

C O P Y

HEADQUARTERS
701ST TANK DESTROYER BATTALION
APO 251, c/o Postmaster, New York, N. Y.

April 14, 1943

Commanding Officer
1st T.D. Group

Dear Sir:

In compliance with message 1115 dated 14th April, 1943, the following report is submitted: combat action of this battalion according to battalion diary is as follows:

March 16, battalion attached to 9th division. A Company leaves Sbeitla, takes up position east of Thelepte.

March 17, battalion leaves Kasserine valley to take up position at Thelepte airfields 1 & 2. Dispositions: A Co. in pass to south east of Thelepte, C Co. covering valley approaching Thelepte from the east with positions about four miles from the town. B Co. in reserve in hills to northwest of town with prepared positions on north edge of town. Co. I, 39th Inf. attached positions at southern and eastern edge of airfield No. 1.

March 20, Recon. patrols into the Pichon, Pondouk, Fiad area and to Gafsa area to learn disposition of friendly units and situation.

March 23, Recon. Co. investigates reported paratroop landings, negative report. 1735, alerted to move.

March 24, 0210 arrived in bivouac area 3 miles east of Gafsa. During this night march column was harassed by bombing, strafing and flares for the last three hours of the trip, causing considerable delay. It was necessary for the officers to get the men back into the vehicles and get them moving after convincing them that the attack was merely for nuisance purposes.

March 24, relieved 601st T. D. Bn. in El Guettar sector. B Co. in position on Gabes road, A, C, and Recon. in vicinity of cross roads. 1045, B Co. under enemy artillery fire, noc casualties. 1600, Recon. Co. sends forward two platoons to reconnoiter to the front. One platoon commander observes enemy mortar position and called for artillery support which was promptly given.

March 25, 1715 B Co. positions under enemy artillery fire, two men killed.

March 27, battalion joins 1st T.D. Group. Moves under cover of darkness to take up positions in "Gum Tree Road" pass. Dispositions: one company less one platoon on east side of pass; 1 company less one platoon in pass; remainder of battalion at west end of pass.

March 29, 1455, strafing and bombing by enemy air, no casualties. Night listening posts established about four miles out in the "Gum Tree Road" and Sacket valley, by Recon. Co.

March 30, 1700, reconnaissance in force consisting of two T.D. platoons in Sacket valley and two in "Gum Tree Road" valley, both taken under heavy artillery fire by enemy. Progress short and uninformative. Withdrew at last light.

March 31, Recon. Co. platoon leaders out on reconnaissance to east spot enemy artillery and act as forward observers to adjust our artillery's fire. 2245, message from T.D. group to move one company without delay

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along Gabes, Gafsa road to protect right flank of division. Necessary reconnaissance movement orders issued immediately. Company moved to assembly position near old positions on Gabes road.

April 1, 0415, orders canceled and company withdrawn to assembly position in vicinity of cross roads. Reconnaissance had revealed area very crowded and no place for T.D. guns.

April 2, Recon. platoon leaders adjust our artillery (by forward observer) on enemy vehicular concentration at Y-5179.

April 3, company commander of A Co. removes cause of shelling of his position by driving away and abandoned 2½ ton truck, while under enemy artillery fire.

April 4, dawn patrols from B Co. (SOP, was for listening post to send forward patrols 1 & ½ miles at first light and then return to battalion CP with report), reach position approximately 800 yards from enemy infantry and reach the mine field just south west of Sakket. Inspection by battalion commander of arms, vehicles and personnel.

April 5, OP, CP established in vicinity of T.D. Group OP and Benson CP. B Co. moves to positions two miles east of old positions on Gabes road and digs in (move under cover of darkness) in anticipation of enemy tank attack on the following morning.

April 6, Recon. Co. platoon leaders adjust fire on enemy vehicle park on El Mazilla area.

April 8, A Co. to move forward during night Apr. 7 & 8 to positions just west of El Mazilla. Movement delayed by mine field which was removed by infantry engineers. Recon. Co. reconnoitered east to 80 grid line, contacted Benson force, 81st Tecon., 6th Armored Inf., and 8th Army patrols before being pulled back by making limit of reconnaissance 74 grid line. No enemy contact. Detached from 1st T.D. group and attached to 1st infantry division. Battalion assembled in area just east of "Gum Tree Road" pass. Headquarters Co. weapons carrier hits enemy mine and is destroyed. No casualties.

April 11, move to Bou Chebka area, pass IP 1300, arrive 1730.

The use of the battalion during this period was in general correct. In guarding the Thelepte airfields we worked in close conjunction with other organizations charge with the same mission. One company of infantry was attached to this battalion for its protection and disposition of companies were left in general up to the battalion commander. The work with the 1st infantry division was also most satisfactory. A large part of the battalion being held in reserve with one company in well defiladed positions about 1000 meters in rear of infantry front lines. The main thing I learned during this period, in addition to how to work with the infantry, was that T.D.'s should not be placed in an area that is congested with other troops where the one might interfere with the movements of the other. Also for positions to be occupied during darkness, daylight reconnaissance is most essential. T.D.'s should protect and support the infantry by taking positions just in rear of the infantry front lines and should coordinate closely with the infantry for mutual support and protection. Reconnaissance for enemy positions and tanks can often be better made from good, forward OP's rather than by ground patrols.

HARRISON KING
Lt. Col., 701st T. D. Bn.
Commanding

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