

S E C R E T

HEADQUARTERS  
814th Tank Destroyer Battalion

APO 230, US Army  
7 January 1945

SUBJECT: After Action Report, Month of December 1944.

TO : The Adjutant General, Washington 25, D.C. (Through Channels)

1. 1 December 1944 found the 814th TD Bn in billets under Battalion control as part of 7th Armd Div troops, with the following exceptions: one Platoon Company B, one Platoon Company C, and one Platoon Rcn Company attached to CCR, 7th Armd Div. Hq and Hq Company, Company A and B and Rcn Company were in billets in Groot Haasdal, Holland while Company C was in billets at Heek, Holland.

2. The One Platoon of Company B, attached to CCR was in dug in positions between Prummern and Suggesterath, Germany, with mission of firing on targets of opportunity to the north east. The one Platoon of Company C, attached to CCR was in vicinity of Lindern, Germany and was being used to fire on targets of opportunity. The one Rcn Company Platoon attached to CCR was used as local security for the dug in guns.

814th TD Bn

1. Hq and Hq Company remained in billets at Groot Haasdal, Holland until 6 December when it moved to Hoensbroek, Holland, closing into billets at 1715 hours, and remaining there until 17 December performing maintenance and planning for future operations.

2. On 17 December all units of the Battalion reverted to Battalion control and units made march to Vielsalm, Belgium. This move was made on such a short notice that no one had any idea of our mission. We were ordered to make the move and go into an assembly area.

3. Upon arriving in Vielsalm about 0100 hours 18 December, Company A with one Platoon Rcn Company was attached to CCB, 7th Armd Div and ordered to vicinity of St Vith, Belgium. The Company was pulled out of the column before it reached the Battalion assembly area, and after refueling it moved to St Vith without incident.

4. The third Platoon Rcn Company and third Platoon Company C was ordered to set up Road Block at 797744 at 0100 hours 18 December, and the remainder of the Battalion closed into assembly area 3 miles east of Vielsalm at about 0230 hours 18 December 1944. The delay in closing was caused primarily by artillery units blocking narrow roads between Vielsalm and the assembly area.

5. Company B minus one Platoon was attached to CCR and moved to that area during the afternoon of 18 December while one gun section of Company B and Rcn (-) was given the mission of blocking and protecting the Vielsalm - Grand Halleux road. The Road Block set up at 0100 hours 18 December by one Platoon Company C and one Platoon Rcn Company was relieved.

- 1 -

S E C R E T

S E C R E T

(After Action Report, 814th TD Bn, month of Dec 44)

6. On 19 December a German tank was reported disabled in Houffalize and the 814th was ordered to send a small force up to knock it out. One section of TD's and one section of Rcn Co went on this mission, but no tank was discovered. On the return trip the force was ambushed near Somouren with the result that two officers were lost, either killed or missing, and one destroyer with two 1/4 tons lost.

7. On 20 December Task Force JONES was formed under the command of Lt Col JONES of the Battalion to cover the south flank of the 7th Armd Div sector from Deifeld - Ourth - Gouvey - Cheram. The CP was set up in Bovigny. TF JONES consisted of the following units:

Hq 814th TD Bn  
 Co C 814th TD Bn (-)  
 Rcn Co (-) 814th TD Bn  
 One Rcn Troop Co C 18th Cav  
 F Co 18 Cav  
 Five assault guns 18th Cav  
 Six Med Tks, 31st Tk Bn  
 17th Tk Bn (- 1 Med Co)  
 440th FA Bn  
 D Co 40th Tk Bn  
 Mortar Plat Co D 40th Tk Bn  
 2 Platoons Co A 33rd Engr Bn  
 Co G 112th Inf Regt.

With the forces under the control of Lt Col JONES organized, four forces were formed and assigned missions of setting up road blocks as follows:

One at Deifeld  
 Two at Gouvey (East and West)  
 One at Cheram, with one in reserve.

The Road Blocks were set up as planned, but on the night of 20 December the enemy attacked Gouvey and the West force which had entered the town, fought a withdrawal to the edge of the town and then withdrew to high ground to the NW. The East force established block near Gouvey Station to the NE of Gouvey.

8. On 21 December the East force entered the town of Gouvey and found only dead and wounded Germans. The east and west forces then formed and occupied high ground to the south of Gouvey.

9. The force at Cheram was attacked on the night of 20 December, but the attack was driven off. Another attack developed on the night of 21 December, but it too was driven off.

10. On 22 December the forces at Gouvey and Cheram were withdrawn to permit the Air Force to bomb, but the bombing never materialized. After this, Company C of the 814th TD Bn was attached to CCB and the Cheram force was withdrawn to Courtil and the Gouvey force remained to the north of the town.

11. On 23 December on Platoon Co C was returned to TF JONES and plans for the withdrawal were made. The task force was to withdraw after the 7th Armd Div, along with TF NELSON which was furnishing an Infantry screen to the East. The plan of TF JONES withdrawal was a leap-frog plan with one force passing through another until entire force had cleared Salm-Chateau.

- 2 -

S E C R E T

S E C R E T

(After Action Report, 814th TD Bn, month of Dec 44, Cont'd)

12. The withdrawal started at 1430 hours and proceeded according to plan until it was discovered that the road was cut off at Salm-Chateau after Hq section had passed through. This left the column lined up on the road. An attempt was made to drive the Germans from the town, but this failed. An alternate route was badly needed, and the S-2 of the 814th TD Bn suggested the route through St Maire which would by-pass Salm-Chateau. This route was taken about 2330 after the S-2 had been on a foot reconnaissance of the road for about a mile. This plan, however, hit a snag when the column came across a road block of trees and a crater just south of St. Maire. The road block seemed to be undefended at the time, but it was useless to try to remove the block as a bridge was blown across a small creek. A by-pass was attempted and after much difficulty with the soft ground and the stream bed, all mobile vehicles were gotten across and proceeded through St. Maire about 0300 hours and finally reached safety.

13. When the column first started to move down the St. Maire road the rear was attacked by tanks coming from the south. In the fight four German tanks were destroyed, but we lost the four destroyers which were guarding the columns rear. The column finally reached Harze, Belgium where TF JONES was dissolved and units returned to parent organizations on the morning of 24 December 1944.

14. Company A was returned to Bn control on 24 December and three destroyers were attached to Company C.

15. 814th TD Bn, Hq and Hq Co and Rcn Co remained in billets in Harze performing maintenance and rehabilitation for the remainder of the month.

16. On 30 December the Battalion was attached to the 75th Inf Div for tactical control after the 75th had relieved the 7th Armd Div.

#### Company A

1. Company A was under Bn control until 18 December 1944 when it was attached to CCB. (One platoon of Rcn Co attached at the same time). The company moved to St. Vith, Belgium and was sub-attached to 38th AIB. The Three gun platoons were separated to set up three separate defensive positions.

2. On the 19th of December the gun platoons moved to new positions and the 2nd Platoon destroyed 3 MK V tanks at range of about 2000 yards. On 20 December the Rcn Platoon was relieved. The 1st Platoon of Company A received an attack of 12 MK IV tanks which was repulsed after 5 of the tanks were destroyed.

3. Enemy Inf began to infiltrate the 3rd Platoons position about 1630 21 Dec. This turned into a bitter fight and a platoon of 23 AIB withdrew leaving the TD's with no infantry support and they were forced to withdraw leaving two M-10's, which were mired. The remainder of the platoon withdrew to the center of St. Vith and formed a road block. About 2330 the M-36 was hit by bazookas which damaged the gun forcing it to withdraw. The M-10 remained, knocking out the leading tank of a column of 8 blocking the road. The M-10's track was damaged but the crew repaired it.

- 3 -

S E C R E T

S E C R E T

(After Action Report, 814th TD Bn, month of Dec 44, Cont'd)

4. At 0230 hours 22 Dec all available men from Hq section were dismounted and joined with others of 23 AIB to dig in one mile north of Crombach, Belgium. At 1500 new positions were dug about 1000 yards in advance of these. From these positions they repulsed enemy infantry attacks with the assistance of artillery.

5. The 2nd platoon in the meantime had picked up the remaining destroyer of the 3rd platoon. At about 0100 the platoon moved to position 1000 yards west of Neundore, Belgium where it remained until 1000 hours when it joined the first plat. The Hq section men joined them and they moved to position between Neundorf and Crombach. Here one M-36 was hit and destroyed about 1830. The Company joined with 87th Cav and 31st Tk Bn to stop an attack by the enemy. In this action No. 1 gun of first platoon destroyed 3 MK VI tanks by direct fire. About 2000 an M-36 became mired and had to be abandoned. It was destroyed by incendiary grenades prior to abandonment.

6. On 23 Dec the Company withdrew with CCB and reverted to Bn control upon closing in Harze, Belgium on 24 Dec.

7. On 24 Dec three destroyers and 29 EM were attached to Co C and departed for Fays, arriving at 1715 hours, where they were put in mobile reserve. The rest of the company remained in Harze, performing maintenance and rehabilitation until it was attached to CCR and moved to Aywaille on 28 Dec where it was joined by 3 TD's which were released from Company C on 29 Dec.

8. Upon attachment of the Bn to 75th Inf Div for tactical control Company A moved to Deux-Rys, Belgium closing at 1515 hours 31 December.

#### Company B

1. 1 December found Company B in billets at Groot Haasdal, Holland, with the exception of the 2nd Platoon which was attached to Company C, which was in turn attached to CCR. This Platoon was in dug in positions between Prummern and Suggesterath, Germany.

2. About 1600 hours on 1 Dec Lt Rose, the platoon leader, was in the gunners seat of an M-36 experimenting with the controls so as to be familiar with them when he spotted a tank at a distance. Knowing that it was at a great range he sighted on it at a 4600 yard range which is the maximum range on the direct telescope sight. The first round was short, so he went up beyond the reticule and got an over, believing that the first shot was close he dropped down to 4600 again and got a hit. He fired 5 more rounds getting two hits and the tank exploded. This is the greatest range at which the organization has knocked out a tank by direct fire.

3. On 2 Dec the 1st Platoon (M-36) was attached to CCB and occupied dug in positions on high ground NE of Gereonsweiler to cover Linnich - Lindern road prior to daylight 3 Dec. These guns remained in positions until the night of 16 Dec when all units reverted to Bn control. The crews were changed at regular intervals to allow all men to get some rest and hot food.

4. The company moved with the battalion to Vielsalm and on 18 Dec (- 1 Plt) was attached to CCR and went into position in town of Petit-Thier where they remained until the withdrawal. They reverted to Bn control at Harze, Belgium on 24 Dec.

S E C R E T

S E C R E T

(After Action Report, 814th TD Bn, month of Dec 44, Cont'd)

5. At 0830 hours 24 Dec the 3rd Platoon was attached to CCA and proceeded to vicinity of Manhay, Belgium being joined by the remainder of the company at about 1700 hours after the release from CCR.

6. On 25 Dec CCA attacked with the objective of taking Manhay. Objective was not reached and Company B set up road blocks in vicinity of Vaux-Chavanne and Chanip De Harre.

7. No contact was made with the enemy during the rest of the month, but occasional artillery and mortar fire was placed on Company positions.

Company C

1. On 1 Dec Company C was attached to CCB with one Platoon attached to CCR in vicinity of Lindern, Germany and the balance of Company in billets in Heek, Holland.

2. On 2 Dec Platoon relieved from CCR and Company plus one Platoon Company B attached, moved to CCB assembly area vicinity of Hunshoven, Germany. During that night, one Platoon (M-36) of Company C and the attached platoon of Company B occupied dug in positions to cover Linnich - Lindern road.

3. Company C remained in this area receiving no missions until 16 Dec when it moved to Veilsalm, Belgium.

4. On arriving in vicinity of Veilsalm the Company remained under Bn control forming part of TF JONES, until 22 Dec when it was attached to CCB and moved to vicinity of Crombach, Belgium. Upon reporting to CCB, the company was split; 2 platoons attached to TF BOYLAND and placed north of Crombach and NE of Hinderhausen, with the 3rd platoon attached to TF ERLENBUSCH in position north of railroad cut at CROMBACH. At 2200 hours the enemy shelled the railroad bridge and enemy infantry attacked. Assault guns, AT guns, and friendly infantry withdrew and the Company Commander was ordered to pull the platoon back. The Platoon however, was in contact with the enemy, and during the withdrawal through the town was surrounded, but the TD's overran many of the enemy infantry, and here the company commander met the C.O. of the 17th Tk Bn. They found forces and arranged a defense which held the town until daylight on 23 Dec 1944.

5. A plan of general withdrawal was announced at 0700 hours 23 Dec with 3rd Platoon of Company C occupying high ground to SW overlooking Crombach and balance of CCB withdrawing through its position. When CCB cleared the ridge the 3rd Platoon fell in as rear guard and fought its way through Braumlauf in spite of heavy small arms and bazooka fire, towards Maidingen. Upon reaching Beho it was attached to TF JONES and acted as rear guard for that unit.

6. The 1st Platoon executed the withdrawal without contact with the enemy.

7. The 2nd Platoon with mission of covering withdrawal, found Crombach route cut so used alternate route. At close range they repulsed enemy tank attack on Hinderhausen with the loss of two M-36's, but in the fight knocked out three MK VI's and on MK V. The Platoon then withdrew to high ground to the Sw, but the Platoon Sgt reported that they were being encircled. One gun was ordered to Commanster while the rest of the Platoon covered CCB's withdrawal and then it withdrew to that town. Upon reaching the town it was again subjected to enemy tank attack, and in the fight

S E C R E T

S E C R E T



(After Action Report, 814th TD Bn, month of Dec 44, Cont'd)

knocked out one MK VI and two MK V's, but lost a third destroyer, which left the Platoon only one M-36. It was then ordered to withdraw to Neuville where it set up a road block with infantry. It held this position until 1900 hours when it withdrew to Harze, Belgium without further incident.

8. On 24 December the 3rd Platoon Company A was attached to Company C to form a provisional Company which set up road block in vicinity of Fays, Belgium. These were maintained during balance of month.

For the Commanding Officer:

WALTER W. LAND  
Captain FA  
Adjutant

1 Incl:  
Unit Journal, month of Dec 44

S E C R E T