

HEADQUARTERS  
899TH TANK DESTROYER BATTALION  
APO 230 U.S. ARMY

15 July 1944.

SUBJECT: Actions - 899th T.D. Bn. - July 11th, 1944.

TO : C.G. Ninth Infantry Division Artillery, AP O 9, U.S. Army.

1. In compliance with Verbal Order C.G. 9th Div. Arty. the following report is submitted.

The Battalion was alerted by Hq. 9th Div. Arty. at approximately 0300 hrs. 11th July 1944, and notified of enemy tanks in vicinity of 401709. This was transmitted to the companies of the 899th T.D. Bn., who were at this time, each attached to an Infantry Regiment of the 9th Inf. Div.

Reconnaissance Company immediately sent reconnaissance elements forward into the area and patrolled generally the complete division sector. At this time, however, the tanks and German infantry were in his rear and very little contact was obtained. Estimate and reports of Rcn. Co. Commander and platoon leaders indicated that the enemy force was composed of at least one Battalion of Mk V Tanks reinforced (10 tanks), very few Mk IV Tanks, and at least one Regiment of Infantry. P/W reports later verified this estimate.

Actions and orders by company of the three destroyer companies follow:

Company "A" - 899th T.D. Bn.

At about 0200hrs, 11 July 1944 enemy armor of at least one Battalion in strength approaching from the South and Southwest of CR 429721 attacked the 9th Div. sector heading toward ST. JEAN DE DAYE. One column of armor moving Northeast from afore mentioned coordinates penetrated our infantry lines near LE DESERT. The number of tanks in this column is believed to be approximately 10 and were on the right side of the road at 454733, apparently attempting to force an opening through our Anti-tank defenses East of that point approximately 200 yards on unimproved road leading to LA PERRINE 471736. 1st Platoon Co. "A", 899th T.D. Bn. was in A.T. positions in vicinity of 455733. Upon hearing the German armor vehicles approaching through orchard 200 yards to their West they fired on the leading tank. The tank was immediately set aflame, exposing three other enemy tanks. They fired two more rounds into the burning tank hitting same in the lower portion of turret causing the round to ricochet down into the tank. The crew then fired on two other tanks in that area, both of which were set on fire, but upon investigation the following morning had been withdrawn to their rear. It was impossible to determine the exact location of the hits. The action taken by this gun crew undoubtedly stopped the attack in this sector. One M-10 was put out of action as result of counter-battery fire. Four casualties were suffered. At this point the enemy armor had penetrated our lines approximately 500 yards. This action took place about 0300 hrs, 11 July '44.

At about 0200 hrs, 11 July another column moving a Northerly direction along an unimproved road from CR 434723 to CR 444746 approached and penetrated our Infantry lines upon turning to the S.E. in the direction of ST. JEAN DE DAYE. This column was composed of one Mk IV tank and at least 10 Mk V tanks accompanied by 4 or more large half tracks. Our infantry lines were penetrated at about 444745. The drive was along the unimproved road and reached a point at 458746.

(Cont'd.)

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Company "A" (Cont'd.)

At approximately 0200 hrs, the 3rd Pltn. Leader, Lt. Hubbard, Co. "A", 89th T.D. Bn. received a message to report to Bn. CP at 449743. Before leaving he left instructions to alert the platoon and establish an Anti-tank defense. The platoon had heard this armor approaching previous to Lt. Hubbard's departure, and moved back over the unimproved road in an Easterly direction to 459747 when the enemy tank column reached the point afore mentioned. Sgt. Maroney's M-10 fired upon the leading tank - due to darkness it was impossible to determine his hits. Another M-10 supporting Sgt. Maroney's M-10 fired at the flash of the leading enemy tank when that tank returned fire upon Sgt. Maroney's knocking it out of action. The leading German tank was totally destroyed by the firing of Sgt. Strukul's M-10. The destruction of this leading Mk IV tank halted the column in its drive toward ST. JEAN DE BAYE.

At approximately 0530 hrs, the "A" Co. Commander reorganized the remainder of the 3rd Pltn, which had withdrawn to positions at approximately 463753 and with assistance of the mine removal platoon of the 39th Inf. and 3 Medium tanks proceeded up the unimproved road with infantry leading the tanks from 461754 to 458747. A considerable amount of German small arms fire was encountered. It was difficult to determine the extent of the German penetration at that time. The column proceeded to the RJ at 453747. Request was made for reinforcing infantry. While awaiting the arrival of a company of infantry, Lt. Hubbard rejoined his platoon. He instructed one M-10 to proceed South over unimproved roads from RJ 458747 to RJ 459745, to turn West along road and to take up the position in the field at 457744. From that position he designated targets to be fired upon, composed of 3 Mk V's "Panther" tanks on the improved road facing East at 456746. Approximately 12 rounds APCBDF were fired - 3 rounds hit the leading tank on the right side of the hull, 1 more round was put into the muzzle break - 1 round hitting the 2nd tank above the track - 1 round hitting the 3rd tank in the rear as it was sitting on the South side of the road in a field facing North. All three (3) tanks were immediately set on fire. During the firing one (1) large enemy half-track vehicle leading the tanks was destroyed. This enemy column had penetrated our infantry lines approximately 2000 yards before it was stopped by the fire from this platoon.

Company "C" - 89th Tank Destroyer Battalion

At approximately 0245, morning of July 11th, 1944 the guard of "C" Co., 89th T.D. Bn. warned the Company Commander that German troops had infiltrated thru the lines of the 47th Inf. and were approximately 400 yards South of the Company CP, which was then located West of LE MESNIL-VERRON (446753). Small arms fire and shouting, which was thought to be Germans, could be heard. The Company Comdr. then talked to a soldier from the A.T. Co. of the 47th Inf. Regt. who said that Germans were all around our positions. He then alerted the 3 platoons, which were generally South and West of the CP position at that time and told them to be on the alert for any German troops. The 1st Sgt. immediately organized the men and Co. Hqs. around the hedgerow.

At approximately 0330 hrs, the 3rd Pltn, which was located at 444749 reported that they were under small arms fire and could hear vehicles moving South of their position, but that they could hold their position. Small arms fire and intermittent artillery firing continued throughout the early morning. At approximately 0800 hrs, it was learned from the 47th Inf. that the 3rd Bn. had been cut off and that the German Infantry and Armored elements were between the 3rd Bn. and the Regimental CP.

Company "C" (Cont'd)

Several 3rd. Bn. Medic and vehicles had been captured by the Germans. The 3rd. Bn. at that time was generally South of the 47th CP in the vicinity of 456735. The "C" Co. Comdr. then told the Regt'l S-3 he would hold his two platoons of his company where they could cover the CR at 443746 and RJ at 450755. At this time the Regt'l CP was under heavy artillery fire and was in the process moving back to a location at 446757.

The "C" Co. Comdr. then returned to the Co. CP and received a report from his 3rd. Platoon that they had just knocked out a large enemy tank which was later confirmed to be a Mk V Panther at CR 443746. This confirmed the previous report that hostile troops were between front infantry elements and the Regt'l 3rd CP. They also reported that they had killed several German Infantry which were leading the tank and some which were riding on the back of the tank. The Co. Comdr. went to the gun positions of the M-10 which destroyed the Mk V tank located at 444746 and told them to be on the watch for more German tanks, for as we had learned in the past, the Germans usually employed their tanks at least in pairs. He then received a report from Lt. Hays, that enemy tanks had been observed near the town of EL SOMMELIERES (456747). He then took one section of the 3rd Platoon and sent them S.E. to take up positions covering the bridge at 453752. This movement was reported to the Regt'l of the 47th Inf. In the meantime the 2nd Pln. of Co. "C" was providing the 2nd Bn. of the 47th Inf with protection in the vicinity of 426745. The 1st. Platoon was with the 1st Bn. of the 47th Inf. which had the mission of clearing out the German infantry and tanks which had come in behind the 3rd Bn. of the 47th.

At approximately 1330 a report was received from the 3rd. Platoon of "C" Co. that two enemy tanks had attempted to cross the CR at 443746 and that 2 Mk V's had been knocked out and one destroyed had been hit. Almost simultaneously a report from the Platoon Leader of the 1st Platoon of "C" Co. was received, who was covering the advance of the 1st Bn. as it moved along the road running south from RJ at 439753 to RJ at 439758, that his platoon had destroyed three (3) German tanks in the vicinity of 444746 with no losses in his platoon. It was later learned that these three (3) tanks had been hiding in a hollow where they could fire upon the advancing infantry column and were moving across an open field where they could fire upon the column when they were engaged by M-10's. All three enemy tanks were destroyed before they could even fire a single round. This platoon continued to follow the 1st. Bn. in support and destroyed machine gun nests and a German vehicle loaded with personnel at vicinity of 740431.

The 2nd. Pln. had seen no tanks during the day. Late that evening the Co. Comdr. personally inspected the six (6) German tanks which were destroyed and they were all confirmed to be Mk V Panther tanks. As a result of personal reconnaissance and from information gathered by P/W's, it was believed that the enemy force which infiltrated behind the 3rd. Bn. consisted of no less than a battalion of Mk V Panther Tanks and one Regiment of Infantry. It was since learned that this enemy force had the mission of taking EL SOMMELIERES.

Company "B" - 899th Tank Destroyer Battalion

At approximately 0300 hrs, 11 July 1944, a message came to alert Company - "B" working through at coordinates 457734 - Request further information on enemy tanks. The Company Commander, Co. "B", 899th T.D. Bn. contacted all of his platoon leaders in person and one by radio, giving them locations to which they would move if company were committed, and also notified the Platoon Leaders that the attack to area "B" would be delayed.

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Company "B" (Cont'd)

The Reconnaissance Cpl. was sent to reconnoiter roads behind "C" Co., and sent the Co. Executive Officer to contact Recon. Co. and Captain Carter, Sr. S-3, who informed the Co. Comdr. he was trying to get control of the company. Lt. Green came back with Captain Carter's plan for employment of Company "B" in support of "A" or "C" Company. Co. Executive reconnoitered road to ST. JEAN DE D'AYE and bridge near COUVERHEM to determine best available road net for lateral movement.

A telephone call from Bn. CO was received giving latest details of battle on Metzger wire, and the Company Comdr. was told he would remain with itnaog until relieved by phone message. Platoon locations and plan of employment was given to the Bn. CO.

At 0950 hrs. the Company Comdr. received a message by phone of tank column of 9 to 12 tanks at 434723. Report from Bn. CO also stated that 10 tanks were on main road. 1st and 3rd Platoons were alerted to move into rear of 47th Inf. 2nd Ptn. and 2nd Bn. of 60th Inf. attached to 47th Inf. moved into "A" objective.

Platoons were kept continually notified of reported locations of enemy armor but it was never necessary to commit this company because "A" and "C" Companies destroyed 13 tanks, after which the tanks withdrew and the fighting was confined to small pockets of German Infantry trying to get back to their own lines.

ROY K. LORANCE,  
Major, 899th T.D. Bn.,  
Commanding