

Tennessee's 117th Regiment Is Ready Now For Inactivation

(Special to The Jackson Sun)

FORT JACKSON, S. C., Nov. 10.—Tennessee's "perfect regiment," the 117th Infantry of the 30th (Old Hickory) Division has begun preparation for inactivation late this month.

The 117th, formerly a Tennessee National Guard unit, earned its "perfect" rating in the great offensive which carried the Allied armies to the banks of the Roer River. The 117th, in the initial assault, carried out what was termed by higher headquarters as three perfect infantry attacks, with artillery, tank, direct fire and other supporting weapons coordinating faultlessly.

With inactivation tentatively scheduled for November 30 the 117th is expected to be placed on National Guard status again. Home stations of the individual units composing the 117th include Knoxville, Elizabethtown, Cleveland, Athens, Bristol, Nashville, Dickson, Lawrenceburg, Jackson, Dyersburg and Union City.

Although the regiment received many commendations for its action in the drive across Europe, 1st Bn. of the 117th was one of only two battalions in the entire 30th Division to receive the Presidential Citation, awarded for the heroic defense of St. Barthelmy, France.

Headquarters and Headquarters Co., which was originated in Knoxville, also received a citation from Maj. Gen. Leland S. Hobbs, former commander of the 30th Division, for "outstanding performance of duty in action against the enemy of 7 August 1944, in the vicinity of St. Barthelmy."

The 117th originally came into being as the Third Tennessee Volunteers, mustered into federal service on October 8, 1847, for service in the Mexican War. It was known as the Third Tennessee Infantry until officially designated 117th Infantry on September 12, 1917, by a special 30th Division order at Camp Sevier, S. C.

It established its "Break Through" motto for its insignia by smashing the Hindenburg Line in World War I. Three battle streamers from that war are for Flanders, Ypres Lys, and the Somme offensives. The unit was demobilized in 1919 and afterward saw service in flood and riot duty.

On September 16, 1940, the 117th was inducted into federal service for a year of training. The individual units left their Tennessee stations and were joined together at Fort Jackson, S. C.

Maneuvers in the Tennessee and Carolinas areas followed, along with new station assignments at Camp Blanding, Fla., and Camp Atterbury, Ind., where overseas shipment orders were received, the 117th leaving the Boston Mass., port of embarkation on February 12, 1944, and arriving in Liverpool, England, on the 24th.

A tally made in England showed three states contributing the most officers to the 117th, New York 18; Tennessee 15, and Ohio 12. Representation of enlisted men included 643 from Tennessee, 300 from North Carolina, and 206 from Illinois. Southern states contributed 51 per cent of the regimental strength, northern states 36 per cent and western 11 per cent.

Shortly after D-Day, the entire 30th was alerted for movement to France. All units of the 117th landed an Omaha Beach from June 14 to June 19. Vigorous reconnaissance and combat patrols constituted the action for June.

The 117th was initiated into battle in the Normandy hedgerows and then proceeded to blaze a bloody trail of conquest through France, Belgium, Holland and Germany.

An assault crossing of the Vire River and Vire et Taut canal paved the way for the capture of St. Lo, and its subsequent spearheading of the war-shortening St. Lo breakthrough on July 25 is now recorded in the annals of history, along with its spectacular battle at Mortain and St. Barthelmy, when it helped thwart four German armored divisions attempting to cut off General Patton's newly arrived Third U. S. Army.

The men of the 117th had little desire to rest while a single German still remained to oppose the mighty Allied war machine. It attacked the Siegfried Line, helped encircle Aachen, first major German city to fall, stormed the Roer River banks, practically annihilated the 1st SS Panzer (Adolf Hitler) Division, aided the First U. S. Army after Field Marshal Karl von Rundstedt launched his counter-offensive into Belgium, forced assaults across the Meuse and Rhine rivers and continued forward until contact with the Russians was established on the banks of the Elbe river.

The 117th was the first outfit to enter Holland, Co. A crossing the border at IJ00 on September 12, 1944, near St. Geertrudi. There was resistance from hostile small arms, machine guns, heavy artillery and anti-aircraft artillery used as direct fire weapons.

October 1944, was spent just inside the German border, and although the penetration was not exceptionally deep, it was the greatest thrust made by any unit hammering against the West Wall.

After the Russians were met at the Elbe, and the war's end only weeks away, the command post was set up in the large industrial city of Magdeburg where the 117th's function was military government.

The British relieved the 117th of its duties in Magdeburg, so a movement to Oelsnitz, 150 miles south, was made. It was there that redeployment orders to the Pacific were received. The 117th traveled to England to board the Queen Mary but prior to sailing, the Japanese surrender was announced.

On August 17 the Queen Mary left England arriving in New York five days later, with the men of the 117th no longer under orders for redeployment, but for discharge and transfer as the 30th became one of the first infantry divisions of World War II to begin inactivation.

Sgt. Richard Nichols Receives His Discharge

Sgt. Richard T. Nichols 128 Walsh Street, Jackson, has received an honorable discharge from the Army at the Army Ground and Service Forces Redistribution Station, Hot Springs, Ark.

Sergeant Nichols has been in the Army for 41 months and served overseas in the European theater.

A firefly's illumination is more than 95 per cent light efficient, while sunlight is only 35 per cent, and an electric arc 10.

1945-11-11 TN's 117 Regt readying for inactivation

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