

S E C R E T

HEADQUARTERS 644TH TANK DESTROYER BATTALION
APO 230 US ARMY

5 January 1945

SUBJECT: Battalion History for the Period 1 December 1944 to 31 December 1944.

TO : Adjutant General
Washington D C

The following history of this organization for the month of December 1944 is hereby respectfully submitted:

- a. Unit - No change.
- b. Changes in Organization - No change.
- c. Strength, Commissioned and Enlisted:

(1) At beginning of period, 1 Dec 44:

Officers 33
Warrant Officer 1
Enlisted Men 587

(2) Net Increase for Month:

Officers 5
Warrant Officer 0
Enlisted Men 95

(3) Net Decrease for Month:

Officers 3
Warrant Officer 0
Enlisted Men 83

(4) At End of Period:

Officers 35
Warrant Officer 1
Enlisted Men 604

- d. Stations of Unit or Parts Thereof:

Station: GEMETER, GERMANY

At beginning of period.
Date of Departure: 11 December 1944

SCURBRODT, BELGIUM

Date of arrival: 11 December 1944
Date of departure: 14 December 1944

ROCHERATH, BELGIUM

Date of arrival: 14 December 1944
Date of departure: 17 December 1944

WIRTZFELD, BELGIUM

Date of arrival: 17 December 1944
Date of departure: 19 December 1944

- 1 -

S E C R E T

69

S E C R E T

ELSENBOERN, BELGIUM

Date of arrival: 19 December 1944
Date of departure: 20 December 1944

BERG, BELGIUM

Date of arrival: 20 December 1944
Date of departure: 29 December 1944

ELSENBOERN, BELGIUM

Date of arrival: 29 December 1944
Present location.

e. Marches.

- (1) Purpose: To move the Battalion to its newly assigned area within the 2d Infantry Division sector.
- (2) Length of Daily March: 30 Miles
- (3) Points between which marched, with date: Unit marched from the vicinity of BERGSTEIN, GERMANY, to SOURBRODT, BELGIUM, on 11 December 1944.
- (4) Condition of roads and weather: The roads were slick and covered with snow. The weather was cold.
- (5) Remarks: The march was made without incident and without enemy interference.

f. Campaigns: GERMANY

g. Battles:

I The Battle of HURTGEN Forest

(a) The Enemy

1. The G-2 Reports stated that we were fighting an enemy whose fighting qualities were as low as his morale. Few reserves were reported in the area.

No special weapons were reported in the immediate sector.
2. The enemy defenses were well prepared. Mines, both anti-tank and anti-personnel, were well-employed and numerous. Natural obstacles such as forests and streams were used to their greatest advantage. The forests were used to secure tree bursts. Streams provided obstacles toward VOSENACH and KOMMERSCHIED, except along the road net which had interdiction fire.
3. The enemy occupied SCHMIDT, BRANDENBERG and KOMMERSCHIED. Isolated enemy groups remained in KLEINHAU.

In the action, the enemy, for the most part, was captured or killed during the battle for KLEINHAU and BRANDENBERG.

The enemy air was active over the front lines and rear areas and strafed on several occasions. Enemy artillery was heavy.

S E C R E T

The enemy attacked BERGSTEIN where Company "A" was located. They used approximately five (5) Mk V Tanks in their defense and later, their counter-attack of BERGSTEIN.

4. No prisoners were reported as being officially captured by this unit.

(b) Elements Affection Action:

1. The enemy had active patrols and no doubt had a fairly good estimate of our front lines.
2. Civilians were not present. Rear area residents were non-cooperative.
3. The terrain was heavily wooded. Hills and streams were prominent features of the terrain.

(c) Action: The unit was assigned to the 8th Infantry Division Artillery.

1. Location of Unit Command Posts: The Bn Command Post was one (1) kilometer west of GERMETER, GERMANY.

The Co "A" Command Post was approximately two kilometers west of GERMETER, GERMANY.

The Co "B" Command Post was near JAEGERHAUS, GERMANY.

The Co "C" Command Post was one kilometer west of HURTGEN, GERMANY.

The Headquarters Company Command Post was at WULARSIMETTE, GERMANY.

Company "C" of the 893d TD Battalion (SP) was attached to the Battalion.

2. The unit, less Co "B" and with Co "C", 893d TD Bn attached, continued in support of the 121st Infantry Regiment on 1 December in attacking the KLEINHAU-BRANDENBERG area. Company "B", attached to 13th Infantry Regiment, continued direct support and indirect fire missions. An advanced Command Post was established in HURTGEN to further the maintenance of communications. Captain WILLIAM P BYE, CO Company "A", was wounded by shell fragments and was evacuated. 1st Lt CLARENCE STEVES assumed Command. On 2 Dec/44 the attachments were as follows: 644th Tank Destroyer Battalion, less companies "B" and "C", and with Co "C", 893d TD Bn attached, was attached to 8th Infantry Division Artillery. Co "B" 644th TD Bn, attached to 13th Inf Div. Co "C", 644th TD Bn, attached to 121st Inf Reg't. Mission of Company "A": (1) to provide anti-armor defense of the KLEINHAU area, employing one platoon for this mission. (2) To provide anti-armor defense for the Division with special attention to the Southeast. 1st Platoon Rcn Co, attached to 121st Infantry Regiment to relieve elements of the 46th Infantry Regiment in its zone of action, Northeast of KLEINHAU, with mission of maintaining contact between the 2d and 3d Bns of the 121st Infantry Regiment. Two positions were dug for destroyers in the vicinity of KLEINHAU from which direct fire could be delivered.

- 3 -

S E C R E T

S E C R E T

into GROSSHAU. These positions were never used. Company "C", 893d TD Bn, to support artillery by indirect fire.

BRANDENBERG taken by CC'R' of 5th Armored Division on 3 December 1944. Co "C" moved two platoons to positions of high ground (036355), Northwest of and overlooking BRANDENBERG. One (1) destroyer, in darkness, ran over a pile of box mines at (036355) which the Engineers had removed and stacked. Destroyer was not recoverable. Captain JAMES C WILLIAMS assumed command of Co "A".

Company "A" continued mission on 4 Dec/44 with two platoons in HURTGEN, one platoon supporting the KLEINHAU Garrison. Co "C" continued mission with two platoons in the vicinity of BRANDENBERG (036355), one platoon in HURTGEN. Company "B" continued in support of 13th Inf Regt, one platoon in reserve, firing indirect. Co "C", 893d TD Bn, remained in indirect fire positions and fired harrasing and interdiction missions.

On 5 December the Commanding Officer of Co "B" was wounded in mine explosion, sent to rear for rest and medical attention until released by Surgeon. 1st Lt JOSEPH J ENNECKING assumed command of Co "B". BERGSTEN seized by CC'R' of 5th Arm Div. Co "A" (- one platoon) moved into BERGSTEN after dark to strengthen anti-armor defense of the town. Heavy arty fire falling in BERGSTEN since CC'R' moved in. Other dispositions, no change on 5 Dec.

BERGSTEN counter-attacked several times by Germans on 5 Dec 44. Co "A" destroyed one SP gun and inflicted casualties on enemy in these attacks. All counter-attacks repulsed. Artillery fire in BERGSTEN still heavy.

On the 7th of December the Bn elements with the 121st Infantry were released to the Bn. Counter-attacks and heavy artillery fire continued at BERGSTEN. Co "A" destroyed one SP gun and one tank in helping to repulse the almost desperate German efforts to retake the town.

Company "A" (- platoon) moved from BERGSTEN to assembly area at 0530 on December the 8th. Heavy artillery fire still falling in BERGSTEN, when the company left.

II The Battle of ROCHERATH - KRINKELT - WIRTZFELD

1. The G-8 Reports stated that there was Panzer Division near DREIBORN on 15 December 1944 with possibilities of its moving South. Enemy morale was reported to be low.
2. Enemy had pillboxes Northeast of ROCHERATH. The Germans carried the offensive in this action.
3. At first there appeared to be very little resistance, then the enemy Panzer Division struck the sector. The counter-attack turned out to be a powerful offensive with ten Panzer Divisions attacking, supported by Infantry. Some planes were used, but after the first day, artillery was used extensively.

This unit knocked out seventeen tanks, two self-propelled guns and one half-track in the action that followed.

S E C R E T

4. No prisoners of war were taken.

(b) Elements Affecting Action:

1. Enemy reconnaissance was not forceful prior to attack.
2. Civilians were in the town but did not affect the action.
3. Terrain was open, rolling country.

(c) Action:

1. This unit was attached to the 2d Infantry Division Artillery. Unit Command Posts were as follows:

Headquarters - ROCHERATH, BELGIUM

Hq Co - SOUBRODT, BELGIUM

Co "A" was three kilometers north of ROCHERATH, BELGIUM

Co "B" was detached from the Bn.

Co "C" was at ROCHERATH, BELGIUM

Res Co was at ROCHERATH, BELGIUM

Co "C" of the 61st TD Bn (T) and Co "A" of the 801st TD Bn (T) were attached after the attack was launched.

2. The mission and attack was follows:

On the 17th of December 1944 a heavy armor attack by enemy was reported SE of BULLINGEN. One Bn Plat of Res Co, 644 TD Bn, was sent out to establish and maintain contact with the enemy tanks, was surrounded in the town of BULLINGEN and is presumed to have been captured, except for the 2d Section, which broke from encirclement. 1st Platoon, Co "C", moved to vicinity of WIMTZELD and met German Panzer attack about 1000 yards south of the town. This platoon destroyed four tanks and a half-track and stopped the German attack on that town.

S E C R E T

Co "A" ordered to move to WIRTZFELD and arrived just as action was ending, with two platoons. CO, Co "A" was wounded by shell and was evacuated. 1st Lt CLARENCE STEVES assumed command of Co "A" and was ordered to provide anti-armor defense for WIRTZFELD, relieving the 1st Platoon of Co "C" without delay. CO, Co "C", was then ordered to provide anti-armor defense of the ROCHERATH-KRINKELT area. The Fwd CP moved to WIRTZFELD. CO, 58th Inf Regt, assumed responsibility for defense of KRINKELT-ROCHERATH and the 9th Inf secured WIRTZFELD. Artillery fire was heavy throughout the period. The requirements of withdrawing from contact on short notice, under heavy fire and with the communications damaged as they were to meet an attack delivered about 10,000 yards behind the Division combat elements was extremely difficult. The picture was further complicated by the fact that the 99th Infantry Div which had been literally overrun by the German Panzers was attempting to move through the 2d Inf Div to an assembly area at ELSENBORN. However, the attack was met and stopped in the sector in the new sector.

Captain HARRY L GODSHALL, JR, assumed command of Company "A". At about 2050 on the 17th elements of the attacking Germans pierced the line defending ROCHERATH-KRINKELT and succeeding in entering the town at the point where Ron Co CP was located. The Ron Co CP Group, fighting under command of CO, Ron Co, organized the CP and were fighting and defending successfully at midnight.

During the morning of the 18th of December the Ron CP Group fought off attacks until about noon. During this action they destroyed one tank, damaged another and accounted for about 20 enemy casualties. Ron Co lost all vehicles open to the attackers' fire but suffered only minor personal casualties. Co "C" of the 612th TD Bn (T) was moved up and attached to the 644th TD Bn. CO, 644th TD Bn, was made responsible for AT defenses in the WIRTZFELD area. Three guns of the 801st TD Bn (T) were attached to the 644th TD Bn. The 2d Platoon of Co "A" did not come under control of the CO, Co "A", as planned, and was, therefore, attached to Co "C" in KRINKELT where the Platoon arrived after withdrawing to that point with the infantry.

Repeated attacks by Panzers trying to take KRINKELT and ROCHERATH were repulsed.

The fighting continued around KRINKELT-ROCHERATH on the 19th of December. Medium artillery fell throughout the Division sector. The CO, 644th TD Bn attended a conference and was advised by Asst Div Comdr of plan to withdraw to ELSENBORN Ridge that night. Plans were made accordingly. The total action in KRINKELT-ROCHERATH resulted in destruction of 17 tanks, 2 damaged, and two SP guns knocked out by the 644th TD Bn. The withdrawal to the new line (about 5000 yards west) was accomplished without undue difficulty - enemy artillery fire was moderate - the town of WIRTZFELD BEING set on fire. Co "C" covered the withdrawal from ROCHERATH-KRINKELT as rear guard and Co "A" covered the withdrawal from WIRTZFELD as rear guard.

- 6 -

S E C R E T

S E C R E T

Prior to daylight on the 20th of December, one platoon of Co "C" moved into positions on high ground east of BERG (959063)(959051) in support of the 38th Inf Regt. Co "A" moved into reserve in ELSENBOHN. Battalion Forward Post was established in BERG.

3. Special ammunition (HVAP) was used against the tanks.
Communications were SCR 608 and 610 radios, plus wire.
4. Assistance from the artillery was good under the circumstances, since they had to displace to new positions during the attack. The Engineers made a crater in the road during the withdrawal.
5. Rocket Launchers were used effectively against the tanks.
6. Supplies and evacuation could not be handled efficiently because of the presence of enemy tanks.
7. Battle casualties totaled thirty-five (35).

h. Commanding Officers in Important Engagements:

I "Battle of HURTGEN FOREST"

Battalion Commander - Lt Col EPHRAIM F GRAHAM, JR
Headquarters Company - Captain JAMES M CARPENTER
Company "A":

01 Dec 44 to 03 Dec 44 - 1st Lt CLARENCE STEVES
03 Dec 44 to 17 Dec 44 - Capt JAMES O WILLIAMS

Company "B":

01 Dec to 05 Dec - Capt CARL H WIGGENHORN
05 Dec to 15 Dec - 1st Lt JOSEPH J ENNEKING

Company "C" - Captain HARLOW F LENON

Reconnaissance Company:

01 Dec to 03 Dec - Capt NELSON C WORKS, JR
03 Dec to 14 Dec - 1st Lt HAROLD L HOFFER

Medical Detachment - Captain NATHANIEL BERG

II "Battle of ROCHERATH-KRINKELT-WITZFIELD"

Battalion Commander - Lt Col EPHRAIM F GRAHAM, JR
Headquarters Company - Captain JAMES M CARPENTER
Company "A":

16 Dec to 17 Dec - Capt JAMES O WILLIAMS
17 Dec to 19 Dec - Capt HARRY L GODSHALL, JR

Company "C": Captain HARLOW F LENON

Reconnaissance Company - 1st Lt HAROLD L HOFFER

Medical Detachment - Captain NATHANIEL BERG