

HEADQUARTERS 106TH INFANTRY DIVISION  
A.P.P. #443, U. S. Army

File  
C. D. D.  
9/7/45

GENERAL ORDERS )  
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FILE

BATTLE HONORS - CITATION OF UNIT

By direction of the President under the provisions of Section IV, Circular No. 333, War Department, 1943, as amended, the following organization is cited for outstanding performance of duty in action:

THE 81ST ENGINEER COMBAT BATTALION is cited for outstanding performance of duty in armed conflict with the enemy from 16 December 1944 to 23 December 1944. On 16 December 1944 line companies of the 81st Engineer Combat Battalion were deployed on various sectors of the front of the 106th Infantry Division, in support of the three combat teams of the division which were committed in defense in the Schnee Eifel area of the Siegfried Line. In the early morning of 16 December 1944, powerful German forces of tank-supported infantry launched a full-scale offensive which eventually surrounded elements of the division and forced other elements to retire slowly as they stubbornly sought to stem the enemy advance. All elements of the 81st Engineer Combat Battalion were from the start of the ensuing decisive action committed as infantry and successfully fought without rest or relief for five days to hold an enemy force of far superior numbers and fire power. When the enemy effected local penetrations in the sectors of the three combat teams, the respective line companies of the 81st Engineer Combat Battalion stubbornly counter-attacked and effected delaying actions in Auw, Bleialf, and Winterspelt, Germany. When forced to withdraw with the 424th Regimental Combat Team, Company C, 81st Engineer Combat Battalion, prepared demolitions on bridges and in one case blew the bridge as the enemy stood on it. Members of the same company, despite intense artillery fire and standing in icy waters, used winch cables to pull a large number of trucks abandoned by another unit across a stream and returned them to their unit for use in evacuation. Company B, 81st Engineer Combat Battalion, fought steadfastly with the 423d Regimental Combat Team, displaying courage and initiative under heavy fire, until completely cut off from other units of the division. On 17 December 1944 when the enemy effected a serious penetration with armor and infantry in the center of the division sector and were advancing rapidly on the Division Headquarters in the vital road center of St Vith, Belgium, Headquarters and Service Company, and remaining elements of A Company, 81st Engineer Combat Battalion, together with other reinforcing engineer troops, were given the mission of stemming the enemy advance. Establishing a defense line astride the road from Schonberg, Belgium to St Vith, they effectively halted the enemy column one mile east of St Vith, although they were outnumbered and out-gunned. From 18 December 1944 until the early morning of 22 December 1944 with reinforcements of infantry and armor, these units composed a task force which repeatedly threw back vicious attacks of combined infantry and tank forces, constantly counter-attacking and regaining previous positions when forced to withdraw temporarily. At all times a high fighting spirit was maintained in the face of withering fire from artillery, mortars, and rocket guns. After the position east of St Vith had been completely overrun by a powerful force of infantry and tanks on the night of 21-22 December 1944, elements of Headquarters and Service Company and A Company, 81st Engineer Combat Battalion, formed patrols which harried the enemy's rear and attempted to return to friendly lines until captured two days later. The selfless devotion to duty and unyielding fighting spirit displayed by the 81st Engineer Combat Battalion in the defense of a vital communications center effectively impeded the progress of the extensive German counter-offensive in the Ardennes forest. This display of stubborn courage and initiative under fire in its initial commitment to battle reflects great credit on itself and the armed forces of the United States.

BY COMMAND OF BRIGADIER GENERAL WOOLFLEY:

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