

HEADQUARTERS 644TH TANK DESTROYER BATTALION

APO 230, U S Army

SUBJECT: Battalion History for the Period 1 January 1945 Through 31 January 1945.

TO : The Adjutant General
War Department
Washington 25, D. C.
(Thru Channels)

The following is a history of this organization for the month of January 1945, submitted in accordance with AR 345-105, dtd 9 Mar 43:

- a. Unit - No change.
- b. Changes in Organization - Bn converted to T/O and T/E 18 - 27, c 1 & 2 on about 17 January 1945.
- c. Strength, Commissioned and Enlisted:

(1) At beginning of Period:

Officers	35
Warrant Officers	1
Enlisted men	604

(2) Net increase for Month:

Officers	2
Warrant Officers	0
Enlisted men	13

(3) Net decrease for Month:

Officers	0
Warrant Officers	0
Enlisted men	0

(4) At end of Period:

Officers	37
Warrant Officers	1
Enlisted men	617

d. Stations of Unit or Parts thereof:

Station - SOURBRODT, BELOIUM (Coor 861 098) No change.

At beginning of Period.- 1 January 1945
End of Period - 31 January 1945

e. Marches - None.

f. Campaigns: Germany.

g. Battles:

(1) Defensive of ELSENBORN

a. The Enemy.

1. G-2, by interrogation of prisoners, determined the fact that enemy armor was making the point and infantry following, set up defensive lines. The enemy was still well prepared, being located forward of the Seigfried Line with the capability of returning to their strong defenses if necessary. Special weapons: The enemy used Mark VI Tiger "Royals". These models were a modified Mark VI with sloping glacis plate and heavy armor up to 6 inches thick. New suspension adjustment was also noticed. Enemy morale was considered good. The news of the stopping of the bulge had not been disseminated to most troops and enemy propaganda spread false reports to bolster morale.

CLASSIFICATION CHANGED TO:
CANCELLED
BY AUTHORITY OF THE ADJUTANT GENERAL
DOWNGRADING COMMITTEE

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2. Enemy defenses were hasty but continually improved, with the Seigfried line and Roer River backing them up. The enemy had the possibility of returning to these defenses in the event of a withdrawal. Natural obstacles were exploited and the enemy habitually defended high ground. Mines were used as defensive measure against our patrols. No evidence of demolitions were found.
3. The enemy opposing the Division sector consisted of the 5th and 8th Co's of the 1055th Regt located in the WIRTZFELD area. 6th Co was believed to be in vicinity of BULLINGEN. Counter-attacks were launched only on a small scale against our patrol activities. Enemy use of armor and artillery was negligible and during the end of the period it was estimated that enemy artillery had been pulled out completely and that the enemy was withdrawing. No enemy armor or artillery was destroyed.
4. No prisoners were taken by this unit during the period.

(b) Elements Affecting Action:

1. Enemy information and reconnaissance was at a minimum. Enemy held defensive positions and was not active due to extremely cold weather and heavy snow that held movement to a minimum.
2. Attitude of the civilian population had no effect on the action. Civilians had been evacuated forward and other assistance was of no tactical value.
3. Terrain was rolling and surrounded by natural easily defended obstacles ie; Lakes, streams and high ground. Heavy snows impeded traffic and in some cases made movement on foot extremely difficult. Many times roads were completely blocked and had to be cleared by dozers and snow plows.

(c) Action:

1. Hq, 6th TD Bn (less Co B) was assigned to 1st Army and attached to the 2d Inf Div for greater portion of the period. Near the close of period unit was attached to the 99th Inf Div, which in turn had been attached to the 2d Inf Div from the time of the breakthrough until 7 January 1945. Unit command post was located in SOURBRODT - Bn Forward at ELSENBORN.

Supporting Units: None.

2. Mission: To defend ELSENBORN RIDGE against enemy attack and to act in support of the 2d Infantry Division.

THE ELSENBORN DEFENSIVE

At the beginning of the period, the Battalion less Company B was attached to the 2d Infantry Division which continued to hold the right flank of the 1st Army north of the German Salient. The Battalion had the mission of meeting and destroying any enemy armor approaching the sector. Company B was attached to the 1st Infantry Division with the same mission. The 1st Division was on the right flank of the 2d Division and held a portion of the north side of the German Salient.

The Battalion forward CP was located at ELSENBORN, BELGIUM. The rear CP at SOURBRODT, BELGIUM. Company A and C had their CP in ELSENBORN, BELGIUM. Company B had its CP in CHAMPAGNE, BELGIUM. Company A was further attached to the 38th Infantry Regiment and Company C fired indirect firing missions assigned by the 37th Field Artillery, during the first part of the period. Company C on 3 January, was attached to the 9th Division.

The Reconnaissance Company during the period reconnoitered for tank approaches, secured the forward CP, made recommendations for minefields and made reports on the conditions of the roads. The maintenance platoon of Headquarters Company utilized the defensive period to maintain the vehicles of the Battalion and to change tracks on the M-10's. On the third of the month, the Battalion received orders to turn its 81mm mortars in to the 99th Division, which was accomplished.

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Changes in the assignment, and duties of officers on the 4th of the month were as follows;

Captain JAMES M CARPENTER from CO Hq Co to S-2
1st Lt JOSEPH J ENNEKING from S-2 to S-4
1st Lt JOHN A BAER from S-4 to CO Hq Co

Captain CARPENTER was further assigned Historian and began writing of the Battalion History for 1944.

During the month, the Forward CP received many visitors, most of whom wished information concerning the Battalion action in repulsing the German Panzers at ROCHERATH and KRINKELT. Among these visitors were the Commanding General, 2d Infantry Division, Commanding General, 2d Infantry Division Artillery, Major WALLACE, Hq 21st Army Group and the Corps Anti-tank Officer.

A dental officer from the 3d TD Group was attached to the Battalion, made a complete Battalion check. Two enlisted men were commissioned as officers during the period - T/Sgt Vincent C Bristol and S/Sgt William E N Beckstrom.

On the 22d of January, Company B reverted to battalion control and moved to SOURBRODT, BELGIUM for refitting and maintenance.

Company C fired indirect fire missions from their position near MUTZENICH near the letter part of the month.

On the 27th of January, the Battalion less companies A and C were attached to the 99th Infantry Division and made plans to meet any armor thrusts in that sector. On the 28th, Company B moved to EISENBORN, BELGIUM and relieved elements of the 612th Tank Destroyer Bn. On the 29th, the Commanding Officer was designated CO of Task Force KING composed of Headquarters, Headquarters Company, and Reconnaissance Company of the 644th Tank Destroyer Battalion, Company D (Light tanks) of the 750th Tank Battalion, and the 99th Reconnaissance Troops. The Battalion constructed a small arms firing range near EISENBORN, BELGIUM and zeroed new weapons issued under the new T.E.

Company A participated in the attack on the last of the month with the 38th Infantry Regiment which retook WIRTZFELD, ROCHERATH and KRINKELT with little resistance. One destroyer struck a mine but no damage was received since the force of the explosion went to one side of the track. The Battalion supported the 99th Infantry Division in their drive, but no action occurred since pillboxes were unoccupied and no armor entered the sector.

3. This unit used Star shell while in indirect fire position in call from 2d Inf Div illuminating prearranged areas. Communications - EXCELLENT. Continuous 24 hour wire and radio communications were used with frequencies tied in with the inter-Bn net, adjacent, and higher units, depending on operations. During the later part of the period one channel was used for air - ground liaison purposes operating in contact with liaison planes.
 4. Supporting Artillery - None. Companies acted as artillery in indirect role during the month. Engineers improved and cleared roads of mines prior to attack.
 5. No close fighting weapons such as grenades or flame throwers were used during this period.
 6. Supply and evacuation were good in spite of the fact that roads were poor due to ice and snow.
 7. Casualties - Two (2).
- h. Commanding Officers in important engagements.
1. Defense of EISENBORN.
CO 644 TD Bn - Lt Col EPHRAIM F GRAHAM, JR
CO Hq Co 644 TD Bn - Capt JAMES M CARPENTER to 3 Jan 45 (Asgd to S-2)
CO Hq Co 644 TD Bn - 1st Lt JOHN A BAER - to end of period
CO Co A 644 TD Bn - Capt HARRY L GODSHALL, JR
CO Co B 644 TD Bn - Capt CARL H WIGGENHORN
CO Co C 644 TD Bn - Capt HARLOW F LENON
CO Hcn Co 644 TD Bn - 1st Lt HAROLD L HOFFER
CO Med Det 644 TD Bn - Capt NATHANIEL BERG

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i. Losses in Action - Officers and Enlisted Men.

1. Engagements:

Defense of ELSENBERN RIDGE

2. Names:

Tec S William L Stephens, 33418257 (WIA)
Pvt John M Meehan, 37575407 (WIA)

3. Killed in Action: None

4. Wounded in Action: Two (2) enlisted men.

5. Missing in Action: None.

6. Taken prisoner: None

j. Former and Present Members who have Distinguished Themselves in Action.

1. Engagements: Defense of ELSENBERN RIDGE

2. Names:

1st Lt CLARENCE STEVES, 01822073
2d Lt (then S/Sgt) QUENTIN M KELLEY, 01999755
S/Sgt John E Kirk, 34174874

3. Act:

First Lieutenant CLARENCE STEVES, 01822073, Field Artillery (Tank Destroyer), Company A, 644th Tank Destroyer Battalion, for heroic achievement in connection with military operations against the enemy on 10 September 1944 in the vicinity of ***** France. An attack was halted by intense enemy fire from pillboxes and strong emplacements. Lieutenant STEVES without thought for his own safety, exposed himself to this fire to lead his platoon into position to bring fire against the positions. The fire delivered by his platoon neutralized the enemy fire and enabled the attack to continue. Entered the military service from Illinois.

Staff Sergeant Quentin M Kelley, 20235806, Field Artillery (Tank Destroyer), Company A, 644th Tank Destroyer Battalion, for heroic achievement in connection with military operations against the enemy on 26 August 1944 in the vicinity of ***** France. Sergeant Kelley moved across 500 yards of open terrain under intense enemy artillery fire. From his exposed position he directed the movement and fire of his platoon with such effect that the enemy OP was destroyed, thus aiding materially to the success of the attack. Entered the military service from New Jersey.

Staff Sergeant John E Kirk, 34174874, Field Artillery (Tank Destroyer), Company A, 644th Tank Destroyer Battalion, for heroic achievement in connection with military operations against the enemy on 29 August 1944 in the vicinity of ***** France. During a night attack, a tank destroyer took the wrong turn, entered enemy held territory and was caught in a tank trap. Without regard for his personal safety, Sergeant Kirk organized a patrol and led it in the face of intense enemy small arms fire to the destroyer's position, and successfully evacuated the wounded and injured crew members. His unselfish courage and quick action are in the highest traditions of the military service. Entered the military service from North Carolina.

4. Rewards:

Three (3) Bronze Star Medals.