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28 Stp. 1943.

HEADQUARTERS
601ST TANK DESTROYER PATTALION
APO 506 U. S. Army

27 September 1943

SUBJECT : Letter of Transmittal

TO . Commanding General, 36th Infantry Division, APO 36, U.S. Army.

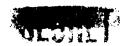
1. Transmitted herewith are reports for the operation AVALANCHE as requested by letter Hq. 56th Infantry Division dated 24 September 1945, Subject; "Historical Records and Histories of Organizations".

2. Delay in transmittal was caused by bridge being washed out, preventing traffic from this sector on that date.

WALTER E. TARDY Major, FA., Commanding

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REPORT-OF-THE

"OPERATION AVALANCHE"

601ST TANK DESTROYER BATTALION

5 SEPTEMBER-20 SEPTEMBER 1945.

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SADING CUMM 25 July 104:

HEADQUARTERS
601ST TARK DESTROYER BAT ALION
A.P.O. NO. 300 U. S. Army

"RATTLE REPORT OF THE OPERATION AVALANCIE"

GUIST TANK DESTROYER BATTALION

25 September 1943

Assigned to 5th army and further assigned to VI Corps, the Battalion Commander, Major Walter E. Tardy, was informed that his operations would be with the 36th Infantry Division upon landing on an unknown nostile shore.

One complete gun company of 12 guns, one partial gun company of o guns, and one depleted gun company of 4 guns with additional necessary command vehicles, totaling 95 vehicles in all, were designated by higher headquarters as the complement to move on the original wave (p day). The remainder of the Battalion remained behind to arrive at the destination on p plus 6.

The first complement loaded on landing Ship Tank 355 and Landing Ship Tank 378 at KAROUBA docks, SIZERTE PORT on 5 September 1943 under the command of Brigadier General Wilbur, 5th Army Staff. At that time, 2 Officers and 108 Enlisted Men, all valuable gumnery personnel, were still in SICILY on a Prisoner of Mar detail under 7th Army control by a former attachment. The Battation's mission was not in an Anti-tank role but to fire as Artillery in coordination with the 151st Field Artillery Battation.

The D-day convoy left Bizerte narbor on 7 September 1945 of which the advance elements of the buist Tank Destroyer Battalion, aforementioned, were a part. Very little occured during the ocean voyage. The weather was excellent, and all available time was devoted to calesthenics and whatever training could be conducted aboard ship. On the morning of 9 September 1945, the ships entered Gulfo Di Salerno and prepared to seach on call from snore control. At 1630, the forward elements of the Battalion landed on the United States Red Beach at PAESTUM. ITALY. The Landing was in order except that the Battalion Commander's naif-track, aue to improper soundings of the beach by the Navy, drove off into 8 feet of water and was immediately rendered useless. The Battalion moved from the beach to an assembly area at coordinates 3-8460/4, and commenced de-waterproofing operations. The Battalion Commander reported to the 36th Infantry Division Command post, and in turn was told to report to the 151st Field Artillery Battalion Command Fost, where he was assigned the mission of: (1) supporting the 151st Field Artillery firing to the South and on the right flank of the beachnead; (2) covering the road from OGLIASTRO against a possible enemy tank attack.



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BATTLE REPORT OF THE OPERATION "AVALANCHE" (con't)

At 1700 hours on 10 September 1943, the Battalion Commander was ordered by the 50th Infantry Division Commander to attach "C" Company (12) guns to the 131st Field Artillery. At 0300 hours, 11 September, the Battalion Commander received orders to prepare the elements present of "A" and "B" Company for re-embarkation at 0500 hours on Red Beach to support the Ranger Operation on the AMAIFI PENILSULA under the command of Lieutemant Colonel Darby. This operation will be explained in a later paragraph.

At 2130 hours, the Battation Commander received information from the Navy that the Germans were to attempt a landing of parachute Troops on the Airlield at N-847066 or on the Red Beach in the vicinity of PAESTUM. The Commanding General of the 36th Infantry Division directed that "C" Company be alerted to move M-10s to either position. The Company Commander, Captain H. E. Sundstrom, reconnoitered routes. At 0500 hours on 44 September, "C" Company moved on order of the Commanding General, 36th Infantry Division, to the vicinity of N-906085 with the mission of protecting that pass against an enemy tank thrust. The Battalio: Commander went to the VI Corps Command Post to confer with the anti-tank Officer on future anti-tank usages of the Battalion. Upon return to the Battalion Command Post, he directed that the Command Post be moved to the vicinity of "C" Company positions. Battalion Officers continued reconnaissance to locate friendly and enemy dispositions in the Albanella sector.

In the meantime, the contingent of "A" and "B" Companies (12 guns) under the command of Major Edward L. Austin, Battalion S-2, participated with a task force comprising one company of tanks, one battery of Field Artillery, one company of Shore Engineers, one company of Infantry and assurted small units in the landing on AMALFI FERN INSULA. The force under command of Brigadier General Wilbur Loaded on Landing Craft Tanks at 1850 hours, 11 September with no orders. One M-10 of "B" Company was lost in the water because the Captain of Landing Craft Tank 422 (British) ordered the gun onto the beach saying that the water was shallow. It was not. Major Austin received orders at 0300 hours to follow Landing Craft Tank 27 to the new landing. Landing Craft Tank 27 lost its leader and most of the convoy remained off Red Beach for the remainder of the day and night. However, part of the vehicles and M-10s unloaded at MAORI about 1330 hours on 12 September. Heavy enemy bombing on the convoy continued throughout operations but no casualties were incurred by members of this Battalion.

On randing, the force was attached to the British 46th Division and moved to PASTENA, and had been hurriedly detached and attached to the British 128th Brigade at PONTECAGNANO FIANO. One Platoon was placed in position and conducted fire on a position at a point 1 1/2 miles East of town. At 0700 hours, 14 September the force was attached to the 23rd Tenk Brigade (British) and moved to N-775180.



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Major Austin received orders that the force would be used on a reserve Tank Destroyer mission. At 1200 hours, 14 September, the following verbal order was received from the 10th British Corps via the 25rd Tank Brigade: "You will proceed at once to N-795156 and contact American Troops. With them you will make a counter-attack on your own initiative. You are attached to American VI Corps. "B" Company, 751st Tank Battalion is attached to you." The force moved to the designated point and an officer contacted the Commanding Officer 141st Infantry Regiment and advised him of orders received. He had no counter-attack in mind and gave orders for the force to remain in their present positions.

Major Austin had reported to the British 10th Corps to check authenticity of orders and after having redelved orders through VI Corps attaching the force to the Mist Infantry Regiment, reported to that Command Post for orders. He received a primary mission of anti-tank defense, employing tanks and M-10 Tank Destroyers. Reconnaissance was made by all officers and the plan as outlined in Overlay, 10 September, was approved by the Commanding Officer Mist Infantry Regiment. At 0830 hours, 15 September, Major Austin conferred with the Commanding Officer 133rd Field Artitlery Battation, and decided to place nine M-10s ("B" Company plus 2 guns attached from the oldth Tank Destroyer Battation) in firing positions at N-785155. The guns were surveyed in by the 133rd Field Artitlery Battation, and one gun registered. Immediate orders were given to cease firing because counter-battery from the enemy had landed in the 133rd Field Artitlery Battation fire Direction Center.

In the afternoon, plans were made to coordinate anti-tank defense with the British on the left flank.

The second echetor of the Battation (Sguns from "A" Company, 4 guns from "B" Company, nousekeeping venicles, Reconnaissance Company and Headquarters Company) remained in BIZERTE to move on the D plus 6 Convoy. Every effort was being made to secure the return of 2 Officers and 100 Enlisted Men from the Prisoner of War Detail in SICILY.

At 1600 hours, 12 September, the 2 Officers and 106 Entisted Men returned from the Prisoner of War Detail in SICILY. On 15 September, orders were received and the following venicles were loaded on Landing Ships Tank 580 and 400 at KARCUBA docks: Reconnaissance Company, the remainder of "A", "B", and "C" Companies, and the Command Post Group plus necessary housekeeping venicles from Headquarters Company. The remainder of Headquarters Company was to move for arrival at SALERNO on D plus 12. At 2100 hours, 13 September, the second Echelon left BIZERTE FORT.

The Convoy moved at a mesh epoch of wight knots, in a mean direction of Northeast. Weather was excellent, no enemy sighted.

After 40 hours on the MEDITERIAMEAN, the convoy arrived at the GULF OF SALEGNO and disembarked at 1850, 15 September at M-722240. It was subjected to enemy shelling while unloading. Elements of Major Austin's Force were immediately located and the 2nd Echelon closed in vibouac at N-791150 after marching a distance of five miles.

At 1050 hours, 16 September, a message was redeived from the 155rd Field Artillery Battalion, that a large enemy tank force was moving in the vicinity of N-325210. The force was alerted and Lieutenant Gioia, Reconnaissance Officer, went forward on reconnaissance. He found that 12 tanks had attacked friendly positions at ST. LUCIA, that three of these tanks had been placed out of action by British anti-tank guas and the remaining tanks had withdrawn. At 1400 hours, 16 September, "C" Company was moved to the vicinity of N-945090 to attack ALRANELLA with the 504th Parachute Regiment and then to attack ALRAVILLA. N-957150.

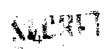
At 1955 nours, 16 September, the Battalion Commander returned to the Battalion Command Post from the 45th Infantry Division Command Post with information that the 601st Tank Destroyer Battalion, less "C" Company, is attached to the 45th Infantry Division Artillery and would operate under the control of Lieuvenant Colonel Casey, Bat Alion Commander, 645th Tank Destroyer Battalion, and the Division Anti-tank Officer, in the same sector as previously occupied by "A" Company, and "B" Company. At 1/50 nours, the Battalion Command Post closed at N-780155 and moved to the new bivouge at N-792146 after marching a distance of 19 miles.

At 1900 nours, the Battalion Commander called the Company Commanders and laid out an anti-tank plan of operation for the Battalion in the sector N-702162 -- N-605260, N-000139 -- N-649169 with "A" Company covering the road N-702162 -- N-655260, two platoons of "B" Company covering the road N-000139 -- N-649169, one platoon of "B" Company covering the road N-000139--N-649169 and Reconnaissance Company conducting reconnaissance patrols on all three roads throughout the might.

At OOLS hours, If September, a message was received by radio:

*To Commanding General, Assumble Recommaissance Company, Goust Tank Descroyer Battalion without delay and move it to bivouse of Idoth Regimental Combat Team vicinity of M-670000.

Recommaissance Company Commanding Officer of report to G - 3, VI Corps for instructions. At OLOO hours, the Battalion Commander, received orders to send one Recommaissance Officer and one Gulfery Officer to VI Corps Command Post. The Satuation Commander ordered Lieutemant Yowell,

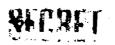


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"B" Company to VI Corps Command Post with instructions for Lieutenant Giola to remain there. At odoo hours, Reconnaissance Company moved to its new bivouac. At 1100 nours, Lieutenant Yowell returned to the Battalion Command Post with a mission for "B" Company and Reconnaissance Company to be a part of a special task force under Brigadier General Wilbur, composed of the 130th Combat Team, one Battalion 30th Engineers, one Company 120th Engineers, 189th Field Artillery Battalion, and attached Tank Destrojer, Anti-Aircraft and Tanks. The mission was to move a flying wedge around the right flank of the sector of operations through EBOLI and ComfursI to Bakevento. At 1400 hours, the Battalion Commander returned to the Battalion Command Post from VI Corps Command Post with information that the operation was postponed indefinitely.

At 0900 hours, 18 September, the Battalian Commander, was ordered to report to the 45th Division Artillery Command post for orders. At 1000 hours, a telephone message was received from the Commanding Officer 141st Combat Team for an officer to report for orders. The Battalian S-3, Captain B-A-G. Fuller, reported. At this stage, no one seemed to know to whom the Pattalian was attached, naving received orders from two different sources. At 1050 nours, the Battalian Diaison Officer arrived at the Battalian Command Post with the VI Corps list of Organization of Troops which clarified the present status of the Battalian. The Battalian was attached to the 45th Infantry Division under the control of and operating in the sector of the 141st Combat Team, which was also attached to the 45th Infantry Division, and under the control of Lieutenant Colonel Casey, Division Anti-tank Officer.

At 1100 nours, the Battalion S-3 returned to the Battalion Command post with orders to place a platoon in position to cover the British advance to BATTIPAGLIA. (N-030235). The 1st Platoon of "A" Company under the command of Lieutenant Matter, was assigned the mission. At 1230 nours, the Commanding General, 45th Infantry Division, ordered the Battalion to move to a new bivousc to the East to make room for the 3rd Infantry Division assembly area. At 1415 hours, orders were received for Major Mayor Mayard L. Austin, Battalion S-2, to report to the 645th Tank Destroyer Battalion and assume command of that Battalion. At 1450 hours the Battalion Command post closed at N-792146 and moved to its new bivousc at N-805160, distance marched - 2 1/2 miles. At 1600 nours, information was received that the British had taken BATTIPAGLIA and that the 1st plateon of "A" Company under Lieutenant Matter nad moved into position at N-827242. At 1630 nours the Battalion Commander returned to the Battalion Command Post with information that Reconnaissance Company had been ordered back to the Battalion. At 1745 nours, the Battalien Executive, Major Daniel S.T. Hinman, reported to the 1441st Infantry Regimental Command Post on orders and after conferring with the Regimental Commanding Officer, changed the position of the 1st Platoon of "A" Company to N-852224 with the remainder of "A" Company



moved to N-813175 for coverage of the Must Infantry Regimental advance on EBOLI.

At 1130 hours, 19 September, the Battalion received the mission of covering the 179th Combat Team on an attack of Hill 405 (N-864249). The Battalion Commander assigned the mission to "A" Company. Lieutenant Frederick C. Miner, the Company Commander, placed two guns at N-851222, two guns at N-840210, 3 guns at N-845221 and 3 guns at N-853208. At 2030 hours, the Battalion Commander returned to the Battalion Command Post from VI Corps Command Post with information that "C" Company would return to the Battalion on 20 September.

At 1320 nours, on 20 September, orders were received from VI Corps that the 601st Tank Destroyer Battalion is detached from the 141st Combat Team, the 45th Infantry Division, and the 56th Infantry Division respectively, and is attached to the 5rd Infantry Division; to assemble the complete Battalion at the present location of the Eattalion Command Post.

Officers and men of the 601st Tank pestroyer Battalion were rather perturbed by the usual attachments and detachments of companies and platoons to various organizations for support, not even in one division, but in several divisions, including British. As a result of operations in the TUNISIAN CAMPAIGN and as a result of discussions with commanders at the close of the TUNISIAN CAMPAIGN, Allied Force Headquarters and 5th Army Headquarters published training notes advising that mank Destroyers Battalions be kept intact, at least in one division sector, to repet a possible large tank thrust in that sector. All major units are equipped with anti-tank weapons found to be most effective in operation against small tank thrusts.

More leeway should be given the Battalion Commander of the Tank
Destroyer Battalion even utilizing him as Division anti-tank Officer,
as does the 45th Infantry Division in control of the anti-tank features
in a divisional sector. During most of the operations the Battalion
Commander and Battalion Staff were used as messenger boys between higher
neadquarters and the various gun companies and platoons detached from
the Battalion. In some cases, the Battalion Commander was left completely
out of the picture. At various times, even Company Comanders were overlooked.

No battle casualties were incurred by the Ba talion during the operation due to the fact that no actual contact with the enemy was gained by any element of the Battalion.

JAMES C. GRIMES

1st Lt. bulst T.D. Rn.
Adjutant.

