

## RECONNAISSANCE COMPANY, 601st T. D. Bn.

BATTLE OPERATIONS REPORT

At about 2350 hours, 22 March 1943, I received orders from the Battalion Commander to move my First and Second Platoons to a point about 5000 yards east of the pass at Y2769 and outpost the position of "B" and "C" Companies until dawn. My Third platoon was to remain at the pass and defend it. At dawn the first and second platoons were to be withdrawn to the pass and help in its defense.

The Reconnaissance Platoons moved out at about 0015 hours, 23 March 1943, and had the position outposted by 0115 hours. Contact was established with the 2nd Battalion, 18th Infantry, on the mountain at Y3569 at about 0230 hours by Capt. Paulick and with the 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry, on the mountain to our right at Y3363 at about 0300 hours by Lt. Gioia.

At about 0500 hours contact was made with the enemy when 2 men in a motorcycle with side car were surprised at our outposts. One was captured and the other seriously wounded. At least 2 companies of infantry on foot in squad column were preceeding the 16 tanks we could see by this time. Both platoons engaged the enemy with MG, 75 mm HE & AP, and 37mm fire. At least 50 enemy infantry became casualties as a result of this fire. No hits were observed on the tanks at this time. During the withdrawal, the 2nd Platoon Leader's track was hit by HE, and the platoon leader was injured. Another track was hit during the withdrawal from the first Rallying Point. It is interesting to note that during night attacks the Germans fire tracer bullets from a light machine gun mounted co-axially with their heavy caliber gun, and they score good hits by following up with heavy caliber shells any deflection of their MG tracer. It was about 0520 hours and still dark when the two tracks mentioned above were hit.

I gave the order to withdraw, and the 1st Rallying Point was occupied at about 0600 hours. Just prior to dawn both platoons withdrew to the ridge at Y-2769. During the withdrawal from the outpost line, it was necessary to abandon one 75mm destroyer and one 1/4-ton C and R which had become mined.

At about 0800 hours 21 tanks attempted to outflank our position on the right. These tanks were engaged by direct fire of 4 destroyers, two of which were Reconnaissance Company, one from "A" Company, and one from "B" Company. The artillery fired heavy concentrations on this group of tanks. At least 8 tanks were disabled or destroyed on this flank or which 4 were retrieved by the enemy. The attack was stopped at about 0930 hours. During this action the "B" Company destroyer was hit and burned.

From about 0930 hours to about 1600 hours our position was under heavy long range artillery fire. At about 1700 hours another attack came due west down the valley. Just prior to this attack our position was dive-bombed and strafed three times. This attack consisted mainly of infantry, but the tanks could be seen about 5 miles distant. The attack stopped about 1500 yards short of our position.



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At dark three guns of "B" Company were attached to me by the Battalion Commander; these three guns along with three of Reconnaissance Company and three from "A" Company were organized into night defensive positions. Machine guns were placed on the ground and incorporated into the infantry plan of defense. No attack developed.

Due to the absence of the Platoon Leader and platoon Sergeant of the Second Platoon who were wounded and missing in action respectively, no detailed report of that action is submitted. Their action is incorporated into the general action of this report.

The following observation and recommendations are made as result of personal observation and conference with platoon leaders engaged in this battle:

- (1) The 37mm AT gun is ineffective against the enemy Mark III and Mark IV tank except at short ranges (about 400-500 yards).
- (2) The present 75mm destroyer is not capable of "slugging it out" with enemy tanks in the open. It must have dug in positions for all around defense. Alternate positions should be prepared for each gun if the terrain and time permit. This is essential because the present destroyer lacks the armor protection necessary to stay in a single position.
- (3) Guns must be placed in depth in a defensive position.
- (4) Mobile reserve of guns should be kept wherever possible. These guns should be used to either replace guns that have been disabled in the forward positions or to counter any flanking movement that may be attempted.
- (5) Ammunition resupply must be at the point of defense. Ammunition resupply must be initiated as soon as a position is occupied if the mission requires making a stand there.
- (6) The trajectory of the present 75mm destroyer is not flat enough for ideal tank destruction. At ranges in excess of 1000 yards the fire characteristics are plunging in effect. A more flat, faster trajectory is desirable.
- (7) Tank destroyer defensive positions must be organized with a view to combatting infantry which usually comes with enemy tank attacks. If no infantry units are available for this purpose, the automatic weapons organic to a TD Bn. should be placed in previously prepared dug-in-positions.
- (8) The present AP shell, 75mm, penetrated both sides of the side armor of the German Mark IV tank at ranges of 800-1000 yards.
- (9) Some effective means of combatting enemy armor at night must be devised. One solution would be to employ the same means used by the Germans—that is, automatic weapons firing tracer bullets co-axially with the heavy caliber guns.

Recon Co. Battle Operation Report cont

(10) Reconnaissance elements of a TD Bn. must receive training in night reconnaissance. During this campaign, the German armored elements have made 3 night attacks, usually when the moon is full or nearly full, against units of this battalion. Heavy stress must be put on tank silhouettes, both friendly and enemy during this training.

(11) Half-tracks are not suitable vehicles for reconnaissance against armor. They are not maneuverable enough and not fast enough. The light tank M-5 and/or wheeled armored vehicles are strongly recommended.

MICHAEL PAULICK  
Capt., 61st TD Bn.  
Commanding



RECONNAISSANCE COMPANY, 601st TANK DESTROYER BATTALION  
BATTLE OPERATIONS REPORT  
FIRST PLATOON

23 March 1943

At about 0100 hours, 23 March 1943, I was out on a reconnaissance mission ahead of the Battalion. At that time I moved to establish contact with the First Battalion, 18th Infantry. Contact was established, and I returned to my patrol at about 0300 hours. In the meantime the remainder of the platoon was brought up with the Second platoon under the Company Commander and a defensive outpost line was set up. This line consisted of 2 tracks with 37mm guns and 1-75mm destroyer on the North side of the road. Both .30 caliber MG's and .50 caliber MG's were dug in on ground mounts.

At about 0430 hours the silhouettes of foot-troops were seen and the rumbling of tracks was heard. At about the same time 2 men in a motorcycle and side-car came along the right into our position. We opened fire. One man was seriously wounded and the other was captured and sent back. At the same time 16 tanks, preceded by what appeared to be about 2 companies of infantry on foot approached our position. We opened fire with everything we had. 37mm cannister on foot-troops at short ranges (our range was about 200 yards) is very effective. We were ordered to withdraw to the 1st Rallying Point. There, Capt. Paulick ordered our 2-37mm guns on "B" Company's right flank. Our 37mm's returned fire on the attacking tanks. Just prior to dawn we were withdrawn to the Pass at Y-2769 where we occupied defensive positions.

My guns were placed in position to defend the pass under Lt. Rogers, and I established an OP at the same point where the Infantry Combat Team Commander had his. Just before dark, I was relieved from this OP and helped coordinate the night defense. No attack developed during the night.

*Joseph A. Gioia*  
JOSEPH A. GIOIA  
1st Lt., 601st TD Bn.  
Plat. Comdr., 1st Plat.



RECONNAISSANCE COMPANY, 601st TANK D'ARTILLERIE BATTALION  
 BATTLE OF BRATTEN REPORT  
 THIRD PLATOON

At about 0030 hours, 23 March 1945, the third Platoon moved to defensive positions on the South side of the Pass at Y-2169. About one hour before dawn there was heavy firing about 3 miles East of this Pass where "B" and "C" Companies and the First and Second Platoons, Reconnaissance Company, had engaged tanks and infantry. At dawn German tanks approached our position from the East. We opened fire with 1 75mm and 1 3 1/2 inch guns. Guns on the left of the Pass went into action along with the artillery. The tanks did not advance any further West at that time. Enemy artillery at about 0730 hours laid a heavy concentration of smoke on our position. At about 0800 hours my OP on the South flank reported scout cars and tanks on our South flank. There were 22 tanks and scout cars attempting to out flank our position at a range of about 2000 yards. I put 4 75mm guns and my 2 3 1/2 inch guns into position and opened fire on these tanks. Friendly artillery was notified of this menace and heavy artillery concentrations were also laid on this group of vehicles. At about 0900 or 0930 hours the tanks withdraw leaving 2 tanks in the most forward position and 2 tanks farther to the East. From my OP I could definitely observe, 4 disabled tanks being towed from the position.

The "B" Company gun placed in position on this flank was destroyed by enemy tank fire. From about 0930 to about 1630 hours our position was under heavy long range artillery fire. At 1630 hours CP's observed enemy infantry advancing on both sides of the road about 1 mile East of our position. At about the same time our position was dive-bombed and strafed three times. When enemy infantry had approached to within 1500 yards, we opened up with one 75mm gun using HE shell. The Section Sergeant adjusted on the right of the line of infantry and made 5 mil shifts for 200 yards to the left of the road. I estimated that at least 100 enemy infantry were killed or wounded during this fire. Our artillery then engaged the enemy infantry with close fire and the attack was stopped.

We organized our position for night defense against tanks and dug in machine guns for anti-personnel attacks. There was no other attack on our position.

*OTIS R. ROGERS*  
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