

REMARKS

Company "B", 77th Tank Destroyer Battalion is cited for outstanding performance in combat for the period from 0700 hours 14 March 1945 to 2100 hours 15 March 1945 in the area of the Siegfried line north of Hammeln, Germany. This company was assigned the mission of directly supporting the 25th Regiment in its attack to break through the Siegfried defense so that armor could enter the Saar-Rhinland region from the south. In a terrain highly unfavorable for attacking armor, fortified with all the ingenuity the enemy could command over a period of years and defended staunchly by a desperate foe the destroyers of this company repeatedly occupied exposed firing positions and brought devastating direct fire upon the two main belts of the Siegfried line until the fortifications were neutralized or destroyed. For sixty continuous hours the gallant destroyer crews, without rest or relief, fought in their open turret, lightly armored vehicles. Defended by the continuous firing of their own guns and shaken by the constant pounding of enemy artillery, they fired, often at point blank range, 1172 rounds of 75 mm ammunition into the strongly built pillboxes of Germany's last line of defense. Scarcely any official relief from the unending labor of manhandling forty-four pound projectiles in the cramped space of a destroyer turret. Busy bombardment, infiltration, and the possibility for night maneuver, reloading, retreating and maintenance was next impossible. Due to the high rate of fire frequent cooling periods for the guns had to be allowed and in these periods crews continued their support of the infantry, firing the .50 caliber anti-aircraft machine gun from the exposed deck of the destroyer against enemy infantry. Working with the leading assault units and well-being restricted in maneuver by the nature of the terrain and defenses, the destroyers were temporarily exposed to direct artillery, machine, anti-tank grenades and sniper fire. High velocity anti-tank guns were knocked out during the course of the action. All destroyers engaged were forced to beat off the frequent enemy infantry attacks with fragmentation grenades and small arms. One destroyer was hit with machine fire and burned and several others were hit. With every possible advantage of command on the enemy was able to maintain a continuous and frequently heavy artillery and mortar fire upon the destroyers and his prepared fires at night were heavy and accurate. Every destroyer was damaged to some degree and two direct hits were suffered. Remains crew members refused ammunition and stayed with their under-manned vehicles, with unflinching courage and the utmost devotion to duty until the most adverse tactical and terrain conditions Company "B" approximately maintained its direct support of the infantry until the battered enemy was forced to withdraw and the mission was accomplished.