

REPORT OF COMBAT, 899th TD Battalion,
Period March 15, 1943, to April 11, 1943.

CALENDAR EVENTS:

March 15: At 1430, this date, the Commanding Officer, this battalion, was ordered by II Corps to report to General ALLEN, 1st Division Commander, at the 1st Division CP.

In compliance with orders issued by General ALLEN, 1st Division Commander, this battalion left its bivouac near BOU CHEBKA at 2345 and arrived at a new bivouac, vicinity 9222-S, Tunisia 1/100,000, at 0650, March 16, 1943.

March 16: Light patrol work, this date, toward GAFSA, disclosed enemy tanks NORTH of GAFSA.

At 1125 The Battalion Commander, Staff Officers and Company Commanders attended a meeting at the CP, 601st TD Bn., where the following plans were made. "These two battalions were to cover the detrucking of the 1st Infantry Division NORTH of GAFSA. Company "A", 899th TD Bn., was to move to a position astride the GAFSA-FERIANA HIGHWAY NORTH of GAFSA. Company "B" was to move to a position NORTH of GAFSA and WEST of SIDE BOU ZID ROAD. Company "C" was to move to a position NORTH of GAFSA and to cross SIDE BOU ZID ROAD. Reconnaissance Company was to reconnoiter area NORTH of GAFSA and EAST to MAK-NASSY ROAD".

Companies moved out at 1700 to occupy positions but were delayed till dusk by order of Lt. Col. BAKER, C.O. 601st TD Bn., because of too much dust created by their movement.

At 1930, companies continued their movement into position.

At about 2330, Reconnaissance Platoon contacted enemy positions NORTH and EAST of GAFSA. Reconnaissance patrol was fired on but received no casualties.

For assigned positions, see attached overlay (ANNEX 3).

March 17: This battalion continued occupation of positions as shown on first overlay to protect against tank attack during capture of GAFSA.

One company (less one platoon) this battalion (Company "A") Attached to 18th Infantry to protect it in its move on EL GUETTAR. One platoon Company "A" attached with Rangers for attack SOUTH and EAST of EL GUETTAR.

March 18 to 22nd: During this period the battalion, less Company "A", part of the time remained in positions along the SIDI BOU ZID and MAK-NASSY ROADS NORTH of GAFSA to protect against any possible tank threat from that direction. Reconnaissance Company kept active patrols up MAK-NASSY and SIDI BOU ZID ROADS for contact with 1st Armored Division.

On March 22nd Company "A" was released from assignment to 18th Infantry and returned to Battalion control.

March 23: Battalion ordered to EL GUETTAR to stop a tank thrust in valley NORTH OF DJ BERDA. Battalion was deployed as follows. Company "B" was ordered to pass through the GAP between the hills EAST of EL GUETTAR and engage the enemy tanks. Company "C" was ordered to cover Company "B" from positions in high ground at Y2769. Company "A" was ordered to remain in reserve near ROAD JUNCTION at Y2373.

At 1530 the Destroyers of Company "B" yet undamaged were ordered to withdraw to a position near Company "A" for reorganization. Company "B" was ordered through the GAP by higher Headquarters prior to Company "C" reaching position because no covering weapons were in position to protect their advance.

Two 4 tons were the only thin skinned vehicles used by Company "B" during this battle. (Loss of personnel and equipment is listed elsewhere in this report. Enemy tank attack at 1650 this date was again repulsed).

March 24 to 29 1943: Positions were occupied as follows during this period. Company "C" occupied positions generally in vicinity Y2769. Company "B" was located at Y2570 with part of the guns in position near Y2969. Company "A" was placed part of this period at Y2373. During this entire period all companies were shelled and bombed by enemy forces. Reconnaissance Company sent patrols forward along both the EL GUETTAR-SFAX ROADS and the EL GUETTAR-Gabes road to locate enemy positions. Reconnaissance patrols were sent SOUTH of EL GUETTAR to contact the French Forces and to ascertain that no enemy Armored Force was located between our troops and the French. Reconnaissance patrols were also active on DJ BERDA and observation points were established by Reconnaissance Company in order to check information relative to enemy Armored Forces observed EAST OF DJ EL KREROUA. On March 29, the forward Command Post was bombed, creating one casualty.

On March 29th the 899th TD Bn. was assigned as part of the Benson Force.

March 30, 1943: The 899th TD Bn. was ordered to furnish protection against armored elements for the Benson Force which was to move EASTWARD along the EL GUETTAR-GABES ROAD and contact the BRITISH 8th ARMY. The formation to be employed was as follows: On the outside of the force would be elements of the 81st Reconnaissance; two thousand (2000) yards from the road on either side and in rear of the forward elements of the 81st Reconnaissance Company were to be the Tank Destroyers; between the Tank Destroyers and the road were to be the two Medium Tank battalions and the two S.P. Artillery battalions. The attached Engineers were to clear all mine fields ahead of the force as soon as same were located. The attached Medical Company and Maintenance Company were to bring up the rear.

At 1130 the Force moved forward but was stopped by enemy fire after it had advanced about 11 kilometers. Company "C" was deployed to the front, Company "B" in column on the right flank and Company "A" in column on the left flank. Casualties were suffered by Companies "A" and "C" which advanced at the time ordered without the 81st Reconnaissance to their front. Enemy artillery fire prevented the force from breaking through. Battalion ambulance was damaged by artillery shrapnel while operating with forward CP.

March 31: A second determined effort was made this date at 1030 to break through the enemy positions between DJ CHEMSI and DJ BERDA but the enemy artillery again prevented the breakthrough.

April 1: Reconnaissance patrols remained active, assisting by acting as OP's for artillery batteries and securing information of enemy along DJ CHEMSI and DJ BERDA. Continued enemy artillery fire prevented forward movement of Benson Force. This battalion was ordered to cover the withdrawal of the Benson Force to the high ground near Y2769. At 1130, this date, this battalion withdrew to the same high ground.

April 2: Battalion moved forward and occupied positions generally along the line Y3569 to Y3169, with Company "A" on the EAST and Company "C" on the WEST. Positions were taken to cover the tank advance.

April 3, 4, 5, 6: During this period, the Reconnaissance Company continued to be active, while positions, supplementary positions and secondary positions were located for all destroyers.

April 7: Company "A" was ordered to move EASTWARD to cover a tank thrust by 3rd Battalion 13th Armored Regiment. Company "C" was ordered to move EASTWARD and occupy the positions vacated by Company "A".

At 0930 the tank thrust showed signs of success and the entire battalion was ordered forward. The advance of the Benson Force proved satisfactory and at 1500 a temporary halt was made at Y5466. The advance was begun

again after a short time and at 1750 the battalion reached a position near Y655707, where instructions were issued for an attack to be made NORTH to cut the EL GUETTAR-SFAX ROAD.

Immediately the battalion proceeded NORTH, keeping to the EAST of DJ BEN KREI, arriving near Y7976 at about 1900. After deploying across a broad front to attack the GUMTREE ROAD (EL GUETTAR-SFAX), the battalion was attacked on the right flank by enemy tanks. An exchange of shots resulted in no casualties for either side, except the loss of one German tank commander. Darkness prevented further attack on the GUMTREE ROAD. Company "A" was reorganizing and joined the battalion on the morning of April 8th.

April 8: The GUMTREE ROAD was crossed by Company "C" near point Y8393 at 1000. The battalion was then ordered to withdraw to a position near Y6373, to reorganize. The new position was reached about 1430 and bivouac established for the night.

April 9: The battalion was ordered to move from its position near Y6373 to a bivouac near BIR EL HAFHEY. Upon completion of the move, the battalion was released from assignment to the Benson Force and assigned to the 1st Armored Division, and later assigned to Combat Command "B". The movement to BIR EL HAFHEY was begun at 0830 and completed at 1600.

April 10: The battalion was ordered to spend the day in maintenance of vehicles and equipment in preparation for movement with Combat Command "B" of 1st Armored Division.

April 11: The battalion was released from assignment to 1st Armored Division at 0810 and ordered to move to vicinity BOU CHEBKA into Corps Reserve at once. Movement to BOU CHEBKA was commenced at 1000 and was completed at ~~1140~~ 2000. At 1140 the battalion was notified that it reverted to Group control.

MAP REFERENCE: Tunisia, 1/200,000.

Attached Annexes:

1. Personnel casualties during period of battle.
2. Vehicular casualties during period of battle.
3. Overlay of positions assigned March 16, 1943.
4. Enemy losses caused by this battalion during period of battle.
5. Notes and Comments.

For the Battalion Commander:

JOSEPH W. MORRISON,
Capt. 899th Tank Destroyer Bn.,
S-3

OFFICIAL:

JOSEPH W. MORRISON,
Capt. 899th Tank Destroyer Bn.,
S-3

CASUALTY REPORT

Company "B"

March 23, 1943KILLED IN ACTION

Pvt. Charles W. Meismer, 7032866, - Died of high explosive wounds. - Mar. 23
 Pvt. Edward V. Skiba, 37019119, - Died of chest wound. Mar. 23

WOUNDED IN ACTION

Sgt. Clarence C. Johnson, 37039928, - Wound on right wrist and left knee-Mar.23
 Cpl. Edward G. Lewis, Jr., 35153582, - Gun shot wound left arm and right leg.- Mar.23
 Sgt. Joseph J. Schick, 35153627, - Wound right eye. - Mar. 23
 T/5 Albert Timmer, Jr., 37039758, - Laceration left upper arm. - Mar. 23
 T/5 Gean E. Givans, 35100959. - Mar. 23
 Pfc. Benjamin Newman, 32359282, - Head wound. - Mar. 23
 Pfc. Kenneth H. Johnson, 37169969, - Shrapnel wound right knee. - Mar. 23
 Pvt. Lester M. Lee, 37170085, - Compound fracture both feet lower legs. Mar.23
 Pvt. Frances P. Donahue, 37146142, - Mar. 23

March 29, 1943KILLED IN ACTION

2nd Lt. Alven F. Koch, O-405430, - Burned to death. Mar. 23
 Sgt. Arnold A. Rhoades, 6918390, - Died of gun shot wounds. - Mar. 29
 T/5 Corby M. Ellington, 17066944, - Burned to death. Mar. 23
 T/5 John F. Heiberger, 37039861, - Died of bomb fragments. Mar. 23

WOUNDED IN ACTION

Pfc. Walter Fox, 39300796, - Powder shot wound left shoulder, shrapnel, upper jaw. - Mar. 29
 Pvt. B. H. Robinson, 38002542. - Mar. 23.

HEADQUARTERS COMPANYMarch 18, 1943WOUNDED IN ACTION

T/5 Donald L. Anderson, 37019266, - Left leg amputated, (land mine). Mar. 20

March 23, 1943KILLED IN ACTION

T/5 Clarence W. Johnson, 37170098, - Died of fractured skull.- Mar. 23.

WOUNDED IN ACTION

1st Lt. Herman J. Garretson, Jr., O-419391, - Shrapnel Scalp and left foot.- Mar. 23
 T/Sgt. Wm. J. Wheeler, 16020006, -Shrapnel left arm and wrist-Mar.23 Mar. 23
 Pvt. Leroy A. Bagley, 39076818, - Light wound. - Mar. 23
 Pvt. Robert E. Marshall, 36035607, - Light wound, - Mar. 23

March 29, 1943KILLED IN ACTION

Pvt. Alfred A. Wolff, 32384864, - Aerial bomb. - Mar. 29

COMPANY "A"March 26, 1943WOUNDED IN ACTION

Pvt. William E. Johns, 6974709

March 30, 1943KILLED IN ACTION

2nd Lt. Robert C. Henderson, O-1030479, - Died from Bomb fragments. - Mar. 30

WOUNDED IN ACTION

1st Sgt. Barney P. Ruffatto, 6520124, - Gun shot wound, compound fracture right tibia. - Mar. 30
 S/Sgt. Paul A. Franks, 6220501, - Shrapnel left foot and leg. - Mar. 30
 Cpl. Adam E. Flath, 35153879, - Gun shot wound, chest. - Mar. 30
 Pvt. Louis Branca, 32270408, - Shrapnel right leg. - Mar. 30

March 31, 1943WOUNDED IN ACTION

2nd Lt. Glenn F. Walsh, O-465121, - Shrapnel, back. - Mar. 31
 T/5 Swante J. Hakomaki, 37019141, - Gun shot wound, left hand. - Mar. 30
 Pfc. Edward J. Pickett, 35010566, - Fractured ulna, gun shot wound forearm - Mar. 31
 Pvt. Wilbert L. Oistad, 37170111, - Piercing wound left forearm and left molar area. - Mar. 31
 Sgt. Olaf Johnson, - Missing in Action. - Mar. 31

ANNEX 1 (Con'd)

COMPANY "A"

April 1, 1943

WOUNDED IN ACTION

Cpl. Howard A. Heiberger, 37039936, - 2nd degree burns on face and abdomen Mar. 31
Pvt. Leonard A. Rodstol, 39181178, - Gun shot wound piercing upper chest Apr 1
Pvt. Edward W. Gretzer, 36246302, - 1st degree face burns. - Apr. 1.
Pfc. Daniel O'Leary, 33319445, - 1st degree face burns - Apr. 1.

RECONNAISSANCE COMPANY

March 18, 1943

WOUNDED IN ACTION

Pvt. Fred C. Barraclaugh, 37149913, - Fractured fingers - Mar. 20.

March 25, 1943

WOUNDED IN ACTION

Pfc. Lester R. Heidelbrink, 37149867, - Apr. 5.
Pvt. Lyle W. Daniel, 37167172, -

April 1, 1943

WOUNDED IN ACTION

2nd Lt. Robert A. Hackett, O-1030476, - Shrapnel both thighs - Apr. 5.
2nd Lt. John A. Will, O-1030537, - Shrapnel buttocks.
Pvt. John W. Quinby, 39178604, - Shrapnel right forehead - Apr. 5.
Pfc. Leonard S. Cochrane, 17050053, - Shrapnel, face. (Light wound) - Apr. 1.

April 3, 1943

KILLED IN ACTION

Pvt. Fred L. Ferguson, 37170207, - Aerial bomb - Apr. 1.
Pvt. Thomas J. Friend, 35332001, - Aerial bomb - Apr. 1.
Pfc. Walter F. Walter, 36177883, - Aerial bomb - Apr. 1.

WOUNDED IN ACTION

Pvt. Herman J. Nesseth, 37168356, - Fractured 2nd and 3rd metacarpal - Apr. 5.

MEDICAL DETACHMENT

April 3, 1943

KILLED IN ACTION

Pfc. Joseph E. Reider, 19015320, - Aerial bomb - Mar. 31.

WOUNDED IN ACTION

Pfc. Thomas D. Grimme, 190383839, - Shrapnel under temple - Mar. 31.

COMPANY "C"

March 23, 1943

KILLED IN ACTION

T/5 Frederick H. Robinson, 37019242, - Died of wounds - Mar. 23.

WOUNDED IN ACTION

1st Sgt. Gordon O. Page, 16015029, - Gun shot wound left tibia region - Mar. 23.
Pfc. George Kelleymyn, 37078108, - Mar. 23.

March 30, 1943

WOUNDED IN ACTION

T/5 Stephen Kugwinski, 32114120, - Shrapnel wound left femur and right knee - Mar.
Pfc. Thomas L. O'Connor, 32602964, - Shrapnel left thigh.
Pvt. Frank J. Freeman, 12087838, - Fracture right lower chest.
Pvt. Permanian M. Nifong, Jr., 14123563, - Shrapnel right leg and thigh - Mar 30
Pvt. Michael A. Basile, 32307680, - Gun shot wound thigh - Mar. 30.
T/5 Harold H. Platts, 37039714, - Shrapnel leg.

March 31, 1943

S/Sgt. Robert L. Smith, 16015102, - Powder wound left forearm - Mar. 30.
Cpl. Henry O. Dootson, 35010949, Compound fracture right tibia, shrapnel wounds left arm and hip - Mar. 31.

T/5 Frank L. Dizanza, 32354602, - Anxiety state - Mar. 30.

T/5 Joseph P. Blossom, 37019108, - Fractured metacarpal, left hand - Apr. 1.

April 1, 1943

Pfc. Gart L. Johnson, 37039746, - Shrapnel left buttock - Apr. 1.
Pvt. Charlie T. Bradshaw, 34009990, - wound penetrating left thigh - Apr 1.

NOTE: Second dates are dates men were injured. The underlined dates are dates men were cleared by Medics.

Vehicle Casualties during period of Battle

Date	Company	Vehicle	Cause	Probable trouble	Where Repaired	Duty
3-18	Hq	M/cycle	M	Hit mine-blow up		
3-2	Rcn	1/4 Ton	D	Wrecked		Lost
3-20	Ren	Light Tank	C	Gun trouble		Lost
3-20	Hq	Ambulance	C	New Motor	30th Ord.	3-22
3-22	"B"	M-10	A	Bogie support blown out	3488 Ord. Bn. Maint.	3-21 3-23
3-23	"A"	Half track	C	Burned up	30th Ord.	Lost
3-23	"A"	1/4 Ton D	Wrecked	front end	Bn. Maint.	3-24
3-23	Ren	1/4 Ton	C	Clutch replaced	Bn. Maint.	3-24
3-23	"C"	3/4 Ton	C	Rear end replaced	Bn. Maint.	3-24
3-24	"B"	M-10	A	Turret repaired	Bn. Maint.	3-24
3-24	Hq	M/cycle	C	Brakes adjusted	Bn. Maint.	3-24
3-24	Hq	1/4 Ton C	Plugs	replaced	Bn. Maint.	3-24
3-24	Hq	1/4	C	Carburator repaired	Bn. Maint.	3-24
3-24	"C"	Half Track	C	Voltage Regulator	Bn. Maint.	3-24
3-26	"B"	M-10	A&B	Burned up	Salvaged	3-25
3-26	"B"	M-10	A&B	Burned up	Salvaged	
3-26	"B"	M-10	A&B	Burned up	Salvaged	
3-26	"C"	Half Track	C	Carburator replaced	Bn. Maint.	3-26
3-26	Hq	M/cycle	C	Spark plugs replaced	Bn. Maint.	3-26
3-27	"B"	M-10	M	Hit mine-Bogie blocks		
3-27	"A"	Half Track	B	& Guides replaced	Bn. Maint.	3-28
3-27	Hq	Half Track	S	Wheel & tire replaced	Bn. Maint.	3-28
3-28	Hq	Half Track	D	Transmission Vehicle replaced		
3-28	Hq	Half Track	C	Turned over-Repaired	Bn. Maint.	3-29
3-28	Hq	3/4 Ton S		Battery & Voltage Reg. replaced	Bn. Maint.	3-28
3-28	Hq	Command Car	B	Radiator replaced	Bn. Maint.	3-29
3-28	"C"	2 1/2 Ton	S	Blown up-Repaired	3488 Ord.	4-5
3-29	"B"	M-10	C	Repaired Gas Tank	Bn. Maint.	3-29
3-29	"B"	M-10	C	Gun repaired	30th Ord.	3-30
3-29	"B"	Half Track	M	Gun repaired	30th Ord.	3-30
3-30	Hq	M/cycle	C	Front Wheels & Axle Blown	30th Ord.	4-1
3-30	"C"	M-10	S	Condenser replaced	Bn. Maint.	3-30
3-30	"A"	1/4 Ton	S	Replaced Radiators	Bn. Maint.	4-1
3-31	Ren	1/4 Ton	S	Front end repaired	Bn. Maint.	3-30
3-31	"A"	1/4 Ton B	Bombed	Oil Pan Welded	Bn. Maint.	3-31
3-31	"C"	1/4 Ton	S	2 tires replaced	3488 Ord. Salvaged	Lost
3-31	Hq	Ambulance	B	Bombed-Repaired	Bn. Maint.	3-31
4-1	Hq	Half Track	C	Luggage Bracket	3488 Ord.	4-5
4-1	Ren	3/4 Ton	C	Rear End replaced	Bn. Maint.	4-1
4-1	"C"	3/4 Ton C	C	Rear End replaced	Bn. Maint.	4-2
4-1	"A"	3/4 Ton	C	Front Spring Tube	Bn. Maint.	4-2
4-1	"C"	1/4 Ton	C	Replaced Carburator	Bn. Maint.	4-1
4-1	Hq	M/cycle	C	Distributor repaired	Bn. Maint.	4-1
4-1	"B"	M-10	A	Fuel Tank & Switch	Bn. Maint.	4-1
4-1	"A"	Light Tank	C	New Clutch, Track turned		4-2
4-2	"A"	M-10	C	100 hour check	30th Ord.	4-5
4-2	"C"	3/4 Ton	C	Adj. Clutch, Replace Battery	Bn. Maint.	4-2
4-2	"A"	Half Track	S	Align Wheels	Bn. Maint.	4-2
4-2	Ren	Half Track	S	Radiator repaired	Bn. Maint.	4-2
4-4	"C"	M-10	S	Radiator replaced	30th Ord.	4-5
4-4	Ren	Light Tank	C	Radiator repaired	Bn. Maint.	4-4
4-4	Ren	1/4 Ton	C	Aux. Motor repaired	Bn. Maint.	4-5
4-4				Radiator Leak	Bn. Maint.	4-4

Date	Company	Vehicle	Cause	Probable Trouble	Where Repaired	Duty
4-4	"A"	1/4 Ton	C	Spring Hanger Bent, Clutch & Spring sus- pen - pension bent-repaired	Bn. Maint.	4-5
4-4	"A"	1/4 Ton	C	Oil Pan repaired & Brake System Cleaned	Bn. Maint.	4-5
4-5	Ren.	Half Track	S	Fuel line repaired	Bn. Maint.	4-6
4-5	"A"	M-10	S	Idler Bent, Adj. Clutch removed track and Guide	Bn. Maint.	4-7
4-6	Ren	M-5	C	Replaced Track	Bn. Maint.	4-6
4-6	"A"	M-10	S	Idler Bent, Adj. Clutch Track shortened	Bn. Maint.	4-7
4-6	Hq	Cond. Car	C	Repair B.O. Light	Bn. Maint.	4-6
4-6	Hq	3/4 Ton C	C	Remove 37mm Mount	Bn. Maint.	4-6
4-6	"A"	3/4 Ton C	C	Front and Rear Ends	3488 Ord.	4-7
4-7	Hq	Half Track	C	Head Gasket	Bn. Maint.	4-7
4-7	"A"	M-10	S	Radiator Replaced	Bn. Maint.	4-8
4-7	"A"	M-10	C	Idler Wheels	Bn. Maint.	4-8
4-7	"A"	M-10	C	Gun-Elevating Sleeve	30th Ord.	4-10
4-7	"B"	M-10	C	Gun-Elevating Sleeve	30th Ord.	4-13
4-7	"A"	M-10	C	Clutch Adjustment	Bn. Maint.	4-7
4-8	"C"	M-10	A	Burned Up	2nd Corp Ord.	Lost
4-8	"C"	M-10	A	Burned Up	2nd Corp Ord.	Lost
4-8	"A"	3/4 Ton C	C	Front & Rear Ends	30th Ord.	4-11
4-9	Hq	2 1/2 Ton E	C	Frame Bent	30th Ord.	4-13
4-9	Hq	2 1/2 Ton	C	Frame Bent	30th Ord.	4-13
4-9	"B"	M-10	C	Oil Leak	30th Ord.	4-12
4-9	Hq	Trailer	C	Body repairs	Bn. Maint.	4-10
4-10	"C"	2 1/2 Ton	S	Welded	Bn. Maint.	4-10
4-10	"A"	M-3	C	Carburetor Bracket	Bn. Maint.	4-10
4-10	"A"	1/4 Ton S	C	Oil Pan Leak	Bn. Maint.	4-10
4-10	"A"	1/4 Ton	C	Rear End	Bn. Maint.	4-10
4-10	"C"	3/4 Ton D	C	Body Bent	Bn. Maint.	4-14
4-10	Hq	3/4 Ton	C	Spring Replaced	Bn. Maint.	4-10
4-10	Hq	3/4 Ton C	C	Front & Rear Ends	30th Ord.	4-14
4-10	"C"	M-10	C	Steering Clutch Bearing	30th Ord.	4-13
4-12	Hq	2 1/2 Ton	C	Toe in Checked	Bn. Maint.	4-12
4-12	Hq	M/cycle	C	Distributor & Points Replaced	Bn. Maint.	4-12

EXPLANATION

M-Mines

D-Damage while enroute (i.e.-Road Accidents)

C-Common Repairs-(To be expected)

B-Bombed

S-Shrapnel

Reproduced at Hq. 899th TD Bn., 5/30/43

DAMAGE DONE TO ENEMY BY 89TH TANK DESTROYER BATTALION

March 18, 1943 - "A" Company - Captured one Italian scout car in valley.

March 19, 1943 - "A" Company - Assisted in damaging one ME 109 in valley.

March 22, 1943 - Rear Echelon - 1 enemy plane destroyed, 1 plane damaged.

~~XX~~

"B" Company - 10 Mk. IV tanks destroyed.

"C" Company - 2 Mk. IV tanks destroyed.

"B" Company - 3 Mk. IV tanks damaged.

2 47mm guns destroyed.

"C" Company - 2 Infantry troop carrying trucks destroyed.

March 26, 27, 28.

Recon. Company used light tanks as decoys to draw fire and disclose 75mm and 88mm gun positions. To our observers, one Recon. Platoon directed fire on enemy infantry and saved two U.S. 105mm howitzers.

March 29, 1943

Reconnaissance Company directed fire for friendly artillery all day; results: Two 105mm guns destroyed and 30 infantrymen. Companies "A", "B", "C" assisted in damaging 5 enemy planes.

March 30, 1943 - "C" Company - 2 tanks destroyed, 1 tank damaged.

3 75mm guns destroyed by H.E. fire.

4 88mm guns destroyed by H.E. fire.

6 47mm guns destroyed by H.E. fire.

6 light machine gun nests blown up.

2 German half-track infantry carriers blown up with A.P. and H.E. fire.

1 Italian mortar crew and mortar destroyed.

1 company Italian infantry forced to move back by H.E. fire directed into their trenches.

March 31, 1943 * "A" and "C" Co. - 1 tank destroyed, captured gun crew and returned with 16 Italian prisoners and induced one entire company to give up to 3rd Bn. of 39th Infantry.

"B" Company - Shot down one bomber which crashed in and beside their company area. Assisted in destruction of 2 other planes.

Hq. Company - Shot down one plane which blew to bits in the air over their bivouac. Damaged one two motored bomber which smoked and lost altitude as it disappeared.

April 3, 1943 - "A", "B", "C", and Recon. Companies assisted in downing 4 planes, all dive bombers.

April 7, 1943 - "B" and "C" Co. Fired harassing long range fire into the 10th Panzer division column with effect undetermined because of darkness.

April 8, 1943 - "A" Company - Captured 8 German prisoners, 2 German Command Cars, 2 - 2½ ton trucks, and 2 motorcycles.

1. Most of the enemy positions were built up as strong points, with two light and two heavy artillery pieces, such as two 47's and two 75's, 80's, 88's or 90's. The guns were well dug in and camouflaged. Usually the lighter antitank guns were placed in the front.

2. Most of the fields of fire were covered by more than one weapon, i.e., the 75's, 80's, 88's or 90's were generally so placed as to cover the same fields of fire as were covered by the 47's.

3. During firing, the muzzle flash observed in most artillery firing was not observed due to the fact that guns were so placed that the blast could be covered as much as possible by the surrounding terrain.

4. A high burst of artillery was generally noticed prior to registering on a new position. It is believed that the high burst was fired by a direct fire weapon and was used as a means for laying indirect fire weapons as to direction. The enemy artillery was usually quite accurate as to direction but not quite so accurate as to range.

5. Certain key points were registered on by enemy artillery and at irregular intervals they would send a few shells into those positions whether the positions were or were not occupied.

6. Enemy tank attacks are very well supported by antitank guns and supporting arms. Prior to the tank attack, Stukka bombers made their presence known. An artillery barrage was delivered prior to the tank advance. The field for the tank attack was ~~probably~~ probably organized prior to the tank advance because, as destroyers advanced to fight the tanks which had withdrawn somewhat, the destroyers were fired on by emplaced antitank weapons which were well forward of the tanks at the time the destroyers started their advance.

7. German main efforts seem to come about 0800, 1230 and 1600 daily. At those hours the artillery opened up more vigorously and attacks for the enemy became more pronounced.

8. Enemy "fox" holes and slit trenches were well covered so as not to create shadows from the air. Quite frequently, positions were dug back into the hills so that they could not be seen from the air.

9. Artillery positions were picked for direct fire weapons on the very peaks of the hills and weapons were emplaced in depth along the sharp ridges. (The suggestion advanced by one friendly artillery officer seems to be very good. He suggested that in firing at the position, if the shot was too high it passed over the position and if too low the burst could not affect the position. It would take almost a direct hit to effect the gun or crew).

10. Quite frequently, while our artillery was registering in with smoke, the enemy seemed to fire smoke into their own positions, but at a distance of 500 yards from the first shot. The effect on the observer was that in sending the correction he sometimes used the wrong smoke shell, with the result that the fire for effect was way off the target.

11. During an enemy tank attack, the tanks move very, very slowly while under observation, but while in defilade or deep in the rear area they moved quite rapidly. The result of this operation was that the gunners of the TD's would have a tendency to believe the forward enemy tanks were knocked out and would disclose their position by firing on the tanks deep in the rear area. The forward enemy tanks would then open fire on the TD's at short ranges.

12. The employment of enemy high velocity direct fire weapons in pairs should again be emphasized. It was noted on one occasion that after one of these guns was knocked out, the other had not even opened fire yet. He held his fire until

the destroyers fully exposed themselves believing the enemy had been destroyed when the first gun was destroyed. When the second gun opened up, it was only by chance that the destroyers were not destroyed.

13. The placing of enemy equipment in positions from which it could not be withdrawn was evidenced during this campaign.

14. All artillery positions were well protected by small arms fire and machine guns. The latter, some of which were American made, had interlacing fields of fire which prevented any infantry approach to the artillery positions without first destroying the machine guns.

15. Reports were made by infantry soldiers of incidents where machine guns of the enemy were so placed that our troops passed them by, and the machine guns could have opened up on troops in column had they desired to do so. The Italian gunners, however, after seeing their positions had been by-passed, surrendered.

16. Enemy artillery will open up with any size gun at targets down to an individual soldier. However, 1/4 ton vehicles maneuvered quite freely on the battle field when tanks were present and were not fired at directly. Occupants of the 1/4 tons were injured by flying shrapnel from shells fired at tanks. "Thin skinned" vehicles in large numbers should not be permitted on the battle field with armored vehicles due to flying shrapnel and effective small arms fire. Half-track vehicles, when used as command cars with M-10's, proved unsatisfactory because they could not keep up and because the protection offered occupants of the half-track is not comparable to that offered by the M-10. The half-tracks could not always be taken with the M-10's, and therefore the platoon leaders, on several occasions, found it necessary to board the M-10's to keep contact with the situation.

17. German coordination of arms is very complete.

- a. In the attack all arms are used in conjunction with maximum effect.
- b. German tanks or infantry seem never to attack without mutual support from German artillery and antitank weapons and aircraft.
- c. In withdrawals, the Germans will sacrifice artillery pieces in order to accomplish their mission.
- d. The Germans will pull completely when they withdraw, but will leave mines and booby traps in every likely spot to delay the pursuit for as long a time as possible.

18. German artillery, particularly larger weapons, seems to avoid, except in the attack, even harrassing fire at night apparently out of respect for our flash ranging and counter battery operations.

19. German mobile artillery seems to fire heavy concentrations for short periods on the defense, then displace and fire again, and appears to be especially adept at occupying new positions and registering rapidly.

20. Germans maintain constant air support over an attacking force.

- a. M.E. 109's will strafe ammunition and gas vehicles if they catch them on the roads in the day time.
- b. M.E. 109's carry large single bombs and dive low over artillery and command post installations at tremendous speed; usually these come in pairs or groups up to 10 planes and they dive in from great altitude and leave rapidly.
- c. JU 88's will bomb all night and drop flares over rear installations - as many as 10 brilliant flares in one spot - dispersion must be maintained at night on the roads, especially.
- d. In daylight, JU 88's bomb artillery or tanks by diving or level bombing in formation, then disperse and run - (These attacks are almost always preceded by one or more reconnaissance ME 109's which find targets such as cluttered C.P.'s, jammed in tank bivouacs, or dust clouds denoting large vehicular columns, and bring the JU 88's in for a short diving bomb run without preliminary circling by the bombers.)
- e. Planes usually attack ground troops from the direction of the sun or out of a cloud cover. Stukas especially will use clouds to make up for their slowness and relative vulnerability from the air.

COMMENTS ON OUR ACTIONS

This section will be compiled from comments of officers of this organization.

REAR ECHELON NOTES

The greatest difficulty in the handling of the Rear Echelon was the vague information as to the battalion's attachments. At times, even the Battalion Commander was not notified to whom we were attached. This made supply very difficult, due to the fact that various headquarters charged with our supply were reluctant to give us supplies with no definite knowledge of our attachment.

Executive Officers of companies must be free to handle their duties and not used as part time platoon leaders.

The Battalion Administrative Radio Net must be utilized and those concerned must have radios capable of working over the necessary distances. SCR-610 is not satisfactory.

Headquarters of divisions and similar units must be educated to the supply system of TD units so they will not expect a divided train, i.e., field and combat train. The TD battalion does not have personnel or transportation to operate this way.

TD battalion supply should be direct from Corps as divisions and like units do not appreciate the size of a TD battalion nor the problems involved in their supply, and like wise are reluctant to fully supply a temporarily attached unit of this size.

G-3 and G-4 actions should be more closely coordinated in regard to probable action of attached TD's. The lack of this has been very evident in all past actions.

COMMUNICATION NOTES

1. Radio Frequencies: Radio communication during the last operation was seriously hampered by several organizations having to cooperate on the same frequencies. On numerous occasions, the channels used by this organization were also used by artillery battalions. During periods of intense combat, when both organizations needed the maximum communication, the channel was jammed due to too much necessary information.

2. Range of Radios: (a) It was necessary at times to send reconnaissance patrols considerable distances, and the range of the present sets (610 and 608) is not sufficient to continue contact all the time.

(b) During the GAFSA-EL GUETTAR action, companies were separated from the battalion by such distances that FM sets could not be expected to maintain contact without introduction of relays.

(c) The dependable range of the FM sets was never found, for on some occasions radios worked satisfactorily for 10 miles and on other occasions 1 mile was too much distance.

3. Messengers: Motorcycles for the entire Message Center messengers was found not satisfactory, as the terrain was such that travel by night on the motorcycle was impossible. Messengers could not follow the other vehicles cross-country on motorcycle.

4. Radio Replacement: It is suggested that a more rapid means of replacement of faulty radio sets for units operating in combat could be devised. During this campaign radio sets which had to be turned in for repair were not replaced for several days. During the absence of these sets communications suffer seriously. If an exchange point for FM sets could be maintained by Signal Corps so that a set not repairable by the battalion could be exchanged for a set which was operating satisfactorily, it would eliminate the necessity of having to rob other vehicles of their sets.

5. Codes: The change of assignment of tank destroyer battalions necessitates a constant change in codes. During the last operation codes of the units to which we were assigned were not obtainable in sufficient copies for proper dissemination without reproduction. Facilities for speedy reproduction were not available.

NEW DESTROYER WEAPON

The 3-inch gun proved a very satisfactory weapon with which to combat tanks. The M-10 is a satisfactory mount except that its size made it difficult to conceal. The appearance of the M-10 resembling that of a tank, caused it on several occasions to be employed in the role required of a tank. It should be emphasized that the M-10 is only the mount for a 3-inch gun.

Security of Personnel Within M-10's:

The M-10 proved adequate security against small arms fire and shrapnel from artillery. It satisfactorily shed long-range 47mm fire.

Range of 3-Inch Gun:

Gun crews on two occasions reported destroying enemy tanks at 5000 yards.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

1. Speed of movement of heavy battalion was over estimated many times. The average speed in daylight should normally be - maximum at 15 mph unless in an emergency for short distances greater speed may be made up to 25 mph. At night normal speed of 8 mph should be held, which would necessitate an early departure for a mission of protection of a detrucking point.
2. The size of the column on the road was underestimated many times which caused interference and delay.
3. Lack of an opportunity for smaller unit commanders for reconnaissance was found many times. Also time for information of the plans for operation to be given to subordinates was not always available.
4. In movement of a battalion into shell fire from artillery, the other vehicles could not keep pace with the M-10's. When platoon leaders rode in M-10's, communications were many times disrupted and the crew of the M-10 suffered was hindered. Also, control of unarmored vehicles when left behind presented a problem. The half-track is not a satisfactory command vehicle when troops are moving under shell fire and unarmored vehicles must remain behind.
5. The performance of the 3/4-Ton truck both as an ammunition and supply vehicle was unsatisfactory. The one vehicle could not haul ammunition and fuel oil for 4 M-10's. The mechanical functioning was not good.
6. The 3/4-Ton truck with one 50 cal. MG on a pedestal mount is unsatisfactory for antiaircraft protection and as an antiaircraft vehicle.
7. The attachment of the unit to various forces and divisions caused many difficulties in operation of supply and ration system. A unit requiring special ammunition and fuel should deal directly with an assigned and permanent headquarters for supply. The unit train is set up to cooperate only as a combat train and cannot be broken down to include a field train without the loss of needed vehicles.
8. Operating over strange type of terrain for the first time with a small scale map and at great distances caused much confusion and delay. Larger scale maps and prior reconnaissance would aid troops until they have been acclimated to new type of operation.

SECRET

ANNEX 8

Extract - Opn. Overlay, Annex 2, FO 18,
2400, 15 March 1943.
Map - 1:200,000, Sheet 13, 17.

Reproduced by S-3 Sec.,
899 TD Bn. T. Sgt. Wigger.
15 April 1943.

Approved:

