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HEADQUARTERS
638th Tank Destroyer Battalion
APO 339, U.S. Army

1 January 1944

SUBJECT: History of Operations for December 1944.

TO : The Adjutant General, War Department, Washington 25, D.C.

THRU : Commanding General 84th Inf Division, APO 84, U.S. Army.

1. Authority: Par. 10, AR 345-105

2. Introduction.

a Command Personnel: No change.

b Not applicable.

c. Period covered: 1 Dec. to 31 Dec. 44.

d. Maps used during period:

(1) 1-20 Dec: Germany GSGS 4/14, 1:25,000-- Sheets 4902, 4903, 5002, 5003. Uncontrolled mosaics of PORSELEN, HILFARTH, RANDEARTH, BRACHELEN-- scale: 1:6250 approx. containing overprint of German defense works.

(2) 22-31 Dec: Central Europe, 1:100,000 Sheets MARCHE, BONN, TRIER. France and Belgium, 1:50,000 Sheets 91, 92, 105, 106. France and Belgium, 1:25,000 Sheets 91, 92, 105, 106

3. Narrative.

a Operations.

(1) Co A moved its CP from GERONSWEILER to AWEILER on 5 Dec. Changed positions from vicinity of GERONSWEILER with 3rd platoon at BEECK in support of the 335 IR and 1st and 2nd platoons in reserve at AWEILER on 5 Dec. On night of 6-7 Dec. 1st and 2nd platoons relieved Co B at LINDERN. On 14 Dec 3rd platoon selected indirect fire positions in vicinity of BEECK. On 18 Dec. 1st and 2nd platoons provided overwatching fires from the vicinity of LINDERN in support of the attack on WURM and MULLENDORF.

On 22 Dec Co A was located at HAVERSIN, BELGIUM after a march with the 333rd combat team from the vicinity of GEILENKIRCHEN, GERMANY.

Co A, 1st Bn 333rd IR started from BAILIONVILLE on 221600 Dec and went south to MARLOIE. The column halted and sent out patrols and everyone dug in. The division rerouted the column back thru MARCHE and HAVERSIN to WANLIN, arriving at 230545. From there the task force split up and went to WELLEN and BEAURAING and part stayed at WANLIN. Everyone dug in and OP's were set up. They stayed in position all day. At 240430 the task force assembled at BEAURAING. At 0600 the column started for DINANT and upon arriving there headed east. The infantry reported that the enemy was nearby and so the plans were changed. The column crossed the MEUSE RIVER at DINANT and headed for NAMUR. At NAMUR the column headed SE.

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64

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Co A stopped just outside of town, gassed up and then headed for the bivouac area in the vicinity of WAILLET. The column arrived at its destination at 241600. While the task force was at BEAVRAING, WANLIN and WELLIN the Germans, still on the offensive, penetrated in between the towns. The task force accomplished its mission by holding the towns until relieved.

On 25 Dec the company selected firing positions in the vicinity of AYE, WAHA and MARCHE. On 26 Dec 2200 one section of the 3rd platoon moved to a position NW of BOURDON to give additional support to the 334th IR. One prisoner was taken. On 29 Dec 1400 the 3rd platoon moved to the vicinity of VERDENNE. On 31 Dec 2nd platoon received mortar fire 600 yards to its front. The platoon fired two rounds HE FQ. No movement was observed and the mortar fire ceased.

(2) Co B continued support of 334 and 335 IR with one platoon in LINDERN and two platoons in GEREONSWEILER. On the night of 1 - 2 Dec two platoons moved from GEREONSWEILER to LINDERN under heavy mortar and artillery fire. One 2 Dec fired 7 rds APC frontal fire at a Mk VI tank but the shells bounced off.

On the morning of 3 Dec fired 21 rds HE fuse delay on church steeple, used as German OP at BRACHELEN securing all hits at 1800 yds. The steeple fell down in the afternoon. There was a marked decrease of enemy artillery and mortar fire after completion of this mission.

On 6 - 7 Dec 2nd and 3rd platoons relieved by Co A and moved to reserve in the vicinity of APWEILER.

On 7 - 8 Dec one destroyer, left behind at LINDERN returned to APWEILER to rejoin the company.

At 0115 hours 8 Dec the destroyer backed into a row of American AT mines stacked three high and five feet long. A terrific explosion occurred, killing all six crew members and the destroyer was completely demolished.

On the night of 8 - 9 Dec the 1st platoon of Co B, commanded by 1st Lt CHARLES F. BRYSON moved to indirect fire positions in the vicinity of BREIL. On 10 Dec the platoon registered on a RR underpass and later fired 21 rds HE on a "revolving haystack" presumed to be a camouflaged direct fire gun, with unknown results. The platoon continued indirect fire missions until 17 Dec firing at pillboxes and infantry; also harassing and Time-on-Target missions in the vicinity of HORST, RANDEATH, HILFARTH, BRACHELEN, HIMMERICH, HONSDORF. Ammunition expended: 371 rds HE. An artillery observer reported that two direct hits on a pillbox during an indirect fire mission, resulted in enemy personnel leaving the pillbox. It was his opinion that concussion caused by direct hits is such that personnel will not stay inside.

On the night of 8 - 9 Dec the 3rd platoon relieved the 1st platoon in the vicinity of LINDERN. On 11 Dec Co C, 771 TD Bn relieved 3rd platoon which rejoined the balance of the company at FRELENBERG. On the night of 12-13 Dec the company (less 1st platoon) moved to PRUMMERN and relieved two platoons of Co C. On 19 Dec 1st platoon relieved 1st platoon Co C at PRUMMERN. The balance of the company supported the division attack on WURM and MULLENDORF with overwatching fires.

On 22 Dec Co B assumed defensive positions in the vicinity of HOTTON, BOURDON and FOCAGNE, BELGIUM after a march with the 334th Combat Team from the vicinity of GEILENKIRCHEN, GERMANY.

At 221000 tanks were reported across the L'OURTHE RIVER. The 1st platoon, commanded by 1st Lt CHARLES F. BRYSON selected firing positions. Fired on a Mk V tank, range 1200 yds with a series of 3, 2 and 2 rounds APC respectively, backing into a defilade position after firing each group. Three direct hits ricocheted off the tank. The Mk V fired 5 rounds, all of which were "overs". The platoon selected other firing positions and observed four additional tanks.

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RESTRICTED

65

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Three of the tanks presented good targets for flanking fire. Two TD's opened up with frontal fire on a tank; one gun opened up with flanking fire and the remaining gun covered the operations. Four hits on the lead tank set the ammunition off and the tank burst into flames. Two rounds on the second tank set that one afire. Three hits on the third tank exploded its ammunition and it became a blazing wreck. Two hits on the fourth tank and it met a similar fate. Four direct hits on a fifth tank succeeded in breaking a track only and the gun continued to fire. A halftrack was observed in the woods and two rounds APC cooked its goose. This action took place at a range of 800-900 yards.

On 251145 one section of the 1st platoon moved to the vicinity of HAMPTEAU. 8 rounds HEFD were fired at a house used as a German OP. An AT gun was observed and the Germans, waving two Red Cross flags, tried to man it. The TD's opened fire at a range of 200 yards, destroyed an armored car and killed three men. The AT gun, undamaged, was towed back to our lines by the 309th Engineers. Later the section destroyed two German occupied houses with 12 rounds HEFD at a range of 600 yards.

On 25 Dec the 2nd platoon lost two destroyers by direct fire of enemy guns. The platoon commander, Lieut. PESTER was wounded. At 251400 fired 7 rds APC at four tanks, destroying one MK IV. At 251630 fired 2 rds HE and 12 rds APC at tanks and infantry. One tank was hit and the personnel took cover. At 260750 fired 6 rds HE in support of artillery with unknown results. At 260900 fired 5 rds APC at the sound of a tank motor. Smoke flared up but results of the action were unobtainable.

On 261500 the enemy attacked HAMPTEAU with approximately 100 infantry. One section of the first platoon fired HE FQ obtaining three bursts at a range of 700 yards. The three security men fired 100 rds 30 cal. acting as infantry. The effect of the 76mm HE was devastating and took a heavy toll on the enemy. The destroyers took cover behind buildings, firing and changing positions constantly. At 1630 one destroyer fired at two buildings containing 35 Germans and killed or wounded the majority of them.

At 261830 the 3rd platoon position in the vicinity of MARENNE was overrun by the enemy and lost one destroyer, by what was thought to be friendly artillery fire. At 270200 the 2nd platoon in the vicinity of MENIL fired two rockets with a bazooka totally disabling a German MK IV engine. At 270800 the 3rd platoon destroyed a half-track with 7 rds APC SE of MARENNE.

(3) On 1 Dec. Co C continued on its mission in the zone of the 113th Cav. Group. Expended 13 rds APC adjusting fire on RR underpass and captured two prisoners on 2 Dec. On 3 Dec. one destroyer demolished and one EM killed by a direct mortar hit.

On night of 12-13 Dec the company, less 1st platoon in vicinity of PRUMMERN moved to FRELENBERG for a rest period. 1st platoon relieved by 2nd platoon in night of 14-15 Dec. On 17 Dec 1st platoon relieved by 1st platoon Co B at PRUMMERN. At 0500 18 Dec 3rd platoon moved to vicinity of BEECK to support the attack on WURM and MULLENDORF in support of the 334th IR. On the night of 18-19 Dec 3rd platoon moved to WURM to provide close AT support in the zone of the 334th IR.

On 22 Dec 44 Co C with 3rd Recon platoon attacked assumed defensive positions in the vicinity of MARLOIE-MARCHE after a march with the 335th Combat Team from the vicinity of GEILENKIRCHEN, GERMANY.

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On 24 Dec the 2nd platoon led by 1st LT ROYCE F. ADAMS destroyed the following at HEDREE:

<u>Vehicles</u>	<u>Rounds</u>	<u>Range</u>
Light Tank	1 - APC, 2 HE	2000 yds
Half track	1 - APC, 2 HE	1900 yds
Personnel carrier	3 - HE	1400 yds
Armd vehicle	4 - HE	1900 yds
Halftrack	2 - APC	1700 yds

At 222400 1st Platoon of Co G, commanded by Captain ROBERT R. KLINE was attached to the 3rd Bn 335 IR whose mission was to establish road blocks at ROCHEFORT, TELLIN and WAVREILLE. The column took a roundabout route to the west and then headed south for ROCHEFORT. Approximately six miles north of ROCHEFORT one destroyer slid off the road and turned completely over killing the asst gunner, Pvt Robert D. Lohan. At ROCHEFORT the infantry found the L'HOMME RIVER bridge blown. Another bridge was found intact $\frac{1}{2}$ mile to the east which the column crossed. CP's were established. 2 Destroyers under the command of S Sgt Charles A Wann and one company of infantry moved south to TELLIN and established a road block in the town. The remaining destroyer under the command of Sgt Morris H. Herring with a company of infantry moved south to WAVREILLE and established a road block there. During the day of 23 Dec both road blocks were attacked by German tanks and infantry causing each force to displace to alternate positions.

At 232300 the task force commander ordered both parties to withdraw to ROCHEFORT which was partially surrounded at that time. The withdrawal was successful. The last elements arriving at 240030. At 240130 the center of town was attacked by two tanks (one a US Sherman) and infantry. A ground mount .50 cal MG fired at the tank affording an illuminated target for our destroyers. The gunner could not pick up the target so S Sgt Wann took the gunners seat and with 1 rd HE and 2 rds APC disabled the Sherman tank turret and gun at a 100 yard range. The enemy infantry and tanks withdrew from the town.

At dawn 24 Dec the enemy attacked with two Tiger Tanks and infantry. At a 100 yard range 2 rds HV AP was fired frontally stopping the tank for a minute. The tank continued and 2 rds APC was fired and penetrated the side with no damaging effect. At the same time a 75 mm SP gun tried to enter the town square from the south and was knocked out at a range of 35 yards. Immediately afterwards a MG on the hill opened up on our forces. Rifle fire was ineffective. Pvt John Hibbs spotted the machine gun, stepped around the corner and with a rifle grenade at a 200 yard range scored a direct hit and eliminated the MG and crew. Pvt Hibbs also accounted for five more krauts with a rifle grenade when he saw them bunched up in a doorway.

By this time the entire town was surrounded with German forces. Every ~~any~~ possible avenue of escape was cut off. Another Sherman tank came in from the west and got into hull defilade between two buildings. 5 rifle grenades were fired with no effect. Then 3 rds HE were fired at the buildings and the tank withdrew.

The task force commander then received orders to withdraw. After much discussion Capt ROBERT R. KLINE volunteered to lead the column out of town. With all machine guns blazing and with as many infantry as the TD's could carry on their hulls the task force made a dash for the 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ ton trucks parked on the SW side of town. The column encountered a hail of small arms fire enroute. At the edge of town a Tiger tank sat on a hill with its muzzle pointing down at the road. The tank crew ran out of a nearby building to man the gun and 3 out of 5 were mowed down by our MG fire.

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Two men manned the tank and fired 2 rds, one of which was white phosphorous. Both rounds landed wide of their mark. The infantry ~~entrucked~~ and the column continued with the TD's in the lead. About 1 1/2 miles SW of town one of the destroyers slid on the road, rammed into a tree and was immobilized. Everything possible was salvaged and 2rds of APC were fired at the destroyer to prevent it's falling into enemy hands. The destruction was effective.

At the meantime the infantry had gone ahead and the TD's and infantry rallied at GIVET. The task force remained in the town that night and then continued into MARCHE the following day, 25 Dec.

At 260915 3rd platoon fired 9 rds HE and 1 rd APC at two houses containing enemy snipers and a light MG. Enemy activity ceased.

On 29 Dec the 3rd platoon fired one round APC and 11 rds HE at a house and trees. The house an OP caught fire and an explosion occurred in the woods (possibly an ammunition dump).

(4) While in GERMANY Rcn Co performed missions of reconnaissance and maintained OP's and LP's. Pioneer platoon was used to check for mine fields in firing position areas and also helped dig in the destroyers. While at LEIFFARTH on 17 Dec 1ST LT ROBERT E. PARKER was hit by mortar fragment and evacuated.

On 22 Dec Rcn Co arrived at MARCHE, BELGIUM after a trip from GEILENKIRCHEN, GERMANY. The three platoons, attached to the destroyer companies for the march, reverted to company control upon arrival. The 1st and 3rd platoons were assigned the mission of reconnoitering in front of the infantry lines to contact the enemy. The 2nd platoon was assigned to terrain reconnaissance in rear of our lines.

On 23 Dec the 1st Rcn platoon commanded by 2ND LT JAMES I. BARRON contacted elements of the 116th Pz Rcn Bn at BANDE and was pushed back to MARCHE. This platoon was the first element in the 84th Inf Division to contact the enemy south of MARCHE. The infantry was warned and a defense established. One vehicle and three enlisted men were reported missing. Four men, S Sgt Hubert Wright, Sgt John A. Coppage, Sgt Ernest L. Walden, Pvt Joe Smith were cut off from their vehicles and made their way on foot back to our lines. They were aided by a Belgium who guided them away from the enemy who had bypassed them.

During the remainder of the month Rcn Co maintained OP's and LP's along the division front. Pioneer platoon assisted the destroyer companies in digging in on 30 Dec.

b. Enemy Forces.

(1) Units in contact.

(a) 1-20 Dec: 9 Pz Div, 15 PG Div, 183 VGr Div, 340 VGr Div.

(b) 22-31 Dec: 2nd Pz Div, 116 Pz Div, 9 Pz Div, 560 VGr Div,
Gross Deutschland Brigade, Fuehrer Begleit Brigade.

(2) Enemy operations during period.

(a) 1-20 Dec: Enemy continued defense of its zone. Shelling of front line troops particularly and towns several thousand yards behind the front lines continued. Enemy uses numerous pyrotechnics each night to limit our patrol activity. Attached with one battalion 16 Dec from vicinity of WURN and LEIFFARTH. 43 Paratroopers dropped from enemy transport in vicinity of EICELSHOVEN, HOLLAND during night of 16-17 Dec. German transport plane shot down and pilot captured.

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(b) 22 - 31 Dec 44: A large German force which had penetrated about thirty miles into Belgium was heading for the MEUSE RIVER with its spearhead in the vicinity of DINANT. In the 84th Division zone, the enemy was pushed back from HOTTON, MARENNE, MARLOIE and this attack stopped. Numerous tanks particularly Mk IV's and V's were encountered and the enemy suffered comparatively heavy losses in men and material.

The enemy took ROCHEFORT on 25 Dec after driving out our forces.

On 30 and 31 Dec the town of MARENNE was shelled by large projectiles believed to be rockets of 220mm caliber. Similar shells of smaller caliber were also fired.

(5) Known enemy losses due to our operations:

No.	Type
4	Mk V tanks
4	Mk IV tanks
1	Mk III tank
2	SP guns
1	AT gun
3	Half Tracks
1	Machine gun
1	Personnel carrier
16	Prisoners of War

4. Annexes

a. Bn moved from GEILENKIRCHEN, GERMANY to MARCHE, BELGIUM using route SCHERPENSTEEL, HERRLEN, VALKENBERG (HOLLAND), LIEGE, MARCHE (BELGIUM) as follows:

(1) 20 Dec 44: Co B with 2nd Rcn platoon attached to 334th Combat Team. Departed 1700.

(2) 21 Dec 44: Co C with 3rd Rcn platoon attached to 335th Combat Team. Departed 0845.

(3) 21 Dec 44: Co A with 1st Rcn Platoon attached to 333rd Combat Team. Departed 1030.

(4) 21 Dec 44: 638th TD Bn (-) departed 1115.

b. Personnel.

(1) 12 EM killed:

- (a) Pvt Arthur L. Dye, 35044961, Co A
- Pfc James G. Carwile, 35044988, Co A
- Pvt Arnold E. Malvitz, 36276669, Co B
- Sgt Henry S. Petoskey, 35158722, Co B
- Cpl Bernard L. Logsdon, 35158160, Co B
- Tec 4 Edwin N. Davis, 35039088, Co B
- Pfc James E. Ball, 35044984, Co B
- Pvt James C. Robertson, 35044811, Co B
- Pvt LaVerne H. Grauvogl, 36265286, Co B
- Pvt Dan Mann, 35044266, Co C
- Pvt David J. Shephard, 37232684, Co C
- Pvt Robert D. Lehan, 11049546, Co C,

(b) Missing in action:

- Tec 5 Herschel L. Butcher, 35044902, Rcn Co
- Pfc Charles L. Wilson, 37193162, Rcn Co
- Pvt Virgil H. Witham, 35044698, Rcn Co

(c) 2 Officers and 12 EM wounded.

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- (2) 16 PW's captured.
(3) Replacements:
1st Lt MAXWELL E. LEE , 01 825 479, Co B
Hq Co - 1 EM, MOS 504
Co B - 1 EM, MOS 645
Co C - 4 EM, MOS, 733, 733, 648, 014.
Rcn Co - 1 EM, MOS 345.

c. Awards (See inclosure)

1st Lt MONROE S. HALL, 01 168 700, Silver Star.
Sgt Charles A. Munday, 35 044 900, Co C, Bronze Star (Posthumously)
Pfc Clinton E. Solee III, 14 073 316, Co C, Bronze Star.
Tec 4 Robert W. Roske, 37 431 733, Co C, Bronze Star.
Pfc Lawrence D. Ward, 37 387 023, Med Det, Bronze Star.

d. No command personnel changes.

e. Supply and evacuation.

(1) Ordnance:

- ** 4 ea. Carriage, motar, 76-mm Gun, M18.
- ** 4 ea. Truck, $\frac{1}{2}$ ton, 4x4.
- * 2 ea. Gun, mach, cal .30 M1919A4.
- * 2 ea. Mount, tripod cal.30, M2.
- ** 1 ea. Mount, MG, Cal. .30 M48.
- * 4 ea. Launcher rocket, AT, 2.36", M9.
- * 4 ea. Pistol, automatic, cal. .45, M1911A1.
- ** 1 ea. Cirche, Aiming, M1.
- * 1 ea. Telescope, Observation, M48.
- * 1 ea. Trailer, $\frac{1}{2}$ -ton, 2-whl, Cargo.
- * 1 ea. Trailer 1-ton, 2- whl, Cargo.

(2) Signal:

- ** 1 ea. Radio set, SCR - 193.
- 4 ea. Radio Set, SCR - 610 (3 ea replaced)
- * 3 ea. Lantern, elect, portable, hand.

(3) Quartermaster:

- ** 33 ea. Can, water, 5-gal (28 ea replaced).
- ** 1 ea. Carrier, Wire cutter, M 1938.
- 5 ea. Outfit, cooking, 1-burner (1 ea replaced).

(4) Engineer.

- ** 3 ea. Net, camouflage, cotton, shrimp 22 x22 ft.
- ** 3 ea. Net, camouflage, cotton, twine fabric 15 x 15 ft.

(5) Medical.

- 2 ea. Kit, first- aid, motor vehicle, 24-unit (1 ea replaced).
- **4 ea. Kit, first- aid, motor vehicle, 12- unit.

* Replaced.

** Not Replaced.

f. Unit Journal inclosed.

2 Incls:

- Incl 1 - Unit Journal.
- Incl 2 - Award citations.

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Harold L. Davis
HAROLD L. DAVIS
Lt. Col., FA
Commanding

70