

CLASSIFICATION REMOVED

**AFTER ACTION REPORT
for the
MONTH OF FEBRUARY 1945**

**621st TANK DESTROYER BATTALION
APO 339
UNITED STATES ARMY**

329-632

3121

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Inclosure No. 1: BATTLE LESSON NOTES
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SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

- Inclosure No. 2, S-1 Journal
- Inclosure No. 3, S-2 Journal
- Inclosure No. 4, S-3 Journal

MAPS AND OVERLAYS

(In attached envelope)

1/25,000 S.M. MAP - Sheets 5003-4, 5103-4, 5804, 5904.

Overlay No. 1: Positions occupied During Phase VII.

Overlay No. 2: Positions occupied During Phase VIII.

Overlay No. 3: Positions occupied During Phase IX.

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HEADQUARTERS
821st Tank Destroyer Battalion (SP)
AFB 339

1 March 1945

AFTER ACTION REPORT FOR THE MONTH OF FEBRUARY 1945

I. SUMMARY OF OPERATIONS

1. PHASE VII: Preparation for the Attack on the Roer River Line.

a. During the period, 1 February to 28 February 1945, the 821st Tank Destroyer Battalion remained attached to the 29th Division Artillery.

(1) At the beginning of the period, elements of the 821st Tank Destroyer Battalion were employed in the Division zone as follows:

(a) Company "A" was in assembly position in the vicinity of Durbealar, map coordinates 9557.

(b) The 1st Platoon of Company "B" was in a training area in the vicinity of Mariadorf, map coordinates 9152, converting from "Towed" to "Self Propelled". The 2nd Platoon was in indirect fire position in the vicinity of Pattern, map coordinates 0054. The 3rd Platoon was in direct fire position in the vicinity of Schopheven, map coordinates 0553.

(c) The 1st and 3rd Platoons of Company "C" were in direct fire positions, the 1st Platoon in the vicinity of Harsenhansen, map coordinates 9860; the 3rd Platoon in the vicinity of Freialdenhoven, map coordinates 9559. The 2nd Platoon was in indirect fire position in the vicinity of Freialdenhoven, map coordinates 9559.

(d) Reconnaissance Company, less the 3rd Platoon, was in assembly position in the vicinity of Hengen, map coordinates, 9253. The 3rd Reconnaissance Platoon was maintaining an O.P. in the vicinity of Fier, map coordinates 0552. The O.P. at Fier was abandoned on 3 February 1945 and the 3rd Platoon joined the company at Hengen.

b. During the period, 1 February 1945 to 22 February 1945, the 821st Tank Destroyer Battalion continued to occupy defensive positions and to fire indirect harassing and interdiction fires. A total of 749 rounds was fired indirect during this period.

(1) On 8 February 1945 the Battalion was alerted for participation in the attack on the Roer River Line. All officers and enlisted men were briefed on the impending operations. In addition to maintaining defensive positions and firing indirect missions the Battalion engaged in intensive training in preparation for offensive action. Vehicles and equipment were maintained for immediate employment.

(2) On 8 February 1945 one Destroyer of the 3rd Platoon of Company "A" fired 13 rounds of AFG and 12 rounds of GPT 105 on known and suspected enemy O.P.'s located in Breich, map coordinates 0362. The enemy was denied the use of these positions during this period.

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Subject: After Action Report for the Month of February 1945:

(3) At the end of the period 22 February 1945 all Destroyer Company of the Battalion had completed conversion from "Towed" to "Self propelled" and were completely equipped with M-10 Destroyers.

2. Division Attack on the Roer River Line.

a. On 23 February 1945 the 27th Infantry Division attacked to force a crossing of the Roer River, to capture Julian and Broich, and establish a bridgehead on the east side of the Roer River.

(1) In support of the attack to cross the Roer River, the 1st and 2nd Platoons of Company "B" and the 1st and 2nd Platoons of Company "A" fired a total of 4,204 rounds of HE indirect; 1,930 rounds were fired between the hours of 0300 and 0600, 2,334 rounds were fired between the hours of 0600 and 1200. The fire was directed at targets to the east of Julian and Broich. The four Destroyer Platoons were relieved of their indirect fire missions on the afternoon of the 23rd and joined their companies in a position of readiness awaiting orders to cross the Roer River.

(2) On the morning of the 23rd one officer and five enlisted men from Reconnaissance Company's Pioneer Platoon crossed the Roer River immediately behind the Assault Infantry. The crossing was made by foot bridge at OHL. Their mission was to clear mine fields from routes and direct fire positions for Destroyers of the Battalion, report progress of the Infantry and to report the strength of enemy resistance with special attention to armor. The patrol made periodic reports by radio, completed their mission and returned to the Company area at 1500.

(3) Company "A" and Company "C" crossed the Roer River on the 24th. Both companies immediately went into direct fire positions in direct support of Infantry elements of the 27th Division. Company "A" on the high ground east of Broich, map coordinates 0261; Company "C" on the high ground east of Julian in the vicinity of Stetternich, map coordinates 0277. Company "A" fired 53 rounds of HE and 1 round of APC on suspected enemy positions in support of the Infantry's attack to expand the Division bridgehead in the vicinity of Broich. The 3rd Platoon of Company "C" fired 26 rounds of HE and 4 rounds of APC at enemy heavy mortar positions in the vicinity of Stetternich. The enemy positions were neutralized. The 2nd Platoon of Company "C" fired one round of HE at an enemy machine gun position in the vicinity of Stetternich. The enemy gun position was destroyed.

(4) One Reconnaissance Platoon was attached to each Destroyer Company for reconnaissance and additional security. The 1st Reconnaissance Platoon was attached to Company "B", the 2nd Reconnaissance Platoon was attached to Company "C" and the 3rd Reconnaissance Platoon was attached to Company "A". The Reconnaissance Platoons moved with the Companies they were attached to and operated with them during both phases of operation from 22 February to 26 February.

(a) Prior to moving the M-10 Destroyers across the Roer River, Platoon Leaders, with a four man combat patrol from their attached Reconnaissance Platoon, made foot reconnaissance for gun positions in the zone of the Division bridgehead.

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Cont'd: After Action Report for the Month of February 1945.

(5) On 25 February the Division Bridghead was secure and had already begun to push to the north of Julich. On this date the remaining elements of the Battalion, with the exception of the Rear Echelon, crossed the Roer River.

(a) In support of the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 116th Infantry's attack on Stetternich, map coordinates 0660, Walldorf, map coordinates 0762, and Gusten, map coordinates 0863, on the 25th, the 2nd and 3rd Platoons of Company "C" fired 40 rounds of 81 and 11 rounds of AIC direct. The fire was directed at enemy gun emplacements, all types of buildings suspected of housing the enemy and targets of opportunity. One known enemy 88mm towed gun and one known enemy machine gun position were destroyed.

(b) On the 25th, members of the 2nd Reconnaissance Platoon captured 7 German soldiers in the vicinity of Stetternich, map coordinates 0659.

3. PHASE II: The Drive to the North and East from Julich:

a. On the 26th of February 1945 elements of the 29th Infantry Division had captured and secured all assigned objectives directly east of Julich and had turned north from Julich and continued to attack, to capture objectives north and east of Julich.

b. During this phase of operations, 26 February to 28 February 1945, Destroyer platoons of the 821st Tank Destroyer Battalion moved with the Infantry and tanks of the 29th Infantry Division from the vicinity of Julich (map coordinates 0262), Wersch (map coordinates 0463), Walldorf (map coordinates 0762) and Gusten (map coordinates 0863) to the vicinities of: Wickrathberg (map coordinates 0780), Gadderath (map coordinates 0981), Basserath (map coordinates 1181), Burselen (map coordinates 1282) and Naal (map coordinates 1383).

(1) As the Infantry and tanks pushed forward, 821st Destroyers provided close-in direct support for the Infantry and mutual support for the tanks. As the Infantry, Tank and Tank Destroyer teams approached a town that proved to be an enemy strong point, Destroyer guns would fire direct covering fire at buildings. This fire neutralized enemy machine gun positions and denied enemy snipers the use of the buildings. When enemy armor or emplaced anti-tank guns held up the advance of the Infantry, Destroyer guns were called upon to neutralize the enemy positions. Tanks and Tank Destroyers were called upon in accordance with the type of mission to be performed and ordered to either to outflank enemy strong points in and around towns. When enemy resistance was neutralized, Tank Destroyers immediately assumed defensive anti-reconized positions against possible enemy counterattacks, while the Infantry consolidated their positions and prepared to move on to the next objective.

(2) Reconnaissance Platoons moved with Destroyer Companies. Their missions were to determine the condition of roads, and to ascertain enemy strength with particular attention to enemy armor. In addition to reconnaissance missions they maintained liaison between the Destroyers and the Infantry, assisted with radio communications and provided additional security.

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Cont'd: After Action Report for the Month of February 1945.

(a) In the three days of operations, 25 February through 28 February 1945, the Battalion destroyed seven enemy tanks, two self propelled guns, six towed anti-tank guns, two armored personnel carriers and captured seventy four German soldiers.

(3) At the end of the period 2400, 28 February 1945, Destroyer Companies were continuing the advance to the north with elements of the 29th Infantry Division. Company "B" was the forward element of the Battalion. The forward elements of Company "B" were in the vicinity of Wal, map coordinates 190835. The 1st Reconnaissance Platoon was with the forward elements.

II BATTLE CASUALTIES

1. As the result of enemy action the following casualties were suffered:

a. Two enlisted men were Killed in Action-

- 1- By enemy machine gun fire.
- 1- As result of enemy artillery fire.

b. One officer and sixteen enlisted men were wounded-

- 1- By shell fragments from enemy mortar fire.
- 9- By shell fragments from enemy artillery fire.
- 3- By enemy small arms fire.
- 1- By fragments from an enemy aerial bomb.

III AWARDS AND DECORATIONS

1. For heroic achievement in military operations against the enemy on 26th November 1944, the following named enlisted men were awarded the Bronze Star Medal:

Sgt Murray A. Lipson, 32708217 (Posthumously)
Cpl Milton Brodsky, 32707024 (Posthumously)
Pfc Vern Mary, 39615333 (Posthumously)

S/Sgt Stanley H. Morrill, 39237112
Sgt Desime A. Lansing, 39275372
Cpl Ignacio C. Garcia, 39854420
Cpl John I. Torres, 39854430
Pfc Homer H. Towell, 33851774

2. The Purple Heart was awarded the following named officer and enlisted men for wounds received in action against the enemy on the dates following their names:

1st Lt Thomas M. Rush, O-1825063 23 February 1945

Pfc Ahrend W. Imbach, 32708300 15 February 1945

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Continued after action reports for the month of February 1945:

IV COMMANDING OFFICERS

1. Lt Col Howard H. Arbury was in command of the Battalion for the period from 1 January 1945 to 31 January 1945.
2. Company commanders for the period from 1 February to 28 February 1945, were as listed below:

Company "A" - Capt Edward A. Burke

Company "B" - 1st Lt. Floyd F. Ginder

Company "C" - 1st Lt. Dale A. Mafziger

Hon Company - 1st Lt. Herman H. Von Benge

Hq. Company - Capt Harry G. J. Sneed

Howard H. Arbury
HOWARD H. ARBURY
Lt Col., FA
COMMANDING

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HEADQUARTERS
321st Tank Destroyer Battalion (SP)

1 March 1945

BATTLE LESSON NOTES AND CONCLUSIONS

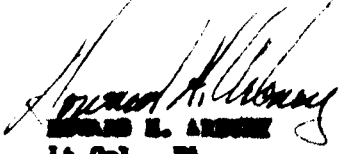
1. When M-10 Destroyers are hit and set on fire by enemy guns, the open turret enables crew members to escape from the burning vehicle. The open turret, however, is vulnerable to enemy mortar and artillery fire when not on the move. Our men swear by the open turret and do not want any form of covering when moving out to engage enemy armor. When the vehicle is parked in a position of readiness or is occupying defensive positions a covering for the turret is improvised by the use of boards and sand bags. This material is readily obtainable and can be easily removed when the Destroyers move out for the attack.

2. Every man in the M-10 crew should be armed with a pistol. Rifles and carbines are awkward to handle while firing the 3" gun. When a Destroyer is hit by enemy fire the crew may have to leave the vehicle too fast to stop for their guns. This leaves them to face enemy infantry unarmed. Side arms would also give the crew members of a knocked out Destroyer more freedom of action in handling the Bazooka against enemy tanks.

3. M-10 Destroyers are equipped with machine gun mounts on the rear, primarily for protection against enemy aircraft. Our Destroyers have been modified by equipping them with an alternate mount on the front of the turret. In many instances when moving forward in an attack on enemy positions the machine gun on the forward mount was used effectively on enemy ground troops. Fire from the machine gun was especially effective in close-in fighting in towns.

4. Ammunition trailers for M-10's should never be used while advancing across country where there is danger of mine fields, this is especially hazardous at night. Maneuverability is impaired due to the fact that, with the trailer, the Destroyer cannot be backed out of the minefield. Destroyers in such a position provide a perfect target for enemy artillery.

5. Training in Infantry, Tank and Tank Destroyer coordination in attacking across open terrain proved its worth during the rapid advance of the current operations. One specific instance clearly demonstrated this fact. On the 27th of February, Infantry, Tanks and Tank Destroyers were moving in an attack from Guster to Aselin when an enemy tank fired on our tanks. The enemy tank was concealed from our Destroyers by a hay stack but was spotted by the muzzle flash. The Destroyers fired a round of HE into the hay stack, setting it on fire. The enemy was apparently confused as to where the fire was coming from and moved to the Destroyer's side of the hay stack and was clearly silhouetted against the burning hay. At a range of 2,500 yards the enemy tank was an easy target.


EDWARD M. ARNOLD
Lt Col., FA
COMMANDING

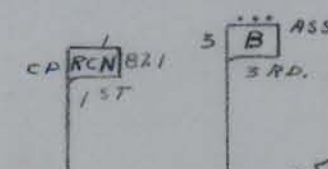
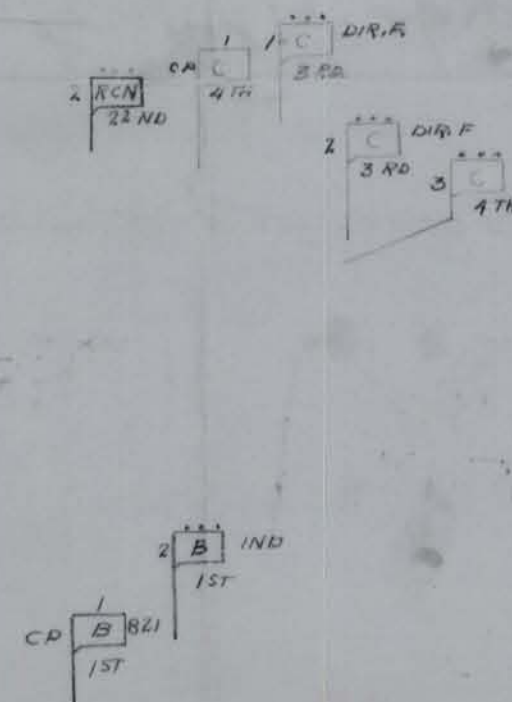
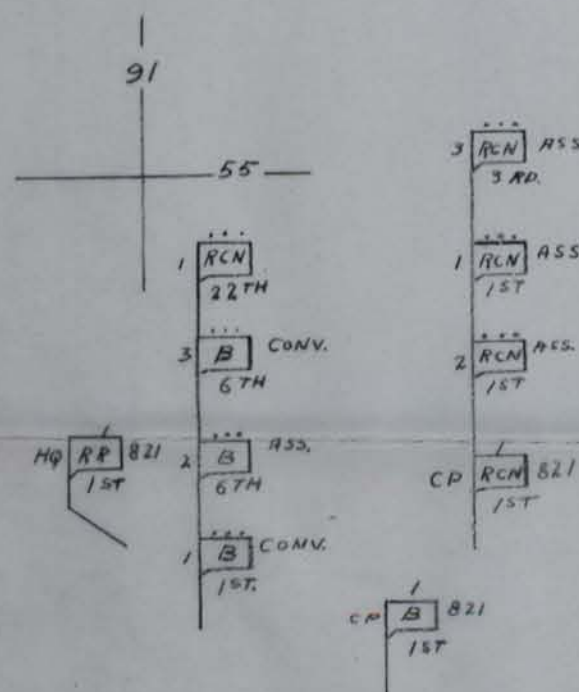
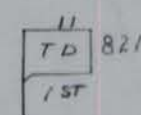
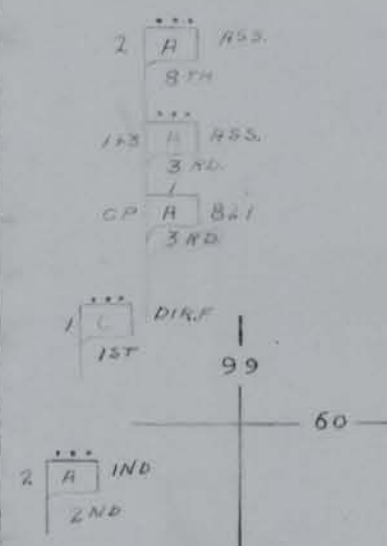
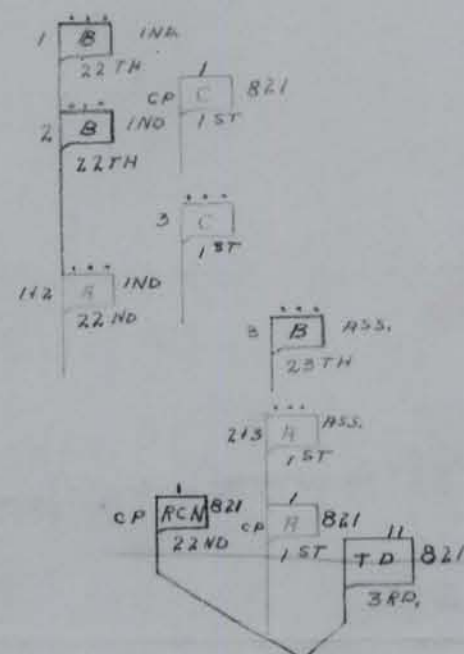
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PHASE VII
 OVERLAY NO 1
 MAPS: GSGS 447
 SHEETS 5003
 5004
 5103
 5104

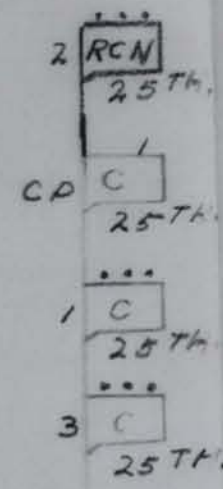
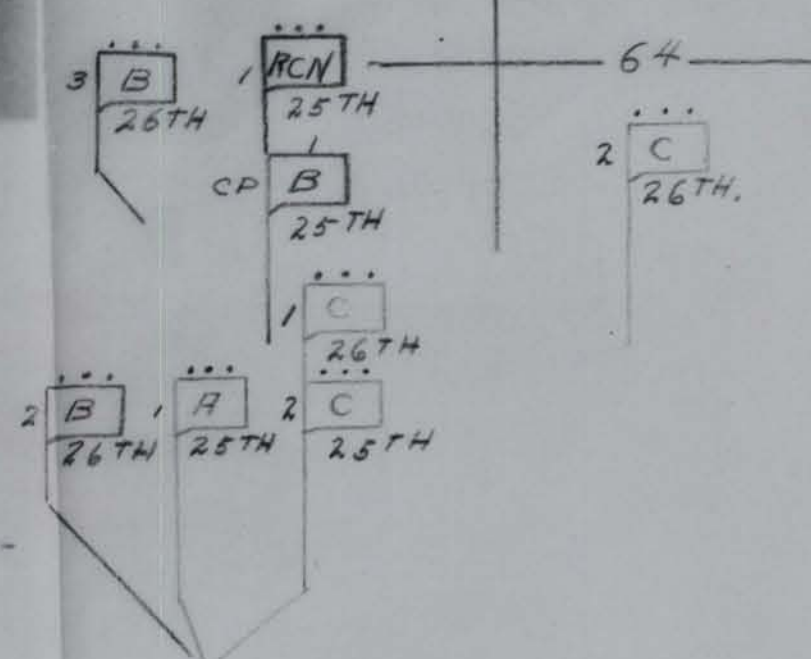
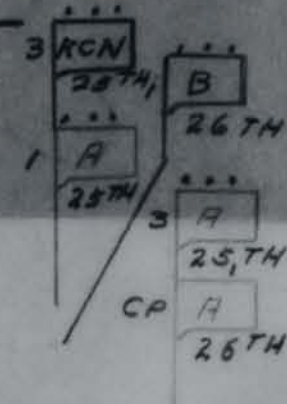
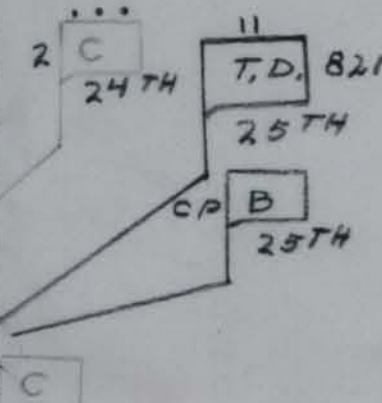
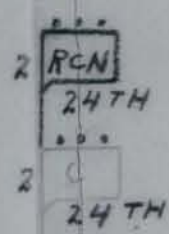
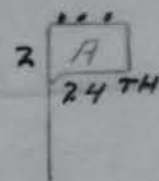
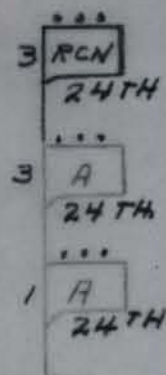
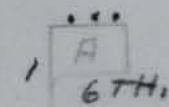
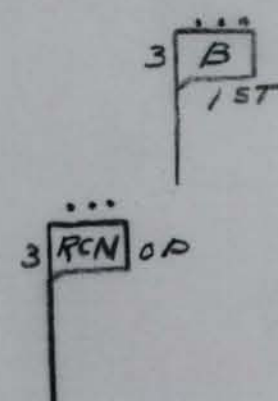
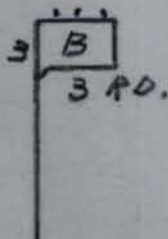
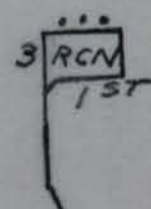
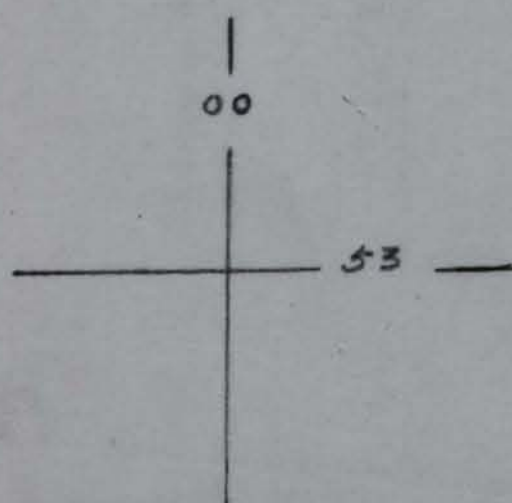
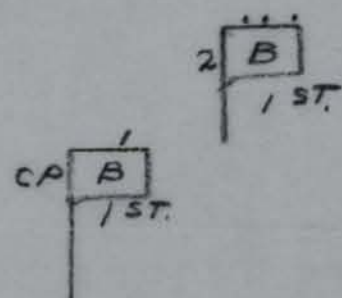
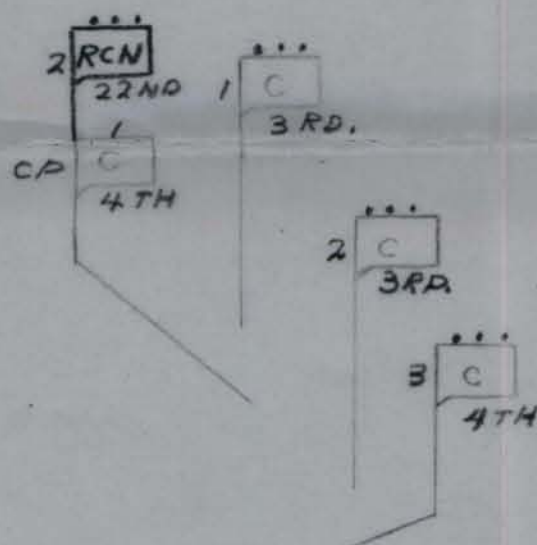
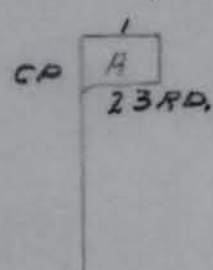
LEGEND:

ASS.- ASSEMBLY POSN.
 IND.F- INDIRECT FIRE
 DIR.F- DIRECT FIRE
 CONV.- CONVERSION



PHASE VIII
 OVERLAY N22
 MAPS: GSGS 4414
 SHEETS 5003
 5004
 5103
 5104

LEGEND:
 ASS- ASSEMBLY POSN.
 IND.F- INDIRECT FIRE
 DIR.F- DIRECT FIRE
 CONV.- CONVERSION



PHASE IV
OVERLAY NO 3

MAPS: GSGS 4414

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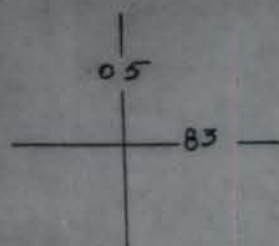
LEGEND:

ASS.-ASSEMBLY POSN.

IND.-INDIRECT FIRE

DIR.F.-DIRECT FIRE

CONV.-CONVERSION



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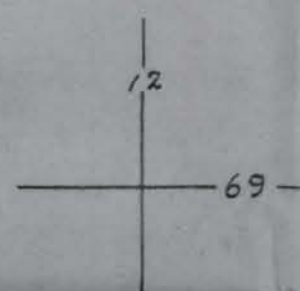
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