

HEADQUARTERS 805TH TANK DESTROYER BATTALION
APO 302, United States Army

2 June 1943
In the Field

BATTALION DIARY

Maps: Algeria and Tunisia - 1:200,000.

January 17, 1943:

Arrived Algiers 9:20 A. Left boat late in afternoon and proceeded to El Biar.

January 22, 1943:

Battalion moved to Saoula and other small towns in immediate vicinity.

February 1, 1943:

Advance elements departed SAOULA at 0745 hours in compliance with verbal orders of Battalion Commander to establish battalion bivouac at place designated by CG II Corps whose headquarters were at TEBESSA.

February 7, 1943:

Received 230 enlisted men replacements. Battalion, less advance elements, departed from SAOULA, destination TEBESSA, for duty with II Corps, in compliance with orders of CG AFHQ. Movement by motor convoy was prescribed, except for armored vehicles which were shipped by rail from ALGER to LE KROUB and thence by road in the period 2 February 1943 to 6 February 1943 inclusive. In addition certain personnel were moved by rail because on above date battalion received sufficient replacements to bring it to almost T/O strength, which strength, due to shipment of some vehicles by rail, could not be transported in remaining motor vehicles.

February 9, 1943:

Battalion closed into bivouac area rear BOU CHEBKA (86964) at 1700 hours. At 2030 "B" Company with one reconnaissance platoon attached departed for GAFSA with instructions to report to Colonel Butler upon arrival there. (Separate diary covering "B" Company's activities at GAFSA are attached hereto marked Annex A).

10 February, 1943:

CG II Corps ordered Battalion less "B" Company, to vicinity of FERIANA where they were to be attached to 26th R.C.T. under Colonel Stark. Order was complied with and Battalion closed into bivouac area (88237) at 2330 hours.

11 February, 1943:

Reconnaissance was made of terrain in vicinity of FERIANA in conjunction with other elements of the 26th R.C.T. based on plans of the Commander for defense of area or counterattack against any force attacking from GAFSA area. 26th R.C.T. was designated as Corps Reserve.

Donated by: John H. Wilcox

67

12 February 1943:

Reconnaissance continued by unit commanders. Patrols initiated by Battalion covered generally area bounded by FERIANA-GAFSA road and north on GAFSA-SIDI BOU ZID Road about 15 miles.

13 February 1943:

Reconnaissance patrols continued but no hostile activity reported. Plans completed for action to be taken when force was committed.

14 February 1943:

Battalion ordered to send one company, with one Reconnaissance Platoon attached, to report to Commanding Officer of Combat Command at SHEITLA. "A" Company with attached platoon departed 1030 hours (Separate diary of activities of "A" Company attached to this record marked Annex B). Battalion less "A" and "B" Companies and two Reconnaissance platoons moved to an assembly area at S9917 as per orders Commanding Officer 26th R.C.T. During night of 14-15 February 1943 "B" Company reverted back to Battalion as a result of the evacuation of GAFSA.

15 February 1943:

Reconnaissance along DU ST. RICH-KSOUR SAHEL (T2526) and DJ. ST. AICH-GAFSA road and NE along DJ. ST. RICH mountain range initiated. Reports for day all negative.

x 16 February 1943:

Reconnaissance patrols were again sent out. Early contact was made with a British reconnaissance unit which reported enemy patrol at Y0090. At 1057 hours patrol operating on DU. ST. AICH-GAFSA road was attacked by an enemy patrol and withdrew north along road. During morning reconnaissance was made for fire positions in vicinity of S9015 while Reconnaissance Company was given mission of reconnoitering FERIANA-GAFSA road. At 1130 enemy contact was reported at X9892 by Reconnaissance Company. At about same time enemy guns commenced firing at an outpost on DJ. SIDI AICH from position at about T0713.

Battalion was deployed in position at S9015, with one platoon guarding pass at T0015. Orders from Commanding Officer 26th R.C.T. to destroy enemy guns firing on outpost were received and in compliance therewith "C" Company's remaining platoons were sent to take care of this mission while "B" Company was ordered to a position approximately 1 mile E of road junction at MADJENE BEL ABIES which was already occupied by a platoon of same company ready to cover withdrawal of Ren. Co. north of FERIANA-GAFSA road.

"C" Company reported no evidence of enemy guns at T0713, and was ordered to report to position occupied by "B" Company, but radio communication had been lost so S-3 was sent to contact them verbally. From that time until 1700 hours 17 February company was separated from the Battalion (Efforts of the company to extricate itself from encirclement are recorded and attached as Annex C). B Company continued to occupy position near MADJENE BEL ABIES until

~~SECRET~~

94

dusk when enemy activity ceased. At times during this period enemy fire from tanks, armored cars and one 88mm gun was very brisk. Losses inflicted on enemy are unknown. Battalion withdrew to bivouac in vicinity of DJ. QUAD DADA as per order of Commanding Officer 26th R.C.T. At 2200 hours Battalion was ordered to send "B" Company into an assembly position near DJ. EL. HOGNEFF (S8429) where a counterattack with tanks was to be launched on following day at 0700 hours. "C" Company which had bivouaced at S9917 where there was an outpost connected by phone with Commanding Officer 26th R.C.T. was notified of impending attack & was ordered to execute a flank attack from the east. x

17 February 1943:

At 0300 hours Battalion Commander was ordered to proceed with Battalion to KASSERINE there to report to Colonel Moore of the 19th Engineers. FERIANA was being evacuated. Outpost in vicinity of "C" Company was removed without informing them of situation and change in orders. Battalion moved out for KASSERINE as ordered but one reconnaissance platoon was sent to contact "C" Company if possible and bring them to KASSERINE. This proved impossible when it was discovered that company was surrounded. Upon arrival at KASSERINE, "B" Company was ordered into position eight miles NE on KASSERINE-SBEITLA road. At 1200 hours, without having had any action, it was ordered directly to withdraw to position west of KASSERINE PASS and astride south fork of road entering pass. "A" Company Commander was contacted during morning hours and after rounding up a few elements of his unit was ordered into bivouac at S8976. This Company was a portion of force that was driven from SBEITLA. Late in afternoon radio contact was established with "C" Company and about 1700 hours one platoon and headquarters of the Company rejoined the Battalion. There being no further mission for the Battalion for the night, it bivouaced at S8976.

x 18 February 1943:

All quiet. Patrols sent east through KASSERINE PASS were fired on and withdrew. One patrol reconnoitered as far as S7855 but reported no activity.

19 Feb
Battalion less "C" Company which had lost all its guns was ordered into KASSERINE PASS to defend same as it was felt that enemy would make determined effort to force it. Subjected to heavy artillery fire, battalion stopped an attack made by an estimated tank battalion at 1600 hours and was then forced to withdraw from foot of pass as enemy infantry commenced infiltrating through and around position. Losses of material reduced available guns to approximately 10 including 37mm's. Remaining guns went into position on west side of pass and were then withdrawn to assembly position occupied during previous evening. In this engagement guns were emplaced and used as artillery initially; against the tanks there was no chance of maneuver due to prior disposition and withdrawal was made extremely difficult which accounts in part for high materiel losses. During course of day, Colonel Stark, Commanding Officer 26th R.C.T., assumed command of forces defending pass. x

20 February 1943:

Uneventful - Battalion ordered to move to a position at S9392 and to report to Brigadier Dumfries, 26th Armored Brigade with headquarters at THALA.

69

Movement was made (er cover of darkness and posit) occupied at 0300 hours, 21 February 1943 by all guns capable of action - a total of four.

21 February 1943:

Late in afternoon hostile forces which included tanks forced a withdrawal by all units to a position at N8505. Platoon of guns worked in conjunction with tanks (English).

22 February 1943:

Position at N8505 was occupied all day. No direct action was encountered, but heavy artillery fire and some bombing was experienced during most of day.

23 February 1943:

Position still maintained - no activity. Battalion was ordered to vicinity of AINE HEIDA for reorganization and rehabilitation, except for platoon occupying position near THALA, which platoon was ordered to report to CG I Armored Division at N6405.

1 March 1943:

Lt. Col. Foreman relieved and assigned to 1st TD Group, per Par. 3, S.O. # 11, Hq. 1st TD Group.

Major Camden W. McConnell assumed Command of Battalion, per Par. 4, S.O. # 11, Hq. 1st TD Group.

2 March 1943:

Received 1 officer and 126 enlisted men replacements.

4 March 1943:

Received 5 officers and 68 enlisted men replacements.

10 March 1943:

Received 3 enlisted men replacements.

11 March 1943:

Received 1 officer and 2 enlisted men replacements.

17 March 1943:

Battalion marched at 0001 hours to vicinity of THELEPTE airport via TEBESSA in compliance with F.O. # 4, Hq. 1st TD Group, 16 March 1943. Mission: To protect THELEPTE airport from mechanized attack. Closed in assembly area 0845 hours.

Battalion moved at 1300 hours to FERIANA, in compliance with F.O. # 5, Hq. 1st TD Group, 17 March 1943. Mission: To provide local defense of Headquarters, II Corps, U. S. Army. By 2330 hours necessary roadblocks, night time listening posts, and gun positions were established by all companies, covering 260° arc around FERIANA.

86

18 March 1943:

By 0930 hours daytime gun positions and necessary minefields were established by all companies.

20 March 1943:

Battalion moved from FERIANA at 1245 hours and closed in assembly area 1 mile NW of SBEITLA 1700 hours in compliance with V.O. C.O. 1st TD Group. Mission: To support 9th Inf. Div. in static defense of SBEITLA-KASSERINE area in conjunction with 894th TD, 1 Bn. 47th Inf. Column strafed by three (3) enemy planes 2 miles NW SBEITLA 0430 hours - casualties 2 killed, 6 wounded, 3 vehicles and guns damaged and 1 - 37mm mtd vehicle destroyed. At 1600 hours battalion came under command of C.O. 894th TD Bn. At 2300 hours forward C.P. and gun positions established 2-3 miles from SBEITLA on road to HADJEB EL AÏOUN. Reconnaissance arc established 8 miles NE of SBEITLA.

21 March 1943:

One company established gun position 2 miles east of SBEITLA on SIDI BOU ZID road, prior to 1200 hours Recon. outposts established at T5581 (TUNISIAN 1/200,000 MAP: SBEITLA). Contact also established w/Derb.Yeomanry and Recon. elements of 34th Inf. Division. No enemy contact.

22 March 1943:

At 2135 hours gun position on SIDI BOU ZID road was reinforced by one platoon as per verbal orders of C.O. 894th TD Bn., based on unconfirmed report of enemy tank column moving west of FAID.

23 March 1943:

Laid minefields.

26 March 1943:

Battalion departed SBEITLA approximately 2200 hours in compliance with radio message C.G. Div. Arty., 9th Div. received 1100 hours, 25 March 1943.

27 March 1943:

Orders changed enroute by authority contained in phone message from C.G., II Corps relayed thru Hq. 9th Inf. Div. placing 805th TD Bn. under command of C.G., Corps Artillery, II Corps. Battalion closed 0900 hours in ass'y area 2 mi. NE of GAFSA on MAKNASSY road. Mission: To provide anti-mech. defense for Corps Artillery. C.P. and gun positions occupied 2000 hours, in wadis 4 miles SE of EL GUETTAR along road to GABES.

29 March 1943:

Random enemy shellfire landed in area. Attacked by dive bombers at 1630 hrs. -no casualties.

~~SECRET~~

57

30 March 1943:

Enemy planes dropped flares and bombs over area at 0300 hours. Casualties - 1 killed, 1 vehicle damaged.

31 March 1943:

Departed EL GUETTAR 1300 hrs. in compliance w/VOCG II Corps. Closed in ass'y area SENED STATION at 1700 hrs. Mission: To provide secondary defense line against mechanized attack from the north, northeast or east, under command of C.G. 1st Armored Division. 2 enemy planes dive bombed IP at 1330; no casualties.

1 April 1943:

Departed ass'y area at 1300 hrs. and occupied position of readiness 1730 hrs. 4 mi. NE SENED STATION (in comp. w/ltr CG 1st Armored Division 31 March 1943 as amended verbally). Mission - unchanged. 8-10 mile recon. radius established and close cooperation with Derby Yeomanry effected.

2 April 1943:

Preparation of alternate gun positions continued. SENED PASS patrolled and guarded.

3 April 1943:

1 Officer and 45 enlisted men replacements received.

4 April 1943:

Departed SENED STATION 1400 hrs. by infiltration in compl. w/VOCG 1st Armored Division, placing this organization under the command of Col. J. J. Williams, Force Comdr., operating under II Corps. Closed in reconnoitered C.P. and gun positions at T-2715 with "A" Company in position at T-2735 (TUNISIAN 1/200,000 MAP: SHEITLA). "A" and Rcn. Companies removed from control of Commanding Officer 805th TD Bn.

5 April 1943:

This battalion (minus "A" and Recon. Companies) departed T-2715 at 1300 hrs. in compl. w/VOCG II Corps and closed in ass'y area 7 miles N of GAFSA at 1530 hrs. At this time VOCG II Corps placed this organization under command of the C.O. 1st Ranger Bn. Mission: To prevent enemy mechanized thrust into GAFSA from Southwestern tip of DJENEL BERDA. Daylight recon. southeast of MEDILLA was executed at 1630 hrs. for night occupation of position.

6 April 1943:

Forward C.P. and gun positions SE of MEDILLA occupied at 0500 hrs. At 1230 hrs. withdrew from MEDILLA area in compl. w/VOCG II Corps and returned to assembly area 7 miles NE of GAFSA on GAFSA-SIDI BOUZID road. Ordered to SHEITLA there to report to Col. J. J. Williams by CG II Corps. "A" and Rcn. Companies remained detached.

6 APR 1943

28

7 April 1943:

Closed in temporary bivouac 2 miles east of SHEITLA at 0200 hrs. As of 1200 hours "B" and "C" Companies were removed from control of this Battalion and attached to force protecting airfield at T-2735. Battalion C.O. given mission of coordinating activities of rear echelons of WILLIAMS FORCE. During afternoon C.G., CCA 1st Armored Division assumed command of this force.

8 April 1943:

Battalion ordered by CG, CCA to position of readiness at T-5751. Mission: To prevent enemy debauchment from FAID area. Battalion closed new area at 1900 hrs. "A" and Recon. Companies reverted to Battalion at same time. Two men wounded by anti-personnel mines.

9 April 1943:

Enemy minefields in and about SIDI BOU ZID cleared by this organization. One officer wounded by enemy anti-personnel mine in SIDI BOU ZID. Observation post on DJEBEL KSAIRA occupied by Rcn. elements of this organization prior to 1730 hrs.

10 - 11 April 1943:

Departed SIDI BOU ZID area at 1800 hrs., 10 April 1943, attached to CCA. Mission of CCA: To move to and occupy area at T-8788 by way of pass 5 miles south of FAID. Battalion provided "C" Company for advance guard and "B" and Recon. Companies for flank guard of CCA. Battalion closed in area in vicinity of T-8788 by 0200 hrs., 11 April 1943, including companies forming portions of flank and advance guards.

12 April 1943:

Departed 1300 hrs. in compl. with VCCG 1st Armored Div. and closed in bivouac 5 miles NE of BOU CHEEKA, reverting to control of Commanding Officer, 1st TD Group.

23 April 1943:

Battalion moved to bivouac in vicinity of Morsott.

6 May 1943:

Battalion moved to bivouac in vicinity of Roumes Souk.

18 May 1943:

Battalion attached to 34th Division effective 14 May per Radio Message.

29 May 1943:

Battalion moved to bivouac in vicinity of Bizerte.

1. During period February 12 - 19, 1943, Battalion had the following casualties:

2 Officers & 9 Enlisted Men - KIA
1 Officer & 20 Enlisted Men - SW
2 Officers & 22 Enlisted Men - LW
4 Officers & 155 Enlisted Men - MIA
1 Officer & 8 Enlisted Men - Captured

2. During period March 20 - April 11, 1943, Battalion had the following casualties:

4 Enlisted Men - KIA
1 Officer & 7 Enlisted Men - SW

3. To date 18 Purple Hearts have been awarded to Officers and Enlisted Men of this Battalion.

Captain Samuel N. Johns, wounded in action, received the D.S.C. on April 6, 1943.

SEPT. 1940-- Co. C. 105 INF (A.T.) BN

DEC. 15 1941. BECAME 835TH T.D. BN (H)

JULY 30, 1942 - LEFT HOOD - TEXAS
^{CAMP}

AUG 2, 1942 - ARRIVED INDIANTOWN GAP, VA.

COPY

from

THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Record Group 407, Adjutant

ADD. INFO. General's Office

WWII Operations Reports