

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

1 June 1944

Subject: Battle Report, May 4

To : Commanding General, Fifth Army, APO 464, U S Army

Map Reference: Sheet 158, 1/100,000, Italy

SUMMARY OF OPERATION

1. Employment of Enemy Armor

At no time during this period with the 45th Infantry Division did enemy tanks attempt to penetrate our lines. There were several reports from the infantry of tank massing and movement at night. However, none could be confirmed. One advancing "tank" turned out to be an ammunition truck, the driver having lost his way. The enemy used his tanks and SP guns singly for AT or harassing missions. The usual "strong point" system of defense prevailed.

In our action with the FSSF the Germans counter-attacked with infantry and tanks. This was broken up and at no other time did tanks attempt to penetrate the lines.

2. Employment of TDs

This period was unique in that the majority of our TDs were employed as assault guns. We attempted to operate with tanks and were successful despite the lack of combined training and communications difficulties. This of course caused many losses due to mines, AT fire, and artillery. The men and officers suffered from exhaustion as it was impossible to make effective relief over such a prolonged period of attack. However, a new assurance has developed in the Battalion as casualties were comparatively light. Our fire was effective and the men saw the infantry exploit our targets. An entirely new feeling of teamwork developed which will make this unit a better aggressive source of power. I think it is dangerous to use too many of our TDs for such missions, but it was generally agreed that one platoon per company would be ready for assault missions.

The terrain was increasingly good for cross country movement with plenty of cover. Platoon and gun commanders showed initiative and judgement in making foot reconnaissance wherever possible.

The only tank fight that occurred was engaged in by "C" Company during their attachment to the FSSF. Six MK VI tanks moved up to the front line and opened up on our tanks and TDs. The MK VIs succeeded in knocking out four MIVs and two TDs. In the meantime, the TDs knocked out three of the enemy tanks at which time they withdrew. During this phase with the FSSF enemy mines were placed very thickly in the fields and roads from our front line to 1000 yards out. This caused many casualties among our armor. After that line was broken very few enemy mines were experienced. After this great loss of our tanks and TDs we received a company from the 636th TD Bn. This unit was used in an attack supported by infantry. It was very successful. Spiked logs were pulled behind the armor in order to clear AP mines for the infantry.

During the phase with the 45th Infantry Division all of our missions were assault fire. Many enemy strong points were destroyed by our TD fire. Many

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mines were sown before the initial lines were broken. After that very few were found. Practically all our movements were cross country.

Liaison officers were assigned to each assault infantry regiment by our Battalion Headquarters. The companies supplied liaison officers to the assault infantry battalion they were supporting.

PART I

1 May 1944 to 22 May 1944 (inclusive).

1. General:

The period was spent in Anti-tank defense of 45th Infantry Division sector, indirect firing, and preparation for future operations.

2. Anti-tank Defense: (see overlay).

(a) A Company: Six guns maintained AT defense in CARANO sector from 1 May - 6 May 1944. Two guns were in AT position in CARANO sector 6 May - 10 May 1944. 10 May - 22 May six guns were in Anti-tank position in CARANO sector.

(b) B Company: Twelve guns maintained AT defense of PADIGLIONE sector 1 May - 6 May 1944. Four guns were in AT position in same sector 6 May - 10 May 1944. 10 May - 20 May 1944 twelve guns were in AT position in PADIGLIONE sector. The night of 20 May 1944 eight guns were relieved in position by eight guns of B Company 894th TD Bn.

(c) C Company: Company in Battalion Reserve 1 May - 6 May 1944. Company relieved crews of eight guns of B Company and four guns of A Company the night of 6 May 1944. Company returned to Battalion Reserve 10 May 1944.

(d) No rounds fired in AT positions.

3. Indirect Firing: A Company maintained four gun battery (see overlay) during this period. Battery fired total of 2160 rounds HE, 211 rounds Smoke, and 17 rounds Time Shell; a total of 39 observed missions and 23 unobserved missions. Targets were houses, personnel, vehicles, tanks, and harassing and interdiction fires.

4. Reconnaissance Company: Maintained OPs and adjusted fire for TDs and Artillery. OPs taken over by TD Companies 7 May 1944. Reconnaissance Company sent out personnel with infantry patrols to check terrain. Company also dug destroyer positions in preparation for future operations.

5. Night Operations:

(a) Night operations were few. On several nights guns were moved forward to fire at possible enemy tanks coming towards our lines at night. No firing was done.

(b) The night 30 April - 1 May 1944, one platoon C Company and one platoon Reconnaissance Company supported FSSF in early morning raid on CERRETO ALTO. TDs shot up houses, covered advance of tanks, and withdrawal of all units. Reconnaissance platoons removed mines.

6. Miscellaneous:

(a) Three officers attended Air OP School the first week May 1944.

(b) All officers, tactically concerned, made aerial reconnaissance in connection with operations 23 May 1944.

(c) C Company and Reconnaissance Company rehearsed with FSSF in preparation

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for 23 May 1944 operations.

(d) Bn CO, S-1, S-2, S-3, two liaison officers, C Company, and Reconnaissance Company assembled in FSSF sector.

PART II

23 May 1944 - 25 May 1944 (inclusive)

1. General:

(a) The Battalion was split into two groups from 19 May to 26 May 1944. The group in the 45th Infantry Sector consisted of A and B Companies (plus two platoons of 894th TD Bn, attached), under the command of the Battalion Executive Officer. The group supporting the FSSF consisted of C Company and Reconnaissance Company with Companies A and D of 191st Tank Bn attached under the command of the 645th TD Bn CO.

(b) The first mentioned group moved according to plan during period 23 May to 26 May 1944; did no firing, lost one M-10 from artillery fire. The group with FSSF lost 12 guns (7 recovered, 5 burned) and knocked out 3 enemy tanks. Company A, 636th TD Bn, was attached 24 May 1944. This group relieved from FSSF 20 May 1944 and joined the remainder of the Battalion in 45th Infantry Division sector 26 May 1944.

2. Group with FSSF:

(a) General: The objective was MT ARRESTINO. Tanks, covered by TDe, to precede infantry. HWY #7 reached by late afternoon 23 May 1944, but had to fall back to a line running NW and SE 050280 for night in order to consolidate line with 3rd Infantry Division on left. 24 May 1944, 133rd Infantry Regiment, 34th Infantry Division, used above line as LD and reached railroad just north of HWY #7. FSSF passed through then night of 24 May and reached objective afternoon 25 May 1944.

(b) 23 May 1944: (see overlay for positions at H Hour). Artillery preparation started 0545B. Tanks moved out 0620B. Heavily mined up to 29 Northing, which held up armor. Reconnaissance Company cleared mines all day. At 1210B M-8s ordered out to supplement light tanks on right. Enemy armor first reported 1115B at 064270. Next report was 1600B, 12 MK VI tanks vicinity 064295; next report was 1840B, 3 MK VIs at 065290. TDe knocked out 3 MK VIs and 1 SP gun during the day. Reconnaissance Company took six prisoners. Twelve M-10s and 3 M-8s lost during day (8 TDe by mines). At 1800B a platoon of A Company 636th TD Bn reported to Battalion and the other two platoons reported at 2000B. Company C 805th TD Bn was attached to 133rd Infantry for day's operations. Enemy tanks reported at 099296 (1200B) and at 067297 (1900B) fired on and driven off. Reconnaissance Company took two prisoners.

(d) 25 May 1944: At 0630B tanks and TDe in column moved across river at 079323 and deployed. Contact with enemy had been lost; light tanks and Reconnaissance Company M-8 sent out to contact enemy and made contact 0645B vicinity 078330. Armor went into position across river to give assault fire for FSSF in going up MT ARRESTINO. None was necessary. Reconnaissance Company took 8 prisoners.

(e) Force relieved from FSSF 2200B 25 May 1944 and C Company and Reconnaissance and CP group rejoined Battalion, 45th Infantry Division sector, at 0600B 26 May 1944.

PART III

26 May 1944 to 31 May (inclusive)

1. General: With the ~~894th TD Bn~~ tanks together again the 8 guns of 894 TD Bn relieved

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from attachment to us. The Battalion continued to give close AT and assault support to 45th Infantry Division.

2. 26 May 1944: Bn CP located 943281. Two guns of A Company disabled by shell-fire but repaired. Reconnaissance Company removed mines in vicinity PADIGLIONE north-south road. Battalion waiting on bridge to be put in across SPACCASSI CREEK and held there for night. C Company expended 52 rounds on houses. Nine enemy tanks reported during day but only two confirmed as enemy.

3. 27 May 1944.

Infantry advanced and bridge put in over SPACCASSI CREEK by 1200H. During afternoon B Company crossed under covering fire of C Company and attacked pill boxes and strongpoints along left flank of 180th Infantry. The night of 27 May all companies crossed SPACCASSI CREEK. Platoon attached to 191st Tank Bn returned to Battalion control. Two M-10s disabled by mines; recovered.

4. 28 May 1944 to 31 May 1944.

TDs continued to give close support to infantry and tanks. Fired on houses and strongpoints. Infantry at this time moving very slowly. Reconnaissance Company maintained OPs. Enemy tank report few and at artillery range only.

5. Miscellaneous:

During this period close liaison was maintained with infantry down to Battalion and, in instances, companies. Contact was made daily with British and 34th Infantry Division.

Edward L. Austin

EDWARD L. AUSTIN
Lt Col FA
Commanding

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Annex "A" Battle Casualty Summary
Annex "B" Battle Report Overlay

Intelligence Summary
Operations Journals
(messages)

BATTLE CASUALTY SUMMARY
1 MAY - 31 MAY

<u>NAME</u>	<u>ASN</u>	<u>RANK</u>	<u>ORGANIZATION</u>	<u>STATUS</u>	<u>DATE</u>
Kenneth H Wood	32192818	T/5	Co A	Wounded	3 May
Robert S Fox	33497549	T/5	Co B	Wounded	3 May
Henry Gilbert	31111931	T/5	Co B	Wounded	3 May
George Morawczyk	35111815	PFC	Co B	Wounded	3 May
Richard E. Bortner	33580339	Pvt	Co B	Wounded	21 May
Francis P. DiMattio	32263818	Cpl	Co A	Wounded	23 May
Deward W. Floyd	38017690	Sgt	Co C	Wounded	23 May
Gary L. Baumwart	20830485	T/5	Co C	Wounded	23 May
Fred E Hurdman	01823004	1st Lt	Co C	Wounded	23 May
Willard W. Emerson	01822684	1st Lt	Rcn Co	Wounded	23 May
Harry A. Smith	130777408	Pvt	Co Rcn	Wounded	23 May
Henry R. Williams	38017998	Pvt	Co C	Wounded	23 May
John W. McPhail	38017669	Cpl	Co C	Wounded	23 May
Peter P. Castellano	31103765	PFC	Co C	Wounded	23 May
William H Rinehart	36418452	Pvt	Co C	Killed	23 May
Robert H Moore	01823332	1st Lt	Co C	Killed	23 May
Earl C Watson	38010432	S/Sgt	Rcn Co	Killed	23 May
Charles D Evans	38017713	T/5	Co C	Injured	23 May
Leo J Cantin	11061665	Pvt	Rcn Co	Wounded	23 May
Paul H. Pyles	35292412	PFC	Rcn Co	Wounded	23 May
Robert E. Bailey	35292412	T/5	Co A	Wounded	23 May
Guy E Apple	36419910	Pvt	Co C	Wounded	23 May
Laurence W. Rhoads	35291840	Sgt	Co C	Wounded	23 May
Elmer W. Kelly	35292007	Pvt	Rcn Co	Injured	23 May
Von L. Wheeler	38011123	Pvt	Co C	Wounded	23 May
Jesse K Hess	33496106	Pvt	Co C	Wounded	23 May
Harry A. Hewlett	35111743	PFC	Rcn Co	Wounded	23 May
William A. Hoffman	33295238	Pvt	Med Det	Wounded	23 May
Herman J. Hift	35292446	PFC	Rcn Co	Wounded	23 May
Deward C. Whetstone	38018032	Pvt	Rcn Co	Wounded	23 May
Harold R. Burgess	38010432	Sgt	Co A	Wounded	25 May
William B. McAuliffe	31112146	Cpl	Co A	Wounded	25 May
Walter Homicz S	32852535	Pvt	Co A	Wounded	26 May
Wilbur H Plummer	35110520	PFC	Co A	Wounded	26 May
Oliver P. Poncia	39120169	Pvt	Co A	Wounded	26 May
Alvin C. Newman	38017991	S/Sgt	Co A	Wounded	26 May
George E. Riale	33550086	Pvt	Co C	Wounded	26 May
Frank H. Hrmodka	37119317	Sgt	Co A	Wounded	26 May
Philip A. Doherty	01167809	1st Lt	Co B	Wounded	27 May
Anthony J. Orlando	31145774	T/5	Co B	Injured	28 May
George W. Rowan	34707782	Pvt	Co B	Wounded	29 May
Raymond A. Hart	35292057	Pvt	Rcn Co	Wounded	31 May
Vincent R. Kuhn	12054943	Sgt	Rcn Co	Wounded	31 May
Clyde Stevenson	35797707	Pvt	Co C	Wounded	31 May
Clyde L. Rinner	20830628	T/5	Co C	Wounded	31 May
George E. Daniels	36292589	PFC	Co B	Wounded	31 May
Vernon S Smeltzer	01822741	1st Lt	Hq Co	Injured	31 May
Ernest F Farmer	34361231	Pvt	Hq Co	Injured	31 May
DiMarco, Alfred M	35053340	Pvt	Rcn Co	Wounded	23 May