

S E C R E T

HEADQUARTERS 161ST FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION  
APO 35 US ARMY

3D August 1944

Unit: Jockey  
Period from 2359, 31 July 44  
to 0001, 31 August 44

SUBJECT: Action Against Enemy, Reports After/After Action Reports.

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

1. In accordance with Ltr, Hq 1st US Army, 13 July 1944, file 319.1/401 (C), above subject. The following report is submitted.

As of 0001 on 1 August 1944 this organization was in support of the 134th Infantry with batteries in position in the vicinity of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles north-west of Torigni Sur Vire. The infantry cannon company was attached to this battalion and was in position from which it could fire with the battalion.

At 2130, 31 July the 134th Infantry received an order from division to maintain contact with the enemy forces to their front, that the 320th Infantry and Task Force S would attack on their left and right respectively. Patrols of the 134th to maintain contact with the enemy in case began to withdraw. The 134th continued to advance throughout the next day supported by this battalion of artillery and the cannon company until they were held up by enemy fire around 1330. At 2300 on 1 August 1944, the regimental commander ordered a new attack at 0200 with the mission of seizing the Vire River. The 161st Field Artillery Battalion fired interdiction and harrassing missions on the enemy's rear areas all night to support the attack of the 134th Infantry. 309 rounds were fired during the night. The method of fire was one battery volley at each critical point of the enemy's communication net-work, approximately every thirty minutes. The next morning, the 2nd of August, the infantry moved rapidly forward against very light resistance and our forward observers and liaison officers with them reported that our fire during the night had apparently been very effective. They reported a number of enemy dead lying along the road and quite a few blood spots on the grass which they interpreted as meaning that others had either been wounded or killed and were evacuated by the enemy. Enemy planes were over our gun positions throughout the night but no damage was done.

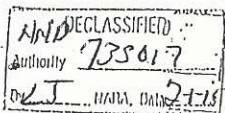
Reconnaissance parts from this battalion went forward to select positions during the afternoon of the 1st of August, but we were unable to displace the battalion forward on account of the large number of small enemy resistance groups behind the front. Positions were reconnoitered, however, and the battalion was displaced the next morning, the 2nd of August.

Close Station, march order was given at 0845 on the 2nd of August and the battalion reported ready to fire again in the new positions approximately  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles south of Torigni Sur Vire at 1025, the 2nd of August. 848 rounds had been fired from the positions  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles northwest of Torigni Sur Vire.

S E C R E T

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S E C R E T

As soon as the battalion had occupied this position, reconnaissance parties were sent on forward to select positions nearer the Vire River to be ready to support the infantry when they would cross the river. There is some very high ground just beyond the river which dominates all the positions from which it could keep this high ground neutralized. The high ground beyond the Vire River was known as Hill 203 and Hill 199.

The battalion closed station at this position at 1230 and reported ready to fire in new positions approximately four miles east of Tessy Sur Vire at 1400 on 2nd August 1944. During the night of 2nd and 3rd of August, the battalion fired a greater number of harrassing and interdiction fire on all the critical points that could be identified as such on the map. Sixty-five different concentrations were fired and a total of 750 rounds of ammunition were expended in this manner during the night. Again, the next day as our infantry advanced they reported that our fire of the night before had been very effective on withdrawing enemy troops.

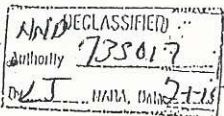
At 031200, reconnaissance parties proceeded across the river to select new positions just north of Hill 203. The main body of the battalion closed station at 1345 and was picked up by 35th Division MP's at 1445 to be taken across an engineer bridge that had been built across the Vire River in the 137th Infantry zone of action. There was no bridge in the zone of action of the 134th Infantry. There was some delay in crossing the bridge because it had not been installed long enough for it to be "set in place" and when the heavy 2½-ton trucks with the howitzers crossed it, it tended to slip out of place. The battalion completed the river crossing at 1630 and completed occupation of position at 1715. The infantry was under heavy mortar and machine gun fire and needed close artillery support badly. Just as our batteries reported ready to fire from the new positions, a heavy rain storm started and we were unable to register for lack of observation. Our survey was not completed yet so we couldn't give the infantry the close support they needed right then. We radioed to the 127th Field Artillery Battalion, the medium artillery of the division, and gave them the coordinates of the targets to be fired on. They promptly opened effective fire and did a good job of supporting our infantry until we could get registered. The battalion fire harrassing and interdiction missions throughout the night. Forty-five different concentrations were fired and 560 rounds were expended in this fire.

At 041000 reconnaissance parties went out to select positions forward. By the time they got back to the battalion the infantry had moved a great distance further forward and they went out again to select positions further forward. While they were gone we received word from higher headquarters that our forward elements had made contact with other American and British troops and that our division was being pinched and would be given a rest period. Our S-4 was told at an S-4 meeting that we would be in our present positions for from one to six days and to get our requisitions in and get our equipment and clothes in first class shape again.

During the morning and early afternoon of the 5th August the personnel of the battalion spent the time in getting themselves cleaned up, washing clothes and taking care of equipment. At 1400 on the 5th August we were ordered to have advance parties ready to go to new position or rendezvous areas some distance away. The battalion executive and sergeant major and one officer and first sergeant from each battery comprised the advance party. The advance party joined those of other units of the division and were taken to the new area by the division G-1 who assigned the areas. The battalion moved out at

S E C R E T



S E C R E T

2120, passed the IP at 2220 and marched to the bivouac area closing therein at 0035 on the 6th August. The bivouac area was approximately one mile south of St. Martin Le Bouillant. The distance traveled was twenty-four miles. The 35th Division is now in the XX Corps instead of the V Corps.

At 1000 on 6th August, reconnaissance parties were sent further south to select bivouac areas within "goose-eggs" given us by higher headquarters. At this time the north-south highway through Brecey was jammed with troops moving south. The 30th Division was moving south to stem a German attempt to cut our corridor from the Cherbourg area down to Brittany. After the 30th Division had completed its move the 35th Division was given first priority on the road. The 161st Field Artillery Battalion was one of the first elements of the 35th to move and it left its bivouac area south of St. Martin Le Bouillant at 1705 and proceeded with MP escort to the new bivouac area three miles north of Louvigne Du Desert. It was a very rapid move. At times the lead vehicles had to travel thirty-five miles per hour to keep up with the MP escort. The distance covered in this move was twenty-seven miles. The battalion closed in the new area at 2115.

At 1150 on 7th August orders were received to be prepared to support the 134th Infantry as they moved to the north-east toward the highway between Barenton and Mortain. The plan was to have a battalion of infantry motorized screened by reconnaissance elements and the I&R platoon. This battalion sent out reconnaissance parties at 2130 to select possible artillery positions. At one time during the reconnaissance our parties found themselves in front of the infantry's forward elements but no casualties were suffered.

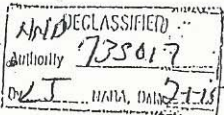
The battalion displaced at 0545 on the 8th August and reported ready to fire in new positions  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles west of Notre Dame De Touchet at 0730. We were combat-teamed with the 134th Infantry for this action and there was a corps order out against any artillery fire except on Corps order due to the American troops of the 30th and other divisions who were in our front. During the night of 8th and 9th August, all units of the battalion maintained very heavy local security due to reported break-through's by German armor and infantry. However, no incidents were reported.

On 9th August the situation remained much the same as on the 8th with our infantry attempting to clean up the pockets of Germans that were in our front. It became apparent that the Germans had their strongholds in the forests to the northeast of the highway between Barentan and Mortain and they would send harrassing parties out from there to hit our flanks and supply routes to our front line battalions. It became necessary to assign a company of TD's to each infantry regiment to follow up their advances and cover their supply lines. This battalion lost one liaison plane today. The pilot, Lieutenant Ralph K. Price, Jr. and the observer Lieutenant Peter F. Nolan, Jr. were both seriously wounded but were evacuated through our medical channels. A liaison sergeant and a forward observer sergeant were wounded and killed also on this day.

On the 10th August the battalion executive officer, Major Herman F. Schuster was put on special duty with the 654th Tank Destroyer Battalion as commander since the tank destroyer commander had been missing in action for over forty-eight hours.

S E C R E T





# S E C R E T

No change in the situation other than the infantry continued mopping up small centers of resistance on the 10th and 11th of August.

At 1015 on 12 August the battalion displaced forward to positions  $1\frac{1}{2}$  South of St Jean Du Dorail. 469 Rounds were fired from the old position in the vicinity of Notre Dame du Desert. Liaison officer #3, Lieut. Vernon Freitas was seriously wounded today. Two enlisted men were slightly wounded at the same time but were not evacuated. At 2100 on the 12th August the division was relieved and we were transferred to the XII Corps.

On 13 August 1944 the members of the battalion took care of organizational equipment and washed clothes, etc. Orders were received to stand by for a move between 2130 and 2400 but the actual movement order wasn't received until 0415 on the 14th August.

At 0500 14th August the battalion moved to a bivouac area five miles Southeast of Le Mans. Distance moved, 119 miles. Arrived in new area at 1930. The battalion stayed in this bivouac area until 1335 on the 16th August at which time it moved to a new bivouac area two miles south of Verdes. Distance travelled, 62 miles.

Reconnaissance parties were sent out to select positions at 1500 on August 17th. Positions 2 miles East of St. Hilaire Sur Yerre were occupied at 1700 on the 17th. Battery B, captured a German soldier who wandered into their gun position. Stayed in these positions until 1200 on 10th when the battalion moved out to bivouac area 2 miles SW of Janville. The battalion closed into the bivouac area at 1810 after making a move of 60 miles. Stayed in this bivouac area until the 21st August.

The 134th Combat Team received orders to march on Montargis. The 1st Battalion of the 134th Infantry with Battery A of the 161st FA attached comprised the advance guard. The leading elements of the advanced guard passed the IP at 0700 and the main body of the field artillery passed the IP at 0820. During the march toward Pithiviers the main body of the artillery occupied positions from which they were ready to support the infantry twice. Then when the infantry had advanced further we moved on. We occupied positions  $1\frac{1}{4}$  mile west of Clos Guichard at 1825.

The same tactical setup was used again on the 22nd except that the artillery furnished the infantry with 15  $2\frac{1}{2}$  ton trucks to haul infantry, and the whole infantry regiment was motorized. The battalion moved out at 0805 and occupied positions about five miles west of Montargis at 1030. Reconnaissance parties were sent out to select positions at 1130 but were not able to get far enough forward to warrant a move.

At 1000 on the 23rd reconnaissance parties again went forward and selected positions about three miles West of Montargis. The positions were occupied at 1145. Remained in this position until the 25th August. At 1300 on the 24th August all the Artillery of the Corps that could reach this area fired concentrations in open country all around the City of Montargis to convince the Germans within the city that they ought to surrender. Large numbers did surrender after the bombardment. The Corps commander had issued orders that the city was not to be fired on without his direct order.

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At 0820, 25th August the battalion moved out of position to positions near the town of La Celle-St Cyr, arriving there at 1020. The tactical setup was the same as the move toward Montargis with the 1st Battalion of the 134th Infantry motorized with "A" Battery of the 161st Field Artillery Battalion attached, being the advance guard. The rest of the regiment was also motorized and followed after which the remainder of the artillery followed. Before firing from their positions at 1200, reconnaissance parties were pushed out forward to select positions from which we could reach well beyond the city of Joigny. These positions in and around the village of Cezy were occupied at 1600. The battalion CP was setup in a building that had been used by the Germans as a headquarters building. The position at Cezy was occupied until August 29th. At 1215, 29th August the battalion moved out of position and closed into bivouac area at 1455 near the town of Aix-En-Othe. In this position the Division went into reserve and continued to be in reserve on the 1st of September. Time is being used cleaning and caring for materiel.

The morale of the troops is excellent and the fighting efficiency has been improved with combat experience.

There were 130 Bronze Star decorations for bravery and valliant service during this month.

Liaison officers have stated their desire for a lighter radio. The 610 radio being too heavy to carry in fast moving combat. Something similar to the 300 series used by the infantry would be much better and would also serve the same purpose.

No decisive exploits were made by this battalion during the month.

*Douglas G. Dwyre*  
DOUGLAS G DWYRE  
Lieutenant Colonel, FA  
Commanding

4 Incis.

- 1-Ammunition Report
- 2-Unit Journal
- 3-S-2 Work Sheet
- 4-S-3 Work Sheet

*not rec'd  
27 Nov 44  
DN 23*

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AND DECLASSIFIED ...  
 Authority 735017  
 Date 11/11/01

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AMMUNITION REPORT

Jockey  
 From: 0600, 2 August 44  
 To : 0600, 1 September 44

Date	Bal. Last Report	Received	Expended	Bal. On Hand
August - 02,0600 - 03,0600	1729	1428	1612	1545
03,0600 - 04,0600	1545	1734	796	2483
04,0600 - 05,0600	2483	918	0	3401
05,0600 - 07,0600	3401	0	0	3401
07,0600 - 08,0600	3401	0	270	3131
08,0600 - 09,0600	3131	0	0	3131
09,0600 - 10,0600	3131	0	754	2377
10,0600 - 11,0600	2377	980	1171	2186
11,0600 - 12,0600	2186	1220	886	2520
12,0600 - 13,0600	2520	800	309	3011
13,0600 - 14,0600	3011	0	38	2973
14,0600 - 22,0600	2973	0	0	2973
22,0600 - 23,0600	2973	0	120	2853
23,0600 - 24,0600	2853	800	470	3183
24,0600 - Sept 1 0600	3183	0	0	3183

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