

S E C R E T

HEADQUARTERS 644TH TANK DESTROYER BATTALION

APO 230
U S Army
27 January 1945

SUBJECT: Battalion History for period 1 October 1944 to 31 October 1944.

TO : Adjutant General
Washington 25, D. C.
(Attention: Historical Section)

The following history of this organization for the month of October 1944 is hereby submitted as per instructions contained in AR 365-105, par 10 (c):

- a. Unit - No change.
- b. Changes in Organization- No change.
- c. Strength, Commissioned and Enlisted

(1) At beginning of period 1 October 1944

Officers 34
Warrant Officer 1
Enlisted Men 603

(2) Net increase for month

Officers 1
Warrant Officers 0
Enlisted Men 0

(3) Net decrease for month

Officers 1
Warrant Officers 0
Enlisted Men 0

(4) At End of Period

Officers 35
Warrant Officers 1
Enlisted Men 586

d. Stations of Unit or Parts thereof:

Station: EUSHDORF (LUXEMBOURG)

At beginning of period
Date of Departure: 3 October 1944

KAUTENBACH (LUXEMBOURG)

Date of Arrival: 3 October 1944
Date of Departure: 5 October 1944

BOUVANGE (LUXEMBOURG)

Date of Arrival: 5 October 1944
Date of Departure: To end of Period.

e. Marches

(1) Purpose: to move Battalion from new destination and assembly area to new station KAUTENBACH (LUXEMBOURG) 3 October 44.

To move the Battalion to a new change of station in closer proximity to operations 5 October 44.

(2) Length of daily march approximately 15 miles.

(3) Points between which marched, with dates:

On 3 October 1944 Battalion left assembly area at ERCHDORF (LUXEMBOURG) by direct route to KAUTENBACH, (LUXEMBOURG).

On 5 October 44 Battalion again moved via road to WILTZ, DEHENBACH, HEISDORF, WINTORGH, BOEGEN be destination, and new change of station, at BOEVANNE-LES-CLERVAUX.

- (4) Roads were over steep mountainous country, covered with heavy forest and were muddy and narrow.

Weather was Wet and cold with early morning ground haze.

- (5) Remarks: The march was made without incident and without enemy interference.

f. Campaigns: Germany

g. Battles

Defense of LUXEMBOURG (1 October to end of Period).

- (1) Narrative account of action to include:

(a) The Enemy.

The enemy had retreated across France before the strong spearheads of our forces and had returned behind the defense of the Siegfried Line. This line had been built after exhausting research and controlled all the destinative country of tactical value. Enemy was well prepared with material but personnel were composed of elements of units that had suffered high casualties in previous campaigns and were in process of building up their strength with young and very old replacements from all branches of the service.

No special weapons were used.

Morale was considered to be at a low ebb. SS Troops reportedly still controlled the WERMACHT and ruled with an iron hand.

- (2) Enemy defenses were composed of a line of heavy fortifications in depth.

Dragon teeth, mines, MG and AT weapons protected the areas between pillboxes, and each defensive position was protected by cross fire of one or more to its flanks.

The pillboxes were made of concrete and reinforced steel to a thickness of 4 to 6 feet and only a direct hit by a 500 pound bomb could crack them. They were well covered and grown over with grass and brush and when viewed from a distance presented only a mound of earth similar to a natural hill surrounding them.

These defenses were protected by MG crews of approximately 8 men. Contained sleeping and air conditioning plants.

- (3) The enemy was disposed behind this line, composed of elements of Divisions already contacted in previous engagements. Continuous improvements in defenses were made.

No counter attacks were launched, however and the enemy was content to sit behind strong defenses and wait for the purposes of getting identification and intelligence. Strong patrols were the only activity during the beginning of the period.

A large number of V bombs were launched from somewhere behind the enemy lines and passed over the battalion area headed for rear areas. Other air activity was used little. Self propelled guns were held in enemy reserve and used as artillery or to counterattack any break in the defenses. No armor or artillery were captured during period.

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(4) 5 prisoners were taken during the period.

(b) Elements Affecting Action.

(1) The enemy used strong patrols to take PWs for identification and intelligence.

G-2 reported that enemy soldiers were dressing in American uniforms and penetrating the lines and German civilians were acting as Intelligence agents. The latter penetrated our lines and gave general information of the enemy to way-lay suspicion and later returned across the German border.

Reconnaissance was held to patrol action that sometimes amounted to as high as 50 men.

At this point the enemy was desperate for information.

(2) The civilian population was friendly and helpful but reserved. They had been liberated only a short while and were still apprehensive as to the return of the Germans.

(3) Terrain was composed of high hills with steep slopes covered with planted reforested areas. The roads were narrow, winding and usually cut into the hillsides. Winding streams and marshy ground separated almost all the hills and flooded after heavy periods of rain.

(c) Action:

(1) The Unit was assigned to 9TH ARMY and was attached to CT 28. Companies were further assigned to Inf Regts and Bns. The Battalion CP was located at BOUVANGNE. Coord (710625).

(2) Mission of Bn was to defend and hold assigned sectors.

Rcn Co patrolled sector between 13TH INF REGT and 2D Bn of 28TH INF REGT.

Co A, attached to 121 INF REGT, reld CCB 5TH ARMORED DIV. Occupied defensive positions in support of CT 121.

Co B, attached to CT 13, reld 109th INF REGT of 28 DIV. Occupied defensive position, in support of CT 13.

1ST and 2D PLATOONS Co B took up positions in salient which entered Siegfried Line defense.

On 6 October, 6th TD Bn, HQ CO, COS A, B, C, and RCN was released from attachment to CT 28 and attached to 8TH DIV ARTY.

Co C moved on 21 October to ENCHERANGE. Coord: (750570) and continued holding missions in their sector. Direct and indirect fire missions were fired at enemy defensive fortifications and personnel.

Rcn Co released from attachment to CT 28, by FO #14, reld to Bn control on 24 October 1944. Rcn CP moved to vicinity of ASSELBORE. Coord: (710623).

Hq Co, 6th TD Bn, was organized into 8th Company, Provisional Bn formed by the 8th IFW DIV for defense of WILTZ. Consisted of 5 officers and 60 enlisted men.

DEFENSE OF LUXEMBOURG

On the first day of October 1944 the 6th TD Bn, less Co's A and B, was attached to C- 28 by FO #13, Hq 8th Inf Div, dtd 1 October 1944. Co A was attached to the 121st Inf Regt which relieved CCB of the 5th Armored Div. Following the attachment, Co A moved to vicinity of ERMSDORF (911 377) to occupy its defensive positions in support of CT 121. Co A fired indirect and harassing missions on fortifications and personnel in the Siegfried Line. Co C, attached to the 28th Inf Regt, moved to the vicinity of HOLZTHUM (809 556), then to

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CLERVAUX where the Bn Fwd CP had set up headquarters. Co C immediately began its assignment of setting up defensive positions within its sector. On October 4th the Greendale train carrying Bn M-10's arrived at BASTOGNE, BELGIUM. The destroyers were dispatched to Co's A, B, and C.

Rcn Co was attached to the 8th Inf Div, operating as a small task force in relief of Task Force "X". It was the belief of the CO, 28th Div Rcn Troop as well as that of the CO of TFX that the task of reconnoitering so wide an area was too much for a unit organized and strengthened as ours was. Rcn Co began to patrol that portion of the 8th Div sector between the 13th Inf Regt and the 2d Bn of the 28th Inf Reg. Contact with 28th Inf Regt on one flank and with the 13th Inf Regt on other was maintained. Patrol and/or counter reconnaissance screen was kept from the 13th Inf Regt on north to the first Bn of the 28th Inf on the south. Rcn Co received hourly reports of activity from all outposts and patrols. These reports were transmitted by phone from Bn Fwd CB to Regimental Hq. On October 6th, Rcn Co had a platoon of light tanks attached to it for a mobile reserve.

At the request of CO, 13th Inf, Co B was attached to CT 13, which relieved the 109th Inf of the 28th Div. Co B established its CP in the vicinity of LIELER (840-708) occupying defensive positions in support of CT 13. 1st and 2d platoons of Co B were the first Bn elements to enter Germany, taking position in a salient which penetrated the Siegfried Line Defenses. Several times enemy reconnaissance patrols entered Co B's sector, entering the town of LIELER. A German agent was arrested in the village dressed as a civilian. He had been giving signals which were followed by an accurate barrage of enemy artillery. CO of Co B, in addition to his military duties, was placed in charge of local civilians, enforcing the 1900 curfew, and serving as Acting Mayor.

On 6 October 1944, Hq and Hq Co was released from attachment to CT 28 and were attached to 8th Div Arty. Bn Fwd CP group moved from CLERVAUX to BOEVANGE (710-623) and there consolidated with Bn Rear CP.

Two EM of the Bn, 1st Sgt Philip A DiCarlo, 20233710, and 1st Sgt Owen R O'Dermott, 32001930, the former holder of the Silver Star, received commissions as officers of the US Army and were assigned to the Bn as 2d Lts in the capacity of platoon leaders.

Co C moved to ENSCHERANGE (750-570) on 21 October. The holding mission continued in that sector. Direct and indirect fire missions were fired at enemy fortifications and personnel.

Rcn Co was released from attachment to CT 28 by FO #11, Hq 8th Inf Div on 24 October 1944 and returned to Bn Control on 24 October 1944. The same afternoon, Rcn Co closed in its new area at ASSELBORN (710 623).

Hq Co was organized into the 8th Co Provisional Bn, an emergency Bn formed by the 8th Inf Div for a planned defense of WILTZ. The Provisional Co consisted of sixty (60) EM and five (5) officers and was divided into infantry and Rcn elements. The Co was under the command of CO, Hq Co. Three practice alerts were given, in all. The Provisional Bn Commander commended the Bn CO, 644 TD Bn as having contributed the best Co of the emergency unit.

During the month of October 1944, two (2) EM of the Battalion were awarded the Silver Star (one posthumously) - both for gallantry in action. Fourteen (14) officers and nine (9) EM received the Bronze Star award for achievements merited since 15 July 1944.

(3) Special weapons used: None.

Communications were good-high hills and wintery weather had bad effect cutting down range of FM sets.

Companies were in contact with IV ARTY.

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- (4) Supporting Artillery fired missions at enemy defenses and fortifications.

Engineers improved roads, built bridges, and devised new methods and experimented in breaching pillboxes.

- (5) The Tank Destroyer 3" gun was found effective in "buttoning up" pillboxes but not in penetrating the concrete walls or steel apertures.

At this time HVAP was not available but it is estimated that it would have been effective.

- (6) Supply and Evacuation: Excellent.
(7) Casualties: See attached Casualty List.

h. Commanding officers in important engagements:

I DEFENSE OF LUXEMBOURG

HQ 6th TD BN Lt Col EPHRAIM F GRAHAM, JR
HQ CO 6th TD Bn CAPT JAMES M CARPENTER
CO A, 6th TD Bn CAPT HENRY A GARTON, JR
CO, B, 6th TD BN CAPT CARL H WIGGENHORN
CO, C, 6th TD BN CAPT HARLOW F LEWIS
RCM CO 6th TD BN CAPT NELSON O WORKS, JR
MED DET 6th TD BN CAPT NATHANIEL BERG

- i. Losses in action:

See attached Casualty List.

- j. Members distinguishing themselves in action.

See attached List.

- k. Photographs of personnel, important scenes or events:
See inclosures.

For the Commanding Officer:

Vincent C Bristol
VINCENT C BRISTOL
2d Lt, FA
Adjutant

2 Incls:

- Incl 1 - Losses in Action, Officers and Enlisted Men
Incl 2 - Photographs of the period.

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Month of October 1944

1. LOSSES IN ACTION - OFFICERS AND ENLISTED MEN

1. Engagement.

Defense of Luxembourg

2. Names.

Sgt Xavier J Fronczkowski, 32056744 (WIA)
Cpl Asahel D Farr, 39850660 (KIA)
Pfc William M Pattison, 33418301 (WIA)
Pfc Alvin W Beeler, 34148762 (WIA)
Pvt. Paul Corni, 32002357 (KIA)
Pvt Raymond Wolf, 39117607 (WIA)

3. Killed in Action.

Two (2) Enlisted Men.

4. Wounded in Action.

Four (4) Enlisted Men.

5. Missing in Action.

None.

6. Taken Prisoner.

None.

j. FORMER AND PRESENT MEMBERS WHO HAVE DISTINGUISHED THEMSELVES IN ACTION

1. Engagement: Defense of Luxembourg.

2. Names:

Tec 5 Michael Choby, 20239447

3. Act:

Technician Fifth Grade Michael Choby, 20239447, Medical Department, Medical Detachment, 644th Tank Destroyer Battalion, for heroic achievement in connection with military operations against the enemy on 5 October 1944 in the vicinity of ~~-----~~, Luxembourg. With utter disregard for his own safety, Technician Fifth Grade Choby ascended a hill while under terrific enemy artillery fire and in full view of enemy pillboxes. Despite the grave danger he continued to treat and evacuate wounded men. His unselfish courage and devotion to duty reflect great credit on himself and the military service. Entered the military service from New Jersey.

4. Award: Bronze Star Medal.