

C O N F I D E N T I A L

319.1

1st Ind.

HEADQUARTERS, 29TH INFANTRY DIVISION, A.P.O. 29, U. S. ARMY, 6 August 1944.

TO: The Adjutant General, War Department, Washington, 25, D. C.

THRU: Commanding General, XIX Corps, A.P.O. 270, U. S. Army.

Forwarded in compliance with letter, Headquarters, First United States Army, file 319.1, subject: "Action Against Enemy, Reports After/After Action Reports, dated 13 July 1944, and letter, Headquarters, XIX Corps., same subject and file, dated 19 July 1944.

For the Commanding General:

ROBERT B. ANCHEN, JR.,
Lt. Col., A. G. D.,
Adjutant General.



REGRADED UNCLASSIFIED
ORDER SEC ARMY BY TAC/WO Ltr. 319.1 dtd 26 Oct 1945
POSTED RAC 3 Mar 48 BY _____

C O N F I D E N T I A L

CONTENTS

NARRATIVE REPORT

- I - Summary of Operations
- II - Battle Lesson Notes
- III - Awards and Decorations
- IV - Commanding Officers

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

- Incl 1, S-1 Journal
- Incl 2, S-2 Journal
- Incl 3, S-3 Journal



MAPS AND OVERLAYS
(In attached envelope)

- France 1/50,000, Sheets 6F/2, 3 & 4
- Overlay of Battalion Positions

REPRODUCTION OF
ORDER SEC ARMY BY 2107, WO Ltr. 312.1 dtd. 26 Oct 1945
POSTED RACB. Mar. 48 BY _____

C O N F I D E N T I A L

HEADQUARTERS
821st TANK DESTROYER BATTALION (Towed)
APO 230

1 August 1944

AFTER ACTION/AFTER REPORT FOR THE MONTH OF JULY 1944I SUMMARY OF OPERATIONS1. PHASE I: The Capture of St Lo.

a. From 1 July 1944 until the capture of St Lo on the 18th of July 1944, the 821st Tank Destroyer Battalion was attached to the 29th Division Artillery. On July 1, the Battalion received orders to relieve the 823rd Tank Destroyer Battalion. Company "A" was in direct support of the 175th Infantry Regiment, in the vicinity of Quesney, map coordinates 5135707G. Company "B" was in direct support of the 115th Infantry Regiment, in the vicinity of Renauf, map coordinates 56806910. Company "C" was in direct support of the 116th Infantry Regiment, in the vicinity of Segueville, map coordinates 53506800. The primary mission was in general support of the 29th Division anti-tank defenses.

b. During the first phase, guns were employed on the main road from Moon Sur Elle to St Lo, on the main road extending east from St Clair Sur l' Elle, and on the main road extending west from St Clair Sur l' Elle.

c. As the 29th Infantry Division pushed forward to objectives in the vicinity of the enemy strong point of St Lo, Company Commanders and Company Officers made constant forward reconnaissance for gun positions along possible enemy tank approaches. Reconnaissance made was generally in the zone south of a line from Villiers Fossard, map coordinates 522675 and Couvains, map coordinates 558683.

d. On the 7th, 8th and 9th of July 1944 Company "B", loan in reserve for primary mission, was given a secondary mission of indirect fire. Missions assigned were unobserved interdiction and harassing fire at night. Concentrations were directed at cross roads, road junctions and troop assembly areas behind the enemy lines to the east of St Lo.

e. During the period from 1 July to 18 July, no enemy armor came within range of our firing positions. Consequently, there was no direct action with the enemy. However, the following casualties resulted from enemy action.

- (1) One officer and one enlisted man was killed and four enlisted men wounded by an enemy "S" type mine. The casualties occurred on 16 July 1944 while the officer and enlisted men referred to were on a reconnaissance mission.
- (2) One enlisted man was killed by enemy small arms fire.
- (3) One enlisted man was wounded by enemy sniper fire.
- (4) Five enlisted men were wounded by enemy artillery and mortar fire.

f. On 18 July the Second Reconnaissance Platoon was assigned to task force "C". Their mission was to enter St Lo with the Task Force. While in St Lo they were subjected to heavy shelling from enemy artillery fire. Two enlisted men were wounded by shell fragments. At 1908h5 the Second Reconnaissance Platoon was relieved of their assignment to Task Force "C" and returned to the Battalion assembly area.

(1)

C O N F I D E N T I A L

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Cont'd: After Action/After report for the Month of July.

2. PHASE II: The Break Through to the South of St Lo.

a. After St Lo was captured by the 29th Infantry Division on the 18th of July 1944, the Division was relieved by the 35th Infantry Division on the 19th and 20th July 1944. The 29th Infantry Division withdrew to a rest area in the rear. The 821st Tank Destroyer Battalion remained attached to the 29th Division Artillery. The 29th Division Artillery with attached units, including the 821st Tank Destroyer Battalion, remained in forward positions. The 821st was attached to the 35th Infantry Division, through 29th Division Artillery, on 20 July 1944. Company "A" and Company "B" were committed as Division anti-tank defenses. Company "C" was held in Division reserve.

b. On the 27th of July 1944, the 821st Tank Destroyer Battalion was relieved from attachment to the 35th Division, through the 29th Division Artillery. At 290005 July, acting on orders from the 29th Division Artillery, the Battalion moved from assembly area in the vicinity of Couvains to a temporary assembly area at map coordinates 290520. The Battalion remained in the temporary assembly area while Company Commanders and Company Officers made reconnaissance for forward assembly areas.

c. At 291440 the Battalion moved forward to an assembly area in the vicinity of Samsen de Bon Fesse, map coordinates 466552. Company "C" remained in the assembly area as Division reserve. Company "A" moved to a forward direct firing position in support of the 175th Infantry Regiment, in the vicinity of La Vallee, map coordinates 442485. Company "B" moved to a forward direct firing position in support of the 116th Infantry Regiment, in the vicinity of Le Mesnil Opac, map coordinates 487519. The Battalion was in these positions at the end of the period 31 July 1944.

d. On the 18th, 19th and 20th of July 1944 Company "A", then in reserve for primary mission, was assigned a secondary mission of indirect fire. Missions assigned were unobserved interdiction and harassing fire at night. Concentrations were directed at cross roads, road junctions and troop assembly areas behind the enemy lines to the east of St Lo.

e. During the period from 13 July to 31 July inclusive no enemy armor came within range of our guns, therefore, there was no direct action with the enemy. As a result of enemy action, however, four enlisted men were killed and seventeen enlisted men wounded. All casualties were the result of enemy artillery and mortar fire.

f. On the 21st of July the Second Reconnaissance Platoon was in an assembly area in the vicinity of Couvains. A concentration of enemy artillery shells landed in the assembly area. A direct hit was scored on the Platoon Sgt's M-8 Armored Vehicle, setting the vehicle on fire and causing the ammunition carried in the vehicle to explode. Six enlisted men were wounded.

II BATTLE LESSON NOTES

1. Towed Tank Destroyers should not be committed, unless routes are available for easy entrance and exit from positions, when there is no tank threat.

a. The Bocage Country of Normandy France has small, narrow dirt roads, affording extremely difficult driving and necessitating slow speeds. Companies in firing positions for primary mission, through necessity, often times have to cut their own roads to fields, then further cut hedge rows to get sufficient fields of fire.

(2)

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Cont'd: After Action/After Report for the Month of July 1944.

The guns must be securely dug in to protect the crews and weapons from fire and shell fragments, and positions sand-bagged if time permits. All this tends to make the position permanent. Observation by the enemy also precludes any movement. With the guns in such permanent positions, the routes of egress must be exceptional to assist in the time and space factor of movement to combat tanks in other areas. Detailed reconnaissance, time and considerable engineer assistance is necessary to help remedy this situation. This brings about the fact that once committed the Tank Destroyer Towed Gun is lost to future employment if too close to the OPIR or MTR.

2. Towed Tank Destroyers should have prepared positions in forward sectors for occupation. These positions being in sufficient quantity to cover all possible tank approaches. In this type country quick occupation of un-prepared positions is not advisable if maximum effectiveness is to be had from the weapon.

a. Experiments were made by this unit to ascertain time and space factors on going into reconnoitered, but unprepared positions. It was found that it was impossible to get off the roads, to proper fields of fire with enough time to combat a tank attack. Lead vehicles were forced to stop, would have had to go into position on the roads, which tactically would have meant gun for tank.

3. In the present action most reconnaissance should be done in small vehicles and in the most forward areas on feet and/or at stationary OP's. Unless an actual tank threat is proven. The Reconnaissance Platoons' M-8's draw hostile artillery fire when observed. A smaller vehicle is disregarded. Their clumsiness on the narrow roads do not make up for the little added protection of armor. Reconnaissance should not be effected further forward than the leading Infantry Command Post, unless an actual tank threat has been made and/or sufficient Cavalry Reconnaissance has been utilized to protect the small unit. The Reconnaissance Platoons are too undermanned to risk them needlessly unless actual threat is shown. When no threat is shown, reconnaissance should be confined to road nets, assembly areas, gun positions, and fields of fire. Reports in detail should be forthcoming every time a unit moves on reconnaissance. Reporting the extent of bridges, speeds possible on varying roads, time distances, correctness of maps, etc.

a. The fact of lost reconnaissance was noted during the occupation of St Le. The organization had a reserve section that could have been employed if a tank attack was made from some other sector, however, as there was no threat imminent, the use can be considered sound; except that a regular patrol mission was given this group, in St Le, which was not in line with their primary mission. With a front that necessitates considerable liaison between TD's and supported units the reconnaissance elements can be of great use, insofar as they do not go farther forward than the leading elements CP. In the original attachment, if a tank attack had been made on the opposite flank, the Bn would not have had sufficient reconnaissance elements to maintain proper contact.

b. A wealth of information on forward positions was afforded the Company Commanders by reconnaissance during execution of their mission on positions, road nets, etc. This information was not attainable by the Commanders through personal reconnaissance that far forward.

4. The secondary mission should be exploited to the fullest. One company being on indirect fire mission while the remaining two are on direct fire missions. By utilizing one company (reserve company) on secondary mission, the comparable effect of a Field Artillery Bn can be utilized. Also fire may be called for by direct firing companies for support on own targets during tank attack.

(3)

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~



~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Cont'd: After Action/After Report for the Month of July 1944.

5. Care should be exercised to insure that units, whose mission is anti-tank, receive complete tank warnings based on facts. False alerts tend to make gun crews skeptical. In one instance a telephone warning of the approach of over 100 tanks was received. In checking for confirmation, the source of this warning could not be uncovered. In this unit it is SOP to include in tank flash messages the number of tanks, size, direction of movement, speed and location by coordinates. Without these essential factors, it is obvious that Tank Destroyer Units would experience difficulty in accomplishing their mission. In all cases it is not possible to include all the information required, but the receipt of all possible information concerning the tanks greatly aids the gun crews. Most infantry units are convinced that any tracked vehicle is a tank and they promptly report it as such. This and the aforementioned practices destroy the efficiency and smoothness of intelligence channels. Front line troops should be thoroughly familiar with identifications of enemy armor.

III AWARDS AND DECORATIONS

1. As a result of meritorious service rendered during the incident when the Second Reconnaissance Platoon was shelled by enemy artillery, the following named officer and enlisted men were recommended for the bronze star medal; Lt Kvernwick, S/Sgt Donaldson, Pvt Odgaard, Pvt Keller, Pvt Vaverick, Pvt Rasmberg and Pvt Watts.

2. Pvt Oscar S. Odgaard 37276443 was awarded the Bronze Star Medal per paragraph 11, General Order Number 67, HQ 29th Infantry Division, dated 30 July 1944.

3. On the 27th of July a review, consisting of Headquarters Company and one Platoon from each letter Company, was held to award the Purple Heart to the following named enlisted men for wounds received in action against the enemy on the dates following their names; Cpl John J. Telesco 39691355, 11 July 1944; Tec 5 Jack E. Jefferies 39615413, 4 July 1944; PFC Raymond E. Deans 39019935, 21 July 1944; Pvt Edward S. Congrove 21315097, 19 July 1944; Pvt Arthur J. Edmondson 37123921, 4 July 1944; Sgt Wayne S. Tompler 38152253, 21 July 1944; Pvt Melvin F. Evans 11049500, 19 July 1944; S/Sgt Arthur Donaldson 37123921, 21 July 1944.



IV COMMANDING OFFICERS

1. Lt Col Howard H. Arbury was in command of the Battalion for the period from 1 July 1944 to 31 July 1944.

2. Company Commanders for the period from 1 July 1944 to 31 July 1944 were as listed below:

- Company "A" - Capt Edward A. Burk
- Company "B" - Capt Fred D. Weatherington
- Company "C" - Capt Deck A. Stuart
- Hq Company - Capt Carl L. Miller

HOWARD H. ARBURY
Lt Col., FA
COMMANDING

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

MANAGEMENT OF THE AREA AND A SUMMARY OF THE
AUGUST 1944/AUGUST 1944 REPORT ON THE AREA JULY 1944

<u>Geography (see also area referred to in par. 2 b.)</u>	<u>Map Coord - 2/0520</u>
<u>Bouvains</u>	" " - 557683
<u>La Vallée</u>	" " - 442435
<u>Le Nouill (pac)</u>	" " - 437519
<u>Moën sur Oile</u>	" " - 536732
<u>Quessoy</u>	" " - 523707
<u>Renaut</u>	" " - 568691
<u>Sanson de Bon Pesse</u>	" " - 465552
<u>Segueville</u>	" " - 535680
<u>St Clair sur l' Oile</u>	" " - 517712
<u>St Lo</u>	" " - 495632
<u>Villers Fossard</u>	" " - 522675

