

HEAD BATTALION 808th AIRBORNE DIVISION  
APO 144, United States Army

BATTALION HISTORY

OCTOBER 1944

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The north opened with the Battalion in the vicinity of Firemuela, in with the 88th Division in the vicinity of Castel del Rio, with a 2 miles northwest of it. B, working north from Reglio with a company of Tanks and the 337 and 338 Inf, has two platoons at Sanbi, in assembly between Firemuela and Reglio, has been ordered to Sanbi to support the 339 Inf. An Co is North of Firemuela, B and San Co's South of town. 85 Div has ordered an attack North along the main Reglio-Casoli, jumping off at 0600 from the high ground north of Casoli. The An is attached to the 752 Tank Bn who will support each regiment with one company. B will support 337, C the 339. B arrived at Sanbi.

Infantry attacked, though advance was not fully under way until about 0645.

An advance C opened at 0615, near Marcolodi. B is attempting to cross the gorge into right An sector near Sigrada, delayed by a landing which has failed. C has occupied position at 0625 firing into Spadetto. Investigation of Sanbi village disclosed a M IV mounting a 10.5, knocked out by 752 Lt Co Tank, M III counting a 75, destroyed, and an Italian M III Tank abandoned. B-2s firing during the attack on this point assisted at least in this effect.

An C opened with air C.

B-1 has destroyed the buildings at Spadetto firing about 150 rounds while tanks fired high burst 83 on personnel, assisting in its capture. B and Tanks have abandoned attempt to operate north from Sigrada, will return to ridge through Spadetto. B fired 30 rounds into houses and haystacks. B, now disposed as follows: C and B-1, 0630; B-2, 0635; B-3 (B-2) attached to B-760 Tank Bn at 0645.

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During the night B-3 moved 2 guns to Salsasso, 0645, by way of B-1 and across our sector. This move of over 3 miles puts him 1 mile west of B-2. A heavy downpour from dawn cancelled all tank operations, therefore.

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Tank Bn ordered road blocks in platoon strength at 0645 and east of Sigrada. C-1 took the first, B-2 the latter. From these positions B-2 destroyed an enemy Co at 0649 with 45 rounds. B fired 30 rounds in occupied houses, had 5 men wounded and 2 damaged by mortar fire. B-2 closed at Sanbi. 337 captured Casoli di Segrada, including two B-2s, which were surprised shortly after occupying positions without having fired. Tanks attempted to move to Spadetto, bogged down. C, 337, requested a platoon of M-1s be on Casoli to support attack at 0645, promised to clear mines from road Spadetto-Casoli and furnish guides to positions. B, alerted, will use B-1. Weather is clearing.

3 October

0300  
0500  
0630

337, thru 751, reported road cleared.

B informed, was enroute.

B-1 arrived at Casoni. His leading TD struck a mine near 90214, causing a wheel and shock absorbers without breaking track. The remainder of platoon crossed mine field without loss. Later in the day, at this point, B-1 T struck a mine in the road; B-1, B-2, B-3, and one man, while picking up the dead and wounded, were injured by debris when a litter jeep also struck a mine. Prior to B-1's arrival, about 75 enemy assembled in houses at 90214, awaiting infantry reaching in various road at that point by hand to land engagement, inflicted considerable losses, and withdrew to house. Occupied direct fire positions about 300 yards south of above house and shelled it, after which infantry occupied it. A B-1 gunner, spotting what appeared to be exhaust rising from a wooded area, shelled it. Later investigation found an M41 tank disabled, abandoned.

1815  
1915

B moved a platoon to 90214.

337 requested another platoon of B's; B-1 ordered to be sent, arrived about 1845, three a track enroute. 5 M's men in firing position, have fired 50 rounds.

1915

Ben to be moved from 90214 to 90214. At days end to be sent at 08114; C-1 and C-2, 90017; -3 90214; no action. 10 rounds into houses, causing considerable damage.

4 October

Division sent for a Liaison Officer and sent a staff officer to see us because the were touring up mine; B-1 visited the, learned offending M's were not ours. B fired 20 rounds in houses north of Casoni, made no noise. B-3 moved to 90214, stopped by demolitions. C-2 attached to B-752, did not move.

5 October

At Lewis, B-1, and 1 M's attacked by shell fire; B-1 fired 25 rounds into enemy occupied houses near 90214 from 90214. B-3, -4, and 1 M's (90214) moved to 90214 to fire a direct fire mission but was recalled about 1745 to fire indirect. He occupied at 90214, registered by tonight, B-3 observing, 10 rounds fired.

6 October

B fired 50 rounds direct and 50 indirect. Rain and demolitions prevented operations in 05 19 sector.

7 October

B assembled at 90214, near 3. Demolition at narrow. Roads drying.

8 October

Rain again prevented operations in this sector. However -3 from 90214 fired 50 rounds into occupied houses. B-1 fired 10 rounds into houses near 90214, causing 30 enemy to surrender, including an officer 1.4, who stated he had been sent there to "put" out with a M-2 on gun.

9 October

B-1 rounds having reduced the supply of M's ammunition, B-1 re-started a battery of M's for indirect fire. All of B's guns were stuck but he riddled out B-3, occupied a position vicinity 90214, and was engaged. Attempts to register by flash were unsuccessful; however he was assigned increasing missions and fired 10 rounds.

B, of Infantry Report, reported for indirect harassment fire with his direct fire gun via 93000. He registered by direct fire on Montecarlo, but was not successful.

10 October During the preceding night B-3 fired 195 rounds crosswise, depending on road and behind Montecarlo. B-2 moved to 95000, near Caseri di Montepo.

11 October During the night B-3 fired 150 rounds indirect harassment. B-2 moved to hilltop of Castellone di Anapo, fired 20 rounds into buildings on H. delle Farnate (91500) assisting B-3 to occupy it. B fired 167 indirect. B-1 fired 50 E and 10 W into occupied houses, Mt. Sora (93400); B-3 fired 30 E and 4 W into occupied houses, causing the surrender of 24 Gs.

12 October B-2 moved with tanks to 94200 near Hill 566, was followed later by rest of company. G at 93700.

13 October B-1 moved to 90700, North of S. Benetto di Anapo. B-2 moved to 90620. B-2 occupied positions at 91700, fired 41 rounds E and 40 into houses on Montecarlo, assisting in the capture by 307. Last round hit E, end of church as infantry went into E. B-2 put 2 guns on H. delle Farnate, (91500), fired 37 rounds in houses, assisting 308 to capture Hill 475. After dark 309 relieved the 307. B-1 fired 140, and B-2 37 rounds into occupied houses, neutralized enemy positions and caused Gs to surrender.

14 October B-2 fired 60 rounds into house at Tre Saggi (92200). The firing was at a range of 300 yds with infantry 100 yds from objective, which they then rushed and occupied. In rear closed south of Anapo (92100).

15 October A tank company caused all 40 guns of the division to occupy positions in the early hours before dawn. B-1 and B-3 occupied on ridge south of H. delle Farnate, B-2 remaining in position. B-1 took up positions vicinity of Hill 566. Fighting developed. B-2 fired 30 rounds from H. delle Farnate. B-2 moved to 90000, on road to San Giacomo.

16 October B-1-B-3 moved to Molinetta. Advances up Highway 600 as a matter of following up the construction of bridges. B-2 moved, this time to 90700 at 2000. Div arty requested a platoon to fire indirect. Arrangements were made with 732 on 10, but it decided in the two late to register. They are getting our former 3" tank gun, which will eliminate need to call on us for harassing missions. "Artificial Moonlight" was tried tonight. Searchlights are directed against clouds which reflect the light, illuminating roads and materially assisting night movement. 732 ordered a platoon on Hill 570 (Montecarlo) before dawn.

- 17 October 1st occupied Montevideo as planned. 1-3, with 1st Sgt. [unclear] commanding, put 2 guns in the [unclear] and fired on [unclear] [unclear] [unclear] effect. Heavy counterbattery killed Sgt [unclear] at 1437. He was commanding the [unclear] in order to win a [unclear] field position. 1-3 fired 150 rounds into [unclear] [unclear], destroying an ammo dump and taking 19 [unclear]. 1-1 moved to [unclear].
- 18 October 1-3 went into indirect position at 972172, fired 1st [unclear]. 1-1 is now at 972171. 1-1 moved up behind Montevideo. 1-1 moved two guns to Hill 455, making opening of trail to Hill 516 (945302) 1-1 is now in [unclear] [unclear] (973000). 1-1 fired 121 [unclear] and 19 [unclear] into houses west of Hill 455, resulting in the destruction of [unclear] [unclear] and one at [unclear]. 1-1 took much of his target area and targets are west of the road in [unclear] of [unclear], in [unclear] [unclear] with their right [unclear].
- 19 October 1-1 is now making [unclear] [unclear] by replacing the [unclear] [unclear] [unclear] [unclear]. Road from [unclear] is [unclear], will [unclear] [unclear] guns on the [unclear] side. 1-1-2 and 2 tanks attached to [unclear] [unclear] [unclear]. 1-1 tanks stuck at [unclear] [unclear] [unclear]. 1-1 [unclear] [unclear] a track.
- 20 October 1-1 moved to [unclear] (935485), giving us excellent observation of the [unclear] [unclear] - [unclear] [unclear] ridge, [unclear], [unclear] our sector. 1st [unclear] occupied [unclear] [unclear] (9732) which affords [unclear] direct fire and observation on [unclear] sector. 1-1 fired 3 [unclear], [unclear] of it to try [unclear] face; with direct [unclear], [unclear] can be [unclear] exactly where desired. 752 was given use of a [unclear] [unclear] [unclear] observation. Cannon from [unclear] is being arranged. 1-1 fired 3 rounds from [unclear] [unclear] across the valley.
- 21 October 1-3 from [unclear] fired [unclear] [unclear] over [unclear] to cover [unclear] [unclear] [unclear] [unclear]. 1-1 assembled guns [unclear] in position at [unclear] [unclear] (973000). 1-1 moved to 973006 on the [unclear] ridge, arriving 1447. 1-1 moved to 973008, on [unclear] Road.
- 22 October 1-1 moved to [unclear] in anticipation of a [unclear] to [unclear]. Heavy rains have [unclear] this road since 1-1 went up. [unclear] [unclear] [unclear] in the road has [unclear] [unclear].
- 23 October 1-1-3 occupied Hill 516, has a good field in [unclear] [unclear] sector, at [unclear] in [unclear]. 1-1 and 2 moved to 973212, near [unclear], to [unclear] support contact and [unclear] parties. Continued rains are [unclear] roads, though 1-1 was able to [unclear] [unclear] behind the crest of [unclear] [unclear].
- 24 October At [unclear], with 1-1, was [unclear] on [unclear] [unclear].
- 25 October During early morning, 1-1 assembled back at [unclear] [unclear] (973000), while 1-3 moved [unclear] and [unclear] [unclear] at 973177, in [unclear] between [unclear] [unclear] and [unclear]. In the afternoon, 1-1 occupied the indirect position [unclear] [unclear] by 1-3.

24 and 2 moved up the road to an assembly area at 7131. Star went to occupied positions in the vicinity of 7131 with four 50s, though 2 of these were empty. 2 overtook a staff truck, as it could not maneuver with tanks due to the lines advanced, it must be destroyed. The attack was halted today; the Corps will go on the offensive. The Battalion will be involved in a defense and counter-attack.

25 October Coordinated plans with 7th Div. 2nd Co will cover the warning system. This readjustment in positions on the road and terrain are now undertaken. Heavy rains continued. It will now be necessary to supply -3, -2 and -1 with tanks.

27 October on has out up to 1 at 7131, 7132, 7133, and on Hill 71, 7134. Logged tanks, and, are distance on foot and road for data. Occupation has delayed waiting by the latter. It is in front of organized line. 14 tanks, -3, was killed by artillery earlier this night but not found until the morning of the 28th. In first 28 rounds in last three days.

28 October Continued rain.

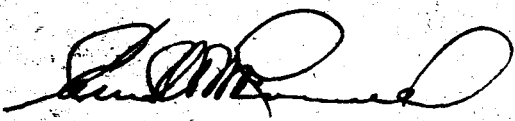
29 October Very rain, more rain. Corps prohibited use of 70mm for artillery.

30 October Clear morning, then more rain. Higher headquarters are prohibiting rest, training, rehabilitation, and maintenance. Maintenance is in a fair state now, but little can be done on these lines in forward positions, especially while weather is wet.

31 October

**R#**  
 In - 1 relieved from attachment to 7th Div. Do not attach to any unit who is responsible for execution of 2nd defense. We are satisfied with our plans, require no changes, at least in the immediate terrain remains impassable. We shall continue occupying positions. The attached division with 70s, 60s and 40s. 3 tanks at 7131 and 7132 plus 2 97mm overloading, and 200 into road; they are attached to 2nd Div also have pulled the 50s. On the new morning 7131 at 7132, entrenchments, begin, the main line front line have been advanced about 16 kilometers, or 10 miles. This distance is no indication of the amount of ammunition fired our seemingly impossible tank warfare. Then, though not being led to be done over engineer constructed roads. The 2nd division tently out, ordered the tanks they accompanied, primarily because of three tanks that were fire ready. However they can be fire ready did lose tracks. The primary destruction was done on the road by soft mud. In a few occasions roads blocked or were seriously impeded after the passage of a few vehicles, especially tanks. Most of the failures of the 2nd division in position were due to these conditions.

They are things were caused by mechanical failure, lack of power, or enemy action. The destroyers mentioned, could not be destroyed, but were damaged. In both cases the good gave way. One heavy engine was broken, except when badly shot or under enemy fire, they were quickly replaced. Two engines, damaged by driver's negligence was replaced. Preventive maintenance including overhauls was then performed on all in the field. Preventive maintenance & oiling consisted mainly from failure or severity of engine parts, though some was caused by accidents and enemy action. No destroyers were lost by enemy action. The one damaged but not destroyed, by mortar fire. Several destroyed merchant ships were also hit. One struck a mine, another by a mine, damaged a ship, and a third by a mine, did not break the back or injure the crew. An accidental collision and fire. The initial fire was severe indeed, 200 shells, of which 100 were 100 lb of the enemy fire was 100 lb. The pieces of the world a few times had exploded these fires the other should learn quickly, from the opportunity. At direct line ranges the height of burst can be controlled accurately. Large dispersion appears not unusual. No gun attacks in coastal waters into AG or other areas, another strike by to fire time. The effect is surprising. One officer and a first lieutenant acting as liaison leader were killed; 3 officers were wounded. 2 other officers killed, 1 wounded. Facilities available were very heavily destroyed and damaged, resulting in the destruction of at least six ships in the area and the capture of more than 60 men.



CHARLES H. HOFFMANN,  
Lieut Colonel, SA,  
Commanding.

Appendix 2A

- 1st Journal
- 2nd Report submitted
- 3rd Report, 35th Div
- 4th Report, 35th Div
- 5th Report, 37th Div
- 6th Report, 37th Div
- General Instructions, 35th Div
- General Instructions, 37th Div
- Instructions, 37th Div
- Liaison Reports, 35th Div
- Coast Artillery Intelligence and Counterbattery Reports, 21 Corps
- Messages

Appendix 2B

- 1st Journal
- Official Report
- General Report