

HEADQUARTERS 820TH TANK DESTROYER BATTALION
A.P.O 339, U.S. ARMY

9 February 1945

After/After Action Report

1 December 1944. The battalion moved from Damville, France () to Laon, France enroute to vicinity of Tongres, Belgium (K395445) closing at 1630. Advance party moved from Laon, France to Charleroi, Belgium (J6505).

2 December 1944. The battalion moved to Charleroi, Belgium (J6505) closing at 2000. The advance party reported to Ninth United States Army Headquarters at Maastricht, Holland (K5551) and XVI Corps Headquarters at Tongres, Belgium (K395445).

3 December 1944. The battalion closed in vicinity of Riempest, Belgium (K497477) at 1900. Command Post and Headquarters Company at Laefelt, Belgium (K505499). Company "A" at Hees, Belgium (K503516) and Companies "B" and "C" at Rosmeer, Belgium (K483517).

4-7 December 1944. Battalion attended to usual maintenance duties in preparation for combat. On 6, 7, December 1944 the battalion commander with the three destroyer company commanders visited the front of the 29th Infantry Division spending most of the time with the 821st Tank Destroyer Battalion. On 6 December 1944 the battalion was alerted for a move to vicinity of St. Vith, Belgium (P852876) and was reassigned to First United States Army and attached to VIII Corps.

7 December 1944. Advance party moved to Bastogne, Belgium (P550576) reporting to VIII Corps Headquarters then proceeded to St. Vith, Belgium (P852876) reporting to Headquarters 2d and 106th Infantry Divisions.

8 December 1944. Advance party at St. Vith making arrangements for bivouac area. No change for balance of battalion.

9 December 1944. The battalion moved to vicinity of St. Vith, Belgium closing at 1630 hours. Command Post and Headquarters Company at Weisten, Belgium (P805853), Company "A" at Crombach, Belgium (P812856), Company "B" at Braunlauf, Belgium (P801838) and Company "C" at Maldingen, Belgium (P782827). The battalion was attached to the 106th Infantry Division and ordered to relieve the 612th Tank Destroyer Battalion at the same time the 106th Infantry Division relieved the second infantry division which with the 18th Cavalry Squadron was holding a line Lanzerath (L002962), Weisswampach (P812720), east of St. Vith. The relief was to be on a "gun for gun basis".

After/After Action Report, 9 February 1945 cont'd

10-15 December 1944. Battalion Command Post and Headquarters Company, less motor maintenance platoon and personnel section moved to Eimerscheid, Belgium closing at 1800. The motor maintenance platoon closed at Eimerscheid at 1300, 15 December 1944. Battalion personnel moved with the 106th Division rear echelon to Vielsalm (P702890) on 13 December 1944 closing at 1600. Period between 12 December 1944 and 15 December 1944 was spent in reconnaissance, improving positions, establishing liaison and communication with supported units and reconnaissance of additional gun positions to give depth to the defense.

Company "A" with the first and second reconnaissance platoon began the relief of Company "A", 612th Tank Destroyer Battalion on the night of 10 December 1944 becoming attached to the 18th Cavalry Squadron. Company Command Post was at Manderfeld, Belgium (L006932), second platoon, Company "A" with second reconnaissance platoon was at Lanzerath (L003963), first platoon (less one section at Roth (L035917)) was at Merlescheid (L015706), third platoon was at Berterath (L025944) and first reconnaissance platoon at Krewinkel (L036935).

Companies "B" and "C" made the relief on the night of 11 December 1944. Company "B" being in direct support of the 424th Infantry Regiment. Company Command Post and the second platoon at Winterspelt (P810803) the first platoon at Hockhuscheid (P915767) and third platoon at Lutzkampen (P892730).

Company "C" (less second platoon attached to the 422nd Infantry Regiment and in position at (L047881)) went into positions at Bleialf (P965835) in direct support of the 423rd Infantry Regiment.

16 December 1944. All companies reported intense artillery and mortar fire on their positions, beginning at 0400 and lasting until 0700. All wire communication was broken by this fire and only messenger and radio communication was available the rest of the day.

Battalion Command Post with rear echelon moved from Eimerscheid at 1630. The Command Post closed in St. Vith (P852876) at 1930. The rear echelon closed at Crombach (P812856) at 2120.

Second platoon, Company "A" with second reconnaissance platoon was withdrawn from Lanzerath (L002962) to Manderfeld (L006932) at 0940. At 1045 the third platoon was withdrawn from Berterath (L025945) to Fockert (L015942).

The first platoon, less the section at Roth (L035917) withdrew at 1030 from Merlescheid (L006932). No word has been received from the section of this platoon at Roth, since 1609.

After/After Action Report, 9 February 1945 cont'd

At 1545 Company "A" withdrew to Herresbach (P945921) from Manderfeld (L006932) closing at 1655. At 1600 Company "A" and first and second reconnaissance platoons were released from attachment to the 18th Cavalry Squadron and attached to the 32nd Cavalry Squadron.

Company Headquarters and second platoon Company "B" was forced to withdraw from its positions in vicinity of Winterspelt (P910803) at 1730. First and third platoons remained in positions repulsing heavy infantry attacks. Private First Class Rosenthal, Gunner of a third platoon gun, sighted five enemy tanks and one ammunition truck at an estimated range of 2000 yards and using 18 rounds of HE and APC completely destroyed all tanks and the truck.

Company "C", less second platoon reported intense artillery and mortar fire on its position throughout 16 December 1944. During the night of the 16th the headquarters section moved to a position approximately 4.5 miles west of Bleialf (P965835). Command Post moved to the third platoon Command Post at 1900 on the high ground west of Bleialf. The first and third platoons remained in positions.

17 December 1944. Battalion Command Post withdrew from St. Vith (P852876) and closed at Vielsalm (P702890) at 2000 hours.

Company "A" was released from attached to 32nd Cavalry Squadron at approximately 0930 hours and attached to 14th Cavalry Group as security elements for a move to St. Vith and Neider Emunels (P840905)). This move was completed at 1300. First reconnaissance platoon ordered to rear echelon for reorganization and reequipping and departed at 1400 hours. At 1730 hours Company "A" less second platoon accompanied by the second reconnaissance platoon was released from attachment by the Commanding Officer 14th Cavalry Group and ordered to the battalion rear echelon, then at Houffalize (P610720) for reorganization. The second platoon Company "A" was ordered to put its remaining three guns into position at 1600 hours east of Petit-Thiers (p740913) covering the road approaches to Recht and St. Vith. At 2300 two guns were moved up the road toward Recht approximately 800 yards.

The second platoon Company "B" drew three 3" guns from VIII Corps at Bastogne and at 0400 hours occupied positions astride the road, St. Vith – Winterspelt, at (P860870). At 0900 this platoon was withdrawn and took positions astride the St. Vith-Schonburg road at (P880884) at 0930. At 1030 this platoon engaged four (4) enemy tanks and an undetermined number of enemy infantry, holding up their advance until 1700. Only one (1) half-track was withdrawn from this action, two (2) cars M-20 and three (3) guns being disabled and abandoned. At 0700 one gun of third platoon Company "B" was destroyed by a direct hit from an enemy mortar. First and third platoons Company "B" were engaged in heavy small arms fire all during the day. At 1400 hours Company Command Post withdrew from St. Vith and moved to Vielsalm (P702890) with the Battalion Command Post closing at 2000.

After/After Action Report, 9 February 1945 cont'd

On 17 December 1944 Company "C" Headquarters section, less executive officer moved at 0800 via St. Vith to Crombach joining battalion rear echelon. At 0920 17 December 1944 repulsed infantry attacks from the north, east and south. At this time a withdrawal was ordered by the Company Commander toward Schonburg. Nearing Schonburg the vehicles came under enemy fire from the vicinity of Schonburg and it was necessary to abandon the vehicles and disperse to the woods on foot. During the withdrawal from Bleialf the company became separated due to dispersion of vehicles and personnel and it is believed that the company commander and platoon leader of the third platoon, and the third platoon less one squad went on the road to Auw (L003899) which was then in enemy hands. These elements of the company and the second platoon have been reported as missing in action. No further word has been had of them. Losses of this company in its withdrawal totals twelve (12) Tank Destroyer Guns and 126 enlisted men and two officers. Elements of the remainder of the company under the leader of the first platoon went cross country west in the direction of St. Vith arriving at the Command Post of an Armored Field Artillery battalion of the 9th Armored Division at 1030 on 18 December 1944.

18 December 1944. Battalion Command Post remained at Vielsalm (P702890). At 0200 the second platoon Company "A" moved its three guns to their original positions east of Petit-Thiers (P740913). At 0630 they were again moved, to fall in behind E troops of the 32nd Cavalry squadron to go to Born, Belgium (K829927). As they moved out they were ambushed by an undetermined number of tanks and infantry. One half-track prime mover and one three inch gun was destroyed in this action. One gun was left behind as a blind by the Cavalry Group Executive Officer and one gun was evacuated by a M-8. Orders were given to withdraw and the platoon joined the company which had moved to Houffalize (P610720). Company "A" and battalion rear echelon moved from Houffalize to Rondeux (P407838) closing at 2000 hours.

At 1100 hours company "B" withdrew to vicinity of P859812 emplaced its remaining guns (4) covering the road net from Maspelt and to the east. The third platoon then moved to P870791 to cover the river crossing to the east and the road net to the south. No enemy contact was reported.

19 December 1944. Company "B" situation remains unchanged. The first and second reconnaissance platoons, headquarters company, were reequipped with personnel and equipment from headquarters company and company "A", and were sent to Vielsalm to rejoin Company "B" and command group. Company "A" furnished security for rear echelon at Rondeux.

After/After Action Report 9 February 1945 cont'd

20 December 1944 Situation remains unchanged for Headquarters Company. Company "B" withdrew to vicinity of Bracht, Belgium (P865800) and occupied direct fire positions in direct support of 424th Infantry Regiment.

21 December 1944. Situation remained unchanged for Company "B" and command group. Company "A", headquarters company and elements of Company "C" were forced to withdraw west from Rondeux by superior enemy infantry forces accompanied by tanks and self propelled guns. This force moved to vicinity of Ciney (P116913) and closed at 2000 hours. At this time the battalion supply officer returned from First United States Army Headquarters with orders for this group to report to Esneux, Belgium (K462169) and come under the control of Army Provost Marshal and act in the role of Army Security Reserve.

22 December 1944. Headquarters Company, Company "A", and elements of Company "C" departed Ciney for Esneux, Belgium (K462169). Company "A" did not close until 1640, 23 December 1944, due to priority road traffic. Other elements closed at 1800, 22 December 1944. First and Third platoon, Company "B", with two (2) 57MM guns borrowed from the 112th Infantry Regiment, covered the withdrawal of the 424th Infantry to the vicinity of Maldange, Belgium ().

23 December 1944. Company "A", Headquarters Company, and the elements of Company "C" maintained road patrols and outposts in the vicinity of Esneux. Supply shortages were determined and personnel shortages requisitioned. First and third platoons, Company "B", withdrew to Houpert thru Vielsalm and St. Antoine, with reconnaissance platoons and CP group. No contact with the enemy. No change for headquarters company, Company "A" and elements of Company "C".

24 December 1944. Situation of all companies unchanged.

25 December 1944. Elements of "B", reconnaissance platoons, and CP moved to Belle Croix at 1030.

26 December 1944. Two gun platoons, Company "B", emplaced at P537958 and P536938 covering road blocks and mine fields with 2nd Rcn Platoon attached. The first platoon, Company "B" also fired indirect fire missions with the 487th Field Artillery. No change in duties of balance of battalion.

27-30 December 1944. Two platoons, Company "B", continued road block mission. Headquarters Company, Company "A", and elements of Company "C" continued security missions at Esneux.

After/After Action Report, 9 February 1945 cont'd

31 December 1944. All elements of Company "B", and command group joined headquarters company, Company "A", and elements of Company "C" at Esneux and came under control of First United States Army Provost Marshal as security reserve.

John F. deV. Patrick,
Lt. Col., F.A.,
Commanding.