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HEADQUARTERS 424TH INFANTRY
A.P.O. #443
U.S. Army

106th Reference # 84

1 March 1945

SUBJECT: After-Action Report for February.

TO : The Adjutant General, Washington 25, D. C.

THRU : Channels.

The start of February saw the start of the most anachronistic month in the brief overseas history of the 424th Infantry Regiment. It was a month in which the regiment had the longest continuous period of contact with the enemy, but also the quietest month from a standpoint of action since the regiment landed in France.

Still in the rest areas near Liege when the month started, the first three days saw a continuation of the rest-training-preparation phase with which January was ended. The training stressed range work, with zeroing of weapons paramount; chemical warfare, aircraft identification, scouting and patrolling and radio procedure.

A forum conducted by the commanding officer, Col. J. R. Jeter, with the battalion and regimental S-2's and S-3's brought out deficiencies in the past operations. A collection of combat tips and recommendations was made by the regimental S-2 and the Information Officer and distributed to companies.

The men of the regiment were given passes, mostly to Brussels, and recreational facilities in the battalion areas included movies, soldier entertainment, Red Cross Club-mobiles, and several companies gave dances and parties with girls invited from the nearby towns.

The warning order for a move back into the front lines was received from division on 5 February, and the quartering parties left on 4 February for an assembly area in the vicinity of Honsfeld (vic P990860).

The regiment moved by truck into the assembly area on 5 February. The 424 Combat Team at this time came under the control of the 99th Division which was in the lines facing the Siegfried Line on the right flank of the 1st Army. The Combat Team included the normal components, the 591st Field Artillery Battalion; Company C, 81st Engineers; Company C, 331st Medical Battalion, and in addition, the 592d Field Artillery Battalion.

On 6 February, the quartering parties went out to reconnoiter for battalion positions in a forward assembly area. In the meantime, the CT unit commanders were attending a meeting with the commanding officer on the mission of the CT. They were told that the combat team would move at 0700, 7 February into the forward assembly area, where it would be in reserve for the 99th Division. Reconnaissance of front line positions was made.

Later the same day, the CO was advised that the combat team would relieve Danzig, the 394th Infantry Regiment of the 99th Division, on the night of 7-8 February.

The battalions moved to the forward assembly area 7 February, and were closed in by noon. The next day they completed the relief of the 394th on the line.

Word was received from division 7 February that Major General D. A. Stroh had

- 1 -

SECRET

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assumed command of the 106th, with Brig. General Perfin replacing the assistant to the division commander.

The position of the battalions initially on the lines included the 2d Bn on the left, the 1st on the right and the 3d in reserve. The regimental sector included high ground from Neuhoef (LO44024) south to (PO4697E), near Frauenkron. It was approximately a 5,000 meter front. In the 2d Bn, F, G, and I (attached) were on line and E Co., minus one platoon, which was with F Co., in reserve. The 1st Battalion put C Co on the left, B Co on the right and held A Co in reserve. The regimental c.p. was located at Buchholz. As the regiment moved into position, Company A, 814th Tank Destroyer Battalion, became attached to the CT.

The 394th moved back into the assembly area which the 424 CT had just evacuated, as V Corps reserve.

The tactical position of the regiment was this: it was on the right flank of the 99th Division, the V Corps, and the 1st Army. On the right was the 347th Infantry of the 87th Infantry Division, flank unit for the 3d Army. On the left was the 393d Infantry of the 99th. The mission of the 424 CT and of the 99th was to hold present positions until given further orders by V Corps.

There followed a long period of relative inactivity, broken only by patrol activity to the front. Counter-attack positions were dug on all vulnerable sides of the strategic Losheimergraben crossroads (PO10989), which had been a main objective of the Germans in their December breakthrough, when the 99th also had been holding this same ground. Road blocks also were established and prepared craters and abatis also were placed.

Chief of the problems during this period was the one of supply. Front line positions were accessible only over narrow trails, and with a thaw which started the early part of the month, deep mud made the trails almost impassable. The problem was somewhat alleviated with the acquisition of eight "weasels," or tracked weapons carriers, by which all supplies were carried over the difficult terrain.

Command posts of many of the companies and battalions were placed in abandoned German bunkers and the front line positions were forward of these, on very high ground. All supplies to the companies were hand carried.

In addition to the mud, a greater hazard was the mass of mines which the retreating Germans had left strewn in the area. All roads had to be carefully cleared of anti-tank and anti-personnel mines before they were usable. The first day the new positions were occupied, Captain Wells, CO of Co C, 81st Engrs, and eight of his men were injured seriously in explosions of the tricky Schu mines. Other men of the combat team from time to time were injured as they tripped the mines inadvertently.

Emphasis was placed on patrolling. All battalions sent groups of men out to the front to probe the line of bunkers and emplacements manned by the Germans as part of the Siegfried Line. Constant contact by patrol was maintained with the enemy, and the patrols ferreted out frequent artillery targets.

The 424 CT passed to control of the 106th Infantry Division from the 99th on 9 February. Co A, 814th TD's, remained attached.

During all the month, the front line companies received daily barrages of enemy harassing artillery fire. Bulk of the enemy rounds fell just before dawn each morning and around 1600.

Also in this period, the total strength of the regiment was replenished by the continuous arrival of reinforcements, as well as the return of some of the men who previously had been evacuated. At the start of the month, the figures included 115 officers,

SECRET

5 WO's and 2122 enlisted men. On the 28th of February these figures read 158 officers, 5 WO's and 2767 enlisted men.

On 10 February, the Commanding General, Gen. Stroh, visited the 424 c.p. for the first time. He conferred with Col. Jeter.

Also on the 10th, the first of the battlefield commissions to enlisted men of the regiment were granted. Former non-commissioned officers who received their gold bars from the Commanding General were: T/Sgt R. W. Boyle, AT Co; T/Sgt H. L. Holder, Co H; T/Sgt R. L. Honaker, Co C; T/Sgt C. L. Jones, Co B; T/Sgt R. L. W. Reick, Hq Co 2d Bn; S/Sgt D. V. Edgette, Co H; S/Sgt A. M. Yanulaitis, Co D; Sgt G. S. Kelly, Co B; Sgt M. H. Myers, Hq Co 3d Bn; and T/Sgt Victor Capelle, Co F.

During the month the fight to keep the roads passable continued. Engineer troops and members of the battalion A & P platoons worked constantly to keep the roads bulldozed and clear for supplies and evacuation. The leading roads into each area were corduroyed and cleared of mines. By this means the supplies were kept going into the battalion areas.

On 12 February, Lt Col Robert E. Stumpf, formerly of the 9th Division, assumed command of the regiment, replacing Col J. R. Jeter, and on the next day Col. Jeter left for his new assignment in the 99th Division.

At this time also, the 99th Division, on the left, was replaced by the 69th Division, and contact was established with the 273d Infantry on the left of the 2d Bn.

The tactical situation continued quiet, with patrolling the main activity. Passes continued, with a number of the men of the regiment going to Eupen, to the V Corps rest camp, for 48 hours. Officers and men also were sent to Brussels, Paris, London and a few men with prior overseas service received 90-day furloughs to the United States.

For the first time, also, a regimental shower point was established by Service Company, and a daily quota of men were transported back for showers and clean clothes. In the special service program, a hospital tent was set up in the reserve battalion area, and movies were shown daily.

The road situation became so acute during the month in the rear areas, that artillery and Cannon Company were placed on a ration basis on ammunition. The heavy mortars also were placed on short rations, and they alleviated this by firing hundreds of rounds of seized German 80 mm ammunition.

A constant drive on recovery of the mass of abandoned German and American equipment in the area also was carried on. Tons and tons of ammunition, personal equipment and weapons were collected and turned in.

On 15 February, Co A, 814th TD's, was replaced by Co A, 661st TD Bn.

Lt Col John R. Kimmell was named new 106th G-3 on 18 February, and Lt Col Charlie A. Brock, former G-3, reported to the 424th Headquarters for duty.

Constant stress was placed on shell reports by the companies to the artillery. One set of these reports was officially credited with leading to information that enabled the artillery to knock out two German battery positions and a heavy mortar emplacement.

The fight against hidden mines in the area was a constant one. Captain Wilcox, in the area with the newly-arrived TD company, stepped on a Schu mine and lost a foot. His liaison officer also was injured.

SECRET

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On 23 February, Co K was inspected for condition of weapons and equipment by Gen. Perrin and the Ass't G-4.

The first change in regimental positions occurred 25 February when the 3d Battalion replaced the 2d Battalion on the left of the regimental area. The relief was completed by midmorning, and after the shuffle, E Co was on the left flank, Co L in the center and Co K on the right of the battalion area. I Co stayed at the front in a reserve position. In the 1st Battalion, Co A replaced Co C on the line and Co C moved back into reserve and also as flank guard.

First of the tactical movement along the static front for the month was provided by the 87th Division on the right. It attacked past Losheim the afternoon of the 26th, with the 345th and the 346th abreast. Combat Command A of the 11th Armored Division moved in on the right flank of the 424th to replace the 347th, which was pulled back as reserve for the 87th. The pattern of the attack became clear by the next morning. The two forward regiments moved easily ahead a few hundred yards in their sector and then hit a combination of mines, artillery, mortar and small arms fire that slowed the advance almost to a standstill. From then on the drive consisted of units inching ahead, trying to clear the mines to their front. At the end of the month they still hadn't reached their objective, high ground in the vicinity of the Frauenkron-Hallschlag line.

The 69th Division on the left moved forward on 27 February in a limited-objective attack to secure high ground east of an east-west road to its front which the 1st Army desired to use as a main supply route. Its progress was good, and at the end of the day, the 273d had advanced approximately 1 kilometer east of our left flank position. Contact was maintained at Neuhof, however.

The next day, 28 February, an assault platoon from Co C, under the direction of Col Brock, jumped off at 1000 on a raid on a pillbox at (LO87986). This platoon was led by 1st Lt Earl M. Uzell, supported by groups of engineer troops, medics, pre-planned artillery and mortars from the 1st and 3d Battalions. The raid was successfully completed by 1100. Eleven prisoners were taken, two other Germans were believed killed. The pillbox was not destroyed because of lack of explosives. Three minor casualties were sustained in the assault platoon.

Vital statistics for the month included: killed in action, no officers, 16 EM; wounded in action, 2 officers, 67 EM; missing in action, no officers, 14 EM; none captured, and total of all battle and non-battle casualties, 12 officers, and 418 EM.

All throughout the month, prisoners were being taken or were surrendering themselves in groups of two and three. The total prisoner bag for the month was 63, and an estimated 73 Germans were killed. Many of the prisoners gave themselves up by walking from their bunkers into our lines. They had a unanimous story of low morale, lack of supplies and a general disinclination to fight, but fear of retaliation kept them in the lines. And there were many stories concerning the P.W.'s.

Three members of the Wehrmacht stationed in one of the big cement and iron bunkers of the Siegfried Line walked into the 424 area, calling it quits for this war. They apologized: "We would have been in last night, but we heard there was going to be a candy ration given us at chow this morning." They added wistfully, "We didn't get it though."

And the men got a laugh out of the paragraph from the German intelligence report which said a certain outfit in the line opposite them "would be relieved the 29th of February."

That story is in the same category of the report by one prisoner taken by the 424th. He said Himmler had told the German nation that the Reich has a new source of

S E C R E T

SECRET

the precious gasoline. It was, he said, distilled from water. But unfortunately it couldn't be used because the cold weather froze the gasoline. However, he promised faithfully that there would be "plenty" of gasoline available in the warm weather. The prisoner, though, wasn't gullible. "Ach," he said. "Those things they tell us. We wait and wait and nothing happens."

During the month also, several awards and decorations were made. A bronze battle star for the European Theater of Operations ribbon was authorized for all personnel. In addition, nearly 500 more men were qualified to receive the Combat Infantryman's Badge. And many Silver, Bronze Stars and Purple Hearts were published.

Those receiving the Silver Star included: 2d Lt Maxwell M. Brown, K Co; Technician 5th Grade Marshall W. Walker, Medical Corps; 1st Sgt Wallace G. Riflemen, A Co; Technical Sergeant Ralph J. Murphy, L Co; S/Sgt Robert E. Vorpagel, Medical Corps, and Technician 4th Grade Melvin R. Pollock, Medical Corps.

Bronze Star medals went to: 1st Lt John J. O'Brien, L Co; 1st Sgt Gerald J. Schauf, L Co; S/Sgt Norman J. Richey, I Co; Tech 3d Grade Frank Franek, Medics; Pfc Frank C. Andrews, Medics; Pvt Charles J. Zalutsky, Medics; Lt Col Lamar A. Welch, Hq 1st Bn; 2d Lt Victor Capelle, F Co; 2d Lt Delbert V. Edgette, H Co; T/Sgt William C. Davis, Hq Co 3d Bn; S/Sgt Michael S. Mosher, L Co; S/Sgt David D. Slattery, Hq Co 3d Bn; Pfc Clarence E. Splitstone, H Co; Pfc Mark S. Wagner, H Co; Pvt Otto W. Colbert, F Co; 1st Lt Glynn Salvora, H Co; T/Sgt John L. Mikalauskis, H Co; S/Sgt Nicholas G. Holgash, Medical Corps; Tech 5th Grade Salvatore P. Bulla, Medical Corps; Pfc Bert Anderkin, F Co; 1st Lt Orville H. Bauer, L Co; 2d Lt Raphael W. Boyle, AT Co; 2d Lt Robert H. Britton, L Co; 2d Lt Milton H. Myers, Hq Co 3d Bn; 2d Lt Anthony M. Yaulaitis, D Co; 1st Sgt Roger M. Rutland, B Co; Sgt Paul G. Oxford, F Co; Pfc Clifford E. Desch, Medical Corps; 1st Lt Ivan H. Long, Hq 1st Bn; 2d Lt William V. Shakespeare, H Co; Sgt Waman R. Mills, Hq Co 3d Bn; Pfc Raymond H. Sites, Hq Co 3d Bn; Pvt Samuel W. Bordelon, C Co; S/Sgt Carl L. Miller, Hq Co 2d Bn; Sgt Harold M. Moore, H Co; Tech 5th Grade David S. Emmert, Hq Co; Pfc Emil J. Grass, Medical Corps; and Pfc Reuben E. Lebeaux, F Co.

The Soldiers Medal was awarded to Corporal Travis L. Hudson, B Co.

For the Commanding Officers:

OFFICIAL:

R. D. Underwood

R. D. UNDERWOOD
Capt, 424th Inf
Asst S-3, Historian

RALPH K LEE
Capt, 424th Inf
Adjutant

- 5 -
SECRET