

After Action Reports of the 31st Tank Battalion (7th Armored Division)

<https://www.7tharmdiv.org/docrep/N-31-AAR.pdf>

Transcribed from the original documents in Box 15716 (7th Armored Division 607-TK-(31)-0.2 to 607-TK-(31)-0.3) of Record Group 407 (Adjutant General's Office) at National Archives II in College Park, MD (see note below on August 1944 report for other locations of original records) by

- Jerry Chastain, son of John Chastain of Company "B", 31st Tank Battalion - Reports for August 1944 (Main Report), September 1944, November 1944
- Teri Lamphere, great-niece of Stanley Gockel of Headquarters Company, 31st Tank Battalion - Reports for October 1944, January 1945, July-August 1945
- Nayda Colomb, daughter of Floyd Swonger of Company "C", 31st Tank Battalion - Reports for March-June 1945
- Wesley Johnston, son of Walter Johnston of Company "B", 38th Armored Infantry Battalion - Report for August 1944 (Chartres Report)

Edited by Wesley Johnston, son of Walter Johnston of Company "B", 38th Armored Infantry Battalion.

Note that the December 1944 and February 1945 reports have not yet been found. There are no folders at the National Archives for After Action Reports for those months. So the National Archives apparently never received them from the Adjutant General.

The August 1944 report is unique. Clearly the system for submitting reports was still being worked out, as is indicated in the main part of the report. The main part of the report, other than the title page, is hand-written. *Hand-written text is rendered in italics in the transcription.* This is the only part of the August 1944 report that is in the 31st Tank Battalion box at the National Archives. The main part mentions previously submitted reports for the battles at Luisant and Chartres. Both of these are contained in the report titled "Battle of Chartres, France". This typed report was found in the Combat Interviews collection, in Combat Interview Folder 285 in Box 24096 of Record Group 407 (Adjutant General's Office) at National Archives II in College Park, MD.

The original spellings and format are generally retained in the transcript. Word wrap in which a line of text continues to the next line is not necessarily as in the original. In some cases in the transcription, the font size is reduced from the original or blank lines between paragraphs are removed, in order to keep each page together. If there is any question of accuracy, please contact Wesley Johnston (wwjohnston@aol.com) so that the original scanned images can be checked to assure that the transcript does or does not match the original.

7TH ARMORED DIVISION
APO #257, c/o Postmaster,
U S Army

AFTER ACTION REPORT
Month of August 1944

31ST TANK BATTALION

Lt. Col. Robert C. Erlenbusch,
Commanding.

Headquarters, 31st Tank Bn.

3 Sept., 1944

In compliance with message received on Sept 1, 1944 Time Signed 1420 re: battle reports from Landing in France until Aug 31, 1944 - the following report is submitted:

I am preparing this report with the following facts and suggestions to the Div. historian:

Actually this unit has been in very few operations which could properly be called battles, although we have been leading CC"B" in its advance from Aug. 13 to the present time. Most of the time, we have been moving swiftly down roads fighting the retreating Germans. One cannot call this daily fighting a battle and make out a battle report on it, although we have lost a lot of vehicles and men in these daily advances and have killed and captured a lot of the enemy and destroyed large quantities of his vehicles, equipment and supplies.

Another thing, we have had several of our companies attached to other forces and they have been in battles, suffered casualties, and killed lots of the enemy - but I can give no details of these operations.

Our advance has been so rapid that we can't even get our M/R in from the various

companies. It is impossible for me to give you the name, rank, etc. of officers and men killed in battles or on certain days. That information must come from Pers. Section in Rear Echelon and I suspect it will be very sketchy back there.

As I see it - all I can do is give you a brief narrative of what we've been doing - give you a sketchy report on the battle (or what I call true battles) which we've been in, and let you know generally the amount of pers. and vehicular casualties we have had plus our estimate of what damage we have done to the enemy.

I would also like to remind you that we have never had any idea of what enemy forces we have been fighting and also point out that all of our attacks have been made at night which precludes even an eyewitness from knowing exactly what happened.

This fighting at night has also kept us from getting any facts about special acts of bravery which should be rewarded although I know we have many officers and men who should receive these awards.

With these few thoughts in mind, I begin

this report:

1. Battle of Luisant, France Aug 15 - previously submitted
2. Battle of Chartres, France Aug 17 - " "
3. A. Battle
 - (1) Battle of Melun, France
 - (2) Melun, France
 - (3) Aug 25, 1944
 - (4) Campaign of Central France Battle of Seine River
 - (5) 31st Tank Bn - Enemy unknown
 - (6) Melun liberated - Remnants of enemy fleeing to the East.
- B.
 - (1) Battle of Melun, France
 - (2) Lt. Col. Robert E. Erlenbusch
- C. Losses
 - (1) Battle of Melun, France
 - (a) }
 - (b) } Must get these from Pers. Section at Rear Echelon.
 - (c) }
 - (d) }
- D.
 - (1) Battle of Melun, France
 - (2)
 - (3) not completed as yet.
 - (4)
4. A. Battle
 - (1) Battle of Epernay, France
 - (2) Epernay, France
 - (3) Aug 28, 1944
 - (4) Battle of the Marne River
 - (5) Co A and Co C- 31st Tank Bn - Enemy - unknown.

- (6) Epernay liberated
(B) }
(C) } Unknown because these 2 companies were attached
(D) } to other forces in CC"B".

These are practically all the battles which we have participated in - however - the daily drive down the road pursuing and annihilating the fleeing Germans has been a running battle of nearly three weeks from our point of view. We have knocked out several hundred German vehicles, destroyed scores of ammunition dumps, captured around 1000 prisoners, killed several thousand Germans, and destroyed between 50-75 anti-tank guns of various calibers.

Our own losses have been very roughly:

- 2 Co. Commanders killed
- 7 other officers killed or wounded
- 75 e. men killed or wounded
- 25-30 vehicles mainly medium tanks lost by enemy action.

If this type report is not what you want or you have any suggestions on how we can turn in a proper battle report when they always take place at night amid

a great deal of confusion, I suggest the Div. historian contact this headquarters and straighten us out.

William F. Beaty
Maj. Cav.
Ex. Off - 31st Tk Bn

S E C R E T¹

HEADQUARTERS 31ST TANK BATTALION
APO 257, U. S. ARMY

.....
: S E C R E T :
: Auth: CG, 7th AD :
: Initial: WFB :
: Date: 5 Sept 44 :
:.....

5 September 1944

BATTLE OF CHARTRES, FRANCE

On the morning of August 15, 1944 Combat Command "B", which was in an assembly area near Courville, France, was given the mission of advancing to the East along Highway 23 in the direction of Chartres, France. The Combat Command was divided into two forces -- Force #1, commanded by Lt Col Allison and made up of the 23rd Armd Inf Bn (--) plus attachments advanced on secondary roads to the North of the main black-top highway in the direction of Chartres and Force #2 commanded by Lt Col Erlenbusch and composed of the 31st Tank Bn plus Co's "B" and "C" of the 23rd Armd Inf Bn, Battery "B" of the 434th Armd FA Bn, Co "B" of the 814th T.D. Bn. and the 1st Platoon, Co "B", 33rd Armd Eng Bn advanced in the direction of Chartres, using the secondary roads to the South of the main highway between Courville and Chartres.

We were almost positive that Chartres would be defended because of G-2 Intelligence reports, the strategical importance of the city itself, and the fact that we had had several members of our command killed the night before while on a patrol along the main highway into Chartres.

The forces moved to the East on their assigned routes of advance -- Force #2 moving through St. Germain, St. Luperce, St. Georges, and La Taye. The general plan of Force #2 was to turn to the Northeast when they hit Highway 821 which is the main road from Illiers to Chartres² -- advance through Luisant -- and then attack straight East -- cutting South of the city of Chartres itself, and ending up in assembly areas Southeast of Chartres -- thus getting in behind the city.

Co "A" of the 31st Tank Bn and Co "C" of the 23rd Armd Inf Bn who were spearheading the advance ran into hasty mine fields and heavy enemy fire on the approaches into Luisant. The Engineers went forward to breach the minefields while Co "A" of the 31st Tank Bn went into firing positions along a ridge about 1-1/2 miles South of Luisant and covered the dismounted advance of Co "C" of the 23rd. Meanwhile the 434th F.A. which was in direct support of Force #2 went into firing positions and assisted by heavy Corps Artillery began to blast the enemy positions.

As the fighting continued throughout the afternoon, heavy toll was taken of the enemy forces. Around 1500 enemy artillery started dropping air bursts on our troops, but they were finally silenced at 1800 by Corps and Divisional counter-battery fire.

As the fighting died down to the Southwest of Luisant, reports reached us that Force #1 to the North had fought their way into the Northeast approaches of the city of Chartres itself. It was decided to send Co's "A", "B" and "C"

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¹ The handwritten text "Advise by Sgt Ludden" is written below this line.

² This road which was then N821 is now D921. See the 1944 map at the end of this section for all road numbers in use in 1944.

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of the 31st Tank Bn and Co "C" of the 23rd Armd Inf Bn on a night attack into Luisant -- cut to the East as planned in the original mission and go into the planned assembly areas to the Southeast of Chartres. At the same time, Force #1 was to launch an attack into the city from the Northwest. Co "C" of the 31st was to leave Force #2 as they passed through Luisant and drive on into Chartres to assist Force #1 in mopping up the city of Chartres.

H-hour was at 2130 -- and Force #2 launched the attack as planned. The force ran into murderous anti-tank fire, flares, and mines in the outskirts of Luisant and the two rear tank companies were forced to withdraw to their alternate rallying positions. Co "C" of the 31st went on into Chartres as planned, but were unable to gain contact with Force #1 and after suffering casualties of both vehicles and men, they became quite disorganized -- especially after their Company Commander was killed³ and the Battalion Commander's tank was blown up. The remaining elements were reorganized and pulled out of the city to the South where they went into an assembly area -- rejoining the Combat Command on the morning of the 16th.

On the morning of August 16th, it was found that Force #1 was satisfactorily mopping up the city of Chartres and C.C."B" was given orders to move to assembly areas to the Southeast of Chartres -- and to prepare to advance on toward the East towards Etampes, France.

Force #1 continued to mop up the city of Chartres throughout the afternoon of August 16th and Force #2 fought their way through scattered enemy resistance into assembly areas to the Southeast of Chartres.⁴

It was discovered that although Chartres itself was pretty well mopped up by Force #1 by noon on August 17th -- there was still quite a large force of Germans who had formed a defensive belt around the outskirts of the city. Accordingly, at 1400 on August 17th, Force #2 (--) was given a mission of attacking to their own rear and driving into the Southeast approaches of the city in order to break up this defensive belt. Force #1 was to finish cleaning up Southeast part of the city, and at the same time the 38th Armd Inf Bn was to attack the outer defense belt from the Northeast.

When the Combat Command had pulled into these assembly areas the previous day, they had their artillery put in to fire to the rear toward Chartres and any targets of opportunity in that direction, so H-hour which was at 1600 on the afternoon of August 17th, 1944 was preceded by a very intense twenty-minute artillery barrage.⁵

All three of the forces jumped off in their respective directions and zones at 1600 and the 5th Inf Div attacked the outer defense belt from the Southwest -- being on the left of C.C."B".

For this attack, Force #2, commanded by Lt Col Erlenbusch, consisted of Co's "A", "B", and "C" of the 31st Tank Bn, Co "B" of the 33rd Armd Engineers, and the Mortar Platoon of Hq Co, 31st Tank Bn. The general plan was to place the Engineers on the back deck of the tanks and use them as infantry, since

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³ This was Capt. Willie W. Oliver. Other C/31 deaths August 15 were Cpl. Harry H. Parthemore and Sgt. Walter F. Dalley. B/31's S/Sgt. Johnnie A. Meade was also killed this day, as was D/31's S/Sgt. Winfred V. Hensley. D/31's Sgt. Norman R. Miesner was wounded this day and died of his wounds the same day.

⁴ The only death in the Battalion's Morning Reports for August 16 was B/31's Pvt. Bert La Combe.

⁵ The incorrect spelling of "preceded" as "preceeded" is as in the original.

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no infantry was attached to the force commander for this attack. The tanks attacked with Co "A" and "C" abreast, and Co "B" following the right company in support. The mortars were placed directly behind the center of the two lead companies.

The mission of Force #2 was to drive through the defensive area into the Southwest outskirts of the city, skirt the city to the right, overrun the airfield east of the city, and cut back to the Southeast -- wiping out another sector of the enemy defensive position and returning to their original assembly positions.⁶

The attack progressed satisfactorily for about twenty minutes -- then Co "C" on the left ran into heavy anti-tank fire -- became disorganized -- and Co "B", the force reserve, was thrown into their zone to keep the two company fronts up even with each other. The lead companies made their swing to the East and overran the airfield -- ran into a regimental headquarters East of Chartres which they destroyed -- then swung back to the Southeast, overrunning the defensive position or belt in that sector.

Meanwhile the Mortar Platoon of the 31st had drawn lots of machinegun and small arms fire from scores of Germans who had hidden themselves in camouflaged holes while the tanks passed through their positions -- and after the tanks passed, resumed their firing. The platoon placed white phosphorous shells all over the wheat fields -- and as the fields burned, the Germans started running out like rats. The Mortar Platoon itself killed and captured scores of Germans that day.

While this was going on the tanks were having a field day killing dismounted Germans all over the place. The last tank elements returned to the assembly area about 2100 the night of August 17th, 1944 with around 300 German prisoners.

From the standpoint of Force #2, the entire operation was a huge success -- this small force knocking out numerous anti-tank guns, capturing around 400 of the enemy, and killing several thousand of the enemy at a cost of four tanks and 62 casualties of their own.⁷

Force #1 had completed their mopping up of the city and the 38th Armd Inf Bn and the Combat Team from the 5th Inf Div had overcome the resistance in their zones of attack.

By 2100 the night of August 17th, 1944, the city of Chartres, France was liberated by Combat Command "B" of the 7th Armored Division.

The following brief accounts are taken as personal battle experiences from officers and men who were actively engaged in the above operations:

"It is sure suicide to attack a town or city at night with tanks. Control which is so essential to any tank attack is completely lost, and the tanks are

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⁶ The incorrect spelling of "overrun" as "overun" is as in the original.

⁷ The only deaths in the Battalion's Morning Reports for August 17 were all in B/31: Cpl. Theodore S. Majka, Pfc. Nickles Steinlander, and Sgt. Harmon T. Jess (who was first listed as Missing in Action).

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unable to fire at any targets with accuracy because they cannot see them. The tanks are completely at the mercy of anti-tank guns which have been sighted during daylight, and the enemy infantry can wipe out the tanks with bazookas or even hand grenades tossed in the turret from the second-story windows. In addition to all this, the tanks are very vulnerable to mines which are hastily placed on top of the road. To the best of my knowledge, every attack of a city at night by tanks has resulted in large, unnecessary losses of tanks and men and practically no damage to the enemy forces encountered."

Major Wm. F. Beaty
Ex. Off., 31st Tank Bn.

"You must get information back to the reserve company in an attack. My platoon was a part of the reserve company in the attack on Chartres. When we were thrown in on the left flank to plug the gap created by Co "C"'s disorganization, my tanks were stopped by the same anti-tank ditch which stopped their tanks prior to this time. I could have avoided this obstacle had I known of its presence."

Lt. Gardner,⁸ Co "B", 2nd Plat., 31st Tank
Bn

"The German seems to put his small anti-tank guns directly to your front and draw your attention, while his 88mm's hit you from the flanks. I believe we would have lost fewer tanks at Chartres if the mortars could have smoked our flanks as we jumped off."

1st Lt Carey, Co "C", 31st Tank Bn

"The enemy always conceals his infantry in well camouflaged places well in front of his anti-tank guns. You should always search the woods, and the stacks of hay with caliber .30 machine gun fire and drop 75mm HE in the houses and sheds in your zone of advance and to your flanks. You've got to burn the Hun out of his hiding places."

Sgt Ettinger, Co "C", 31st Tank Bn

"Against deeply dug in gun positions, there is nothing better to use than W.P. It will burn them out like rats. If tank commanders would only give we mortar people the approximate location of some gun holding them up, we could do them a lot of good for a near miss with W.P. will stop the gun. I think the mortars should be used more in screening the flanks of the tanks with smoke, and save them from this murderous, flanking anti-tank gun fire which the German is so good at dishing out."

Lt Murnane, Hq Co, 31st Tank Bn
C.O., Mortar Platoon

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⁸ One of the 31st Tank Battalion men to die in the war was Sgt. Clifford L. Gardner. The first name of Lt. Gardner is not yet known.

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"The main thing to remember is to keep constantly on the alert, and fire at all likely gun positions."

Sgt Hill, Co "B", 31st Tank Bn

"When carrying infantry on the back deck of your tanks while going through towns, be sure that the tanks in the rear do not fire their bow guns as the bullets glance off buildings, and inflict casualties on their own infantry."

Sgt Howorth, Co "C", 31st Tank Bn⁹

"I personally think it is wrong to sandwich the Mortar Platoon between two waves of tanks in an attack. We find that we got pinned down by the fire of our own second wave of tanks, and consequently, can't support the attack like we should."

Sgt Gazdak, Hq Co, 31st Tank Bn
Mortar Platoon

"One of the first and most important things is to be very watchful for the German camouflage which is very good.

Before entering the enemy defense line make sure that all hedgegroves and haystacks are fired upon, mostly with tracer bullets.

The enemy believe in digging in their bazookas and spacing them about 100 yards apart. They are very difficult to spot as they are very neatly camouflaged. Men riding on top of tanks are capable of spotting bazookas more readily than the tank crew because of the latter's poor visibility.

In such an attack men riding tanks should be heavily armed with plenty of ammunition and grenades. In my opinion I believe that the .50 caliber machine gun is very much respected by the enemy.

The old slogan of "Look before you leap" should be remembered while in a combat zone. Make sure American bullets are fired upon the enemy and not Americans. "Don't be trigger happy".

Be always on the alert for snipers. They seem to appear almost anywhere, anytime, anyplace.

S/Sgt Hubert J. Allen
Co "B", 33rd Armd Eng Bn

"When riding tanks it is apparent that if the tank is knocked out the men riding the tank should immediately find another tank to ride. The number of men

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⁹ S/Sgt. Thomas Horwath of 31st Tank Battalion died October 1, 1944. It is not known if this is the same man as the Sgt. Howorth who is quoted here.

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that should ride the back of tanks should never exceed four. This insures safety to the men riding when the turned gun has to be swung to other side for action, also more men than four does not allow the men riding tanks to fire effectively. When tanks attack in waves with men riding all waves the machine gunners must be careful and control their fire so as to not hit the men on the leading waves.

"The main thing to remember is to keep constantly on the alert, and fire at all likely gun positions."

Capt Morris M. Hochberg
Co "B", 33rd Armd Engr Bn

(signed)
WILLIAM F. BEATY
Major, 31st Tank Bn
Executive Officer.

Inclosure:

1 Overlay showing schematic
plan of attack on Chartres

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S E C R E T

OPERATIONAL HISTORY

THIRTY FIRST TANK BATTALION

Sep 1-30, 1944

Sep 1, 1944:

Force consists of 31st Tank Bn (-) Co's A & C with B/23, B/434th and 1st Plat A/87 attached. At 0100, the force moved out of an assembly area near BINARVILLE to proceed through Argonne Forest on a night advance. On these night marches, we are roadbound and are always given the mission of by-passing enemy resistance - merely shooting at anything that shoots at us and continuing the advance. We are an advance guard which consists of a platoon of tanks and a platoon of armored infantry in 1/2 tracks - putting them in column - using a tank - then a half-track - then another tank, etc.

We continued on our route of advance - our mission being to get across the Meuse River and Capture VERDUN. We met scattered resistance all along the route - having to bypass¹⁰ the town of MOUNT FAUCON which contained some enemy.

Upon reaching the Meuse River in the early afternoon, we found the bridges over the river at CUMMIRES, FORGES AND CHERVEY were all blown, so we immediately started the Engineers on a plan of establishing a crossing at FORGES.

At 1700, we received a change of orders because it was learned CC "A" who had been advancing on our right had crossed the river at VERDUN and had captured the town of VERDUN itself.

Our force reassembled and marched on down to an assembly area about 4 miles NW of VERDUN, arriving in bivouac at 2040.

That night at 2325, our unit received its first bombing from the Luftwaffe - Some casualties were inflicted on us. We definitely decided it is wrong to fire on enemy planes at night from a bivouac area, as it discloses your position - especially all the tracer ammunition. We have put out an order forbidding any one to fire at airplanes at night from an assembly position or a bivouac area.

Sep 2, 1944:

Early in the morning we were given orders that we would move into VERDUN on order and relieve the outposts of CC "A", but orders were changed and at 1030 we moved to an assembly area near MARRE, awaiting new orders.

At 1500, we received orders to move to the North along the Western side of the Meuse River and to attack SEDAN. This move was supposed to be a diversion - any move to try and draw enemy armor to the East of VERDUN on up the river to the North.

We were out of gas, so were unable to comply with the order - however at 2055, we received a small amount of gas - enough for about 15 miles of operation, and our force which now consisted of 31(-) Co's A & C plus B/23 and C/434 started the trek to the North. We used our usual advance guard for a night march - a platoon of tanks and a platoon of infantry interspersed with each other.

¹⁰ This spelling is as in the original.

Operational History - 31 Tk Bn cont'd - 1 Sep to 30 Sep 44.

2 Sep 44 - cont'd.

We pulled into an assembly area just North of MONT FAUCON because we were practically out of gas again at 2300 and secured our area for the night.

3 Sep 44:

Entire day spent in same assembly area awaiting gas. It seems the entire Division is out of gas, and everything is at a standstill.

4 Sep 44:

At 1145, we received some gas and received orders to move our force back into the Combat Command assembly area N.W. of VERDUN - closing in this area at 1430 where the missing Companies A & D rejoined us and our attached units reverted to their parent units again. Spent the remainder of the day in this position. At 2315 we received a plan for projected move to the east toward METZ - when we get some gas!

5 Sep 44:

Still no gas. Our force now consists of 31st (-) Co's A & D; B/23; C/434; 1st Plat B/33; 3rd Plat 814 T.D's with the 274 AFA Bn in direct support. This is the composition of the force which will move toward METZ when we get the gas.

At 0900, a meeting of all officers and platoon sergeants was held, and ways and means of advancing on a sound tactical basis and still attaining the speed of advance desired by higher headquarters were discussed. It was decided that an advance guard consisting of a platoon of tanks and a platoon of infantry intermingled with each other was the best formation for the fast rate of advance. It was planned to use a double advance guard - if one became held up by the enemy - the other would bypass and the column would continue their advance.

No movement throughout the day.

6 Sep 44:

At, 1030; we received orders to move our force across the Meuse River at VERDUN and go into an assembly area 4 miles east of VERDUN preparatory to the attack on METZ. We were given priority over the bridge from 1000-1200.

This move was accomplished, and at 1340, the force moved to the East with the mission of crossing the Moselle River South of METZ, and swinging to the NE - capturing METZ by closing in on it from the East. We were then to continue the attack to the East capturing SAURBRUCKEN, GERMANY - and then move to the NE toward FRANKFURT and the RHINE River.

We passed through the last friendly outposts of the 5th Inf. Division near JONVILLE at 1650, and the head of our force ran into mines and booby traps at 1955 in the vicinity of GORZE. It was decided to move the tanks back to BUXIERES.

Operational History - 31 Tk Bn cont'd - 1 Sep to 30 Sep 44.

6 Sep 44 - cont'd.

We shelled the town of GORZE with our artillery and took our infantry company and worked them dismounted to the South of GORZE cross-country with the mission of establishing a bridgehead across the Moselle River.

7 Sep 44:

At 0540, our infantry was held up - in fact completely pinned down by heavy enemy fire and at 0630, our entire force moved to a new assembly position to the South about 1½ miles North of ONVILLE.

The artillery went into position to assist the infantry and by using our mortar platoon using smoke, our AG platoon, and a platoon of tanks from Co C, we were able to get our company of Inf. back at 1100. They had suffered very high casualties.

We spent the remainder of the day in this assembly area - maintaining contact with elements of 5th Inf Division which had moved through our position and were encountering heavy fire on the west side of the river.

The 5th Inf Division has been given the mission of forcing a crossing over the Moselle River, establishing a bridgehead, and the Engineers will build a bridge so that our armor can cross and continue the attack to the East.

8, 9, 10, 11th Sep 44:

The unit spent this period in this same assembly area waiting on the 5th Division to get the bridgehead established and the Engineers to make the bridge. Enemy activity was very heavy along the river and the Engineers suffered very heavily in trying to build a bridge.

12 Sep 44:

The completion of the bridge was still delayed by fire throughout the night, but some headway was made during the morning, and the unit less Hq & Hq Co started moving across the river to an assembly area 1 mile North of ARRY at 1150. The force we now have across the river consists of Co A/B/ & C of 31st. Co B of 814 and our own Medical Detachment.

The general plan is to attack to the South thru ARRY - then into LORRY and swing back thru MARDIGY. Generally - we planned to enlarge the bridgehead by taking this swing and the 5th Division to consolidate and hold the ground we overrun. This attack is to take place at dawn tomorrow.

13 Sep and 14 Sep 1944:

These two days were spent in position in the same assembly area just East of the bridge across the Moselle - the unit being subjected to constant artillery and mortar fire. Rain falling made the terrain so boggy that the tanks were unable to move, and also precluded the air support which was needed to help the attack - thus the delay in this planned attack.

Operational History - 31 Tk Bn cont'd - 1 Sep to 30 Sep 44.

15 Sep 44:

At 0915, the attack jumped off - but the going was very slow because of practically no visibility and very rough and boggy terrain.

By 1030 - the force had reached their second objective which was the high ground to the SE of ARRY, and spent the rest of the morning and the better part of the afternoon calling the artillery for fire missions at artillery and mortar positions to their E and SE. Our force received very heavy artillery, mortar and small arms fire all the time they were in position on their objective. They were also trying to establish liaison with the force on their right and tie in with them for the night.

At 1845, force received orders to attack the town of MARDIGNY, capture it and hold it until relieved by elements of the 5th Inf Division which was supposed to relieve all of our elements along objective number 2 also.

The town of MARDIGNY was taken by C/31 and a platoon of B/23 at 2045, and they outposted it for the night. Balance of night spent in trying to contact our relief from the 5th Inf Division.

16 Sep 1944:

Contact with the 5th Inf Division was finally affected at 0800, and the better part of the morning was spent in regrouping the force in an assembly area just South of ARRY.

The Division is now to advance to the NE, swinging in an arc behind METZ and capturing the town of THIONVILLE from the rear. They are to advance with CC A and CC R abreast - CC "B" split into 2 forces -, force following each C Command. Our force is to follow CC "R" on the right - CC "R" now moving to the East and attacking the town of LORRY. They were meeting stiff resistance, so our force remained in position for the night.

17 Sep 1944:

Rain all day - terrain impossible - no movement.

18 Sep 1944:

At 1130, Co's B/31 and A/31 each attached to the 48th and 23rd Inf respectively and were supposed to attack in a pincers movement on the town of BOUXIERES at 1300. The Infantry bogged down from receiving heavy artillery fire and the tanks were not used. The remainder of our force was placed in CC "B" reserve, and remained in position awaiting orders to move.

19 Sep 1944:

At 1200, the force was moved into an assembly area in the vicinity of BOUXIERES where they received very heavy artillery fire. An unsuccessful attack was made on the town of CHEMINST¹¹ by the 23rd Inf with A/31 attached which cost Co A 5 tanks and 25 men either killed or captured. All of the tanks were knocked out by AT guns firing from positions across the river in the town of CHEMINST.

¹¹ This was probably actually "Cheminot".

Operational History - 31 Tk Bn cont'd - 1 Sep to 30 Sep 44.

20, 21, 22 and 23 Sep 1944:

This entire period of four days was spent in the same assembly areas under constant artillery fire. Everyday plans were made where the tanks and Infantry would cross the river and capture the town of CHEMINST - but something always happened. Either the weather made the terrain impassable or the Infantry were driven back from their bridgehead or the Engineers got their bridge knocked out or something.

At 2230, received word that the 5th Inf Division was relieving us in this sector and that we would spend the rest of the night and the next day in pulling our unit back to an assembly area near the river. This move back to the rear was to be done with the strictest secrecy.

24 Sep 1944:

Morning spent in moving units back by small infiltrations. At 1130 we received orders that the unit would be pulled across the river tonite and would march to an assembly area in the vicinity of JONVILLE. Our unit was to have priority on crossing the bridge across the Moselle at CHAMPEY from 2100 - 2300.

25 Sep 1944:

Marched night long - closed in new bivouac area in vicinity of JONVILLE at 0245. Balance of day spent in maintenance and some rest for the men.

At 0915 - Bn moved out on a long march; headed for northern Belgium.

26 Sep 1944:

Spent the entire day in marching towards our new assembly area NE of HASSELT, BELGIUM.

27, 28 Sep 1944:

Spent these 2 days in the vicinity of LEUTH, BELGIUM. No operations.

29 Sep 1944:

Moved from LEUTH, BELGIUM to DEURNE, HOLLAND. No operations.

30 Sep 1944:

Force now consists of Hq, A & B 31st; B/23; B/814; C/434; 1 Plat B/33; and 1 Plat A/82 Combat Engineers.

The force moved from DEUNE, HOLLAND at 0725 and closed into the assembly area near ST. ANIHOINES at 1000. The force was reserviced and ready to attack at 1130 - Awaiting orders.

At 1600 - the advance guard which consisted of 1 platoon B/31 and a platoon of B/23 moved out to attack the town of BOXMER. The balance of B/23 moved into BOXMER, dismounted, and pushed on South into outskirts of SAMBEEK. The tanks bypassed BOXMEER and moved South until they were West of VORTUM. All units received

Operational History - 31 Tk Bn cont'd - 1 Sep to 30 Sep 44

30 Sep 1944 - cont'd

fairly heavy mortar and artillery fire.

Just at darkness, it was decided to pull the tanks back about 1 mile and have the Infantry outpost them - planning to renew the attack at dawn tomorrow.

William F. Beaty¹²
Maj. Cav.
Exoff.

¹² These three lines in italics were all hand-written.

S E C R E T

OPERATIONAL HISTORY

THIRTY FIRST TANK BATTALION

Period: 1-31 Oct 44

1 October:

Our force continued the attack at dawn - after pulling back at darkness the night before. We lost two halftracks, one 1/4 ton 4x4, and one medium tank from running over mines along the same road which we had previously fought along the day before. The Germans had infiltrated through our infantry outposts during the night, and mined this road which was presumably in our hands. The Engineers with us were put in front and started sweeping the road for mines - a very slow and tedious process since they were subjected to heavy mortar fire throughout the day. They found all of the crossroads heavily mined, and the shoulders of the road and the ditches well filled with booby traps. As it became dark, the tanks were pulled back slightly into positions for supporting fire. Our outposts were very alert to guard against any repetitions of the night before - allowing Germans to infiltrate thru our lines and mine the roads. We sent small patrol into Boxmeer and Sandbeck.

2 October:

We continued the advance at dawn - engineers still clearing the way of mines. Lost four of our medium tanks by direct fire from German anti-tank guns in vicinity of Mellum. The attached infantry then fanned out to the flanks and started working into Mellum to destroy the AT guns. The force commander moved the remainder of B/31 and A/31 into a forward assembly area near Boxmeer in event of an enemy counter-attack. Finally got dismounted patrols into Mellum and started working to the East in direction of Vortum which was our objective. In the late afternoon, an air mission on Vortum was granted, but the infantry patrols were in too close to the outskirts of the town for the air to do its work. A great deal of time was lost in getting the infantry patrols contacted and out of the way so the air could perform its mission. The Germans withdrew - the air went on other missions and at 2330 - the town of Vortum was ours.

3 October:

It was learned that CC "B" of which we were a part was to be pulled back into Division Reserve and be replaced by CC "R". Heavy enemy artillery fire and mortar was placed on Vortum during the morning. At 1247, our force started moving back to our new location and by 1600 - everything but one platoon of A/31 (which was left out on outpost near Vortum) had closed into the new assembly area. At 1800 the platoon of A/31 arrived in the assembly area, and D/31 was given the mission of outposting and running patrols in the general area of St. Anthonis - Boxmeer - Sandbeck - Vortum.

4 October:

D/31 lost one tank during the night. It was shot in the tail by a German bazooka on the patrols seventh trip between Sandbeck and Vortum. You must change your route and times when you are patrolling at night with tanks - the jerry is smart and after a few trips will be set and waiting for you.

S E C R E T

Operational History, 31 Tk Bn, 1-31 Oct 44 cont'd.

4 October - cont'd

In the late afternoon, we received orders to be ready to move on a one hours notice to relieve either one of the other combat commands, or to repel an enemy counter-attack on any sector of the Division front.

5 October:

At 1135, unit started moving to an assembly area west of Sanbeck to be prepared to relieve CC "A" at dark. Closed in this new area at 1315, where we reserviced. The remainder of the day was spent in reconnoitering defensive positions for our vehicles after we would relieve the other combat command.

6 October:

At 0300, the unit moved to an area just NW of Overloon where they took over CC "A"'s defensive sector. The battalion was split up again - Companies "A" and "D" being attached to the 23rd Inf on the right flank of the Combat Command, and our forces consisted of Hq & Hq Co/31, B/31 & C/31 and B/33 Eng - using the latter as dismounted infantry to patrol the tank positions.

The day was spent in observation for any enemy counter-attack, and all units received quite heavy artillery, mortar, and nebelwerfer fire throughout the day.

7 October:

Morning spent in observation with a little enemy action thrown in. Destroyed one enemy AT gun in outskirts of Overloon, and our mortar platoon and some tanks fired W.P. on the towers and churches in Overloon in an attempt to knock out enemy O.P's.

Around noon we received word that the British 11th Armd Div would relieve us prior to darkness that night, and we would pull back and regroup for a new mission to the south.

We didn't get started to our new assembly area until midnight because of trouble in relieving units due to very heavy and intense artillery and mortar fire on all our positions - received three direct hits on our vehicles that night.

8 October:

Left vicinity of Oploo at 0015 and closed into an assembly area in vicinity of Deurne at 1300. We posted double security because of strong German patrols reported to be working thru this area nightly.

We learned that our mission was still to protect British right flank, and that our force would hold a defensive position west of canal in vicinity of Deurne. Since the relief of the unit now holding this sector is not to be effected until 1800 tomorrow morning, the day was spent in organizing forces, and making a reconnaissance of the area.

9 October:

All night spent in putting out orders, and briefing various sector commanders. Our force now consists of Hq & Hq Co/31 (-), B/31, D/31, B/23, 1/B/33- 1/B/87, B/203 AA. Our companies "A" and "C" and the AG platoon are to work with the 434th FA Battalion in indirect fire. Our units moved out into their sectors

S E C R E T

Operational History, 31 Tk Bn, 1-31 Oct 44 cont'd.

9 October - cont'd

Leisel, Zeilberg, and Deurne and were in position at 0800 - effecting their relief.

All of the outposts and forces were tied into a central switchboard in the vicinity of Deurne, and negative hourly reports were submitted day and night - positive information being reported as it happened.

At 1330, force #3 in the vicinity of Leisel flushed a German Patrol behind our lines, and killed 20 of them - capturing 3.

There was scattered artillery and mortar fire throughout the day, and several enemy patrols were fired on during the night - no casualties. An engineer RCN patrol was sent out to rec a bridgesite over the canal NE of Deurne, but were unable to accomplish their mission due to visibility and enemy automatic small arms fire.

10 October:

Little activity during the day. Our force sent out small patrols throughout the day which always drew fire from the east bank of the canal as they approached the canal. Two raiding parties with Engineers attached were sent out at night to get necessary data on canal for proposed bridging operation, but again failed due to weather, visibility and enemy fire.

11 October:

No change from previous day. Enemy definitely has strong outpost positions on west bank of canal near all proposed bridge sites.

12 October:

At 1200, our C.C. had a two hour artillery barrage of the enemy positions along the canal, and two forces under cover of smoke started making diversionary moves toward the canal - the plan being to attract the enemy's attention in this sector, and relieve some of the pressure from the British, who were attacking Overloon to the North of our positions.

Under cover of the smoke, the forces withdrew back to their original defensive positions. Received quite a bit of artillery and more mortar fire throughout the remainder of the afternoon and evening. Six patrols sent out various places along the canal after dark.

13 October:

Return of patrols indicate that enemy is much stronger on our side of the canal than before - even making attempts to capture our patrols. Same diversionary move as yesterday from 1630-1830. Prisoners captured report the artillery barrages are terrific.

14 October:

Day confined to scattered artillery and mortar fire and light action with the enemy by small patrols.

15 October:

It is believed that the enemy is withdrawing from this sector as no prisoners were taken this morning for the first time. Another artillery barrage took

S E C R E T

Operational History, 31 Tk Bn, 1-31 Oct 44 cont'd.

15 October - cont'd

place at 1000-1100, and immediately after strong patrols were pushed out toward canal to determine enemy strength and dispositions. They met only light resistance west of canal, so a plan for establishing a bridgehead was worked on to take place the next morning at dawn.

16 October:

Attack started at 0720. The Infantry pushed towards the canal under heavy artillery and mortar fire while two platoons of B/31 went into position on either flank of the ditches on the west side of the canal and supported the Infantry by direct fire. Our Assault Gun platoon and A/31 and C/31 supported the attack by indirect fire in conjunction with the artillery. Co D/31 used a light tank platoon to protect the South flank of the bridging operation. Our mortar platoon was in position about 1500 yards west of the canal, and fired W.P. and HE at enemy strong points on call of the Infantry and direct fire tanks.

The entire operation was slowed down considerably by an abundance of mines and booby traps near the bridgesite. The Infantry also received lots of sniper fire from their rear - B/31 finally sending a section of tanks over near their axis of advance in an effort to clean out the Jerry Snipers.

In the late afternoon the Infantry got across the canal by using pot bridges and had a fair bridgehead established by dark. They had a complete circle on the east side of the canal except across the main road from Deurne to Venray. Just at dark two tanks were sent up to proposed bridgesite and each blasted 16 rds of 75 HE down the main road - after which our Infantry hopped out of their slit trenches and closed the circle of their bridgehead. The tanks were pulled back and outposted the west side of the canal, and the British Engineers started building a bridge after dark.

17 October:

The Infantry plus a platoon of B/31 continued to expand their bridgehead during the morning. The bridge was completed at 0800, and the British 11th Arm'd Division began to cross at 1000 passing through our bridgehead which received heavy artillery, and mortar fire throughout the day. We pushed patrols up to the canal to the south of the bridgehead in the vicinity of Griendstreen and ran into numerous enemy outposts on our side of the canal.

British pushed thru our bridgehead and captured the town of Ijsselsterjn just at dark. We outposted the same as the night before.

18 October:

CC "R" moved into vicinity of Zeilberg and was to establish another bridgehead across canal at Griendstveen, while our combat command was given mission of cleaning the enemy from the east bank of the canal from the northern bridgehead on the road to Venray down to the proposed bridgehead being worked on by CC "R". Due to boggy terrain, the entire attack was principally one for infantry - although 2 platoons of B/31 went across canal and pushed down main roads in support of the infantry advance. They were pretty much canalized, but they did manage to capture around 70 Germans and overran an enemy Bn Hqs. The advance of the tanks was held up about 1 1/4 miles from the objective by mines and booby traps, and the Engineers had to sweep the roads in front of them.

By dark, the infantry were in the outskirts of the town, and the tanks were pulled back on the west side of the canal for outposting.

S E C R E T

Operational History, 31 Tk Bn, 1-31 Oct 44 cont'd.

19 October:

Rest of the day spent in getting the Infantry into Griendstveen and bridging the canal at that place. Tanks were used in direct support to fire at steeples and other O.P's in the town.

At dark, B/31 moved back and went into position to fire indirect and D/31 outposted along west side of the canal to the south of Griendstveen.

20 October:

Learned that our force is being relieved as soon as disengagement can be effected. At 1430, we moved back into Division Reserve near Zomeren - closing in our new location at 1700.

21, 22, 23 October:

No operations - Division Reserve. Time devoted to maintenance of personnel and vehicles.

24 October:

Learned that we would relieve CC "R" in outposting along canal south of Griendstveen. The day was spent in reconnaissance of positions to go into when we relieve tomorrow.

25 October:

At 0930 we moved to vicinity of Breemortel and relieved CC "R". A/31 outposted the south flank from Loon to the canal, and B/31 and AG platoon/31 were in indirect firing positions. Remainder of the Battalion in bivouac around Breemortel. No enemy activity noted.

26 October:

No enemy activity. Our mortars sent across canal to assist 23rd infantry in their bridgehead east of Griendstveen on the road to Venlo.

27 October:

Germans placed heavy artillery concentrations on area to our south. Leisel, Asten shelled. They managed to build bridge over canal in the vicinity of Hoagebrug, and got about a Battalion of infantry and some armor across - fighting the units to our South.

At 1740, we were ordered to move to an assembly area west of Leisel - and moved in a roundabout way through Deurne, Asten, and finally closed in this assembly area, near Leensel at 2330 - planning to assist our own units in stemming the German advance at just light in the morning.

28 October:

At dawn, we jumped off in the attack. C/31 plus mortar platoon/31 and B/23 were to attack down the road from Leisel to Hoagebrug with the mission of destroying the enemy bridge across the canal while A/31 plus remainder of 23rd infantry were to attack to the south astride the main road from Leisel to Meijel

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S E C R E T

Operational History, 31 Tk Bn, 1-31 Oct 44 cont'd.

28 October - cont'd

now in enemy hands. D/31 remained in our assembly area - sending one platoon to reconnoiter woods to south of Leensel, while B/31 remained in their present location in Division Reserve.

The attacking units ran into heavy artillery and mortar fire which slowed the dismounted infantry down and caused the tanks to get ahead of their supporting infantry. Around noon, the tanks started taking losses from direct fire by enemy AT guns.

At 1400, D/31 ordered to go into defensive positions SE of Leisel to try to stop an enemy encirclement of our left flank. B/31 was moved back into firing positions south of Asten as a secondary defense line in event of a complete enemy break through.

After dark our "A" and "C" companies were pulled back slightly for regrouping and resupply - both companies having lost heavily in the day's engagements.

During the night, the area was shelled and also bombed and strafed by the Luftwaffe for the first time since we have been in this sector.

29 October:

At dawn, all troops were drawn into a defensive position around Leisel and ordered to hold what they had. However about 0900, German tanks got into Leisel, and our AG platoon plus some TD's were pushed into the western outskirts of Leisel - managing to knock out 3 German tanks. B/33 was sent dismounted into town, and started to mop up the town from north to south. B/31 moved up into direct fire positions on a N-S line through Leensel, and fired directly into Leensel at targets of opportunity.

Learned that the British would relieve us at dark, and pulled our units into a temporary assembly area near Vartledonk - completing the assembly at 2045 amid a terrific German artillery barrage.

At 2130, the unit started moving to a new assembly area near Weert - closing at 0115.

30 October:

Learned we would relieve CC "A" in their outposts along the Nederwert Canal SE of Weert by dark, so most of the morning and early afternoon was spent in reconnoitering of positions in that area.

At 1630, the unit pulled out and effected the relief at 1815. In general we outpost the canal from the railway bridge along the Roermond Hgy down to just north of the Belgium border - tying in with the Belgian Brigade on our right.

Our force consists of Hq, "B", "D"/31 - C/814 (-) - B/48 - 1/B/33 who were used to help sector commanders mine and booby trap their areas.

31 October:

Sent out an Engineer patrol at 0200 to reblow the bridge over the canal on the main road from Weert to Roermond - mission accomplished.

The day was spent in lining up communications with our outposts - mining and booby trapping the area, etc.

At 1700, we learned that the British were relieving us of our outposts, and after dark, our force pulled back into a temporary assembly area SE of Weert - being in general support of the British should they need us.

HEADQUARTERS 7TH ARMORED DIVISION
APO 257 US ARMY

13 December 1944

SUBJECT: Letter of Transmittal
To : Adjutant General, Washington, D. C. (Through Channels)

Enclosed herewith is the After Action Report of the 31st Tank Battalion for the month of November, 1944. Request it be filed with other November After Action Reports from the division.

(signed)
NILS S JACOBSON,
Captain, A U S
Division Historian

314.81 1st Ind.
HEADQUARTERS XIII CORPS, APO 463, U. S. Army, 15 December 1944.
To: Commanding General, Ninth U. S. Army, APO 339, U. S. Army.

(signed)
W. S. M.

S E C R E T

OPERATIONAL SUMMARY

NOVEMBER 1944

THIRTY FIRST TANK BATTALION

The Battalion was not employed in contact with the enemy during the month of November, but was training for future operations.

A series of problems involving tank-infantry cooperation were evolved and in each case several runs were made to improve technique.

The first problem, run near Weert, Holland, had the purpose of showing the quick development of the enemy situation and a rapid envelopment of his flank when the situation was known.

For this problem the infantry was simulated, an enemy consisting of a T.D. Co and a tank Co; borrowed from another Battalion, was put into position on a piece of terrain highly favoring the enemy. The leading element of the column, the RCN Platoon, faded out of the picture on encountering enemy fire, the light tank company plus the AG platoon developed the situation and on reporting enemy disposition to the Battalion Commander the decision was made to employ the Support Task Force, consisting of a tank company and an infantry company on a wide envelopment.

The lessons learned:

1. With a column organized into forces prior to the encounter of enemy the situation could be rapidly developed.
2. The Support Task Force plus the use of all supporting weapons and artillery when used in a vicious, rapid attack can make almost any situation highly untenable for the enemy.

The second series of problems involved use of the Support Task Force only. A situation was set up in which the leading elements encountered fire, the situation was developed and the Task Force assembled for a coordinated attack on the enemy strong point.

Infantry followed the tanks in the assault mounted on their H/tracks. The formation generally chosen was one with the tank platoons in wedges, infantry H/tracks within the wedge.

Terrain selected was very difficult, mud rendering the situation nearly impossible. In each case, however, the tanks negotiated the terrain well, the infantry H/tracks arrived at the bottom of the objective in good style and the "dough-feet" dismounted and took over the objective within five minutes after the tanks had overrun the enemy.

This particular problem was viewed by the Corps Commander and his reaction to the tactics and employment, was favorable.

The third series of problems involved the use of the light tank company, the R&I Platoon, and the AG platoon.

- 1 -

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Operational Summary, 31 Tk Bn Nov 1944, cont'd Page 2

Rapid development of the situation, route reconnaissance and radio procedure were the keynote of these exercises.

The fourth series of problems concerned the crossing of obstacles such as tank ditches, railroad cuts, and craters. Several methods were used including the tank dozer, dynamite charges to blow down the banks of the ditch and the use of a treadway bridge, twenty-four feet long, mounted on a tank recovery vehicle. The latter method was quite successful, troops succeeding in crossing the obstacle without exposing any personnel to small arms fire while the crossing was made.

In each of the above group of problems a good many mistakes were made which gave us a very excellent guide for concurrent training. It is felt by all officers that a mutual respect was developed between tankers and "doughs" for the capabilities and limitation of both arms.

Attached is a copy of one of the problems evolved by this Headquarters. In each case a similar problem was written up as to make the situation as real to the troops as possible.

For the Commanding officer:

L. A. LOHSE
Maj. Cav.
S-3

S E C R E T

HEADQUARTERS 31ST TANK BATTALION
APO 257, U. S. ARMY

AFTER ACTION REPORT

JANUARY 1945

1 January:

Battalion was in billets at Pavillon Champne in Corps Reserve. Intricate plans were made to fill any gap in the Corps sector immediately. CC "B" units were to be committed first and Division was to reinforce CC "B" in order to bring the sector under control as quickly as possible.

Battalion moved to ERNANHEID at 2115.

2 January:

No Operations.

3 January:

A problem involving the use of a tank platoon, a company of infantry and an engineer platoon was run, the purpose being to attempt to infiltrate this fairly powerful striking force through lightly defended areas, over secondary roads to strike the enemy from the rear.

The problem was critiqued by Brig. Gen. BRUCE CLARK at 1900.

4 January:

No operations.

5 January:

Day was spent driving tanks over icy roads to determine the relative effectiveness of steel blocks over rubber.

6 January:

No operations.

7 January:

Crew drill problems were conducted involving the hitting of unexpected targets by a single tank. Objective of the crew was to take under fire as rapidly as possible any target seen.

8 January:

Entire Battalion took a dismounted road march.

After Action Report, 31 Tk Bn Jan 45 - cont'd.

9 January:

At 1900 General CLARKE spoke to all officers on projected future operations.

10 January:

At 1000 Battalion was placed on alert status to move on two hours notice.

11 January:

Unit started move to vicinity of SPA, BELGIUM at 1215.
Unit closed in assembly area at 2000.

12 January:

No operations.

13 January:

No operations.

14 January:

Unit received overlay for proposed attack through First Infantry Division to capture ST VITH.

15 January:

At 0630 the Rcn. Platoon left battalion area to look for assembly area in vicinity of WEISMES, BELGIUM.

At 1630 the Battalion Commander alerted the Battalion to be prepared to move after 2000.

16 January:

At 1540 Battalion was alerted to move at 2100. At 2000 orders from CC "B" cancelled move until further orders.

17 January:

No movement or operations.

18 January:

Battalion was again alerted to move after 1200. No movement orders were received, however.

19 January:

Battalion moved out for assembly area in vicinity of WEISMES. Companies moved with Task Forces as follows:

After Action Report, 31 Tk Bn Jan 45 - cont'd.

19 January - cont'd.

<u>TF "A"</u>	<u>TF "B"</u>	<u>TF "C"</u>	<u>CC "B" Trps</u>	<u>Div Support</u>
Hq/48	Hq/509	Hq/31	A/33 (-)	434 AFA
A/48	A/509	C/31	C/814	1/C/203
B/48	B/509	C/48	D/31	
A/31	B/31	C/509		
1/A/33	3/A/33	2/A/33		

20 January:

Task Force "C" under Lt Col ERLENBUSCH closed into assembly area at 0300.

At 0400 units within the Task Force were given an oral order to attack BORN, BELGIUM.

The plan was for Task Forces "A" and "B" to attack from the West and Task Force "C" from the North of town.

Task Force "C" had to proceed to the line of departure through a very narrow defile from ONDENVAL to MONTENEAU and thence through firebreak to a point overlooking the village of BORN. This route was very difficult to maneuver and time was consumed on at least one occasion when a tank became disabled in the defile.

The formation followed by the Task Force was as follows:

	1/C 509	
2/C/509	1 Sqd/A/33	3/C/509
	1/C/31	
	C/48	
	2 & 3/C/31	

The plan was to work the tanks through the firebreak to a point where they could over look the town of BORN and support by fire the Infantry companies as they assaulted the town.

A heavy snow had drifted over the firebreak, at some points four feet deep, so it became necessary to head the advance with a tank equipped with a bulldozer blade to clear the way.

After reaching the predesignated assembly point above BORN it was discovered that only two tanks could find a suitable place from which to fire into BORN. These two tanks were promptly knocked out by an anti-tank gun well "zeroed in" on their positions.

Tanks of Co B/31 was having a rough time in this attack from the West and by 2400 had lost thirteen to enemy AT fire and artillery. Casualties were light, however, with only one man killed and five injured.

Company "A" was not used in taking BORN but was used to outpost the town after its fall.

Company "D" in CC "B" reserve was not committed. They had five key men killed by an artillery shell, however.¹³

21 January:

Task Force "C" jumped off to attack BORN with "C" Co of the 509 Paratroopers and "C" Co 48, attacking abreast at approximately 0200 but were pinned down by heavy small arms fire. Their second attack at 0630 was successful and by 1300 the north east section of BORN had been cleared of enemy. By this time

¹³ Actually, seven were killed: Buckalew, Clouse, Day, Lacney, Merrithew, Rolston, Sweeney.

After Action Report, 31 Tk Bn Jan 45 - cont'd.

21 January - cont'd.

Engineers and Co "C" bulldozer tank had opened the road from MONTENEAU to BORN.

22 January:

Co "B" reverted to CC "R" control with only three operative tanks.

At 1200 an order was given orally by the Combat Commander for an attack on HUNNANGE. The Forces were rearranged a little with C/509 reverting to Bn control, and with Task Force "C" as follows:

C/31
B/48
1/A/33
1/C/814 TD

The Force under Maj BEATY was now under CC "A" control.

After meeting heavy enemy resistance and suffering heavy infantry casualties HUNNIGEN was taken by Task Force BEATY at 1950.

Co "C" knocked out four enemy tanks, Mark IV's, in this attack. The doom of ST VITH was now sealed as HUNNIGEN commands the heights looking into ST. VITH.

23 January:

Task Force BEATY reverted to CC "B" control for the attack on ST. VITH which was launched at 1415. Despite heavy artillery fire and a battery of 75mm artillery pieces which were used as anti-tank guns, Task Force BEATY reached their objective at 1625 and immediately coordinated with Task Force RHEA and CHAPPUIS for defense of the town.

Company "A" was used to defend the south of the town. All roads in the town were completely untenable, having large craters and rubble from the buildings that had been destroyed by the Air Corps bombings.

"B" Company remained in CC "R".

"D" Company was not committed.

24 January:

At 1500 Task FORCE "C" was ordered to take the high ground two thousand yards south of ST. VITH. Two objectives were to set up and the one to the southwest was taken, the one to the southeast was not taken because of superiority of fire from enemy holding the objective.

Troops used in this attack were:

A/509 Paratroopers
D/31
C/87 Ren.

After Action Report, 31 Tk Bn Jan 45 - cont'd.

25 January:

At 1200 CC "B" ordered a completion of the mission to take the high ground southeast of ST. VITH. D Troop, 78th Ren. was made available for this attack together with Hq personnel of the 509 Paratroop Bn which gave a total of approximately 200 men.

By 1610 the objective had been taken unopposed.
By 1920 all defenses were coordinated.

26 January:

Defense continues same. Battalion alerted to expect relief from Third Army troops. Billeting detail left for WALKENRAEDT.

27 January:

At 1930 the 346th Inf of the 87th Div moved through our defensive sector into ST. VITH. Mistaken identity nearly resulted in a pitched battle as they approached.

"A" Co., committed with the 48th Inf lost two tanks to direct fire while advancing East of ST. VITH. Objective was taken only after the 38th Inf Bn was thrown in to reinforce the 48th.

28 January:

At 1115 a route of march was received for our move to WALKENRAEDT, BELGIUM. The IP time was set at 0800, 29 January.

29 January:

Marching in two serials the Battalion closed in billeting area at 1820 at WALKENRAEDT, BELGIUM.

30 January:

No operations.

31 January:

No operations.

e
n
d.

HEADQUARTERS 7TH ARMORED DIVISION
APO 275 U S ARMY

20 April, 1945

SUBJECT: Letter of transmittal

TO : Historian, III Corps

Transmitted herewith are five (5) copies of the March, 1945 After Action Report of the 31st Tank Battalion. It is requested that this report be forwarded to be placed with the other After Action Reports of the 7th Armored Division for the month of March.

(signed)
GUSTAVUS OBER III, 1st Lt.
Division Historian

S E C R E T

HEADQUARTERS 31ST TANK BATTALION
APO 257, U. S. ARMY

AFTER ACTION REPORT

THIRTY FIRST TANK BATTALION

MARCH 1945

1. March 1945:

No operations. Unit in billets at WELKENRAEDT, BELGIUM. At 1100 a company commanders meeting was called at which time the Battalion Commander discussed our projected operation - he informed the officers that the division had been removed from SHEAF Reserve and returned to the V Corps, and that the battalion is scheduled to move between 2 and 4 March. At 1600 all officers attended a class held by T/Sgt Kenneth E. Knutsen, Battalion Communication Sergeant, on the operation of the "Slidex" coding device.

2 March 1945:

No operations. The battalion occupied itself with the maintenance of vehicles and equipment, and stowage of the vehicles, in preparation for our anticipated move. In the afternoon the Battalion Commander attended a meeting at CC "B" and on his return called a company commanders meeting for 1745. The Colonel informed the company commanders that the battalion will tomorrow move to Simmerath, Germany. Following this news with a discussion of the present situation in the area in which we are to work. Details of the march to Simmerath were outlined - particular stress being given to road discipline.

3 March 1945:

At 0800 a meeting of company commanders was called and the details of our move announced. The battalion is to move at approximately 1300 for vicinity of Simmerath, Germany, as part of Combat Command "B", consisting of the 31st Tank Battalion, "C" Co of the 814 TD Bn, and "A" Co of the 33rd Engineer Bn. Orders of the march for the Bn to be: Hq & Hq Co, "D", "A", "B" and "C" companies, followed by the battalion maintenance section - Ser Co to revert to division control. Route of march: Welkenraedt-Eupen, Rottgen, Simmerath. Rate of march 5-10 mph. Distance between vehicles, 75 yds. Radio silence until "H" hour of the march and then a listening alert.

At 1240 the first vehicles moved out from Welkenraedt and at 2000 the unit closed in the bivouac area in Kesternich, Germany, two thousand yards East of Simmerath and about 3 miles from the Belgian border.

4 March 1945:

During the day the Bn has been engaged with maintenance of vehicles and equipment. In the afternoon "D" Co inspected two of the new M 24 light tanks with which it is hoped that the company will soon be equipped.

Lt Col Erlebenbusch returned in the evening from a meeting at CC "B" with news that the division, in FIRST ARMY Reserve, will move shortly to vicinity of Embken, Germany, about 12 miles northwest of this place.

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After Action Report, March 1945 - cont'd

5 March 1945:

At 0830 the Battalion Commander attended a meeting at CC "B" and returned for a meeting at 0900 with the company commanders. The current situation was explained as follows:

The division is for the present, being held inactive by FIRST ARMY, as a Reserve Force to facilitate as necessary the junction between the FIRST ARMY moving Southeast and the THIRD ARMY northeast to create a pocket West of the Rhine.

Operations for the day were specified as a maintenance of vehicles and equipment. Particular attention to be paid to military discipline and sanitation and each company is to construct a Sand Table for the demonstration of tactical situations of companies and platoons.

6 March 1945:

At 0730 billeting details left to stake and hold claims in the area we are to move to.

A company commanders meeting was held at 0830. The Colonel outlined the general details for the move, setting the date tentatively as tomorrow. In ARMY Reserve, in the middle of the III Corps Zone, there are at present three possible missions in which we may be employed from the new location: Attacking southeast, down the level corridor running to the Rhine; attacking South thru rugged and wooded country, or as part of the VII Corps, assisting in the clearing of COLOGNE. In conjunction with the projected move the necessity for road discipline was again stressed with particular emphasis on vehicles not "tracking" one another to prevent destruction of the roads.

During the day the battalion was engaged in maintenance and Sand Table tactics problems.

In the afternoon a message was received setting the date of our move as 8 March instead of tomorrow.

7 March 1945:

The Battalion Commander attended a meeting at 0830 at CC "B" and returned with the information concerning our move from this area which he presented to the company commanders at a meeting at 1130.

The battalion is to move out tomorrow at about 1000 for Muldenau, Germany, about 20 miles to the northeast. There, as part of a Force consisting of this Bn (less "C" Co), "B" Co of the 48th Armd Inf Bn, "C" Co of the 814 TD Bn, and "A" Co of the 33rd Eng Bn, are to be prepared to operate either to the North, Northeast or Southeast. The route of march will be Kesternich, Strauch, Schmidt, Hasenfeld, Vlatten, Wollersheim, Embken, Muldenau. Order of march within the Bn to be: Hq and Hq Co, "D" Co, "B" Co, "A" Co, Ser Co - rate of march 10 mph; speed of march 15 mph; 75 yards to be maintained between vehicles and 5 minutes between companies. The assigned convoy number is V-33. Radios to be on a listening alert. Particular care is to be taken to insure that vehicles execute curves and bridges slowly and do not track one another. Men are to be warned of the presence of Shu and "S" mines in the area. On arrival a vehicular guard is to be set up to prevent acts of sabotage or theft by German civilians - this in addition to the usual security guard.

8 March 1945:

At 0730 orders were received from CC "B" returning "C" Co battalion control and informing the battalion that "B" Co of the 48th Inf had been relieved. At

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After Action Report, March 1945 - cont'd

8 March 1945 - cont'd

0800 the companies were notified of a change in the march order to the following:

Hq & Hq Co, "A" Co, "C" Co, "D" Co, Ser Co.

The first unit of the battalion moved out from Kesternich at 1050. The march on the whole uneventful was made over fair roads thru the southern part of the Hurtgen Forest. At 1510 the last vehicle closed in our assembly area in Muldenau. The total distance of the march was 18 miles.

At 1730 a company commanders meeting was called at which the Battalion Commander confirmed rumors heard throughout the day to the effect that a bridgehead South of Bonn had been established by way of a RR bridge captured intact. Orders were then given for a move from this area to Heimersheim where the Combat Command will be held on a one-hour alert ready to attack to the East or Southeast thru the Rhine bridgehead. Combat Command "B" now consists of the following: 31st Tank Bn; 40th Tank Bn; "A" Co 33rd Eng Bn; "C" Co 814 TD Bn. "H" hour for the march is 0830 tomorrow. Order of march for the battalion: "B" Co, Hq & Hq Co, "A" Co, "D" Co, "C" Co, Ser Co. Route of march: Muldenau, Embken, Froitsheim, Vettweiss, Sievernich, Disternich, Weiler auf d. Ebne, Borr, Niederberg, Lommersum, Derkum, Strassfeld, Muggenhausen, Heimersheim, Dunstekoven. Other details of march concerning rate and discipline remain unchanged.

9 March 1945:

First unit of the battalion left Muldenau at 0815. At 1215 after marching a distance of 26 miles the last unit closed in the assembly area at Dunstekoven.

At 1500 the Battalion Commander attended a meeting at CC "B" and on returning called a company commanders meeting for 1600. Companies at this meeting were alerted for a move to the vicinity of Rottgen. Early in the evening, about 2000, word was received confirming our move in the morning - the assembly area has been changed to Witterschlick. Time of departure was set for 0745; order of march: "A" Co, "D" Co, "C" Co, "B" Co, Hq & Hq Co, Ser Co - route of March: Dunstekoven, Netterkoven, Witterschlick. Other details remain the same as for our previous marches.

A strong guard has been posted to prevent acts of violence or sabotage which are a real possibility since the men in the area, some of whom are of military age, have not, as yet, been given security checks by the Military Government.

10 March 1945:

At 0745 the head of the battalion column moved out of Dunkstekoven and moved 8 miles, the greater portion of which was on the Euskirchen-Bonn highway, to Witterschlick, closing there at 1020.

It has been necessary to set up our own Military Government with the Battalion Commander as the head. Capt William F. Kirwan, the S-2, has been appointed the unit MGO, with S/Sgt Alfred Ettinger, as his staff and interpreter. A civilian curfew has been put in force from 1800 to 0730.

At CC "B" headquarters in Rottgen, the Battalion Commander received orders for the employment of the medium tanks and assault guns of the battalion in firing indirect harrassing missions across the Rhine from position in Ippendorf. "A", "B", and "C" companies and the assault gun platoon will move to Ippendorf in the morning. Instructions for the move and firing were given to the company commanders at a meeting at 2100 hours.

11 March 1945:

At 0745 the tanks of "A", "B", and "C" companies and the assault guns of

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After Action Report, March 1945 - cont'd

11 March 1945 - cont'd

Hq Co left Witterschlick and moved thru Duisdorf, Endenich, Longsdorf and the northern outskirts of Rottgen to the firing position in an open field 1000 yds southeast of the center of Ippendorf, arriving there at 1000 hours. During the remainder of the morning and early afternoon a fire direction center was set up and the guns laid in on aiming stakes for firing at targets across the Rhine and registered with the aid of air observation. Then serious firing commenced. Harrassing and interditory missions were fired against intersection on the Reichautoban highway in the late afternoon and evening to the extent of 546 rounds of high explosive ammunition.

Capt William D. Brown, MGO attached to CC "B" came to the battalion CP at 1000 hours to advise and assist Capt Kirwan in the execution of his duties. One deserter was brought in the late afternoon and delivered from here to CC "B" PW cage at Rottgen.

12 March 1945:

During the day the tanks at their positions in Ippendorf firing 916 rounds of harrassing and interditory fire at targets across the Rhine.

At 1300 orders were received from CC "B" for the remainder of the battalion to move to Ippendorf. Remaining units will move out at 0800 tomorrow in the following order: "D" Co, HQ & Hq Co, Ser Co. Route of march will be: Witterschlick, Duisdorf, Longsdorf, Ippendorf.

The battalion's Military Government functioned throughout the day receiving arms and other military equipment from the civilians thru the Burgomeister. One deserter and one possible deserter who turned themselves in were delivered to the CC "B" PW cage at Rottgen.

13 March 1945:

The march of "D" Co, Hq Co & Ser Co, to join the balance of the Bn at Ippendorf was made according to schedule, the first vehicles leaving Witterschlick at 0800 and the last vehicles of Ser Co closing in the assembly area at 1300. On orders from CC "B" each company set up its vehicles in units of five with five minutes between units and moved by infiltration over the route with traffic of other organizations. The march was uneventful.

On arrival Capt Kirwan summoned the Burgomeister and "layed down the law".

The tanks and assault guns continued their missions of indirect fire, firing a total of 364 rounds.

Two rounds of illumination ammunition were fired after dark as part of a test of the defense system set up to protect the bridges across the Rhine in the vicinity of Remagen from attack under cover of darkness via the River. The plan is to fire these shells in the event that there is indications of such an attack in order to provide visibility for direct fire by tank destroyer vehicles posted along the river edge.

14 March 1945:

The battalion continues to be engaged with indirect fire missions - 978 rounds were fired in twenty-five missions.

15 March 1945:

The battalion was primarily engaged in the performance of vehicular maintenance and indirect firing. Thirteen missions were fired for a total of 764 rounds.

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After Action Report, March 1945 - cont'd

16 March 1945:

The battalion continues to be engaged with indirect fire missions. A total of 560 rounds were fired in 14 missions.

At 1400 hours Major General HASBROUCK visited on a routine inspection.

17 March 1945:

Operations for the day consisted of routine maintenance and firing of indirect missions. During the day and night 13 missions were fired for a total of 554 rounds. Three rounds of illuminating ammunition were fired on order from the Colonel who observed there from a position on the West bank of the Rhine.

18 March 1945:

Indirect fire missions continue with 174 rounds fired in 5 missions.

At 1400 the Battalion Commander held a critique for all officers on a problem of basic tactics in the use of a tank platoon in eliminating an enemy road block. During the meeting Col Joseph F. Haskell, Commanding Officer, CC "B", arrived and took the opportunity to introduce himself to our officers.

During the morning and afternoon the 1st and 2nd platoon of "D" Co went out on problems acting as the advance guard for CC "B".

19 March 1945:

The battalion during the day's operations was primarily concerned with indirect fire missions - 420 rounds were fired in 10 missions.

Units of "B", "C", and "D" companies left the area and participated during the morning and afternoon in CC "B" problems of an advanced guard working as a covering force on a broad front.

Orders from CC "B" were received at 1200 informing us that the division had been placed in the VII Corps and alerting the battalion for imminent move to Dunstekoven. At 1600 further orders were received to the effect that the battalion will, for the present, remain in place.

20 March 1945:

The day was generally quiet with no indirect fire missions until 1700 when the Battalion Commander returned from a meeting at CC "B" at which he received intelligence of and orders for the employment of the battalion in defense against a possible large scale counter-attack against the existing bridgehead in conjunction with a diversionary attack to secure a bridgehead in the vicinity of Bonn, both operations to be accompanied by paratroop landing in the area concerned. A company commanders meeting was called for 1830 at which the Colonel gave orders and instructions for putting into effect the following security plan for our defensive sector:

1. Outposts and composition (see overlay).
2. Reserve consisting of A/48 will remain on 10-minute alert to move to area of attack.
3. Tank in indirect positions will continue to reinforce artillery but will be on 10-minute alert to assist Reserve in quelling any disturbance.

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20 March 1945 - cont'd

4. Companies in Ippendorf and Rottgen will post additional guards in strategic places within each town in order to control civilian population. Service Co to post a roving patrol in town of Rottgen. A/33 Eng to provide roving patrol in town of Ippendorf.
5. D/31 to patrol from support position to Outpost #7, Plat/C/87 will perform a continuous outpost and Deviltry C.P.
6. All radios in Hq and D/31, A/48 will be open on Channel #26. C/87 on own channel. Plat leader remain at Deviltry C.P.
7. Report: Negative information each ½ hour.
Positive information on occurrence.
All airplanes will be reported as to time heard or seen, direction of flight and number, friendly or enemy if positively identified.
8. Specific instruction for outposts:
 - a. Strict enforcement of civilian curfew.
 - b. Prevent signalling of any kind by civilians and notify this Hq of suspected signals or attempted signals.
 - c. Maintain communication with Deviltry C.P. at all costs.
 - d. Investigate the movement of all traffic through road blocks.
9. Outposts will not move from present location until 1900 and will be in position by 2000.
10. Outposts are relieved on order Deviltry C.P. Code for relief, "Cologne". Upon relief outposts will assemble in present position.
11. Rcn/31 to notify C.O. all units not a part of this command and billeted in this area of the threat and defensive measures taken.

Reports from the outposts were received in the evening and thru the night which progressed without event except for the passage overhead of small groups of enemy aircraft.

At 1800 the Battalion was relieved for the present of further indirect fire missions.

21 March 1945:

During the early morning hours reports were received from the outposts of the passage overhead of small groups of enemy planes, except for this the night passed without incident.

At 1000 units of the battalion resumed outpost duties according to the plan of yesterday. Reports were negative.

22 March 1945:

Reports from outposts were negative.

Tank crews of "D" Co attended a practical school at the 87th Rcn on the new light tank M 24, a number of which the battalion expects to draw shortly.

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After Action Report, March 1945 - cont'd

22 March 1945 - cont'd

At 1130 1st Lt Robert J. Levy, our liaison officer with CC "B" brought in oral warning order and instructions for the movement of the battalion across the Rhine to an assembly area in the vicinity of Linz. The move is expected to take place March 24 or 25th. Billeting details left at 1315 and returned at 1800 with the information that when we make the move we will be living in tents since there are no house billets available.

In the evening we resumed our outpost duties.

23 March 1945:

During the early morning hours negative reports were received from the outposts.

At 2000 the Battalion Commander held a meeting of company commanders and Staff at which he discussed the "big picture" of the current situation on the Western Front, the role to be played by the 7th AD in the coming drive, and details of our move across the Rhine to an assembly area at Ohlenberg in preparation for the operations. The 7th AD has been assigned to the III Corps of the FIRST ARMY, which has in addition, two other armored divisions, the 3rd AD assigned to the VII Corps and the 9th AD to the V Corps. The III Corps from the area of the bridgehead is to attack astride the Reichautoban toward Limburg, with the 7th AD spearheading the operation.

The battalion, as part of CC "B", will leave Ippendorf tomorrow evening at 2030, joining the Combat Command column behind "C" Co of the 814 TD Bn. Details of the march as follows: Order of march - Ser Co, Hq Co, "D" Co, "A" Co, "C" Co, "A" Co of the 48th Armd Inf (attached to the Bn for the operations), followed by the maintenance section of this Bn. Route of march - Ippendorf, Rottgen, Villip, Oberkachem, Berkum, Odingen, Ukelbach, Ernich, Remagen, across the Rhine, Erpal, Kasbach, Linz, Stuxhof, Erl, Ohlenberg - speed of march 10 mph, 5 mph on the bridge; cat eyes only after dark; radio silence. All vehicles are to be camouflaged before departure and all markings identifying the division and battalion are to be painted over and replaced with the following code: "D" to identify the battalion followed by the company letter designation except for Headquarters, which will be identified by the letter "L", and Service which will be identified by the letter "S". In addition, all individual shoulder patches will be removed or covered.

"C" company is to be removed from battalion control and attached to TF "Chappius", of the 48th Armd Inf Bn as of the time of departure from Ippendorf.

The battalion again assumed outpost duties - negative reports were received during the evening.

24 March 1945:

Negative reports were received from the outposts.

During the day the battalion was engaged in camouflaging, loading and maintenance of vehicles. In the afternoon "D" Co drew five M 24 light tanks.

At 2030 the first vehicles of the battalion column left Ippendorf on the march to Ohlenberg. At 2030 the first vehicles had reached and crossed the Rhine by way of the pontoon bridge two thousand yards North of Remagen, and by 1115 had closed in the assembly area at Ohlenberg.

25 March 1945:

At 0200 the battalion closed in the assembly area at Ohlenberg and by 0500 the last of the straggler vehicles had arrived. The march distance was approximately 20 miles.

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After Action Report, March 1945 - cont'd

25 March 1945 - cont'd

A company commanders meeting was called for 0800 at which time the Battalion Commander discussed the current situation, the setting up of a balanced combat teams within the combat command, and the means to our projected objective. The "balanced combat teams" of the Combat Command are to be self sufficient groups comprised of tanks, infantry, tank destroyers, and engineers, which will be able to work independently in armored exploitation operations or reinforce each other as the necessity arises. Limburg and Kassel, are specified as our objectives.

At 1200 hours formal operations instructions launching on the first phase of forth coming operations were received as follows:

SECRET

Auth: CO CG "B", 7 AD

Init: OEW

Date 25 Mar 45

Hq CC "B", 7th AD

LINZ, Germany

251430 Mar 45

OPERATION INSTRUCTIONS:

TO: C.O.'s - 31, 48, C/814 and A/33.

(Confirming verbal and fragmentary orders)

MAP: GS GS 4507, Sheet 60, 1/50,000.

1. CC "B" initially in Div Reserve, will displace forward on Div order in the Zone of CC "A", prepared to pass rapidly through either CC "A" or CC "R" to continue the attack.

2. a. Troops:

TF "Erlenbusch"

31 (-B, C, D)

B/48

3rd Plat/C/814

1 Plat/A/33

TF "Chappuis"

48 (-A & B)

B/31

1st Plat/C/814

1 Plat/A/33

TF "Beaty"

C/31

A/48

C/814 (-2 Plats)

CC Reserve

A/33 (-2 Plats)

D/31 (-1 Plat)

b. TF "Beaty" attached CC "R" initially in present position.

c. 1 Plat. D/31 attached CC Tns upon movement from present area.

d. Engineer platoons attached to respective Task Forces upon movement from present area.

e. 87th Rcn Sqdn attached CC "B" from movement from present assembly area.

Instructions for movement to be issued separately.

f. Route of March and I.P. from present assembly area - see overlay atchd.

3. Order of March from Present Assembly Area:

TF "Chappuis"

Hq CC "B" (Fwd)

TF "Erlenbusch"

CC Reserve (Capt. Kunze Comdg)

CC Trains

4. Supply.

a. "A" Tns will be held to the absolute minimum. Kitchens and ammo vehicles will march with "B" Tns. "A" Tns accompanying units will include sufficient fuel vehicles for approximately twenty (20) miles of operation.

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25 March 1945 - cont'd

4. Supply - cont'd
 - b. "B" The march at rear of column under CC S-4
 - c. Location of CC "P's" - to be announced.
 - d. Medical Collection Point with CC HQ. (Fwd).
 - e. VCP and Radio Maintenance with CC S-4.

HASKELL
Comdg

OFFICIAL:
/s/ WOODRUFF
/t/ WOODRUSS
S-3

Incl. 1
1 - Opn Overlay

At 2120 hours orders were received from Combat Command Headquarters setting the time of departure of the first Task Force of the Combat Command for 0600 tomorrow - remaining Forces will leave by liaison notification.

26 March 1945:

At 0610 the head of the column of Task Force Erlenbusch moved out from Ohlenberg thru Hargarten, Frosath, Hausen, Ndr Breitbach, Wolfenacker, Kurtscheid - 20 miles to a temporary bivouac on the outskirts of Bonefeld, closing there at 1000.

At 1845 the march was resumed, continuing on thru Obr Roden the unit came upon the two lane Reichautoban at 2200 and marched astride it for 8 miles. Turning off the highway to the north the march continued thru Sessenhausen to a bivouac area in an open field in the vicinity of Krummel, closing there at 2350. Total distance covered during the day was 40 miles.

A strong security guard consisting of individual vehicle guards, outposts, and road blocks was set for the remainder of the night.

27 March 1945:

The head of the Task Force column pulled out of Krummel at 0500 and marched thru Selters, Maxsain, Arnshofen, Kolbingen, Elsoff, Mangerskirchen to an assembly area on an open hillside in the vicinity of Odersberg, closing there at 1330 after a march of 23 miles.

In each town we came to white flags of surrender to the leading elements of the division still hung from improvised flagpoles and from window sills; and in each we were greeted by happy groups of liberated French, Belgium, Polish and Russian prisoners, and silent, curious, bewildered German citizenry. In Gershasen the Force took its first prisoners of the operation, 14 in all - they had formed in a group on the roadside apparently waiting for the arrival of the column to give themselves up.

Shortly after our arrival in the assembly area, Ser Co took 23 prisoners which they flushed from the surrounding woods. During the remainder of the afternoon sporadic firing was heard from patrols combing the woods for additional prisoners.

After establishing a strong guard the Force bedded down for the night.

Thirty-six prisoners were taken during the day.

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After Action Report, March 1945 - cont'd

28 March 1945:

A company commanders and platoon leaders meeting was called for 0430 at which the mission for the day was given; to attack East and secure a bridgehead across the Lahn River. The Task Force is to cross the IP at Odensberg at 0530 and attack thru objectives in the vicinity of Giessen. Combat Command "A" will attack Giessen. Order of march for our TF is as follows:

Section of Rcn Plat; Plat "A" Co tanks (with two squads of Inf from "B" Co 48th Armd Inf Bn mounted); section of 1st Plat "C" Co of the 814 TD Bn; Command Group: Command Tank, F.O. Tank; Section of Rcn Plat; Command H/T; CO "B" Co 48th Armd Inf Bn; "C" Co; Executive Officers's tank; remainder of "A" Co; remainder of "B" Co 48th Armd Inf; remainder of "C" Co 814 TD Bn; mortar platoon; 1st Plat "A" Co 33rd Eng Bn; CC "B" Advance Headquarters; Hq & Hq Co.

At 0530 the head of the TF pulled out of the bivouac area and marched thru Merkenbach, Sinn, Katzenfurt, Ehringen, Oberlamp, Hohensolms, Rodheim, Krofdt, Gleiben to the Eastern outskirts of Wissmar, a distance of 30 miles. Each town we passed thru was turned out in white flags of surrender and the populations, Germans and forced laborers, in separate groups, stood along the streets.

Arriving at the outskirts of Wissmar at 1100 the TF ran into the first interruption of our advance in this operation due to enemy resistance. This resistance consisted of a number of 88 mm flak batteries being used for direct AT fire. Attempts to locate these guns were unsuccessful and it was decided that in keeping with the mission the resistance would be bypassed by slightly altering the prescribed route. A new advance guard was appointed to carry on the mission while the original advance guard attempted to extricate itself from the fire of the flak batteries by means of an artillery smoke screen. At approximately 1115 Capt JOHN J. DUNN, leading the original advance guard, was killed in action when his tank took a direct hit from one of the flak guns.

At 1130 the head of the tank column rolled into Wissmar. The point tank commanded by 1st Lt Henry G. TALIAFERRO, near the center of town was bazooked. All forces were immediately withdrawn from the town and routes reconnoitered for a means to bypass - no routes being found it was decided to resume the attack after having the way prepared by a twenty-minute artillery barrage.

At 1555 the 434th FA Bn placed a "time on target" on the town which was followed with battery concentrations for twenty-minutes. At the conclusion of the fire, tanks and infantry moved in together as approximately one hundred German Soldiers, with their hands up, poured out to meet them and surrender. Lt Taliaferro and two members of his crew, Pfc Vernon L. Miller, 35245521 and Pfc Lloyd S. McDonough, 36955402, were immediately located in a cellar, painfully but not seriously wounded. By 1710 the entire town had been captured and mopped up without a round having been fired.

In the meantime, at about 1650, two trucks from Ser Co, coming up the original route were knocked out by direct fire from flak guns. Pfc Denver C. Hall and Pfc Gordon R. Lee were wounded and held by the enemy for five hours, being recovered by our forces as we pushed on.

By 1917, the original mission had been accomplished, a bridge due east of Launsbach, crossing the Lahn had been captured intact.

At 1920 orders were received to take and outpost Wieseck and Grossen-Buseck. The town of Wieseck was captured and outposted by 2005 without opposition. Immediately thereafter a force consisting of a platoon of tanks and a platoon of infantry under command of Lt Col WILLIAM H. DODGE, went out to seize Grossen-Buseck. At 2355 with no opposition this town was also captured and out posted. At 2400 three enemy tanks, one Mark V and two Mark 'V's were knocked out by 1st Lt Swonger's tank as they sought passage thru the town. The tanks were hit at a range of 10 yards. In the

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case of the first tank knocked out, it was permitted to advance in order that identity could be sure before it was fired upon, after it was hit, it continued on until it smashed into Lt Swonger's tank. The two tanks following piled up behind the first and were dispatched in short order.

With the outposting of town, operations were shut down for the night.
140 prisoners were taken during the day's operations.

29 March 1945:

At 0400 all members of TF Erlenbusch returned for regrouping to the unit bivouac area 1000 yds East of Staufenberg.

A meeting of company commanders and platoon leaders was held at 0530 where orders were issued to move the TF to a new assembly area in the vicinity of Rauisehholzhausen. Order of march to be "A" Co, "B" Co 48th Armd Inf, Hq & Hq Co, 1st Plat "A" Co 33rd Eng, 1st Plat "C" Co 814 TD Bn.

The TF moved out on the march at 0730 and moved along the route: Bainhansen, Laudenhafen, Rossberg, Rauisehholzhausen. By 0830 thirty prisoners had been picked up along the route. At 1200 after traveling 24 miles, the unit closed in the assembly area.

A meeting of company commanders and platoon leaders was called for 1400 at which orders were given to continue the TF's attack to the North, and at 1430 the head of the column moved out of the assembly area, passing thru Rauisehholzhausen, Rossdorf, by-passing Amonsburg to the East and arriving at the southern outskirts of Kirchhain. The buildings of both Rauisehholzhausen and Rossdorf being German Army Hospital towns were draped in with Red Cross Flags.

Arriving at the outskirts of Kirchhain at 1730 after a march of 5 miles, it was found that TF's Beaty and Brown were heavily engaged in the town with an enemy Bn reported to be Hitler Jungen, 14-18 years old, fresh from Norway specially trained in anti-tank work with panzerfaust weapons. The TF was pulled into an assembly area and a decision immediately made to commit one platoon of "A" Co and "B" Co, 48th Armd Inf units to assist in the clearing of Kirchhain.

In the meantime at 1745, the remainder of the Force in the assembly area surrounded by a number of other units, was repeatedly subjected to attempted attack by four Messerschmidts 109. On the first pass one was brought down by the vehicular anti-aircraft weapons, .50 and .30 caliber machine guns. The remaining planes were driven off by this fire as they were on each successive attack.

By 1910 Kirchhain was reported cleared and the Force received orders to move on thru town. At 1945 the head of the column moved out of the assembly area on to the road, however, at 2000 orders were received directing the TF to remain in place. The column was immediately pulled off the road into bivouac at 1000 yds North of the area just vacated, closing there at 2230. It developed later that the change in plans was made by General HASBROUCK because of his decision that the poor visibility of the light rain and mist which had set in after dark would make a night march prohibitively hazardous.

In the bivouac area the Colonel ordered a strong guard against enemy tank hunters and the battalion bedded down for the night, minus the "A" Co platoon, which remained in the town on outpost duty.

246 prisoners were taken during the day's operations.

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After Action Report, March 1945 - cont'd

30 March 1945:

At 0530 the unit with the mission of moving rapidly North to secure intact the Waldeck Dam at Eder See moved out of the bivouac area thru Kirchhain where the 1st platoon of "A" Co was picked up in the column. The Force continued with some light resistance from bazooka teams thru Burgholz, Halsdorf, Gemaden and Haina, 18 miles to Lohlbach. There a light force consisting of "D" Co and 1 platoon of "A" Co was dispatched to proceed at top speed to capture the dam before it could be blown by the enemy. At 1140 this force arrived in Neu Bringhsn where they ran into TF Brown which had beaten them there by 15 minutes. Our Force there gave way to TF Brown which also had the mission of securing the dam.

By 1445 the remainder of TF Erlenbusch closed in an assembly area at Neu Bringhsn having marched a distance of 12 miles thru Huddingen, Gellershausen.

At 1510 the TF was assigned and took over the defense of the dam and power plants connected with it from TF Brown which had successfully accomplished the capture of this installation after knocking out a protecting flak battery.

By 1900 defense of our sector had been completed.

Defense of the dam was set up as follows: One squad of "B" Co 48th Armd Inf Bn on the high banks at the Northeast end; 2 Co "A" tanks and a squad of "B" Co 489th Armd Inf 200 yards North of the northeast end, a single "A" Co tank at the southern end, 4 posts, 1 on each end, 1 in the center of the dam and 1 directly in front along the waters edge at the southeastern end, manned by 33rd Engrs, 3 "A" Co tanks on the West bank just above the southern end - 1 tank equipped with V.H.F. radio to either call for air support or to prevent bombing by friendly planes.

"D" Co holds and outposts the town of Hemfurth with a tank roadblock on the West end of the bridge and infantrymen of "B" Co 48th Armd Inf walking post at both the East and West ends. The 814 TDs in position on the southern outskirts of the town, stand ready to protect the approaches to the town from the West or the dam approaches from the East.

Engineers outposts occupy the 2 power houses of the dam installation. The remainder of the Force is posed in a circular defense of Eder See with the assault gun platoon in position to protect to the West and the mortar platoon in position to fire on the peninsula to the West which extends out into the Eder-Staussee. In addition, at 1900 the TF was assigned the 23rd Inf Bn minus one company to strengthen the outpost on the high banks at the North end of the dam.

At 2100 a roving patrol, mounted in ¼-ton trucks made up of units from the Rcn Plat started on a circuit of the area; this patrol will be made hourly as long as we are here. Broken down into three sections the following routes are in effect: Bringhausen to Kleinern, Kleinern to Buhlen to the dam, and Eder See to Bringhausen.

150 prisoners were taken during the day's operations.

31 March 1945:

The TF remains in place occupied with the manning of its defensive positions and vehicular maintenance.

At 1350 the 23rd Inf units attached for outpost duty were relieved and left the area.

196 prisoners were taken during the day. The majority coming in from the wooded hills of their own accord, however, in several cases, before giving up, a number of shots were fired by the Germans in token resistance.

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S E C R E T

S E C R E T

HEADQUARTERS 31ST TANK BATTALION
APO 257, U. S. ARMY

.....
:S E C R E T :
:Auth: CG, 7th AD:
:Initial:_____14_____
:Date: 2 May 1945:
:.....

2 May 1945

SUBJECT: After Action Report Month of April 1945

TO : The Adjutant General, Washington 25, D.C.
(Thru Channels)

1. In compliance with AR 345-105, and Administrative Memo No. 44, Headquarters, 7th AD, dated 17 Nov 1944, the following "After Action Report" is submitted:

1 April 1945:

The Battalion is in a defensive position in the area of the Eder See Dam. At 1630 a section of Troop "A" of the 87th Rcn Bn was assigned to the Task Force to assist our Rcn Platoon in patrolling the roads assigned to our defensive sector.

2 April 1945:

The TF continues to be engaged in the defense of our sector. Maintenance of vehicles, equipment and personnel occupies the time of the men when they are off post. In general, the day has been without incident.

3 April 1945:

The Battalion continued during the morning and early afternoon to be engaged in the defense of our sector and the defense and maintenance of the dam.

At a Company Commanders meeting at 1000 the Battalion Commander announced that the TF will move some time after 1600 hours from this area to the vicinity of LOHLBACK, there to be in Division Reserve. It is contemplated that we may be used in the reduction of the RHUR POCKET. The TF using the battalion's SOP for details of march will move out from EDER SEE thru HEMFURTH, BRINGHAUSEN, GELLERSHAUSEN, HUDDINGEN and HUNDSDORF to LOHLBACK. Orders of march will be "D" Co 31 Tk Bn, "B" Co 48 Armd Inf Bn, Platoon 814 TD Bn, "A" Co 31 Tk Bn.

At 1650 the head of the TF column pulled out of EDER SEE and marched over secondary roads thru threatening weather. The TF pulled into LOHLBACK at 1930. A distance of 16 miles was covered on the march.

The Battalion Commander was called to a meeting at Division at 2200 hours. He left word before leaving that there is a possibility that we will move out on the march during the night.

4 April 1945:

A Company Commanders meeting was called for 0730 at which the Colonel outlined projected operations of the Combat Command and our move to a new assembly area. The Division is to be committed to the Southwest of WINTERBERG in the vicinity of OBERKIRCHEN and move into the RHUR POCKET attacking generally in a westerly direction; CC "B" is to clear the way for the remainder of the Division. The enemy in the area are reportedly people who are ready to fight attempting to extricate themselves from the pocket. For this operation the TF is temporarily dissolved and "B" and "C" companies return to Bn control. Two infantry Bns are to be attached to each tank battalion. "D" Co is detached to the immediate control of CC "B" for use in advanced guard and security work.

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S E C R E T

¹⁴ Illegible initials written here

S E C R E T

(After Action Report Month of April 1945 cont'd 2 May 1945)

4 April 1945 - cont'd

We will move initially to NEUKIRCHEN behind CC"B" Headquarters Group in the following orders of march: "B" Co, "C" Co, HQ & Hq Co, "A" Co, 1 plat 33rd Engineers; 1 plat "C" Co 814 TD Bn.

In the coming operations any towns offering the least resistance is to be demolished and in addition all male civilians are to be processed thru PW channels to prevent the escape of soldiers posing as civilians.

At 0930 the head of the Bn column pulled out of LOHLBACK and moved in intermittent rains over primary and secondary roads thru DAINRODE, GEISMAR, FRAUKENBERG and RENGERSHAUSEN to NEUKIRCHEN, arriving at 1440 after covering 23 miles.

Another Company Commanders meeting was held at 1800 at which the Colonel gave the officers further orientation on the projected operation. The pocket is reported to contain up to an estimated 150,000 troops with some 20-60 SP guns and tanks at their disposal. The terrain is rugged and excellent for defense. We will attack West down the RHUR valley.

During the afternoon one platoon of "B" Co tanks was attached to the 48th Inf Bn.

At 2130 orders were received for our move tomorrow morning from this area to the vicinity of NEU ASTENBERG.

5 April 1945:

At 0610 the head of the Bn column pulled out of NEUKIRCHEN and marched 18 miles over good roads to the new assembly area in the vicinity of NEU ASTENBERG closing there at 0845.

An order was received at 1355 directing that another platoon of "B" Co be sent to reinforce the 48th Armd Inf Bn and at 1415 the platoon moved out from the Bn assembly area enroute to join the 48th.

The remainder of the Bn was inactive during the rest of the day after providing for its local security.

6 April 1945:

During the day further attachments were made of platoons of the Bn to other units.

At 0630 two platoons of "A" Co were dispatched, one going to the 38th Inf Bn and one to the 395 Inf Bn and at 1535, two platoons of "C" Co were sent out to reinforce the one platoon which had previously left to work with the 38th Inf Bn.

Later in the day, at 1830 "D" Co minus one platoon was relieved from its security mission with CC "B" and returned to the Bn area.

At 1845 the remainder of "C" Co was placed in CC "B" Reserve.

Casualties suffered during the day by units of the Bn in action with other organizations were:¹⁵

Pfc Andrew J. Krisak	B Co	Killed in action
Pvt Jeremia J. Stella	B Co	Missing in action
1st Lt Harold H. Clark	B Co	Seriously Wounded in action
Cpl James T. Rankin	B Co	Seriously Wounded in action
Sgt Lemual W. Hancock	C Co	Seriously Wounded in action
Pfc Henry B. Mead	B Co	Seriously Injured in action

7 April 1945:

At 0100 a message was received reporting that two tanks from the "A" Co force working with the 38th Inf Bn had been hit by direct fire; this was followed by another message at 0500 to the effect that two more tanks were destroyed, this time by their crews in the face of a counter-attack by a superior enemy force.

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S E C R E T

¹⁵ All but Krisak survived.

S E C R E T

(After Action Report Month of April 1945 cont'd 2 May 1945)

7 April 1945 - cont'd

At 0940 an order was received from CC "B" for the Company Commanders four tanks and the tank recovery vehicle to report to that headquarters.

In the afternoon at 1325 the Bn CP group moved from NEU ASTENBERG by infiltration with other units moving along the same route, 11 miles to GRAFSCHAFT.

The Remainder of Hqs Co followed, moving to a new assembly area just West of the town.

"D" Co remained in place in the vicinity of NEU ASTENBERG.

Further losses of tanks were reported at 2010; these losses consisted of two by "B" Co and three by "C" Co in an attack on SCHUNALLENBERG.

Personal casualties suffered by the units attached to other organizations:¹⁶

1st Lt	REX E. WALDROP	"C" Co	Killed in action
Pfc	Oliver McDonald, Jr	"B" Co	Seriously Wounded in action
Pfc	Layton L. Widner	"A" Co	Lightly Wounded in action

8 April 1945:

During the morning the remainder of the battalion so far uncommitted remained in the assembly area in the vicinity of GRAFSCHAFT awaiting orders for its employment.

At 1300 orders were given for the formation of "Task Forces" as follows:

<u>TF BEATY</u>	<u>TF ERLENBUSCH</u>	<u>TF RHEA</u>
A/31 (-)	B/31	C/31
Mortar Plat/31	C/23	Hq & Hq Co/48 (-)
3 Assault Guns AG/31	3 Assault Guns AG/31	A/23
B/23	Rcn Plat/31	1 Plat C/814
1 Plat C/814	1 Plat C/814	1 Plat A/33
1 Plat A/33	1 Plat A/33	

"D" Co of the Bn was placed in CC Reserve.

By 1500 the Task Forces were formed in their respective assembly areas, TF ERLENBUSCH being joined in GRAFSCHAFT and marched 4 miles to a temporary assembly area on the Northern outskirts of SCHUMALLENBERG. There the Colonel after receiving orders from the Combat Command gave instructions for a further move to an assembly area just Northeast of WERPE. The move was started at 2110 and after another 4 miles march was completed at 2145. Upon arriving in the area road blocks and strong security were set up for the protection of the Force throughout the night.

Three casualties were suffered during the period in "C" Co working with TF RHEA - they were as follows:¹⁷

Pfc Joseph G. Coleman	Killed in action
Cpl Raymond L. Wrather	Lightly Wounded in action
Pfc Charles King	Slightly injured in action.

9 April 1945:

The Bn Commander, at 0100 after returning from a meeting at CC "B" Headquarter held a meeting of company and platoon commanders of the Task Force and outlined the initial objectives of the Forces' operations and gave orders for an attack on BERGHAUSEN as the first objective. The TDs are to leave the assembly area at 0530 and move through WORMBACH Northeast to positions in defilade on the edge of the woods where they can cover the wooded areas before BERGHAUSEN, they

¹⁶ McDonald and Widner survived.

¹⁷ Wrather and King survived.

S E C R E T

(After Action Report Month of April 1945 cont'd 2 May 1945)

9 April 1945 - cont'd

are to be followed by the remainder of the Force which is to cross the LD at WORMACH at 0630.

At 0700 the TF jumped off in the attack in a heavy mist which cut visibility to a few yards. The LD was crossed at 0725 and 10 minutes thereafter the attack was held up momentarily by small arms and bazooka fire and a blown bridge. At 0805 a means to bypass the bridge was found and the attack continued. Progress was satisfactory and at 0830 contact made with TF BEATY and Infantry units established on either side of the objective. The Force then proceeded in on the objective reporting it cleared of enemy at 0935.

Shortly after the consolidation of the first objective, at 1015, orders were received from CC "B" for the TF to pull back to WORMBACH where at 1125 further orders were received to attack SELKENTROP. In the meantime, by 1030 the mist had cleared improving operating conditions considerably.

At 1345 the Task Force moved out in the attack on SELKENTROP from FELBECKE and with little opposition took the objective at 1405 - moving out again almost immediately, at 1410 to take the high ground just to the West in order to secure the objective against counter-attack; this secondary objective was secured at 1610.

Orders were then received at 1625 for the Force to move up thru WEENTROP, BRACHT and LECKMARTH to take SCHWARTMECK, about 5 miles to the Northwest of SELKENTROP. Resistance was met as LECKMARTH was approached. At 2200 the Force moved into an attack on that locality and after 45 minutes had cleared out the resistance permitting an attack on SCHWARTMECK to be launched at 2315.

During the period 79 PWs were taken and two tracks and one 20 mm Flak gun destroyed.

Three casualties of Bn personnel were suffered during the day; one in TF ERLENBUSCH and two in TF RHEA's - they were:¹⁸

Pvt	Norberg S. Doyle	"B" Co	Lightly Wounded in action
Pfc	Elvin O. Haecker	"C" Co	Lightly Wounded in action
T/5	Angelo Del Pozzo	"C" Co	Slightly Injured in action

During the morning the Headquarters group of the Task Force remained in bivouac at WERPE where intermittent and scattered rounds of high explosive apparently either "overs" or interdiction fire were received between 0530 and 1100. In the afternoon on orders from the Colonel this group moved forward to a new bivouac area just West of WERNTRUP.

10 April 1945:

TF ERLENBUSCH at 0300 reported SCHWARTMECK taken and proceeded to consolidate the position and set up a defensive to hold for the remainder of the night and morning.

At 1325 the Force jumped off from SCHWARTMECK in an attack on OBER MARPE approximately 2000 yards to the Northwest - one hour and ten minutes later the objective was reported cleared and at 1440 the Force moved out again to take the high ground 1500 yards further to the Northwest and at 1540 this objective was taken and secured.

The Hqs group and CP in bivouac since the previous night in the vicinity of WERNTRUP, at 1730 moved out and marched 9 miles to a new bivouac area on the Northern outskirts of LECKMARTH closing there at 1830, immediately thereafter the main road just passed over was reported by CC "B" to be under enemy small arms and bazooka fire.

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S E C R E T

¹⁸ All three survived.

S E C R E T

(After Action Report Month of April 1945 cont'd 2 May 1945)

10 April 1945 - cont'd

At 1900 TF ERLBUSCH moved out from OBER MARPE in an attack on DORMECK 2000 yards to the Northwest and the crossroads 500 yards beyond in the same direction - by 1950 the objectives had been taken and secured for the night.

During the day's operations the Force took 98 prisoners and destroyed one 88 mm AT gun and four 40 mm flak guns.

There were no casualties within the Bn units working with TF ERLBUSCH or BEATY, however, in TF RHEA's four casualties were suffered by "C" Co:¹⁹

Sgt	Robert L. Foster	Seriously Wounded in Action
Pfc	Tony J. Rinaldi	Seriously Wounded in Action
Pfc	Andrew J. Yakab	Seriously Wounded in Action
Pfc	Russell H. Llewellyn	Slightly Injured in Action

11 April 1945:

The Task Force spent the morning in position in and around DORMECK and at 1300 moved out in an attack on FEHRENBACHT 1200 yards to the Northwest; at 1540 the objective was reported as taken. The Force then proceeded on to take SCHLIPRUTHEN approximately 1000 yards further to the Northwest and had taken this objective by 1655. Defense of the area was established for the remainder of the day and at 1800 orders were received to the effect that the Force would go into Reserve as of 0700 the next day.

In the meantime, in the late afternoon, the CP and Hq group moved from LECKMARTH 10 miles to the vicinity of KUCKELHEIM.

During the day's operations by the Force, 149 prisoners were taken and four 40 mm flak guns, 2 half tracks and 10 trucks destroyed.

Casualties suffered by units of the battalion during the day were one Officer and two men from "C" Co working with TF RHEA and one man from "B" Co working with TF ERLBUSCH.

12 April 1945:

At 0900 TF ERLBUSCH was relieved by the 87th Recon Bn though remaining in place for the present.

The Bn Commander attended at meeting at CC "B" Hqs at 0930 at which orders were given for the movement of the TF to a new assembly area in connection with projected operations to the Northwest.

At 1510 the head of the TF column crossed the IP at KUCKELHEIM, where the CP and Hqs group rejoined the force and marched over good roads thru WHENHOLTHAUSEN, BERGE, VISBECK, HELLEFELD, SEIDFELD to the assembly area on the Northwestern outskirts of AMECKE. The column closed in the area at 2300 after covering 23 miles.

Meanwhile in the afternoon "D" Co reverted to Bn control with the mission of guarding the PW enclosure in AMECKE. The "enclosure", a large field without restricting devices around its perimeter was secured by means of herding the hundreds of prisoners into a compact group and covering the group with the guns of light tanks.

13 April 1945:

In the morning and afternoon the TF remained inoperative.

At 1700 the Force moved out of AMECKE and marched 4 miles West to LANGENHOLTHSEN closing there at 1830.

14 April 1945:

After attending a meeting at Hq CC "B" B, the Bn Commander returned to a meeting of TF Company Commanders and Platoon Leaders at 0830 and there gave

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S E C R E T

¹⁹ All four survived.

S E C R E T

(After Action Report Month of April 1945 cont'd 2 May 1945)

14 April 1945 - cont'd

orders for a move to a new assembly area.

At 0940 the head of the TF column moved out of LANGENHOLSTHSN and marched 8 miles North to the far side of HOVEL arriving there at 1150. Here the Force went into bivouac and remained without further operations for the balance of the day.

15 April 1945:

At 1145 a meeting was called for TF Company Commanders and Platoon Leaders at which the Colonel gave orders for our move to a new assembly area in the vicinity of MENDEN, and outlined our objectives in a probable attack to the West from MENDEN. It is reported that RHUR POCKET has been split into an East and West section and that the West section which we are to operate in covers an area of only 15 square kilometers.

The head of the TF column pulled out of the vicinity of HOVEL at 1250 and marched thru BECKUM 14 miles to the Northern outskirts of MENDEN arriving there at 1655. The Force was not committed during the remainder of the day and a defense of the area was set up for the night.

At 2220 a message was received ordering the Force on a ½ hour alert after 0630 the following day.

16 April 1945:

At 0100 a message was received from CC "B" to the effect that the TF would be prepared to move any time after 1200; the morning to be devoted to rest and personal maintenance of the troops. This message was countermanded by another received at 0800 alerting the TF for immediate move to an assembly area just South of MENDEN where it would be joined by the BNS companies returning from other Task Forces. With this regrouping Task Forces will be dissolved and will move as a Bn to another assembly area just Northeast of KASSEL. The Bn is to be ready to move on a one hour alert after 1100.

By 0930 the TF had closed in the Bn assembly area South of MENDEN.

At 1300 a company commanders meeting was called at which the Colonel gave the route and orders of march. From MENDEN we will march thru LANGENHOLTHSN, EIRINGHSN, ALTENHUNDEM, SCHMALLENBERG, WINTERBERG, MEDEBACH, KORBACH, SACHSENHAUSEN, FREINENHAGEN, KASSEL, HANNMUNDEN and DRANSFELD to our assembly area in the towns of OBERNJESA and STOCKHAUSEN, a total distance of somewhat over 150 miles. Orders of march will be as follows:

Command vehicle; one section of the Rcn Plat, "D" Co, 1 Plat 33 Eng; Hq & Hq Co, "C" Co, "B" Co, "A" Co. One platoon of "C" Co will be detached to form the advance guard for Headquarters CC "B". The assigned convoy number is M 158. Rate of march will be 12 mph with 15 minutes between units of the Combat Command and 5 minutes between the companies of the Bn. Radio silence is to be in effect throughout the march and lights are to be used after dark.

At 1450 the head of the column pulled out of MENDEN and marched throughout the remainder of the day, over good roads, in splendid weather.

17 April 1945:

At 0900 the Bn closed in the adjoining towns of OBERNJESA and STOCKHAUSEN completing our march from MENDEN. The total march distance was 160 miles.

An order from CC "B" Headquarters was received at 1005 to the effect that the remainder of the day is to be used for the rest of the men and their personal maintenance.

18-21 April 1945:

The entire battalion engaged primarily in the maintenance of vehicles,

S E C R E T

(After Action Report Month of April 1945 cont'd 2 May 1945)

14 April 1945 - cont'd

equipment and personal maintenance; calisthenics, and reviewing of Military Discipline.

22 April 1945:

There was no change in the Battalion's operational status during the day. A warning order was received in the afternoon setting the probable date of our departure from this area as 25 April.

23 April 1945:

Maintenance functions continue to be the chief operations of the battalion.

At 1030 a Company Commanders meeting was called at which the Battalion Commander gave orders concerning a Command Inspection tomorrow of the Battalion's men, vehicles and equipment.

In the afternoon word was received that the battalion may move out tomorrow morning to the North to join the 18th Airborne Corps. This alert was received when at 1630 another message was received to the effect that the battalion will not move from this area until the 29th of April.

24 April 1945:

During the morning the battalion was engaged in preparing for the Command Inspection scheduled for the afternoon in such a manner as to permit attendance by the men at two performances of a USO Troupe in the battalion theatre.

The inspection lasted from 1330 throughout the afternoon and the condition of the men, vehicles and equipment and billets was found to be excellent.

25 April 1945:

A training schedule was put into effect for the battalion. Subjects for the day included calisthenics; orientation on Military Government and Germany, Gunnery, close order drill and maintenance of vehicles and weapons.

26 April 1945:

Training similar to yesterday was still in effect for the battalion.

A Company Commanders meeting was held at the CP at 1300 in which the Colonel stated that we are to move, tentatively the 29th, to North and East of Hannover, there to join the 18th Airborne Corps. Our mission will be to protect the right flank of the British as they move East of HAMBURG to clear out to the sea.

27 April 1945:

Concurrent training, including organized games, road march, gunnery, maintenance of vehicles and equipment.

28 April 1945:

Concurrent training.

A Company Commanders meeting was held at 1330 at which the Battalion Commander gave the details of the march to our new area and information pertinent to our occupation of the area and relations with the British. It is estimated that the total march distance will be 120 miles. Radios will be kept on a listening alert only.

In the British Zone we are to observe their rules of Military Government and make no changes without authority from the British and practice all varieties of military courtesy.

S E C R E T

(After Action Report Month of April 1945 cont'd 2 May 1945)

28 April 1945 - cont'd

The Battalion Commander stressed the need for strong and alert security in the new area because of reports of "Werewolf" activity and the activity of organized bands in attacking small units. The area has been passed thru but not completely mopped up.

The British 8th Corps is expected to jump off about 2 May, establish a bridgehead across the Elbe and take the city of LUBECK. Our mission will be to cross just behind them and fan out to the South to secure the right flank.

29 April 1945:

There was no training schedule, the day being spent in preparation of vehicles and equipment for the march.

At 1300 a Company Commanders meeting was called at which the Colonel gave further details on our movement to the new area. It is expected that we will not move until 0230 tomorrow morning. The orders of march within the battalion will be as follows: 1 Plat "D" Co and 1 Plat "A" Co 48th Inf Bn as the advance guard; followed by "D" Co (-);

"A" Co; Hq & Hq Co in two serials; B Co; C Co and Sere Co. The rate of march 15 mph. Route: OBERNJESA; GOTTINGEN; SEESEN; SALZGITTER; BRAUNSCHWEIG; GIFHORN; CELLE; to the "RP" at ESCHADE. The IP will be in GOTTINGEN and the convoy number M 275. At RUNIGEN a halt of 45 min will be made for refueling and eating; at this halt all vehicles will close up to a 5 yd interval. Billet parties will meet the column at ESCHADE.

30 April 1945:

At 0245 the head of the battalion column pulled out of OBERNJESA crossed the IP at GOTTINGEN at 0310 and was followed at five minute intervals by the remaining company serials. The column marched in good order with 10 minute halts each two hours and one 45 minute halt for refueling and eating for 135 miles over good roads and thru intermittent light rains to the assembly area in an around the town of DOBSON, closing there at 1600.

On arrival in the area the Colonel went immediately to a meeting at CC "B" and returned with orders to the effect that maintenance to bring the battalion up to maximum combat efficiency would be performed without delay in preparation for a possible commitment tomorrow with the 82nd Airborne Division.

After setting up roadblocks and strong all around security the battalion bedded down for a night of much needed rest.

2. During this period the THIRTY-FIRST TANK BATTALION was commanded by Lt Col ROBERT C. ERLENBUSCH.

For the Commanding Officer:

(signed)
LEON J. MINVIELLE, JR
1st Lt - Inf
Adjutant.

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S E C R E T

HEADQUARTERS 31ST TANK BATTALION
APO 257, U. S. ARMY

2 June 1945

SUBJECT: After Action Report Month of May 1945

TO : The Adjutant General, Washington 25, D.C.
(Thru Channels)

Transmitted herewith is After Action Report for this unit for the month of May 1945,
together with supporting documents.

For the Commanding Officer:

(signed)
LEON J. MINVIELLE, JR
1st Lt - Inf
Adjutant.

HEADQUARTERS 31ST TANK BATTALION
APO 257, U. S. ARMY

:::::::::::::::::::::
: S E C R E T :
: Auth: CG, 7th AD :
: Initial: _____²⁰ :
: Date: 2 June 1945 :
: ::::::::::::::::::::::

SUBJECT: After Action Report Month of May 1945

TO : The Adjutant General, Washington 25, D.C.
(Thru Channels)

1. In compliance with AR 345-105, and Administrative Memo no. 44, Headquarters, 7th AD, dated 17 Nov 1944, the following "After Action Report" is submitted.

1 May 1945:

During the morning the Bn was engaged in the repair of vehicles which had mechanical breakdown on the march of yesterday and in addition performing routine maintenance on vehicles and equipment.

At 1000 the Colonel held a meeting with the company commanders at which he informed the officers that in all probability we will move across the Elbe into the 82nd Airborne Division's bridgehead tonight; the crossing is to be at Bleckede. The terrain on the other side of the river is generally poor for tank operations, being literally dotted with swamps and cut by small rivers, canals, and drainage ditches. However, a long ridge runs into the initial Corps objective, the city of Ludwigslust and the going should be better than that of average terrain of the area. Resistance within the bridgehead has so far been light.

A number of the officers and men during the remainder of the morning paid informal visits to the concentration camp at Belsen now under control of the British. The simple statement on a closed grave "Approximately 1000 persons Buried Here, April 27, 1945" gives some indication of the condition in which the camp was found.

At 1700 the head of the Bn column is to cross the IP at Beckendorff and move thru Muden, Lintze, Uelzen, Seedorf, Himbergen to Bleckede and there cross the Elbe and continue thru Wendischthun and Stiepelse to an assembly area in the vicinity of Sumte. March order to be: B Co, Hq Co Serial #1, consisting of wheel and half-track vehicles; D Co; C Co; A Co; Hq Co, Serial #2 consisting of tanks and assault guns, Ser Co. the TRP of the bridge, 50 miles distant, in the town of Gohrde, is to be reached by 2200 and the bridge 20 miles further is to be crossed at 2400. Rate of march is to be 12 mph during daylight and 8 mph after dark. Distance between companies on the march is to be 5 minutes and between vehicles 75 yds during daylight and safe driving distance after dark. There will be radio silence with a strict listening watch maintained. Lights will be used after dark until the blackout line in Goddingen is reached.

At 1655 as the leading company reached the IP the Bn was hatled and given new route of march orders as follows: Beckdor, Eschede, Breitennees, Ulzen, Zernien, Gohrde, Oldendorf and back on the original route. The Bn took up the march again at 1800 and moved over generally good roads 80 miles to the bridge with the head of the column reaching that point at approximately 2400.

The weather during the day was generally overcast with occasional light rains, clearing in the evening.

S E C R E T

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²⁰ Illegible initials written here

S E C R E T

(After Action Report Month of May 1945 cont'd 2 June 1945)

2 May 1945:

At 0800 the Colonel held a meeting of the Bns company commanders and officers from elements of the 82nd Airborne Division and A Co of the 33 Engr Bn and gave a general picture of the situation and missions assigned for the day. The 82nd Airborne Division jumped off early this morning and is moving east without opposition. The Bn is to be broken into three Task Forces and will be ready to move into the attack by 0930. Task Forces will contain one company of tanks from this Bn, one company of infantry from the 82nd Airborne and one platoon of Engineers from A Co 33rd Engr Bn. Task Forces will be designated: TF (LT Col) ERLBUSCH, TF (Maj) BEATY and TF (Col) MAJOR. Units of the Bn are assigned as follows: A Co - TF ERLBUSCH, B Co - TF MAJOR; C Co TF BEATY. The final objective of the attack is the city of Ludwigslust approximately 45 kilometers to the east, intermediate objectives will be the towns and cross roads along the way. The three Forces will attack down a zone approximately 10 kilometers wide with TF ERLBUSCH to the North; TF BEATY in the center and TF MAJOR to the South. From New Garge to Brownsberg the Forces will move in column. At Brownsberg peeling off each on to a separate parallel route. D Co is attached to the 504th Paratroop Inf Regiment of the 82nd Airborne Division.

At 0930 the Task Forces moved out into the attack. TF ERLBUSCH moved forward without opposition and had passed thru Rosien by 1010; moving forward without delay Gaslitz was cleared by 1130 and Kubstorf reached by 1230. Still no opposition was met though numerous enemy vehicles were destroyed in the wooded areas along the way. Scattered groups of enemy personnel met by the Force surrendered as they were approached and were led to the rear. Continuing in the advance the Force marched into Picher where at 1340 the mass surrender of an enemy Signal Bn was received. After organization of the town had been completed orders were received at 1400 from CC "B" for the TF to assemble in Picher. Defense of the town was immediately organized and PW cages set up to receive the enemy, coming in at first in small groups and then in a steady stream from the east.

During the day there were no casualties suffered within TF ERLBUSCH. 200 miscellaneous enemy vehicles were destroyed and 1500 prisoners taken. There were no casualties among other units of the Bn working with TF BEATY and TF MAJOR.

Negative reports were received throughout the night from outposts.

3 May 1945:

Throughout the morning prisoners continued to come into the town from the east, all apparently with one idea in mind, to escape being taken prisoner by the advancing Russians who are some 40 kilometers away and with whom contact has already been made in this zone. The prisoners come in on foot, in wagons horse drawn and in motor vehicles of all types.

A message was received at 0925 alerting us for movement on one hour's notice; this was followed by another message reverting B Co to Bn control.

At 1230 word was received that the 21st German Army Group had surrendered en mass and would be routed through Picher. The group is reported to consist of some 400,000 troops of all types. We are now relieved of processing prisoners thru our cages and will instead merely act as road guides and herders to keep the approaching column moving.

The first elements of the Army Group approached the town at approximately 1430 and from then on throughout the afternoon and night the column streamed past our doors. One couldn't help but feel on viewing this overwhelming spectacle that Germany is at last "Kaput". Although units hang pretty much together they present the appearance of refugees rather than that of a military organization.

S E C R E T

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(After Action Report Month of May 1945 cont'd 2 June 1945)

3 May 1945 - cont'd.

Every conceivable type of vehicle has been pressed into service to provide transport; there are civilian automobiles, supply trucks, prime movers for big guns - some with guns attached, motorcycles, bicycles, hand carts, wagons drawn by horses, mules and oxens.

The weather was intermittently overcast during the period.

4 May 1945:

The seemingly endless caravan continues to move slowly thru our town, however, its makeup has changed markedly since it began - now it is predominantly civilian refugees, all attempting to reach and cross the Elbe before the Russians catch up with them.

C Co reverted to Bn control as of 1200 but remained in place in Warlow.

At 1330 the Colonel held a meeting of the Bns company commanders and platoon leaders of attached units. The Engineer platoon has been relieved. As of 1200 the Combat Command was relieved from attached to the 82nd Airborne Division and reverted to Division control. We will move shortly to a new assembly area where it is anticipated that we will go into a modified garrison set-up. Until that time we will continue with our function of directing PWs and refugees along the route to the rear. In preparation for the probable move the Colonel gave instructions as to the orders of march: .C Co; D Co; A Co; Hq & Hq Co; B Co; Ser Co.

In the afternoon on instructions from the Colonel a message was sent out to the companies directing them to serve breakfast at 0530 tomorrow morning and be prepared to move at 0700. A Company Commanders meeting followed at 2200 hours at which details of the move and our mission were given. We are to move into a Division sector 20 by 40 miles West and North of Picher where we will occupy an area approximately 3 by 10 miles. Our mission there will be to set up road blocks against the further passage West of all civilian personnel either displaced persons or German Nationals and at these road blocks to assemble and pass thru to temporary collection points and thence to a Combat Command collecting point all bona fide PWs, both German and Allied. Our move will begin at 0700 tomorrow and the Bn will march at 12 mph with 5 minute intervals between companies. Route of march as follows: Picher, Kuhstorf, Hagenow, Wittenberg, Camin, Zahrendorf with the companies peeling off in their respective areas between Camin and Zahrendorf.

The weather during the day was cool and overcast with intermittent rains.

5 May 1945:

At 0700 the head of the Bn column moved out from Picher and marched on fair to good roads over the prescribed route approximately 27 miles into the new area. Cos of the Bn drew off from the column into subareas where their CPs were set up in towns as follows: A Co, Rodenwalde, B Co Zahrendorf; C Co, Camin, D Co Bangersdorf; Hq & Hq Co, Bennin; Ser Co, Bengersdorf. Each of the sub areas dominates a main road or a converging road net. Road blocks were set up on arrival and the process of freezing displaced personnel in place and collecting PWs started immediately and continued thru the day. PWs are being transported in groups to the CC B PWC at Warchow.

A meeting of company commanders was held at 2315 at which the Colonel gave orders for the movement of the Bn to a new area North of this place along the West side of the Schaal See. Our mission is to be that of operating camps for PWs, refugees and displaced persons. Companies will move out individually tomorrow at 0830 and march thru Camin, Wittenburg and Warschow to Zarrentin where billeting parties will lead each company into its area.

These camps are to be set up as follows; A Co - Allied PWs other than U.S., British or Canadians. B Co - Displaced persons, former slave laborers and refugees; C Co - British and Canadian PWs (German PWs are to be guided thru to the cage at Waschow).

S E C R E T

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(After Action Report Month of May 1945 cont'd 2 June 1945)

5 May 1945 - cont'd.

D Co will have the mission of patrolling the road net within the area and guiding the various categories of persons to the proper camp. Displaced persons, former slave laborers, and refugees are not to be permitted to enter or leave the area. PWs are to be processed and fed and passed on as directed by CC B.

The weather during the day was cool and overcast.

6 May 1945:

At 0830 the lead company of the Bn column pulled out of the vicinity of Bennin and marched over good roads toward our new area. By 1130 after covering approximately 26 miles, the companies had all closed in their respective sub areas. Companies are located as follows: Hq Co - Sterling; A Co - Gr. Zecher, B Co - Hollenbeck. The Bn CP is located in Kogel. All companies are in adequate house billets and a number of CPs including that of Bn Hq are set up in pretentious domiciles.

Road block and camps of the various types were organized immediately on arrival in the area and the segregation according to plan was started by noon. There is an acute shortage of mess gear and cooking equipment in the camps and the captured and abandoned equipment in the area is being put to service to alleviate the problem. The food situation is being handled thru the use of German rations, foraged supplies, and supplies requisitioned from the local Bourgamasters.

The weather during the day was overcast with intermittent light rains.

7 May 1945:

We continue to function as a separation center for the various classes of civilians and PWs.

In the afternoon the Bn suffered the tragic loss of Pfc Lawton T Gay, B Co, thru drowning when he failed to make shore after accidentally overturning a canoe. Pfc Gay was a veteran of the outfit having participated in all actions since the Bn was first committed in France.

In the evening there were two performances of a film at the Bn Theater located in the Hq Co area.

Splendid weather prevailed throughout the period.

8 May 1945:

The Bn continues to be engaged with the operation of the various camps of its separation center.

A Company Commanders meeting was held at 0800. Instructions were given by the Colonel for the achievement of our change from a combat garrison outfit and orders were also given for the instituting of a campaign, which will start immediately, to salvage all types of enemy equipment; in the case of ammunition and explosives, German PWs are authorized for the handling of all material of this type.

At 1500 formal announcement was received over the radio of V-E day to start at 0001 tomorrow. News of the complete collapse of the German Army has been in the air for so many days now that the formal announcement come as somewhat of an anti-climax.

The weather continued splendid throughout the day.

9 May 1945:

V-E day has been altogether quiet and without notable incident. The Bn continues with its operation of the various camps.

The weather overcast in the morning cleared to bright sunshine in the afternoon.

S E C R E T

S E C R E T

(After Action Report Month of May 1945 cont'd 2 June 1945)

10-12 May 1945:

The Bn continued the assembling of the Allied and German PWs and displaced persons in temporary camps for disposition. Our roadblocks on the outskirts of the area have been constantly engaged in turning back and freezing in place caravans attempting to move to the West.

When not on duty some of the men have been boating, fishing, playing baseball and investigating the surrounding country side. Movies have been the chief source of entertainment in the evening.

All member of the Bn attended a film "Two Down, One to Go" - orientation for the C.B.I.

At 0900 on 12 May the Colonel attended a Unit Commanders meeting at CC B Hq and received assignment of a new area for the Bn. We are to locate in the vicinity of Gadebusch and move there the morning of the 13th.

The weather has been warm and pleasant throughout the period.

13 May 1945:

At 0830 the head of the Bn, minus "B" Co, column pulled out of the vicinity of Kogel and moved generally North to Ratzeburg and then due East to Gadebusch, closing in and around Gadebusch by 1500. The march was made over good roads and covered approximately 22 miles.

In this area we will carry on the same work with displaced persons, PWs and roadblocks as we did in the previous area and will have in addition the management of the Military Government of the City of Gadebusch with a population of some 12,000 persons.

14-19 May 1945:

At 1115 14 May B Co closed in the vicinity of Gadebusch and rejoined the Bn.

Management of this area continues along the same lines as that of our previous one with the same roadblock and traffic control difficulties. The Military Government of Gadebusch presents the main source of new problems. The most critical items in the city management are food and sanitation. After the first few days these were well under control following a canvas of the foodstocks in the area and the establishment of a joint control consisting of the Burgomister and our Military Government. The sanitation problem was for the most part alleviated thru the insurance of electric power from the local plant which in turn provided sufficient water for carrying off the accumulated sewage in the individual houses. Other problems solved thru numerous conferences between the Colonel and the local officials were: The reopening of banking facilities; the organization of a public health department; the reorganization of the police force; and the publishing of a local newspaper - discontinued after two days of publication on advice from Division M.G.

On 18 May the Bn received a warning order to be prepared for a move from this area to the vicinity of Leipzig and the following day march orders were issued by the Colonel. We will leave Gadebusch the morning of the 19th.

The weather throughout the period was generally warm and clear with an occasional light rain.

S E C R E T

S E C R E T

(After Action Report Month of May 1945 cont'd 2June 1945) (

20-21 May 1945:

At 0330 20 May 1945 the head of the Bn column pulled out of Gadebusch for the new area just north of Leipzig. The march order was as follows: A Co, B Co, Hq Co, D Co, and Ser Co. The Bn marched throughout the daylight hours over good roads moving from Gadebusch thru Wittenburg, Vellahn to the Elbe River crossing at Daschau and continuing thru Dannenberg, Luchow, Salzwedel, Gasdelegen, Neuhaldeusleben, Madgeburg, to Dodendorf, closing there for the night at 1845 after covering a distance of 145 miles.

At 0645 the morning of 21 May 1945 the march was resumed with the Bn moving from Dodendorf thru Bernburg and Kothen to our final destination at Bitterfeld, closing there after covering 40 miles at 1320. The remainder of the day was spent in setting up in house billets and taking over the patrols and outposts of the 413 Inf Regt which we relieved on our arrival in Bitterfeld.

22-28 May 1945:

The Bn has been principally engaged in guard, patrols and the maintenance of outposts while at the same time making adjustments to a garrison type set-up. This adjustment started with a showdown inspection of all equipment and a T.I. of all vehicles; from now until another combat assignment voluminous records and accountability will be the order of the day.

Entertainment for the men is now of the essence and in keeping with this the movie projector was set up immediately in the local theatre and two showing of a film have been accomplished each night. In order to control and maintain the order of non-fraternization of our men with the German Girls an experimental escort bureau has been established. Personnel for this bureau come from the Displaced persons Camps, and are Polish, Dutch, Greek, and Finnish. Each girl is screened by the C.I.C. before being permitted to have dates with the men.

29 May 1945:

This morning Lt Col ERLENBUSCH left the Bn to take over the management of the Recreation Center at BRUSSELS. His transfer came suddenly and there were no leave taking ceremonies possible; each officer and man felt real reluctance to accept the fact that the Bn has lost the soldier who had led them from the Coast of France to the heart of Germany.

Major WILLIAM D. BEATY now assumes command of the Bn.

30 May 1945:

In the afternoon all available personnel participated in a Memorial Day Ceremony in which the Combat Command passed in review before Brig General CLARKE and Col HASKELL. This was the first review of the Combat Command on the continent of Europe. After the ceremonies, presentation of awards were made by Maj BEATY to the following officers and men:

BRONZE STAR MEDAL:

1st Lt MANUEL N. CEPEDA,	01 011 280	Co B
1st Lt MELVIN E. WISCHMEIER,	01 016 109	Co B
Sgt Titus R. Crawford	34 230 635	Co A
Tec 4 Paul E. Wages	38 084 150	Co B
Cpl John J. Coridon	36 234 583	Co C
Pvt Tafe E. Livesay	33 847 732	Co B
Pvt Victor Sajec	36 234 512	Hq Co
Pvt Ralph E. Harriman	31 428 863	Co C

S E C R E T

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(After Action Report Month of May 1945 cont'd 2 June 1945)

30 May 1945 - cont'd

OAK LEAF CLUSTER TO BRONZE STAR MEDAL:

Maj WILLIAM D. BEATY	022 672,	Hq Co
1st Lt WILLIAM R. HART	01 014 942,	Hq Co
Sgt Clifford Green	35 275 141	Hq Co
Sgt Mack K. Overcash	34 254 466	Hq Co

31 May 1945:

Usual patrol and outpost duties continue.

2. During this period the THIRTY-FIRST TANK BATTALION was commanded by Lt Col ROBERT C. ERLBUSCH up to May 27, 1945, at which time he was succeeded by Maj WILLIAM F. BEATY.

For the Commanding Officer:

(signed)
LEON J. MINVIELLE, JR
1st Lt - Inf
Adjutant.

S E C R E T

:::::::::::::::::::::
: S E C R E T :
: Auth: CG, 7th AD :
: Initial: ²¹ :
: Date: 3 July 1945 :
: ::::::::::::::::::::::

HEADQUARTERS 31ST TANK BATTALION
APO 257, U.S. ARMY

SUBJECT: After Action Report for Month of June 1945.

TO : The Adjutant General, Washington 25, D.C.
(Thru Channels)

1. In compliance with AR 345-105, and Administrative Memo No. 44, Headquarters, 7th Armd Div, dated 17 Nove 1944, the following "After Action Report" is submitted:

1 - 3 June 1945:

Battalion continued following training schedule in addition to maintaining outposts, patrols and guard.

4 June 1945:

Co "A" designated as "Reserve Company".

5 June 1945:

Instructors from the 2nd Armd Div gave instructions to Co "B" on new tank - T26E3. Battalion Commander awarded Bronze Stars to five (5) enlisted men.

6 June 1945:

1st Anniversary of "D" Day. Battalion observed it as such.

7 June 1945:

Co "B" continues receiving instruction on T26E3 tank. Remainder of companies followed training schedule.

8 June 1945:

Co "A" received instruction on T26E3 tank. Map reading course set by companies.

9 June 1945:

Co "A" received instruction T26E3 tank. Inspection of billets by Battalion Staff Officers.

10 June 1945:

No training schedule. Installation and security guards maintained.

11 - 12 June 1945:

Co "C" received instruction on T26E3 tank. Remainder of companies followed training schedule.

S E C R E T

- 1 -

²¹ Initials written here, probably LJM Jr, for Leon J. Minvielle, Jr. who signed the report.

S E C R E T

After Action Report, 31st Tk Bn, for June 1945, cont'd

13 June 1945:

Battalion parade held in morning. Silver Stars and Bronze Stars awarded by Battalion Commander. V.D. film shown, V.D. lecture given and film "On to Tokyo" was shown.

14 June 1945:

Co "C" designated as "Reserve Co". Co's "A" and "C" on small arms range.

15 June 1945:

Co "C" on range. Training Schecule followed.

16 June 1945:

Co's "A" and "C" on range. Remainder of companies followed training schedule.

17 June 1945:

Co "C" left for tank range D 770-430.

18 - 19 June 1945:

Co "C" firing on tank range. Remainder of Companies followed training schedule.

20 June 1945:

Co "C" returned from range, fired the T26E3 for the 1st time. Excellent results. Company Command parade in the afternoon.

21 - 22 June 1945:

Co "D" designated as "Reserve Co". Co's "B" and "D" fired on small arms range. Training Schedule followed.

23 June 1945:

Inspection of billets by Battalion Staff Officers. Co's "B" and "D" on small arms range. Riot squads called out on "dry run".

24 June 1945:

Co "D" left for tank range. No training.

25 June 1945: & 26 June:

Co "D" firing on tank range. Training schedule followed.

27 June 1945:

Co "D" returned from tank range. Training schedule followed.

28 June 1945:

Co "B" in reserve. Co's "B" and "C" on small arms range.

29 June 1945:

Co's "B" and "C" on small arms range. Training schedule followed.

30 June 1945:

Next page.

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After Action Report, 31st Tk Bn, for June 1945, cont'd

30 June 1945:

Orders on preparation of move received. Training schedule followed in morning.

NOTE: Guarding of installations and patrols maintained throughout the month.

For the Commanding Officer:

(signed)
L.J. MINVIELLE, JR.
1st Lt, Inf
Adjutant.

S E C R E T

S E C R E T

.....
:S E C R E T :
:Auth: CG, 7 AD :
:Init:_____ :
:Date: 2 Aug 45 :
:.....

HEADQUARTERS 31ST TANK BATTALION
APO 257, U.S. ARMY

2 August 1945

SUBJECT: After Action Report for Month of July 1945.

TO : The Adjutant General, Washington, 25, D.C.
(Thru Channels)

1. In compliance with AR 345-105 and Administrative Memorandum No. 44, Hq 7th Armd Div, dated 17 November 1944, the following "After Action Report" is submitted:

1 - 3 July 1945:

Battalion departed vicinity Bitterfeld, Germany 010950 July enroute to new area at Walldurn, Germany. Closed assembly area at Walldurn, Germany 030215 July.

031330 Company Commanders' meeting at C.P. Orientation of new area and mission to be accomplished while in Walldurn.

4 July 1945:

No training - holiday.

5 July 1945:

Morning spent on maintenance. Athletics from 1500 to 1730.

Company Commanders' meeting at C.P. - Orientation.

6 July 1945:

Maintenance of all vehicles in preparation to turn in of combat vehicles. Athletics from 1500 to 1730.

7 July 1945:

Inspection of personnel and billets. Afternoon spent in organized athletics.

8 July 1945:

No training - holiday. Guard posts maintained.

9-10 July 1945:

Training schedule followed in mornings, afternoons spent in organized athletics.

11 July 1945:

Raid on five towns in Bn Area. Continued training schedule in morning. Organized athletics in the afternoon.

12-13 July 1945:

Training schedule followed in morning. Afternoon spent in organized athletics.

-1-

S E C R E T

S E C R E T

14 July 1945:

Command inspection of personnel, billets and individual equipment.

15 July 1945:

No training - holiday. Guard posts maintained.

16 - 17 July 1945:

Hq Co fired small arms; Serv Co fired .30 and .50 cal. machine gun; Co "B" fired on tank range as did Hq tanks and Assault Guns. Co's "A", "C" and "D" followed training schedule.

18 - 19 July 1945:

Hq Co fired .30 and .50 cal. Machine guns; Co "B" on small arms range; Co "C" on tank range; Co's "A", "D", and Serv followed training schedule.

20 July 1945:

Co "A" on tank range; Co "D" fired .30 and .50 cal. machine guns; Serv Co fired small arms; Hq Co, Co's "B" and "C" followed training schedule.

21 July 1945:

Conducted raids on towns in our area of responsibility.

22 July 1945:

No training - holiday. Maintained guard posts.

23 July 1945:

Inspection of personnel, billets and full field equipment in morning. Co "A", "B", and "C" on range in the afternoon. Schedule followed by Hq Co, Co's "B" and Serv.

24 July 1945:

Co "A" fired .30 and .50 cal. machine guns; Co "D" fired small arms; Co "C" on tank range. Schedule followed by Hq Co, Co's "B" and Serv.

25 July 1945:

Co "A" fired small arms; Co "B" fired .30 and .50 cal. machine gun; schedule followed by Hq Co, Co's "C", "D" and Serv.

26 July 1945:

Co "A" fired small arms; Co "B" fired .30 and .50 cal machine guns; Co "D" on tank range. Bn parade held in afternoon.

27 July 1945:

Co "B" fired on small arms range; Co "C" fired .30 and .50 machine guns; Co "D" on tank range. Schedule followed by Hq Co, Co's "A" and Serv.

28 July 1945:

Inspection of billets and personnel in the morning. Organized athletics in the afternoon.

S E C R E T

29 July 1945:

No training - holiday. Guard posts maintained.

30 - 30 July 1945:

Training schedule followed by all companies.

(signed)
LESLIE A. LOHSE
Major, Cavalry
Commanding

-3-

S E C R E T

S E C R E T

HEADQUARTERS 31ST TANK BATTALION
APO 257, U. S. ARMY

1 September 1945

SUBJECT: After Action Report for month of August 1945.

TO : The Adjutant General, Washington, 25, D.C.
(Thru Channels)

Transmitted herewith is After Action Report for the 31st Tank Bn for the month of August 1945.

For the Commanding Officer:

(signed)
James M. Sharkey
1st Lt Inf
Adjutant

S E C R E T

HEADQUARTERS 31ST TANK BATTALION
APO 257, U.S. ARMY

:::::::::::::::::::
: S E C R E T :
: Auth: CO, 7thAD :
: Init:_____ :
: Date: 1 Sept 45 :
: ::::::::::::::::::::

1 September 1945

SUBJECT: After Action Report for month of August 1945.

TO : The Adjutant General, Washington, 25, D.C.
(Thru Channels)

1. In compliance with AR 345-105 and Administrative Memorandum, No. 44, Hq 7th Armd Div, dated 17 November 1944, the following "After Action Report" is submitted:

1 August 1945:

Search of woods in area of responsibility by all companies.

2-23 August 1945:

Training - Area guard.

23-31 August 1945:

Relieved from training and area guard. Transfer of personnel.

(signed)
LESLIE A. LOHSE
Major, Cavalry
Commanding

S E C R E T