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HEADQUARTERS, 216th FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION
APO 35 U S ARMY

3 September 1944

SUMMARY OF EVENTS

This report herewith submitted, covers in detail the combat action of the 216th Field Artillery Battalion, for the period of the month of August 1944.

The beginning of August 1944 found this Battalion in an excellent state of Morale and combat efficiency, as it had been in actual combat for a period of approximately three weeks. During such time, the Battalion had been in the Battle of St Lo, and it was now well behind. On 1 August 1944 the Battalion was in position in the vicinity of Brigny (coordinates 55.40-60.70) and supporting the 320 Infantry in its swift attack to clear the high ground to the South of the Vire River. In particular this piece of terrain was very well adapted to defense, having the good advantage of high well covered hills, exposed avenues of approach.

Much credit is to be given to the 320th Infantry in their swift and determined advance, which had begun North of Torigny-Sur-Vire. Sweeping forward, capturing the town, and without hesitation, proceeded South to take its next objective. This Battalion worked almost constantly day and night to lay, service and maintain its wire communications with our front line Infantry Battalions. This was maintained and, during the entire action, no artillery support was denied.

Hill 203 will long be remembered by this Battalion. Its numerical designation was obtained from the operational map; its location was immediately South of Torigny and on the South bank of the River Vire; during the Battle to take this Hill this Battalion fired 2406 rounds in support of the Infantry attack. This Battalion's fires were reinforced by the 127th Field Artillery Battalion and the 81st Chemical Mortar Battalion; and both fired many missions at our request. Special mention is made here to the very effective support rendered by the Chemical Battalion in firing approximately 250 rounds of white phosphorus smoke on Hill 203, denying the enemy its excellent observation and screening our preparations for night attack of that position; such attack was successful and, on the morning of 3 August at 0430 our Infantry had occupied Hill 203.

With Hill #203 in our hands this Battalion displaced at 1530 on Thursday 3 August 1944 to a point on the North Slope of such hill and, in the vicinity of Le Benny Bocage (coordinates 58.00-42.00) we were now in possession of very excellent observation to the South and, from established observation posts fired many concentrations on enemy gun flashes, road interdictions and counter battery.

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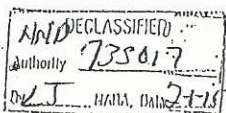
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Summary of Events, Month of August 1944, Hq 216th FA Bn, contd.

Mission of the 320th Infantry after capture of Hill 203 as above stated was to continue its attack to take the Division objective which was the high ground and road net immediately Northwest of the city of Vire. This objective was taken by the division about noon Friday 4 August 1944. One particular concentration fired by the left platoon of Battery A hit an ammunition dump, causing some terrific explosions resulting in the enemy's as well as the civilian's to evacuate the village of Neufbourg. Upon the taking of the above objective the Division was to hold and defend in its present location.

The 35th Division received a new assignment. Up to this time we were fighting with the 1st United States Army. Now we were assigned to the newly formed 3rd United States Army. This meant to us that we were on our way. Orders were soon forth coming and, on Sunday 6 August 1944, this Battalion moved to a defensive position 2 kilometers North of Brecey with orders to continue the march further South on 7 August 1944. However, due to the heavy military traffic, over our proposed routes, orders were received to remain in position until further notice and on a 30 minute alert status.

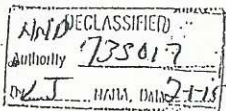
The Germans Counterattack

While this Battalion was in position near Brecey and prepared to move further Southeast on our mission with the 3rd U. S. Army, information was received that the Germans were counterattacking in force near Mortain, with its mission to drive through to Avranches, thereby cutting off our lines of supply as well as divide our forces: during this time we were a part of the XX Corps: on 6 August 1944 we received orders to move by combat team with a mission of preparing to meet a possible threat from the direction of Milly. An additional mission was to be prepared to reinforce the fires of the 161st Field Artillery Battalion in the event this attack develops. On Monday 7 August 1944 we received orders that the Division was to attack. The 134th & 137th Infantry Motorized with the mission to secure the Mortain, Barenton & St Cyr Road. For this operation we are again in the 1st Army and in the VII Corps.

The 320th Infantry and this Battalion did not enter into the actual battle until attack orders were given 9 August 1944, whereupon displacement was made to a position Southwest of Barenton (coordinates 50.82-06.09) to support it. The Battalion spent the next four days in the battle of what is now known as Mortain. During this battle the fires of the Division Artillery were massed and many Division Artillery Concentrations were fired. The counterattack was stopped cold and our infantry began to drive forward towards the city of Mortain. This battle, as in the battle for Hill 203, disclosed the enemy had all the observation and commanding terrain; the advantage was his. Irrespective of all this the infantry fought forward yard by yard, against the best troops in the German Army. The following types were identified: Der Feuer Regiment- Deutschland Regiment, SS troops, Panzer Division, and some Paratroopers. There was no stopping this Regiment when it was learned the major portion of an infantry Battalion of the 30th Division on our left had been surrounded for several days on the high ground just east of Mortain. They were rescued and relieved by the 1st Battalion of the 320th Infantry, this Battalion in support. We were relieved from further action in this sector on Saturday 13 August 1944 and again continued on our original mission with the 3rd U.S. Army.

During the entire phase of the Mortain operations this Battalion

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Summary of Events, Month of August 1944, Hq 216th FA Bn, contd.

fired 3188 rounds in its direct support mission.

The personnel of the Battalion were delighted when it was later learned that a great trap had been formed and some 50,000 Germans surrounded, in the area of Mortain and Falisse. We knew we had helped form this trap in our Battle of Mortain which developed and was fought out just as this Division was passing by, a 5 day diversion with the 1st Army.

During the Battle of Mortain the 3rd U.S. Army continued its advance Eastward and the Division was far behind. By Wednesday 16 August 1944 our Division finally caught up with the advance forces and the enemy to our immediate front. Our motorized infantry had received enemy fire from a point 5 kilometers Southwest of the city of Chateaudun. By midafternoon the 320th had detrucked, deployed astride the main road with its mission to attack, take, and secure the city of Chateaudun.

During the afternoon above mentioned, additional artillery from the 182nd Group was placed into position to reinforce our fires. However, due to the speed of the attack and the need of observed fires, the additional artillery failed to get registered. This battle started about 1600 and by dawn 17 August 1944 it was all over. Later it was learned the Germans had fled in great haste leaving every type of equipment as well as hot meals. It is interesting to note that during this lightning attack the only artillery to fire was the 216th FA Bn and the infantry Cannon Company and, when the city was entered, five German Mark VI Tanks had been disabled, by direct hits and abandoned.

During this battle this Battalion fired 929 rounds.

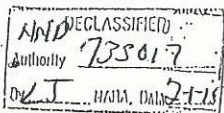
From 20 August 1944 to 26 August 1944 no important battles were fought. During this time the Battalion moved from Chateaudun through Montargis, Courtenay, Joigny to a point west of the city of Troyes, where it went into a position to prepare for an attack upon that city; it had been reported it was held by 3000 Germans, however, the enemy withdrew to the East after blowing up all bridges over the Seine River. By Sunday 27 August 1944 the city was fully occupied and this Battalion moved to a position in the South edge of the city to protect the approaches from the North, East, and Southeast; the entire 182nd Group was also in position in the vicinity with the same type of mission.

During the night 27-28 August 1944 it was reported that the 15th Panzer Grenadier and the 3rd Panzer Division who were formerly in Africa and fought in Italy had inflicted casualties to a cavalry screen attempting to establish a road block on the road to Lusigny-Sur-Barse and that they were in the large woods North and South of the village: it was also learned that this force had a mission of attacking Troyes. An enemy patrol had reached a point 4 kilometers South of town, and apparently the force withdrew when considerable unobserved artillery fire was directed at the road block, woods, and important road junctions.

Organizations of Task Force Seebree to attack this force resulted in attack orders being issued to attack, seize, and defend the road from Bar-Sur-Seine to Venderevere-Sur-Barse.

This attack was to begin at 0800 30 August 1944. No opposition was encountered, however, much evidence of a very hasty withdrawal was very obvious. The Task Force was on its objective and this Battalion in position to fire: by 1500. The Battalion position was 1 kilometer South of Villy-en-Trodes.

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Summary of Events, Month of August 1944, Hq, 216th FA Bn, contd.

The end of the month found this Battalion in position vicinity of Brienne-Le-Chateau after a displacement from Villy-en-Trodes during the night of 30-31 August.

For the Commanding Officer:

Maurice R. Hubbard
MAURICE R HUBBARD
Major, FA
Executive

Incls: Journal and Supporting
Papers August 1944.

319.1 1st Ind RGC/mla
(3 Sep 44)
HQ 35TH INF DIV, APO 35, U S Army, 20 Sep 44
TO: Commanding General, XII Corps, APO 312, U S Army

July 44

Forwarded in compliance with paragraph 2, Memo 2, Headquarters XII Corps, 2 August 1944.

For the Commanding General:

Richard G. Chadwick
RICHARD G. CHADWICK
Lt. Col., A. G. D.
Adjutant General

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