

The following document is on file in the National Archives.

S E C R E T

HISTORICAL REPORT
725TH FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION
FOR
1 March 1945 to 31 March 1945

At the beginning of the period the battalion was occupying positions in the vicinity of Buschbach, France. (See overlay 1) The battalion had moved into these positions on 23 February, with the mission of general support of the division and reinforcing the fires of the 882d Field Artillery Battalion. From 1 March to 20 March, the battalion fired 3,755 rounds of all types, which means that during the attacks on Forbach, Stiring Wendel and Saarbrucken this twelve howitzer outfit expelled 180 tons of "disaster" supporting the advance of the division. Our biggest day from the standpoint of number of rounds fired was 20 March when the batteries fired 484 rounds in support of the Saar River crossing. We apparently worked ourselves out of a job that day too, for since then the howitzers have not been fired. The period began with some good hunting too. On 1 March, one gun of "B" Battery was adjusted on a house north of Stiring Wendel that contained about 20 Germans and some automatic weapons. Out of a total of 34 rounds fired from the one gun 26 direct hits were scored on the house. The observer reported hearing screams from the building as the first few rounds penetrated the interior. The same day, another gun in "B" Battery made eight direct hits on a round house in a railyard. From our own experience, we have definitely proved that the 155mm howitzer is an extremely accurate artillery weapon.

At different times during the action the battalion had the mission of reinforcing all three light field artillery battalions (882d, 883d, 884th webmaster note). Each change of the reinforcing mission necessitated a direct telephone line to be laid from our CP to the CP of the new reinforced battalion. On one such change, the order to lay the wire was given to the headquarters battery wire crew at 0300. The distance between the CP's was about seven miles. It was most urgent that telephone communications be established hurriedly. The line was laid in total blackout, over difficult terrain and was completely installed by 0645. During the whole action which this report covers, not once was a telephone line reported "out". For this superior performance the wire section was appropriately rewarded by the commanding officer. On 16 March, in anticipation of a displacement, "A" Battery was ordered to move one gun from positions in the vicinity of Forbach, a distance of five miles, and to prepare to register. Fast action was necessary in order to register before dark. From the time the order was given to the Battery Commander until the time the gun was reported to be ready for registration in the new position, only 45 minutes had elapsed. This section was also duly and appropriately rewarded.

Upon the Infantry's crossing of the Saar River and breaching of the Siegfried defenses, the Battalion displaced to bivouac locations. Displacement was accomplished on 20 March and positions occupied were as follows: Headquarters & Headquarters Battery - Gersweiler (410-710) Germany; "A" Battery - Krughutte (394-697) Germany; "B" Battery - Gersweiler (411-707) Germany; "C" Battery - Krughutte (395-698) Germany; Service Battery - Krughutte (398-699) Germany; Map 1/50,000, France, Sheet Forbach 36/12. The mission assigned here was to get the equipment in the best possible condition and to conduct a training program. This time was well spent in that our material was carefully checked and serviced. The training program had just gotten underway when orders were received to displace again. The move was effected on 25 March when the Battalion crossed the Saar River at Saarbrucken and took bivouac positions in the small town of Hutschenhausen (581.2-291.2) Germany. (Map 1/25,000 Germany, Sheet 6510) To support the Military Government was an added mission. It remained unchanged otherwise. The firing of all secondary weapons was included in the training. Advantage was taken of a nearby pillbox to experiment with the rocket launcher.

An area in the vicinity of Bad Kreuznach was assigned to the Battalion, and on 31 March we moved in with the mission of safeguarding bridges, policing, patrolling the MSR and conducting training. Locations were as follows: Headquarters & Headquarters Battery - Hargesheim (068-405) Germany; "A" Battery - Wizenheim (094-4150) Germany; "B" Battery - Rudesheim (055-385) Germany; "C" Battery - Gutenberg (045-425) Germany; Service Battery - Roxheim (054-407) Germany; Map 1/25,000, Germany, Sheets 6112 and 6113. Battery Commanders assumed the role of Town Governors in their respective towns.

SIEGFRIED FORTIFICATIONS

It was our conviction that the 155mm howitzer M1 was not the right weapon to use against concrete, reinforced with steel pillboxes (Siegfried type) when fired indirectly. We had an opportunity to experiment against this type fortification using fuse quick, fuse delay and concrete piercing fuse. On one pillbox 20 direct hits were scored. Later when the enemy had been driven from that area a close examination of the same pillbox revealed that the damage was negligible, thus confirming our belief that unless the 155mm howitzer M1 is used directly it is not very effective against the Siegfried type fortification. It is, however, severely effective against any standing concrete or stone structure such as the buildings found in Europe. Many fire missions against this kind of building were received with the result that the building was destroyed for all practical purposes.

OP'S

One thing that has seemed to hold true is that anytime our OP's were heavily shelled an enemy withdrawal soon followed. It is never safe to assume that the krauts do not know the locations of our OP's. Emphasis must be placed on OP discipline. All precautions must be taken against being seen by the enemy. Visitor to OP's must not be allowed. Other troops in the vicinity breaking defilade has been one of the major problems in maintaining proper OP's. They must be made to keep down and out of sight of the enemy.

S-2 AIR SECTION

During the first few days of the offensive when the Liaison Planes were under Battalion control, and circumstances necessitated one plane observing all the time, close liaison between S-2 and observers verified and produced profitable targets. Prior to take-off, the observer would phone S-2 and be briefed on what specifically to look for and what other pertinent information was desired. Immediately upon return from the mission the observer would report via phone to S-2 his findings plus newly acquired information. Briefings evolved from information acquired from OP's PW reports, Infantry and other artillery battalions, and resulted in more fire missions. When OP's were being shelled, a message to the observer to hover within practical distance of the OP would usually result in the cessation of shelling or produce a counter-battery target. A representative of the air section would visit the S-2 office each evening for detailed discussions. The methods outlined above proved very successful.

CASUALTIES

The Battalion was very fortunate in that no battle casualties were suffered during the period 1 March to 31 March.

PROMOTIONS

The following named officers were promoted from Second Lieutenant to First Lieutenant on 1 March: Marlowe P. Burgy, James R. Coker, Nelson F. Hermance, Jr., Gerald L. Hover, Saul A. Jackson, Roy P. Knowles, Monte L. Reed.