

R E S T R I C T E D

HEADQUARTERS 35TH INFANTRY DIVISION
APO 35 US ARMY

GENERAL ORDERS
NUMBER 39

31 May 1945

BATTLE HONORS. Under the provisions of Section IV, Circular 333, War Department, 22 December 1943, as amended, the 737th Tank Battalion is cited for extraordinary heroism and outstanding performance of duty in action against the enemy in the vicinity of Mortain, France, from 10 to 13 August 1944.

The 737th Tank Battalion, as part of a tank-infantry team, was given the mission of driving through the enemy lines to establish contact with and furnish relief to the Second Battalion, 120th Infantry, 30th Infantry Division. The latter battalion had been isolated during a desperate counterattack by the enemy in his determined attempt to drive through to Avranches and the sea after having been forced from the hedgerow defenses in Normandy. The tank-infantry team was spearheaded by tanks of this battalion, with infantry riding thereon. In the initial attack, the leading tank was disabled by enemy fire immediately after it crossed the line of departure, which action precipitated an intense concentration of enemy fire of all types, inflicting heavy casualties of men and tanks, halting the advance of the team and forcing the infantry to leave the tanks and take cover. Subsequent attempts to remount the tanks were prevented by the intense enemy fire, until the reserve tank company, with infantry riding the tanks, drove through to force an enemy withdrawal. Tank maneuvers in the fields were very difficult because of the hedgerows. A resumption of the attack behind the reserve met with the same result as that of the first instance. The tanks, able to maneuver only with difficulty, were again stopped by enemy fire, and the infantrymen forced to dismount. The senior infantry officer present conferred with the company commanders of the tank and infantry units, and although tank support was impossible because of losses, lack of gasoline and the approach of darkness, ordered an attack by the infantry and drove to a point within three hundred yards of the objective, where the battalion was stopped by bitter enfilade fire from concealed positions. It was discovered that the infantry battalion had cut an enemy supply route at that point, and was well within the enemy lines. A defensive position was taken, although digging was impossible because of its attraction of heavy enemy fire. Between midnight and daybreak, four determined enemy infantry-armored assaults were repelled. Early the following morning, the tank-infantry team was strongly attacked by enemy armor supported by SS infantry who assaulted the battalion positions with the battle cry, "Seig Heil!" Increased fire from enemy armor finally forced a limited withdrawal of the infantry battalion to a position affording possibilities of perimeter defense. There the battalion was completely surrounded by the enemy and contact lost with the battalion command post. Officer patrols re-established contact, and plans for a resumption of the attack were perfected. The unit was bombed during the early morning hours. Enemy patrols were active throughout the night. Upon the arrival of the Third Battalion, 320th Infantry, on the right, and the establishment of wire communication, making the direction of artillery fire possible, the attack was resumed. The attack was so powerful as to force the enemy to withdraw, and resulted in the establishing of contact with the isolated battalion. Relief was furnished the Second Battalion, 120th Infantry, 30th Infantry Division, which had, at that time, been isolated for five days, and the pursuit of the enemy forces was resumed. The zeal and devotion of this battalion to its mission, and its successful accomplishment thereof in spite of the obstacles presented, the intensity of the

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enemy fire and his stubborn defense, and undaunted by the fact that it was on different occasions surrounded by enemy and subjected to strong counterattacks, pay high tribute to the officers and men of the battalion, and are in accord with the highest traditions of the military service.

BY COMMAND OF MAJOR GENERAL BAADE:

OFFICIAL:

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