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HEADQUARTERS

60TH ENGINEER COMBAT BATTALION

APO 35

US ARMY

5 February 1945

SUBJECT: Report After Action Against Enemy.

TO : The Adjutant General,
Washington 25, D.C.

1. In compliance with the provisions of Par 10 C3, AR 345-105, submitted below is report after action against the enemy for the 60th Engineer Combat Battalion, covering the period 1-31 January 1945.

At the beginning of this period the battalion was continuing its mission of facilitating the attack of the 35th Infantry Division north along the Belgium-Luxembourg border. Key officer personnel consisted of Lt Col Philip Botchin, commanding; Maj Alexander G Sutton Jr, Executive Officer; Maj Louis H Johnson, S-3 (Maj Johnson was promoted from the rank of Captain to Major on 16 January 1945); Capt Fred B Waters, Jr, S-2; Capt Robert W Johnston, ADE; Capt Robert H Houk, S-4; 1st Lt Charles D Meckes, S-1; Capt Charles W Harris, commanding Hq & Serv Co (Capt Harris was promoted from the rank of 1st Lt to Captain on 1 January 1945); Capt Tim Mercer, commanding Co A; Capt Charles W Jones, commanding Co B; and Capt Frank G Rennis, commanding Co C. Battalion strength at the beginning of the period was 26 officers, 3 warrant officers, and 556 enlisted men.

On 1 Jan 45 the battalion (-) was bivouaced at Bilsdorf, Luxembourg, with Co A in direct support of the 134th Infantry Regiment, Co B in direct support of the 137th Infantry Regiment, and Co C in direct support of the 320th Infantry Regiment. The 1137th Engineer Combat Group was in direct support of this battalion. At this time the division was maintaining pressure on the enemy, with the mission of following closely any enemy attempt to withdraw. To thwart any enemy attempt to launch a large scale mechanized attack, numerous bridges in the division sector were prepared for demolition, charges were placed for prepared craters, and abatis and AT mine "daisy chains" were prepared and manned. Vigorous patrols were employed by the enemy as well as our own troops, and in one instance either an enemy patrol or civilians laid AT mines on the road west of Tintange and camouflaged them with snow. This road had previously been cleared of mines and posted by our own troops. Consequently it was necessary to check daily, many roads which had been previously cleared of mines, but which were subject to infiltration by enemy patrols. Due to heavy snowfall in this area, it was necessary to maintain constant ice patrols on all important roads, and hauling and spreading of traction material was a continuous task.

1 January 1945

The battalion (-) was bivouaced at Bilsdorf, Luxembourg, with each company in direct support of its respective regiment. Co A was bivouaced at Honville, Belgium; Co B at Tintange, Belgium; and Co C at Boulaide, Luxembourg. All companies maintained ice patrols in their respective regimental sectors and hauled and spread traction material. Co B, upon order of the 137th Infantry Regimental Commander, destroyed with demolitions, two bridges over a small creek on the main road south west of Harlange, Luxembourg. Co B also manned two road blocks, one on this road and one on the highway south of Harlange. Co C prepared and manned an AT mine "daisy chain" on the road between Boulaide and Harlange.

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2 January 1945

The battalion continued its mission of manning road blocks and ice patrols. Co A cleared mines from several roads south of Bastogne and removed an enemy abatis from a trail south east of Bastogne. Co B laid an AT minefield north of Honville, Belgium, and Co C swept all roads in the 320th Infantry Regimental sector.

3 January 1945

Co A removed an enemy minefield south of Honville while Co B removed a friendly minefield south and east of Honville. Co C rechecked for mines on all roads forward of the 320th Infantry Regimental CP, and all companies continued ice patrols and manning of road blocks.

4-5-6 January 1945

During this period all companies continued hauling and spreading of traction material on roads in this sector in addition to manning road blocks and rechecking of roads which had previously been cleared of mines forward of regimental command posts.

7 January 1945

Co A laid an anti-tank minefield north east of Luttrebich, Belgium, while Co B removed a friendly minefield on the main highway south of Harlange. Demolition charges were removed from a prepared crater, and a daisy chain road block on the road north of Surre, Luxembourg, and a bridge over a small stream south east of Honville was prepared for demolition. Co C continued manning of road blocks in its sector.

8 January 1945

Since the 320th Infantry Regiment was placed in division reserve, Co C, at 1100 hours, was relieved of direct support and reverted to battalion reserve. At the same hour, the 1137th Engr Combat Group was relieved of direct support of this battalion and the 1123rd Engr Combat Group placed in direct support. Co's A and B continued manning road blocks in addition to hauling and spreading traction material.

9 January 1945

Battalion Headquarters and Hq & Serv Co moved by motor convoy north and west and closed into bivouac at Hotte, Belgium at 1600 hours. Co C moved in the vicinity of Warnach, Belgium and closed into bivouac at 1600 hours. At 1430 hours, Co C was attached to Task Force Walton, which was to become operational in the event of a counter-attack or if the enemy suddenly withdrew. The Task Force consisted of one company of Engineers, one company of Tank Destroyers, and one Reconnaissance Troop. Its tentative mission was to pursue the enemy, or, in the event of a counter-attack, be committed to the defense as division reserve.

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10 January 1945

Co A removed friendly minefields north east of Luttrebhis, Belgium, and gapped and marked a friendly minefield north of town. Co B removed a friendly AT minefield in the vicinity of Villers-la-Bonne-Eau while Co C continued bridge maintenance and hauling and spreading of traction material.

11 January 1945

Co A cleared enemy AT mines from roads in its sector, and rechecked all roads which had previously been cleared forward of the 134th Regimental CP. Co B constructed a class 40 treadway bridge over a small creek at Villers-la-Bonne-Eau and cleared enemy mines from roads leading into the town. Rubble and "knocked out" enemy vehicles were cleared from the streets. Co B was also relieved of manning an AT road block north east of Livarchamps, Belgium at 1100 hours. Co C replenished stock piles of traction material and continued spreading it on roads in the division sector.

12 January 1945

As it became apparent that Task Force Walton would not be employed tactically, it was dissolved at 1325 hours, and Co C reverted to battalion reserve. Co's A and B cleared roads of mines in their respective regimental sectors, and replenished stock piles of traction material along roads in the division sector.

13 January 1945

Co B was relieved of direct support of the 137th Infantry Regiment and reverted to battalion reserve. The company continued to remove friendly AT minefields in the vicinity of Villers-la-Bonne-Eau, Belgium, and conducted a flame thrower school for the 3rd battalion, 137th Infantry Regiment at Livarchamps. Co A rechecked all roads forward of the 134th Regimental Headquarters for enemy mines and Co C continued the replenishing of stock piles of traction material in the division sector.

14 January 1945

Co B removed 300 friendly AT mines from a field north east of Honville, as well as an enemy AT minefield in a field south of Villers-la-Bonne-Eau. Snow was cleared from the 35th Div Artillery Liaison air strip, and all companies performed extensive maintenance of vehicles and equipment. Co A (-) was relieved of direct support of the 134th Infantry Regiment at 1130 hours. One plat, Co A, remained in direct support.

15 January 1945

Co C continued the replenishing of stock piles and spreading of traction material on roads in the division sector in addition to clearing snow from the 35th Division air strip. Co's A and B constructed artillery gun emplacements for the 514th Field Artillery Battalion in the vicinity of Salvicourt, and all companies continued extensive maintenance of vehicles and equipment.

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16 January 1945

One platoon of Co B was placed in direct support of the 134th Infantry Regiment. Co B filled craters, and leveled the Artillery Liaison air strip in the vicinity of Lutremange, Belgium. Co C assisted Co A in the burial of dead stock by blowing a crater 43' x 28' x 12' in the vicinity of Sainiez, Belgium. All companies continued hauling and spreading of traction material.

17-18 January 1945

The battalion continued its normal support of the 35th Infantry Division and continued extensive maintenance of vehicles and equipment in preparation for motor movement on 19 Jan 45 to Metz, France. The 134th CT with one plat of Co A attached, was attached to the 6th Armored Division at 1800 hours. As the 137th Infantry Regiment and 320th Infantry Regiment were to move to Metz by Combat Teams, one platoon from Co's B and C were attached to their respective regiments at 1800 hours.

19 January 1945

The battalion (-) moved by motor convoy to Metz, France, closing into bivouac in the Grand Arsenal at 1730 hours. As soon as the 320th Infantry CT closed into bivouac, the CT was dissolved, and one platoon from Co C was relieved of attachment and reverted to battalion control.

20-21-22 January 1945

The battalion continued extensive maintenance of vehicles and equipment and cleaning of billets and grounds. During this period the enlisted men were given every opportunity to cleanse and rehabilitate themselves, and full use was made of special service facilities such as movies and U.S.O. shows. Extensive plans were made for the training of infantry troops in assault of land fortifications, but training schedules were discarded upon receipt of movement orders. In preparation for the move of the division to the XV Corps area, one platoon Co C was attached to the 320th CT at 2200 hours 22 Jan 45.

23 January 1945

At 1315 hours, the battalion (-) moved by motor convoy south to Blanche Eglise, France, closing into bivouac at 1630 hours. The division was now attached to the XV Corps of the Seventh U.S. Army, and preparations were made to relieve elements of the 100th and 45th Infantry Divisions in the Corps, defensive position, the following day.

24 January 1945

As part of the XV Corps, the division moved into the line with the 100th Division on the left, and the 45th Division on the right. The CT's moved into position with the 320th Infantry Regiment on the right and the 137th Infantry Regiment on the left. As soon as the CT's had assembled into bivouac at 1725 hours, Combat Team attachments were dissolved. Co B was placed in direct support of the 137th Infantry Regiment and Co C in direct support of the 320th Infantry Regiment. The battalion (-) moved by motor convoy to Frohmuhl, France, closing in bivouac at 1700 hours. As this was to be a defensive position, plans and preparations were immediately made to determine the number and density of friendly minefields in the division front, and the amount of engineer materials such as AT and AP mines, concertina wire, pickets and warning de-

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vices needed to complete the defensive positions.

25 January 1945

At 0001 hours the 1109th Engr Combat Group was placed in direct support of the battalion. The battalion continued preparations for establishing defensive positions and consolidated all reports of the known defensive works in the division sector in order to determine the amount of additional works required.

26-27 January 1945

Due to the heavy snow in this sector, it was again necessary to maintain 24-hr ice patrols, and haul and spread traction material on all important roads in the division sector. Co C cut timbers for revetting of gun emplacements and shelter for the division artillery and Co's B & C made numerous reconnaissance of all existing field fortifications and obstacles in the division sector, so that all mines and barbed wire emplaced by this battalion would supplement existing works. The battalion snow plow cleared snow from the 35th Division air strip near Struth. As security against any enemy mechanized attack, anti-tank mine road blocks were installed and manned by Co's B & C on the road between Meisenthal and Montronn. Eleven bridges in the division sector were prepared for demolition and manned by Co's B & C. Co A, in battalion reserve, performed maintenance on vehicles and equipment. As the 134th Infantry Regiment was still in Belgium, and the 137th and 320th Infantry Regiments were abreast on the line, the battalion was prepared to assemble on three hours notice as division reserve.

28 January 1945

Normal engineer duties were performed by the battalion, and eleven more bridges in the division sector were prepared for demolition. In accordance with division order, three main lines of defense were planned so that, in the event of a withdrawal, the division could defend each line of resistance with only a small holding force.

29 January 1945

The battalion received orders to assemble in Frohmuhl on the morning of the 30th of January 1945 and to move by motor convoy to St Geertruid, Holland.

30 January 1945

During the morning, the battalion was relieved of all engineer tasks by the 120 and 325th Engr Combat Battalions, and assembled at Frohmuhl to move by motor convoy to Holland. As the medium artillery pieces and attached tank destroyers of the division were to be transported by rail, one platoon of Co A remained behind to supervise loading, blocking, and wiring of the artillery pieces to the railway flatcars. The battalion (-) moved by convoy at 1015 hours, arriving in Troyon-sur-Meuse, France at 1700 hours.

31 January 1945

After spending the night at Troyon-sur-Meuse, France, the battalion (-) left by motor convoy at 0920 hours, closing into bivouac at St Geertruid, Holland at 1945 hours.

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During this period four Silver Stars, and thirteen Bronze Stars were awarded to officers and enlisted men of this battalion. General Orders 59, Headquarters 35th Infantry Division dated 31 December 1944 awarded the Silver Star to 2d Lt John S Parker for a daring daylight reconnaissance under fire which greatly facilitated the successful crossing of the Saar River at Saarguemines, France, in December 1944, formal presentation was made at Honville, Belgium 4 Jan 45; to Cpl Daniel L Boyd, Co B, the Silver Star for heroic action in the rescue of five infantry soldiers from drowning during the assault crossing of the Blies River in December 1944, formal presentation was made 4 Jan 45 at Tintange, Belgium; and Major Louis H Johnson, the Bronze Star for exceptionally meritorious service during the period 7-14 December 1944, formal presentation was made 3 Jan 45 at Bilsdorf, Luxembourg. General Orders 2, Headquarters 35th Infantry Division dated 8 Jan 45 awarded the Silver Star posthumously to 1st Lt Paul B Shamhart, Jr, for heroic action while evacuating a seriously wounded man. General Orders 3, Headquarters 35th Infantry Division dated 9 Jan 45, posthumously awarded the Silver Star Medal to S Sgt Chester Wade, Co A, for gallantry in action while constructing a foot bridge across the Blies River in December 1944. General Orders 4, Headquarters 35th Infantry Division dated 12 Jan 45 awarded Bronze Stars to Tec 5 William H Bosshammer and Pvt James R Keegan Co C for heroic action while evacuating a seriously wounded comrade from an artillery barrage in December 1944, formal presentation was made to Tec 5 Bosshammer at Warnach, Belgium, 14 Jan 45. This same order awarded Bronze Stars to Pvt John W Canfield and Pvt Cecil McHenry, Co A, for heroism in rescuing five infantry soldiers from drowning during an assault crossing of the Blies River in December 1944. General Orders 7, Headquarters 35th Infantry Division dated 17 Jan 45 awarded Bronze Stars to Sgt Victor L Jones, Tec 5 Edgar H Yarito, Pfc James M Winters, Privates James R Moore, Harry F Dowers, John J Henry and Horace E Koontz, for gallantry in action in holding a strong point against repeated counterattacks in December 1944. Formal presentation was made at Metz, France, 22 January 1945. 1st Lt Roland F Moureau, Co A, was awarded the Bronze Star on this same order for gallantry in action in the assault crossing of the Blies River in December 1944. Formal presentation was made at Metz, France, 22 January 1945.

The officers and men of the battalion keenly felt the loss of 2d Lt John S Parker, Co A. Lt Parker was killed the night of 7 Jan 45 by enemy mortar fire while making a reconnaissance in the vicinity of Luttrebbis, Belgium, preparatory to laying a minefield. Total casualties of the month were one officer and one enlisted man killed in action; one enlisted man wounded in action and thirty-two non-battle casualties. There were no prisoners captured. Total strength at close of period was 25 officers, 3 warrant officers, and 597 enlisted men.

Philip Botchin
 PHILIP BOTCHIN
 Lt Col CE
 Commanding

2 Incls:

- #1 - S-3 Journal
- #2 - Copy of ltr re: Friendly Mine Fields

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HEADQUARTERS
60TH ENGINEER COMBAT BATTALION
APO 35 U S ARMY

13 January 1945

SUBJECT: Friendly Minefield Data.

TO: Commanding General, III Corps,
APO 303, U S Army.

ATTN: Corps Engineer.

1. In compliance with letter, your headquarters, file ref: 476 GWEN, subject: "Friendly Minefield Data", dated 8 January 1945, the following information on the employment of anti-tank and anti-personnel mines by this unit is submitted. Accounts of tactical use during two phases of operation are included, the first being a description of the employment of mines in a defensive situation, and the second the use during an advance, or attack, when limited use was made of mines for local security only.

2. Defensive situation.

a. From 27 September 1944 to 8 November 1944, this division was in a defensive situation with positions in the northern edge of the Forest of Gremecy. Our front lines extended from a point south west of Gremecy, north west to Ajoncourt, an exceptionally wide front. During this period, defensive works on the MLR were executed by this Battalion in the form of minefields and wire entanglements.

b. Anti-tank fields:

- (1) Anti-tank fields laid ranged in size from 9 to 1200 mines. In restricted approaches, a small amount of mines were used, sufficient to efficiently block the route. From 9 to 40 mines were used in these instances, in approximately 50% of the cases the mines being buried. These blocks were often supplemented by daisy chains manned by infantry personnel. Two row and four row regular hasty patterns were employed except in exceptional cases when mines were laid two to three feet apart in critical locations.
- (2) The standard deliberate minefield was used in only one instance, across an open expanse of ground in front of front line positions. This field contained 1200 mines, and included an extended portion. It was used as a flank protection between units.
- (3) Enemy minefields were used in numerous instances during this period to tie in with our own fields. These fields were reconnoitered, marked, and filled out with our own mines, and in addition to fitting in with our defensive works by their locations, they also helped alleviate the critical mine shortage.
- (4) Anti-tank fields were employed on all roads leading into area; across open expanses suitable for tank approaches; in draws and gullies leading into our positions; and through edges of light woods.

c. Anti-personnel fields and booby traps:

- (1) Anti-personnel fields were employed in positions where approach of enemy patrols were likely, such as draws, woods, covered approaches and creek banks; to fill or supplement all gaps in anti-tank fields; and in conjunction with concertinas and barbed wire fences. They were often placed in fields of crops.
- (2) Artillery shells were used as AP devices, lined along roads at fifty yard intervals, and placed in crotches of trees. Booby trapped hand grenades were used in brush, undergrowth, and tied to barbed wire en-

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tanglements.

- (3) The effectiveness of the anti-personnel mines and booby traps was later noted, when on resuming the attack to our front, scattered enemy dead showed where patrols, attempting to infiltrate after dark, had become casualties to our AP mines and booby traps, certainly with the desired harassing effect on the enemy.
- (4) M-48 and M-49 trip flares were densely located across the front, used particularly in conjunction with the triple concertina which was employed as tactical wire. These flares, when set off by tampering with the wire, was the signal for machine guns to open up along the previously sited protective line of fire. It might be noted here that the triple concertina was used instead of double apron fence, and while the infantry was at first dubious of using it rather than the conventional double apron, they became convinced by the ease and speed of construction and adequate protection it afforded.

d. All installations were made at night. Due to the activity on this front while the division was thus employed, it was impossible to lay minefields, construct wire entanglements, and place booby traps (most of which were located in No Mans Land) without a prohibitive number of casualties. Consequently, all such engineer work was done under cover of darkness.

e. Offensive use of mines: During this period, mines were used offensively on one occasion when a patrol, under cover of darkness, penetrated into enemy territory and laid a field of four anti-tank mines and eight anti-personnel grenades.

3. During the advance or attack.

a. On 27 December 1944, this division was committed on the southern flank of the enemy salient established by his counter offensive. The division jumped off on that day, and continued limited objective attacks and/or maintained pressure until 12 January 1945 against considerable opposition in the sector generally southeast of BASTOGNE.

b. During this period shuttle mines, road blocks, and small hasty minefields were frequently used for protective measures and to secure the gains made prior to the halting of the regiment either for the night or because of superior enemy fire.

c. Hasty minefields afforded considerable protection against enemy counter attacks, which were expected and which frequently occurred during this period. These fields were laid by the engineer companies (which normally operate in direct support of the infantry regiments) and were ordered placed by the infantry regimental commanders, normally upon recommendation of the engineer company commanders concerned.

d. During the advance in the HARLANGE sector, Co A, 60th Engineer Combat Battalion, laid a field of ninety-nine mines. One Mark IV German tank, attempting to penetrate our lines during darkness, was knocked out in this field. The field was moved forward the next day when the unit advanced.

e. Shuttle mines or "daisy chains" were often employed at outpost positions and were manned and usually laid by the infantry units. During a rapid advance, this was normally the only use made of mines.

For the Commanding Officer:

ALEX G. SUTTON, JR
Major CE
Executive Officer