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Authority 735017  
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HEADQUARTERS 216TH FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION  
APO 35 % PM NY NY

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Auth: CG 35th Inf Div

Initials *RHC*

Date *16 Apr 45*

4 April 1945

*May 45*

SUBJECT: Action Against Enemy, Report After.

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

1. In compliance with the provisions of Par 10, C 3, AR 345-105 submitted below is report after action against the enemy for the 216th Field Artillery Battalion covering the period 1-31 March 1945.

1 March 1945

The 216th Field Artillery Battalion was in an overnight rendezvous area in Milich, Germany, having just displaced from positions in the vicinity of Hulhoven, Germany, crossing the Roer River over a captured bridge at Hilfarth, Germany. The Battalion received orders, during the night of a newly formed task force to be known as Task Force Byrne, and commanded by Col B A Byrne, 320th Infantry Regimental Commander. This task force was composed of the 320th Infantry Regiment, 784th Tank Battalion (colored), 216th Field Artillery Battalion, 275 Armored Field Artillery Battalion, Company C 60th Engineer Battalion, Co C 110 Medical Battalion and certain other attached units. Task Force Byrne effected a quick penetration of the final Siegfried Line defensive system east of the Roer River. On the morning of 1 March 1945 the task force attacked with the 3rd Battalion 320th Infantry riding tanks. Using the system of movement with fire, this force moved with great speed, thru places of scattered enemy resistance, capturing such places as Bruggen, Bradt, Kaldin-Kirchen and finally entering its objective of Venlo, Holland at 1700; completing a historic dash of 30 miles and outflanking the Siegfried Line to the west of its spearheads. Tactical decisions were quickly made throughout the day resulting in this unusual success. Over 500 PW's were taken, including the mopping up of Venlo.

*325-FA (216) - O.M*

Enemy demolitions of the railroad overpass at Bruggen, ordinary road blocks and mined areas were cleared with record speed. Thus causing a quick collapse of all organized enemy resistance, and holding casualties to a low figure. The 216th Field Artillery Battalion together with its attached anti-air craft battery captured 11 prisoners during the day.

*sf*

This battalion encountered its first German civilians in any number. Non-fraternization orders were obeyed.

Occupation and liberation of Venlo, Holland required artillery defensive fires. Thus the 216th Field Artillery Battalion and the 275 Armored Field Artillery Battalion occupied positions on the German-Holland border 2 miles South of the city of Venlo, with orders to be prepared to continue the attack in a North-easterly direction with the city of Wesel, Germany on the East bank of the Rhine

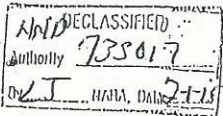
BY AUTHORITY OF THE ADJUTANT GENERAL  
*Frederick C. Col*  
DOWNGRADING COMMITTEE 23 July 1945

*JUL 24 1945*

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River as the subsequent objective.

2 March 1945

The 216th Field Artillery Battalion displaced to positions in the vicinity of Straelen, Germany. The Battalion column underwent considerable enemy interdiction fires while it was halted along the road immediately southwest of Straelen. However, no personnel casualties occurred, some materiel was damaged. The Battalion passed thru the town during hours of darkness and while infantry units were still mopping up enemy forces. The enemy were using bazookas as mortars, firing them from one street over to another.

3 March 1945

Task Force Byrne continuing its mission attacked in the direction of Nieu-kirk where this battalion made a displacement, taking up positions east of the city. Speed of the attack prevented the enemy from detonating many 500 lbs bombs which had been placed under bridges along the routes of advance. The offensive spirit of the task forces was evident by the actions of every man and officer in it. Enemy resistance in vicinity of Sevelen, Germany, was beginning to stiffen somewhat. 700 rounds of all types of ammunition were fired to assist in its neutralization. All items of supply were excellent and no problem was expected to develop in any critical item.

4-5 March 1945

Displaced to Omerton, Germany, 4 March 1945, Frontline reports indicated a more determined resistance slowing up our advance.

6 March 1945

Displaced to vicinity of Neirson, Germany. From this position the Air Observers began reporting many profitable targets including ferry boats criss-crossing the Rhine, also street cars and vehicles in the city of Wesel on the east bank of the Rhine. Intelligence reports indicated strong resistance in a pocket forming in the area west of Wesel. The enemy was encountering much difficulty in attempting to evacuate its troops. This battalion fired many observed missions into the pocket from both ground and air observers. This type of warfare continued until the pocket was completely wiped out and the Division was relieved by the 75th Infantry Division on March 11, 12, 1945. The Division was then given the mission of defending the west bank of the Rhine in the Corps Sector.

7-12 March 1945

The Battalion remained in its present position until 1200 12 March 1945 supporting Infantry compressing the Wesel pockets.

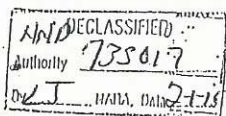
12-20 March 1945

The 216th Field Artillery Battalion moved by motor, 12 March 1945, to a rest

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area in the vicinity of Belfeld, Holland, and remained until 1900 20 March 1945. The period of time was well taken up by organized maintenance of materiel, baths, picture shows, passes to Liege, Maastricht, Sittard, Brussels, Paris, and also a sizeable allotment to Army Rest Camps. Emphasis was placed upon sanitation, military courtesy and personal hygiene.

21-23 March 1945

The artillery of the 35th Division was ordered to occupy positions along the main highway between Rheinberg and Ossenburg to support crossing operations of the 79th and 30th Infantry Divisions. Reconnaissance and preparations were complete prior to the occupation of such positions which was made under the cover of darkness on the night of 20, 21 March 1945. Our mission was to support the infantry crossing the river and to cross it ourselves.

These positions were within 1500 yards of the river and affording very little defilade from points of observation in enemy territory. Thus all day time circulation was strictly curtailed. Camouflage became paramount. Positions were well dug in and all vehicles were dispersed and dug in to protect tires from fragmentation. As a result no enemy fire was ever directed at this position, although a considerable amount fell within view of the positions. Orders were received directing the hauling and digging in of  $2\frac{1}{2}$  units of fire above basic load, or a total of 6400 rounds, was successfully accomplished without mishap.

24 March 1945

This Battalion participated in the largest artillery preparation of the war to date, firing 3200 rounds in five hours. 800 rounds of which were fired within 200-300 yards of our infantry in an 18 minute period, an average of 4 rounds per howitzer per minute. This preparation started at 0100 24 March 1945. By 1200 the same day the Battalion had expended nearly 5000 rounds, which was a record for this organization. Reports from 35 Division Artillery indicated the crossing was made as planned with opposition considered moderate.

The Battalion fired its last round from the West bank of the Rhine at approximately 2100, and prepared to cross the river on Division order.

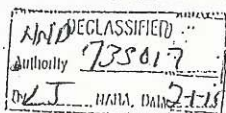
25-28 March 1945

An order was issued 25 March 1945, stating this battalion would cross at 1730 over Love Bridge and occupy positions on the east bank with the mission of reinforcing the fires of the 219th Field Artillery Battalion the direct support Battalion of the 137th Infantry Regiment.

The entire Battalion made the crossing as planned and occupied positions in the vicinity of Hirsfelders, Germany. An additional displacement was made

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to the vicinity of Waldhuck, Germany, prior to the commitment of the 320th Infantry who were to attack by passing through the right flank Battalion of the 137th Infantry Regiment at 0600 28 March 1945.

29 March 1945

This Battalion continued to support the Infantry in its maneuver to turn south and line up along a canal in the north fringe of the industrial district of the Rhur. Many observed missions were called in requesting fire on various types of targets from groups of enemy personnel to trains operating within the Rhur area.

30 March 1945

This Battalion displaced to positions in the vicinity of Battrop, Germany. Resistance along the front was beginning to show signs of breaking up. Many missions were fired. The entire area was full of excellent artillery targets such as factories apparently still in operation.

31 March 1945

This Battalion remained in position to continue its support of the infantry during its relief in certain sectors by the 79th Division. The Division had a defensive mission of holding a line east and west along the north side of the Rhur area which is now completely encircled and estimated to have up to 100,000 troops therein.

The battle casualties for the month of March 1945 are as follows:

	OFF	EM
KIA.....	0.....	0
DOW.....	0.....	2
SWA.....	1.....	4
SIA.....	0.....	0
LWA.....	0.....	2
LIA.....	0.....	0
MIA.....	0.....	0
Total	1	8

Awards received by members of 216 FA Bn are as follows:

	DSC		Silver Stars		Soldier's Medal		Bronze Star		Air Medal	
	Reg	Olc	Reg	Olc	Reg	Olc	Reg	Olc	Reg	Olc
Officers	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1
Enlisted Men	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	1	0	0

The number of Purple Heart Awards are: Eight.

*Kenneth H Reed*  
KENNETH H REED  
Lt Col, FA  
Commanding