

DECLASSIFIED

Authority 735017
by LHM MAR Date 1

UNIT REPORT
(After Action Report)

No. 6

From: 312400A October 1944
To : 302400A November 1944

L.280
Unit: 702nd Tank Destroyer Bn
Date: 30 November 1944
Place: Gladorf, Germany

Map: 8803, 5002, 5003, 5102, Scale 1/25,000.

I. ENEMY:

a. 1-17 November. During this period the enemy desisted from attack and used this time to the best advantages they could, working incessantly on their defences containing our salient into the Siegfried Line by improving anti-tank ditches; digging fire trenches and where effective, digging intanks and anti-tank guns. A great deal of this work was done by civilian labor.

Troops containing our salient were of the 320th and 343rd Regiments of the 183rd Infantry Division.

Enemy action during this period consisted of artillery and mortar fire on our forward elements. At night the enemy engaged our Infantry patrols with small arms fire and sent patrols of their own into our lines. From the nature of the weapons carried it is believed these patrols were on the mission of destroying day in tanks.

Enemy armor evidently remained quiet in forward areas and in rear areas moved to locations best suited to meet an attack.

Very few PIs were taken during this period and so they were usually Infantry from fox holes little could be ascertained concerning bulk of the troops to the rear.

17 - 21 November. As our troops moved forward the enemy resisted strongly and for the first time in the present campaign used a large amount of armor which consisted of Mk IV, Mk V and the new King Tiger (Mk VI) tanks of the 9th Panzer Division. The tanks were used in conjunction with enemy counter attacks and in dug in positions.

Counter attacks were broken up by artillery, tank fire and TD 90mm guns. A total of 11 enemy tanks were destroyed in this sector on the 18th.

In the last of November the enemy attacked toward HAMBURG, GERMANY with Infantry which was scattered by our troops. Our advance into HAMBURG, GERMANY was resisted by artillery and direct fire from tanks. Enemy Infantry proved very poor.

Due to the terrain, mud and intermittent rain our armor in general was held to roads and higher ground more than was our usual policy and the enemy took full advantage of this fact knowing the terrain, as they did, from previous occupation.

This made a situation simple, for if our movements were camouflaged so were those of the enemy counter attacks. Here though, the enemy used the heavy armor of his Mk VI tanks to full advantage. In several instances the enemy would maneuver his heavily armored tanks into position between 3,000 and 3,500 yards from our TD's and tanks and open fire. At this distance our TD's could not penetrate the front of the Mk VI tank and the enemy evidently knew this for he would open fire on our Destroyers and tanks endeavoring to keep only his heavily armored front exposed. At this distance our 90mm gun would ricochet off the Mk VI and the 105mm velocity gun of the Mk VI would penetrate and knock out our vehicles. Gun Commanders reported that the Mk VI would continue firing even when our gunners had hit a hit of the enemy tanks.

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Henry Gaffin and R.L.D.
DOWNGRADING COMMITTEE 220-117446

only when in the course of attack our P.T.'s could get closer to them or when their more vulnerable sides were exposed could our guns destroy the Mk VI tank.

21 - 23 November. On the 21st the enemy offered stiff resistance to our advance to the high ground North of GROßGELSTADT, GERMANY with Infantry, mortars and artillery. Once the high ground was gained the enemy launched a series of counter attacks, again using artillery and tanks, but in every attempt were beaten off.

On the 22nd the enemy continued to defend and delay at all critical points. Extremely stiff resistance was found at MERZENHAUSEN where at least six tanks (believed to be Mk VI) were dug in. The enemy continued heavy artillery fire on our attack at MERZENHAUSEN and on forward elements further North. At GROßGELSTADT four tanks made an unsuccessful attempt to over run the high ground North of GROßGELSTADT.

23 November 1944. In this period newly identified units were the 2nd Battalion, 22nd SSPI, 10 SSPI Division Wiking of GROßGELSTADT.

Again heavy resistance was met in the town of MERZENHAUSEN with a counter attack at 0100 by 1st Battalion 695 Infantry Regiment, supported by artillery and tanks. After some gains were made the enemy was stopped and the Infantry entrenched along the sides of the streets.

24 - 27 November 1944. The enemy remained generally quiet during this period with considerable artillery on Communications Centers and Roads. New identification to our front was the 696 Infantry Regiment of the 3/P Infantry Division at MERZENHAUSEN and KOBLENZ.

27 - 30 November 1944. Again the enemy offered stubborn resistance to MERZENHAUSEN with the usual artillery, mortar fire, small arms fire and with mines. At least four tanks (Mk V or Mk VI) were aggressive to the South in the vicinity of KOBLENZ. At MERZENHAUSEN the 655 and 696 Regiments were the main defenders and German High Command ordered their positions be held at all costs. Most of the P.T.'s had only been inducted recently and some had come from the German Navy. As a rule the Infantry surrendered after our first wave of tanks had passed through.

On the 28th of November the enemy realized our occupation of BIRKEN principally by artillery fire from East of the RHEIN RIVER and by tank fire from FLOHBERG. Between six and nine enemy tanks were destroyed by our Air Force. There was also some resistance by Infantry in BIRKEN who fought from houses in the town. Enemy artillery continued on a reduced scale.

From the 29th to 30th, of November our sector front remained static with varied artillery and mortar fire falling on front line towns. Tanks were reported moving in the enemy rear sectors and activity observed around defence lines.

The RHEIN WILDERNESS rose and fell to varied degrees, evidently caused by the opening and closing of the sluice gates causing satisfactory periodic floods.

Enemy units in contact still are the 695th and 696th Infantry Regiments; 34/P 1/P Battalion and elements of 9th Panzer, 13th Panzer Grenadier Division and 10th SS Panzer Division. An estimated 300-400 tanks still oppose us in this area.

II. OWN SITUATION:

The Battalion C.P. remained in vicinity of BIRKEN, GERMANY (884758) from 1-23 November 1944, establishing forward C.P.'s and radio contact stations further forward, during periods of activity by the line companies. On the 24 November the Battalion C.P. was moved to ALBACH, GERMANY (885519) and remained there throughout the remainder of the month.

During the period 1-5 November 1944, Company "A" remained on outpost duty along OSA front line sector at BISCHWILLER, GERMANY (K906582) and BIRKENHOF, GERMANY (K908598) with two platoons, relieving a platoon of Company "C" in the last town 2 November 1944. The 2nd Platoon in BIRKENHOF, GERMANY fired at probable O.S.A.'s in MÖLLENICH, GERMANY, (K910615) on 3 November 1944, resulting in the destruction of two steeples at 1500 yards. On the 5 November 1944, Company "A" was relieved of all outposts with the exception of a listening patrol (Reconnaissance Platoon) established at BISCHWILLER, GERMANY serving as a connecting link between the Second Armored Division and the 29th Infantry Division. Company "A" was assembled in BU UBACH, GERMANY (K978593) on thirty minute alert under OSA Control, remaining in mobile reserve in that location until 7 November 1944.

All outposts were relieved by 7 November 1944, and the Company placed in OSA reserve in an area west of the RHEIN RIVER (K995600). Attachments were designated for future operations as follows: 1st Platoon attached to the 3rd Battalion, 66th Armored Regiment (TF "A"); 2nd Platoon remained with Company "A" as OSA reserve; 3rd Platoon attached to the 2nd Battalion, 66th Armored Regiment (TF "B"). Company "A" remained in place preparing for future operations. Between 15-17 November, Company "A" was completely equipped with new M-36 Tank Destroyers.

On the 17 November 1944, Company "A" (less 1st Platoon held in Division Reserve) moved with TF "A" to assembly positions near PUFFENHOF, GERMANY (K925612) to be prepared to attack toward KERSEN, GERMANY (K955668) on 19 November 1944. A total of twelve enemy were encountered in PUFFENHOF and killed by Company "A" outpost. Company "A" (less one platoon) outpost PUFFENHOF and during the period 17-18 November 1944 destroyed three (3) Mk V tanks and one (1) Mk IV tank. On the 19th of November on the attack of TF "A" of OSA toward the high ground between PUFFENHOF and KERSEN they destroyed three (3) Mk V tanks opposing the advance of the tanks; firing on our advance from FISCHERBACH, GERMANY (K955610 and 6200).
On 20 November 1944 Company "A" (less one platoon) assisted in advance of TF "A" of OSA by covering and flanking fires on KERSEN, GERMANY, destroying one (1) Mk IV; one (1) Mk V; and two (2) Mk VI tanks. Three M-36 Tank Destroyers were hit and destroyed by enemy fire during the attack from PUFFENHOF to KERSEN. After the objective was secured Company "A" was placed on outpost duty around KERSEN to secure the town against enemy tank attack and to assist in the attack of TF "B" of OSA on the town of MERTZBURG, GERMANY (K986605) by fire.

Company "A", less one platoon, remained on outpost duty around KERSEN, under heavy shell fire from KERSEN, GERMANY (K965635) and area NE of the RHEIN RIVER, until relieved on the 211100 November by elements of the 771st TD Battalion and 771st Tank Battalion. Company "A" assembled in KERSEN, GERMANY (K907502) for reorganization and maintenance.

Company "A" alerted on 25 November to assist in attack on KERSEN (K90615), if necessary. On the 26 November Company "A" moved to FISCHERBACH under OSA control to assist in the attack. One platoon was held in reserve; one under control of 3rd Battalion, 66th Armored Regiment; and one platoon attached to the 82nd Reconnaissance Battalion. These platoons assisted in the taking of the BUDEN-BERGHEIM highway and protection of BUDENBERG, being used principally on the flanks of the tank attacks and as T guns in captured towns and along the high ground. No enemy tanks were engaged during this attack. Approximately thirty-five enemy were killed with M-36's and 90mm Hs by the 2nd Platoon, Company "A".

Company "A" was relieved on 29 November 1944 to return to BISCHWILLER, GERMANY for reorganization, extensive maintenance and training of replacement men and officers.

1 - 16 November 1944. Company "B" remained in OSA mobile reserve in the vicinity of UBACH, GERMANY (K972601) completing reorganization and maintenance preparatory to XIX Corps attack. One platoon of M-36's were attached on 10 November manned by "C" Company personnel to give Company "B" a heavier striking force for the initial attack and training in that vehicle. -

Company "B" was placed under following attachments: 1st Platoon in TF #1; 2nd Platoon in TF #2; and the 3rd Platoon in TF #3 of COA. On the 16 November Company "B" moved out in support of COA on attack on HUENEMUTH, GERMANY (K910614) and LOEWENICH, GERMANY (K910603). Objectives taken at 0900 and attack continued at that time toward the town of MULLENBACH, GERMANY (K926612) which was seized at 1200. During the period 16-17 November Company "B" destroyed three (3) Mk IV tanks; three (3) Mk V tanks; two (2) 82 mm guns; and neutralized two pill boxes. Platoon of Company "C" attached claimed one (1) Mk IV.

Company "B" (plus one platoon -36 TD's) were placed on outposts at INGENHEIM, (K901526), RUFFENDORF (K926412) and the high ground in between those two cities. On the 18 November APENHEIM (K916026) was taken in the face of heavy AT fire. Guns of Company "B" assisted by covering the advance of the tanks by fire. Immediately after seizure by troops of COA two platoons of Company "B" were placed in position of readiness to defend the objective from counter-attacks. Two platoons of the 771st Battalion outposted the town proper. During this attack the subsequent action the 19 November along the entire front Company "B" destroyed one (1) Mk III; two (2) Mk V tanks; two anti-tank guns and one 82 mm nest.

On the 20 November 1944, COA attacked toward GRONAU, GERMANY (K91535), and the high ground NW of that town. Company "B" (less two platoons remaining on North flank in the vicinity of INGENHEIM on outpost duty) carried out the mission of protecting the flanks of the attacking force and repelling or destroying any opposing armor. One Mk V was destroyed during the engagement. Company "B" had been receiving -36 TD's as replacements during these engagements and were now complete with exception of four M-10's.

After GRONAU, GERMANY had been taken, Company "B" outposted the town to the North and East. On 21 November the enemy attempted a local counter-attack which was repelled with some losses. Company "B" destroyed one Mk V during this engagement.

On 20 November the 1st Platoon Company "B" held in UMLICH, GERMANY as Division Reserve during the Division assault was placed under control of Company "B" and placed on outpost at INGENHEIM, GERMANY. This platoon was relieved, without engagement with the enemy, on the 22 November 1944 and moved to ST. TILM, GERMANY (K915576) in Division Reserve to later rejoin Company "B" on the 24 November 1944.

Company "B" was relieved of duty along the CO "B" front and assembled in ST. TILM, GERMANY for maintenance and reorganization on the 22 November; moving to ALSTADT, GERMANY (K915540) under Battalion Control on the 24 November, remaining in that location through 30 November 1944.

During the action of this month Company "B" suffered heavy losses. Two M-36 TD's were burned; one damaged beyond repair; one M-10 burned and three damaged by enemy action. Corresponding loss in trained personnel resulted.

From 1-16 November two platoons of Company "B" were on indirect fire missions for the Division Artillery in the vicinity of BIELEFELD, GERMANY (K905592) firing interdiction and harassing fires during the hours of darkness. One platoon of Company "B" was on outpost duty at KREUZNICH, GERMANY (K900596) until relieved by a platoon of Company "B" on 2 November 1944. This platoon reverted to the Company and placed in indirect fire position. Indirect fire was carried on by the Company during this period with exception of a forty-eight hour halt to draw and prepare M-36's. Company "B" was completely changed over by 12 November 1944 and test fired new weapons both direct and indirect.

Company "B" was placed under following attachments for the second armored Division attack. Two platoons of Company "B" attached to TF "B" of COA; Company "B" (less two platoons) under COA.

On the 17 November 1944 Company "B" was relieved from indirect firing mission in BIELEFELD, GERMANY and moved to assembly positions south of BIELEFELD, GERMANY (K905595). One platoon in reserve position in BIELEFELD from 17-18 November. On the 19-20 November Company "B", less two platoons outposted SITTARD, GERMANY (K914593) to protect TF "B"'s rear and South Flank during attack on FRIEDRICHSWERK (K958640).

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Two platoons Company "C", attached to TF "B", under command of Colonel HINES, assisted in that element's attack through SWITZENHORN, toward the high ground to the East of FLEISCHMANN, GERMANY (K944609) on 19 November. Attack continued at 201000 November toward MERZENHAUSEN (K958600) with TD's protecting the advance by fire to the front and flanks.

Company "C" less two platoons was ordered into MERZENHAUSEN, GERMANY (K955618) to assist Company "A" in defending that sector, being attached to TF "A" under Colonel SWIFT. Company "C" less two platoons released from TF "A" to rejoin two platoons in TF "B" on the 24 November to assist in the attack of that element on MERZENHAUSEN, GERMANY (K985605).

The town of MERZENHAUSEN, GERMANY had been partially taken on the 22 November by TF "B" but had been successfully defended by the enemy with Mk VI tanks in the SE part of town. The TD's assisted in this attack by flank protection, destroyed one (1) Mk IV on the 21 of November.

Company "C" was placed on the high ground in defensive positions prepared to assist attacks by fire.

After Companies "A" and "B" had been withdrawn Company "C" held the line in MERZENHAUSEN under heavy shell fire, assisting in attack on the enemy by flank fire, destroying one (1) Mk IV tank and two armored vehicles, having lost one M-36 destroyed by enemy action.

On the 25 November 1944 Company "C" prepared to assist in the attack by CC "A" toward BAUMHEIM, GERMANY (K994615) and the high ground along the BAUMHEIM-KOGLAR highway overlooking the RUR RIVER. One platoon attached to CC "A" reserve; two platoons attached to TF "B" under Colonel HINES. Company "C" aided in the attack toward BAUMHEIM, and its vicinity, on the 26-28 November outposting the high ground between ADERKIRCH and SCHWALDTHOVEN; the North East of MERZENHAUSEN (when taken) and BARWEI. Very little enemy armor encountered until 28 November when fifteen (15) enemy tanks were reported in FLEISCHMANN, Germany (K982631) and all TD's alerted for counterattack. Confirmed air attack; artillery and TD fire smashed this attack before more than a threat developed. Company "C" destroyed one (1) Mk V during this action.

Company "C" placed guns en route to the North in MERZENHAUSEN, and on the high ground to the NE of MERZENHAUSEN protecting the Division salient in that sector through the 30 November 1944. One German S.P. gun destroyed by direct fire. Gun was located in vicinity of FLOORDORF, GERMANY.

Reconnaissance Company was retained in bulk with the Battalion CP throughout period being used as liaison with Infantry Divisions on our right flanks and with the various headquarters in command of the division elements. Several men and officers transferred to line companies as replacements.

Bad weather involving muddy terrain and poor visibility plus heavy armor met during this period was to some extent responsible for the heavy losses incurred by the Battalion.

III. TOTAL ARMY MATERIAL DESTROYED

a. By date and Company

DATE	CC "A"	CC "B"	CC "C"
16 Nov 44			1 Mk IV 1 Mk V 2 S.P. Guns 2 Halftracks
17 Nov 44	1 Mk V		2 Mk IV 2 Mk V
18 Nov 44	2 Mk V 1 Mk IV		1 Mk IV

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Authority 735017
By J.M. NARA Date

DATE	CO TANKS	ART.	CO "GP"
19 Nov 44	3 Mk V	1 Mk III 2 Mk V 2 AT Guns 1 MG Nest	
20 Nov 44	1 Mk IV 1 Mk V 2 Mk VI		
21 Nov 44		1 Mk V	2 Mk IV 2 Arm'd Vehicles 1 Mk V 1 Mk V
28 Nov 44			

b. Total by types:

1. Mk III Tanks
8 Mk IV Tanks
15 Mk V Tanks
2 Mk VI Tanks
2 SP Guns
2 AT Guns
2 Arm'd Vehicles
2 Hill Boxes
1 MG Nest
119 Enemy killed (approximately)

IV. ADMINISTRATION:

a. Personnel Strength: 34 Officers, 2 Warrant Officers, 607 Enlisted Men
Effective Strength: 32 Officers, 1 Warrant Officer, 536 Enlisted Men

b. Casualties

	W	I	D	POW	CO TAN	CO ART	CO "GP"	Total
(1) Killed	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
(2) Wounded	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Evacuated	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Non-victualled	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
(3) Captured	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
(4) Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

c. Prisoners Captured: None

d. Evacuations: Normal

e. Does not apply.

f. Status of Supply: 150 operational miles gasoline and oil carried by Battalion at all times. 1-1/3 units of fire carried by Battalion at all times.

g. Condition of roads and circulation: Operations confined mostly to roads due to poor soil trafficability. Some cross country work practicable with attached paddle feet on tracked vehicles. Impassable for wheeled vehicles.

h. Replacements Received: 9 Officers and 42 Enlisted Men.

John A. Beal
JOHN A. BEAL,
Lt Col., Inf.,
Commanding.