

~~SECRET~~ CONFIDENTIAL

HEADQUARTERS
628th Tank Destroyer Battalion (SP)
APO 230, U. S. Army

1 January 1945.

SUBJECT: Report After Action Against Enemy - Month of December 1944.

TO : Commanding General, Hq. 3rd Armored Division, U. S. Army.

1. Campaign of Northern France and Campaign of Germany.
2. Commanding Officers were:

- a. Battalion Commander: William J. Gallagher, Lt. Col., PA, O-384952, from 0001 hours 1 Dec. 44 to 2400 hours 31 Dec. 44.
- b. Hq. Company Commander: Daniel L. Thomas, Capt., F.A., O-422582, from 0001 hours 1 Dec. 44 to 2400 hours 31 Dec. 44.
- c. Company "A" Commander: James H. Lloyd, Capt., PA, O-409317 from 0001 hours 1 Dec. 44 to 2400 hours 31 Dec. 44.
- d. Company "B" Commander: Paul L. McPherran, Capt., F.A., O-317706, from 0001 hours 1 Dec. 44 to 2400 hours 31 Dec. 44.
- e. Company "C" Commander: Robert C. Jones, Capt., AUS-TD, O-1822013, from 0001 hours 1 Dec. 44 to 2400 hours 31 Dec. 44.
- f. Rcn. Company Commander: David (NMI) Doerr, 1st Lt., AUS-TD, O-1821835, from 0001 hours 1 Dec. 44 to 2400 hours 31 Dec. 44.
- g. Medical Detachment: Francis T. England, Capt., M.C., O-1683058, from 0001 hours 1 Dec. 44 to 2400 hours 31 Dec. 44.

3. Losses in Action were as follows:

- a. Killed in Action.

- (1) James W. Luvender, Sgt., F.A., 20317374, Co. "C", KIA in vicinity of Hurtgen, Ger., 5 Dec. 44.
- (2) Woodrow W. Woods, Sgt., PA, 34071626, Co. "C", KIA in vicinity of Hurtgen, Ger., 6 Dec. 44.
- (3) Thomas (NMI) VanderVeen, T/5, PA, 36400270, Co. "C" KIA in vicinity of Hurtgen, Ger., 6 Dec. 44.
- (4) Frank L. Mozina, Pfc, PA, 33161228, Co. "C", KIA in vicinity of Hurtgen, Ger., 6 Dec. 44.
- (5) Ben J. Smith, 1st Lt., AUS-TD, O-1824384, Co. "C", KIA in vicinity of Hurtgen, Ger., 6 Dec. 44.
- (6) Charles A. Leo, Sgt., PA, 35020246, Co. "C", KIA in vicinity of Hurtgen, Ger., 6 Dec. 44.
- (7) Henry (NMI) Goffart, Cpl., PA, 33161233, Co. "C", KIA in vicinity of Hurtgen, Ger., 6 Dec. 44.

~~SECRET~~

CONFIDENTIAL

~~SECRET~~ CONFIDENTIAL

(8) Ashley C. Long; Cpl., PA, 34386198, Co. "C", KIA in vicinity of Hurtgen, Ger., 6 Dec. 44.

(9) Peter (NMI) Kowalchik, T/5, PA, 33161252, Co. "C", KIA in vicinity of Hurtgen, Ger., 6 Dec. 44.

(10) Louis P. DiOrio, T/5, PA, 20315035, Co. "C", KIA in vicinity of Hurtgen, Ger., 6 Dec. 44.

(11) John I. J. Lawler, Pvt., PA, 33028880, Co. "C", LIA in vicinity of Hurtgen, Ger., 7 Dec. 44 and subsequently DOI on 10 Dec. 44.

b. Wounded and Injured Men in Action:

(1) Stephen R. Medack, T/4, PA, 33161102, Co. "C", LWA in vicinity of Hurtgen, Ger., 3 Dec. 44. Evacuated.

(2) James W. Richardson, T/5, PA, 34386094, Co. "C", LWA in vicinity of Hurtgen, Ger., 3 Dec. 44. Evacuated.

(3) Frank R. Balogh, Sgt., PA, 33050184, Co. "C", SWA in vicinity of Hurtgen, Ger., 6 Dec. 44. Evacuated.

(4) Frank J. Buc, Cpl., PA, 36527547, Co. "C", SWA in vic. of Hurtgen, Ger., 6 Dec. 44. Evacuated.

(5) Johnny L. Copeland, Pfc, PA, 34386030, Co. "C", SWA in vicinity of Hurtgen, Ger., 6 Dec. 44. Evacuated.

(6) William J. Kane, Sgt., PA, 13058696, Co. "C", LWA in vicinity of Hurtgen, Ger., 6 Dec. 44. Evacuated.

(7) Stoy M. Smith, Sgt., PA, 34080378, Co. "C", LWA in vicinity of Hurtgen, Ger., 6 Dec. 44. Evacuated.

(8) Louis J. Wintz, Sgt., PA, 34045586, Co. "C", LWA in vicinity of Hurtgen, Ger., 6 Dec. 44. Evacuated.

(9) Frank G. Wochim, Pfc, PA, 33161306, Co. "C", LWA in vicinity of Hurtgen, Ger., 6 Dec. 44. Evacuated.

(10) George W. Yusko, Jr., T/5, PA, 33161093, Co. "C", LWA in vicinity of Hurtgen, Ger., 6 Dec. 44. Evacuated.

(11) Jay (NMI) Terry, Pfc, PA, 34080420, Co. "C", LWA in vicinity of Hurtgen, Ger., 6 Dec. 44. Evacuated.

(12) Herbert A. West, Sgt., PA, 32046820, Co. "B", LWA in Germany, 15 Dec. 44. Evacuated.

(13) Oscar F. Martin, Cpl., PA, 34385944, Co. "B", LWA in Germany, 15 Dec. 44. Evacuated.

(14) Edward C. DeWitt, Pfc, PA, 36400145, Co. "B", LWA in Germany, 15 Dec. 44. Evacuated.

(15) Joseph F. Keller, Pvt., PA, 36016190, Co. "B", LWA in Germany, 15 Dec. 44. Evacuated.

(16) Thomas M. Darrah, Jr., 1st Lt., AUS-TD, O-1821977, Co. "A", LWA in Germany, 15 Dec. 44. Evacuated.

(17) George (NMI) Kee, Cpl., PA, 32085673, Co. "A", LWA in Germany, 15 Dec. 44. Ret. to Duty.

(18) Freeman P. Caretti, Sgt., PA, 33016322, Co. "B", LWA in Germany, 16 Dec. 1944. Evacuated.

(19) William J. Boyer, T/5, PA, 20315831, Ren. Co., LWA in Germany, 17 Dec. 44. Remained on Duty.

(20) Donald M. Ryder, Pfc, PA, 36400245, Co. "A", LWA in Germany, 17 Dec. 44. Evacuated.

(21) Leon A. Rennebaum, 1st Lt., AUS-TD, O-1822055, Co. "B", in Germany, 20 Dec. 44. Evacuated.

CONFIDENTIAL

SECRET CONFIDENTIAL

- (22) Adrian (NMI) Smith, Cpl., PA, 6369979, Co. "B", LWA in Germany, 20 Dec. 44. Evacuated.
- (23) Alfred B. Ames, T/5, PA, 36400216, Co. "B", LWA in Germany, 20 Dec. 44. Evacuated.
- (24) Joseph S. Monaco, T/5, PA, 32036966, Co. "B", LWA in Germany, 20 Dec. 44. Evacuated.
- (25) John J. Jago, Cpl., PA, 20316921, Co. "B", LWA in Belgium, 24 Dec. 44. Evacuated.
- (26) Patrick P. Pennetti, Cpl., PA, 33161165, Co. "B", LWA in Belgium 24 Dec. 44. Remained on Duty.
- (27) Frank G. Lynn, Pfc, PA, 33161109, Co. "B", LWA in Belgium, 24 Dec. 44. Evacuated.
- (28) Miles C. Kent, Pvt., PA, 36763749, Co. "B", LWA in Belgium, 24 Dec. 44. Evacuated.
- (29) Finley J. McGimpsey, Cpl., PA, 32154020, Co. "A", LWA in Belgium, 25 Dec. 44. Evacuated.

c. Missing in Action During Month of December 1944:

- (1) Joseph C. Yakaitis, Jr., PFC, PA, 31038937, Co. "C", MIA, 6 Dec. 1944, in vicinity of Hurtgen Forest, Germany.

d. Captured - None.

4. Battles:

a. The enemy forces opposing units of this Battalion in Germany in the Hurtgen Forest, Hurtgen, Kleinbau, Groshau, Brandenburg, Bergstein area as well as in Belgium in Hotton, Soy, Pont d'Ereyee, Grand Menil area were in general a cross section of the armed forces of Germany. All of these troops of Panzer, Paratroop and SS units were well trained, aggressive and well equipped. The Volk Grenadier soldiers were less skillful and fought with considerably less enthusiasm and especially in the Bergstein sector the Volk Grenadier soldiers were prone to surrender whenever the opportunity presented itself, but Panzer troops fought to the bitter end.

b. The enemy defenses in the Hurtgen area were very well organized and extensive use of prepared entrenchments and village strongpoints were encountered. The enemy's use of natural obstacles supplemented by mine fields were well coordinated and the extensive use of mines, skillfully laid, caused considerable delay to our troops and cost us several vehicles in the Brandenburg area where a T-2 Recovery Vehicle was completely disabled by a mine in an area that had been swept by engineer troops and checked by the Battalion Pioneer Platoon. Italian type box mines were often used with several on top of each other so that all would detonate at one time. Anti-tank mine fields were often supplemented by anti-personnel mines in the same area. Demolitions were employed to blow bridges and demolish buildings in our path, the demolished building often being converted into a formidable fortified strongpoint.

c. For Order of Battle Notes and disposition of enemy forces during the period refer to G-2 reports of 5th Armd. Div. and its Combat Commands to which our companies were attached. However, in the Hurtgen-

SECRET CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

Bergstein area this unit engaged troops of the 272nd and 246th Volk Grenadier Division and 3 Paratroop Divisions and elements of the 5th Panzer Army, probably 116th Panzer Division. In Grand Menil, elements of the 2nd SS Panzer Division and 560th Volk Grenadier Division.

d. The enemy made extensive use of his air elements, strafing and bombing both forward and rear elements of this organization. On 3 December 1944, near Rotgen, Germany, Co. "B" was attacked and strafed by ME-109's while in indirect fire position and one ME-109 was shot down. On the same day, 1 mile east of Rotgen, Germany, Company "C"'s bivouac area was strafed by enemy planes and one was destroyed by our .50 caliber MG fire.

e. The enemy employed his armor in the Bergstein area in groups of three to twelve tanks, usually Mk V and Mk VI, employing prepared dug-in positions and concealed positions in demolished buildings. This armor was well employed but no new tactics were encountered. The enemy tank crews continued to show their excellent training in fire, movement and occupation of position during darkness. Their ability to move, regroup and attack under cover of darkness was good. Our crews noticed that often enemy crews were slow to engage targets of opportunity on rapidly moving situations. On the night of 24-25 December 1944 in Grand Menil, Belgium, Co. "B" knocked out two Mk V tanks at ranges of 50 to 100 yds., these tanks having moved up silently under cover of fog and darkness. Upon re-entering Grand Menil, 26 December 1944, several abandoned Mk V tanks were observed in addition to above. These were destroyed by demolition by personnel of another unit.

f. Enemy artillery employment in the Hurtgen-Bergstein area was the heaviest ever encountered. The artillery fire was such as to confine tank crews to their tanks for hours at a time and air bursts and shrapnel caused many casualties to our men in the open M-36 turrets. Many officers and men are of the opinion that captured American Materiel and ammunition were used against them in this area. On 7 Dec. 44, the enemy used White Phosphorous shells against our destroyers in Bergstein.

g. Tabulation of enemy losses inflicted by this Bn. during month of December is as follows:

<u>Tanks and SP Guns</u>	<u>Enemy Materiel Destroyed</u>	<u>Damaged</u>
Pz Kw. VI	1	0
Pz Kw. V	4	0
Pz Kw. IV	0	3
<u>Towed Guns</u>		
88 mm	2	0
Other	1	1
<u>Enemy Installations</u>		
Pill Boxes	1	0
MG Nest	1	0
O.P. in Stone House	1	1

Personnel Casualties.

35 EM enemy casualties due to 90 mm HE and small arms fire.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIALPrisoners of War.

35 EM prisoners of war were taken during the month of December 1944.

h. Elements affecting action:

(1) Enemy information and reconnaissance was extremely effective in its employment of infiltration tactics by patrols. The enemy was apparently well informed as to our probable moves and objectives.

(2) The civilian population in Germany was hostile at all times.

(3) The terrain in both the Hurtgen Area and in Belgium in the area around Grand Menil was hilly and heavily wooded, and as a general rule armored employment was canalized along roads, excepting when the ground was frozen.

i. Action.

(1) Unit attached to 5th Armd. Div. until 20 Dec. 44 when it was assigned to the 78th Inf. Div. for AT support. On 25 Dec. 44, the Bn. was relieved of its assignment and assigned to the 3rd Armd. Div. The Bn. remained with the 3rd Armd. Div. during the remainder of the month.

(2) During the first part of the month the Bn. remained attached to the 5th Armd. Div. in supporting them on tactical missions in both direct and indirect fire. Bn. Hq. was attached to Div. Arty. and the companies were attached as follows: Co. "A" plus Rcn. Plat. to CCA; Co. "B" plus Rcn. Plat. to CCB; Co. "C" plus Rcn. Plat. to CCR.

Company "A" plus Rcn. Plat. attached to CCA supported them on tactical missions in the Strauss area. One Plat. reinforced the fires of the 47th FA Bn. 275 rds. of harassing fire were fired between the first and the 10th of Dec. The entire company was assigned to the 34th Tk. Bn. with the mission of supporting them in the attack on Gey. 1A supported Co. "B", 34th Tk. Bn. and 2A was in reserve ready to support the 46th Inf. Bn. 3A was in support of Co. "A", 34th Tk. Bn. 3A lost one M-20 and 1 M-36, later repaired. They knocked out one AT gun, one pillbox, and one MG nest. Also took 14 prisoners and killed 15 enemy. CCA's mission was accomplished and the company set up AT defense in vicinity of Kufferath, Ger. Company remained in this position until 20 Dec. 44.

Co. "B" plus Rcn. Plat. attached to CCB reinforced forces of 71st FA from 1 Dec. to 9 Dec. 44, firing 6 TOTs totalling 30 rds and 23 interdiction concentrations totalling 607 rds. Company moved to support CCB on tactical mission near Strauss. The entire Co. went into indirect fire position and on call for direct fire support. They fired one registration of 14 rds, 1 TOT totalling 20 rds, 6 interdiction concentrations totalling 128 rds, and 2 harassing concentrations totalling 32 rds. Co. moved out to give AT support to CCB. 3B had two M-36s hit enemy mines but these were later returned to action. Co. moved into anti-tank defense position SE of Strauss. One Officer was lost due to mortar fire. Co. remained in position of readiness until 20 Dec. 44.

Company "C" plus Rcn. Plat. attached to CCR continued in action in Hurtgen Forest area which started on 23 Nov. 44. As of 1 Dec. 44 entire Co. was attached to TF Hamburg, 10th Tk. Bn. and in assembly area vicinity of Kleinhau. Morning of 2 Dec. 44, the 2nd Plat. moved out in support of

Co. "A", 10th Tank Bn. for attack on Brandenburg but returned to assembly

CONFIDENTIAL

~~SECRET~~ CONFIDENTIAL

area when attack was stopped by enemy anti-tank minefields and anti-tank fire. No losses. On night of 2 Dec. 44, 2nd Plat. moved into position at 062355 in support of Co. "B", 10th Tk. Bn. and Co. "A", 47th Armd. Inf. Bn. to furnish cover for Engineers to remove mine-field vicinity 061355. 1st and 3rd Platoons remained in assembly area attached to 10th Tk. Bn. Losses sustained, 2 EM wounded by mortar fire. Losses inflicted on enemy, 8 PW taken, 1 AT gun destroyed. On 3 Dec. 44, 1st and 2nd Platoons moved to position vicinity 062353 to give supporting fire to attack Brandenburg by Company "C", 10th Tk. Bn. and 47th Armd. Inf. Bn. Later in day moved into defensive positions in Brandenburg. 3rd Platoon remained in assembly area. Losses sustained, 2 Destroyers disabled by AT mines, 1 Destroyer out of action due to mechanical failure in starting system. Co. remained in position until 1430 hours 5 Dec. when 3rd Platoon moved up and joined 1st and 2nd Platoons in support of CCRs attack on Bergstein. 3rd Plat. moved into defensive position in town at about 1700 hours. 1st and 2nd Platoons moved into defensive positions in town at about 1830 hours. Co. remained in position during night. On the morning of 6 Dec. 44, just prior to dawn, the enemy counter-attacked our position. Co. remained in position and defended the town though we suffered the loss of two destroyers knocked out and three disabled, leaving only one destroyer in action. On the night of 6 Dec. 44 two of the previously disabled destroyers were put back in action and by 1500 hours 7 Dec. three others were put back in action. Co. moved to assembly area in vicinity 783508 during afternoon of 8 Dec. 44. Losses sustained, 1 M-36 disabled by AT mines, 1 M-36 disabled by enemy arty. fire, 1 M-36 disabled by AT fire, 2 M-36s out of action due to loss of crews, one of which was later manned and the other returned to assembly area. 10 men killed, 10 men wounded and one man missing in this engagement. Co. "C" plus Rcn. Plat. attached to CCR withdrawn to assembly area in vicinity of Rabo-rath, Bel. for necessary maintenance and reorganization from 8 Dec. to 18 Dec. when it moved with CCR to Rotgen, Ger. and went into a position of readiness. CCR was attached to 78th Inf. Div. On 20 Dec. 44, Bn. was assigned to 78th Inf. Div. in vicinity of Rotgen, Ger. for AT defense. Co. "A" minus 1 Plat. remained under Bn. control. Co. "B" plus one Plat. of Co. "A" attached to 162nd Cav. where they set up AT defense. Co. "C" remained under CCR control. No contact with the enemy was made. On 22 Dec. 44 Co. "C" plus Rcn. Plat. moved with CCR outside of the Corps Sector, to position in vicinity of Dupen, Bel. On 23 Dec. 44, the Bn. was relieved of the attachment to 78th Inf. Div., XIX Corps and assigned to 3rd Armd. Div. VII Corps. Bn. moved and joined 3rd Armd. Div. in vicinity of Barvaux, Bel. Co. "A" plus Rcn. Plat. was attached to CCR in vicinity of Soy, Bel. Co. "B" was attached to TF Yeomans in the vicinity of Ezeree, Bel. Co. "C" remained in Div. Reserve under Bn. control.

Co. "A" set up anti-tank position in vicinity of Soy, Bel.

Co. "B" employed two Platoons in vicinity of Grand Menil, Bel. and knocked out two enemy tanks and lost one M-36 destroyer when the enemy counter attacked. 4 EM were KIA.

Co. "C" moved to vicinity of Moraont on 25 Dec. 44 and was held in readiness for defense against tank attack.

Company "B" reverted to Bn. control on 27 Dec. 44 and moved to vic. of Oppagne.

Bn. C.P. moved from Ereyee, Bel. to Tours, Bel. on night of 27 Dec.

Co. "A" plus Rcn. Plat. remained with CCR until 31 Dec. 44.

Co. "B" under Bn. control moved to Heyde, Bel. and then to Petit Han, Bel. where they remained until 31 Dec. 44.

CONFIDENTIAL

Weapon.

31 Dec. Co.

~~SECRET~~ **CONFIDENTIAL**

Co.
Bel. War

Co. "C" in Div. Reserve remained in vicinity of Mormont, Bel. until 1 Dec. 44.

(3) No special weapons were used. The M-36 was the primary weapon.
 (4) Radio and wire were used, supplemented by messenger service.

(5) No supporting units.
 (6) No bayonets, flame throwers used by this unit.

(7) During the month of Dec. 44, supply operations were largely spent in drawing normal supplies from the various services of supply. Combat losses suffered by this unit during the month of December were replaced almost 100%. Critical Ordnance Items still not replaced were two (2) each Vehicle, Tank Recovery, T5. One has not been replaced since the month of September 1944. The Motor Maintenance Platoon of this unit is still seriously hampered in performing necessary work due to the existing shortage of 1 Charger, Battery, 12 volt, 2000 watts, gasoline engine driven. Supplies throughout the month were generally stable. Ord. vehicle shortages are as follows--6 ea. Car, Armored, Utility, M20 and 13 ea. Truck, 1-4 ton,

(8) During the month of Dec. 44, casualties were evacuated partly through the Bn. Aid Station and partly through Bn. Aid Stations of Units to which this Bn. was attached. Evacuation in this manner was necessary due to the fact that the separate companies were sometimes attached to other Units. Supplies for the Bn. Aid Station were obtained by submitting requisitions through the Bn. S-4, supplies were adequate and no shortage of any specific items were noted.

(9) Casualties: Types of casualties handled by Company Aid Men for the month of Dec. 44 are as follows:

<u>Battle Casualties</u>		<u>Non-Battle Casualties.</u>	
LWA	- 9	Disease	- 5
SWA	- 3	Injury	- 5
DIED	- 11 KIA	C.E.	- 4



5. Summation.

a. During the month of December, as in the other months of combat, this unit was never employed as a Bn., the companies being attached to the various Combat Commands of the 5th Armd. Div., this being necessitated by the fact that the Division usually was employed on three simultaneous missions. When not used directly with the Combat Commands, the Companies were used by Division Artillery to reinforce the fires of the organic Field Artillery Battalions of Division Artillery.


b. On the Bergstein-Brandenberg engagement, it became most clear that most of the casualties sustained by the Tank Destroyers were from air bursts and tree bursts. This caused the Bn. to devise a top covering for the M-36 made from captured German armor plates. This design was approved by VII Corps A.T.O. and by the VII Corps Ord. Officer. As of this date, 8 M-36s in the unit have been fitted with this new turret.

~~SECRET~~

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

c. Due to the German counter-offensive, this unit was, on 22 December 44, attached to the 78th Inf. Div. then on the 24th of Dec. to the 3rd Armd. Div. and still again on the 31 Dec. to the 82nd Airborne Div. It is the feeling of the officers and men of this unit that better fighting efficiency will be obtained from Tank Destroyers if, wherever possible, they (the T.D.s) are permanently attached to the "parent" unit with whom they have worked since coming to Combat. Changing Tank Destroyers every four or five days works a double hardship on the Tank Destroyer Bn in that, first, it precludes the possibility of the Bn. dove-tailing into the tactics and personality of each new commander, since they are not attached to a unit long enough to become familiar with the Commanding Officer, and secondly, it denies to the T.D. Bn. the opportunity for much needed maintenance and refitting which would have been possible for the Bn. had they remained with the parent unit. This Bn. fully realizes the necessity for the rapid and varied attachments of the last eight days, but it does hope that, when the current emergency is over, it will be returned to continue the attack with its parent unit, the 5th Armored Division.


WILLIAM J. GALLAGHER,
Lt. Col., F.A.,
Commanding.

CONFIDENTIAL