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HEADQUARTERS
645TH TANK DESTROYER BATTALION
APO 45, U. S. ARMY

6 February 1944.

SUBJECT: Battle Report.

TO : Commanding General, Fifth Army, APO 464, U S Army (Thru channels)

MAP REFERENCES: Italy, 1/100,000, Sheet #161.

PERIOD COVERED: 1 January 1944 to 31 January 1944.

PART I - From 1 January 1944 to 8 January 1944 inclusive.

1. On 1 January 1944 found the Battalion Command Post in same position as 31 December 1943. (see overlay)

2. On 1 January 1944, the Commanding General, 45th Infantry Division ordered the Battalion to form a Provisional Infantry Company to replace the 751st Tank Battalion Provisional Infantry Company on M.T. CORNO, directly west of VENAFRO, ITALY.

3. The Company was formed and assembled 1000 yards west of VENAFRO at the base of M.T. CORNO. It was composed of eighty-two enlisted men each of Companies "A", "B" and "C", plus Reconnaissance Company complete, making a total strength of 340 enlisted men and fifteen (15) Officers.

4. The Provisional Company was put under the command of WAYNE E. DAVIS, Captain, F.A., Commanding Officer of Reconnaissance Company (CP was located 1000 yards west of VENAFRO) and given the mission of holding the line on the crest of MT. CORNO, from the coordinates 006207 to 014213, then occupied by the 751st Tank Battalion Provisional Infantry Company.

5. The relief of the 751st Tank Battalion Provisional Infantry Company was completed by 0600 hours, 3 January 1944, with Company "A" on the left, Company "C" in the center, Company "B" on the right, and Reconnaissance Company in the town of CONCACASALE. The 755th Tank Battalion had a Provisional Infantry Company of two hundred men in reserve, 1000 yards west of VENAFRO.

6. During the period on the line, the 645th Tank Destroyer Battalion Provisional Infantry Company had no action on their front. The 1st SSF Brigade on their left and the 157th Infantry Regiment on their right were advancing toward VITICUSO, (across their front) consequently cutting them off from the enemy. Reconnaissance Company however maintained daily contact with the above mentioned adjacent units, and sent infantry patrols as far as Hills 960 and 1020.

7. The 3rd SPANIS of the French Expeditionary Corps began relieving this Battalion's Provisional Infantry Company on 7 January 1944, and completed same on the 8th of January 1944 at 1200 hours. Personnel of this unit returned to parent companies, and Reconnaissance Company remained in assembly area 1000 yards west of VENAFRO.

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8. During this period, 1 January 1944 to 8 January 1944 inclusive, the only fire missions were fired by the 2nd platoon of Company "B" vicinity of COLLEMACCHIA, when it fired ninety-seven rounds, HE on crossroads registration and road junction, 200 yards, northwest of AQUAFONDATA.

9. Companies "B" and "C" maintained CP's vicinity of HILLS 1010 and 760 respectively. Both CP's and 2nd platoon, Company "C" were pulled back to their respective companies on 8 January 1944. The section of Company "A" on the CASALE-PCZZILLI road had been pulled back to Company "A" gun area 4 January 1944.

PART II - 9 January 1944 to 13 January 1944 inclusive.

1. On 9 January 1944, Companies "A" and "B" fired a total of twenty-seven rounds in attempted registration vicinity AQUAFONDATA. Smoke was used, but the Air OP conducting the registration could not pick it up.

2. January 10, 1944, found the Battalion attached to the CEF at 1200 hours, as the 3rd Infantry Algerian Division had relieved the 45th Infantry Division that day. The Battalion was given the mission of general artillery support to the 3rd Infantry Algerian Division, which was preparing an attack toward AQUAFONDATA. In preparation, Company "C" moved the 2nd platoon, plus two guns of the 3rd platoon to the vicinity of COLLEMACCHIA. Reconnaissance Company put a roving OP south of CASALE to follow the infantry.

3. On 11 January 1944, the gun companies expended a total of two hundred and thirty five rounds HE, plus four rounds of smoke (expended by Company "B" only) in registration on vicinity AQUAFONDATA. Registration observed by Air OP. Smoke was not picked up. Reconnaissance Company put another OP on Hill 970(014274).

4. The 3rd Infantry Moroccan Division launched its attack toward AQUAFONDATA at 0630 hours, 12 January 1944. The Battalion expended a total of 4620 rounds HE in preparation and interdiction fire in support of this attack. The following were the missions; From 0615 to 0930 hours, Company "A" fired 1174 rounds HE interdiction fire in vicinity 1000 yards east of AQUAFONDATA at ranges from 13,300 yards to 14,200 yards, and from 1035 to 1055 hours, each platoon of Company "A" fired twenty rounds HE interdiction fire at town of AQUAFONDATA. At 0615 to 1020 hours, the 1st and 3rd platoons of Company "B" fired a total of 1902 rounds HE on MT. MOLINO and from 1035 to 1055 hours, they fired sixty-six rounds HE interdictory fire on AQUAFONDATA. Company "B" had been divided into two (2) six gun batteries. At 0615 to 1018 hours, the 1st platoon, Company C, six gun battery, fired 739 rounds HE interdiction fire on AQUAFONDATA at 14000 yards range, and 2nd platoon, six gun battery, fired 679 rounds HE on AQUAFONDATA at a range of 12000 rounds.

5. The fire on MT. MOLINO was observed by the Battalion Commander to cover the mountain completely. The French took MT. MOLINO during that morning, having our fire advance as the infantry moved forward, thus making the fire direct support rather than the original plan of general support and interdiction fire.

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6. On 13 January 1944 found the 1st platoon of Company "A" on the CASALE-POZZILLI road, vicinity 035240, at 0730 hours. It fired twenty-nine rounds HE and one round of smoke at 10,650 yards on vicinity four hundred yards west of AQUAFONDATA.

PART III - From 14 January 1944 to 31 January 1944.

1. The Battalion was relieved from attachment to the CEF effective 2400 hours, 13 January 1944. Company "A" and Company "C" returned their platoons to company area west of VENAFRO, the night of 13 January 1944. Midnight, 14 January 1944 found the Battalion reattached to the 45th Infantry Division, and moved 15 January 1944 to SAN LORENZO, GUARDIA S. FRAMANDI, and vicinity for a rest period.

2. The Battalion was alerted per VOGG, 45th Infantry Division at 1400 hours, 21 January 1944 and left for staging area, eight miles south of CASERTA, on 24th January 1944, closing therein at 0200 hours, 25 January 1944. The Battalion moved to the Palace Grounds concentration area, NAPLES, on 28 January 1944, closing therein at 0300 hours. The Battalion embarked on LST's at NAPLES at 1530 hours, 29 January 1944. The whole Battalion had disembarked at ANZIO, ITALY by 1700 hours, 31 January 1944, and went into an assembly area four miles northeast of NETTUNO.

PART IV - ADMINISTRATIVE AND ORGANIZATION CHANGES.

1. 2nd Lt. VERNON S. SLELTZER, was promoted to the rank of 1st Lt; orders were received on 8 January 1944, effective in December 1943.

2. 2nd Lt. ERNEST F. SANTANGALO, was assigned to the battalion, 11 January 1944, and was assigned to Company "B", 18 January 1944.

3. On 16 January 1944, the Battalion started to reorganize in compliance with 5th Army General Orders Number Seven, dated 15 January 1944. Reorganization to comply with T/C 18-25, dated 27 January 1943, and T/E's 18-25-A, 18-26, 18-27, 18-28, was completed 23 January 1944, with T/E exceptions as noted on letter of compliance to Commanding General, Fifth Army. Excess personnel were transferred to the 6th Personnel Center, Forward Echelon, near CASERTA, 23 January 1944.

4. The following changes in assignments and duties were directed on 25 January 1944. Captain PAUL W. PRIOR was assigned to Company "B" as Commanding Officer; Captain HERB C. BEACHAM assumed command of Reconnaissance Company; Captain WALTER E. DAVIS took over the position of Battalion S-3, and Captain FLETCHER B. EMERSON assumed the duties of Division Anti-Tank Officer.

5. On 26 January 1944, Lt. VERNON S. SLELTZER assumed the duties of S-1; Captain JERRY E. ORGIN was assigned to Special Staff, and Lt. NEVILLE R. SPENCER was transferred to Reconnaissance Company. Master Sergeant Lloyd B. Brown was appointed Warrant Officer (JG), by order of the Commanding General, 45th Infantry Division, and assumed the duties of Personnel Adjutant.

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BATTLE REPORT (CONT'D)

6. Supplies during this period offered no problems. The morale of the enlisted men and officers was excellent.

Edward L. Austin

EDWARD L. AUSTIN
Major, Field Artillery
Commanding

Annex "A"- Battle Report Overlay
Annex "B"- Battle Casualty Summary
3 incls.
Intelligence Summary
Operation Journals
(1) Messages

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BATTLE CASUALTY SUMMARY FOR PERIOD 1 JANUARY 1944 TO
31 JANUARY 1944

NAME	ASN	RANK	CC.	DATE	STATUS
Giampole, Vincent	33420075	Fvt.	Co. B	4 Jan 44	Wounded

ANNEX "B"

HEADQUARTERS
645TH TANK DESTROYER BATTALION

APO 45 U. S. Army
1 February 1944.

SUBJECT: Intelligence Summary, Supported Units (45 Div, 3 DIA, 751 Tk Bn, 645th Prov Inf Co) Sector. 1 Jan to 14 Jan 1944.
Annex to Battle Report for January 1944.
Maps: Italy, 1:100,000, Sheets 160 and 161.

Ey front lines 1 Jan 1944: From North to South-M. MONNA CASALE-M. ROTONDA-M. MOLINO* west side of AQUAFONDATA*VITICUSO road-M. MAJO. On 2 Jan our patrols showed ey front lines in north sector as 975262 to 979268, then from 971267 to 974270 to 968275 to 973290; strong points at M. MOLINO, Hill 960 North, Hill 1040 and Hill 1115. No apparent change in southern sector. No major changes thru 10 Jan. On 6 Jan, Hill 1000 (972277) occupied by the ey. On 8 Jan, VITICUSO was reported unoccupied by the ey, but S/A fire made it inaccessible to our troops. On 9 Jan, Hill 960 was unoccupied by ey and on 10 Jan, Hill 1000 was no longer in ey control, the ey at that point having withdrawn to Hill 1325. On 11 Jan, ey abandoned twin peaks of M. MONNA CASALE. M. MOLINO was abandoned by ey and also M. SAN ANTONIO. On 12 Jan, ey occupied positions on west slopes of M. AQUAFONDATA (960285) - vic east of M. FERRO (958275) - slopes on M. PILE (950253)- slopes on right bank of R. ASENSONE. On 13 Jan he had been forced to abandon points 950285, 942286, 930268, 944258. Continued to resist at 932288 and 929249. PW reports indicated intermediate defense line, called the "GUSTAV LINE", defined by MONTE MONNA(9536)-SAN BIAGIO (937346)-MONTE CROCE (950335)- the heights west of RAPIDO as far as SAN ELIA-CASINO; with a final defense line of VALLERATONDA-PICINISCO-ATINA-SAN ELIA.

Ey activity during entire period was defensive with limited inf activity. Ey arty was light during early part of period, and increased after 10 of month when our forces began pushing ey back. Ey arty increased whenever ey expected an attack by us. Weather during early part of period hampered both sides.

Ey organized its MLR thinly but in depth; purpose mainly to reduce casualties from our artillery. Bunkers occupied by the ey accommodated 5 to 9 men, were three meters deep, 1 meter thick and well camouflaged. Reverse slopes of hills were strongly organized.

Ey air was noticeable the early part of period, light thruout entire period.

Units identified were the 71 PGR of the 29th PGD, 132 IR of the 44 Inf Div, 85 and 100 Mtn IRs of the 5th Mtn Div.
Disposition of the units during period: 1 Jan to 10 Jan- 3d Bn 100 Mtn Regt in North (sector of the 179th Inf, relieved approx 10 Jan by 3 DIA), 1st and 2d Bns 100 Mtn Regt and elements of the 71 PGR (6 Coy) in the Center and South (sector of 157 Inf, 751 Tk Bn and 645th TD Prov Inf Co, all relieved by 3 DIA).

Only changes in that period were replacement of the elements of the 71 Ptn by 1 Bn of the 132 IR in the south on the 3 or 4 Jan. Only other change during period was presence of 1st and 3d Bns of 15th Mtn Hqgt to support and relieve 100 Mtn Regt.

Miscellaneous

By Equipment: Cases and projectiles of the German 105 mm caliber Airborne Howitzer found in S. PIETRO area. The propelling charge case has a plastic insert (3-3/4 in. in diameter) in the base of the case which blows out the rear when the powder is discharged by the explosion of the primer located on the side wall just above the base. The resultant flash to the rear will greatly resemble that of the rocket nebelwerfer projector.

Mines and Booby Traps: In the CERASUOLO area, engineers removed several mines that were laid in the tracks left by a truck tire. It seems that a vehicle was driven across the spot selected for the laying of the mines, and once the mines were laid, their emplacements were camouflaged by means of a special device to reinstate the tire tracks (or else by rolling an empty tire over the emplacement). Therefore vehicle tracks should not be considered as being free from danger.

Clothing: White uniforms worn by the mountain troops are made of a sort of denim. They are reversible and have a sort of lining.

Air: On 7 Jan, a B-25 with American markings flew over village of POZZILLI at the same time as the village was subjected to enemy arty fire. The aircraft appeared to be carrying out fire control.

For the Commanding Officer:


JAMES H. LEGENDRE, JR.

Captain F. A.

S #2

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