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 AUTH: CG, 7TH AD

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BATTLE HISTORY

of

HEADQUARTERS AND HEADQUARTERS BATTERY

DIVISION ARTILLERY

OCTOBER 1944

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S E C R E T

Battle History of Hq.& Hq. Btry Div Arty.

October 1944.

Sunday, the first of October 1944 downed cool and cloudy with a threat of rain in the air. Hq.& Hq. Battery was located in their previous bivouac area 8 miles west along the highway from St Anthonis Holland. Colonel Martin had established command liaison with Div Hq located one-half mile west of St Anthonis, Holland.

The artillery situation remained unchanged from the last day in September. The 434th F.A. Bn was attached to CCB, the 489th F.A. Bn. was attached to CCA with the 440th reinforcing its fires. The 774th F.A. Bn (4.5 guns) was in general support of the Division. The British 11th AD Arty (2 Regts of 25 pounders and 2 Regts of 5.5 guns) was reinforcing the fires of the 7th AD to the limit of its range. The 33rd F.A. Regiment (3rd Inf Div (Br) Artillery) was also reinforcing the fires of the 7th AD. The 33rd F.A. Regt was out of range of most of the targets in our general area, but they would be available to reinforce our fires when the 7th AD extended further South.

In general, CCB had pushed the attack to the east and held, with one task force a general north-south line in front of Vortum, Holland. With their second task force they were south of Vortum pushing in a south westernly direction towards Overloon. CCA was attacking Overloon from the woods to its North and West. Both Combat Commands were meeting stiff resistance in the form of dug in infantry, A/T fire, Artillery, Mortar and large amount of fire from Nebelwerfers. The flatness of the country made it very difficult for the armored vehicles to advance. After a number of tanks had been blown up, the job was left primarily to the infantry. As was so often the case, our wildly scattered infantry were not able to push forward in any particular area with much force. So, the progress was very slow. The artillery fired preparation fires, counter battery fires, numerous fires against the easily moved nebelwerfers and fires when called for on targets of opportunity. The 11th Armored Div Arty (British) furnished excellent and plentiful support and were extremely cooperative. We fired the following missions:

434th F.A. Bn. 38 Missions 873 Rounds

440th " Bn 14 " 562 "

489th " Bn 80 " 2162 "

774th " Bn 29 " 449 "

11th AD (Brit) Arty 64 " 2460 "

The 2nd October our lines from Vortum and above Overloon were joined as indicated on the attached overlay, this date. The Arty set up remained unchanged except that the 33rd FA Regiment (3rd Div (Br) Arty) moved with its division and was no longer available for support. In as much as they were out of range for our sector this made comparatively, no change in our operations.

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In contrast to the first of October, the second was clear and observation was much easier. Primarily observation was obtained from Liaision planes as the flatness of the country did not offer any points of advantage from the ground. The artillery fired a short violent preparation fire on Overloon, Holland between 0628 and 0630 for CCA in preparation for their attack at 0630. A/T guns, enemy batteries and usual targets were fired upon. The enemy retaliated with some counter battery fire injuring 2 men in the 440th FA Bn. However, most of their fire was reserved for the front line troops and interdicting towns and cross roads in our general area.

The following missions were fired:

434th F A Bn 9 Missions 387 Rounds

440th " 26 " 1039 "

489th " 42 " 1935 "

774th " 20 " 420 "

Brit 11th AD 19 " 300 "

The 3rd October was cloudy and rainy. Our forces had broken through to the town of Vortum and had soldiers in the outskirts of Multoon area that we were forced to pull back our force most elements and consolidate what gains we had made.

CCR, which had been held in reserve, moved up into position relieving CCB which had been having a pretty rough time. This necessitated a regrouping of the artillery in order to gain a maximum advantage. The 440th FA Bn was now attached to and in direct support of CCR while the 434th FA Bn was reinforcing the fires of the 440th. The other units remained unchanged as to their missions.

Visibility was very poor and most of the artillery fire was expended on interdicting road junctions, counter battery fire and the usual fires on call. The following fires were given:

434th FA Bn 12 Missions 283 Rounds

440th " 21 " 675 "

489th " 38 " 1904 "

774th " 31 " 383 "

Brit 11th AD 25 " 1144 "

The 4th October was again cloudy with very poor visibility. This day and the others to follow were marked by the counter attacks attempted by the Germans. This date there was a total of 7 German counter attacks. Each of these were repulsed with heavy loss to the enemy, but they retarded our advance which remained practically unchanged from the 3rd.

Counter-battery fires, smoke marking missions, preparation fires, fires to break up counter attacks, fires against A/T guns, troop concentrations and harassing fires expended the major amount of artillery fire for the 4th. Fighter Bombers bombed the area around Multoon on with the new type liquid bomb that detonates and then scatters fires over the surrounding, area. The poor visibility plus the excellent concealment and camouflage of the Germans made them bombing very difficult. The effect of this bombing had seemingly

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little effect. In order to assist the bombers, red smoke was placed on the desired target areas. The following missions were fired:

434th FA Bn 28 Missions 687 Rounds

440th " 18 " 583 "

489th " 69 " 2744 "

774th " 41 " 535 "

Brit 11th AD 31 " 1025 "

The 5th October the set up remained the same with very little change in the situation. Again it was cloudy and the visibility poor. Counter battery fires, TOT's, defensive fires against counter attacks and fires on enemy concentration areas were fired. Other usual fires such as Nebelwerfers, interdiction of road junctions and harassing fires were given. The following fires were given:

434th FA Bn 56 Missions 954 Rounds

440th " 28 " 1018 "

489th " 89 " 1905 "

774th " 39 " 556 "

Brit 11th AD 30 " 1350 "

The night of the 5th October, CCA was to be relieved by CCB. This necessitated a rejuggling of the artillery again, and on the completion of the releif the following changes were made: 434th was in direct support of CCB, the 440th in direct support of CCR with the 489th reinforcing the fires of the 440th. The 774th and British 11th AD Art fires remained in general support of and reinforcing the fires of the division, respectively.

The 6th of October was unlike the last three days in that it was clear with good visibility. For a change the artillery was able to fire observed missions with considerably more effect. Counter battery and normal missions were fired on enemy concentrations, nebelwerfers, and such. The following fires were expended:

434th FA Bn 29 Missions 389 Rounds

440th " 31 " 876 "

489th " 54 " 813 "

774th " 26 " 271 "

Brit 11th AD 24 " 2050 "

Because of an order limiting us to approximately 2500 rounds of 105 ammunition daily, the battalions were ordered to take it easy and not to go over 800 rounds per battalion except in an emergency. This date we were instructed to press the attack only if the opportunity presented itself. Otherwise hold what we had with a minimum expenditures of men and materiel.

The 7th October we were informed that we were to be relived by he British 11th AD who would move into our positions under cover of darkness wile we moved out of the area. Our artillery was to give maximum artillery support to the change until such time as their

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combat command was to move. We were then to move to our new area as rapidly as possible.

In general, our new mission was to protect the right flank of the British from north of Deurne to a point 6 miles south of Weert. We were to establish roadblocks as indicated and meet the threat of a German counter attack with the full strength of our division.

This in itself presented quite an artillery problem because of the distance involved. This was solved by assigning the 434th a zone of fire in the CCB sector to the north, the 489th a zone of fire in the sector of CCB to the south and the 440th a zone of fire in between the 434th and 489th sectors. The 774th was placed in a position where, with its greater range, it could support the fires of the entire division.

Before moving out the night of the 7th, the following fires were given:

434th FA Bn 35 Missions 927 Rounds

440th " 25 " 656 "

489th "

774th " 5 " 60 "

Brit 11th AD 11 " 650 "

The 7th October was partly cloudy with fair visibility. Most of the artillery fire was on enemy concentrations, nebelwerfers and In support of the relief of our forces by the British 11th Armored Division.

At 0745 the morning of the 8th Hq & Hq Btry left the assembly area west of St Anthonis, Holland and moved to a point 1 Mile west of Zomeren, Holland, a march of 19 miles, arriving there a 0900. The weather was partly cloudy and cool.

For our artillery set up, we had the 434th FA Bn in direct support of CCB, 440th FA Bn in direct support of CCB, 489th FA Bn in direct support of CCA and the 774th FA Bn in general support. The 61st Field Regiment (5.5 guns - British) were reinforcing our fires in the northern sector. A sound ranging troop (British) was located to our north and was able to give sound location of enemy batteries to the 'East.

There was little artillery activity as most of the Battalions were marching to their new areas as indicated on the overlay, 8 October 1944. The battalions covered the with drawed and fired the following mission:

434th FA Bn 3 Missions 36 Rounds

440th FA Bn 4 " 385 "

489th FA Bn 4 " 38 "

774th FA Bn 4 " 64 "

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These missions were all fired in the old area around St. Anthonis.

The 9th found us in our new location. It was a cool day, very cloudy and with poor visibility. There was very little artillery activity. We fired on enemy vehicles, enemy guns and registered our own guns in. The following missions were fired:

434th FA Bn 6 Missions 101 Rounds

440th FA Bn 2 " 109 "

489th FA Bn 18 " 102 "

774th FA Bn 6 " 55 "

The 10th of October was characterized by a cold, drilling rain that fell all day. Visibility was very poor and there was a limited amount of firing. The 61st British Regiment, FA, moved, to a new position from which it could no longer reinforce the fires of the 7th AD. The 8th AGRA organized in the area north west of Overloon a group composed of four 5.5 Gun Regts, one heavy Pert of 7.2 How. and 155 Guns M-1, and one 3.2 AA Regiment. Their support was available in a limited area only (as indicated on overlay, this date). This support was to be available the 11th October 44. The sound ranging troop (British), moved to face to the NE instead of East. The following fires were given.

434th FA Bn 1 Mission 16 Rounds

440th "

489th " 12 " 117 "

774th " 9 " 33 "

The 11th October the artillery set up remained the same with the addition of the 8th Army Group Royal Artillery in the area NW of Overloon, Holland. This group was composed of four 5.5 guns Regiments, one heavy 7.2 How. and 155 Guns M-1, and one 3.2 AA Regiment. Their support was limited to the indicated areas on the overlay, this date (limits of range of 63rd and 77th Regiments represents limit of range, of Royal Artillery). The sound ranging troop (British) was still available for support covering the NE part of the 7th Armored Division sector.

The day was clear to partly cloudy with fair visibility. Most of the fires were in the from of counter battery missions.

434th FA Bn 20 Missions 356 Rounds

440th FA Bn

489th FA Bn 22 " 322 "

774th FA Bn 8 " 138 "

Ever since our settling in this new area, with the mission of guarding the right flank of the British, plans were being considered and developed by which we might materially aid in the clearing out of this pocket between our forces and the Maas.

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It was finally decided that we would first put on a demonstration of an attack with our forces to the North around Deurne, Holland (CCB) and attract as many of the enemy to our front as possible, while the English made an attack from our old positions North of Multoon on Venraij, Holland. Then, as that attack by the 3rd Inf Div (British) progressed, the 11th Armored (British) would push across the canal just north of Deurne in a East and then South east direction with the mission of capturing America, Holland.

Our scheme in the whole thing was, as mentioned above, to perform demonstrations and then to establish bridge heads across the North South canal east of Deurne at a point North of Deurne. The Canal itself was about 5000 yards east of Deurne. As these actions progressed, we were to later cut across towards the town of Venlo, Holland which was on the Maas river. But, this was to first be dependent on the success of the other operation and the desires of British with whom we ware cooperating

From the artillery point of view this presented a perplexing problem. Although the activity was to he centered in the Northern part of our sector, and our plans called for extensive artillery fires, we still had to protect the right flank down to a point several miles south of Weasem where we hit the 12th U.S. Army zone. We were given the Belgium Brigade (attached) to assist us by remaining in the small sector they had previously been. The Belgium brigade had the equivalent of one U.S. Battalion of 25 Pounders, a platoon of tanks and company of TD's to support their fires. However, we still had a front of about 37,000 yards to cover. This necessitated spreading our three organic battalions over the north third, central third and southern third of our sector with the 774th in general support of them.

An additional problem was the request of the 11th Armored Division (British) for the support of our fires when they made the breakthrough. It was impossible to move any of our battalions without greatly endangering, the area they were to protect. So, it was necessary to add all additional fire power we could get in the northern sector from other sources. A group was formed by the 434th which consisted of itself, the 774th in their original position with the primary mission of reinforcing the fires of the 434th and to this, formed into battalions and instructed in the meager time available were 12 - 105mm Medium tanks assault guns, 12 – 3" tank destroyers, 12 - 75-mm gun tanks, 12 - 76mm tanks and 2 - 75 mm assault howitzers or a total of 80 pieces. These pieces came from e every unit that could spare a single gun from their defensive positions.

So, on the 12th October 1944 the British started their attack from the North and CCB staged their demonstration in our Northern sector. The following missions were fired:

434th FA Bn 82 Missions 1794 Rounds

440th "

489th " 11 " 123 "

774th " 41 " 551 "

(Total) Tanks, TD's etc 117 Missions 2196 "

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The day was partly cloudy with fair to good visibility. The demonstration, achieved the desired effect and the 3rd British Division pushed through and to the South of Multoon in some very bitter fighting.

The 13th another demonstration a much smaller scale was held again with success. The following fires were given:

434th FA Bn 56 Missions 703 Rounds

440th FA Bn 1 " 31 "

489th " 16 " 171 "

774th " 28 " 132 "

(Total) Tanks, TD's etc 94 " 1774 "

The British 3rd infantry Division pushed through the woods South of Multoon and were within 3000 yards of Venraij at the closest point. Meanwhile a brigade of the British 11th AD had established a bridgehead over canal 4000 yards north of the area in which we were staging our demonstration. The weather was partly cloudy with fair to good visibility.

The 14th the 3rd Inf (British) pushed on to the outskirts of Venraij after considerable fighting and the brigade of the 11th armored division pushed to the East several thousand yards. Our fires were limited to targets of opportunity, counter battery fire, etc. We fired the following:

434th FA Bn 19 Mission 275 Rounds

440th " 8 " 258 "

489th " 15 " 237 "

774th " 4 " 162 "

(Total) Tanks, TD's etc 102 " 747 "

The weather was cloudy with fair to roar visibility. Tec 5th Billy W. Manuel of Hq Btry Div Arty accidentally shot himself in the hand while cleaning a captured German pistol. It was necessary to evacuate Corporal Manuel and drop him from our records.

The morning of the 15th was rainy and cloudy. Visibility was fair. The British were now fighting in the outskirts of the town of Venraij itself. The fighting was bitter and developing into a house by house battle. One strong point to the east of the town was a Monastery. One brigade was attacking this and had successfully captured it by the next day.

Our artillery again fired on normal targets firing the following missions:

434th FA Bn 9 Missions 69 Rounds

440th " 10 " 383 "

489th " 51 " 618 "

774th " 2 " 22 "

(Total) Tanks, TD's etc 50 " 1397 "

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Because of the nearness of the British 3rd Inf Div to the capture of Venraij and feeling that the moment was right to attack, it was decided to make the bridgehead north of Deurne across the canal the next day.

Early the morning of the 16th the artillery laid down a violent barrage that effectively drove the Germans out of their positions and allowed our infantry to cross the canal and push out-ward in an endeavor to establish the bridgehead. The main difficulty encountered by the troops establishing the bridge was countless A/P mines along the canal and A/T mines which littered the road. That evening a bridge was constructed across the canal and all was ready for the British armor to cross. Considerable difficulty had been experienced in removing countless mines that had been laid East of the canal. In support of this operation and other more normal targets the following rounds were fired:

434th FA Bn 36 Mission 1661 Rounds

440th " 18 " 314 "

489th " 24 " 436 "

774th " 24 " 218 "

(Total) Tanks, TD's etc 212 " 3494 "

The day was rainy with very poor visibility.

The 17th the British 11th Armored Division proceeded across the canal through the bridgehead and several thousand yards eastward where they were then to proceed in a South easternly direction towards America, Holland.

As the British moved over the bridge they took over the bridgehead and relieved the infantry of CCB which then attacked down the East side of the Canal towards the area designated for the second bridge. This generally 5500 yards south along the canal. This entire area was a swamp land and could only be covered by troops on foot. Tanks followed the advance along the west side of the canal-one platoon even then becoming bogged down in the marsh. This advance was of course covered by the artillery, while the group formed by the 434th FA Bn also aided the British 11th Arm'd Division whenever called upon. The 17th was cloudy and rainy with poor visibility, nevertheless, our artillery paved the way with the following fires:

434th FA Bn 28 Missions 2091 Rounds

440th FA Bn 35 " 733 "

489th " 12 " 282 "

774th " 18 " 401 "

(Total) Tanks, TD's etc 34 " 917 "

Both attacks pushed out several thousand yards past the established bridgehead by darkness of the 17th, in order to assist the establishment of the 2nd bridgehead, a task force of CCR (TF Fuller) attacked from the west in a frontal attack the 17th reaching a point about 500 yards as from the canal.

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The 18th, the Infantry of CCB had, after an initial artillery preparation rushed to the road crossing the 2nd bridgehead while the infantry task force from CCR (TF Fuller) had attacked frontally and controlled the canal several thousand yards to the north and approximately 500 yards to the south. Through the 19th the forces of CCB enlarged the bridgehead until it extended 3000 yards eastward and north to the forces of the 11th AD (British). A bridge was constructed over the canal, mines removed from the roads and the passage open to America, Holland as far as the bridgehead extended.

The 11th Armored Division had become mored in the mud caused by the continuous raining weather we had been having and had advanced no further after attacking from the North West to the Deurne Venraij highway north of America. The 3rd British infantry Division had complete control of Venraij and the immediate area on the East and South about 1500 yards from the city proper. Both British units were ordered to hold here awaiting further developments in the northern part of this theater.

The artillery remained unchanged with 774th still giving calls for fire fro the 434th priority. The 18th the following fires were given:

434th FA Bn 19 Missions 838 Rounds

440th " 15 " 741 "

489th " 29 " 783 "

774th " 11 " 142 "

(Total) Tanks, TD's etc 39 " 834 "

Most of the fire of the 434th, 440th and tanks were in support of the bridgehead operation. Other fires were normal.

The 19th was again cloudy and rainy with very poor visibility. The mission of the artillery remained except that targets now were enemy opposition encountered as the bridgehead was enlarged. The following missions were fired:

434th FA Bn 26 Missions 843 Rounds

440th " 5 Missions 136 "

489th " 19 " 413 "

774th " 28 " 375 "

(Total) Tanks, TD's etc 25 " 1201 "

The 20th of October the forces of CCB were relieved by the forces of CCR which took over the bridgehead and sent patrols out to find various enemy locations. CCR during the next three days pushed the bridgehead out a little allowing for construction of several bridge head over bad portions of the road to America. The bridgehead was extended to a point about 4200 yards east of the canal and 2000 yards south of the Deurne America road.

The relief of CCB changed the artillery set up a certain amount. Altogether, the organization for combat was: 434th FA Bn reinforce fires of 440th FA Bn. 440th FA Bn in direct reinforce support CCR. 489th FA Bn attached CCA. 774th FA Bn reinforce fires of 440th FA Bn. The 434th FA Bn lost its supporting tanks, TD's and assault howitzers.

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Support available from the British was from 77th Medium Regt (16 - 5.5" guns), 53rd Heavy Regt (Only 4-155 guns M-1 available) and one troop of 165 Heavy AA Regt (4 - 8.7" Guns) Sound Ranging Troop (British) was available for support covering NE part of 7th Armored Division sector. Belgian Brigade, with the equivalent of one U.S. battalion of 25 pounders was operating to our south.

The 20th was another cloudy and rainy, day with poor visibility. The following fires were given.

434th FA Bn 14 Mission 645 Rounds

440th " 5 " 132 "

489th " 9 " 299 "

774th " 12 " 198 "

The 21st the 440th FA Bn moved two of its batteries 4000 yards east of their old location so that the range of fire could be extended. This territory had been constantly patrolled by the enemy, but since our bridgehead had been established it was mach better. It was decided to take the risk and the 2 batteries remained in position there instead of returning, at night as they had previously done.

The 87th Cavalry Rcn Sqd had been given the territory from the southern most portion of the bridgehead to CCA's zone to cover. This was an exceedingly large front for this one Sqd and could only be covered by patrols. In order to aid the 87th, the 440th FA Bn was placed in direct support of them. This necessitated the 434th being placed in direct support of CCR on the bridgehead. Otherwise the artillery situation renamed unchanged.

For a change it didn't rain although it was cloudy. Visibility was fair. The following missions were fired.

434th FA Bn 22 Mission 503 Rounds

440th " 8 " 116 "

489th " 10 " 335 "

774th " 8 " 221 "

Most of the fires were on targets of opportunity, counter battery fire, harassing. and interdiction fires.

The 22nd the general situation remained unchanged. The 7774th FA Bn moved their CP across the road from their old location. The day was cloudy with fair visibility. Most of the fires were counter battery, targets of opportunity, enemy infantry in the open, concealed positions and the usual fires. The enemy continued shelling and patrolling at random. Nothing of large scale was encountered. The battalions fired the following number of rounds.

434th FA Bn 22 Mission 612 Rounds

440th " 10 " 200 "

489th " 10 " 234 "

774th " 4 " 174 "

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The 23rd October the artillery, was again augmented by the addition of 6 - 105mm Howitzers of the 17th Tank Bn and 10 tanks from the 31st Tank Bn. These were to reinforce the fires of the 434th FA Bn. The Germans fired a rolling barrage at our bridgehead this date. The barrage was in reverse though as it started from the canal and traveled eastward. We suffered very slight casualties under their 250 rounds and destroyed the patrol that attempted to blow the bridge before it had penetrated our bridgehead. The other fires were normal. We fired the following rounds:

434th FA. Bn. 25 Missions 404 Rounds

440th " 21 " 517 "

489th " 22 " 536 "

774th " 14 " 145 "

Tanks (16) 12 " 72 "

The morning of 25th October at 0900 Hq & Hq Btry moved their unit from 1 mile west of Zomeren to the small town of Nieumwepovochie, Holland, two mi So of Zomeren. Here the billeted the troops and established their quarters in a Catholic school. The entire division, within the limits of tactical employment, had been ordered to go into billets to save the troops from the cold and rainy weather.

The 25th was cloudy with poor visibility. The employment of the artillery remained the same with most missions those of harassing and interdicting fire. Targets of opportunity were fired on small patrols and other enemy activity. The following missions were given:

434th FA Bn 26 Missions 220 Rounds

440th " 27 " 444 "

489th " 14 " 295 "

774th " 16 " 307 "

17th Tank 4 " 49 "

The 26th was again cloydy, but the visibility was fair. The enemy seemed a little more active but the targets offered were few. Our patrols met considerable small arms fire near the canal, but noticed no aggressiveness on the part of the enemy. Most of the troops not actively engaged in fighting, were billeted in various buildings in their respective sectors.

The following fires were given:

434th FA Bn 25 missions 404 Rounds

440th " 21 " 517 "

489th " 22 " 536 "

774th " 14 " 145 "

31st Tank Bn 1 " 18 (13 Tanks)

31st Tank Bn 1 " 7 (6-105 ass.How)

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Again, the normal harassing and interdictory fires were given with a few additional counter battery and fires on target of opportunity.

The 27th of October was cloudy with poor visibility. The greatly increased enemy strength that we later found had been building up in this sector for the past several days became particularly evident on this date. The 87th Cav Rcn Sq received a counterattack in its zone about 0630. This counterattack steadily increased in ferocity and strength. The 87th was pushed back from the canal and out of the town of Meijel. At 1014 the 87th made an attack to retake Meijel. Following Closely behind an artillery barrage that swept the path for them. they gained the outskirts of the town but were unable to enter because of the greatly increased strength of the enemy.

When this attack failed, CCR was committed to drive the enemy from Meijel. One task force attacked from the Northwest along the Deurne - Meijel road and the second task force attacked from the West. Another task force was sent to reinforce A /87 south of Meijel. Neither of the above two task force were able to advance much and were meeting very strong resistance. A number of our tanks and vehicles in the vicinity and it was destroyed. The enemy had a sizeable number of Tiger Tanks in the vicinity and it was evident that he was attempting a major drive through this sector.

With the above circumstances happening, the 11th Armd (Br) Div moved down and took over the bridge head we had established over the canal on the Deurne - Amerika road. CCB moved to an assembly area north and west of Liesel, Holland.

The artillery set up remained basically the same except that the 440th FA Bn was placed in direct support of CCR when that Combat Command took over the 87th Cav Rcn Sqd area around noon of the 27th. The 440th FA Bn bore the brunt of the artillery in this phase, materially aiding our ground forces in organizing and attempting to hold back the enemy. It was reported that they knocked out several of the enemy tanks, silenced a number of artillery positions, interdicted the bridges over which the enemy was crossing and in general supported the attack. In this they were materially aided by the 774th FA Bn. Little activity was recorded in CCA and CCB sectors. The following missions were fired:

434th FA Bn 28 Missions 346 Rounds

440th " 3000 "

489th " 21 396 "

774th " 82 1300 "

Tanks (19) 12 199 "

In General CCR held their positions they had taken over from the 87th. However, every indication pointed to a full scale German attack as the enemy continued to build up his forces in this sector.

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On the 28th the artillery was augmented by the 25th Regiment of 25 pounders going into action in the CCR Sector in the afternoon. Two more regiments were on their way and were due to be in our area sometime the 29th. One Brigade of the 15th Scottish division was called from the Antwerp area and directed to go into a reserve position to our immediate north -- to be used if the situation became critical. CCA was assigned an additional area along the north canal from Weert and sent a task force there to clear out the opposition mounting an our other forces left flank from that direction. This force continued operations to clear the area immediately adjacent to the canal of enemy forces and advanced several thousand yards. CCB continued operations to try and contain the enemy within our northern sector. They attached at 0700 in the morning along the road to Meijel. In this attack they made very slow progress, losing a number of tanks and vehicles. The enemy resistance was very determined and of increasing strength. Much armor was evident.

CCR also attacked at 0700 in the direction of Meijel coming from the West. They met stiff enemy resistance and were forced to remain in their old positions. The enemy had a number of tanks in this sector as well as artillery and foot troops. The difficult terrain made it practically impossible to maneuver our troops so that we could out flank the enemy. A number of our Tank Destroyers were knocked out in an attempt to fire head on into advancing Tiger tanks.

Our artillery fire was intense. As eack German counterattack would develop, we would meet it with massed volleys of fire from every available British and American artillery units. This fire was very effective and in itself slowed the German advance materially. Our artillery set up was as follows: 434th FA Bn in direct support of CCB, 440th Armd FA En in direct support of CCR. 489th Armd FA Bn attached to CCA. 774th FA Bn. (4.5 Guns) in general support. 25th Field Regiment (British 25 pounders - 24 Guns) in general support. Support was available from 53rd Heavy Regiment, 165th Heavy AA Regiment (1 troop) and 6 - 105 assault howitzers of the 31st Tank Bn. In the south and out of range of the northern action was the regiment of the 25 pounders with the Belgian Brigade.

The day was cloudy but the visibility was good. On the 28th we fired the following:

434th FA Bn 44 Missions 1513 Rounds

440th " 59 " 2048 "

489th " 55 " 628 "

774th " 77 " 883 "

31st Tank (How) 6 " 81 "

25th Regt (Br) 55 " 2305 "

Due to the difficulty of obtaining 105 ammunition, the supporting British artillery was used as much as possible. During the night of the 28th - 29th we releived two of our infantry companies that had been cut off by placing an artillery box around them and easing them through enemy tanks back to our other units. This was successfully accomplished.

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S-E-C-R-E-T

The 29th was again cloudy but with good visibility. We were expecting full scale assaults on this day and we really got them. In general, the division had consolidated and reorganized their positions in the Zones of CCB and CCR against further enemy action. Germans renewed their counterattacks from the directions of Meijel against both combat commands -- making use of tanks and infantry in force. Their attacks gained little ground and resulted in heavy losses of personnel, dead and wounded. Some few prisoners were taken and numerous tanks and other materiel were destroyed.

Enemy activity was particularly intensified around the town of Liesel. We had set up a defensive system there, but the enemy, after a heavy artillery concentration, pushed forward with such strength that our forces were forced to withdraw to the West of the town. There was approximately a battalion of infantry and a battalion of tanks that the enemy had pushed on Leisel from one of several bridges they had across the canal to the east of that town. The fighting was especially bitter in this area. Our artillery was called for and given almost constantly. We had moved two British regiments that had come in the morning of the 29th, the 61st medium and the 131st Field Regiment. Both of these regiments were placed in general support of our artillery. The 434th FA Bn which was in position some 2500 yards west of Leisel was at one time firing at a range of 1500 yards. Previously one battery had been withdrawn and placed in position to the north and west of this location. All was ready for an immediate displacement if necessary on this date, while the brunt of the attack was on Leisel the counter attack on the Aston - Meijel road continued. CCR had withdrawn the 2 companies that had been cut off and were attempting to defend their present positions. However, tanks and infantry of the enemy broke through their defensive position and forced them back. The artillery barrages so heavily placed upon the enemy stopped their advance and allowed our forces to reorganize and set up another defense.

This was a most active day for the artillery. Time and time again they stopped the enemy with the murderous fire they gave. Countless materiel as well as large numbers of personnel were destroyed. In support of this days operations the following fires were given.

434th FA Bn 75 Missions 2005 Rounds

440th " 88 " 4003 "

489th " 43 " 811 "

774th " 55 " 1353 "

 6 Tanks 4 " 30 "

(Br) 131st 17 " 3438 "

 25th 70 " 6919 "

 61st 14 " 345 "

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During the fighting on the 29th; it was decided to move 2 Brigades of the 15th Scottish Division, the 227th and 44th into the sectors of CCB and CCR respectively to relieve these forces. The division was then to move to the vicinity of Weert and be prepared to attack to the North-East. This relief was conducted without incident during the evening of the 29th and early morning of the 30th. This relief was completed with all units of our division except the artillery closing into position in the vicinity of Weert by 0220 the 30th.

Division artillery supported the withdrawal of our troops and fired in addition counter battery missions, harassing missions and interdiction missions throughout the night. A counter preparation on active enemy areas was fired about 0600 the morning of the 30th. Beginning about 1015 the artillery displaced the to their new position in the vicinity of Weert. This displacement was completed about 1700. At the same time, Hq and Hq Btry moved to their new location 2 miles north of Weert in the front of a small house. Wire had already been laid to this position and by night fall we were ready for anything that might come up. One the 30th the following fires were given:

434th FA BN. 12 Missions 1094 Rounds

440th " 12 " 1135 "

489th " 863 863 "

774th " 12 " 152 "

(Br) 131st Field 13 " 428 "

 25th " 12 " 425 "

Due to the new mission in the vicinity of Weert the artillery set up was some changed. By the evening of the 30th it was set up as follows: 434th in direct support of CCB. 440th in direct support of CCR. 489th in direct support of CCA. 774th in general support. The 4th RHA (25 pounders SP - 24 guns) was in general support. Support from the British to the North consisted of: 25th Field, 131st field, 181st field and 190th field (each of 24 - 25 pounders) and 61st Medium (16 - 5.5" guns) The weather the 30th was cloudy but with fair visibility.

On the 31st October the units strengthened their defensive positions with CCB taking over CCA 's area along the canal South of Weert. CCA took over the section of canal north of Weert as indicated on the overlay this date. The task force of CCA still remained on the East side of the Canal in the northern part of our sector. Enemy activity was very slight and on our part we were strengthening our defenses.

At 1630 the 31st the 4th RHA was relieved of its general support mission. Most of the fires during this period were counter battery missions, harassing missions and interdiction missions.

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The following rounds were fired:

434th FA Bn. 46 Missions 732 Rounds

440th " 4 " 57 "

489th " 52 " 343 "

774th " 7 " 66 "

(Br) 4th RHA 4 " 144 "

During the month of October the division artillery was mainly engaged in the immediate area bound by St Anthonis Deurne and Weert, Holland. Considerable artillery was used and to good advantage. Our artillery was chiefly responsible, together with excellent air support, in checking the German attempt to break through in the Asten - Weert area. In 3-1/2 days time - the 27th, 28th 29th and till morning of the 30th Division artillery controlled over 34,700 rounds of artillery fire that literally flew the enemy attacks to pieces. Our Artillery had done an outstanding job this month and were mighty proud of it.

During the month, Hq Btry Div Artillery had liaison pilot Lt Layton replaced by lst Lt Alton formerly of the 434th FA Bn. Lt Layton took over the air section of the 434th. T5 Billy W. Manuel was evacuated because of a self-inflicted wound and replacement was received in his place bringing the battery up to T/O strength. In Hq Div Arty, due to a change in T/O we lost the Orientation officer, Capt David Cooley (on SD with G-1). This cut our officer strength down to 16 officers and 1 warrant officer. At the end of the month Hq & Hq Btry was full T/O strength. Moral was excellent.

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HEADQUARTERS

DIVISION ARTILLERY

7th Armored Division

 1 Dec 1944

SUBJECT: After Action Report, Month of November, 1944.

TO : The Adjutant General, Washington 25, D.C. (Thru Channels)

The After Action Report of Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, Division Artillery, 7th Arm'd Division consisting of eleven (11) pages is attached as an inclosure.

 (signed)

 O. W. Martin

 Colonel, F.A.

 Commanding

Inc. 1 (After Action Report for Nov 44)

S E C R E T

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BATTLE HISTORY, HQ & HQ BATTERY, DIV ARTY

November 1944

Hq & Hq Btry, Division Artillery was introduced to its fourth month of combat in Holland, under cloudy skies, blustery winds and disagreeable rain squalls, We were located two miles north of Weert, Holland in the vicinity of the small town of Laar, Holland.

Our tatical mission of protecting the right flank of the British Second Army was still in force. However, after the major counterattack attempted by the German troops the last week in October, the once larger front assigned us had been narrowed to approximately 8,000 yards extending north of Weert along the North-South canal. On our left we had the 15th Scottish Div, and the 11th Armored Division further to the north in the Deurne- Aston area. On our right we had the British 53rd Inf Div which had the Belgium Brigade and the British 4th Armored Brigade attached.

The first day of November was cold and cloudy, visibility was fair. We were outposting our assigned Division Zone with CCR generally along the west side of the Weert canal and CCA in position across the canal and in position to attack South from the Northern portion of our zone. CCB was held in reserve on the west side of the canal in the northern sector of our zone after having been releived of their assigned mission south of Weert by elements of the 53rd Inf Division.

The artillery set up remained virtually the same with the exception of the 434th FA Bn which was moved from positions south of Weert to a new position north of Weert so that they might better support our units in their assigned zones. A large amount of artillery was in position in the general vicinity and most of it available to us when the pieces were within range. Our organization for combat was as follows: 434th Armd FA Bn support units in zone of CCB. 440th Armd FA Bn in direct support of CCR. 489th Armd FA Bn in direct support of CCA. The 774th FA Bn (4.5 guns) was placed in general support. A British sound ranging troop occupied a position to support to the East and Southeast. Support from British Artillery on the North consisted of artillery of the 15th Scottish Division. Additional support was available from 8th AGRA (available as Corps Arty to reinforce our fires). This consisted of: 53rd Medium Regiment (16 5.5" guns), 61st Medium Regiment (16 5.5" guns) 165th Heavy AA (3.7" guns) and 53rd Heavy Regiment (1 Btry - 4 155 guns, M-1). Support from British artillery on our right consisted of the 53rd Infantry Division artillery and the 4th Royal Horse Artillery (Armd).

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Most of the artillery fires the first were limited to interdiction and harrassing missions with some fire being placed on enemy activity. The afternoon of the first much enemy activity was reported and several towns on our side of the lines shelled.

The enemy were attempting to construct bridges over both canals, the canals were full of landing barges and some vehicular activity was noted. These of course were fired on when definite information as to their locations had been obtained. The following missions were fired:

434th FA Bn 43 Missions 478 Rounds

440th FA Bn 15 " 237 "

489th FA Bn 67 " 972 "

774th FA Bn 23 " 547 "

It was decided that we should make an attack, so on the 2nd of November 1944 CCA reinforced was assigned the task of attacking from their positions on the East side of the Weert canal in the north portion of the Zone, to the south to seize the North bank of the Canal Du Nord which ran generally East by North East from Weert. CCA divided their troops into two task forces that pushed abreast towards their objective. The Left force encountered a quite extensive mine field which held up their advance. Relatively little progress was made this day. The other task force received much cross-fire from the vicinity of Horic and did not attempt to break the general front. In general both task forces met with enemy S/A, MG, AT, Nebelwerfer and Arty fire. Some prisoners were taken.

In order to better support this attack, the artillery was shuffled somewhat. The 434th, having moved to their new positions were placed in general support reinforcing the fires of the 489th FA Bn. The 440th was in direct support of CCR and the 489th in direct support of CCA. The 774th remained in general support.

Numerous artillery fires were given at the call of the forward observers in direct support of the attack. Interdiction, counterbattery and enemy activity in general received the majority of fires. The following rounds were given:

434th FA Bn 18 Missions 663 Rounds

440th " 76 " 1389 "

489th " 161 " 2630 "

774th " 45 " 844 "

At 0645 the 3rd of November CCA again attacked and made steady progress against enemy small arms, MG, Mortar, AT and artillery fire. They reached their first objective, the north bank of the Du Nord canal at 1230. As the 87th Cav Rcn took over the security of the canal, the forces of CCA reorganized and at 1530 attacked generally East in the Division Zone. CCR which was relieved of outposting the North-South canal as the attack advanced, organized to assist the forces of CCA as a reserve force. A bridge was placed across the North-South canal, completed by 1615 which allowed the forces of CCR to cross to the east side of the canal.

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The artillery remained unchanged except for the displacing of the 489th to positions across the canal to the East where they could more effectively aid CCA. The initial attack the morning of the third was preceded by a heavy artillery preparation fire that covered all important roads, strong points and villages. This was credited with making the rapid advance possible of our force. Numerous interdiction fires and counterbattery fires were given. In addition a large number of targets of opportunity were fired. The following fires were given:

434th FA Bn 70 Missions 1861 Rounds

440th " 67 " 1811 "

489th " 33 " 1283 "

774th " 50 " 809 "

53rd Div Arty 17 " 654 "

8th AGRA 8 " 496 "

The 4th of November the Division was assigned an objective some 4,000 yards to the east of their location at nightfall the 3rd. Once reaching that objective we were to wait until the 15th Scottish had progressed to a given point just above Meijel and then both of our divisions were to push the attack simultaneously and completely oust the Germans from the north of the Du Nord canal. CCA continued its mission of clearing the enemy from our Division zone by attacking at 0645. The task force on the left pushed onward to the objective, reaching the intermediate objective by 1110 and the objective of the day by 1230. The south task force received considerable artillery fire but moved onward reaching a point some 500 yards from the objective by 1230. By early afternoon they had reached their objective. Both task forces then consolidated their positions and awaited Corps order before pressing the attack any further. CCR took over the mission of the Rcn Sqd of outposting the north bank of the canal, CCB remained in Division reserve.

The 440th FA Bn was placed in general support (secondary mission reinforcing fires of 489th). The 434th remained in general support, reinforcing the fires of the 489th which was in direct support of CCA. The 774th continued in general support, reinforcing the fires of the 489th. The weather was cloudy to fair with good visibility. The 434th was moved to positions East of the canal in the general vicinity north of Horic.[[1]](#footnote-1) The 440th and 774th were displaced forward to positions just west of the canal. With this employment the artillery was prepared to support the attack on the final objective.

The artillery fired preparations during the night 3-4 November and for the attack at daylight. Counterbattery fire, enemy activity and interdiction took up the balance of the fire as the following missions were tabulated:

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434th FA Bn 43 Missions 559 Rounds

440th " 17 " 580 "

489th " 61 " 1680 "

774th " 43 " 551 "

53rd Div Arty 15 " 1479 "

8th AGRA 19 " 572 "

Ever since we had departed from the Aston area the Scottish Division had been pushing the Germans back across the canal to the East. Resistance had been strong and the progress of the English, though steady, had not been great. By the 5th of Nov they had cleared a general area to a point 2000 yards north of Meijel and west of the canal.

As the 7th was not to make the attack on the final objective until the Scottish had pushed past a certain point north of Meijel, the 5th of November was spent by our troops in consolidating their positions and removing minefields, exchanging small arms fire with the enemy in their locality and in preparation for the forthcoming attack.

The English were having a tough time against the enemy armor and numerous mine fields in their route of advance. Pratically no progress was made the 5th, and the 7th did not receive the order to attack.

The artillery set up remained unchanged with the Arty placing considerable fire on enemy batteries and enemy activity of all sorts. Numerous targets were fired upon with good success. The 5th was cloudy but with good visibility. We fired on the following:

434th FA Bn 32 Missions 1684 Rounds

440th " 30 " 833 "

489th " 36 " 749 "

774th " 66 " 1150 "

53rd Div Arty 20 " 1526 "

8th AGRA 18 " 1184 "

The 6th of November we received word that the 7th Armored Division was to assemble in an assembly area of the 9th Army in the vicinity of Maastricht, Holland. The British were to take over our sector as soon as possible, our artillery remaining in position until the relief had been completed. Billeting details were sent out the evening of the 6th from each Battalion to prepare for their units arrival.

Meanwhile, the morning of the 6th the 48th Inf Bn was releived by the 23rd Inf Bn., lines were further consolidated and all was in readiness to launch the attack on the final object whenever the go-ahead sign was given. Later in the day arrangements were made for the relief of the north task force by the 227th Brigade of the 15th Scottish Division.

The artillery continues to interdict important bridges and road junctions, fire on enemy activity of any type and counterbattery the enemy artillery.

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The following missions were fired:

434th FA Bn 23 Missions 531 Rounds

440th " 56 " 1641 "

489th " 97 " 794 "

774th " 17 " 266 "

53rd Div Arty 13 " 392 "

8th AGRA 18 " 407 "

The 7th of November the artillery fired missions in support of the releif of the rest of the division, fires on enemy batteries and enemy activity. The front line troops were relieved by the 15th Scottish Division and the 152nd Brigrade of the 51st Highland Division. Relief was completed by 2345. The British artillery had taken up positions in our general sector and were preparing to move across the canal to occupy the positions we held there. So, by noon the 8th we had moved the artillery to the initial assembly area south of Marheeze preperatory to the move to the Ninth Army Zone.

The 7th was cloudy with some rain. Visibility was poor. Interdiction, connterbattery and relief fires accounted for the following rounds:

434th FA Bn 16 Missions 303 Rounds

440th " 51 " 739 "

489th " 106 " 1887 "

774th " 6 " 329 "

53rd Div Arty 18 " 876 "

The 53rd Infantry Division Artillery and the 4th RHA were no longer available for support after 1700 of the 7th. The 434th moved to a new location in the assembly area south of Marheeze.

On the 8th Nov the 7th Armd Div was officially releived in its sector of the British VIII Corps and movement was in progress to the zone of the Ninth Army.

The Division artillery continued to support the division in our sector until our troops were withdrawn. By noon of the 8th, our battalions had withdrawn or were in the process of of withdrawing to the assembly area south of Marheeze preparing to move to the Ninth Army sector starting about noon of the 9th. The weather was cloudy with fair visibility. The following rounds were given in supporting the relief of the division from this sector:

434th FA Bn 10 Missions 168 Rounds

440th " 20 " 282 "

489th " 141 " 337 "

774th " 11 " 547 "

The 9th Nov the Division Artillery plus the 774th FA Bn moved from the assembly area south of Marheeze to the vicinity of Mheer, Holland in the Ninth Army Zone. Division Artillery, headed by Hq & Hq Btry left the assembly area at 1210 the 9th and were all closed by 2130 that same evening.

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Hq & Hq Btry left their area near Laar, Holland at 1210 and arrived in their new area at Libeek, Holland at 1600 after a march of 42 1/2 miles. The weather was cold, approximately 40 degrees with snow and rain. Visibility was poor.

The 774th FA Bn which was the last in the column had three batteries held up for two hours while the bridge at Maastricht was repaired. All of our other battalions had closed in their areas by 1900 the 9th Nov 1944. The balance of the 9th was spent in preparing our bivouacs.

The 10th through 16th of Nov was spent in training personnel, gun drill, cleaning of weapons, maintenance on vehicles and personal maintenance. On the 10th we received an order from the Ninth Army attaching the 774th FA Bn to the XIII Corps and relieving them from attachment to us, effective 9th Nov 1944. We were sorry to see Col Binkley's outfit leave us as they had done a splendid job and we had, so to speak, broken them into combat. The weather in general throughout this period was rainy and cloudy with cold winds blowing most of the time. The countryside was very disagreeable being mostly mud knee deep. It was nearly impossible to move off the roads.

Large numbers of flying bombs were seen and heard during this period as they passed directly over our general area. One exploded 300 yards from "B" Btry of the 434th FA Bn the 11th Nov leaving a crater" 15 feet deep and 25 feet across. No one was injured, although windows were broken in areas over a mile from the place the bomb dropped.

For the past several days there were strong indications that a task force was being organized to be given a special mission of protecting the north or left flanks of the 102nd Inf Div when it was committed.

The plan for task force Biddle was quite complex and for that reason considerably changed as events moved towards the day of committment. In general Task Force Biddle was to move to an assembly area N. East of Geilenkirchen when the British 30th Corps operating to our North succeeded in capturing Geilenkirchen, Germany. As the attack progressed we were to attack to the north and hold the line Linden - Beeck, Germany and thus protect the left flank of the 102nd Division who would by then pass to the South of us on an easterly attack to take the town of Linnich, Germany on the Roer River and at that point establish a bridgehead across the Roer.

Meanwhile the 7th Armored Division would have moved to an assembly area South-West of Linnich, assisting in the attack of Linnich if necessary, and, when the bridgehead had been established, push across to the East and towards the high ground to the North between the Roer and Rhine Rivers.

When the 7th Armored Division moved across the Roer River,

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Division Artillery and other units in Task Force Biddle from the 7th AD would join the 7th and assume their normal missions.

This plan was gone into in great detail. Constant meetings, terrain study, and tatical dispositions plus supply problems kept the staff in Hq. Div. Arty. very busy. As the day set for the completion of the plan approached and last minute revisions and reconnaissance were made, it became increasingly evident that the plan must fall through because of the congestion of the area. It was actually impossible to squeeze any more troops in the area, and those already there, it was felt, could handle the situation.

At 1045 the 7th Armd Div Artillery, on Nov 17th, moved from their location at Libeek, Holland to the town of Klimmer, Holland, a distance of & miles, arriving at Klimmer at 1300 the same day. Hq & Hq Btry established themselves in a very nice home in Klimmer. The facilities there were the best we had had since we arrived in the ETO. Our stay there was very pleasant. The 24th of November we received definite word that the TF Biddle operation was off and to be prepared for committment as an artillery group on Corps order.

At 0900 the morning of the 28th November 1944, Hq & Hq Btry moved from the house at Klimmer, Holland where we had spent a very enjoyable 12 days and journeyed to the town of Geilenkirchen, Germany where we were to pursue our next objective. We arrived there at 1100 the same day.

During our stay at Klimmer, Holland and in view of the possibilities of Task Force Biddle being committed, a number of the officers had made reconnaissance of the area then in our hands of Germany proper. However, for most of Hq Btry this was our first trip into and first view of Germany itself. There was a marked difference as one crossed the border. The first thing that struck your eye was the scene of utter distruction and lack of civilian inhabitants. The houses were gutted by artillery fire, the furniture and personal belongings spilling into the streets. Everywhere were masses of debris and evidence of total war.

The burned out tanks, dead cattle, crumbling towns and sernade of the implements of war gave us all a very vivid impression of the waste and distruction that total war in an enemy country necessitates. In all of our minds was one question, how can the German people stand very much of this?

We arrived at our new quarters in an ex-German college a thousand yards south-east of Geilenkirchen, Germany at 1100 the morning of the 28th November. This building, as all others in Germany, had received considerable shell fire, but offered some protection against the elements. It was a four story building and the fourth floor looked out upon our prospective field of battle.

In general, the Division Artillery of the 7th Armd Div had been placed under Corps control to act as an artillery group in support of the 84th Inf Division's operation which had the mission

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of seizing the towns of Wurm and Lindern, Germany and the high ground between. In addition to the 434th, 440th and 489th Armd FA Battalions, we were given the 17th Tank Battalion to assist us by utilizing their 75 and 76 mm tank guns in indirect fire. The 40th Tank Battalion was attached to the 335th Inf Regt of the 84th Inf Div and assigned the mission of passing through the Infantry once the Infantry had seized control of a large anti-tank ditch running generally 1200 yards south of the main objective. After passing through the infantry , the tankers were to split into two forces, one attacking towards the high ground east of Wurm, the other attacking the town of Lindern, Germany.

The attack started at 0730 the 29th with the Infantry advancing towards the anti-tank ditch. While opposition was limited mostly to machine gun and small arms fire, the rain that fell the previous night and the early morning had added to the mud already present and had materially hindered our progress. The morning was damp and cloudy with poor visibility. Very little progress was made by the infantry, and the tanks remained in their original position area. Very little artillery fire was called for, and with the exception of harassing and interdictory fire from 0730 to 1000 by the 17th Tank Bn. on the area to the north of our objective, so fire was asked for or given by our organic battalions. Artillery in this area was plentiful. XIII Corps had 11 battalions that were available to fire on the area, not including our artillery, 84th Div Arty and 3 Regt's of British Artillery to our North.

By noon the weather had suddenly cleared, the sun was out and visibility was good. At 1415 the combined artillery placed a heavy concentration on the town of Beeck, Germany. After this operations advanced much more rapidly. The infantry breeched the anti-tank ditch, the tanks passing through and entering the town of Beeck by 1515. Meanwhile, our elements on the left had forged ahead to Lindern and had troops in the southern edge of that town. During this entire operation in the afternoon, excellent artillery and air support was given the tanks and infantry. The late afternoon was spent in consolidating positions and re-grouping. At 1645 a small counterattack was developing on our right flank. This was observed and artillery quickly dispersed it.

During the afternoon, following the heavy artillery concentration, Germans were reported leaving Beeck, Wurm and Lindern and traveling to the north to the town of Randerath, Germany. They were greeted along the way by straffing planes and in the town itself by an artillery barrage containing everything available in this area. Results were very satisfactory and German casualties thought to be heavy.

The Germans throughout this entire operation interdicted important cross roads and towns with artillery and mortar fire. A few Nebelwerfers were reported and there were several threats from Tiger Tanks and Mark IV's and Mark V's. The troops in the front lines received comparatively little artillery fire. The

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caliber of the enemy guns was generally of the 75 and 105mm with occasional 150mm shells reported. The mortars varied up to 120mm Considerable 88 fire and A/T fire was received. The town of Geilenkirchen especially received heavy mortar and artillery fire of a harassing and interdictory nature. Most of this was received one or two rounds at a time. Our troops, for the most part installed in the basements, suffered few if any casualties.

The 29th of November the following rounds were fired:

434th FA Bn 320 Rounds 7 Missions

440th " 318 " 7 "

489th " 379 " 23 "

17th Tank Bn 75mm 1536 " 15 "

17th Tank Bn 76mm 681 " 16 "

The 30th of November the 84th Inf Div was to continue its drive towards the high ground North-East of Beeck and South of the railroad with one regiment, and to push towards the North-East to a general area South-West of Brachelen, Germany. At The same time the 102nd Inf Div on the right was given the objective of Linnich, Germany on the Roer or Rur river.

Both attacks jumped off at day break, preceeded by an artillery preparation. The advance was slow against steady resistance. The enemy were using a number of tanks and infantry teams to counterattack on meet our forward thrusts. The attack the 29th had bypassed several fortifications and now fire was being received from the rear of our forces, especially those advancing to the north. It was necessary to destroy these isolated pockets before the advance could continue. The skies were slightly cloudy and towards late morning the visibility changed from fair to good.

The 40th Tank Bn made two tries to get across the large anti-tank ditch south of the railroad about 1200 yds between Beeck and Lindern. The crossings were attempted at several breaks in the ditch between these two towns. Both attempts failed as the Germans had zeroed in the breaks with 88's. Each time the tanks were forced to return to Gereonsweiler, the only point of terrain that offered them any protection.

Several Tank-Infantry counterattacks were received at various times throughout the day in this area. These were quickly repulsed by artillery fire but served the purpose of holding up the advance of our forward elements.

On the 102nd Inf Div front progress was also very slow against the same Inf-Tank counterattacks, especially in the area north of Linnich. Our forces advanced about 1000 yards in this sector, reaching at the northern flank the Linnich-Lindern road. Further to the South the 102nd captured the town of Welz, Germany. While neither division obtained their complete objective, substantial gains were made.

Our artillery mainly supported the operation of the 84th Inf Div to the north thrust and also hit several points in the vicinity of the Div Boundary to the North-East. The 17 Tank Battalion minus one company again gave harassing and interdictory fire to areas outside the immediate operations zone. A number of combined

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Corps concentrations were given and several Time On Target (TOT) for the 84th Div. As our artillery was not in direct support of any particular unit (except the 40th Tank Bn which was supported by the 489th FA Bn) the number of observers we sent out were much fewer in number than usual. There were three observers with the 40th Tank Bn from the 489th and one observer from the 434th with the north flank forces of the 102nd. The other observers manned O.P.s on high ground and very often in buildings that overlooked the operation area.

In support of the operation the 30th, the following fires were given:

434th FA Bn 516 Rounds 9 Missions

440th " 482 " 12 "

489th " 1678 " 25 "

17th Tank Bn 75mm 1408 " 12 "

17th Tank Bn 76mm 888 " 10 "

During the month of November the units of Division Artillery were out of the line for the first time in nearly 80 days. The rest was very welcome to the officers and men and they made the best of it they could. Weather conditions were far from pleasant, but all troops were billeted indoors and enjoyed an occasional movie or a 12 hour pass to Maastricht, Holland. The 24th of November 4 officers and 50 enlisted men from Division Artillery were given two day passes in Paris -- returning the night of the 27th, just before our move into Germany. Morale was excellent and everyone exceedingly proud of what our artillery had accomplished since we had landed in the European Theater of Operations.

From the 14th of November to the 28th the staff of Hq Div Arty was kept very busy preparing plans for the Task Force Biddle operation and then later for other potential operations. As none of these operations were carried out, much time and trouble was for naught.

Six officers of Hq and Hq Btry, Div Arty received awards this month. COL O.W. MARTIN received the Oak Leaf Cluster to the Silver Star for gallantry in action. This was in addition to the Bronze Star Medal awarded him for meritorious service in the month of October. Col MARTIN received the Oak Leaf Cluster to the Silver Star for gallantry in action during the German counter-attack the 27th - 30th October in the vicinity of Meijel, Holland. Major JOSEPH SAFER, Major W.W. RAWLINGS, lst Lt W.W. ZEILOR and 1st Lt HAROLD E. SWAN were awarded the Bronze Star Medal for meritorious service against an enemy of the United States during the period 11 Aug 44 to 23 Nov 44. Lt Alton, our liaison pilot, received the Oak Leaf Cluster to his Air Medal.

Hq & Hq Btry suffered no casualties this month and received one replacement to bring us to the full T/O strength of 16 Officers, 1 Warrant Officer and 88 Enlisted men. Liaison pilots were exchanged with the 440th FA Bn to give the 440th a battle experienced pilot. Lt CROCKETT took Lt LAYTONS place in Hq Battery.

The entire month of November was spent in Holland and the latter part in Western Germany. For the most part the weather was very disagreeable and the country we operated in a sea of mud!

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S E C R E T

S E C R E T

From all indications, December was going to be even more disagreeable and the fighting tougher than that experienced in November.

A FEW POINTS OF INTEREST AND INFORMATION

1) Infantry and tankers (especially inexperienced troops) will attack much more readily and with a great deal more vigor if their attack is preceded by an artillery preparation. This seems to have a psychological as well as actual advantage.

2) It is often times necessary to send as high as 9 or 10 forward observers out from one of our battalions. F.O's, R.O's, Survey officer, Asst Ex and Motor officers are often times used.

3) A number of our battalions and our Hq Div Arty are using trained enlisted men as Liaison plane observers. It seems to be much better to have one observer and one pilot work together constantly. In one battalion the sergeant mechanic in the air section does both his ground job and the job of observing. Results are excellent.

4) The use of wire whenever possible in an Armored Divisions artillery has proved itself to us!

5) Division Artillery's survey section obtained 4 Inf Walkie-Talkie radios. This greatly reduces the necessity of the survey officer to run from one point to another and hence materially reduces the amount of time necessary for survey.

6) The 510 radio is too heavy and impratical for the forward observer working with Infantry. Most of our forward observers borrow a radio from the Infantry company and relay fire missions to their 1/4 ton truck where they are called in. A lighter radio

with greater range is a necessity.

7) Complex plans have never worked for us. Simple, one phase plans are desirable. The more phases in the original plan, the more changes we received and the more confused the subordinate units become.

8) The Germans invariably counter-attack after being forced back. If the artillery is prepared and their observers alert to catch the first evidence of a counter-attack forming, one good artillery concentration will generally disperse the enemy and convince him you mean to hold what you get.

9) When firing smoke missions for marking targets for aircraft, be ready to change colors of smoke on a minutes notice. The Jerry will often mark your positions with the same color you are using. (especially is this true when we used red smoke)

10) During the months of October and November, Col O. W. MARTIN established command liaison at the Headquarters of the unit Div Artillery was supporting. This party was very small, consisting of 2 Officers each with a 1/4 ton truck and radio plus driver. In Col MARTINS absence the officer with him acted as Liaison.

11) 105 artillery fire will seldom knock out a tank when used as indirect fire. However, it was found that a concentration of 1/2 white phosperous shells and 1/2 high explosive with delayed fuse would either set some of the tanks on fire, materially damage some or would cause them to beat a hasty retreat.

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S E C R E T

1. This sentence, ending in “Horic”, is followed by a crossed out sentence that read: “The 440th and 774th were in general vicinity north of Horic.” [↑](#footnote-ref-1)