

HEADQUARTERS
601ST TANK DESTROYER BATTALION
APO #464 U. S. ARMY

6 March 1944

SUBJECT: Report of Operations for Period: 1 - 29 February 1944.

TO : Commanding General, Third Infantry Division, APO #3, US Army.

a. SUMMARY OF OUR OPERATIONS:

Attached to Third Division, VI Corps, the Battalion was actively engaged throughout the period. The Battalion pressed the conflict home to the enemy, destroying houses containing enemy strong-points and OP's, tanks, armored vehicles, personnel, and other targets of opportunity while providing close support to attached infantry units. Numerous interdiction and harrasing schedules by night and indirect fire missions by day were conducted.

Complete coverage of all road nets was maintained.

Reconnaissance Company operated two full time OP's during the entire period, and in addition, a left flank OP for the greater part of the time and two other OP's during part of the period.

Tabulation of enemy and our losses is contained in Annex #1.

b. SUMMARY OF ENEMY OPERATIONS:

Enemy operations during the period 1st to 29th February consisted of:

1. Harrasing our forward and rear areas with artillery and air power both day and night.
2. Probing our lines with patrols.
3. Mounting and carrying out two attacks employing Armor and Infantry.

Harrasing artillery fire was effective and the enemy employed all types from 20mm "flak-wagons" to 170mm guns.

Bombing and straffing attacks were frequent. Many personnel bombs, commonly called "bread baskets", were dropped around our artillery positions at night.

Patrolling was constant at night and many houses on the outskirts of our sector exchanged hands frequently with prisoners being taken on both sides. Patrols of platoon size were most common.

There were two concerted attacks against this sector during the period. The first attack began on the 16th of February and lasted through the 18th of February. The second attack began on the morning of the 29th and carried through the period covered by this report. In both attacks the enemy employed armor and infantry. There were several features noted which were common to both attacks:

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1. Attack began in the early hours of the morning with increased artillery fire shifting from our rear areas to our forward areas just prior to the attack.

2. Armor ordinarily preceded the infantry, but, at times, was employed alone.

3. Armor was reported in groups of twenty to sixty, but was never employed in the attacks in greater force than nine, usually by twos or threes.

4. The terrain and inclement weather forced the enemy to use the road net almost exclusively for the attacks.

5. Tanks were frequently observed grouped closely and they smoked themselves whenever they came under fire.

6. Mark IV's and Mark VI's were employed together.

c. SITUATION AT END OF PERIOD:

All destroyers remained in position to repel further enemy tank attacks at the end of the period. "B" Co positions in the vicinity of ISOLA BELLA and the direct route to CISTERNA were being reinforced with the reserve platoon of "C" Co in expectation of the main force of armor from that direction. Our infantry was counter-attacking to restore slight losses in positions.

d. STATUS OF PERSONNEL AND MATERIAL:

Morale was unusually high during the period due to the fact we were destroying enemy tanks, the purpose for which we were designed. Greater confidence and esprit de corps were established by our holding against enemy attacks. However, increased recurrent malaria and other medical cases have decreased the floating reserve in personnel. This, coupled with lack of available replacements for both a large number of rotation personnel and personnel on backlog requisition, has created quite a condition of fatigue among men constantly in alert positions.

In the same manner, lack of maintenance of vehicles is causing an undue amount of 24 hour vehicle casualties for repairs.

Efforts are being made to alleviate both of these problems. We have promise of replacements in the near future and, as soon as the situation permits, plans are being made to relieve tank crews and tanks for a short period at a time for rest and maintenance.

e. COMMENTS AND LESSONS LEARNED:

1. The enemy has proved himself totally unsuccessful in his present type of operation of using small groups of tanks along main avenues of approach. Our method of selecting avenues of fire to cover these routes from defiladed positions has proved most successful and at no time has enemy armor penetrated our positions.

2. Use of "Tiny Tim" radio generator for each M-10 is heartily recommended due to radio drain on the M-10 motor.

3. A sponson .30 or .50 caliber MG is needed on each M-10 to provide the crew with small arms security.

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4. More protection is needed for the radiators of M-10's. Most M-10 casualties have been from shell fragments penetrating the radiator and ruining the motor.

5. The chevron type rubber track is the only logical type to be used in combat.

6. The enemy carefully observed our movements and registered artillery on important points during periods of relative inactivity. Just before or during an attack, he will utilize this knowledge to neutralize these important points. Gun positions must frequently be changed to secure the element of surprise.

7. During this period there were two attacks made by the enemy. The weather limited utilization of the terrain and confined enemy advances with armor to the roads. The fact that the enemy was obliged to confine himself to the roads enables us to take advantage of him from hidden positions in rear of houses on the sides of the roads.

8. It was noted that the enemy would attempt any trickery which he thought might have even a remote possibility of bagging some of our guns. In several instances he would, under cover of darkness, withdraw a knocked out tank and substitute a live tank in its place. Close observation on the part of the infantry and our gun crews exposed this trickery and it has become the policy of this unit to set fire by shelling all enemy tanks knocked out. In another such instance it was found that the Kraut would re-man a knocked out tank which had not been burned and use it as a pillbox.

Walter E. Tardy

WALTER E. TARDY,
Lt. Col., FA,
Commanding.

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FROM : 281200A Feb 1944.
TO : 291200A Feb 1944.
UNIT : 601st Tank Dest Bn
PLACE: APO 464, U. S. Army
DATE: 29 February 1944.

No. 32

MAPS: 1/50,000 ITALY, Sheets: 150 II, III. 158 I, II, III, IV .

1. Location of Units:

- (a) CP A Co - 966294
 - 1st Plat A - 972295, 962277
 - 2nd Plat A - 942298
 - 3rd Plat A - 968301 (3 guns)
- CP C Co - 978248
 - 1st Plat C - 963317 (2 guns) 935283 (1 gun)
 - 939282 (1 gun)
 - 2nd Plat C - 970252
 - 3rd Plat C - 030262

- CP B Co - 991248
 - 1st Plat B - 990285, 992288, 991273, 990278
 - 2nd Plat B - 019276, 022277, 025274, 018266
 - 3rd Plat B - 005292, 005288, 008288, 010287

Rcn CP - 980234. Rcn OP's - 937312, 018236, 980296. Bn CP - 987244.

2. Operations for the Period:

- (a) 2nd Plat C Co fired harassing fire during night.
 - One section, 952360, 952350, 972346, 977360. 100 rds.
 - One section, 999357, 988358, 000333, 010350. 100 rds.
- (b) 2nd Plat B Co fired 200 rds harassing fire in front of 15th Inf sector.
- (c) 1st and 2nd Plat fired 461 rounds at targets in front of 15th Inf sector.
Damage unknown.
- (d) Bn engaged in tank fight at end of period on Division front.
- (e) C Co 701st TD Bn attached to 601st TD Bn.

3. Results of Operations:

- (a) Unknown.

4. Tank Status: Runners: 36 M-10's

Fit in 24 hrs: None.
Total loss todate: 3 M-10's battle loss.

For the BATTALION COMMANDER:

UNIT JOURNAL COPY*

JOHN C. PERRY
Captain, FA.,
S-3

TRUE COPY: *James C. Grimes*
JAMES C. GRIMES
Captain, FA.,
Adjutant.

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AFC #464 U. S. ARMY

6 March 1944

OPERATIONS REPORT:

ANNEX No. 1

SUMMARY OF DAMAGE INFLECTED ON ENEMY
PERIOD: 1 February - 29 February 1944

	* A CO	* B CO	* C CO	* TOTAL
Tanks and SP's	* 5	* 8	* 1	* 14
	* 1 Prob*	* 2 Prob*		* 3 Probables
Armored Cars & $\frac{1}{2}$ Tracks	* 1			* 1
MG's	* 3			* 3
Artillery & AT Guns	* 1 AT		* Pk How*	* 1 AT, 1 Pk How
Prisoners of War	* 3	* 1		* 4
Miscellaneous		* FW 190*	* Pill Box	* 1 FW 190, 1 Pillbox

: CASUALTIES INCURRED BY 601ST TD BN
PERIOD: 1 February - 29 February 1944

	* A CO	* B CO	* C CO	* RCN CO	* HQ CO	* TOTAL
EM (SWA, MIA, LWA, KIA)	* 19	* 5	* 5	* 3	* 2	* 34
Officers (LWA)	* 1		* 1			* 2
M-10's (KO'd not repairable in 24 hrs)	* 1					* 1

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