

HEADQUARTERS
645TH TANK DESTROYER BATTALION

AFPO 45, U. S. Army
31 October 1943.

Subject: Battle Report, 645th Tank Destroyer Battalion.
From: 1 October 1943. To: 31 October 1943.
Map Reference: Italy, 1/100,000, Sheets, 172, 173, 174, 186.

To : Commanding General, Fifth Army, (Thru channels)

1. On October 1, 1943, The Battalion C.P. was located 6 kilometers NW of GUARDIA, LOMBARDI. Company A was located 2 kilometers east of TSORA. Company B in position south of TORRELLA. Company C, one kilometer west of GUARDIA, LOMBARDI.

2. October 2, 1943, Company C and one platoon, Reconnaissance Company were attached to the 180th Infantry Regiment to march on BENEVENTO. Company A ordered to move to 7 kilometers northeast of GUARDIA LOMBARDI with mission of AT protection Division right flank. Company B moved from TORRELLA to POTERNOPOLI protecting Division left flank. Due to inclement weather, the companies were slow but successful in fulfilling their assigned mission.

3. On October 3, 1943 at 0600A, Battalion Command Post moved to one kilometer north of APICE. Company C in position vicinity of 3 kilometers northwest MIRABELLA at 1230A. Orders received from Commanding General, 45th Infantry Division, attached Company A to 180th Infantry Regiment relieving Company C. Company C then attached to 157th Infantry Regiment. At 1500A, Company B was in position at 2 kilometers north APICE. Company A moved from a temporary position just south of BONITO to Highway 90. Moving by bounds with the 180th Infantry Regiment, the company went into an assembly area 2 kilometers northeast of S.GIORGIO at 1730A. Remained in that position during the night. During the day, Reconnaissance Company made road reconnaissance west along the CALORE RIVER towards BENEVENTO and north toward GIORGIO reporting bridges blown at most crossings.

4. The morning of October 4, 1943, found our units in the same position. 3rd platoon, Reconnaissance Company reports all bridges out vicinity of BENEVENTO. City under enemy artillery fire. Would be at least 1500A before bridge would be repaired to permit crossing the CALORE RIVER. 4th platoon reached vicinity PEITRELCINA at 1800A. Held up by artillery fire. Company B moved to vicinity of 3 kilometers east of BENEVENTO at 1900A. Remained in that position during the night. Company C moved to one kilometer southeast of BENEVENTO at 1930A.

5. At daylight on October 5, 1943, the 2nd platoon of Reconnaissance Company crossed the CALORE RIVER. Platoon reached the vicinity 7 kilometers northwest of BENEVENTO before being stopped by small arms fire. Since the 157th Infantry were advancing, they were unable to bring artillery fire on that point. 3rd platoon, Reconnaissance Company contacted an enemy patrol in the vicinity of 4 kilometers east of FRAGNETO at 1000A. Patrol escaped.

CLASSIFICATION

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BY AUTHORITY OF THE ADJUTANT GENERAL

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Company B moved 2nd platoon 3 kilometers north of BENEVENTO and 3rd platoon to 3 kilometers north of BENEVENTO at 1030A. 3rd platoon, Company C, moved to 5 kilometers northwest of BENEVENTO at 1000A. LNO3 reported three Mark IV tanks moving south from PONTE. 3rd platoon of Company C fired thirty rounds at tanks, knocking out one. Artillery fire also fired on tanks. 3rd platoon, Company B opened fire at three tanks approaching road block at one kilometer northwest of PIETRELCINA. Expended forty-six rounds with two possible hits. Activity took place at 1600A. At 1430A, Company C moved the 3rd platoon to 5 kilometers south of FRAGNETO and the 1st platoon to vicinity 4 kilometers west of PIETRELCINA. Company A moved to 2 kilometers northeast of S.GIORGIO at 1600A. 1st platoon, Company B, moved to 6 kilometers northwest of BENEVENTO under enemy artillery fire. Platoon into position at 1800A. No enemy activity during the night.

6. During the morning of October 6, 1943, troops moved towards the city of PONTE. Company C had one platoon attached to each battalion, 157th Infantry. At 1130A, 3rd platoon, Reconnaissance Company reached vicinity 4 kilometers southeast of BENEVENTO. 3rd platoon, Company B fired 45 rounds HE at a house in which there were thirteen German infantrymen reported by 3rd platoon, Reconnaissance Company. House was destroyed. 2nd platoon, Reconnaissance Company made road reconnaissance of route to PONTE, on the west side of the CALORE RIVER. 3rd platoon, Company C proposed to use route but Battalion Commanding Officer ordered platoon not to move. Road unsatisfactory for M-10's. 2nd platoon, Company C moved forward 3 kilometers southeast of PONTE at 1730A. Company A moved forward with 180th Infantry to positions vicinity of 1 kilometer south of PIETRELCINA.

7. Movement of battalion held up on the morning of October 7, 1943, because by-passes were not completed on road to PONTE. Enemy artillery fire held up work on by-passes. PONTE was taken at noon. At 1540A, four enemy tanks were reported in the vicinity of CASALDUNI. No further report was received concerning tanks. Company A attached to 180th Infantry moved 3rd platoon into position vicinity one kilometer northwest of PESCOLAMAZZA at 1350A. 1st platoon covered their left flank and the 2nd platoon moved to vicinity 3 kilometers east of FRAGNETO. During the afternoon, the 3rd platoon fired a total of 35 rounds HE at enemy MG nests and on an OP. All were destroyed. At dusk, the 1st platoon fired 7 rounds HE at an enemy MG position, but due to poor visibility, results were unknown. 2nd platoon constructed a road block at 637640 at 2100A. Units remained in same position during night.

8. Battalion Commanding Officer gave the pioneer platoon the mission of working on road from 6 kilometers northeast of BENEVENTO to FOGLIANESE, on the morning of October 8, 1943. At 1330A, Commanding Officer, Company A, reported ten enemy tanks vicinity 2 kilometers east of CASALDUNI on information he had received from 180th Infantry. LNO1 with Division Artillery reports that 179th Infantry Regiment to pass through the 157th Infantry Regiment. Company C will be relieved from attachment with 157th Infantry Regiment and become attached to 179th Infantry Regiment. Attachment became effective at 1400A. 2nd and 3rd platoons moved vicinity of one kilometer west of PONTE at 1430A. 1st platoon held up at 5 kilometers southeast of PONTE at 1430A. This platoon fired 12 rounds HE at bridge located at 2 kilometers east of PEINO over which enemy vehicles and personnel were passing. Fire reported effective by infantry. Units remained in above location during the night. 1st platoon, Company A, supported the 180th Infantry and a company of medium tanks (191st Tank Bn) in an attack on BOMBA. PALATTORA. At 1600A, 1st platoon was in position at 3 kilometers northeast of PONTE. 3rd platoon moved forward to 2 kilometers northwest of FRAGNETO, receiving enemy machine gun fire until dark. 2nd platoon, Company A protected 180th Infantry Regiment one kilometer east of FRAGNETO. Command Post received enemy artillery fire at 1600A. Due to traffic and muddy terrain, Company B remained in same position occupied yesterday.

9. At 1300A on October 9, 1943, Battalion Command Post began to move to TORRECUSO vicinity PONTE. Company B moved from their position to vicinity of PONTE. 2nd platoon crossed river at PONTE at 1600A. One M-10 hit a teller-mine. Track and bogie assembly damaged. Repaired by Battalion Maintenance on the spot. Platoon went into position vicinity 2 kilometers northwest of PAUPISI at 1900A. Battalion Command Post moved into municipal building at 2000A. Company C remained in position in support of 179th Infantry Regiment. Company A continued support of the 180th Infantry Regiment.

10. October 10, 1943, Company A completing the mission of supporting 180th Infantry Regiment, moved to an assembly area vicinity 6 kilometers southeast of PONTE at 0600A. The 1st platoon remained at one kilometer south of CASALDUNI, for AT defense of Division right flank. Company B(-) in vicinity of PONTE. 2nd platoon at 2 kilometers northeast of PAUPISI fired ten rounds HE at three or four enemy tanks leaving GUARDIA. Range 6500 yards. Due to dust, effect was not determined. 3rd platoon attached to 160th FA Battalion to support their fire. Company C remained in support of 179th Infantry Regiment. C.O., 179th Infantry Regiment ordered C.O. to provide direct assault fire. 1st platoon fired 13 rounds HE at a range of 750 yards. 3rd platoon fired 65 rounds at a range of 2500 yards. 78 rounds were expended from 1615 to 1635. Infantry moved out to their objective at 1700. Company remained in position vicinity one kilometer south of LORENZO.

11. On 11 October 1943, at 0930, 2nd platoon, Company A moved in support 2nd Battalion, 180th Infantry Regiment to position 4 kilometers east of TELESE on Verbal Order, Commanding Officer, 180th Infantry Regiment. The remainder of Company A remained in fire positions as AT defense for 180th Infantry Regiment, in vicinity one kilometer southeast of CASTELVENERE. Company B remained in vicinity 2 kilometers northwest of PAUPISE and 3rd platoon which had been attached to 160th FA Battalion was returned to command of Company, B.C.O. At 1830A, Division Artillery reported fire for effect had been brought on enemy gun position with platoon leader, 2nd platoon, Company B, acting as OP. Fire was reported very satisfactory. At 1300, an enemy 88mm shell hit a tree under which a Company B half track was passing and knocked out vehicle and killed two members of the vehicle personnel. Company A in support of 179th Infantry Regiment moved to it's mission of AT defense to vicinity 2 kilometers south of S.LORENZO. Division Artillery fired with effect on enemy tank assembly area as of 1215. Reported by Company C. observer.

12. On October 12, 1943, although Company A attached to 180th Infantry Regiment remained in position vicinity one kilometer southeast of CASTELVENERE, the 2nd platoon expended 40 rounds HE at a range of 1200 yards and destroyed two enemy armored vehicles while firing on ammunition dump. Company B as of 2200 had moved vicinity 2 kilometers southeast of TELESE. 3rd platoon fired on two Mark IV and two Mark VI tanks at a range of 3500 yards and had two hits. 3rd platoon fired on town of TELESE causing much damage. 160 rounds total 3 inch HE were expended. Company remained in position overnight. Company C remained in same position as of October 11 in mission of AT defense for Division right flank while attached to 179th Infantry Regiment. While the infantry attacked town of CERRETTO, 2nd platoon acted as direct support but was forced to take position vicinity 2 kilometers northwest of GUARDIA, they could not bypass blown bridge. No fire was necessary. Remainder of company took up road block positions vicinity one kilometer west of GUARDIA. As of 1012, 10 rounds of 3 inch HE were expended at range 6000 yards on building housing OP. Fire could not be observed. 3rd platoon, Reconnaissance Company, encountered German patrol, vicinity 3 kilometers southeast of CERRETTO., and killed one, wounded one and captured four.

13. On October 13, 1943, Company Attached to 180th Infantry Regiment continued

PARAGRAPH 13 (CONT'D)

it's mission of AT defense. Fired 12 rounds HE at enemy machine gun nest at a range 1000 yards. Fire was effective; enemy leaving gun and ammunition behind. Company stayed in position affording Division left flank AT protection. Company C attached to 179th Infantry and furnished AT defense for Division right flank, remained in road block position vicinity one kilometer west of GUARDIA. 2nd platoon covered infantry advance around CERRETTO and 3rd platoon started two small fires while firing on FAICCHIO between 1230 and 1530. Fire was effective. Total of 123 rounds were expended at range of 4000 to 6000 yards. Company remained in position overnight. One casualty during this period.

14. Movement was delayed on the morning of October 14, 1943 due to bridge out on TELESE - AMOROSI road and north of S.SALVATORE. By passes completed at 1300. Company A recovered a half track abandoned by the Germans which had been lost in PERSANO valley. Vehicle was stripped but was repaired. Company continued mission of AT defense with 180th Infantry. 1st platoon reverted to Battalion control, moved to position 1000 yards west of TELESE. Company B(-) moved into position west of TELSES during afternoon. 2nd platoon fired 112 rounds HE from vicinity of SOLOFACA at the city of PUGLIANELLO. Fire was effective. Company C remained in position during morning and early afternoon. At 1430 hours, the 1st platoon fired 240 rounds HE at a counter attack in vicinity 2 kilometers southeast of S.SALVATORE, 2 kilometers northeast of FAICCHIO. Rounds expended in 15 minutes breaking up counter-attack. Pioneer platoon repaired road and ford so 2nd platoon of Company B and CP group could cross river.

15. Company B(-) moved into position east of PUGLIANELLO (385415) at 0300A on 15 October 1943. Company attached to 180th Infantry at 1030 relieving Company A. Company A(-) then attached to 157th Infantry, 1st platoon under Battalion control. Company C released from 179th Infantry. Battalion Command Post moved to 395875 at 1530. Reconnaissance Company removed 35 mines, 6 kilometers east of ALVIGNANO.

16. On 16 October 1943, Company A(-) attached to 157th Infantry moved by bounds along road S.SALVATORE-FAICCHIO. Remained in position vicinity 3 kilometers northwest of S.SALVATORE during night. Company B moved the 1st and 2nd platoons support advance 2nd Battalion, 180th Infantry to a position north of PUGLIANELLO at 1700. 2nd platoon returned to rear echelon for maintenance, rejoining company later. 3rd platoon crossed TITERNO RIVER at 1430, under enemy artillery fire going into position at 5 kilometers northwest of S.SALVATORE. One M-10 of the 1st platoon, Company B, hit a mine while crossing river bed. Track and bogie assembly destroyed. Battery acid destroyed personal equipment and burned one man. No other casualties suffered. M-10 was repaired in 48 hours. Company B (-3rd platoon) remained in position at one kilometer northeast of AMOROSI. 3rd platoon expended 78 rounds HE on a manastary containing MGs and an OP. Range 7500 yards. C.O., 179th Infantry reported results were excellent. 171st FA Bn aerial observer observed registration of 1st platoon. 7 rounds HE were used.

17. By passes were completed on the morning of October 17, 1943, across TITERNO RIVER, vicinity FAICCHIO allowing Company A to move into position vicinity one kilometer southwest of FAICCHIO. 2nd platoon Company B moved across TITERNO in support of 2nd Battalion, 180th Infantry at 0800A moving into position vicinity 7 kilometers northeast of ALVIGNANO. 1st platoon moved forward to occupy position vicinity 6½ kilometers northeast of ALVIGNANO. 3rd platoon moved into position at 8 kilometers northeast ALVIGNANO. Company C moved 3rd platoon to vicinity 3 kilometers northwest of S.SALVATORE. 1st and 2nd platoon moved to vicinity 4 kilometers southwest of S.SALVATORE. A half track from the 3rd platoon, Reconnaissance Company hit two mines while crossing the TITERNO RIVER bed. Half track had to be replaced, but no casualties were suffered.

18. At 1040A, October 18, 1943, 3rd platoon Company A moved into position vicinity of S.FELICE. Remainder of company was in position in vicinity of GIOIA. Company B attached to 180th Infantry Regiment moved 2nd platoon to 3 kilometers west of ALVIGNANO and 3rd platoon to 5 kilometers southwest of GIOIA. At 1130A, the 2nd platoon expended 54 rounds HE on an enemy Mark IV tank and personnel being in defiladed position. At 0930A, an M-10 from the 2nd platoon, Company B, hit a mine at 5 kilometers northeast of ALVIGNANO. Tank was disabled but there were no casualties in personnel. The road had previously been swept for mines. Traffic had passed over the road before the M-10. Company C remained in position as of yesterday. 3rd platoon, Reconnaissance Company swept and cleared road of mines along VOLTURNO as far north as 4 kilometers northeast of ALVIGNANO. Platoon also established an OP at 3 kilometers east of ALVIGNANO. Battalion Command Post moved to northern bank of TITERNO at 3 kilometers north of FUGLIANELLO.

19. On the morning of the 19th of October 1943, 1st platoon, Company A, moved 2 kilometers northwest of GIOIA to support artillery of the Division. Platoon fired 14 rounds in registration at range of 9700 yards. The M-10 from 2nd platoon, Company B, which hit a mine on October 16, hit another mine in the same area that an M-10 had hit one previously. The M-10 was on the way to join 2nd platoon. The road had been cleared by 180th Infantry mine sweeping crew and also by Reconnaissance Company. No casualties to occupants of the M-10. One man on side of road received a head injury. 1st platoon, Company A, fired 14 rounds at an enemy six gun battery. Range 13,300 yards. Fire observed by artillery observer. Fire discontinued because of poor observation., sheaf was good at maximum range.

Battalion went into an assembly area in the vicinity of GIOIA at 1500A, 20 October 1943. Twelve personnel replacements were received during this period. Morale of troops at close of first period of combat was excellent. Malaria caused numerous ineffectives during first period of combat.

20. On October 30, 1943, this battalion was alerted by the S-3 of the Division Artillery. At 1300, the Battalion Commanding Officer went on a reconnaissance with the Commanding General, 45th Division Artillery for future artillery positions. On October 31, 1943 at 1000 hours, the Battalion Commander, S-3, and all company commanders made reconnaissance for displacement of the battalion. At 1830, the Battalion Commander submitted his employment plan to the Commanding General, Division Artillery, which was approved.

21. During this phase the company attached to Infantry Regiments were used as assault artillery in many cases. This use of Tank Destroyers proved to be very effective, but it is believed that in some of the missions given to the companies, should have been given to the organic weapons of the infantry regiments. In some cases, the destroyers were on the front lines exposing themselves to hostile observation and artillery fire unnecessarily. However, the men and officers were more than willing to give all the support requested of them by the infantry.

EDWARD L. AUSTIN
Major, F. A.,
Commanding