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HEADQUARTERS
5TH TANK DESTROYER GROUP
APO 75E, U.S. ARMY

7 January 1945

SUBJECT: Report After Operations Against the Enemy.
TO : Adjutant General, Army War College, War Department, Washington, D. C.
THROUGH: Commanding General, Seventh U. S. Army, APO 75E, U.S. Army, (Attention: Historian), and Commanding General, XV Corps, APO 436, U.S. Army.

1. In compliance with AR 345-105, dated 18 November 1929, and change 4, dated 10 August 1944, and Ltr, Hq ETOUSA, Subject: "Handling of Historical Documents in the European Theater of Operations", file AG 312.1 Op History, dated 14 July 1944, the following report is submitted.
2. Arabic numbers following certain statements refer to similarly marked pertinent entries in the attached Unit Journal of this organization. See inclosure #1.
3. Report after Operations Against the Enemy, 010001 December to 312400 December 1944.

1 December 1944, Hq 5th Tank Destroyer Group, attached to XV Corps, was located in SAARBURG. Tank destroyer battalions in XV Corps were employed as follows: The 813th TD Bn, SF, M-10, was attached to 79th Division on the Corps East flank, south of HAGENAU. The 645th TD Bn, SF, M-10, less Company "B", was attached to the 45th Division which was operating West of the 79th Division and East of the VOSGES MOUNTAINS. The 824th TD Bn, (Towed), less Company "B" attached to the 645th TD Bn, was with the 100th Division, which was preparing to move into the VOSGES MOUNTAINS between 45th and 44th Divisions. On Corps West flank, the 776th TD Bn, SF, M-36, was supporting the 44th Division.

1 December, the Executive Officer of the 824th TD Bn reported in to Group CP and conferred with the Group Commander on the situation and future plans. The Group Dental Officers returned to Group Hq and began a check on Group personnel. (5)

020700 December, "C" Company, 776th TD Bn, working with the 114th Inf, 44th Division, knocked out 2 enemy half-tracks and one SF gun at point blank range. The visibility that morning was extremely poor, and the enemy vehicles infiltrated into the town of WESLIDGEN where the TD positions were, before TD gunners spotted and destroyed them.

Operations Instructions #57 directed the 100th Division, with 824th TD Bn attached, move into a sector between the 44th and 45th Divisions on 2d of December, prepared to join the Corps attack North on 3d December as per IO #14, Hq XV Corps. (31)(42)

2 December, Lt O of 827th TD Bn, SF, M-18, reported to Group CP. This battalion landed at MARSEILLE and was scheduled to come to XV Corps when completely outfitted at MARSEILLE. Close contact was kept with this officer during the period prior to the arrival of his unit in the XV Corps area, 15 December. (27)

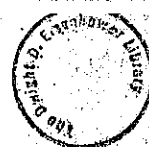
At 031500 the 813th TD Bn destroyed a Mk IV tank, an SF gun, and a Flak wagon. Also, late that afternoon, 776th TD Bn had two destroyers damaged by anti-tank mines.

4 December 5th TD Group received Operations Instructions #27, XV Corps, which included the relief of the 813th TD Bn and 645th TD Bn from XV Corps, establishing the new Corps front with 44th and 100th Division on the line, and the 12th Armored Division moving up to the XV Corps from South France. No change in the attachments of 776th and 824th TD Bns was made. (86A)

The two Group chaplains were recalled from the 813th and 776th TD Bns and reported to 776th and 824th TD Bns respectively. (97)(98)

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5 December the 776th TD Bn destroyed a Mk III tank and an armored retriever, while losing a destroyer by enemy mine action. The destroyer was at first thought to be a complete loss, and the violence of the explosion broke both legs of the radio operator. Later examination showed that a repair was possible at Base Ordnance shops.

Early on 6 December, Company "B", 824th TD Bn, was relieved of attachment to 645th TD Bn and reverted to Bn control with the mission of supporting BCT 397 of 100th Division. The Group Executive contacted CO, 106th Cavalry Group, and obtained a release for the 3rd platoon, Company C, 413th TD Bn, to enable the platoon to re-join its unit, now in the VI Corps. The Group Commander visited the Seventh Army to see the Artillery and Ordnance Officers with reference to obtaining replacement destroyers and parts. That afternoon an officer from the Army AT Section visited the Group CP and conferred with the Group Commander on TD matters. (129)(131)(138)

6 December the Group billeting party went N to FROMMUL (667345), Sheet XXV-14, GRS 4416, 1/50,000, and selected a site for the new CP for a tentative move 8 December.

7 December, while rendering direct assault fire in support of the infantry, one M-36 of the 776th TD Bn was lost to enemy artillery fire.

8 December Group CP moved forward 29.1 miles to FROMMUL (667345) closing in at 1120. In the afternoon of 8 December the 776th TD Bn had two destroyers advance into ECKENBURG with tanks and infantry. The TD's rendered close support and over-watching fires in this advance. One destroyer was damaged beyond repair by enemy artillery fire. (185)

Report of 776th TD Bn on test firing of 57mm antitank guns on Mark V tank conducted on 8 December is attached as inclosure 6.

9 December, in view of a serious problem of replacing M-36 destroyers, the Group S-1 visited the 776th TD Bn and determined the exact status of destroyers. Basing his information on this report, CO, 5th TD Group, initiated a letter through command channels, requesting that 12 M-36 and 12 M-18 Tank Destroyers be furnished this Corps in view of present shortages and calculated future losses of tank destroyers. In addition, a request was made for a supply of spare parts to be made available to supporting ordnance companies. (212)

10 December, Group S-1 went to 67th Ordnance Company at STÄNDLBERG to arrange for an inspection team to check and/or repair the recoil mechanism of the 90mm gun on the M-36. The team was obtained for 11th and 12th December. After completing the test of actually firing over 150 rounds from a destroyer, it was concluded that no remedy could be made for the failure of the recoil mechanism to function well under long periods of sustained fire, but that in the normal anti-tank role, the gun functioned satisfactorily. "A" Company, 776th TD Bn, destroyed a Mk IV tank in the vicinity of MAIERROFF, (0681515) on 10 December. (234)(255)(256)

11 December the 11 Pz Division threw in approximately 18 - 20 tanks into the XV Corps sector, against the 12th Armored and the 44th Infantry Divisions. The 776th TD Bn engaged some 3 - 5 tanks, getting hits on the enemy tanks, destroying at least one tank, while losing two destroyers to tank fire.

12 December, S-1, 1st TD Brigade visited CP of 5th TD Group and conferred with Group Commander on TD matters. At 1420, CO, 5th TD Group, was called by G-3 of Corps and instructed to report to the 324th Infantry Regiment and aid in coordinating the employment of 776th TD Bn in that sector. After conferring with CO, 44th Division, and regimental commander, it was discovered that the TD's were in satisfactory supporting position and were offering close AT protection to advance infantry elements. However, the route for the advance of the tank destroyers had to be changed due to enemy mines and also enemy high velocity fire from concealed positions. (278)(281)

13 December, officers from the Ord Section of Seventh Army visited 5th TD Group and 776th TD Bn to aid in the maintenance problem on the M-36 destroyer. The Group Commander accompanied these officers from Army to 776th TD Bn in order to keep informed of the results of the visit. (304)

14 December, Group S-2 conducted an experiment with the rocket launcher, testing its efficiency against the Mk V tank. A full report of this test was drawn up and attached hereto as inclosure 7. (326)

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15 December, 776th and 824th TD Bn's began engaging pill boxes and forts of the MAGNOT LINE. TD firing forced pill boxes to button up and enabled the infantry to close with and capture fortifications.

15 December, Major Baroo from Seventh Army AT Section visited Group GP with the information that the 824th TD Battalion (Towed) was being converted to an SF, M-10, battalion. Upon receipt of this information the CO, 5th TD Group, furnished this report to CO, 824th TD Battalion, and together worked up a plan to take care of fitting the battalion for combat as an SF unit. Group staff officers aided the battalion in the drawing up of the plan and in supply matters. (355)

16 December, CO, 827th TD Bn, reported in to Group GP and received orders attaching his battalion to 12th Armored Division. The battalion communications officer was given portions of the SOI and oriented on the set-up and SOP's in XV Corps. The TD Bn's during this period continued the neutralization and reduction of MAGNOT LINE forts. (375)

During the afternoon of 16th December, the CO, 776th TD Bn, was requested by CO, 44th Division Artillery, to submit recommendations for the use of his battalion to destroy the three apertures of FORT BLAGINOFF which fired WEST. After a careful reconnaissance and selection of positions, the plan to dig in two destroyers on a hill 2100 yards West of the fort by darkness was submitted and approved. At the first good observation, about 171100, firing began and a total of 210 rounds HE, APC, and RE with T-105 fuses were fired. 30% were estimated as direct hits in the embrasures, and no fire was returned from the three apertures and one porthole. After the fort was captured, a careful inspection was made and it was determined that TD firing had disabled the three guns beyond serviceability. Report of 776th TD Bn of the damage to this fort by direct M-36 fire is attached as inclosure B.

16th December, Group Dental Officers and technicians departed to 824th TD Bn to service personnel of that unit. (373)

17 December, S-4 of 824th TD Bn came to Group GP with list of shortages and overages in equipment which would occur in the reorganization of his battalion. Group S-4 visited Army with this list of shortages and alerted the Army G-4 to the fact that upon reorganization at the battalion, certain critical items would be neces-

sary to enable the battalion to operate. (403)

19 December, SX, 5th TD Group, visited Army Headquarters to find out the estimated time of arrival of M-10's for 824th TD Bn and to submit for approval plans to train the personnel of the battalion for drivers, gunners and maintenance personnel. (438)

824th TD Bn in support of the 100th Division used one TD company to fire indirect missions interdicting rear area crossroads from 17 - 21 December. Some illuminating shell was fired.

21st December, 5th TD Group received Operations Instructions 67, 68, and 69 which directed the Corps to assume the defensive due to the loss of troops sent to stop the enemy attack on the First U. S. Army. It further ordered the 106th Cavalry relieve the 100th Division, that the 100th Division relieve the 44th Division, and that the 44th Division relieve two regiments of the 35th Division and 2nd Cavalry Group. The 87th Division from XII Corps, 691st TD Bn attached, also relieved elements of the 35th Division. No changes in TD attachments were made except that at 211420 Company "B", 824th TD Bn, was attached to 106th Cavalry Group, on Corps right (East) flank. At 211420A a telephone message from the AF Section of XV Corps notified the Group Commander that the 103d Division with the 614th TD Bn (Towed) was arriving in the Corps sector to relieve the 6th Armored Division on Corps left (West) flank. (492)

22d December the CP of 5th TD Group moved Northwest to KESKASTEL (494410), Sheet XXAVI-13, GRC 4416, a distance of 16.1 miles. (515)

23d December the 87th Division with 691st TD Bn was relieved from XV Corps. Elements of 776th and 824th TD Bn were moved to that area with the infantry to provide AF defense. 23d December, Group S-3 and Communications Officer visited the CP, 614th TD Battalion, and oriented the battalion on SOP and SOI of TD battalions in the XV Corps. (533)

24 December, FO #15, XV Corps defense order, confirming previous operations instructions, charged 5th TD Group with the coordination of the anti-tank

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defense of XV Corps during the defense. In order to carry out this mission, CO, 5th TD Group maintained close liaison with the TD Bn's. Divisions were required to keep an up-to-date record of AT and TD gun positions, which was sent to Corps headquarters daily. Group staff officers visited the division anti-tank sections and TD battalions and insured that the Corps directive was being followed. (548)

23d December the 106th Cavalry Group was relieved in its sector by elements of VI Corps and moved to the Corps left flank to relieve XX Corps troops. "A" Company, 824th TD Bn, replaced "B" Company, 824th TD Bn, for duty with 106th Cavalry Group.

26 December, 776th TD Bn in indirect fire positions, fired a total of 181 rounds of harassing fire in coordination with the 44th Division Artillery.

27th December, 12th Armored Division with 827th TD Battalion attached withdraw to rear area and was attached to XXI Corps until 29 December when units reverted to attachment to XV Corps.

31 December 1944, 5th Tank Destroyer Group moved South from KROSKANSTYL to DIESENHOF (4951), a distance of 8 miles, closing the old CP at 1144, opening new CP at 1250. (695)

The period 25 December - 31 December was extremely quiet, neither side taking the offensive. Tank destroyers remained in close support and improved their gun positions by slight shifts. Plans were made by XV Corps troops for successive positions in case of a retrograde movement.

During the month of December, the dentists of 5th TD Group worked on personnel of Hq, 5th TD Group, and 824th TD Battalion. The Group Chaplains were attached to the 776th and 824th TD Battalions during this period.

For the period covered, the Commanding Officer of 5th Tank Destroyer Group served as anti-tank officer for XV Corps. During this period, the XV Corps is credited with knocking out 33 tanks and 4 self-propelled guns. Since XV Corps became operational 311600Z July 1944, the cumulative total of tanks and self-propelled guns liquidated by all troops assigned, attached or in support of XV Corps totals 831. Of this 831 tanks and self-propelled guns liquidated, 89 were eliminated by Hq, 5th Tank Destroyer Group and 773d Tank Destroyer Battalion on temporary detached service with V Corps during the period 17 August to 22 August 1944.

Daily TD Reports of 614th, 776th, and 824th Tank Destroyer Battalions dated 31 December are enclosed in order to show total destruction of enemy material by these battalions.

Detailed report on the first two months of combat operation of M-36's in the 776th TD Bn are attached as inclosure 9.

L. F. Jacoby
L. F. JACOBY
Colonel, TA
Commanding



9 Incls.

- Incl #1 - Unit Journal, Hq, 5th TD Group, 1 - 31 December 1944.
- Incl #2 - Record of ATO, XV Corps, of enemy tanks destroyed during December 1944.
- Incl #3 - Daily TD Rep, 614th TD Bn, dtd 31 December 1944.
- Incl #4 - Daily TD Rep, 776th TD Bn, dtd 31 December 1944.
- Incl #5 - Daily TD Rep, 824th TD Bn, dtd 31 December 1944.
- Incl #6 - Test firing of 57mm gun against Mark V tank.
- Incl #7 - Report of basecra firing at Mark V tank, Hq, 5th TD Group.
- Incl #8 - Effect of M-36 direct fire on PORT SIMONSKOFF.
- Incl #9 - Report on initial two months combat experience of 776 TD Bn with M-36.

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