

HEADQUARTERS  
737th Tank Battalion

APC 436  
**RESTRICTED**

2 Feb 45

**SUBJECT:** Action Against Enemy Report, After After Action Report.

**TO :** The Adjutant General, Washington, D. C. (through Commanding General, 5th Infantry Division.)

1. General Situation:

During the first half of January the Battalion performed necessary maintenance, defensive plans were developed and routes reconnoitered. Combat units moved into positions prepared to repulse possible enemy counter-attacks, while one platoon of each medium tank company performed secondary tank mission of indirect fire. From 18 to 28 Jan the Battalion actively supported the advance of the 5th Infantry Division in an attack to the North across the SAUER RIVER and the advance of 12 miles along a 7 mile front against elements of 352 VG Div., 79th VG Div., 9th VG Div, 130 Ps Lehr Div and miscellaneous units in the cold, snow-covered, wind-swept, mountainous ARDENNE sector of northern LUXEMBOURG. During the last days of the month maintenance was performed and the combat units manned defensive positions in their sectors.

2. Assignments, Attachments, Support and Reinforcing Fires:

a. Battalion remained assigned to XII Corps (Ltr Hq TUSA, File No. 322, GNMCC, Subject: Troop Assignment A-23, dtd 13 Aug 44) and attached to 5th Inf. Div. (Ltr, Hq XII Corps, File No. AG 322(G-3), Subject: Troop Assignment A-17, dtd 29 Dec 44.)

b. The Companies were attached or supported the following units:

1. A Company: 13-17 Jan, 1 platoon supported 50th FA Bn; 17-24 Jan attached 2d Inf Regt; 24-31 Jan attached 11th Inf Regt.
2. B Company: 13-17 Jan. 1 platoon supported 46th FA Bn; 17-28 attached 10th Inf Regt.
3. C Company: 20-24 Jan. 11th Inf Regt, 13-17 Jan 1 platoon supported 19th FA Bn, 28-31 Jan 2d Inf. Regt.
4. D Company: 25-28 Jan. 1 platoon attached 10 Inf Regt; 28-31 Jan. 1 platoon attached 2d Inf Regt.
5. Bn (-ASB Cos) 17-20 attached 11th Inf Regt.

c. The Assault Gun Platoon reinforced (6 - 105mm How. mounted on M-4 Tank) supported the 50th FA Bn from 19-25 Jan.

3. Our Operations:

a. Period 1-12 Jan. From 1-4 Jan the Battalion (-Co C) remained assembled in the vicinity of REULAND (VP 920303) and HEFFINGEN (VP 925313) while C Co. assembled at CHRISTENACH (VP 948331) attached to 11th Inf Regt. On 5 Jan "B" Co. moved to MEDERNACH (VP 905355) and on the following day "A" Co moved to an area 2 Km NE of SCHRONDWEILER (VP 859357). All units performed much needed maintenance. Defensive plans were developed and routes reconnoitered. No material losses or personnel casualties.

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3. (continued)

b. Period 13-17 Jan. One platoon of each "A", "B" and "C" Companies performed secondary tank mission of indirect fire. The platoon of "A" Co fired a total of 510 rounds from its position at SCHRONDWEILER. "B" Company platoon fired a total of 315 rounds from an area 1 Km East of STEGEN (VP 886377) while the platoon of "C" Co. moved to HALLER (VP 954367) and fired a total of 452 rounds. The balance of all units remained on the alert prepared to repel possible enemy attack. Bn (-AMB Cos) Moved to LINTGEN (VP 844260) 15 Jan. No materiel losses or personnel casualties.

c. Period 18-28 Jan. The 5th Inf. Div. attacked to the North across the SAUER RIVER 18 Jan with the 2d and 10th Inf. Regts abreast. The ice and snow-covered terrain was mountainous, with very poor road nets and the few roads were in draws bounded by sheer cliffs. On 18 Jan "A" Co took up positions on hill 330 (VP 877404) and fired direct fire missions upon preselected targets at the request of the infantry commanders of the 2d Inf. Regt. At 1200 the 1st platoon crossed the SAUER RIVER and supported the infantry in securing the bridgehead and the town of INGELDORF (VP 850405). At 1600 the 2d platoon moved to relieve the 1st platoon and the 3d platoon held its position on the hill. At 1630 the 1st platoon supporting the 3d Bn., jumped off toward DIEKIRCH (VP 869422), and fired neutralizing fire at enemy strong points within the city. The 1st and 2d platoons assembled at INGELDORF at 1900. Other units of the battalion were not committed. The Assault Gun Platoon moved to vicinity of MEDERNASH (VP 884418).

On the following day the 1st platoon of "A" Company jumped off at 0730 moved into DIEKIRCH and supported the 3d Bn. in mopping up the city. The Assault Gun Platoon, moving to vicinity of STEGEN (VP 885386) tied in and supported the 50th FA Bn and fired 272 rounds of neutralizing and interdiction fire. Other units were not committed.

On 20 Jan "A" Co. supported the advance of the 3d Bn., 2d Inf. Regt. to the high ground (VP 833473), firing at targets of opportunity and at enemy strong points. The company was directly responsible for the capture of 87 PWs. The Company Commander, Capt. Martin V. Conde, 01017840, following in the wake of the tanks in a  $\frac{1}{4}$  ton truck at one point of the advance dismounted, went forward of his tanks and, although armed only with a pistol, prodded 18 Germans out of foxholes.

"B" Company supported the 2d and 3d Battalions, 10th Inf Regt. in an attack on Hill 420 (VP 860474). The tanks advanced, protecting the flanks of the infantry, cleared the draws and then deployed on open terrain, reaching the objective at 1230. The company destroyed the following enemy equipment: 1 loaded gasoline trailer, 1 half-track, 1 small tracked truck and 1 heavy truck. The capture of 21 PWs was directly attributable to "B" Co. tanks. The Assault Guns closed at INGELDORF (VP 854409) at 1400 and fired concentrations on enemy batteries, Assault Guns and personnel assembling in the open. 4 - 75mm SPs were destroyed. 218 rounds were expended.

No other units were committed.

The next day "A" Co. supported the 1st and 2d Bns., 2d Inf. Regt. and tanks and infantry moving together captured and secured high ground vicinity (VP 828472) and then assaulted, captured and secured the town of LIPPERSCHIED (VP 815479). "B" Co. was not committed by reason of unfavorable terrain which made it impossible for tanks to maneuver. "C" Co moved to DIEKIRCH. The Assault Guns were instrumental in breaking up an enemy counter-attack, firing 102 rounds. The platoon then took up positions vicinity KIPPENHOFF (VP 850450) and fired 114 rounds at enemy infantrymen in the vicinity of LIPPERSCHIED. A forward Battalion CP was opened at SCHIEREN (VP 823382), the town where the 5th Inf. Div. CP was situated.

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3. Continued.

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On Jan. 22 "A" Co. performed maintenance and installed modified track blocks. The 2d and 3d Platoons of "B" Company jumped off at 0730 and the 1st Platoon jumped off at 1200 supporting the 1st Bn., 10th Inf. Regt. The tanks advanced in line up the slope of hill to (VP860508), while the infantry covered the draw on the left flank. Two Mark IV tanks were definitely destroyed and a third, after being hit 3 times was last seen burning in the woods (VP874511). One ammunition truck and two half-tracks were also destroyed. Two AF guns were silenced. A machine gun nest in a haystack was destroyed and an ammunition dump was blown up. The tankers were instrumental in the capture of 31 PWs. "C" Co. cleared Diekirch at 0730. The 1st platoon joined the 3d Bn., 11th Inf Regt, which was in reserve vicinity (VP832467), while the 2d and 3d platoons directly supported the advance of the 1st and 2d Battalions. The high ground to the SW and the town of GRALINGEN (VP827498) was captured and secured, and two enemy self-propelled vehicles were knocked out by the tanks. The Assault Guns were inactive except between 2300 and 2300 when they fired 36 rounds of harrassing fire.

On 23 Jan "A" Co continued to perform maintenance. "B" Co attacked with the 1st Bn., 10th Inf. toward PUTSCHEID (VP856524) and advanced to the high ground to the SW of the town against strong enemy resistance and heavy direct anti-tank and tank fire. Two Mk IV tanks, 2 self-propelled guns (calibre unknown), 2 half-tracks and 3 75mm anti-tank guns were destroyed. "C" Co could not maneuver over the icy terrain or roads although several abortive attempts were made. Two tanks slid off the road, one catapulted into a draw several hundred feet below the road and another dropped some 30 feet into a draw. The Assault Guns fired a total of 254 rounds of harrassing and interdictory fire at HOSCHEID (VP 813510).

On 24 Jan "A" Co continued to perform maintenance. "B" Co supporting the 1st Bn., 10th Inf Regt continued the attack on PUTSCHEID against continuing heavy resistance and anti-tank and tank fire. The company succeeded in destroying 2 tanks, probably Mark IVs and 3 trucks. The 2d Platoon "C" Co., supporting 2d Bn., 11th Inf. Regt., moved up to position before daylight and advanced during the day with the infantry to HOSCHEID. Three 75mm SP Assault Guns were concealed in the town. Two "C" Co tanks went into the town. Two of the enemy SPs were destroyed, the 3d was hit by our tank fire, probably damaged but managed to withdraw under cover of smoke. Bn Hq and Service Co moved to MICHELBUCH (VP 765368) and "D" Co to BISSEN (VP 797335). The Assault Guns did not fire, but held their positions at KIPPENHOFF.

The following day "A" Co relieved "C" Co., which assembled at DIEKIRCH, performed maintenance and installed modified track blocks. The 2d and 3d platoons, "A" Co., jumped off from HOSCHIED at 0800 with the infantry. The tanks advancing with the infantry fired direct fire into MERSCHEID (VP 830519) and lifted the fire as the doughboys entered the town. After capturing the town they continued to advance to the high ground to the NE of the town. "B" Co performed maintenance at BASTENDORF (VP 872447). One platoon "D" Co was attached to the 10th Inf Regt and the 2d Platoon of the Co took up defensive positions vicinity WALS DORF (VP 879485). Other components no change.

On 26 Jan "A" Co moved into position prepared to support units of the 11th Inf Regt in an attack on WEILER (VP 843529) but the tanks were not committed. Two tanks were disabled while moving into position.

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3. Continued.

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There were no changes in the other units.

The next day the 2d Platoon of "A" Co., supporting the 1st Bn., 11th Inf Regt., crossed the line of departure at 0800 with the mission of securing CR (VP 820560). Two Mark V and 2 Mark IV tanks, 1 half-track and a 75mm AT gun were destroyed in the vicinity of the objective. At 1330 3 tanks of the platoon continued to support the advance of the infantry through the village of NEHLHAUSENER (VP 834554) to the CR at (VP 836554). There was no change in the balance of the battalion.

On 28 Jan the 2d Platoon, A Co., supporting the 2d Bn., 11th Inf. assembled as a mobile reserve at HOSCHIEDERDICKT (VP 820539) at 1600. Two tanks moved to the NE of WAHLHAUSEN (VP 845550) in support of a patrol and fired at enemy dug in positions. Two platoons, B Co., attacked, followed by infantry of 1st Bn., 10th Inf. toward PUTSCHEID. Outside the town the infantry passed through the tanks, while the tanks fired neutralizing fire on enemy strong points. Fire was lifted as the infantrymen entered PUTSCHEID and the tanks withdrew to rally. The enemy counter-attacked and the tanks moved into the town in support of the infantry. In the course of repulsing the counter-attack 1 Mark VI (Tiger Royal), 2 half-tracks, 2 motorcycles and 1 75mm Howitzer were destroyed. The 3d platoon of "D" Co. relieved the 1st platoon at Walsdorf, otherwise no change in units of the battalion.

d. Period 29-31 Jan. During this period units of the battalion remained defensive, manning positions within their sector.

On 29 Jan "A" Co assembled at LIPPERSCHEID, "C" Co relieved "B" Co. at BASTENDORF and "B" Co. moved to DIEKIRCH. Bn Hq moved to DIEKIRCH and the forward CP at SCHIEREN was closed.

4. Results of Operations: Although fighting the terrain and weather, excellent results were achieved by the tank-infantry team. During the greater part of the operations the temperature was below freezing, the ground covered by ice and snow and the terrain mountainous. The operations were further limited by the lack of a lateral road net. The North and South roads were all in draws bounded by steep cliffs. Despite the natural obstacles of terrain and bitter weather the tankers of this battalion succeeded in destroying the following equipment: 1 Mark VI Tank (Tiger Royal); 2 Mark V Tanks (Panther); 8 Mark IV Tanks; 10 self-propelled vehicles; 8 half-tracks; 4-75mm AT guns, 1-75mm How; 5 trucks; 1 small tracked vehicle; 1 loaded gasoline trailer and 2 motorcycles, and in addition probably destroyed 1 Mark IV Tank, 1 self-propelled vehicle and 2 anti-tank guns. The tankers were directly responsible for the capture of 139 PWs. An undetermined number of other vehicles, machine guns and small arms were destroyed.

Our losses were as follows: 5 M4 Tanks were a total loss, 3 of which were the result of enemy action and 2 of which were the result of icy roads. One was disabled by enemy AT fire and another threw a track after striking an enemy minefield. Two enlisted men were killed and 6 were evacuated as battle casualties.

5. Tactics:

a. Employment: Generally tanks were employed successfully. Due to the extremely difficult terrain there was an increased tendency to commit tank companies piecemeal. Nevertheless, maximum success was obtained when committed as a unit. In some instances time was insufficient for tanks to join varying

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5. Continued.

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supported units within the regimental combat team zone, resulting in a lack of mass tank strength when needed and terrain permitted. Again this may have been due to the practically impossible terrain but may also have been due to the tank company previously having been broken down to platoons.

b. Camouflage.

1. Prior to this operation tanks were given a white coating with a water soluble residue. This aided materially in making them less visible against a snow-covered background, however, a wet snowfall washed much of it off. Believe a more permanent coating desirable, perhaps even paint. Although the latter could not be readily removed when weather changed, tanks could always be repainted OD.

2. A heavy wire screen was welded to hull and turret and proved of material aid in use of natural camouflage such as pine branches, etc.

c. During operation rubber tracks were modified by replacing every sixth block with a steel chevron block on which metal lugs about 1" high had been welded. These not only afforded traction on ice & snow but greatly reduced side slip prevalent with ordinary all steel track and proved much superior to the never very satisfactory grouser. They are effective even with rubber chevron track. The only disadvantage is an imperceptible loss of speed and the necessity for more frequent checking of sight adjustment.

d. Equipment:

Although several enemy tanks were destroyed, including 1 Mk VI, many opportunities were lost due to lack of tanks equipped with 76mm guns. (Only one in the battalion which was disabled by enemy fire was evacuated to ordnance.)

It is recommended that the light tank company (Co "D") be converted to a medium tank company. The use of light tanks is limited in a coordinate tank-infantry operation. Such a conversion would not only supplement the striking power of the battalion and guarantee a more adequate reserve, but would also provide an opportunity to rotate companies more often, thereby permitting time for maintenance in extended operations.

6. Miscellaneous:

a. Commendations: During the month of January the Battalion received letters of Commendation from Major General PAUL W. BAADE, Commanding General, 35th Inf. Div. (Exhibit "A"), and Colonel H. A. SEARS, Commanding Officer, CCA, 4th Armored Div., former Commanding Officer, 17th Armored Group (Exhibit "B").

b. Awards: In January 3 Silver Star Medals, 1 Oak Leaf Cluster to the Silver Star and 6 Bronze Star Medals were awarded to members of the command. Cumulative Awards: Distinguished Service Cross, 1; Silver Star Medal, 8; Oak Leaf Cluster to Silver Star Medal, 2; Bronze Star Medal, 4; Oak Leaf Cluster to Bronze Star Medal, 2.

c. Orientation: An extensive orientation program was continued. This program consists of a daily information sheet setting forth the activities of the

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6. c. Continued.

battalion, summaries of news broadcasts, pertinent information extracted from sources usually not available at company level such as Corps and Army G-2 Periodic Reports, SHAEF INTELLIGENCE NOTES, Psychological Warfare Reports, etc. It also included open discussion of the situation complete with maps with the battalion S-2 with each company once a week, providing the tactical situation permits such activity.

For the Battalion Commander:

*James I. Wickens*  
JAMES I. WICKENS  
Captain, Cavalry  
S-3

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Exhibit "A"  
Exhibit "B"

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HEADQUARTERS 35TH INFANTRY DIVISION  
APO 35 U S ARMY

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January 17, 1945.

Lt. Col. Fred M. Kroschel, Jr.,  
Commanding Officer,  
737th Tank Battalion,  
APO 403, U. S. Army.

My dear Kroschel:

I want you to know that when the 737th Tank Battalion left the Division, it did so with the admiration and respect of every member therein. Since the Battalion joined the Division on the 13th of July in 1944, it has gone through all the operations of the Division including many hazardous river crossings, and suffered the discomfortures of mud, cold, and rain without a murmur of complaint. At the same time your battalion distinguished itself in a glorious manner on all occasions and in many instances performed with outstanding valor. The courage and determination of your command aided greatly in the success of the Division at St. Lo, Mortain, the relief of Nancy, and the final invasion of Germany. Your work in connection with the relief of a surrounded battalion of another division at Mortain was especially noteworthy and outstanding.

I, and with me every member of the Division, regret that the Battalion has been transferred. We wish you Godspeed and the best of luck.

Sincerely yours,

PAUL W. BAABE  
Major General, U S A  
Commanding

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737th Tank Battalion  
APO 436

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2 March 1945

SUBJECT: Action Against Enemy, After After Action Report.

TO : The Adjutant General, Washington, D. C.  
(Through: Commanding General, 5th Infantry Division, APO #5, US Army.)

1. Transmitted herewith Action Against Enemy, After After Action Report for month of February, 1945.

For the Battalion Commander:

*Leonard M. Shealer*  
LEONARD M. SHEALER  
1st Lt., Inf. (Armd)  
Adjutant

Inclosures - 2

- Incl. #1 - Action Against Enemy, After After Action Report.
- Incl. #2 - Original Unit Journal.

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*June 12*