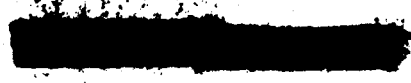


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(Nov. 11, 1945)

**AFTER ACTION REPORT  
for the  
MONTH OF JANUARY 1945**

**81ST TANK DESTROYER BATTALION  
APO 139  
UNITED STATES ARMY**

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- III - Awards and Decorations
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**SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS**

- Inclosure No. 2, S-1 Journal
- Inclosure No. 3, S-2 Journal
- Inclosure No. 4, S-3 Journal

**MAPS AND OVERLAYS**  
(In attached envelope)

- 1/25,000 CGCS 4444 - Sheets 5003, 5004, 5103, 5104
  - Overlay No. 1: Positions Occupied During the Month
  - Overlay No. 2: Area "H"
- [REDACTED]

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HEADQUARTERS  
821st Tank Destroyer Battalion (SP)  
APO 339

1 February 1945

AFTER ACTION REPORT FOR THE MONTH OF JANUARY 1945

I SUMMARY OF OPERATIONS

1. PHASE VI: Defense of the Rear River Line.

a. During the period, 1 January 1945 to 31 January 1945, the 821st Tank Destroyer Battalion remained attached to the 29th Division Artillery.

(1) At the beginning of the period, elements of the 821st Tank Destroyer Battalion were employed in the Division zone as follows.

(a) The 1st and 2nd Platoons of Company "A" were in assembly positions in the vicinity of Darboslar, map coordinates 9557. The 3rd Platoon was in assembly position in the vicinity of Langendorf, map coordinates 9752.

(b) The 1st Platoon of Company "B" was in direct fire position in the vicinity of Schephoven, map coordinates 0653. The 2nd and 3rd Platoons were in the vicinity of Pattera, map coordinates 0054, the 2nd Platoon in indirect fire position, the 3rd Platoon in direct fire position.

(c) The 1st and 3rd Platoons of Company "C" were in direct fire positions, the 1st Platoon in the vicinity of Hertenhausen, map coordinates 9860, the 3rd Platoon in the vicinity of Freialdenhoven, map coordinates 9559. The 2nd Platoon was in indirect fire position in the vicinity of Freialdenhoven, map coordinates 9659.

(d) The 2nd Reconnaissance Platoon was maintaining two OP's, one in the vicinity of Schephoven, map coordinates 0653, the other in the vicinity of Pler, map coordinates 0652. The OP at Schephoven was abandoned on 7 January 1945. The OP at Pler was maintained through 31 January 1945.

(2) Destroyer Platoons employed on their primary mission of direct fire were in general support of the 29th Infantry Division's anti-mechanized defenses. Platoons employed on their secondary mission of indirect fire were in support of the fires of the 29th Division Artillery. Indirect missions were harassing and interdiction fire behind enemy lines. A total of 6,353 rounds was fired indirect during the month of January.

b. In coordination with the 29th Division's Defense Plan for the Division Zone, the 821st continued to prepare gun positions and to improve those already prepared, engaged in practice moves to prepared positions in conjunction with Infantry, Tank and Tank Destroyer units; reconnoitered for gun positions on the Division's north flank in coordination with the 108th Infantry Division and participated in harassing operations.

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**Sent'd: After Action Report for the Month of January 1945.**

(1) In addition to preparing alternate and supplementary gun positions, in general support of the Division's anti-mechanized defenses, "Switch Line" positions were prepared for occupation by Infantry, Tank and Tank Destroyer teams.

(2) Practice occupation of prepared "Switch Line" defensive positions provided training in Infantry, Tank and Tank Destroyer Coordination. By actual occupation of positions, weak points were noted and improvements made.

(3) In coordination with the over-all defenses of the area west of the Rear River, Company Commanders and Platoon Officers recommended for gun positions on the north flank of the Division zone. The 102nd Infantry Division was responsible for the defense of the area on the 29th Division's north flank. Selected gun positions were to add depth to the defenses of the 102nd Infantry Division against a possible enemy thrust through the Wurm Valley, in the Gailenkirchen area.

(4) The 29th Division conducted a continuous "Harassing Program" to keep the enemy confused as to our disposition and intentions and to deprive him of rest. In keeping with this program Destroyer Platoons, on secondary missions, directed their fire at suspected supply dumps, known and suspected installations and supply routes behind the enemy lines east of the Rear River.

g. At the expiration of the period ending December 31, 1944, Company "A" and Company "B" were converting from "Towed" to "Self Propelled". Company "A" completed conversion during the month of January. Company "B", not having received all of their self propelled weapons were unable to complete conversion during this period.

(1) Full advantage was taken of the static situation to engage in intensive training with the new "Self Propelled" weapon. Training on the M-10 Destroyers consisted of driving, range firing of the 3" gun, self propelled tactics, terrain studies and range estimation.

d. Reconnaissance Company being newly formed, engaged in intensive training to familiarize all personnel with their new assignments and weapons. Continuous road net and bridge reconnaissance was made in the Division zone. This afforded training as well as supplying Company Commanders and Staff Officers with valuable information.

(1) The Reconnaissance Company's Pioneer Platoon assisted Destroyer Platoons in clearing fields of fire and in improving gun positions. Frozen mounds of earth and best piles were blasted from in front of gun positions. Trees were cut to clear fields of fire. The logs were used to floor dug in M-10 positions.

g. On 23 January 1945 one Destroyer of the 1st Platoon of Company "C" was moved into position between Hertenhausen (map coordinates 9860) and Keolar (map coordinates 0059) to fire direct on a church steeple that was suspected of being an enemy OP and a dug in enemy gun position. Both targets were in the vicinity of Julich (map coordinates 0059). Forty three rounds of HE, five rounds of APC and six rounds of CPT 105 were expended. Direct hits were scored on the targets. Due to the great range it was impossible to accurately determine the results of the fire.

Continued: After Action Report for the Month of January 1945.

f. Acting on orders of the Commanding General, 29th Division Artillery, the 821st Tank Destroyer Battalion assumed the responsibility for preparing defenses against possible infiltration by enemy ground forces and/or enemy paratroopers for the town of Sierdorf, map coordinates 9356, and an area designated as "Area H", see inclosed overlay No. 2. During the entire month of January all elements of the Battalion participated in planning and training in defense against possible enemy ground forces and paratroop attack. Each element of the Battalion engaged in this planning and training with elements of other units billeted in their respective areas. Several practice alerts were engaged in during the month.

g. At the end of the period, 31 January 1945, all elements of the Battalion were in relatively the same positions on the map as they were at the beginning of the period. All elements were on the alert for enemy attack and at the same time conducting training and maintaining vehicles and equipment for offensive action.

## II BATTLE CASUALTIES

1. As a result of enemy action the following casualties were suffered.

- a. Two enlisted men were killed by shell fragments from enemy mortar fire.
- b. Two enlisted men were wounded by shell fragments from enemy mortar fire.

## III AWARDS AND DECORATIONS

1. For heroic achievement in military operations against the enemy, on the dates following their names, the following named enlisted men were awarded the Bronze Star Medal.

Sgt Leonard Jackson 20956714	26 November 1944
Pvt James Messapella 32621676	24 November 1944

2. For meritorious service in military operations against the enemy, the following officers and enlisted men were awarded the Bronze Star Medal.

Lt Col Howard M. Arbury O-855103  
1st Lt Dale M. Richardson O-1823646  
1st Lt Dale A. Malsiger O-526610

S/Sgt Leslie C. Clauson 39309398  
S/Sgt Wallace M. Elliott 38157016  
S/Sgt Dale T. Steen 18071894  
S/Sgt Melvin J. Lanferman 37251815  
Sgt Paul A. Beckringer 25713174  
Sgt Joe Crispy 38125830  
Sgt Russell E. English 18104691  
Cpl Dominick Manno 32707134  
Pvt Edward G. Hays 38528479  
PFC Edward J. Ziskowski 36343335

3. The Oak Leaf Cluster to the Bronze Star Medal was awarded to 1st Lt John M. Dille Jr, O-522754, for meritorious service in military operations against the enemy.

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Cont'd: After Action Report for the Month of January 1945.

IV COMMANDING OFFICERS

1. Lt Col Howard H. Astbury was in command of the Battalion for the period from 1 January 1945 to 31 January 1945.

2. Company Commanders for the period from 1 January 1945 to 31 January 1945 were as listed below:

Company "A" - Capt Edward A. Burke

Company "B" - 1st Lt Floyd F. Ginder

Company "C" - 1st Lt Dale A. Haffinger

Res Company - 1st Lt Herman H. Von Bunge

Hq Company - 1st Lt Harry G. J. Swood

*Howard H. Astbury*

HOWARD H. ASTBURY  
Lt Col., FA  
COMMANDING

[REDACTED]

**HEADQUARTERS**  
**821st Tank Destroyer Battalion (SF)**

1 February 1945

**BATTLE LESSON NOTES AND CONCLUSIONS**

1. The supply of 3" ammunition is such that it is sometimes necessary to use both normal and reduced charge HE on indirect missions. In order to gain sufficient elevation to fire the reduced charge ammunition with the 3" gun, trails must be dug in to the maximum. With the gun in this position the tube cannot be lowered sufficiently to fire the normal charge ammunition on close in targets. To alleviate the necessity of changing gun positions, so that both normal and reduced charge ammunition can be fired, one gun of each section is dug in to fire reduced charge, the other to fire normal charge. Self propelled positions are so constructed that the desired changes in elevation can be obtained by moving the Destroyer forward or to the rear.

a. The introduction of reduced charge ammunition for the 3" gun, due to its short range, has made it necessary to place platoons on indirect fire missions as far forward as flash defiladed areas will permit. This, however, allows the maximum use of normal charge ammunition on long range harassing and interdiction fires.

2. To alleviate the steering difficulties encountered during operations on frozen ground and to add traction to the M-10 tracks, the standard steel cleats have been modified by welding "machine steel" plugs on every fifth track block, three plugs to each block. These plugs dig into frozen ground where the normal cleats will not.

HOWARD H. ARBURY  
Lt Col., PA  
COMMANDING

C O N T E N T S

MAPS AND OVERLAYS

1/25,000 USGS Map - Sheets 5003, 5004, 5103, 5104

Overlay No. 1: Positions Occupied During the Month

Overlay No. 2: Area "II"

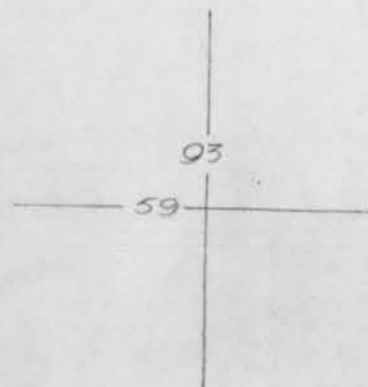
\* \* \* \* \*

MAP COORDINATES OF TOWNS REFERRED TO IN  
AFTER ACTION REPORT FOR THE MONTH OF JANUARY 1945

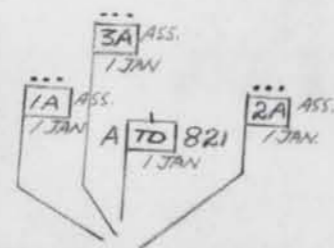
<u>Durboslar</u>	<u>9557</u>
<u>Freialdenhoven</u>	<u>9559</u>
<u>Julich</u>	<u>0359</u>
<u>Koelar</u>	<u>0059</u>
<u>Langendorf</u>	<u>9752</u>
<u>Maryenhausen</u>	<u>9860</u>
<u>Pattern</u>	<u>0054</u>
<u>Pier</u>	<u>0652</u>
<u>Siersdorf</u>	<u>9356</u>
<u>Schenhoven</u>	<u>9551</u>

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C TD 5A1 1 JAN  
2C IND 1 JAN



TD 821 1 JAN

1B Conv 14 JAN  
2B Conv 5 JAN

TD 821 1 JAN

3A ASS 1 JAN

1A ASS 4 JAN

1B IND 12 JAN  
2B IND 1-5 JAN

3B ASS 1-5 JAN  
 IND 5-12 JAN

B TD 821 1 JAN

5C IND 1 JAN



2B OP 1-7 JAN

1B DIR. F 1 JAN  
3B DIR. F 12 JAN

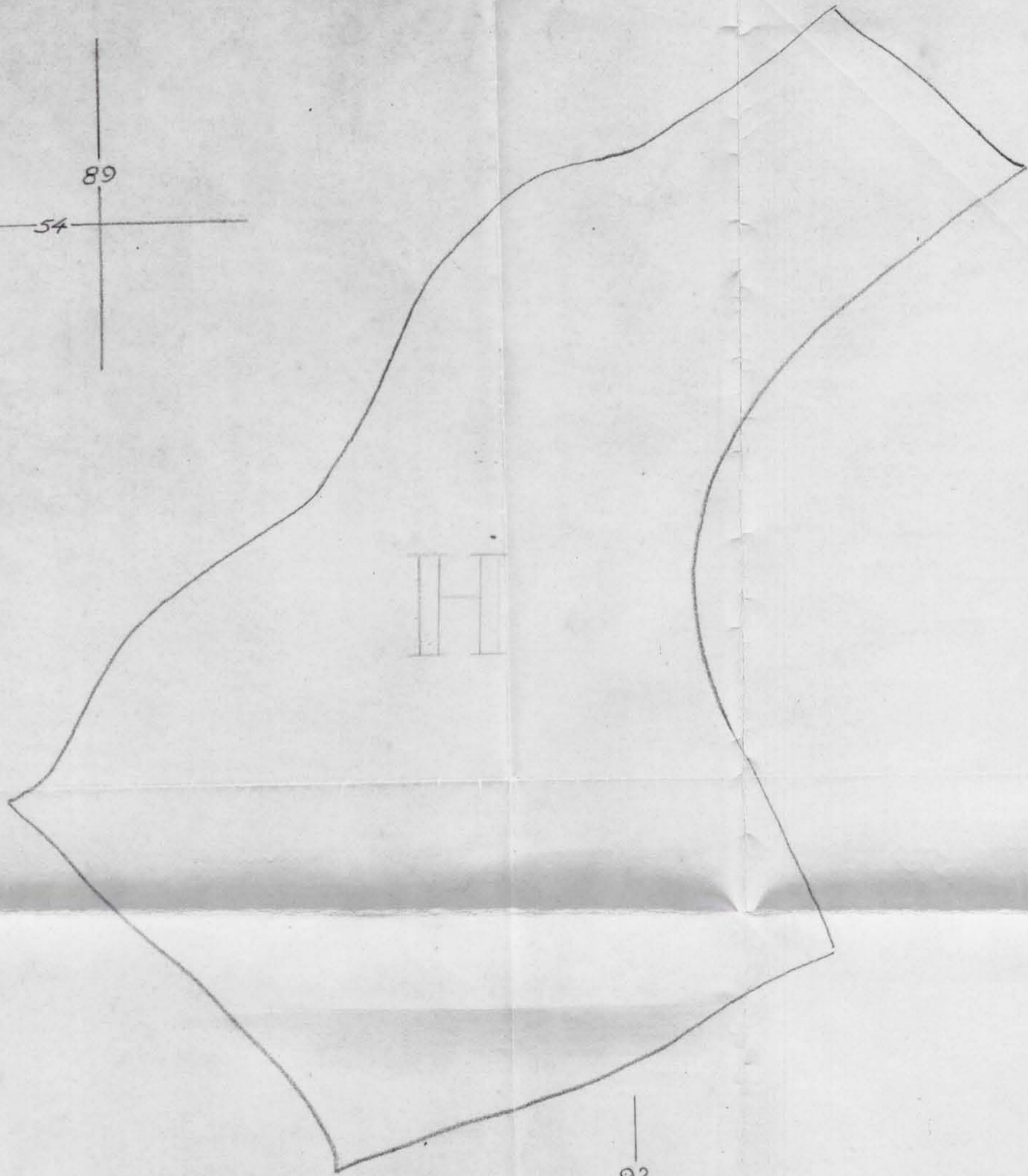
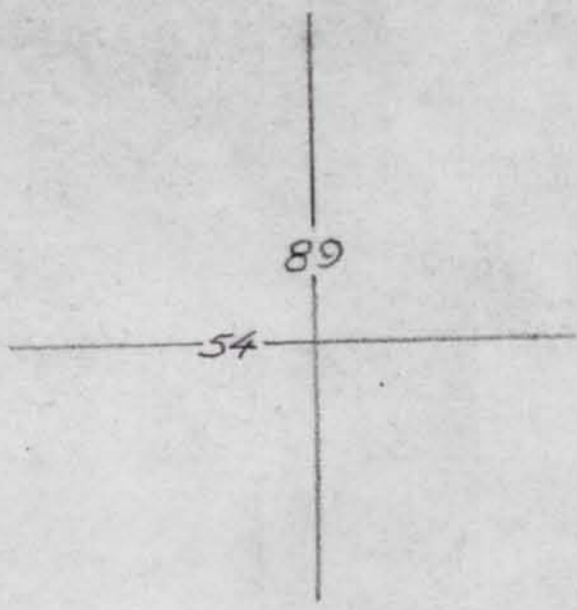
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2B 1 JAN

49

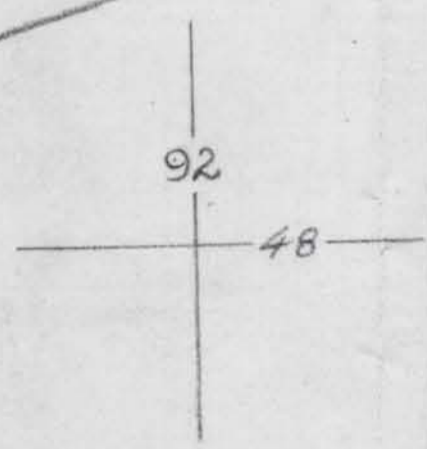
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 SHEETS 5003  
           5004  
           5103  
           5104

LEGEND:  
 ASS. - ASSEMBLY POSN.  
 IND. - INDIRECT FIRE  
 DIR. F. - DIRECT FIRE  
 CONV. - CONVERSION

OVERLAY No. 2



OVERLAY No. 2  
SCALE 1:25,000  
MAPS - 65654414  
SHEETS - 5102  
5103



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