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HEADQUARTERS  
85TH CAVALRY RECONNAISSANCE SQUADRON MECHANIZED  
APO 255

3 January 1945

REPORT AFTER ACTION AGAINST THE ENEMY  
(Reference: Par 19, AR 345-105, C3)

DECEMBER 1944

**SECTION I - The Enemy and Elements Affecting Action.**

**1. Enemy Situation.**

a. Estimate of enemy opposing force - During the period 11 - 22 December 1944, the enemy held the sector opposing our attack with estimated two (2) battalions of 941 Infantry Regiment and two (2) battalions of 6th Parachute Regiment supported by estimated five (5) battalions artillery and unknown number of 80mm and 120mm mortars. At least one platoon of Mark V tanks was also used by the enemy in his defense. Enemy was well trained and extremely accurate in his artillery and mortar fire and seemed to have an abundance of ammunition. Morale of troops was only fair but they were aggressive and not disposed to surrender readily.

b. Enemy made liberal use of anti-tank mines in likely avenues of approach and in one instance improvised mines out of 80mm mortar shells. Enemy was well dug in with overhead cover to withstand our artillery. However in one instance after a heavy concentration of artillery he withdrew from his dug in positions under cover of darkness although his dug in positions were effective against his shelling when we took over his positions.

c. The enemy continuously pounded our positions with artillery and mortar and interdicted our MSR. He was very allergic to tanks and the approach of one of our tanks invariably resulted in extremely heavy concentration of artillery.

(1) Enemy air was quite active but seemed content with reconnaissance only and at a fairly high altitude due to our anti-aircraft fire.

(2) The only employment of enemy armor was estimated one platoon of Mark V tanks with about a company of infantry which attacked our road block. At the beginning of the attack the infantry preceded the tanks but upon receiving our small arms fire, the infantry withdrew behind the tanks which then moved up to the houses our troops were occupying and at very close range fired at the houses with 75 AP shells. This proved ineffective and our troops were able to repel the attack by use of small arms fire, anti-tank grenades and artillery. In

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this attack it was found that our rifle grenade firing from a range of 75 yards effectively pierced the rear plate and turret of the Mark V tank but a direct hit from a 105 Howitzer did not stop another Mark V tank but did convince the crew that it was time to withdraw. The enemy made repeated attempts to bring troops and vehicles past our block and it was found that 105 fire particularly of battalion volleys forced them to withdraw. The total damage to enemy vehicles during the period of this road block was the following destroyed: one (1) Mark V tank, one (1) SP gun, two (2) Half-tracks, one (1) trailer and one (1) Staff car. Damage to vehicles by artillery was not ascertained.

(3) Enemy infantry attempted a reconnaissance in force with a final mission to take high ground held by our Troop "B". The enemy force of estimated one platoon attacked from two directions along a draw around the hill. The attack was launched at dawn after a heavy artillery and mortar concentration. The enemy was not very aggressive and failed to follow his artillery closely with the result that our artillery and small arms fire stopped his probing at the source. No further attempts were made by the enemy to take this hill.

d. Elements affecting actions: Source of most information about enemy dispositions was aerial photos and PW information both of which proved adequate, accurate and complete except for location of enemy artillery about which very little accurate information was obtained. Difficulty was experienced in locating enemy mortars even though the sound could be heard. Enemy kept himself well informed of our dispositions by observation from high ground across the river.

## 2. Terrain and Weather.

a. The terrain involved in our operation was hilly and wooded and because of the wet condition of the ground, use of vehicles on secondary roads was difficult and cross country movement of vehicles was impossible. The M-5 light tank and the Carrier personnel, M-29 were the only vehicles that could be used to supply the front line troops.

## 3. Civilian population.

a. There were no civilians in the area of our attack but in the period before the attack (vicinity of VanWegen) and after the attack (vicinity Hoof, Belgium), civilian circulation was difficult to control due to the failure of GAC and AMG to have a standardized identification system. It was found necessary to arrest a number of civilians and take them back to their homes to determine identity. None of the civilians however proved to be dangerous or violators of any regulations.

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## SECTION II - Action.

1. 1 December 1944 the Squadron was still in Division reserve in vicinity of WUPPEN, Belgium.

a. 2 December 1944 moved to new division assembly area vicinity VENWEGEN, Germany with GP at 928355. D troop was attached to OCA and C troop to CCR. No mission assigned Squadron during period till 10 December 1944. D troop reverted to Squadron control 5 December 1944.

b. 10 December 1944 Squadron (minus Troop C) moved to assembly area vicinity KLEINHAU, Germany and prepared to execute mission under control of 4th Cavalry Group. GP at 039370.

b. 11 December 1944 Troop D attached directly to 759th Tank Battalion (part of 4th Cavalry Group) remainder of Squadron (minus Troop C) attached to 4th Cavalry Group.

d. 14 December 1944 Squadron (minus Troops G, D, E and F Company) control passes to CCB, 5th Armored Division. Location of Troops and GP unchanged.

e. 24 December 1944 Squadron (minus Troop C) having been relieved of mission by the 330th Infantry Regiment, 83rd Division, moved to new assembly area at HOOFF, Belgium (726800), and passed to division control.

f. 31 December 1944 - No change.

## 2. Mission.

a. The general mission assigned the Squadron was to seize and hold ground - in the case of Troop D operating under 759th Tank Battalion, to hold ground only since it was already cleared of enemy (though still under heavy enemy fire); in the case of Troops A and B to both seize and hold a series of objectives. The remainder of the Squadron (minus C Troop) acted in a supporting role to these troops.

b. Troop C attached to CCR, 5th Armored Division performed similar missions under direction of that headquarters the objectives being the towns of BRANDENBURG and BERGSTEIN, both in Germany.

## 3. Plan of Action.

a. Troop D held section of wooded nose east of KLEINHAU, Germany (see S-3 overlay, 10 Dec 44) from 11 to 21 December 1944. Severe losses were suffered by this troop due to constant enemy artillery and mortar fire which continued unabated throughout their stay in this sector.

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b. Troops A and B were initially assigned a flank security mission for the advance of CCB on objectives #1 to 3 (see FO#22, Hq 4th Cav Gp, dated 10 Dec 44, and accompanying overlay). This mission was changed and the two troops took part in the initial assault on Objectives #1 and 2 and assaulted and held Objective #3 without support from other troops, except for tanks furnished by 81st Tank Battalion. All three missions were successful against moderate enemy resistance.

c. Subsequently it became the mission of Troop A (minus one platoon) to establish a road block at 103375 between the towns of WINDEN and OBERMAUBACH and to prevent enemy movement between these towns until supporting infantry cleared them of enemy. As planned this operation was to take one day 21 December 1944. Actually the town of WINDEN was not taken and the town of OBERMAUBACH remained in enemy hands until 23 December 1944. Troop A maintained their position and were successful in their mission despite repeated attempt on the part of the enemy to break through and reinforce their troops to the South. The troop was highly commended for their fine performance by both the CO of CCB and CG, 5th Armored Division.

4. Troop C attached to CCR, 5th Armored Division. While few details are known concerning their activities during the month it is known that the Commanding Officer, Troop C successfully commanded a company of medium tanks and a company of infantry as well as his own troop in the attack on BERGSTEIN when commanding officers of both units became casualties and for this action has been recommended for the Silver Star award and for a battle-field promotion to the rank of captain.

5. Troop E gave general support to the division attack from vicinity KLEINHAU until an acute shortage of ammunition forced them to cease fire.

6. Company F supported both Troops A and B as well as Troop D in their operations. The terrain conditions and intense enemy artillery and mortar fire throughout the entire sector precluded any possibility of supply and evacuation being carried on in the usual fashion and by vehicles ordinarily used for these purposes. The tanks of Company F took over such necessary details with success and throughout the action were able to keep the line troops supplied with rations, water, ammunition and other needs. They also evacuated casualties to the aid stations. It is believed however that "weasels" would be excellent for this purpose.

7. Since arrival in the present location troops have gone out on daily reconnaissance missions covering the areas South to MALMEDY - West to LIEGE and North to HEERLEN - MAASTRICHT. Mission has been to provide necessary prior information for the advance of the division in any of these directions.

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8. Special Weapons used - No new or special weapons were used.

9. Communication.

a. 509 radios were used by line troops since terrain conditions made it impossible to bring vehicles forward. Light tanks from Company F furnished relay stations to the Squadron CP. Communications were not satisfactory on the whole. The batteries in the SCR 509 having too short a life and the relay system too slow, particularly when calling for and adjusting artillery.

b. Sound power phones and runners were also used between the line troops, principally for lateral contact.

10. Assistance from supporting units.

a. Outstanding in this category is the 71st Field Artillery, who did a superior job for us - their fire was highly accurate and effective and inflicted considerable losses on the enemy as well as breaking up a counter-attack against our positions several times.

11. Use of Grenades, Flame throwers, etc.

a. Troop A used the rifle grenade with excellent results. A Mark V tank was knocked out from a distance of 75 yards by hits on the turret and rear. Two SP guns also were destroyed by the same method. The troops have great confidence in the rifle grenade placing it even higher in their estimation than the bazooka.

12. Supply and Evacuation - As stated in previous narrative (see Co. F).

13. Casualties

a. Troops A and B and in particular Troop D suffered heavy losses in key personnel. Of the casualties a high percentage were high ranking non-commissioned officers and officers. All three troops have had a difficult task of re-organization to do and Troop D will require a long period to recover its former high standard of combat efficiency.

14. SUMMATION

a. In these missions our troops assumed the role of infantry and because it is anticipated by this headquarters that this will be the rule rather than the exception from now on, an alternate T/O has been worked out. (see attached T/O).

b. In an infantry role, our troops are seriously handicapped by insufficient manpower. The reconnaissance platoon is comprised of only twenty-eight men and one officer and even with the "new" T/O

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is hardly strong enough to perform typical infantry assignments. Also if all three platoons are used as they must be for most jobs no troop reserve remains which we consider highly undesirable but also difficult to avoid.

c. Aerial photos were a great aid in preplanning all phases of the operations. When grid squares have been drawn on they are the perfect means of accurate reporting.

d. Medical aid. -

STATEMENT BY MEYER FRIEDENTHAL, Captain, Squadron Surgeon "A major evacuation problem arose when the squadron was highly mobile. The troops, operating on wide and distant fronts, depended solely on the two aid men attached and their single one quarter ton truck for evacuation. In most instances the aid station and its ambulance was too far away to be of practical value. Thus long distance transportation was required in an open vehicle, subjecting the wounded not only to violent passage but to exposure to the elements also. At the same time the troop was bereft of all medical support during their absence.

Even in situations where the reconnaissance troops were operating in areas close to the aid station, the fact that the Medical Detachment has but one ambulance with which to evacuate the total squadron casualties, I was loathe to use it for evacuation back to the aid station from the troops.

When the squadron was in a static situation, dug in and under mortar and artillery fire incessantly, peeps were found to be unsatisfactory for evacuation purposes. No protection of any type is given the injured or the medical personnel.

When operating with a Combat Command in a static position, I feel I need a medical plan for evacuation made clear to me through the Combat Command Surgeon so that I may relay this important information to the troops.

In conclusion I suggest an increase in number of medical personnel to twenty-eight men and addition of a half-track ambulance would do much to effect prompt medical evacuation."

e. It was found that preplanning of supply is most important, and that a representative of S-4 must be on hand at all times during the action to co-ordinate between the line troops and the rear as well as to keep an accurate accounting of status of supply. Since all items were delivered under constant fire it has been decided that in the future they will be lashed to the delivering vehicle in such a manner that they can be quickly cut and dropped to the ground to be picked up by intrenched troops when enemy fire lifts.

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**SECTION III - Summary of Strength and Casualties, December 1944.**

	Asgd Strength 1 Dec			Asgd Strength 31 Dec		
	<u>OFF</u>	<u>WO</u>	<u>MI</u>	<u>OFF</u>	<u>WO</u>	<u>MI</u>
Headquarters	9	1	46	9	1	46
Headquarters & Service Troop	3	2	78	3	2	75
Troop A	6	0	132	4	0	106
Troop B	4	0	129	4	0	108
Troop C	4	0	126	4	0	127
Troop D	4	0	134	4	0	85
Troop E	4	0	100	5	0	99
Company F	5	0	86	4	0	86
Medical Detachment	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>12</u>
TOTALS	41	3	843	39	3	744
<b>CASUALTIES (85th-)</b>	<u>OFF</u>	<u>WO</u>	<u>MI</u>			
Killed	0	0	17			
Wounded	1	0	73			
Missing	0	0	1			
Captured	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>			
TOTALS	1	0	91			

Enemy Prisoners of War captured by Our Forces: 17.

**SECTION IV - COMMANDING OFFICERS - December 1944.**

Squadron Commander: 1 December 1944 to 31 December 1944 - Major GEORGE C. BENJAMIN, 023422, Cavalry.

HEADQUARTERS & SERVICE TROOP: 1 December 1944 to 31 December 1944 - Captain PAUL O. PETERSON, 01010111, Cavalry.

TROOP A: 1 December 1944 to 31 December 1944 - Captain SLYKOUR B. SCOTT, 0306938, Cavalry.

TROOP B: 1 December 1944 to 26 December 1944 - Captain KENNETH M. HAYES, 01010128, Cavalry.

0900 26 December 1944 to 31 December 1944 - 1ST LT. LOREN L. VILMB, 01012533, Cavalry.

TROOP C: 1 December 1944 to 31 December 1944 - 1ST LT. GEORGE W. BASQUEZ, 01012910, Cavalry.

TROOP D: 1 December 1944 to 1830 14 December 1944 - 1ST LT. EDWARD J. MC GANN, 01012549, Cavalry.

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1630 14 December 1944 to 0900 25 December 1944 - Captain  
PATRICK J. BURNS, JR, 01010401, Cavalry.

0900 25 December 1944 to 31 December 1944 - 1ST LT.  
EDWARD J. MC GANN, 01012549, Cavalry.

TROOP B : 1 December 1944 to 31 December 1944 - 1ST LT. PETER M.  
SCOTT R, 01012549, Cavalry.

COMPANY F : 1 December 1944 to 31 December 1944 - Captain JOHN T.  
SCHWAB, 01010396, Cavalry.

MEDICAL DETACHMENT : 1 December 1944 to 31 December 1944 - Captain  
MEYER PAUL WENTHAL, 0425804, Medical Corps.

*George C. Benjamin*  
GEORGE C. BENJAMIN,  
Major, Cavalry,  
Commanding.

- 2 Incls.  
Incl 1 - Unit Journal.  
Incl 2 - File of Incoming and  
Outgoing Messages.

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