

714TH TANK BATTALION - NARRATIVE OF ACTIVITIES FOR JANUARY 1945

For the period 1 – 5 January 1945, the battalion was devoted to training, reorganization and resting of troops. Training schedules stressed tank-infantry team problems, night patrolling, small arms firing in firing range area, gas security, and physical training. (See attached training schedules.)

The battalion by verbal order was on one half hour alert status.

Battalion location was vicinity of Mulcey, France.

6 Jan 1945: at 2020 the force was alerted to move. At 2300 the Task Force moved from area near Mulcey, France, crossed IP at Mittersheim 070140, and closed in Alt-Eckendorf at 070730.

7 Jan 1945: at 0900 CO of CC-B visited the Battalion CP. Col Phelan left for reconnaissance of area in vicinity of Hagenau, France. The Task Force Exec Officer, Major Fields, left for Hagenau, France to attend a meeting with Col Bromely, CO CC-B at the 79th Inf Division CP. At 1510 the Task Force Commander and S-3, Major Boone, returned from reconnaissance at 1715. Major Fields returned from meeting at 79th Inf Division CP at 1715.

Lt Col Phelan and Major Boone (S-3) (then Captain) returned from reconnaissance of front lines 071510. A meeting was called for all company commanders at 1730, verbal plan given to Col Phelan by CC-B prior to the move from Weyersheim, France, gave the battalion the mission of supporting the 56th Inf attack on Herrlisheim, France, by the 56th, 714th, and other units of the force; the 714th plus C of the 56th would move southeast to Offendorf as the second objective. The 56th Inf minus would move northeast to attack Drusenheim from the south. Both attacks were to be coordinated. Task Force number 5 left vicinity of Alt-Eckendorf 071900 and closed in Weyersheim 072000. Overlays to verbal order and enemy situation were given to companies at 080230. (See attached)

8 Jan 1945: at 0442 Lt Taylor, Reconnaissance Platoon Leader, returned from route reconnaissance to Rohrwiller, France. Lt Taylor reported that two bridges were out between our positions and attack area, the first bridge south of Bischweiler may be bypassed by an alternate route. Liaison Officer returned from CC-B, confirmed report that the two bridges were blown on route. At 0730 the Task Force moved from Weyersheim, France to an assembly area in vicinity of Rohrwiller, France. At 0945 a verbal message to follow plan was received. (Task Forces now include 56th Inf Minus, plus Co B of 714th Tank Battalion, the other 714th Tank Battalion minus Co B, plus C/56.) Company C moved out with two platoons infantry leading at 1000, doughs across foot bridge at 1030, tanks across first bridge at 1045 (coordinates of bridge out 134163). During the hours 0715 to 1130 the town of Rohrwiller, France and assembly area were subjected to aerial and impact artillery. The battalion CP was moved from Rohrwiller, France and established at Hanshoffen, France at 1831. At frequent intervals beginning 1300 enemy positions were reported from air (enemy battery located R130105 75 MM, self-propelled battery going into position at R112114, one enemy gun at R117101). Artillery placed fire on enemy self-propelled 75s. PW reports at 1900: 88s at R13751305, R13851310, R14151325. CP Battalion (Kappes) at K12651395. Company D 92 Recon Battalion reported enemy patrols at R090172, 1950. (Supply information, water points R097192 will be open 090800.) Additional supply information

in message received 2340, sent to S-2 by Exec Off. "See if you can get in touch with S-4 and stop his movement of trucks into Hanshoffen."

9 Jan 1945: at 0555 civilian informant reports that many enemy infantry are in Herrlisheim. Enemy tanks were reported to be at 132165. At 090800 CC-B reported that bridge that had been out was now ready for use. At 0835 unidentified men numbering ten were sighted in vicinity of Herrlisheim carrying Red Cross flag; the commanding officer ordered that they would not be fired on. At bridge east of Rohrwiller, France Company A of task force reported that they were receiving anti-tank fire on their positions. Lt Parsons, mortar platoon leader, was ordered to coordinate his fire plan with the plan of attack to be made by task forces on Herrlisheim. Grasshopper artillery planes were in the air spotting anti-tank gun positions of the enemy. By 1140 tank companying of the task force have all reported that their company is ready to move out on the attack and review of their orders is given them. Company A is ordered to have two platoons fire spasmodically into south of Herrlisheim. Company B attached to 56th Inf minus moves to the flank to north of Herrlisheim, reporting that crossing of canal bridge had been accomplished. Company C was now in firing position and firing into Herrlisheim. B Company had advanced to southern edge of town after elements of the 56th Inf had entered. Prior to these movements, enemy tanks numbering 25 were reported along east-west road between the towns of Herrlisheim and Offendorf. After advancing under heavy enemy fire, the town of Herrlisheim was occupied in its north sector by the task force. Casualties of personnel up to this time numbered about eight, vehicle casualties amounted to about eight. Re-supply of the force now occupying Herrlisheim was becoming acute due to concentrated anti-tank fire being directed on the approaches to Herrlisheim. Evacuation of wounded that was being carried on by Company D of task force was advancing into the concentrations of anti-tank fire and likewise suffering personnel and vehicle casualties. The assembly area of Rohrwiller, France was attacked by enemy infantry at 2055. Captain Shipe, Battalion S-4, in Rohrwiller reported that enemy were infiltrating into Rohrwiller.

10 Jan 1945: at 0740 it was reported that heavy casualties were suffered by the infantry. Five enemy tanks are moving into east of Herrlisheim with smoke concentrations laid along railroad to east at 1145. At 1355 the Exec Officer and Communications Officer with crew of the S-3 halftrack moved forward to better their communications with troops occupying Herrlisheim. At 1403 Lt Col Phelan was wounded by enemy artillery while making plans for consolidation of the sector of Herrlisheim that the force had taken. At 1410 message was intercepted at Battalion CP requesting that Col Phelan be evacuated from Herrlisheim. Staff Sergeant T A Poole of Company D was killed attempting to traverse the open ground that was under heavy anti-tank fire, in an attempt to evacuate the commanding officer. Staff Sergeant Maurice I Seller was injured in this same action. Major Boone, S-3 (then Captain) assumed command of the forces in Herrlisheim until Exec Officer, Major Fields, advanced to the position. Major Fields with S-3 halftrack goes forward to Aid Station in Rohrwiller. In Rohrwiller medics were being held down by patrol rifle and machine gun fire, making their mission of personnel evacuation of wounded impossible at that time. At 1500 Major Fields contacts D Company, 714th, the company that had been evacuating wounded over the ground covered by anti-tank fire, in an attempt

to contact A Company of the force anti-tank fire halted the Exec Officer's attempt to survey the situation in the occupied area. Major Fields returned at 1620 and left for CC-B for orders and plan. On his return Major Fields gives Major Boone orders to withdraw from Herrlisheim; the plan of withdrawal would be accomplished by artillery concentrations to cover withdrawal, with other units of the force coordinated so as to give protection to units that were to move out at a preconceived signal. Infantry were to move out first, followed by tanks; outpost protection was established with infantry to protect any flank infiltration of enemy in the withdrawal. On 102015 Major Fields called Captain Harrington, commander of Company A, to explain situation. From 1600 the vicinity of CP at Hanshoffen was shelled. After the order of withdrawal from Herrlisheim had been given the S-2, Captain Magruder, was sent to the new assembly area north of Rohrwiller to make arrangements for guides to area, posting them personally. The S-2 reported his actions to Major Fields at 2230. Message that Col Phelan is evacuated, that his tank will be passing soon was received at 2335.

11 Jan 1945: in the assault on Herrlisheim, Company B, 714th was ordered to revert to 714th from 56th Inf attachment. The withdrawal was accomplished with no casualties to the task force. In the assembly area the 56th Inf minus again assumed the attachment of B/714th. Captain Harrington, Company A, 714th will report to Col Bahr, Division Artillery, and take up roll of supporting artillery. Lt Taylor report to Major Avery, S-3 CC-B, for route and areas in vicinity to repel any counterattacks from northeast, east and north and southeast. An overlay was submitted immediately to CC-B showing exact locations of vehicle casualties, location of Hq Company, and tanks evacuated by type (see attached overlay).

12 Jan 1945: Battalion CP was set up at Oberhoffen, France on order of CC-B to have companies assemble in that town. Reorganization accomplished.

13 Jan 1945: A meeting of all company commanders and the staff was called for 0955. Major Fields commanding left for CC-B. CO arrived from CC-B at 1050 announcing the forthcoming plans for CC-B would hinge on actions of CC-A and 14th Armored Division to the north. Company commanders were given flight schedule to observe from air enemy positions and to make an aerial reconnaissance by 1200. Platoons from companies of 714th were given diversionary missions in the vicinity of Rohrwiller coordinating their actions with the attacks of CC-A. The Reconnaissance Platoon Leader, Lt Taylor, made reconnaissance for defilade positions west of railroad running north and south. The mortar platoon and assault gun platoon would take up positions in vicinity of tri-bridges northeast of Rohrwiller. At 1700 a meeting of all company commanders at battalion CP was called for purpose of discussion of day's ground and aerial reconnaissance. Plans for reconnaissance were made to continue for 14 Jan 1945. Between 132200 and 132300 reports of red flare by friendly troops in vicinity of Rohrwiller reputed to be enemy. Enemy artillery were shelling area with large caliber, approximately 20 shells in immediate area. Shelling ceased 140105.

14 Jan 1945: At 0552 reports reached battalion Hq that 30 enemy infantry had infiltrated behind our lines CR 105145 at 0532. Company commander of Company D/714th was ordered to alert

his company and report to post duty. Reconnaissance Platoon was attached to D/714th and put on outpost duty. Company A was notified that they were to report to 314th Infantry Regiment, 79th Inf Div at Rohrwiller. At 1300 an overlay of the enemy situation was sent to the companies. Forward Observers from 494th Field Artillery reported at CP for their missions and assignment to companies for artillery support.

15 Jan 1945: At 2025 Field Order was issued by CO indicating detailed firing positions for Company A in direct support of Engineers in the vicinity of the tri-bridges east of Rohrwiller. Captain Harding, Hq Company commander, was ordered to coordinate command of assault gun and mortar platoon in this area. Plans as follows: Map – France 1/25000, 12th Armored Division attacks 16 Jan 45 at 0200 to seize objective as shown on overlay. CC-A attacks at daylight to seize Staihwald woods (overlay), French Army attacks on 16 Jan 45 at 0930 to seize Gamsheim (see overlay). 314th demonstrates vicinity Drusenheim 0130 for one hour. For detail assignments see Hq CC-B, 12th Armored Division Field Order #5 (attached). (Paragraph 1, F O #5, inclusive above.) (see attached overlay for mortar concentrations)

16 Jan 1945: Enemy actions executed against the aforementioned plan resulted in the following incidents. At 1010 the element from Company C received small arms fire in their positions. At 1026 three casualties were reported at A Company position. D Company 714th received message at 1105 calling for aid in evacuation of wounded of 56th Infantry. Elements of force reported seven casualties at 1116, requesting evacuation by D/714th. 714th was now located 500 yards south of checkpoint A. A request for evacuation of wounded was sent by Company A and in compliance Exec Officer informed them that three tanks were on the way at 1117. The 56th Inf, after suffering many losses, was in dire need of consolidation, A Company of 714th suggested that a smokescreen be laid down for cover. The operations of the force were unsuccessful and units were ordered to withdraw. On 161720 the commanding officer was called to CC-B for a meeting; at 1750 CO called on telephone to have company commanders assemble at CP. Company A reported that two tanks had been disabled by enemy fire, one man was reported killed by AP shell at creek. CO returned from CC-B with the verbal order. At 170600 Task Force Field moved.

17 Jan 1945: After repeated attempts in putting in treadway bridge by the 119th Engineers for the coming operation, the 92 Cavalry will assist in this task. The rebuilding of this bridge was necessary frequently due to enemy artillery zeroed in on that point – east of Rohrwiller. The plan continues as follows for Task Force Field. B and C Companies, 714th and one platoon of A Company will assemble in area west of Rohrwiller by 0500, picking up 56th Infantry B and C companies. At 0600 Company C will move out with mission of seizing road and railroad intersection to east, not to pass further than that point, B Company starts as soon as C Company clears treadway bridge, one platoon of B Company swings to left and heads for trees near river/canal. B proceeds from north side of railroad, paying particular attention to edge of creek where three enemy tanks were previously reported. Suspected enemy occupying a factory 450 yards forward of the position to be taken up by assault gun and mortar

platoons vicinity of Rohrwiller. A Company one platoon at factory will on order take remainder of infantry and mop up area in rear; on taking initial objective, Force Field will proceed north with Company B and occupy factory. Company C will consolidate on road running north and south. Infantry will be under complete control of tanks, to be used in close support of tanks, riding six doughs per tank. The infantry will be instructed to fire from the backs of tanks into foxholes known to be in this area, be prepared for counterattack from Herrlisheim and enemy fire from creek that bulges in. Company D will remain in CC-B reserve, one tank report immediately for Infantry Command Vehicle. Assault gun and mortar platoons will go into positions at 0600. Checkpoints on route of attack were specified.

In a meeting with CC-B at 170130 CO returns with change of plan. Factory will not be taken, C Company to establish bridgehead at railroad. Force to take Herrlisheim, B Company to carry doughs, C Company to protect north, A Company to cover west of town, B Company to cover west of town. Prior to move by companies the tri-bridge site was reported as being shelled by enemy artillery. This operation resulted in an unsuccessful assault due to heavy concentrations of enemy anti-tank fire and artillery that was placed on route of attack and repeated destruction of the tri-bridges. The entire action is included in detail in the Battalion S-2, S-3 Journal for 17 Jan 1945. The journal includes small unit actions, decisions, orders, reasons, and a discussion of unsuccessful as well as successful actions for this operation.

18 Jan 1945: At 0130 company commanders were called to the battalion CP for a meeting, and for discussion of situation and plans for 18 Jan 1945. The situation as was given to the companies was as follows: Disposition of friendly troops including the 43rd Tank Battalion and the 17th Armored Infantry Battalion are now at the southern end of Herrlisheim, but not in contact with the enemy (they have reported to have taken 300 prisoners). The 56th Armored Infantry Battalion plus one company of tanks will move to the vicinity of Rohrwiller, France. The 23rd Tank Battalion, 12th Armored Division is now south of Herrlisheim and will jump off on the attack at 180400. Herrlisheim as the first objective with Drusenheim as the second objective, in conjunction with CC-B. CC-B attacks today to establish a bridgehead and follow the 23rd Tank Battalion to seize and hold high ground. The 714th Tank Battalion minus is in Corps reserve. The 714th Tank Battalion will support the attack with two companies and supporting weapons. One company of the 714th Tank Battalion will be attached to 92nd Cavalry to support the attack. The 714th Tank Battalion will move on orders and will be prepared to attack at 0600. Plan: Attacking elements of the 714th Tank Battalion will not go forward until the 23rd Tank Battalion passes their front, however positions will be taken up prior to 0400. Company D, 714th Tank Battalion was ordered to dispatch two light tanks to infantry task force forward CP to aid in evacuation of wounded and transportation for infantry commanders. The plans for the 23rd Tank Battalion were altered in that some of their pressure would be directed south of Herrlisheim. In support of the attack Company B was alerted at 0850 to move to a position past tri bridges to take up positions in woods east of Rohrwiller. Company C with like mission will precede Company B. The assault gun platoon will take up positions to afford support by fire in area of the factory east of Rohrwiller where positions of the enemy have been reported.

19 Jan 1945: During 172130 through 182347, this action proved an unsuccessful attempt to gain its objective due to enemy reinforcements and defensive gun positions that had been set up in Herrlisheim, Drusenheim and in defiladed fire positions east of Rohrwiller. The complete action is in detail related in the S-2, S-3 journal for the aforementioned period. The journal complete in detail includes actions, decision and orders by units that took part in this phase. On 190530, Company B, 714th Tank Battalion was attached to the 79th Infantry Division to form Force Lehman, the commanding officer of Company B. The 79th Infantry Division was attacking Drusenheim at dawn with Company B, 714th Tank Battalion in support. At 0740 a message from CC-B reported that enemy of unknown strength was crossing canal in vicinity of Rohrwiller 108142. The 714th Tank Battalion was alerted and prepared to move immediately. The companies now assembled in Oberhoffen alerted their personnel for a move to repel the enemy thrust. At 0840 resupplied the battalion with small arms ammunition. Outpost platoons of Company A located in woods east of Rohrwiller reported that no enemy action in their sector had been detected. The enemy force proved to be reconnaissance in force and through actions of the 714th Tank Battalion and infantry implaced in Rohrwiller, the assault was repelled. At 1445 the S-3 proceeds to Bischwiller on reconnaissance for contemplated move of CP. At 1630 the orders for the battalion to move to Bischwiller were cancelled in order that the battalion may meet an armored thrust reported to be 20 enemy tanks proceeding in the direction of Rohrwiller. On 191645 Company C, 714th Tank Battalion was ordered to a position at vicinity of factory site south of Bischwiller. The infantry was ordered to blow bridges and holds their positions that had been established east of Rohrwiller and Bischwiller. After defense positions were set up in the area of Rohrwiller and Bischwiller, the 714th Tank Battalion minus moved to the new CP in Bischwiller and closed in at 1730.

20 Jan 1945: Positions now held by companies of the 714th Tank Battalion will be spread over a wide area east of Bischwiller with fields of fire available to northeast and south. The mission at this time is mainly supporting. The enemy thrust had been repelled and positions, plans and moves in case of a counterattack were verbally issued. The battalion CP was moved from southeast Bischwiller to northeast Bischwiller. On this date the 714th Tank Battalion was withdrawn from the front lines for a move to Brumath, France.

21 Jan 1945: At 0005 the 714th Tank Battalion left assembly area in Bischwiller, France.

22 Jan 1945: At 1100 the battalion was attached as reserve to the 36th Infantry Division, now in Bischwiller area, and placed on 20 minute alert. Company B was attached to the 79th Infantry Division and placed on a 20 minute alert.

23 Jan 1945: The location of the battalion CP now in Brumath, France received artillery fire on the night of 23 Jan 1945.

24 Jan 1945: The 714th Tank Battalion was alerted to move to vicinity of Strasbourg, France at 1000. The time for move was advanced to 1400. At 1235 the movement order was cancelled until further notice. On 241530 the battalion dispatched billeting parties; they were later recalled and reported to stand by until further notice.

25 Jan 1945: At 1300 an order was received to move at once crossing IP at Stephansville at 1400. The S-1 with an advance billeting detail proceeded to Eckwersheim, France to secure CP and billets for the battalion. The battalion closed in Eckwersheim, France at 1545. On 252100, Company A was notified to set up outposts and maintain until 260900 at which time Company B would relieve them. Service Company and Company D CPs and billets were located in Berstett, France. Company B will set up outposts in Berstett. At 2120, S/Sgt Wright was sent out to reconnoiter routes in the surrounding area. (See overlay route of march.)

26 Jan 1945: At 1100 S/Sgt Wright, Reconnaissance platoon, was sent out to reconnoiter bridges over canals in the surrounding area of Eckwersheim and Berstett, his main efforts of reconnaissance were to the northeast of Eckwersheim and as far north as Brumath, France, south to Hoenheim, France, east to Kilstett, France. (See overlay attached). At 1110 Major Fields left for liaison with French Army to the south. On 261830 company commanders made reconnaissance of surrounding area of Eckwersheim paying particular attention to routes from the east.

27 Jan 1945: The commanding officer left for CC-R at 1000 and returned at 1800.

28 Jan 1945: Reconnaissance made by Reconnaissance Platoon indicated location of inundated areas, mine fields, the condition of bridges and demolitions for same in the area east of Eckwersheim, France (see attached overlay). For the period 282900 through 281740 various plans of offensive actions were submitted to units of the 12th Armored Division for attacks that may be made to the northeast plus plans of defense of area of present location. The 714th Tank Battalion remained on a three-hour alert.

29 January to 1 February 1945: the Battalion spent in Tank Infantry plans and training.

s/s

F. P. FIELD
Major, Cavalry
Commanding