

HEADQUARTERS 105TH AIRBORNE DIVISION
and 164, United States Army

Battalion Report, 1 January - 31 January 1944

1944 found the Battalion assigned to Fifth Army, attached to VI Corps, and reattached to 2nd Division Infantry Mountain, General of Division Duty, commanding. Company "A", less 3rd platoon, was in position west of Scilli, Company "B" just southeast of Rocchetta and "C" overlooking same. 3rd platoon, "A", was still in bivouac near Montecchia.

1 January - The day broke with a raging snowstorm. The reconnaissance officer with a party of men entrained Lieutenant Newman and his party from his D.C. on Mount Mairone. At an elevation of about 1200 meters, they were nearly frozen. Real eggs, from shells, were served for breakfast and excellent fresh Roast Turkey for dinner. The Adjutant spent the day paying the troops at their guns; a task made difficult by the long trip to corps, the scattered positions, and the snow and mud.

At 1714, Commanding General, M.D., 2nd Division, (General C. Royce, Commanding Division Artillery) thru the Liaison Officer, gave permission to occupy a position near Scopoli with the 3rd platoon, "A". Scheduled night harassing missions were fired as usual.

- 2 - Lt Logan occupying the Scopoli position; location was obtained by inspection, direction by traverse from 1st platoon. 1740 - General Royce and aide paid a 20-minute visit. He expressed great satisfaction with the effect of our harassing fire, based on information from prisoners of war.
- 3 - The Commanding General, 3rd Div., observed 3rd platoon, "A", near his D.C., and observed, stating the battery was under observation from Monte Grande, which it was, and would open fire. At 2200, the Commanding General, M.D., ordered its withdrawal. (see below, 4 January).
- 4 - Lieutenant Mainwold reacquainted his D.C. on Mairone, running a wire from the road up. Hereafter, the observer will not live on the Mountain, but will go up when needed. However, communication with 2nd Div. Radio, and it was impossible to obtain clearance to regular. Observers are now able to identify points to the D.C. by means of identical overlay grids used with vertical and oblique photos.
- 5 - Permission was requested of M.D. to occupy 05648, near Rocchetta, with 3rd platoon, "A". "C" got a night's rest, harassment missions on the Biagio road being out of their range. Corps G-3 report, 3 January states control of corps sector passed to French Expeditionary Corps (C.E.A.F.) (the Sixth Corps) at 031200.
- 6 - 2nd Div. disapproved request to occupy 05318. Again harassing missions were out of range for "C".

- 7 January - Attempts to register "B" Company failed; all shots were lost. 1300 - Lieutenant Colonel Simon, commanding the 5th Chasseurs d'Afrique, with Staff and Squadron (Company) Commanders visited the C.P., stating he had orders from Fifth Army to move into the sector night 9-10 January, and relieve the 605th by 12 January. The regiment is organized as a self-propelled Tank Destroyer Battalion. 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Squadron Commanders were guided to company positions. 1350 - Lieutenant Colonel J. F. Casey and Captain Gull, Artillery Officer, Fifth Army, visited C.P. and informed the Battalion Commander that after relief by the 5th Chasseurs d'Afrique, 605 would probably be attached to II Corps. He also stated that a limited amount of trucks was now available. 5-3 has been conducting, since 5 January, a school in survey to include carrying direction and location from a company place mark to the guns. At least one officer per company and selected officers and men of the Staff attend.
- 8 - All attempts to register "B" again failed. "B" was registered with seven salvos. 5-3 made a complete check of "B" guns, sights, and firing charts, but no error could be found. The usual night harassing schedule was assigned all companies.
- 9 - Received a Fifth Army order attaching us to Front Expeditionary Corps (G.I.F.) (Letter, Hq. Fifth Army, 2 January 1945, HQ 322.1-Y) in accordance, previously received, unless the attachment effective 0300 January. Simultaneously, "B", because our first "B" casualty - slightly wounded by shell fragment.
- 10 - "B" took more night caliber harassing during the night. From 1400 to 1700 the Battalion Commander, with Lt. Col. Simon and Staff, 5th Hq.C., conferred with General Boydson. At his latter's request, the Battalion Commander phoned Col. Casey and learned that conditions of an Army order to be published would permit the Battalion's remaining to support an offensive 12 January, thus obviating need for 5th H.C. to take our present positions. The request may have been prompted by the General's belief that 3 H.C., an Artillery Regiment, was not too well qualified to handle our artillery mission on short notice.
- 11 - Lieutenant Harwood from the C.P. registered all positions of "B" and "A" and a platoon of "B". "B" fired our first salvo; it proved quite effective, and should simplify future registration considerably. Received Operations Order # 22, 2d D.I., night harassing missions and the schedule for tomorrow's attack. From 1-2, 3 H.C., learned his Battalion would not take our gun positions and missions, but would be assigned an independent mission. However, as ordered his my assistance we might be capable of giving.
- 12 - 2 D.I. launched its attack at 0300 and progressed as planned in Operations Order # 22. By 1200, it had secured the second objective, hills 1025 and 1029. It came part of the third objective, hills 1025 and 1029 were reported occupied. "B" after conducting

its schedule at 0000 was out of range. "A" and "B" continued interdiction of the magic beam. 2d B.I.A. reported this fire was having the desired effect. Air forward observer, Lieutenant Hoffman, reported fire was accurate. He also engaged "D" with good effect on the targets of opportunity, a few trucks and a peak train. Total expenditure 1785 rounds.

Mr. Cahall, A.M.C., with three girls, served doughnuts at the mess during fire, greatly boosting the morale of the men, as well as giving the girls quite an experience.

13

- 0700 - Battalion commander visited II Corps to get the general situation and future plans for the 805. As yet there is nothing definite concerning the employment of the Battalion.

Increasing fire continued throughout the day for "A" and "B".

The ammunition expenditure was decreased in the evening and the number of targets was limited due to the progress of the attack.

14

- 0800 - The Companies ceased firing; this coincided with our mission with the 2d B.I.A. which started on 18 November '43. In 23 days of firing harassing and interdiction missions, the Battalion expended 10,980 rounds.

1130 - The Battalion Commander ordered the Companies into assembly areas by nightfall of the 14th.

1200 - Lieutenant Ferguson returned from 2d B.I.A. Artillery as Liaison Officer.

1350 - Lt. Col. Cuddy, Assistant Officer, Fifth Army, visited the B.I.A. and informed the Battalion Commander that the Battalion reverted directly to Fifth Army control at 0001 14 January. Special order #16, Headquarters, G.I.F., confirms this statement.

1415 - Lt. Hoffman reports for Fifth Army as Liaison Officer.

1445 - A message received from Allied Liaison Section, 2d B.I.A., states that the Battalion is attached to II Corps.

General Foydenet asked the Battalion Commander to convey to the Companies his appreciation for the very fine work done by them.

15

- 0115 - Lieutenant Hoffman returned from Fifth Army stating that orders were issued attaching us to II Corps, where we would probably be assigned to 15th Brigade; we should establish Liaison with II Corps, reconnaissance on the 15th and 16th, and move into the Corps sector on the 17th.

1300 - The Battalion Commander, #2, and #3 opened an advance C.P. at H 020045 in II Corps sector. Corps Artillery officer said that we may be attached to the 34th Infantry Division.

1900 - The Battalion executive issued a warning order for the move on the 17th. Companies worked on the maintenance of vehicles and equipment throughout the day.

16

- 0430 - The Battalion Commander was called to II Corps, and received verbal orders attaching the Battalion to the 34th Division, and to relieve the 776 Tank Destroyer Battalion.

T/Sgt. Foley, Personnel Sergeant, in Fornelli, reported three suspicious civilians; they were reported to be shot, found to hold forged passes, and taken into custody.

- 17 January - 0930 - The Battalion marched under executive order per Fifth Army movement control from Celli to Torc Road (H 050045) closing at 1300. Earlier in the morning a lucky Jerry hit knocked out Rugged Bridge across the Volturno, causing the Battalion to detour among much French traffic congestion.
1830 - 1-2, and 3 opened an advance C.C. in Corvara (H 9176015).
- 18 - Liaison Officer was relieved by II Corps and was sent to 34th Div. Arty., reporting at 1400. Commanding Officer conferred with Div. Arty., received assignment to area and movement clearance. Mission: 1. To furnish antitank protection. 2. To furnish artillery support. Commanding Officer was made responsible for Division antitank plans and defense. Companies prepared positions during the day, moved at 1800, and closed in position at 2130. Field Order # 5 was issued.
- 19 - 3-3 requested a survey from the Div. Arty. 3-3, who answered he could not give it.
1100 - Commanding Officer attended a conference at Div. Arty., received the general plan; Commanding General ordered that he be surveyed. It was initiated but not completed. "B" reported the gun; destroyed on Trochia observation. Due to friendly smoke, observation failed before completion of "B". Lieutenant William Vance the 43rd Tank Destroyer Battalion and learned their antitank plans.
- 20 - Reconnaissance Officer registered "C" from Trocchio. Fading visibility, due to haze and friendly smoke, prevented further registration. However, "B" and "C" checked their laying, by direct laying on Monte Cassino. Battalion fired a one hour and 15 minute "demonstration" on Cassino and G. Villa starting at 1415 hours in accordance with Division Field Order # 10 and annexes as a feint to cover the attack for a bridgehead by 36th Division on left flank at 2000. Div. Arty. reported that high velocity projectiles were landing on Trocchio, whereupon "A" Company's missions in the southern impact area were cancelled. However, none of our guns were firing across Trocchio; also Div. Arty. confirmed later that shells continued falling where we expect.
- 21 - Last night's "demonstration" was repeated at 1530. Trains and rear echelon moved to San Pietro (G 972155).
- 22 - By telephone from II Corps antitank Officer, Corps attached Co. "B", 77th Tank Destroyer Battalion for firing only; his primary mission remaining as Corps antitank reserve. Company Commander later reported, was assigned an area near 905210, with survey by Div. Arty., and closed in position at 2130. C05 will haul his ammunition. II Corps Staff message, 222115 January, received the next day, defined the attachment.
NATUSA Letter, 10 January 1944, gives us battle participation awards for the Italian campaign. Entries will be made on the records of all officers and men.
Battalion is surpassing the Torchio road at the rate of 90 rounds per hour.

23 January - 0110 - "A" received some light shelling; no effect.
 1230 - Battalion commander completed registration of "A" and "B" - 776; visibility spoiled by friendly smoke.
 1500 - "C" was snailed by air bursts. Lt. A. J. Jones, Lieutenant Baker seriously wounded, 3 men lightly wounded.
 Throughout the day and night the Battalion lived a rather heavy harassing schedule on the Torrelle-Jairo road, believed carrying considerable enemy traffic.

24 - Battalion harassed the Torrelle road throughout the period.
 1130 - Battalion commander visited Company General, Div. Arty., learned the plan of the 756 Tank Battalion, scheduled to move in during the night and attack in the morning, and was ordered to establish liaison with them. However, weather was poor, and was ordered to their new C.P.
 2130 - Battalion lived a half-hour preparation for attack by 193 Infantry at 2200.

25 - "A" and "B" each selected an antitank position for 2 platoons well forward on the Division left and right flanks respectively. Infantry attack only partially successful, part of right battalion establishing a small bridgehead. Tanks failed completely to get under way. There was some confusion at Tan. Headquarters about Lieutenant Hoffman, the Battalion confining liaison officer with a forward observer reported from Div. Arty. The Battalion Commander sent Lieutenant Hardy to act as an F.O. However, no radio hookup with his tank section, the tanks did not move, and nothing was accomplished.

In anticipation of possible break through, Reconnaissance Platoons, in bivouac at near Luchon, were ordered up and closed at Cervaro at 1600. Harassing on the Torrelle road ceased at 1715. Harassing of other targets continued.

A 11 Corps letter alerted Capt. Zierit and 14 enlisted men for return to U. S. under the rotation plan. It is not a myth after all.

26 - Attack stalled; no progress; tanks stuck in the mud. At 1700 two tanks made a posture down Highway 6 to Cassino and return. 805 Co.'s continued surveillance; Div. Arty. stood by with a prepared concentration. They drew fire from antitank guns on some Cassino and Div. Arty. snatched them, our observers correctly. Better results might have obtained had the run been made at 1600 as scheduled. Harassing continued.

27 - Tank Battalion and company of engineers, combining our efforts to get tanks across bridge, have gotten five over. Both infantry got five companies across during the day. Tonight's missions are harassing No. 6 to the north.

28 - Attack of 168th Infantry on Hill 213, scheduled for this morning, was postponed to tomorrow. All Infantry are determined to last tank. The walk is needed to cover the engineers' work to improve roads and cross the tanks. Lieutenant Lewis, got well forward and adjusted "C" on a machine gun nest and using C.P. He adjusted "B"

on a locality said to contain mortars; visibility then faded. Div. arty. suspected possible armored counterattack and requested some guns within 3000 yards of location and Aquino road. "B" and "F" completed day reconnaissance and by midnight "B" had a gun of 3rd platoon at 030200 and a gun at 030300; all guns of this platoon now cover Highway 6 and approaches. 2nd platoon of "B" is on rising ground near 03.8 between 23 and 24 grid, covering Salvo road and possible crossings.

29 January - 168th Infantry put 7 companies, and 756 put 17 effective tanks across Napiso; resistance very stubborn. Battalion fired aerial night harassing with 4 companies.

30 - "B" received a few rounds of very heavy caliber from direction of Atana. Some excellent and much desired equipment were turned in to C. B. Co. 1st, meeting increased resistance, have occupied Cairo and Hill 213, taking over 150 prisoners. Heavy tanks, rumored approaching from north, turned out to be 5 L-4's with 0.5's. Captain Martin, "B", 776, announced he had verbal orders of his Battalion Commander to revert to 776, and started moving. He and Div. arty. know nothing of it.

31 - Both 168 and 142 reported losing contact with enemy. Battalion Commander spearheaded approaches to river in north of sector and through Cairo; also visited commanding officer of 7th Regiment, the hours 214100, Tank Destroyer Battalion with 2d Signal Division. At 1715 he returned from a conference with commanding General, Div. arty., receiving Field Order 11, for commander's action. C.B. was asked to do as much "sniping" as possible, consequently plans were made for sending out all available forward observers. Instructions on firing forward antitank guns was listed. Airo communication was established with 125 P., for close support between 2nd and main effort.

CHARLES W. MCCORMACK,
Lt. Col., P. A.,
Commanding

2 Incls. -

Index #1 - S-1 Journal & Master of 030000
Operational Journal
0-2 & 0-3 reports submitted

Index #2 - Counterbattery reports Rec'd from 11 Corps
P. A. Rec'd. from C.B. & 34th Inf. Div.
0-2 reports Rec'd from C.B. & 34th Inf. Div.
0-3 reports Rec'd from C.B. & 34th Inf. Div.