Le-Ban and TD's set up road blocks on south edge of town. No enemy activity.

15 Jan - Platoon occupied positions in vicinity of (637763) with no enemy activity.

16 Jan - Tanks attacked Brisly. 2nd Platoon moved to vicinity of (645764) and fired 63 rounds at three (3) enemy tanks and one (1) enemy AT gun. Though rounds were observed striking the enemy tanks - there was no penetration or damage to the vehicles. However, it was later learned that one MK IV tank was destroyed though not burned. The enemy returned fire and caused the exposed TF to withdraw to the Line of Departure.

17 Jan - TF assembled in vicinity of Mont-Le-Ban and resumed the attack striking from the north. 2nd Platoon moved just south of Cherain where it occupied supporting positions but no targets were available.

18 Jan - Platoon moved to vicinity of Cherain and upon arrival set up road blocks at (663761) with one TD and (662755) with two TD's. Enemy artillery was heavy throughout the period. One (1) RM KIA due to the artillery.

19 Jan - At 1400 hours the Task Force was relieved and 2nd platoon assembled in Regne with the Company CP (Rear) to move on 20 Jan 45 to new Division Assembly Area.

- 3rd Platoon -

4 Jan - Platoon was attached to 83d Armd Ren Bn whose mission was to guard the Div Fwd CP. Two TD's were put on road block at (585934) and one gun was at (546953) and one gun at (543955). There was no enemy activity throughout the period of this attachment and the platoon was relieved on 10 Jan 45 and assembled with the Company CP.

11 Jan - 3rd Platoon joined TF HOGAN and relieved 2nd Platoon "G" Co. Two guns were at (608856) and two were in reserve at (610857). Harassing artillery was limit of enemy activity.

12 Jan - At 0600 hours, 1 section of 3rd Platoon moved with five (5) Medium Tanks to vicinity of Bihain to reinforce the outpost on the south edge of Bihain. The section arrived at daybreak just as the enemy attacked the town with infantry and tanks after an artillery preparation. The enemy was repulsed before the reinforcements were required and the reinforcements took up defensive positions. One TD at (626843) and one at (622838), both covering approaches from south and west. There was no enemy action throughout the rest of the period.

13 Jan - Remainder of Task Force moved to Bihain. When the second section of 3rd Platoon arrived they were held in reserve position in town. The enemy harassed the town throughout the day.

14 Jan - The Task Force moved to assemble at (628803) at 0830 hours arriving at 0930 hours. 3rd Platoon remained in reserve in this position while the tanks secured Haonreux, and TD's moved to Mont-Le-Ban at 1200 hours.

15 Jan - At 1200 hours, the platoon moved to high ground at (645772) to provide covering fire as the tanks attacked Vaux. When Vaux had been secured, 1 section of TD's moved there to set up a road block on south of the town. Other section joined platoon at Vaux at 1730 hours.

16 Jan - Enemy counterattack was broken up when one TD destroyed a MK IV Tank at 0800 hours. Another counterattack was also broken up when the same TD K.O.'d two MK V's at 1200 hours.

17 - 19 Jan - No action until the platoon was relieved of attachment at 1600 on 19 Jan 45 and moved to Haonreux.

20 Jan - Moved with TF KANE to new Division Assembly Area.

SHOWALTER
Lt Col, Commanding.

OFFICIAL:

Swett
SWETT,
Capt, S-2