

714TH TANK BATTALION – NARRATIVE OF ACTIONS - FEBRUARY 1945

Following the move of 7 kilometers from Brumath, France to Eckwersheim, France, the 714th Tank Battalion now located in Eckwersheim, France remained on three-hour alert to be ready to counterattack any enemy thrust in the vicinity north of Strassburg. Prior to, and including 1 Feb 1945, the 714th Tank Battalion continued maintenance of vehicles and equipment and Tank Infantry Problems in the vicinity of Eckwersheim, France.

2 Feb 1945: At 2400, warning order was received from CC-B by L/O, to be prepared to move by 0800. The division will move to assembly area in vicinity of Selestat, France (7862) starting movement at night 2-3 Feb 1945 and prepare for operations in this area. Move by combat commands in order of CC-B, CC-R, and CC-A. The 714th Tank Battalion will remain an element of CC-B, additional units to include 56th AIB, 494 FA, D/92 Reconnaissance, B/119 Engineers, B/82 Medics, B/134 Ordnance, D/572 AA and one platoon 827 TDs. At 1100, order was received by 714th Tank Battalion to be prepared to move by 1800 but changed ordering battalion to cross IP at 1500 with route of march on overlay. At 1350, the Battalion S-3 left for CC-B to coordinate movement from Eckwersheim. The Battalion moved out at 1400 2 Feb 1945, marched to Epfig, France, arriving 2245, march was without incident, weather clear. At 2245 the CO reported to CC-B for meeting. On 2 Feb 1945 at 2400, Major Field returned from CC-B with information that Battalion would be broken down into three task forces: task force Field, task force Boone (Ex Off 714th Tank Battalion) and task force Norton. B/714 to go to TF Norton, A/714 to go to TF Boone, C/714 to remain with TF Field. The Battalion will march to assembly area north of Colmar, France prepared to exploit to the south. The route of march pointed out on the map by Major Field, TF Field to follow TF Norton. TF Field consists of Hq, Hq and Hq Co, C/714 – Co C/56 AIB; TF Boone, A/714, Co A/56 AIB; TF Norton, 56 AIB (Minus) plus Co B/714th.

3 Feb 1945: At 0300 the Battalion moved out from Epfig, France to an assembly area in the vicinity of Houssen, France, assembling on main road leading to Colmar, France. On 3 Feb 1945 at 0600 the forces received orders to move south to Colmar, France. At 0730, the Reconnaissance Platoon with Lt Taylor, as platoon leader, reported small arms firing and snipers in Colmar. A company commanders meeting was held at 0800 at road junction, 1 ½ mile north of Colmar. By 0900 the Battalion entered Colmar moving to south of town. Friendly infantry in canal (726-391) in fire fight. The Battalion had moved to the south of town crossing railroad (724-397) making contact with friendly infantry. Major Field ordered that the Assault Gun and Mortar Platoon take up firing positions at railroad (724-397) on edge of woods, south of canal and on left of Colmar-St Croix road. At 0930, it was reported that bridge across the canal was out, the bridge site receiving heavy mortar and artillery fire. At 1210, it was ordered that all vehicles would display cerise panels to identify friendly vehicles. Force Field's objective was at this time St Croix, France, south of Colmar (739-344). After moving the Assault Gun and Mortar Platoon into firing positions, Major Field reported two enemy tanks between his force and objective. Fire from the Assault Gun platoon was too far to the left, Major Field directing that it be moved 200 yards right so as to bring fire on enemy vehicles and personnel north of St Croix (733-365); hits were observed. The mortar platoon was ordered to lay fire on the road south of the bridge and walk it south on Colmar-St Croix road. Lt McDougal, C Co Platoon leader, had been alerted for preparations to move his platoon forward in the vicinity of bridge. A message from S-3, CC-B reported that PWs were taken by

friendly forces on the left of Force Field. Statements from PWs were to be effect that their unit had orders to withdraw. Force Field pushed forward vigorously toward objective, St Croix. The bridge at 725-392 was out; Major Field requested that engineers be sent forward for repairing of bridge. At 1312, message from CC-B, S-3, asked of Field if he needed additional air support, his reply was no. A message at 1420 from CC-B asked if engineers had arrived. Affirmative was given in answer to this message and also sending prisoners back today, however, did not come from this point. By 1600 one antitank gun had been captured in vicinity of bridge and the bridgehead established with no enemy resistance present. A message about 1910 from S-3 of the 714th asked of Clayton, CO Co C Force Field, information as to what action was taking place. The commanding officer at this time was at CC-B CP. Capt Clayton's reply to this message from S-3, 714th was that his company was in close support of friendly infantry beyond the canal. Clayton's company was located on north side of the canal, and he said that he had coordinated with the artillery officer for fire defense plan with battalion mortar platoon in general support of defense.

4 Feb 1945: At 2400, heavy artillery fire by enemy artillery, position undetermined, was falling in southern section of Colmar. Artillery fire, about three rounds every fifteen minutes all night, increasing around 0300 to about one round per minute. At 0530, a civilian reports an enemy CP, unidentified unit, at 7389344, an enemy ammunition dump at 73503469, one battery of enemy artillery at 74463479. This message was from CC-B. During the night, friendly infantry had been fired on by either artillery or antitank guns in the vicinity of south Colmar. Seven enemy artillery pieces or antitank guns were reported at 0700 on road 500 yards south of bridge, counter-fire had been directed at them. Undetermined activity in front of Force Field elements but from activity and sound, appeared to be enemy infantry digging in. At 0745, Capt Fairburn of the 56th Infantry, Commanding Officer, Co C, reported casualties as the result of enemy artillery in this vicinity and requested that medics be sent up for evacuation. The 714th Liaison Officer, Lt Heath, reported to Battalion CP at 0745 with the latest plan for commitment of Force Field, Force Boone, and Force Norton. Boone's force on the left of Force Field's present position which remained north of St Croix, would pass through Norton's force, likewise located on the left of Force Field in an attack on Sundhoffen (761-381), Map: Neuf-Brisach, 3 and 4 France 1:25,000, to be supported by Force Norton from the woods, then Force Field was to attack toward St Croix supported by fire from Assault Gun Platoon. The Assault Gun Platoon, now located 400 yards south of the bridge, was directed to walk his fire down the Colmar-St Croix road. Lt Jenks, Assault Gun Platoon leader, was ordered to fire one round of white phosphorus so that his fire could be adjusted by Major Field. The Assault Gun Platoon fire was held due to artillery concentration laid in the same area. A message at 0815 from CC-B reported antitank gun position at 743-392 in the woods near railroad and road junction (729-395). At 0830 Boone's force was being delayed at the crossroad by antitank fire; he reported that his force had knocked out one tank and one antitank gun. At 0830, Force Boone received fire from antitank gun at crossroads (743-392). Major Boone, Commander of Force Boone, deployed his force including one platoon of TDs, one infantry company, and one company of tanks in the vicinity of the enemy antitank position with the plan of making a concerted effort for the enemy emplacement. At 0920 it was reported that enemy reconnaissance vehicles were sighted 300

yards north of St Croix. The message from Force Field to the Assault Gun Platoon, an element within Field's force, was ordered to fire at 0900 WP on enemy reconnaissance vehicles, Major Field adjusting. A message from CC-B to Boone (0920) requesting an estimate of enemy strength on opposite side of road (744-394). In Boone's reply, estimate of enemy strength was approximately 150 infantry and three antitank guns. Boone's infantry at this time had been directed to make a double envelopment of the AT position at crossroads. Boone's force drew small arms fire from south of railroad and due to loss of one tank, running upon a minefield, and one tank receiving AT fire, the envelopment was halted. The antitank ditch in this vicinity, where at this time the CO of CC-B had established an advanced CP, was located at (75253840-275903871) facilitating a closer contact with the task forces. At 1145, message to CO CC-B ordering him to report to Big 6, CG, 12th Armored Division. At 1312, Force Boone reported that antitank guns had been knocked out 745-392, 40 PWs captured. Force Boone was held up at the railroad tracks by AT fire from the south. Doughs of Force Boone are able to advance beyond the railroad tracks but armor was being held in its present position. Boone's Force requested engineers through CC-B to clear minefield so that his force could continue the attack and exploitation. At 1320, CO C 56th AIB, an element of Force Field, had encountered a sizeable enemy force in vicinity of bridge (726-391). Capt Fairburn, CO C/56th AIB, reported to Field that going was pretty slow with mortars laying fire on south edge of Colmar woods (71303738-72223631). A message at 1513 from Field ordering Assault Gun Platoon to fire searching fire for two minutes on enemy mortar positions. At 1640, a message from CC-B to S-3 714th, contemplating a relief of Force Boone and Force Norton and on this relief, elements of the 7814th Tank Battalion would revert to control by Major Field, CO 714th Tank Battalion. Present positions would be consolidated by task forces awaiting relief by the 28th Infantry Division. At 1738, CO calls S-3 714th to contact CO C/714th and CO C/56 AIB and have them report to CO 714th Tank Battalion. At 1759, location of enemy pillbox (734-382) still being occupied. COs of task forces report to be on their way to 714th CP at 1838. Lt Heath, 714th Liaison Officer, from CC-B brought orders at 2220 to CO 714th to have all vehicles refuel and loaded with ammunition on their return to vicinity of rear CP and to notify CC-B as soon as this has been accomplished.

5 Feb 1945: CO 714th contacted S-3 CC-B by radio checking on unit that was to take over task force positions and when they were to relieve the forces. A company commanders meeting had been called by the CO 714th to meet at rear CP. At 0100 CO 714th checked with Ex O and found that some of the relief units were moving into position. Reconnaissance platoon was relieved of its present mission in preparation for a new mission. At 0246, information reached Hq 714th Tank Battalion that relief of the task forces would be completed in about 45 minutes or about 0400. By 0600, the 714th had assembled in south Colmar making preparations for a movement south. Field Order #6 was received from CC-B at 0630 covering plan for division move to vicinity of Rouffach, France, before daylight. Elements of the 1st French Army are advancing north from Soultz, France (621-205), to effect the junction with elements of the 12th Armored Division at Rouffach, France. The enemy is reported withdrawing from the vicinity south of Colmar but antitank fire was reported in the vicinity of Herrlisheim covering the north and south road from 685-365 to 681-350 during the daylight hours. The 12th Armored Division will march on an axis, Colmar-Hattstatt- Pfaffenheim-Rouffach to effect a junction with the 1st French Army. The

order of march will be CC-A, CC-B and CC-R and by available routes along this axis, by-passing enemy strong points where possible. The 714th Tank Battalion will follow 56th AIB and be prepared to by-pass the 56th AIB if necessary to reach objective. By 0815, the column was halted on the road west of Herrlisheim, France (697-354). At 0820, CC-A reported that their objective had been taken and the junction with the French had been made. All enemy resistance at the objective ceased. Air reports on bridges from north to south at 1230 on the axis of march revealed that the first bridge was in, the second out, the third in, and the fourth out. A message previously received at 1100 confirmed all bridges in and OK for crossing on route of advance Colmar-Rouffach. A message at 1400 from CO Co A, requesting information of troops moving north from St Croix and the reply from CO to Harrington stated that they may be elements of CC-R or French. Company A at this time had reverted from 714th control to 109 Infantry Division for support in attack and exploitation from vicinity Colmar woods to the Rhine. The 714th Tank Battalion assembled at checkpoint G, objective in Rouffach at 1415, all vehicles closing in at 1416. Harrington's location at 1420 719-351 in vicinity west of Herrlisheim. At 1600, Force Boone with C/714, A/56th and one squad of engineers, move from Rouffach north on main road to secondary road turning west toward objective, Oberhergheim (747-297). Force Boone received small arms fire from woods north of his route of advance (woods 705-295). At 1645, Force Boone passed through one platoon of B/714, an element of Force Field located beyond railroad (6850295). Force Field minus one platoon from Co B moved from Rouffach following Boone to position in vicinity west of railroad. Force Norton, 56th AIB minus Co A followed Force Field passing through Force Field on axis of advance toward Oberhergheim. Plan: Boone to occupy Oberhergheim, Norton to protect north flank of Boone Force. Field to follow up and remain as reserve in the approximate vicinity west of Oberhergheim (730-295). At 1720, message from Force Field ordered Lt Jenks of the Assault Gun Platoon, 714th and D/714 to move to right and left of Force Commander, Major Field. A message from Boone to CO/714 reported that friendly troops are in Oberhergheim. Major Field ordered Force Boone to move into town. At 1745, a message from CC-B to B/714 asking the position of B/714 and if his company was ready to move into Oberhergheim. Capt Leehman stated that he was in position but not ready to move in. Force Boone reported at 1820 that his force was well into town and receiving mortar fire from undetermined directions. Force Norton joins Force Boone in Oberhergheim. At 1948, message that Capt Clayton CO C/714 is in Oberhergheim and has met friendly foreign officer. A message to Boone from CO/714 directed that troops with Clayton move into Oberhergheim. The roads into town of Oberhergheim were partially blocked by troops moving in, including French, 56th AIB, elements of 714th and engineers of CC-B. The S-3 of 714th notified CO/714 that the rear CP is set up where originally planned, east of Rouffach (message 957 at 694-292). At 2000, Capt Kelly S-2, 714th contacted friendly infantry moving north and south of (684-291) to the east. Force Boone wants to know the situation with the French and if they are infiltrating toward east. At 2001, CC-B stated that all friendly troops have occupied ground this side or west of Ill River which runs north and southeast of Oberhergheim. At 2005, a message from Boone requesting information on evacuation of wounded from his position south in Oberhergheim, to CO/714. The occupying troops in Oberhergheim are now under command of Norton. Capt Wilson of the 119th Engineers has been notified to reconnoiter for bridge site in Oberhergheim, across the Ill River, east,

toward the Rhine River. At 2027, it was reported that friendly infantry were advancing from north toward Oberhergheim. At 2120, an initial plan to have units in Oberhergheim continue the attack to the Rhine River was changed with the following set up in effect: C/714 will be with Force Norton, Force Boone plus B/714 will return to Force Field.

6 Feb 1945: At 0715, a message to Capt Leehman, CO B/714 from CO 714, in vicinity of crossroads 729-302, warned that there are about 25 enemy in the woods to his rear. At 0730, the Reconnaissance Platoon with 4 peeps was sent to investigate report of 25 enemy in woods vicinity of CP (729-302). The Reconnaissance Platoon returned at 0830 reporting no results in their search for enemy position. At 0730, a CP guard of 714th rear CP reported 14 enemy walking down road (694-294) in patrol formation. The Battalion S-3, Capt Magruder, accompanied by officers and men, searched the area in vicinity of CP but were unable to locate reported enemy patrol believed to be enemy reported in woods west of CR 729-302. At 0835, Capt Wilson of the engineers, in message, stated he was ready to put in bridge at Oberhergheim, requesting one tank dozer report to him at bridge site, no enemy present in area. At 1215, message from CC-B to CO/714, notifies Battalion of enemy vehicles at 778-243, 798-272, roadblock 768-256. Major Field at 1220 left for reconnaissance to north from his present position, vicinity CR 729-302. The 714th would remain in its present position until return of CO. Major Field returned from reconnaissance at 1335 arriving at CP 694-292. Major Avery arrived at 714th CP to confer with CO at 1335. At 1400 Companies B, D/714 and Assault Gun are ordered to report to rear CP. A message at 1735 ordered that no units of 714th would be sent across Ill River as friendly infantry were to take mission. The present CP will be moved to Oberhergheim in vicinity of bridge site. The command H/T will be the only vehicle moved to new CP, the distance of which was 4 miles from the present CP (694-292). At 2130, Lt Taylor, L/O, reported to CP with information that the mission of 714th remaining in present position, vicinity Oberhergheim, had been changed, that new mission is to move to west and guard Vosges Passes (663-352). If 714th desires to remain in present location, it may, if not, the battalion will move to town of Herrlisheim (697-354). From CC-B to CO/714th, send your answer by radio – yes, if to move, no, if do not desire to move tonight. The CO, Major Field, answered no. At 2400, a message from CC-B alerting 714th to be ready to move at 0830 on 7 Feb 1945.

7 Feb 1945: At 0800, an overlay plus verbal order as explanation to overlay (included herewith) was received. Co A/714th will be attached to 28th Infantry Division in crossing of Ill River. (The complete mission of A/714 will be outlined in succeeding portion of narrative as it was detached for the operations in immediate vicinity.) At 1030, 714th Tank Battalion minus Co A/714th crosses IP enroute to Herrlisheim and Obermorschwihr. Billeting plans were confused in order from CC-B causing Battalion to remain on road from 1200 to 1400. The Battalion closed in at 1430, Company D in Obermorschwihr; Hq, B, C and Service Companies in Herrlisheim. The Battalion was alerted for possible presence of enemy agents and stragglers in the Herrlisheim-Obermorschwihr area (673-355). All personnel report any suspicious persons or incidents to Battalion Headquarters immediately. Message 1120, locating PW processing point (69453545). After battalion had cleared in Herrlisheim and Obermorschwihr, a defense against possible enemy infiltration was ordered in that companies would form patrols of two peeps to cover the battalion area and report hours to CC-B through Hq/714th, enemy activity as negative to the

same effect. A search for lost or stolen truck, 2 ½ was made of the battalion in response to directive from higher headquarters. Negative reports were submitted by 714th after thorough search.

8 Feb 1945: At 1000, a company commanders meeting was called by CO/714 with general discussion of situation and billeting of troops. At 1100, Ex O, Major Boone, called a meeting of all staff officers discussing the execution of disseminating information to companies.

9 Feb 1945: At 1100, the Liaison Officer, Lt Heath, from CC-B with information that the bridge over Lou River (669-353) is thought to be mined. Capt Kelly, S-2, 714th, checked the Lou River bridge and found that it was heavily mined and requested through CC-B that engineers be sent to this location. At 1300, Company A/714th reverted to battalion control after being attached to the 128th Infantry Division during operations apart from those in the vicinity of Oberhergheim. The following is operations and actions of "A" 714th on its detachment from 714th to the 128th Infantry Division. Company A/714 moved with Force Boone in CC-Reserve and established its CP in northeast Colmar on 3 Feb 1945. The company moved on 4 Feb, 0400, with Force Boone with the mission of taking Sundhoffen, France. Force Boone was attacking on two routes, CO Company A/714, one platoon of tanks plus two platoons of infantry to proceed down road through woods to Sundhoffen (761-381). On 4 Feb at 1705, one platoon of tanks from Company A was sent to road junction (745-395) to attack enemy antitank positions. The element was diverted from this mission to knock out enemy AT position on railroad to the south (743-392). Force Boone at 1500 on 4 Feb was relieved by the 128th Infantry Division, the third platoon to the 1st battalion, made a midnight attack on Sundhoffen on 4 and 5 Feb, taking 100 prisoners. The 1st platoon with the 109th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Battalion, on 5 Feb moved out 0700, proceeded southwest to the Colmar Woods to a position on the road between Herrlisheim and St Croix, France. The 3rd platoon was relieved from attachment from the 1st battalion remaining under company control at 1000 5 Feb. The 3rd and 2nd platoon now under company control was given a mission as supporting fire in the vicinity north of St Croix, firing east. Coordination with supporting fire of 2nd and 3rd platoon, the 1st platoon will attack St Croix with the 3rd battalion of the 109th Infantry Regiment, 28th Infantry Division. At 1400 on 5 Feb the company assembled on its objective, St Croix. At 1700 on 5 Feb the second and third platoon of Company A attacked Niederhergheim with 2nd battalion of the 109th Infantry Regiment, with light resistance, capturing 20 PWs. The 2nd and 3rd platoon, Company A, remained in Niederhergheim the night of 5 Feb, Capt Harrington being relieved from the 109th Infantry Regiment at 2000 on 6 Feb and attached to the 110th Infantry Regiment, 28th Infantry Division. At 0800 7 Feb the 3rd platoon company A proceeded to Rustenhardt to support the 3rd battalion 110th Infantry Regiment in their attack. As a result of this operation, there was established a bridge site over the Rhine Rone Canal and the destruction of 12 enemy pillboxes. The 3rd platoon remained in this vicinity to secure the bridge site. The balance of Company A advanced to Rustenhardt (795-269). On 7 Feb at 1700, Company A/714th minus the 3rd platoon moved to Baldau (855-255) by way of Dessenheim (816-307) crossing bridge at 835-325, and proceeding south to Baldau. The town of Baldau had been previously taken by the French. Capt Harrington, CO Company A, contacted the French, with agreement that Company A would cover northeast of town, and the French forces the southern portion. At 0045 8 Feb, the 2nd platoon of

Company A with the 3rd battalion 110th Infantry Regiment, 28th Infantry Division, moved to and occupied Nambenheim with no enemy resistance. The 2nd Platoon covered the eastern portion of Nambenheim overlooking the woods along the Rhine River. The company disposition on 8 Feb was 2nd platoon in vicinity of Nambenheim, 1st platoon and company headquarters in Baldau, and the 3rd platoon covering bridge site at Rhine Rone Canal. At 0900, 9 Feb Company A/714th Tank Battalion was relieved from assignment to the 28th Infantry Division, reverting to 714th control and joining its battalion in Herrlisheim, France on 9 Feb at 1300. At 1630, a company commanders meeting was called for contemplated move at 2230. The order of march: 56th AIB, CC-B, and 714th to march in series. At 1735 a message was received postponing move until after daylight on 10 February. The battalion remained on two hour alert status effective at this time.

10 Feb 1945: At 1345 a message was received that move from Herrlisheim, France is expected after 1715 this date. The original route of march was changed, and corrected route included herewith. At 1600, a company commanders meeting was called, with order of march given and overlay of route of march. At 1815 the battalion moved from Herrlisheim, crossing IP 686-687 at 1830.

11 Feb 1945: At 0900 the 714th Tank Battalion closed in at Cites de Charbonnages, France, traveling a distance of one hundred fourteen miles. At 1300 an overlay from CC-B showing disposition of friendly troops was received at this headquarters. Reconnaissance Platoon was attached to 56th AIB at 1300 to set up a counter-reconnaissance screen with OP's Bambiderstroff. 167-566, Narbefontaine, 132-610, Boucheborn 179-609, and Zimming 160-593, establishing contact with CC-A at Bambiderstroff and the 26th Infantry Division at Narbefontaine.

12 Feb 1945: At 0930 the battalion received an overlay to the enemy situation. By 1600, Capt Kelly, Battalion S-2, had made a reconnaissance of the area now occupied by the 714th Tank Battalion and surrounding area, forwarding the results to CC-B.

13 Feb 1945: Lt Heath, Liaison Officer and Battalion Gunnery Officer, reconnoitered area for ranges for firing of tank weapons of new tanks – M4A3E8. At 1300 awards were presented to the members of the 714th Tank Battalion for achievements in the past operations by Major Field, CO/714th and 1st Lt Carlson, Adjutant, in formal presentation.

14 Feb 1945: At 1400 Major Field, CO/714th Tank Battalion, and 1st Lt Carlson, Adjutant, 714th Tank Battalion, made formal presentations of awards for achievements in past operations to members of this battalion.

15 Feb through 28 Feb 1945: Training of troops in night reconnaissance patrols and small unit training (Advance Guard, Section and platoon problems), range firing (firing at captured German tank) with 76mm gun and bazooka, maintenance of vehicles, drawing the new M4A3E8 medium tank, gas mask training, baths and rehabilitation of troops were accomplished during this period.

/signed/

F. P. FIELD, Major, Cavalry, Commanding