

RESTRICTED

OPERATIONS OF COMPANY "C", 701st TANK DESTROYER BATTALION

Period - 3 October 1942 to 24 January 1943.

On the 30th of September 1942, Company "C", 701st Tank Destroyer Battalion (Captain Frank J. Reddin, Commanding) moved from bivouac area at Camp Ballykialar, County Down, Northern Ireland for destination unknown, via Macclesfield, England.

The Company arrived in Macclesfield on the 3rd of October, and for the next few days prepared for further movement by water transportation on a combat mission. The Company was a part of an organization of the 1st Armored Division termed "Combat Command "B". This command was split into Red and Blue forces for the coming mission, and the Company was a part of the Red force. Lt. Eggleton's Platoon (the 2nd) was made a part of a group under the command of Lt. Colonel Todd, said group being aptly named "The Flying Column". This platoon left Macclesfield to board ship at Woom's Bay, Scotland on the 13th of October.

The remainder of the Company left Macclesfield on the 15th, and boarded the S.S. "Batory" at the Liverpool Docks. The command sailed from Liverpool to the Firth of Clyde, Scotland, where the company, with other units of the command, practiced invasion landings for approximately one week. The convey then reformed and sailed for North Africa.

On November 8, 1942, landing began in the vicinity of Oran, Algeria; the Company beaching in the vicinity of Mersa Bou Zedjar. No resistance was encountered on the beach. The "Flying Column" unloaded, removed water proofing, and moved toward Tafaraoui Airport. Lt. Eggleton's Platoon was the point of this column, and met resistance on the highway between Oran and Sidi Bel Abbas. Here Sgt. Mitchell's S/P gun accounted for two emplaced French 75's. There were no casualties within the Platoon. The following day, this Platoon moved

RESTRICTED

13

RESTRICTED

to La Senia, and thence to Oran where they remained until the Armistice was signed. Three 37mm guns were unloaded and moved from the beach on November 10th; these guns were from the 3rd Platoon. They met resistance both on the way to Oran and also in Oran. Of the 1st Platoon, two guns of 75mm and one gun of 37mm (the latter from the 3rd Platoon) unloaded and moved, under the Command of Sgt. Weaver, to vicinity of Er Rahel to reinforce road block of the 6th Armored Infantry Regiment.

After the Armistice with the French, the Company moved into a bivouac area immediately south of Tafaraoui.

"C" Company left for Tunisia on the 16th of November, and on the 21st arrived at Seuk el Arba. The Company was placed under the command of the 11th Brigade (British), and Captain Redding reported to the Commanding Officer. The next day the Company was dive bombed and strafed while in the town of Seuk el Arba, and one H/T M-2 was lost. Four men were wounded. The following day was spent on maintenance, the vehicles being in bad shape after the long road march across Algeria. The Company moved on the 24th of November and that evening arrived in Beja, where they were given the mission to secure the high ground west of Medjez el Bab (then occupied by German infantry and paratroops). Supporting the Company was one platoon of British Bren Gun Carriers.

The Company moved from Beja at noon in the direction of Medjez, order of march being the Bren Gun Platoon, 3rd, 2nd, and 1st Platoons of the Company. The column was mortared and strafed at intervals all during the afternoon, and in the evening the Company Commander assembled his company just outside of the range of German mortars. During the day's activities one man was killed (Corporal Glasman).

On the morning of the 25th of November, the Germans withdrew into

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

at 11:00 hours, and at 11:30 hours Captain Redding received orders to go into Medjez and neutralize German anti-tank guns which had been giving the British Lancasters and Cheshires trouble. These Regiments were advancing on Medjez from the North and South respectively. The Company arrived on the outskirts of the town at dusk, but it was fast getting so dark that a withdrawal was made to the hill overlooking the town. Here they spent the night. In the meantime, British artillery was shelling the town.

In the morning, Captain Redding received orders to join the 2nd Battalion of the 13th Armored Regiment (mission - to protect the right flank of the Battalion while it made a wide envelopment on the town of Medjez). While moving to join this Battalion the company was strafed by an American P-38 squadron of the 11th Pursuit Group of the 12th Air Force. It is presumed that the American fliers thought the vehicles to be German. At any rate, the results of the strafing completely immobilized and demoralized the Company as 75% of the combat vehicles were out of operation (only one 75mm S/P and one 37mm S/P were not made inoperative). Seven men were killed and twelve men wounded. Thus, the entire days of November 27th, 28th, and 29th were spent in rebuilding the destroyed vehicles, with the maintenance crew working day and night. By the 30th the Company was ready to go again (although the men had not yet recovered from the shock), and was assigned to the French for the perimeter defense of Medjez (40 German tanks were reported approaching Medjez from Tebourba). The following day, however, the Company was reassigned to the 175th Field Artillery Battalion (USA). One platoon stayed in position between Sloughia and Tesour, while the other two platoons were sent out between Beja and Sidi N'Sir. Thus, at this time, the Company was spread over an area of some 50 miles.

RESTRICTED

On the 2nd of December the Company was ordered to join the 1st Battalion of the 6th Armored Infantry, but was unable to contact this unit. At the same time, the 1st Battalion of the 13th Armored Regiment was positioned in the town of Tebourba (then defended by several battalions of German infantry and one battalion of German medium tanks). The Company joined in the attack to support the light tank battalion. The attack, however, was a failure and the attackers withdrew to defensive positions south of Tebourba.

On December 5th, Company "C" was officially attached to the 1st Battalion, 13th Armored Regiment, and moved with the Battalion across the Madjerda River into an olive grove near the main Tunis-Medjez road. Here the Company outposted the harbor of the Tank Battalion, going out on reconnaissance by day and withdrawing back into the harbor by night.

On the morning of December 10th, word came that a German armored column of some 55 mixed vehicles was proceeding down the Tunis road toward Medjez el Bab and was attacking the tank park of the 1st Battalion of the 13th Armored Regiment (Col. Waters). Company "C" with "A" Company, 13th AR, immediately attacked. The light tanks, however, became stuck fast in the mud (it had rained ceaselessly), and a tank vs. tank destroyer battle resulted. Again due to weather conditions all of the fighting was done on the highway. After destroying four German Mark IV tanks and 1 anti-tank gun, the company was ordered to withdraw back to the orchard to reorganize.

In the evening, with the pressure of the German tank destroyer attack ever increasing, the Company, with the other units in the area, moved back hoping to get to the Tebourba-Medjez road and return to Medjez; but when the head of the column arrived at the bridge across the Madjerda, the Germans laid mortar fire down on the bridge. The column was ordered to turn around and proceed in the direction from whence it had come. The march was no cross-country, and one by one the vehicles fell from the column, mired in the mud. Finally the whole column was immobilized. The order then came to abandon vehicles and to return to Medjez on foot.

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

The period from October 12th to 19th was spent in preparation.

On December 15th, the Company was assigned to Military Police duties under Combat Command "B" (all combat equipment having been lost in action, with no replacements being available). The Company remained in these duties until rejoining the Battalion on January 24th.

RESTRICTED