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24 September 1943
AFC 306

REPORT OF COMBAT, 636th TD Battalion
Operation - Avalanche
Period Sept 1, 1943 to 0800 Sept 20, 1943.

ASST
703
28 Sept 1943

CALENDAR EVENTS:

September 1: At 0030 hours the S-1 was ordered to report to Headquarters Sixth Corps Staging Area and there receive orders for embarkation that morning. Details to ride the Hugh Williamson and David Caldwell were to entruck at 0630, those riding the James Woodrow were to entruck at 0915, and those riding the Duchess of Bedford entrucked at 1130. The Battalion was loaded in that manner on the morning of September 1, 1943 and that afternoon moved out into the Gulf of Oran to await the loading of the remainder of the convoy.

September 2: The Battalion layed at anchor in the Gulf of Oran.

September 3: The convoy left the Gulf of Oran at 1515 hours proceeding eastward along the north coast of Africa.

September 6: The convoy arrived at the harbor of Bizerte, Tunisia at 1200 hours. During a forty-five minute attack by enemy planes starting at 2100 hours three men were wounded necessitating their evacuation.

September 9: The convoy left the harbor of Bizerte at 1200 hours.

September 10: At 0820 hours depth charges were dropped by one of the British Corvettes off our starboard bow. Later it was reported that one German submarine had been sunk. At dusk on the same day, a Corvette and two destroyers dropped fourteen depth charges about 1000 yards to our starboard. No report of results was received.

September 11: At 0900 hours our convoy approached the Gulf of Salerno and at 0930 hours there was an enemy air attack during which an American cruiser was hit and damaged. There were repeated air attacks during the day and night.

September 12: The air attacks continued. About half the Battalion succeeded in debarking on the beach at Paestum and moved into an assembly area about five miles from the beach ((86.7-08.0) Sheet 2094 Map 1:50,000). At 1000 the Battalion Commander received orders to make a reconnaissance for our first combat mission and the reconnaissance was completed that afternoon.

September 13: At 0700 the Battalion Commander formed a provisional company composed of twelve M-10's to carry out plans made during the previous night. At 2130 the Battalion Commander and the S-3 left the assembly area and moved with twelve destroyers to the combat area. The Battalion was notified at 1530 that a tank attack was expected south of Persano at the junction of the Calore River and F. La Cosa Creek and appropriate positions were taken. At 1930 the ranger platoon reconnoitered and occupied positions on the bank of F. La Cosa Creek. Sgt Garland G. Humphrey of Company B was killed at 2000 by bomb fragments during an air raid and Pvt Joseph D. Ventresca, Company B, was seriously wounded by strafing. During the 13th the ships continued to unload and twelve more destroyers were ready for action by the following morning.

September 14: At 0030 the Battalion Commander was apprised of a dangerous situation and the twelve M-10's which were received from the ships the previous day were assigned a sector about 1500 yards in width and at 0130 they were guided to their positions. During most of the day the Battalion was under considerable artillery fire and some small arms fire. Company B knocked out seven tanks during the day and Company C destroyed seven tanks. Company C also destroyed one ammunition vehicle. Pvt 1 cl Salvatore V. Vinci, Company C, was killed. Ten destroyers from various companies which had been unloaded from the ships were given the mission of guarding the Fifth Army Headquarters.

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September 14: The enemy was repulsed in the positions selected the previous day with ~~the Reconnaissance Company~~ to the front. A number of enemy tanks were reported to be opposite our position across the F. La Cosa Creek and the Battalion fired indirect fire for a considerable period. Our forward observers reported a direct hit on one of the enemy tanks which burst into flames. Artillery fire continued to fall on our positions throughout the day.

September 16: The enemy shelling of our positions continued and Company B fired an indirect fire mission on Persano. During the afternoon a B Company destroyer was struck by enemy fire and began to burn. The fire was extinguished by the Platoon Commander and the Platoon Sergeant before any serious damage resulted and the destroyer was put back in action in a short time.

September 17: At 0100 our intelligence reported a dawn attack by the enemy was imminent. All destroyer crews were alerted and plans made to mass fire on the enemy. Our destroyers were to coordinate their fire with that of the 645th TD Bn. The anticipated attack by the enemy was never launched.

September 18: During the morning of September 18th patrol activity continued by our Reconnaissance Company and the Battalion fired some indirect fire missions with the targets in and near Persano. That afternoon the Battalion Commander led certain elements of the Reconnaissance Company into Altavilla, on a reconnaissance mission for the Division Commander. No enemy resistance was met and the Battalion Commander reported to the Division Commander that it was safe to move troops into the town. Two German Prisoners were taken by our Reconnaissance Company.

September 19: On the morning of September 19th the Battalion Commander led elements of the Reconnaissance Company on a reconnaissance of the area in and around Persano. No enemy resistance was found in this area and the Division Commander was notified that troops could safely be moved up to that area. During the night of September 19th and 20th six destroyers of Company C were moved to positions back of the 141st Infantry to support them. (see overlay)

September 20: At 0100 Company C was assigned to Fifth Army as security for the Fifth Army Headquarters and the remainder of the Battalion was detached from the 36th Division and assigned as Corps troops in Corps reserve.

MAP REFERENCE: Italy, 1:50,000.

Attached Annexes:

1. Overlay of positions.
2. Copy of Unit Journal.
3. Personnel casualties during period of battle.
4. Vehicular casualties during period of battle.
5. Enemy casualties caused by 636th TD Bn during period of battle.
6. Recommendations for awards.

For the Battalion Commander:

REAGAN L. DUNCAN
Captain, Infantry
Adjutant

OFFICIAL:

Reagan L. Duncan
REAGAN L. DUNCAN
Captain, Infantry
Adjutant

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ANNEX NO. 3

CASUALTY REPORT

HEADQUARTERS COMPANY

9 September 1943

WOUNDED

M Sgt Robert H. Hamilton, 20814478, - Slightly wounded by shrapnel.

MEDICAL DETACHMENT

21 September 1943

WOUNDED

Pvt Raymond M. Rand, 32397184, - Seriously wounded by mine explosion.

COMPANY "A"

9 September 1943

WOUNDED

Techn 4th gr Henry (MEM) Royuk, 37146944, - Slightly wounded by shrapnel in right leg.

Techn 5th gr Charles W. Trumbo, 15116060, - Slightly wounded by shrapnel in right leg.

14 September 1943

Sgt Roy A. Adams, 38038261, - Slightly wounded by shrapnel.

Techn 4th gr Lynn E. Mills, 20816098, - Slightly wounded by shrapnel.

Pvt 1 cl Frank (MEM) Pesiba, 37145583, - Slightly wounded by shrapnel.

COMPANY "B"

13 September 1943

KILLED

Sgt Garland G. Humphrey, 38037442, - Shrapnel from enemy bomb.

18 September 1943

WOUNDED

Pvt Joseph D. Ventresca, 31257416, - Slightly wounded by shrapnel in left foot.

19 September 1943

Pvt Louis (MEM) Filoteo, 38024388, - Slightly wounded in chest by vehicle while in foxhole.

COMPANY "C"

14 September 1943

KILLED

Techn 5th gr George A. Polter, 38037403, - Killed by shrapnel.

Pvt 1 cl Salvatore V. Vinci, 38209832, - Killed by enemy strafing from the air.

15 September 1943

WOUNDED

Pvt 1 cl Earl A. Burgeson, 38504236, - Slightly wounded by shrapnel.

15 September 1943

WOUNDED

Sgt Sgt Raymond G. Murphy, 20602898, - Slightly wounded in vehicle accident.

Pvt 1 cl Francis A. Murphy, 32379038, - Slightly wounded by shrapnel.

16 September 1943

Sgt William A. Jones, 38025858, - Slightly wounded by shrapnel.

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ANNEX NO. 4

VEHICLE CASUALTY REPORT

<u>DATE</u>	<u>COMPANY</u>	<u>VEHICLE</u>	<u>TROUBLE</u>	<u>WHERE REPAIRED</u>	<u>BACK TO DUTY</u>
9/13/43	B	M-10	Track Thrown	Battalion Maintenance	9/13/43
9/13/43	B	M-10	Track Thrown	Battalion Maintenance	9/15/43
9/14/43	Hq	Half-Track	Track Thrown	Under Fire	9/14/43
9/14/43	C	M-10	Escape Hatch Blown	Under Fire	9/16/43
9/14/43	Hq	3/4 Weapons Carrier	Burned	Replaced	9/15/43
9/15/43	C	M-10	Escape Hatch Blown	Battalion Maintenance	9/16/43
9/15/43	Hq	2 1/2 Ton	Broken Axle	756th Ordnance	9/16/43
9/16/43	O	M-10	Damaged by shell fire	Battalion Maintenance	9/17/43
9/17/43	C	M-10	Motor Trouble	Battalion Maintenance	9/18/43

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DAMAGE TO

<u>DATE</u>	<u>COMPANY</u>	
9/14/43	B	Destroyed seven Mark IV Tanks
9/14/43	O	Destroyed seven Mark IV Tanks Destroyed 1 Ammunition Vehicle
9/15/43	B	Destroyed 1 Mark IV Tank

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