

(Co. B 98 Inf. Reg.)

APC 704

21 July 1944

SUBJECT: Historical Report

TO : Adjutant General, U.S. Forces, APC 704.

HISTORY

Company B, 641st TD Battalion was attached to CYCLONE TASK FORCE, APC 704 as per order Headquarters CYCLONE TASK FORCE Field Order No. 1, Annex No. 3, dated June 23, 1944.

The unit was equipped with 12 4.2 Chemical Mortars. The Company is organized into two Mortar Platoons of 6 mortars each, a Headquarters Platoon, and an Ammunition Platoon. The authorized strength of the Company is 6 officers and 187 enlisted men. Each Mortar Platoon has two officers. One is the executive who conducts the fire, the other the liaison officer who observes fire for the unit to which it is attached. The present for duty strength for this operation was 4 officers and 140 enlisted men. Lt. Weobeking was Company Commander and acting Platoon Leader of the 1st Platoon, Lt. Schlusshier, Executive Officer, Lt. Setzke, Liaison Officer for the 1st Platoon, Lt. Wagner, 2nd Platoon Leader, and T/V Jack S. Cliff, in the absence of Lt. Finnegan, acting Liaison Officer for the 2nd Platoon.

On June 22, 1944 the Company moved to a staging area in the vicinity of TOEM. Our mission was to support the 158th Infantry Regiment in an amphibious attack on TABLENNIS and seize TIPTOE area.

From June 22nd to June 27th the Company furnished a perimeter guard and prepared equipment for the coming operation.

The plan of operation for this Company was as follows. The 1st Platoon was attached to the 1st Battalion, 158th Infantry Regiment, the 2nd Platoon was attached to the 2nd Battalion of the 158th Infantry Regiment. Three Mortar Sections of each Platoon, supporting their respective battalions, were to go in on the assault waves. The three remaining sections of each platoon, loaded on two 2 1/2 ton trucks, with the balance of the Company on LCI's were to land as soon as conditions permitted. The kitchen, mobile load, to arrive D+2.

On June 27th three Mortar Sections of the 1st Platoon, loaded into 3 LST's, were placed on LST 459, three Mortar Sections of the 2nd Platoon were placed on LST 467 preparatory to practice landing of the assault waves. The liaison parties of each platoon were attached to the Battalion Commanders parties.

CLASSIFICATION CHANGED TO:

CANCELLED⁻¹⁻

BY AUTHORITY OF THE ADJUTANT

and Meyer *Cal A.P.*
GRADING COMMITTEE 27 MAR 46

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On June 28th at H-hour the practice landing was made at a beach East of the TELENTOE RIVER. The three Mortar Sections of the 2nd Platoon returned to LST 467, remaining there until the day of departure. The three Mortar Sections of the 1st Platoon, unable to board LST 459, remained in the Company area until the day of departure.

On June 29th all Mortar Sections were loaded on LST's. On June 30th the balance of the Company boarded LCI's 106 and 364. The Task Force left TOPHEAVY at 1900 hours.

On July 2, 1944 the Task Force arrived at TABLETENNIS at 0600 hours. After a two hour preparation of YELLOW BEACH by Cruisers, Destroyers, and Aircraft the assault waves moved toward YELLOW BEACH. The liaison parties landed with the 3rd wave. The Mortar Sections landed with the 5th, 6th, and 7th waves. Little difficulty was encountered by DUKW's carrying the Mortar Sections in negotiating the coral reef. Upon reaching the beach the Mortars plus one unit of fire (60 rounds per Mortar) were unloaded from the DUKW's. First platoon placed mortars in gun pits, previously prepared by the Japs, between the airstrip and the beach. Second Platoon, taking advantage of bomb craters, dug positions 500 yards East of the 1st Platoon. Due to interference on the radio and the continuous cutting of wire by Buffaloes, communication was not established for several hours.

The 2½ ton truck carrying the three remaining Mortar Sections of the 1st Platoon fell into a hole in the coral reef, causing the loss of some ammunition and delaying the emplacing of the balance of the mortars. The balance of the Company landing from LCI's at approximately 0900 hours came under Jap artillery fire. Each man carried one box of 4.2 ammunition over the coral reef to the mortar positions.

First Platoon expended 86 rounds on enemy positions at call of the 1st Battalion, 158th Infantry. Second Platoon expended 12 rounds at call of 2nd Battalion. Results unknown.

July 3rd, 1st Platoon expended 90 rounds. The 2nd Platoon 18 rounds. Results unknown. One Battalion of 503rd Parachute Regiment dropped on KAMIRI DROME.

July 4th, 1st Platoon expended 70 rounds. The 2nd Platoon nil activity. Kitchen truck arrived and was sent to the 2nd Platoon area. Another Battalion of the 503rd Parachute Regiment dropped on KAMIRI DROME.

July 5th, 1st Platoon expended 95 rounds. The 2nd Platoon nil activity.

On July 6th, Lt. Woebeking with Lt. Wagner and the 2nd Platoon plus attached men from Headquarters and Ammunition Platoons joined the 2nd Battalion, 158th Infantry Regiment in a shore to shore operation from KAMIRI DROME to NAMBIR DROME. H-hour was 0900 hours. After a 45 minute naval bombardment the assault waves moved in on LCM's. The Mortar Sections landed with the 4th wave. The liaison party with the 1st wave. No opposition was encountered on landing. The mortars plus two units of fire were unloaded on the beach. Due to the dense jungle and the rugged coral, the mortars and ammunition were reloaded in the LCM and

again landed on the jetty South of NAMBER DROME. Mortars were then man handled to NAMBER DROME and placed in positions at the South end of the airstrip. From July 6th to July 10th, 193 rounds were expended on Jap positions and in the night harassing fire. No activity 1st Platoon at KAMIRI DROME.

On July 8th, 1st Platoon relieved of attachment to the 158th Infantry Regiment and attached to the 503rd Parachute Regiment. On July 9th, Lt. Woebeking with 6 men returned from NAMBER DROME. No activity by the 1st Platoon from July 9th until July 13th, when the 1st Platoon moved from original position on the beach to the high ground South of KAMIRI DROME. No activity by either platoon during this period.

On July 14th, 1st Platoon was relieved of attachment to the 503d Parachute Regiment and attached to the 158th Infantry Regiment, the 2nd Platoon was relieved of attachment to the 158th Infantry Regiment and attached to the 503d Parachute Regiment.

From July 15th to July 20th the 1st Platoon with Headquarters and Ammunition Platoon furnished details for unloading ships. Second Platoon nil activity during the period. During this entire operation red alerts were sounded nightly. Bombs were dropped twice. Counter battery fire was received at the mortar positions on the initial landing only. Liaison parties were frequently subjected to sniper and mortar fire.

July 20th, 2nd Platoon returned from NAMBER DROME at 1300 hours and loaded on LST 469. Received orders to load 1st Platoon and Headquarters Platoon on LST 469.

LESSONS LEARNED

During this and previous operations the lack of transportation has been a handicap in bringing up ammunition. This necessitated man handling of ammunition thereby reducing the fire capabilities of this weapon. Also lack of organic transportation delayed the forward displacing of the unit. In the initial assault, on an amphibious landing where transportation is limited, the number of mortars taken in should be limited to a bare necessity and ammunition substituted for the difference in weight. Due to the high rate of fire of the mortar a few mortars with the increased amount of ammunition is the more desirable.

During this and previous operations very little WP (White Phosphorus) ammunition was called for. This ammunition can be used very effectively against enemy installations where the toxic effect of the smoke and the burning of the White Phosphorus is desirable. Recommend this ammunition especially for night harassing fire if the direction of the wind is favorable.

Fire was requested by several Infantry Companies at the same time. Having but one liaison party per platoon, Infantry units should instruct their personnel to observe Artillery fire by the simple forward observer method.

On this operation, with so few units operating 610 radios, radio communication would have been greatly improved if the interval between frequencies were increased.

In this and previous operations the mortar has been used extensively for night harassing fire. The present sight and aiming posts are not equipped with a night lighting device. This unit has developed a night lighting method which is not altogether satisfactory. Suggest the Chemical Warfare Service develop such a device.

VERNON F. JOELBEKING
1st Lt., Infantry

HEADQUARTERS
NINETY EIGHTH CHEMICAL BATTALION, (ACTORIZED)
A.P.O. / 565

HISTORICAL REPORT

(Hollandia - Noisless)

After three weeks of intensive training with the 4.2" Chemical Mortar in the vicinity of Borio, N. G., this unit was ordered to report as follows: Company "A" to the 24th Infantry Division at Goodenough Island, Company "B" to the Persecution Force at Finschafen and the balance of the battalion to the 41st Infantry Division at Finschafen. Each company was composed of 2 platoons, organized to act as separate tactical units. The average strength per company was 6 officers and 160 enlisted men.

Company "A", with 6 officers and 132 enlisted men embarked from Oro Bay on the USAT Kota Intan 12 April 1944 and disembarked at Goodenough Island the following day. At Goodenough Island the 1st Platoon was loaded aboard the LST 3 USS Carter Hall and sailed on the 17th. The balance of the company less a rear echelon detachment, sailed on LST 204 two days later for the Hollandia operation as a part of the Noisless Landing Force.

On 22 April, the 1st platoon landed in LCM's on Red Beach #2, Tanahmerah Bay. As the assembly area was organized, observers went forward with the 21st Infantry. No hostile opposition was encountered, consequently no fire missions were received. On the 23rd the platoon was attached to Company "H", 19th Infantry. The balance of the company was still on the water and landed on White Beach #3, Humboldt Bay on 25 April at which time all enemy resistance in the immediate area had been neutralized. On this date the 1st platoon was relieved of assignment and again attached to the 21st Infantry. The following day, one officer and 20 men started for Hollandia Brome with one mortar section, arriving at Mariboe at 1800 hours. The following day was spent in hauling the mortar and ammunition carts by hand to Janglana. Tremendous difficulties were encountered during these days and the men were forced to the greatest efforts in order to bring in one mortar and a few rounds of ammunition. The Infantry units were meeting little resistance and moved along rapidly. No fire was called for during the operation. On the 27th an officer and 20 men arrived and joined this group at the 21st Infantry CP. On that date one officer and the balance of the platoon embarked at Red Beach #1 and landed on White Beach #3, Humboldt Bay to join the 2nd Platoon and Company Headquarters there. On 13 May 1944, the company was finally assembled in a bivouac area near the 24th Infantry Division CP. Company Headquarters and 2nd platoon were transported by boat and truck from White Beach #3. A detachment from Battalion Headquarters joined the unit and was attached for rations. There were no personnel losses from enemy action. One mental case was evacuated.

The Battalion, less Company "A", embarked from Oro Bay on the USS David L. Hughes 14 April 1944 and disembarked at Finschafen on the 19th. The companies reported to the units to which they were attached.

Company "B" assigned to the Persecution Force and attached to the 191st

The group, sailed on the 22nd March 1944 and landed with the 163rd Infantry on the 22nd between Wagi and Korako to establish the Mitape beach-head. Positions were established about 2 miles west of the landing point under sniper fire.

The Company was moved 1 1/2 miles west by LCV on the 23rd and completed registration with 6 rounds on enemy positions. The following day 19 rounds of MG were expended in the Mitape section, after which further consolidation of positions was attempted. Before this could be accomplished, the company was again ordered to move, taking positions 6 1/2 miles Southeast at Lemlong Point. In this position 14 rounds were expended, the majority of which were adjusted by aerial observation. A total of 173 rounds were fired during the Mitape operation. No casualties were suffered from enemy action, which proved to be slight. On 14 May 1944 the unit received movement orders, and embarked on LST 456 for Hollandia Bay.

At Finschafen, Companies "Q" and "R" were assigned to the Letterpress Landing Force. Attachment was made to the 162nd and 186th Infantry Regiments respectively of the 41st Infantry Division. Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment were attached to 41st Division Artillery Headquarters.

Company "Q" loaded on LST 466 and left Finschafen 18 April. The Company landed on White Beach #1, Hollandia at H plus X, 22 April 1944. As the unit was not able to reach its pre-designated positions due to difficult terrain, the platoons went into position on Pancake Hill. One forward observer reached Hollandia at 1700 hours with infantry elements and reported no opposition. The next day the town was captured and the 2nd Platoon transported there via LCV's. Up to this time the only fire was for registration. Enemy bombing of White Beach #1 at 1930 hours resulted in loss of 12 mortar carts by fire. On 24 April 1944 the 2nd Platoon fired on enemy positions destroying one machine gun nest. The following day 1st Platoon was transported by water to the North side of Challenger Cove and completed registration before dark. No further action occurred and by the 5 of May, both platoons had been relieved of assignment to the 41st Division and re-assigned to the 24th Division. A total of 68 rounds was fired during this operation. No personnel losses from enemy action. One prisoner was taken and three Japanese killed by security patrols near company areas.

Company "R" loaded personnel and equipment on LST 457 and LSD Gunstan all at Finschafen and left in convoy 17 April 1944. Landing on D-Day at White Beach #3, Humboldt Bay. The 1st Platoon went into position and commenced firing at H plus 18. Screening smoke mission was fired on Pin Jetty to cover the landing of the 186th Infantry Regiment. Early that afternoon the 2nd Platoon landed and went into position. The following day registration was affected for defensive barrage in the vicinity of Sulcarbrook Hill. The Company was relieved of attachment to the 186th on the day following and attached to the 34th Infantry Regiment of the 24th Division. On the 26th the 1st Platoon was transported to an area ((El. 65-71.45) Kucjaboc River Sheet 1;20000) and went into position. The 2nd Platoon fired in support of the 3rd Battalion, 34th Infantry in mopping up operations in the Hoebai River Valley. On this date the 3rd Battalion, 34th Infantry requested fire in an area occupied by a friendly patrol causing three casualties. Company

transportation was taken over by Engineers and Quartermaster. The company was relieved of attachment to 34th Infantry on 30 April, and returned to Pin to stand by for orders. 104 rounds fired during this operation, no personnel losses from enemy action.

The Battalion Commander, Executive, 2-3 and a Headquarters Detachment of 26 men were attached to the Artillery Section of the 41st Infantry Division during the entire operation. This group suffered no casualties and encountered no opposition from the enemy.

The remainder of the operation period, closing 6 June 1944, was spent in construction of a Battalion Camp site. During this time, Company "A" and the Company forward echelon were the only units of the Battalion available for this task. Company "B" embarked from Aitape 14 May 1944 for the Haka operation. Company "C" was assigned to temporary desk duty on Pin Jetty. Company "D" embarked 25 May 1944 for the Bink operation. None of these units were returned to Battalion control before 6 June 1944.

SUMMARY OF LESSONS LEARNED:

This unit learned the value of movement by amphibious vehicles during initial operations. If vehicles of this type are provided in future action, the knowledge gained will yield greater efficiency. During the Aitape beach action, "Alligators" were assigned Company "B" for transportation of mortars and ammunition. This means of transportation afforded the unit a high degree of mobility, enabling the mortars to deliver accurate fire on the numerous enemy positions as called for. The desirable feature of this mode of travel was the enablement of mortar crews to move rapidly from one position to another by water, thus avoiding congested beach areas.

Close command liaison with supported unit commanders is essential, particularly when firing in close proximity to our troops. This situation was met by the company commander or executive officer at the supported units (P). On several occasions, adjustment of fire was made by observers from flank units thru the liaison officer. This proved advantageous when observation was limited. In fast moving situations, coordination was obtained between mortar and artillery liaison officers who accompanied infantry units. Excellent results were obtained by observation planes in spotting targets.

Satisfactory results were obtained with the SCR 610 radio for initial beach operations. This means of communication proved superior to wire transmission due to heavy vehicular traffic which continually cut wire. Difficulty was encountered with the SCR 511's and 281's.

All SCR's should be trained in forward observation and the capabilities of the weapon. Observers should be rotated periodically and should have practice in signaling by sound.