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HEADQUARTERS 216TH FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION
APO 35 U S Army

16 Jul 46 HSD
Date Initials

1 January 1945

SUBJECT: Action Against Enemy, Reports After/After Action Reports. KHR/rlw
TO : The Adjutant General, Washington 25, D C, (Thru: Channels).

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

The 216th Field Artillery Battalion was in a position in the vicinity of Nelling, France at the beginning of December 1944. The firing batteries as well as Headquarters Battery were quite fortunate to obtain some housing facilities. Each organization provided ample hot water for bathing purposes. Much effort was given to personal sanitation as well as the proper methods of preventing trench foot.

The 320th Infantry Regiment was, during the period 26 November to 2 December 1944, assembling in their areas for rest and resupply, having been relieved on their front by elements of the 26th Infantry Division. This Battalion continued to support the 320th for any defensive fires, in addition to the firing on call of the 26th Division.

The Battalion displaced to Hilsprich, France on the 2nd day of December 1944; continuing our direct support mission of the 320th Infantry Regiment. This particular displacement was rather difficult due to extremely bad weather conditions. However, time, effort and excellent supervision overcame these obstacles and the 9 mile move was effected without undue wear and tear on the materiel.

The enemy was very determined to slow our advance. They used many mines, booby traps, destroyed bridges, and blew large craters at vital intersections and at points on roads where detour was impossible. Thus the advance became an engineering problem.

On 5 December 1944 displacement was ordered by Lt Col Kenneth H Reed, Battalion Commander, to the vicinity of Grundviller, France (44.10-49.74). This was a very wide sector and required many known points to be located upon the survey chart, as much of this area would be initially by passed and later cleaned out. This plan of advance necessitated prepared concentrations to protect the exposed flank of the regiment. This was accomplished and large areas were liberated by the outflanking maneuver. The Service Battery of this Battalion later moved into Willerwald, France reporting it practically untouched ex-

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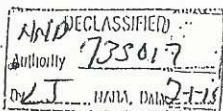
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cept for enemy demolitions.

One point of interest occurred when unverified reports were received to the effect Sarrable, France, was displaying white panels of surrender. 1 Lt John L Cecil, the Liaison Pilot, with Capt Robert E Philbeck, expert air observer, were sent to investigate. The white panels were identified not as surrender panels, but weekly washings hanging in various parts of the city. Later, however, the city was entered and found clear of the enemy which again added to the profit of the outflanking maneuver.

Excellent progress made it possible for the Battalion to displace to the vicinity of Hambach, France on the 6th day of December. The Saar River was now only a short distance ahead. Thus again plans were immediately undertaken to secure a bridgehead and to lighten the burden of its establishment, by well coordinated, infantry-artillery team work, which has been so strongly urged and fostered by Brig Gen T L Futch, the Division Artillery Commander. The teamwork was so well organized to the extent that a forward observer with one of the infantry battalion's arranged to have an artillery shell bursting in the vicinity of the bridgehead everytime the engineers constructing the bridgehead expected some noise which might reveal to the enemy that a bridgehead was being established. The Battalion listed such support as "Anti-noise Artillery Engineer Support."

The Infantry made two crossings within its sector during the night of 8, 9 December. Artillery forward observers were very successful in carrying with them wire communications in their assault crossings. The communications chart showing existing communications discloses that two of the three wires strung across the flooded Saar never went out; a good record. River crossings became a "matter of fact operation" as personnel had much experience and possessed the necessary "know How."

The secure bridgehead enabled this battalion to displace to a point just north of Dieding, France, located on the east bank of the Saar River. On this day the Battalion fired its first round of artillery into prewar Germany.

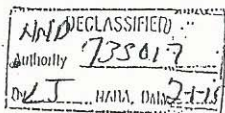
The Battalion did not move again until 14 December 1944 as progress was slow as another river, The Blies River, was to be crossed. This was successfully effected and the Battalion displaced to the vicinity of Weisviller, France where it remained until it displaced to Bliesbrucken, France on 17 December 1944. This particular town was the last town in France. The Infantry, our forward observers and Liaison Officers together with their enlisted personnel were all in prewar Germany.

Lt Col Reed had completed reconnaissance for displacement; forward lines of communication were completed as well as survey of positions, when we were ordered to an assembly area at Steinback, France, 22 December 1944. The following day the entire Battalion moved by blackout drive a total of 89 miles to Barracks Area in the city of Metz, France.

The stay at Metz was for rest, refitting and resupply. However, during this very brief rest. every man had his Christmas Dinner on Christmas Day.

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Church Services, Quartermaster Hot Showers, and picture shows were available. However, every man knew we would be there only a short time. The Germans were attacking in the north and what was assumed to be a rest turned to be an "axe sharpening session" by everyone's own choice. Everything was made ready. There was a war going on and when that is the case the 35th will not rest. It does not know how to rest. One soldier remarked: "It has forgotten how. Look at those - - - - work. Don't they know this is a rest?"

Orders were received on 25 December 1944 to the effect the 35th Division would move to the south flank of the German break through in Luxembourg and Belgium. The 216th started moving at 1130 26 December arriving at a point in rear of the 3rd Corps sector, moving into position during the early morning hours at 27 December 1944 in the vicinity of Weissen Hof, Luxembourg. A good initial advance was made by our infantry in effecting a crossing of the Sure River. Whereupon the Battalion displaced to the vicinity of Boulaide, Luxembourg coordinates 61.7-44.6 on the 29th day of December. The month ended while in these positions and enemy opposition was somewhat heavy. However, our lines were holding, and some small advances were being registered.

The terrain in this vicinity greatly improved our ability to observe and adjust fire on the enemy. Clearing sky permitted excellent visibility. This is our kind of weather and the shooting was wonderful.

Battle Casualties for period: KIA - 1, LWA - 1, Other - 0. Total; 2.

POW captured; None.

Kenneth H Reed
KENNETH H REED
Lt Col FA
Commanding

1 Incl
Unit Journal w/supporting papers.

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