

Oct, Nov 44

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HEADQUARTERS 216TH FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION
APO 35 U S Army

Oct - Nov

1 December 1944

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

TO : The Adjutant General, Washington, D C, (Thru: The Commanding General, 35th Infantry Division, APO 35 U S Army ATTENTION: Public Relations Officer Rear Echelon)

In compliance with the provisions of paragraph 10, change 3, 9 March 1943 to A 345-105, 18 September 1943 the following Report After/After Action Report is submitted;

UNIT HISTORY 216TH FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION

The 216th Field Artillery Battalion was still in a defensive position in the vicinity of Foret De Gremecey woods at the beginning of the month of November 1944.

Defensive warfare to this Battalion was not conducive to good morale and it became necessary for the officers of the organization to put forth their best efforts in an attempt to keep everyone somewhat satisfied. Many types of entertainment were inaugurated, such as shows, passes to Nancy, and shower-bath details. Regardless of the effort to keep men satisfied the big question was when do we push on. The question was soon answered.

The Third United States Army would continue to attack. The rumors, statements and preparations to remain all winter came to an abrupt halt. On the 8th day of November 1944 at 0500, the greatest artillery preparation in the war so far opened up, and seemed to gain in intensity as the minutes passed by. This artillery preparation in which the entire XII Corps participated in for a period of one hour prior to the attack, was directed against specific enemy positions. The Battalion during that period expended 347 rounds of ammunition in attacking 14 assigned targets. At 0600 one hour later the artillery lifted on close in targets, and the attack was on. Artillery could blast a path, disorganize the enemy, silence its Artillery, but it was for the Infantry with their artillery forward observers to close with the enemy.

The Command Post and Fire Direction Center displaced to the vicinity of Gremecey, France early in the morning of 9 November 1944. The firing batteries remained in their original positions until 10 November, when a complete displacement was made to the town of Fresnes, France, located on the westside of the Chateau Saline woods.

CLASSIFICATION CHANGED TO:

CANCELLED

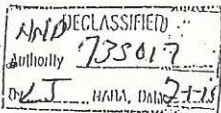
BY AUTHORITY OF THE ADJUTANT GENERAL
Frank A. Meyer *Col ASD*
DOWNGRADING COMMITTEE 12 May 46

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Ltr; After/After Action Reports, Hq 216th FA Bn, 1 Dec 44, Cont'd.

German defensive positions encountered between the Foret de Greamecey and Chateau Salins woods, were very well prepared. But the entire system of defense could not stop the 320th Infantry as the distance of approximately 1500 yards was covered with in a period of 24 hours.

Later information obtained from captured enemy maps disclosed the main line of resistance passed along a railroad track just east of the village of Fresnes, a distance of about 800 yards from our outpost line, or one half the distance between the two woods.

This Battalion History would not be complete without some mention of the damage and destruction to the village of Fresnes. During the entire period of defensive warfare our outposts kept a watchful eye upon this village as it was just in front of our Infantry position. Considerable patrol activity generated from this point. Each time our patrols would report any activity or our forward observers or liaison pilots observed any activity, a battalion concentration would fall immediately thereon. Over a period of about five weeks many such concentrations were fired. Every officer or observer unfamiliar with the village would remark upon seeing it for the first time, "I have never seen a town so completely destroyed". The credit for this must go to the 216th, as it controlled every round of artillery that was fired into the town.

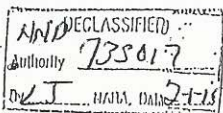
The Third Army attack on 8 November 1944 had caught the Germans by surprise. Prisoners of War captured the first day of the attack stated that their commanders told them the Americans had taken up defensive positions for the winter. Much enemy materiel such as barbed wire, mines, logs and planking were found in preparation for building a defensive line during the winter.

The first complete displacement for the battalion was ordered by the Battalion Commander, Lt Col Kenneth H Reed, on 10 November 1944 to a point just east of the village of Fresnes coordinates 04.85-27.54. The Battalion Fire Direction Center set up in a wine cellar which was formerly occupied by an enemy mortar platoon. This displacement brought great relief to the communications Sections of the Battalion, as the maintenance of wire and radio through the Foret de Greamecey was almost impossible.

The Battalion upon its second displacement occupied positions near the town of Foxe which was well within the defense system set up by the enemy. In this area many targets had been attacked in the original preparation, and the effectiveness was apparent. Much materiel had been abandoned such as two Mark IV Tanks, twelve anti-aircraft guns, two 75mm Howitzers, considerable horse drawn transports, and large piles of all types of ammunition. The enemy made a very hasty retreat from this area as was quite evident from the huge quantity of personal effects strewn around, what had been in shelters, dugouts and command posts. The move to Foxe was made on the 11 Day of November.

The enemy was beginning to withdraw more rapidly, now that the whole of the Chateau Salins woods had been cleared by our 320th Infantry and on 13 November this Battalion displaced to the vicinity of Chateau Brehain.

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Evacuation of refugees has been a real problem during the month. Many villages occupied were not cleared of civilians, presenting a problem of security, shelter and interference of military operations. Many long lines of tanks, armored cars and other vehicles have been halted along the roads held up only by some civilian driving a hay rack or other type of transport down the middle of the road at a very slow pace.

The town of Morhange was a German supply base. Orders from the enemy high command were to defend it to the last man.

On the night of November 14 the Battalion received its strangest night firing mission- "Put 1000 rounds into Morhange between now and 0600. Your sector is grid square 20-36, 20-37 and 21-37. Pick your own targets".

Actually 999 rounds burst from our guns during the night and raked the Nazi defenders. The other light Battalions had similar missions in other sectors of town. Ours were fired on 42 different targets.

Prisoners later said German determination wilted during the night. The last one left at 1000 the next morning.

Upon examination of this area it was disclosed that a large portion of the eastern portion of the town was taken up by permanent barracks housing many enemy forces. Upon occupation of the area much pleasure was had by all passing the long line of buildings carrying such names, Henrich Himmler, Herman Goering and Adolph Hilter Barracks. Each entrance was flanked by the typical Sentry Box, with its wide red, white and black diagonal stripes.

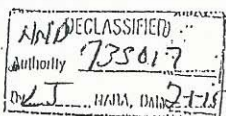
The advance of our infantry continued to make excellent progress, thus making displacements an hourly possibility, and when the 320th Infantry reported they had completely cleared the woods of Chateau Salins, the Division ordered them into reserve. Artillery never being in reserve, was immediately ordered to reinforce the fires of the 219th Field Artillery Battalion, direct support Battalion of the 137th Infantry Regiment. September 10 - 13. This status remained until 17 November 1944. During such time we occupied positions at Faxe, Chateau Erhain, and Morhange.

An objective had previously given the Division an area just east of Morhange to occupy. This particular area was in the vicinity of a railroad track running north and south. This terrain feature was used as a line of departure for the 320th Infantry passing through the 134th Infantry then holding along this line.

The Battalion displaced arriving in the vicinity of Bermering, at 1700 20 November 1944. The firing Battery Commanders were permitted at this time to make their own reconnaissance for positions. All selected excellent positions

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in the vicinity of the village. A prime consideration now was to select positions where ingress and egress were possible. Many back breaking hours were spent in placing and getting vehicles, howitzers, and ammunition in and out of position. On many occasions a near by tank or tank destroyer was called in to give assistance. Regardless of the difficulties, hopeless situations were always overcome in time to preserve our record and "To give continuous support to the Infantry".

The Battle now became a slugging match centering in each little town as the Infantry would drive the enemy from one town this battalion would move up to the previous town occupying what had been spared of destruction. Thus the Battalion occupied positions in the following villages at times set out;

Obreck	21 November 1944
Francaltroff	23 November 1944
Nelling	25 November 1944

During our occupation at Nelling, France we were informed that the Division was to be pinched out and placed into Corps Reserve. However, the Artillery continued to support the 1st Battalion of the 320th Infantry in the occupation of two villages Kappelkinger and Uberkinger. Whereupon the 26th Division extended its left flank thus relieving our front. At this time we had several thousand yards of possible range left so Lt Col Reed offered it to the Division Artillery of that Division who accepted and we continued to fire for two additional days.

Thus rounds out the combat activities of the month of November 1944 for the 216th Field Artillery Battalion.

During the period 8 November to 30 November little time presented itself for activities of special service, however, PX supplies were obtained and distributed three times. Included in the PX ration were eight Christmas Cards for each man. Activity during the last few days of the period lifted considerably, so we had time to enjoy the ARC Clubmobile, and converted a barn into a Motion Picture Theater where the men of the Battalion enjoyed two movies.

For the Commanding Officer:

Carl R Thomas
 CARL R THOMAS
 WOJG USA
 Asst Adj

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