

HEADQUARTERS  
703RD TANK DESTROYER BN.,  
APO 230, U.S. ARMY

1 February 1945

OPERATIONS OF "B" COMPANY, 3 JANUARY 1945 ----- 31 JANUARY 1945

During the operations of the 3rd Armored Division during January, "B" Company was attached to CGA. The employment of each platoon is told in the following narrative.

1st PLATOON

On the morning of 3 January the 1st platoon moved out with TF McGeorge, which was met almost immediately with heavy AT fire, mines and artillery. The task force reached the bridge at P570913, and being unable to proceed further, TF's spent the night just short of the bridge. In the morning the attack continued through Jevigny (P595304) and on towards Barveux (P592894).

When the platoon moved to follow the task force, one destroyer struck a mine which damaged the track and bogie wheel but did not injure any of the crew. In the afternoon the column was stopped just north of Barveux by direct fire from AT guns, and the three destroyers of the platoon fired several rounds on enemy activity in the woods west of Liernaux (P618830), destroying two AT guns and one Nebelwerfer position.

That night the platoon remained at Barveux, and on the morning, 5 January, one section went forward with elements of the task force to aid CGA in cleaning out Liernaux. This section returned to Barveux that evening remaining there for the night.

On 5 January the attack on Liernaux continued and the platoons assisted by moving up and shooting up an enemy CP in the town. During the day the destroyer which had been damaged by a mine rejoined the platoon, and they remained in Liernaux that night.

The following morning the task force attacked towards Regue, and reached the town that afternoon. The destroyers did not go into action during the attack and when they reached the town, established road blocks to the north and east. The attack pushed on towards Hebronval (P631860), reaching the town at noon, and proceeded towards Ottre, where it was stopped just short of the town. The destroyers remained in a covering position just south of Hebronval during the attack there, and remained in that area until 12 Jan. while the 83rd Inf. Div. passed through their positions to clean out Ottre and the woods to the south. On 10 January Sgt. Legters was wounded by artillery fire and evacuated.

On 12 January the task force assembled in Ottre to prepare for a new attack to the south and moved to Petite-Langlir (P652836), remaining there that night. Originally the task force had planned to move to the woods south-east of Langlir (P650825), but were held up by the forces in front of them. At Petite-Langlir one of the destroyers was backing off the road and struck a mine, damaging the track but injuring no one.

The task force moved at 0730 on 13 Jan. towards its assembly area, but was stopped in the vicinity of Langlir for several hours by what was reported to be a dug in tank in the woods. When this resistance was finally cleared out it was found that the tank had previously been knocked out, but its machine guns were being manned. The task force then advanced as far south as the bridge at (P664804) where it coiled for the night. While the platoon was in this area, Cpl. Frasier who had just driven up to deliver a replacement, was killed by mortar fire.

At dawn the tanks attacked to secure Baclain (P665750) but were held up by enemy tanks behind some buildings on the west edge of Au-Billeul. Lt. Ball sent a section of destroyers into the woods northwest of the enemy positions and destroyed two Mk V tanks. Baclain was strongly defended, however and the force was

unable to advance. In the afternoon the TD's moved from their position west of Ag-Tilleul, back into the woods east of Aaclain, and took up positions covering the town and the road running east out of the town.

This patch of woods was under constant shelling, and any movement drew immediate fire. On the morning of 15 Jan, a tank crew near by started to thaw out the turret of their tank with a blow torch and immediately drew direct fire with HE. One round struck the mast base of a destroyer killing Sgt. French and two members of the tank crew near by. The same morning a light tank pulled up to the TD positions and was knocked out almost directly in front of a destroyer, necessitating a move to an alternate position.

The town was finally secured late that day and the TD's moved into town. Lt. Bell was evacuated to the company GP and Lt. Stites took over the platoon on that date.

On 16 January the platoon moved the task force to Cherain and established road blocks there protecting the attack of the task force on Sterpigny.

On 17 January the 3rd Platoon relieved the 1st platoon at Cherain and this platoon moved to the Company GP at vicinity of Loreure until 21 Dec. when it moved to its present rest area.

#### 2nd Platoon

The 2nd Platoon was placed in OOB reserve during the initial stages of the attack moving to Jevigny (F655904) on 6 Jan. and to Hebronval (F631860) on 10 Jan. On 12 Jan. this platoon relieved the the 3rd Platoon with TF Lovelady, which was to attack the following day after the infantry had cleared the woods to the south of Langir (F650825). Although the woods were not cleared, TF Lovelady attacked anyhow, and proceeded as far as F643210, where two tanks were lost as they emerged into an open area at that point. Under cover of darkness, Lt. Brown moved his destroyers up, taking positions at the edge of the clearing and at daybreak the following morning one of the destroyers spotted an AT gun across the clearing and knocked it out.

With this gun out of the way the attack pushed on through Loreure towards Mont-La-Ban where AT fire again held up the column. Lt. Brown moved one destroyer through the woods just northeast of the town, trying to gain a firing position, but the TD drew AT fire each time it moved out of defilade. That night the TD's moved back into Loreure.

At 0900 15 Jan. TF Lovelady attacked again by-passing Mont-La-Ban in an attempt to move along the low ground east of the town and seize Cherain. There were eight tanks and two destroyers remaining in the task force by that time, and they proceeded through the woods east of Loreure to the edge of the woods at F650791. At noon the tanks attacked down the trail to the south and every one was knocked out by AT fire. The task force commander called the commanding general about his predicament and orders came back to move the TD's down.

Lt. Brown moved the destroyers cautiously, taking advantage of all available concealment, and succeeded in gaining a defiladed position several hundred yards down the draw. Setting up three GP's around the destroyers, the platoon remained on the alert, and an observer picked up a column of four tanks with infantry on them moving out of Cherain towards Aaclain. Lt. Brown moved one destroyer into a firing position and knocked out two assault guns on MK IV chassis before they could withdraw.

Shortly after dark the security problem was aided somewhat by six infantry men who came up from the rear to join the platoon and late that night four MK IV tanks moved up to receive the position.

The next day the platoon returned to Loreure and Lt. Roberts took over the platoon.

On 18 January TF Lovelady moved to an assembly area in the woods just northwest of Sterpigny preparatory to attacking east to secure the high ground southwest of Couvy (F719778). While moving into the assembly area one destroyer was slightly damaged by a mine but was repaired in position.



The next morning the attack started and by the end of the day the platoon was in position in the vicinity of BF (#709791), covering approaches from the east. On 20 January the platoon returned with the task force to Cherain, and on 21 Jan. proceeded to its present rest area.

### 3rd PLATOON

The 3rd Platoon, attached to TF Stallings, (Lovelady), moved with the attack on 3 Jan. and by noon was in Malempre (#561850) where Lt. Silva established road blocks covering western approaches to the town. They stayed in position that night and joined the attack the following morning. The task force met considerable resistance in moving out of Malempre and made little progress for two days, advancing only as far as #572873.

On 6 Jan. the task force advanced toward Fraiture (#567862) and the TD's moved up to positions in the woods at #575869, covering both flanks of the attacking tanks. Sgt. O'Conner, one of the car commanders, spotted a full-tracked prime mover or personnel carrier in the town of Fraiture, and fired 4 rounds of HE at it. The first round was over at 2200, the second a hit at 1800, and the next two rounds hits at the same range. A short while later one of the destroyers fired several rounds at a column of horse drawn wagons moving out of Fraiture to the south-east but the results were unobserved.

In the afternoon the town was secured and the TD's established road blocks for the night.

On the morning of 7 Jan. the task force moved out towards Regne (#612857) and the destroyers started with the column. As Sgt. Gore's destroyer moved through the town his vehicle struck a mine and was almost completely destroyed by the force of the demolition charge. The road had been used for the past several hours and many vehicles had been over the identical spot. It was evidently a delayed action type and from the force of the concussion there were probably several mines together, or one extremely large one. Although no one was killed, the entire crew was evacuated to the company, and T/5 Layman and Pvt. Ramsey were evacuated through medical channels.

The task force had been instructed not to fire on the town of Regne because friendly troops were there, but as the column advanced it received a large amount of small arms fire from the town and south-east of the town. Infantry and Engineers moved forward to clear the town and as the fight went on both the tanks and destroyers fired into the enemy line southeast of the village. The following day two destroyers and one abandoned tank were spotted in that area but possible to credit any particular gun crews for their destruction.

When the town was cleared the platoon moved in and took up defensive positions covering east and south. That night one destroyer crew captured a prisoner who walked right into their lines. He was calling for his lieutenant and was evidently unaware that the town had been taken.

On 8 Jan. the platoon remained in position and moved to Hedronval on the 9th where the task force assembled to regroup. On 12 Jan. it was relieved by the 2nd Platoon and went into reserve until 17 Jan. when it was relieved the 1st platoon at Cherain. Until 21 Jan. the platoon remained at Cherain, when it moved to its present rest area.

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W. E. SHOEMAKER  
Lt. Col., 703 TD Bn.  
Commanding