

AFTER ACTION REPORT

753RD TANK BATTALION

*July, Sept, Nov & Dec 1943*

~~DECEMBER 15, 1943~~

**846-95**

ATTACK ON SAN PIETRO, etc.

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HEADQUARTERS  
753RD TANK BATTALION (M)

APC 700, New York, N.Y.,  
30 August 1943.

SUBJECT: Operations of 753rd. Tank Battalion (M), in Sicilian Campaign.  
TO : The Adjutant General, Washington, D.C. (thru channels).

MAPS: Italy, 1/100,000, GSGS No. 4164.

1. This battalion loaded on LST's at La Goullette for amphibious operation against Sicily. Results of battalion operations in diary form as follows:

10 July 1943

Company "C" unloaded on "Blue" beach,  $3\frac{1}{2}$  miles southwest of S. Croce Camerina, at 1600, and went into an assembly position 200 yards north of the beach.

11 July 1943

Company "A" unloaded on same beach at 0030. Company "B" and the Battalion Command Group were unloaded by 1230, and assembled 200 yards north of the beach. Meanwhile, orders were received to attach one company to the 3rd. Bn., 157th. Inf. Regt. Company C was detailed, and departed at 0500. Division ordered the battalion to take up an assembly position at Comiso. The battalion, less Company "C", moved out at 1510. While en route, orders were received at 1605 to send one company to a position 6 miles west of Vittoria, to assist the 82nd. Airborne Division. Company "B" was detailed. At 1630, orders arrived by mounted messenger to send all available tanks to the sector west of Vittoria. The battalion, less Companies "B" and "C", moved immediately to the area, taking up a position 6 miles west of Vittoria at 1800. Upon arrival, verbal orders were issued for the battalion to drop back into an assembly position  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles west of Vittoria. This was accomplished at 2000. Co. "B", upon completion of its mission, rejoined the battalion in the new area at 2400.

12 July 1943

Company "C", having been released from 3rd. Bn., 157th. Inf., rejoined the organization at 0700. At 1645, Company "B" was attached to the 180th. Inf. to assist in the attack on Biscari.

13 July 1943

Orders received at 1200 to move the battalion to an area 5 miles northeast of Vittoria. At 1400, Company "A" was attached to the 179th. Inf., and departed at 1500. The battalion, less Companies "A" and "B", moved out at 1615, arriving in the new area at 1830.

14 July 1943

Disposition of Companies "A" and "B" unchanged. At 1030, one platoon of Co. "C" was dispatched to assist Company "A". At 1300, the battalion was ordered to move forward and establish a CP at 4505338. This was accomplished at 1600.

15 July 1943

Companies "A" and "B" are in positions of readiness against enemy counter-attacks in the respective regimental areas to which they are assigned. The Battalion is spending the day on maintenance of all vehicles.

16 July 1943

Companies "B" and "C" reverted to battalion control. At 0930, the Battalion was ordered to move 3 miles west of Biscari. Moving out at 1030, the new area was reached at 1200. Upon arrival, Company "C" was detailed to assist the 157th. Inf. At 1730, Company "A" departed to join the 70th. Tank Battalion, 1st. Inf. Division, as ordered by Division.

17 July 1943

At 1200, the battalion, less companies "A" and "C", was ordered into an assembly area two miles east of Riesi. Moving out at 1315, the area was reached at 1700.

18 July 1943

At 1900, the battalion, less Companies "A" and "C", moved into a position 1/2 mile west of Caltanissetta. Company "C" was released from the 157th. Inf., and immediately attached to the 180th. Inf.

19 July 1943

Positions of "A" and "C" Companies unchanged. Co. "A" is spending the day on maintenance of vehicles. Battalion CP still at Caltanissetta.

20 July 1943

Disposition of "A" and "C" companies unchanged. CP at Caltanissetta. At 1400, the battalion was ordered into an assembly area at 0985963. Moving out at 1545, the new area was reached at 2130.

21 July 1943

Disposition of Companies "A" and "C" still unchanged. Company "B" was attached to the 179th. Inf. at 1400, and moved out at 1640 to join that organization.

22 July 1943

At 0830, the battalion, less Companies "A", "B", and "C", established CP at B800025. Company "C" was relieved from the 179th. Inf., and joined the 157th. Inf. immediately.

23 July 1943

Company "C", attached to the 157 Inf. Regt., reached the coast at 0715, at B811295. Company "B" reverted to battalion control at 0900, and reached the area at 1000. The battalion, less Companies "A" and "C", moved out at 1430 and established a new CP at Caltavuturo.

24 July 1943

The battalion, less Companies "A" and "C", moved out at 1100, reaching a designated area 22 miles west of Cefalu at 1645. Company "C" reverted to battalion control, and Company "B" was attached to the 180th. Inf, remaining in the battalion area until needed. Company "C" was deployed along the coast around Capo Leone at 2100.

25 July 1943

Disposition of Companies "B" and "C" unchanged. CP unchanged.

26 July 1943

Company "B" departed at 1130 to join the 180th. Inf. The rear echelon moved up to the vicinity of Gerda.

27 July 1943

Disposition of "B" and "C" Companies unchanged. Also CP.

28 July 1943

"B" and "C" Companies in same positions. Company "B" engaged in minor skirmishes in the afternoon.

29 July 1943

Disposition of Company "B" unchanged. Company "C" moved into Battalion Command at 1630.

30 July 1943

Company "B" rejoined the battalion at 1800. The day was spent on maintenance, instructions, etc.

31 July 1943

Orders were received at 1500 to move the battalion to an area at C135130. Preparations were made to move out early the next morning.

1 August 1943

The battalion came under direct control of II Corps at 0600. Moving out at 0615, the area at C135130 was reached at 1030. Company "A" reverted to battalion control, and moved to an area at C333201.

2 August 1943

The battalion departed at 0615, with orders from II Corps to occupy an area at C333201. The destination was reached at 1100, and plans were made to spend some time in this area. Heavy maintenance was to be stressed.

3 August 1943

The battalion is together, except for the rear echelon, which is on the outskirts of Sperlinga. Maintenance is being carried on as planned.

4 August 1943

Maintenance and other routine activities carried on.

5 August 1943

Third platoon, Company "A", was attached to the 3rd. Infantry Division, and departed at 1700 to join that organization at San Stefano.

6 August 1943

Disposition of 3rd. platoon, Company "A", unchanged.

7 August 1943

Routine day. Disposition of 3rd. platoon, Co. "A", unchanged.

8 August 1943

Third platoon, Company "A", participated in amphibious operation in conjunction with 3rd. Division. Results unknown at present.

9 August 1943

Company "B" departed at 0600 to join the 3rd. Division. Third platoon, Co. "A", relieved from attachment to 3rd. Division.

10 August 1943

Disposition of "B" Company unchanged. Third platoon, Company "A", in assembly area at San Stefano.

11 August 1943

One platoon from Company "B" participated in an amphibious operation during the night of August 10-11. Company "C" was attached to the 157th. Inf. at Marsini Ingress, but stayed in the bivouac area awaiting further orders.

12 August 1943

Liaison officer from 3rd. Division reported that Company "B" lost no tanks, but one half-track was destroyed by a mine.

13 August 1943

Company "C" Commandant reports from 157th. Inf. that no further amphibious operation is planned, but one platoon is to stand by until the 14th.

14 August 1943

At 1515, one platoon from Company "C" left to join the 157. Inf. Regt. on an amphibious operation.

15 August 1943

On request from CO, 157. Inf., another platoon Company "C" departed at 0600 to participate in amphibious operation.

16 August 1943

Heavy maintenance, instructions, etc., carried on throughout the day.

17 August 1943

Routine duties performed by all personnel. Campaign ended at 0930.

## 2. RESULTS:

- (a) Weather: During the entire campaign the weather was clear and warm.
- (b) Terrain: On the initial landing at Camerina the battalion encountered numerous sand dunes for about the first mile. The first few days of the campaign the areas around Biscari and Comiso Airfields were suitable for tank operations. After that the terrain was very mountainous, confining the tanks to the roads most of the time.
- (c) Estimated enemy casualties (including prisoners): Estimated 250 killed, 1100 captured.
- (d) Estimated loss of enemy material: 26 tanks, 80 wheeled vehicles.
- (e) Our losses in men and materiel due to enemy action:
  - (1) Men killed: one officer and 5 enlisted men.
  - (2) Captured: 5
  - (3) Wounded: 14
  - (4) Tanks (totally destroyed): 6
  - (5) Other vehicles: 1 half-track destroyed by mine.
- (f) Losses in men and materiel due to accidents:
  - (1) Died: 3
  - (2) Wounded: 8
  - (3) Vehicles: None
- (g) Tactical employment of the Battalion: During the entire campaign this battalion was never employed as a unit. Each tank company was reinforced with an assault gun section, mortar section, medical detachment composed of one  $\frac{1}{4}$ -ton, one half-track with a medical officer and seven aid men, and a section of Battalion Maintenance. During the first five days the reinforced tank companies were attached to the assault infantry battalions. When the infantry ran into strong opposition, such as machine gun emplacements or armored vehicles, the tank company was on hand to neutralize this resistance. This worked out extremely well due to the suitability of the terrain for tank action. However, the remainder of the campaign was in mountainous country and the tanks were employed as a reserve for the assault infantry battalion, being used mainly as stationary pill boxes, support artillery, or as a

reserve in case of an armored attack. The steep mountain slopes made it practically impossible for tanks to get off of the road.

- (h) Maintenance: Tank motors had a tendency to heat up while crossing the sand dunes during the beach landing. The treacherous mountain roads over which the tanks had to travel necessitated going in first and second gear most of the time. This caused the motors to overheat. Also, while descending these mountains, the RPM of the motors would be entirely too high. The combination of these conditions shortened the life of the motors considerably, and necessitated putting in a large number of new motors at the end of the campaign. Steel tracks were found to be more suitable than rubber tracks during this campaign. The steel lasted much longer, and afforded much more traction when going cross country, especially over very steep terrain.

JOSEPH G. FELBER,  
Lt. Colonel, 753rd. Tank Bn. (M),  
Commanding

Annexes 1-3 attached.

Annex No. 1

DIARY

Company "A", 753rd. Tank Bn. (M)

26 June 1943

Arrived port of Arzew 1540 and loaded on LST 7 at 2200.

27 June 1943

Aboard LST 7 Port of Arzew.

28 June 1943

Left Port of Arzew, sailed for Tunis Area.

29 June 1943

On board LST 7 en route to Tunis.

30 June 1943

On board LST 7 en route to Tunis.

1 July 1943

Arrived at La Goulette. Part of 1st., 2nd. and 3rd. Platoons disembarked and proceeded to Kentucky Area.

2-10 July 1943

Aboard LST 7 en route to invasion of Sicily.

11 July 1943

Unloaded on "Blue" beach at 0030. Marched to Comiso via trail to beach assembly area 200 yards southwest of Comiso.

12 July 1943

Left Comiso 1600 for Vittoria. Took position north of Highway 115, 3 K west of Vittoria to stop enemy break through line. No action.

13 July 1943

Moved to support 179th. Infantry moving up from Comiso Airport to Galtagirone. Assisted infantry advance with little action until 2200. Withdrew one mile behind front line of 3rd. Battalion for night.

14 July 1943

Moved up at 0600 to intercept enemy tanks attacking 3rd. Battalion. Knocked out one Mark VI and four Mark IVs while assisting the infantry. Drove out enemy infantry and machine guns, clearing front of 3rd. Bn. We used five tanks. Spent entire day at front line, and received heavy artillery fire. The company suffered no casualties, but lost one tank. Withdrew  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile for night.



Annex No. 1 cont'd.

15 July 1943

Moved up behind 3rd. Bn., 179th. Inf., about 2½ miles south of Highway 124, southeast of Galtagirone.

16 July 1943

Relieved from attachment to 179th. Inf., and marched back to position 3 K west of Biscari. Moved out again 1900 to join the 1st. Infantry Division at Mazzarino, reaching there at 2400.

17 July 1943

Moved from 1st. Div. CP to Barrafranca 0400. Attached to and joined the 70th. Tank Battalion (L). Moved out on approach march to objective east of Pietraperzia. Held in reserve all day.

18 July 1943

Attached to 16th. Infantry, joining them at 0430. Moved across river behind infantry. Lost one M-4 tank from mine explosion. Knocked out one Mark VI. Attached to 70th. Tk. Bn. again, and moved on approach march on Enna. Contacted two enemy infantry regiments, and two artillery battalions. Caused enemy to withdraw. Met with artillery fire and were forced to withdraw. Held position on flank. 3rd. Platoon attached to 18 Inf., and received heavy artillery fire all day. No casualties.

19 July 1943

Stayed in position, and did maintenance. Third platoon under artillery fire with 18th. Inf.

20 July 1943

Remained march to Enna and reinforce the light tank battalion. Encountered no opposition. Waited at Enna for infantry, then moved northwest to join the 26th. Inf. Couldn't pass bridge and went into bivouac with the 70th. Tank Bn. (L). Third platoon joined company.

21 July 1943

Resumed march to Petralia. The road march was halted at Alimena due to strong enemy opposition. The company engaged artillery fire at point blank range. We were ordered to charge, and drove out the enemy, who abandoned his equipment. The company rallied behind high ground, moved forward, taking up position for the night.

22 July 1943

Continued march to Petralia, but met direct enemy artillery fire. Company deployed and covered withdrawal of light tanks. Two M-4 tanks were lost. One officer and three enlisted men were wounded, and four enlisted men were killed in action. Remained deployed and engaged enemy until out of ammunition. Two tanks covered road, and the others reloaded, taking up their positions immediately. Engaged enemy with nine tanks, and lost two. At 0600 received orders for two tanks and a platoon of light tanks to enter Petralia. We lost one medium tank, and the other was stopped. Five enlisted men missing in action. Enemy forced to withdraw.

Annex No. 1 cont'd.

23 July 1943

Attached to 18th. Inf. and moved up to Petralia. No action. Bivouac'd south of Petralia.

24 July 1943

Remained in bivouac area and did maintenance work on tanks. Attached to 70th. Tank Batt Lion (L).

25 July 1943

Remained in bivouac area and performed maintenance of all vehicles.

26 July 1943

Moved up to Gangi to support 1st. Division. No action.

27 July 1943

Received orders from 70th. Tank Battalion to clear pocket two miles to the front. Ordered to support 18th. Inf., reaching them at 1900. Too dark, so did no firing. Withdrew at 2300 and returned to bivouac area 2 K east of Gangi.

28 July 1943

Remained in bivouac area. No action.

29 July 1943

Moved to new area 300 yards northwest of Sperlinga.

30 July 1943

Remained in bivouac area at Sperlinga. Maintenance stressed.

31 July 1943

Remained in bivouac area at Sperlinga. Maintenance stressed.

1 August 1943

Occupied new area 5 miles south of Mistretta. Strafed by enemy planes on movement forward. No casualties.

2 August 1943

Remained in position 5 miles south of Mistretta.

3 August 1943

Company relieved from assignment to 3rd. Division. Rejoined battalion.

4 August 1943

Maintenance stressed. Position unchanged.

Annex No. 1 cont'd.

5 August 1943

Third platoon left at 2400 to join 2nd. Bn., 30th. Inf., 3rd. Division.

6 August 1943

Disposition unchanged.

7 August 1943

Maintenance carried on as planned.

8 August 1943

Disposition unchanged.

9 August 1943

At 0900, the Third Platoon landed on an amphibious operation behind the enemy lines and proceeded in direction of St. Agata to locate objective. The platoon encountered an enemy column on the coastal road and dispersed the enemy. Taking up a position along the road, they held it for 48 hours. Operation was a success, and the enemy rear was disrupted. An enemy counterattack was broken up. One medium tank was lost in the operation, one officer and 2 enlisted men were wounded.

10 August 1943

Disposition unchanged.

11 August 1943

The Third Platoon was relieved from the 3rd. Division at St. Agata, and moved to San Stefano, enroute to join the company.

12 August 1943

Third Platoon joined the company in the bivouac area 5 miles south of Mistretta.

13-18 August 1943

Company remained in bivouac area south of Mistretta for maintenance and on call for further action.

DIARY  
Company "B"  
753rd. Tank Battalion (M)

10 July 1943

Attempted landings five miles north of Pontasecca, but water too rough. Pulled out from shore and anchored.

11 July 1943

Landed at 1000, and serviced vehicles for action. Mission: To support Company "C" at Cassino Airport. Left 1500. Mission changed at 1600, and company prepared to Vittoria to support the 82nd. Airborne Division, reaching assembly area at 1800. Made foot reconnaissance and planned attack, which started at 1920. Company was under heavy artillery fire. The tanks knocked out one Mark VI, one Mark IV, two 88mm. field pieces, and five machine gun emplacements. Company withdrew under heavy artillery and mortar fire at 2130. After reaching the assembly area, the company was bombed and strafed. Left assembly area at 2300, reached bivouac area at 2400. Morale excellent.

12 July 1943

Bivouac area northeast of Vittoria. Bombed and strafed for thirty minutes, the attack starting at 1000. Received orders to support the 180th. Infantry in attack on Biscari. Left bivouac area at 1600, reaching assembly area at 1720. Moved into assault position and attacked town at 1910, meeting no resistance. Withdrew upon arrival of infantry. Bivouaced 7 miles southeast of Biscari. Morale: Excellent.

13 July 1943

Left bivouac area at 0600, taking up a defensive on road northwest of Biscari to stop counterattack. Moved back to bivouac area at 2400. Morale excellent.

14 July 1943

Left bivouac area at 0700 with mission to support 180th. Infantry in attack on Biscari Airport. First platoon attached to 2nd. Bn. 180th. Inf.; 2nd. Platoon attached to 3rd. Bn., 180th. Inf. Airport taken. Enemy counterattacked at 1000, driving the infantry back. First and second platoon attacked under heavy fire and drove the enemy back, stopping the attack. The two platoons knocked out three enemy field pieces, then took up defensive positions 150 yards north of the airport at 1300. Attacked enemy positions on high ground northeast of airport at 1345, routing one Italian artillery regiment. Rallyed at airport at 1500, then moved to bivouac area one mile north of airport at 1700.

15 July 1943

Company prepared to leave bivouac at 0500 to support the infantry in attack on Gaggiatone. Left bivouac area at 0800 and entered assault position five miles south of city. Moved into defensive position protecting flanks of the infantry. Capt. Jasper A. Hess, commanding the company, was killed while making a reconnaissance of enemy positions. Fifty Italian soldiers were captured. Morale excellent.

Annex No. 2 cont'd.

16 July 1943

Left defensive position at 1300 and withdrew to bivouac area four miles south of Biscari. Morale excellent.

17 July 1943

Moved to bivouac area 3 miles west of Ralia. Morale excellent.

18 July 1943

Moved to bivouac area one mile north of Caltanissetta. Third platoon (left in North Africa) joined company at 1400. Cpl. Scudder died of injuries received in accident in entering bivouac area. Morale excellent.

19 July 1943

Remained in bivouac area one mile north of Caltanissetta. Morale excellent.

20 July 1943

Left bivouac area at 2000, moving into an area 8 miles north of Caltanissetta.

21 July 1943

Left bivouac area 0340, occupying position 3 miles north of Vallolunga.

22 July 1943

Left bivouac area 1100, and moved ten miles further north of Vallolunga. Morale excellent.

23 July 1943

Left bivouac area 1100, moving up to the outskirts of Caltavuturo.

24 July 1943

Departed at 1500, occupying bivouac area five miles west of Cefalu. Morale excellent.

25 July 1943

Remained in bivouac area five miles west of Cefalu. Maintenance stressed.

26 July 1943

Left bivouac area at 1130, taking up position on coastal road six miles east of Cefalu.

27 July 1943

Left area along coastal road six miles east of Cefalu at 1130. Moved up three miles toward San Stefano. Under artillery fire all day. Morale excellent.

Annex No. 2 cont'd.

28 July 1943

Company moved up at 1800, but drew artillery fire. Withdrew to former position. Morale Excellent.

29 July 1943

Maintenance and rest.

30 July 1943

Maintenance and rest. Morale excellent.

31 July 1943

Left bivouac area nine miles east of Cefalu, and returned along coastal road to join Bn. CP in bivouac two miles west of Cefalu. Morale excellent.

1 August 1943

Left bivouac area at Cefalu at 0600. Bivouaced on outskirts of Coraci at 1700.

2 August 1943

Left Coraci at 0600, going in bivouac five miles south of Mistretta at 1700.

3-8 August 1943

Remained in bivouac area, giving vehicles 100 hour checks, performing all necessary maintenance, etc. Morale excellent.

9 August 1943

Attached to 3rd. Division. Left bivouac area 5 miles south of Mistretta, moving up to four miles north of Coronis.

10 August 1943

Left bivouac area 4 miles north of Coronis. Second Platoon bivouaced 8 miles northeast of Coronis. Third Platoon continued on the front in support of the 2nd. Bn., 7th. Inf. First platoon boarded LOT for amphibious operation behind the enemy lines. First platoon atchd to 2nd. Bn., 30th. Inf.

11 August 1943

First platoon landed  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile west of Brolo, and engaged the enemy. Heavy fighting occurred. We knocked out several enemy vehicles, but all our tanks were temporarily disabled. One tank commander was killed, and four men were wounded. Third Platoon atchd to 2nd. Bn., 7th. Inf. Remained in defensive position all day under heavy artillery fire. 2nd. Platoon remained in reserve. Morale excellent.

12 August 1943

Second and third platoons left their positions and moved into bivouac area  $\frac{3}{4}$  miles west of Brolo, and were joined there by the 1st. Platoon. Morale excellent.

Annex No. 2 cont'd.

13 August 1943

Second platoon moved by LCT from Brolo to Patti, leaving at 2000. First and Third platoons remained behind.

14 August 1943

Third Platoon left bivouac area at Brolo at 1200, and boarded LCT for Patti to join the 2nd. platoon. Morale excellent.

15 August 1943

Second and third platoons left Patti en route to Messina.. First ~~platoon~~ platoon remained in bivouac at Brolo.

16 August 1943

Third platoon engaged enemy at 1500, knocking out seven and causing the enemy to abandon thirty-two vehicles, and destroying 2 88mm field pieces. The 2nd. Plt. remained in reserve. First platoon still at Brolo. The infantry marched into Messina without opposition after the tanks had engaged the enemy.

17 August 1943

Second and third platoons in bivouac 15 miles west of Messina. First platoon at Brolo. Morale excellent.

18 August 1943

Second and third platoons loaded on LCT at 1600 and sailed for San Stefano. They landed 10 miles east of San Stefano at 1800 and bivouaced there.

19 August 1943

First platoon left bivouac area at Brolo at 0700 and joined 2nd. and 3rd. platoons east of San Stefano at 1300.

DIARY  
Company "G"  
753rd. Tank Bn. (M).

10 July 1943

Disembarked from LST 356 on beach 200 yards south of Point Braccetto, Sicily, at 1600, and went into assembly position 200 yards inshore.

11 July 1943

Received verbal orders from 753rd. Tank Battalion (M) Commanding Officer, at 0230, attaching the company to 3rd. Bn., 157th. Inf. The company commander reported to CO, 3rd. Bn., and was assigned mission of supporting infantry attack on Comiso and Comiso Airport. Left assembly area at 0500 and crossed Line of Departure (CR H561076) in company advance guard formation at 0610. The company followed the infantry by bounds.

At 0930 the infantry advance elements entered Comiso and reported the presence of enemy armored cars. We received orders to enter the town and assist the infantry in destroying the cars. The tanks entered Comiso at 0945 and met no resistance.

At 1000, the CO, 157th. Inf., ordered the company to seize Comiso Airport and hold same until arrival of the infantry. The company moved out immediately in an advance guard formation toward the airport with the company commander in the lead. While crossing the bridge northwest of town, the lead tank sighted five light tanks (Italian Renaults) at a range of 200 yards, opened fire, and destroyed all of the enemy vehicles. This was the first time that any part of the 753rd. Tank Battalion (M) engaged in enemy action.

At 1045 the tank column resumed its march on the airfield. The company commander ordered the first platoon to the east edge of the objective and the third platoon to the south edge with instructions to engage anything that moved. The tanks arrived on the field at 1100 and stayed in the vicinity until 1300 when we began to receive fire from our own artillery. The company commander ordered the company to withdraw from the objective and rally at CR H561076. The company remained at the rally position until 1400, at which time the company commander ordered that we return to the vicinity of CR H561073 and protect the town from armored counterattack.

12 July 1943

Relieved from attached to 157th. Inf. at 0130, and left for assembly area 1800 yards west of Vittoria at 0610, arriving there at 0645. Spent remainder of the day in rest and maintenance.

13 July 1943

In battalion assembly area.

14 July 1943

In battalion assembly area.

15 July 1943

Moved with battalion to new assembly area at H511245. The 1st. platoon was attached to "A" Company and moved out at 1430.



16 July 1943

Moved with battalion to new assembly area at H503335, arriving there at 1730.

17 July 1943

First platoon reported back to company at 1300. The company was attached to 1st. Inf. Div. at 1430 per VOCO and left to join that unit at 1500. Division CP located at Mazzarino. The company commander reported to 1st. Division at 1730 and found the company had been released back to the 157th. Div. and attached to the 157th Inf. The company commander reported to CO 157th. Inf. at 2000. The company was ordered to an area 600 yards east of Riesi to protect west flank of regiment.

18 July 1943

Attached to 2nd. Bn. to support the advance on Pietraperzia.

19 July 1943

Attached to ~~2nd. Bn.~~ 157th. Inf. still for advance on S. Caterina. Worked with Company "C", 70th. Tank Bn. (L). Terrain unsuitable until we passed Caltanissetta, good from there to one mile north of railroad. No resistance. Entered Caterina at 1800 and found that 157th. Inf. was 15 miles ahead of remainder of division. We set up strong anti-tank defense at CR 4 miles east of Caterina, using third platoon as anti-tank guns. The 2nd. platoon, left in N. Africa, rejoined the company.

20 July 1943

Rest and maintenance. Tanks are beginning to break down continuously for lack of 50 and 100 hour checks.

21 July 1943

Attached to 160th. Inf. for attack on Vallalunga. No action until the afternoon. In the early part of the afternoon the light tank company, this company, and a reinforced infantry company advanced through Valledolmo and secured the high ground surrounding that town for the regiment. Late in the evening the company was attached to the 179th. Inf. for the advance on Caltavuturo.

22 July 1943

Sent first platoon with leading infantry battalion as AT support. Remainder of company followed between 2nd. and 3rd. Bns. under regimental control. Terrain unsuitable for tanks to employ. Went into assembly-bivouac area 300 yards southeast of town. At 2000 the company was attached to the 157th. Inf.

23 July 1943

The company moved at daylight to the vicinity of RJ 8128 just behind the assault battalion. The infantry commander decided to secure the ground in the vicinity of RJ 9334. The assault battalion moved out and was held up by intermittent medium artillery fire at RJ 8120. The tanks were given the mission of securing the high ground at Campofelice in order that the infantry might establish positions there. The first platoon was ordered to advance on the north side of the railroad

Annex No. 3 cont'd.

as far as the river, the 2nd. platoon was left in reserve, and the company commander took the 3rd. platoon to the right to go around the town.

The first platoon moved forward under enemy artillery fire toward their objective, secured same, and sent forward foot patrols in an effort to locate the guns, but were unsuccessful. The infantry had not arrived at the river by dark, so the first platoon was ordered to rally south of RJ 890325.

The second platoon had been ordered to the same rally position about an hour previously.

The third platoon, being unable to go around the town due to terrain difficulties, went into the town (very friendly), and took up positions on the east edge town from which they engaged enemy infantry on the next ridge to the east. Fortuitously the town was masked from enemy artillery fire.

The tanks that entered the town captured approximately 150 Italians, 5 Germans, 2 Italian officers, 50 rifles, and two small houses full of munitions, destroyed one German ammunition truck and one ammunition dump by fire. An unknown number of the enemy was killed. The third platoon remained in the town all night.

#### 24 July 1943

At 0630 the prisoners were marched down to the main road and turned over to the 157th. Inf. The third platoon moved back to the rally position to reload with ammunition, gas, and oil.

It should be noted here that the civilians in the town were of great assistance to the tanks in pointing out targets and in finding firing positions. The civil police assisted in guarding prisoners through the night.

At 0830 the company commander went forward to rejoin the regimental commander and found that the regiment had been stopped by a blown bridge at 00536. The company commander moved the company into an assembly area about 4000 yards west of Cefalu. There the company rejoined the 753rd. and was relieved from attached to the 157th. Inf.

#### 25 July 1943

At 0100 the 45th. Division ordered that the company be deployed along the coast between Cefalu and RJ B845307 as protection against a possible counterattack from the sea. Lt. Nyblad with seven tanks was sent into the area just east of RJ B935345, with orders to cover as much of the coast as possible. Lt. Sorenson with seven tanks was ordered to the area west of Campofelice with the same mission.

The tanks were to be used as pillboxes, therefore it was possible to start on much needed maintenance.

#### 26 July 1943

Company still deployed along coast. Rest and maintenance.

#### 27 July 1943

Same as before.

#### 28 July 1943

Same as before.

#### 29 July 1943

The company moved back into the battalion CP area at 1630.

30 July 1943

Rest and maintenance.

31 July 1943

Preparations made to move with the battalion on the 1st. of August.

1 August 1943

Moved out with battalion at 0615, reaching destination at 0130 at 1100.

2 August 1943

Moved out with battalion at 0645, reaching our new bivouac area at 1100.

3-10 August 1943

Remained in bivouac area performing heavy maintenance, instructions, etc.

11 August 1943

The Battalion Commander received a message from II Corps at 1800 that the 157th. Inf. desired the use of Company "C" in a contemplated operation. The company was alerted, and the company commander left for the 157th. GP at Fagnini Imereze, arriving there at 2230. Contemplated operation is to be an amphibious flanking attack west of Capo di Millazo. One platoon of tanks will be attached to each infantry battalion. The date of the landing is unknown; undoubtedly, it will "depend upon the situation". Company commander remained in the 157th. area.

12 August 1943

Col. Anchorn returned from 7th. Army Headquarters at 1930 with information that 157th. could take only one platoon of tanks due to a shortage of LCT's. Company commander decided to send the 1st. platoon, to be used as follows: two tanks with the right battalion, two with the left, and one with the center. The company commander was released to return to the 753rd. Hq. area and send back platoon leader of the 1st. platoon.

13 August 1943

Lt. Sorenson reported to the 157th. Inf. at Ln. Officer. Entire company still in 753rd. area.

14 August 1943

Lt. Sorenson came back to company GP at 1400 to move his platoon to San Stefano. The platoon left the area at 1530.

15 August 1943

Lt. Sorenson reported to the GP at 0500 with information that the 157th. had received additional LCT's and would be able to use an additional platoon. Company commander left at 0540 to report to 157th. GP. Second platoon left company area at 0600 for assembly area west of San Stefano. The landing is to be made east of Capo Di Millazo instead of west. H hour is 160300. First platoon, second platoon, T-2, and Ln peep boarded LCT's at 1100, leaving Stefano bay at 1300.

Annex No. 3 cont'd.

16 August 1943

Third Division troops have already passed our beach east of Millazo, and new orders are that we land on friendly beach west of Millazo. All tanks and LCT's by 0130 and in assembly area at 0025503 by 0200. The T2 was used to tow damaged vehicles off the beach.

17 August 1943

At 2300 the company received orders that they would load on LCT's at 150000 and return to Termini.

18 August 1943

Company commander left for Termini at 0200 to select bivouac site. This done, he returned to the 753rd, CP to report actions.

~~RESTRICTED~~

HEADQUARTERS  
753RD TANK BATTALION (M)

~~RESTRICTED~~

APC 464, New York, N.Y.  
1 October 1943.

SUBJECT: Operations of 753rd. Tank Battalion (M), in Salerno Campaign.

TO : The Adjutant General, U.S. Army,  
Washington, D.C..

SECTION I: Authority.

SECTION II: Operations of the battalion in diary form, for the period  
29 August to 21 of September 1943.

SECTION III: Resume.

SECTION IV: Operations of Company "C", 753rd. Tank Battalion (M), for  
period 6 September to 19 September 1943.

SECTION I: Authority.

In compliance with Paragraph 10, Army Regulation 345-105, a report on the  
operations of the 753rd. Tank Battalion (M) in the Salerno Campaign (10 Sept.-  
25 September, 1943) is hereby submitted.

SECTION II: Operations.

Operations of 753rd. Tank Battalion (M), in diary form, is attached hereto.

SECTION III: Resume.

- (a) Weather: Clear and warm for the entire campaign.
- (b) Terrain: Fairly flat and wooded. Main obstacles were canals and drainage  
ditches.
- (c) Estimated enemy casualties: Killed 150.
- (d) Estimated loss of enemy materiel: Destroyed 13 Mark IV tanks.
- (e) Our loss in men and materiel due to enemy action:
  - (1) Killed: 5 EM.
  - (2) Wounded: 5 EM.
  - (3) Tanks:
    - (a) Totally destroyed: None.
    - (b) Knocked out: Three.
  - (4) Other vehicles: One half-track, M3, w/inch, w/arm.
- (f) Losses in men and materiel due to accidents:
  - (1) Died: None.
  - (2) Wounded: One EM.
  - (3) Vehicles: None.

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BY AUTHORITY OF TAG HS

Date

Initials

94-69.2

16986

(g) Tactical employment of the battalion: Upon landing at Paestum, Italy, the battalion was given the mission of taking up a defensive position in rear of the 45th. Infantry Division front, to repel any counterattacks by the enemy. Later the battalion was placed in Fifth Army Reserve, and then VI Corps reserve.

Company "C", reinforced by one section of the Mortar Platoon, one section of the Assault Gun Platoon, one-third of Battalion Maintenance, and one-third of the Medical Detachment, was attached to the 179th. Infantry Regiment, 45th. Infantry Division, for the initial landing. This was the only company of the battalion to see action in the Salerno Campaign.

On the defensive Company "C" was used principally as mobile anti-tank guns in close support of the infantry. On the offensive tanks were used in close support of the assault infantry battalions to clean out machine gun nests, snipers, and anti-tank guns. As a result of this, thirteen enemy Mark IV tanks were destroyed.

(h) Maintenance: There were few maintenance problems during this campaign. Tanks pulled out of the line at night for major repairs were returned the following night. The two tanks knocked out by anti-tank fire were repaired and sent back to the company.

*Joseph G. Felder*  
JOSEPH G. FELDER,  
Lt. Colonel, 453rd. Tank Bn. (H),  
Commanding.

Annexes 1-5 attached.

DIARY

753RD TANK BATTALION (L)

SALERNO CAMPAIGN

29 August 1943

At 1000, the battalion was relieved from attachment to II Corps, and attached to the 45th. Infantry Division. Company "C" was attached to the 179th. Infantry Regiment, 45th. Inf. Div., effective 2400B 30 August 1943. Effective 010001 September 1943 the battalion was relieved from the 7th. Army, and assigned to the 5th. Army.

30 August - 5 September 1943

Disposition unchanged.

6 September 1943

Company "C", reinforced, departed from staging area at Cerda, Sicily, to join the 179th. Inf. Regt., 45th. Inf. Div., east of Termini Imerese.

7 September 1943

Disposition unchanged.

8 September 1943

The battalion, less Company "C" which sailed for the invasion of Italy this date, was notified to be ready to move on an amphibious operation with the 45th. Inf. Div. by 0001B 10 September 1943.

9 - 12 September 1943

Preparations made for operation.

13 September 1943

At 1900, the first serial of four departed from Cerda, en route to Termini Imerese to load on LSTs. At 2100, the last vehicle of the fourth serial cleared the I.P.

14 September 1943

By 0225, the battalion, less Co. "C", completed loading. At 1300, the battalion sailed from Termini Imerese.

15 September 1943

The battalion landed at Paestum, Italy, attached to the 45th. Inf. Division, at 1030. All vehicles were de-waterproofed in an area about 500 yards inshore. During this process, the beach area was bombed and strafed by several enemy planes, but damage was slight. The battalion moved into a bivouac area at 857056. At 1140, the battalion was relieved from the 45th. Inf. Div., and attached to VI Corps. At 1830, the battalion was attached to the 180th. Inf. Regt., 45th. Inf. Div., and placed in Fifth Army Reserve.

~~RESTRICTED~~  
16 September 1943

About 0530, three enemy artillery shells of unknown caliber landed in the bivouac area, injuring three men. They were E.E. Long and Burr Groff, Headquarters Company, and Harold E. Owens, "B" Company. At 0840, the Battalion moved into a new area at 867050. This was accomplished by 0930. At 2000, the battalion became a part of a combat team with the 180th. Inf. Regt., and placed on a four hour alert.

17 September 1943

At 1100, the battalion (less Co. "C"), was alerted by Fifth Army for a possible move on Albanella. It was believed the enemy was massing for a counterattack in that vicinity. The alert was called off at 1400.

18 September 1943

Disposition of the battalion still unchanged. At 1222, the battalion was relieved from the 180th. Inf., and attached to VI Corps, being placed in VI Corps Reserve.

19 September 1943

At 1500, the battalion, less Co. "C", reverted to Fifth Army control. Co. "C" was relieved from the 179th. Inf. and attached to 180th. Inf.

20 September 1943

At 192400, Company "C" reverted to Bn. control, and moved into the bivouac area at 1550.

21 September 1943

At 1130, the battalion was attached to the 36th. Inf. Div., and was ordered to remain in its present position.

4



DIARY  
"C" COMPANY  
753RD TANK BATTALION (M)  
SALERNO CAMPAIGN

**RESTRICTED**

6 September 1943:

The company had been attached to the 179th RCT during the previous week to be available to make a movement with them at a time set by Commanding General 5th Army. On this date the company, reinforced, moved from the Battalion bivouac area North of Cerda, to a serializing area west of Termini Imerese. At 2200 the company and the other vehicles of the Regimental Echelon landing team moved to the port area at Termini to await orders for the actual loading.

7 September 1943:

The 2nd platoon completed their loading last night about 2400. The 1st platoon completed their loading about 0400 this morning. The boat team to which the remainder of the company was assigned started loading on HMS LST 361 at 1130, entire ship loaded at 1400; pulled away from dock and awaited orders for our combat team to sail toward Italy.

8 September 1943:

At sea aboard HMS LST 361. Discussed various plans of action with tank commanders and officers. The 179th RCT is a floating reserve for 5th Army.

9 September 1943:

We are still aboard ship in the Salerno Bay. The assault divisions landed early this morning however we have received very little news as to how the action is progressing. Captain Davis, 179th Infantry, Commanding Officer of troops was called to a meeting aboard the flag ship and on his return informed us that we would disembark on the morning of the 10th.

10 September 1943:

The ships moved into Red Beach, we unloaded, and moved to an assembly area at N 850055. Entire company was into the area by 1400. The Regiment has been ordered to secure the high ground in the vicinity of O 0523 and prevent the enemy from making a counterattack along highway number 19. The 1st platoon was attached to the 2nd Battalion to support their advance along a route generally south of the Calore river. The remainder of the company was directed to follow the regiment (-) along the route between the rivers Sele and Calore. The company (-) was directed to move into an assembly area at N 880113 at 2300, to be prepared to cross the Calore river at day-light.

11 September 1943:

The company (-) crossed the Calore river over an Engineer prepared ford at 0645. Upon reaching the other side the company commander deemed it advisable to put the company in an assembly position until the situation in the vicinity of Persano could be more thoroughly reconnoitered.

RESTRICTED

The situation was as follows: Two infantry battalions plus attachments had passed through the town prior to daylight - at approximately 0600 enemy artillery, mortar, anti-tank, and small arms fire destroyed part of the vehicles in the regimental support column and by the continued intensity of their fire prevented any movement of men or vehicles in the area just south and west of Persano.

By 0730 one battery of the 160th Field Artillery and the 645th Tank Destroyer Battalion (-) had arrived in our same general vicinity. From the information we were able to gather it appeared that our troops East of Persano were being forced to withdraw and that the enemy was attempting to secure the ford over which the regiment had crossed the river, thus cutting off the regiment from the remainder of the 5th Army.

After a conference with the Commanding Officer 645th Tank Destroyer Battalion it seemed advisable to keep both our commands in the vicinity of the river crossing to protect both it and the 155 Howitzer batteries that were on both sides of the river.

By 1100 the firing in the immediate vicinity of Persano had become intermittent and the Commanding Officer 645th Tank Destroyer Battalion and the Company Commander decided to attack with one company of Tank Destroyers with a platoon of tanks attached. The Tank Destroyers furnished a base of fire while the tanks attempted to push through. The attack was repulsed with a loss of one tank and seven destroyers. During the remainder of the afternoon a platoon of tanks ranged the woods South East of Persano in an attempt to clean out enemy machine gun and rifle emplacements.

At 1730 the company commander ordered the 3rd platoon to contact the 179th Infantry by using a route along the north bank of the Calore river. The platoon leader was unable to find a crossing over the drainage (irrigation) ditch that runs east and west about 500 yards south of Persano before dark therefore the company commander ordered that the 3rd Platoon return to the company assembly area.

A pre-dawn reconnaissance found a crossing for the company to use the next morning.

12 September 1943:

The combat elements of the company moved out at 0700 and by hugging the North bank of the Calore River managed to make contact with the 179th Infantry at 0800. No opposition was encountered. The company was attached to the 1st Battalion for an attack on Persano from the East - the company commander ordered that the 2nd and 3rd platoons advance with the infantry and support their advance by fire if necessary. The command tank moved along with the Battalion Commanding Officer - no opposition. The tanks moved on through the town and took up positions from which they could support the positions set up by the infantry.

The Regimental Commander, at a commanders meeting, ordered that the company move, by night, to an assembly position at N 842152. The remainder of the regiment is to move approximately 1800 yards north of that position and take over a defensive position from the 36th Engineers.

The company moved out at 2000, crossed the Calore river, went west to highway 18, thence north to the designated area - completed movement at 2230.

At 2300 a messenger arrived from Regiment with orders that we leave this area and move to an area immediately southwest of CR N849140 - movement completed 130030.

13 September 1943:

During the previous night the Regiment had occupied a defensive position generally along the line N831146 - N847156. About noon the RCT commander requested that the line be reinforced by the tanks in order that the infantry might have better and closer anti-tank protection. The company commander ordered that the tanks move individually to defiladed positions designated by him along the line of the reserve companies of the infantry battalions. This movement was completed by 1500 and the presence of tanks almost in the front line caused a noticeable rise in the moral of the individual infantrymen.

The RCT commander called a commanders meeting for 2100 and announced that during the night of September 13-14 the line would be shifted from its present position astride highway 18 to a line N845169 - N863154 and that he desired the tanks to support the infantry as closely as possible; the company commander said that the tanks would be in position at daylight. After a personal reconnaissance the Company Commander found that the only suitable firing positions were along the MLR - the tanks were in those positions and camouflaged by daylight September 14.

14 September 1943:

The enemy attacked at 0800 with approximately a battalion of infantry and eight (8) Mark IV tanks. The attack was apparently not directed at our position as the enemy tanks were moving almost parallel to our front at a range of 600 - 1000 yards. All of the enemy tanks were "knocked out" but only seven were destroyed; in not more than five minutes. During the remainder of the action the tanks fired HE and machine guns at enemy personnel, the action lasted about one and a half (1½) hours.

For the rest of the day action directed against our forces was confined to rifle and machine gun fire from small groups of the enemy, and harrassing artillery fire.

At 1600 one of the infantry company commanders requested that some tanks be used to clean out a machine gun nest to his left front. A section of tanks was ordered out on this mission. The nest was cleaned out but as the tanks were returning to our lines one of them was fired on and hit by a concealed AT Gun. That tank was put out of action but the section leaders tank destroyed the AT Gun by fire.

There was no further tank action this date.

15 September 1943:

The company is still in the same position. Enemy activity is confined to harrassing artillery fire.

16 September 1943:

Enemy artillery was more intense this date - two men were wounded by shell fragments - one seriously.

17 September 1943:

Enemy harrassing fire much lighter today. We believe that our own artillery and mortars have destroyed the guns that have been annoying us.

18 September 1943:

All is quiet -. The RCT commander called a commanders meeting at 2100 and ordered that the RCT move forward and occupy the positions shown on Operation Overlay 1900B 18 September 1943 (attached) and be dug in by daylight.

The tanks are to be used exactly as they are in our present position except that the 1st platoon is to come back under direct company control and the entire company isto support the 3rd Battalion. Company "B", 191st Tank Battalion (M) which had been in position to reinforce our fire along the RCT front is to support the 2nd Battalion just as we are supporting the 3rd Battalion. This change was made on the recommendation of the Company Commander Company "C".

19 September 1943:

All tanks were in position by 0630. First platoon on the right, 2nd platoon on the left, 3rd platoon in reserve. This time we are going to rotate the reserve platoon each night so as to lessen the strain on the men. This time, too, the tanks are completely hidden approximately 400-500 yards behind the MLR and each tank commander has been shown the route they will take in order to reach his firing position - they will move to these positions on order of the company commander at the first indication of an enemy attack.

No enemy activity.

About 1100 the RCT commander received orders that the Regiment is to occupy the high ground between Battipaglia and Eboli. Here the terrain is unsuitable for tank employment - the company commander recommended that the tanks be kept in mobile reserve south of highway 19 with a mission of making a counterattack either to the east or west flank should the enemy attack from either direction. The recommendation was approved.

The company did not make this move as they were detached from the 179th Infantry and attached to the 180th Infantry at 1130.

The 180th is going into an assembly position just southeast of CR N875175 before moving up to a new position. The company commander ordered that the entire company assemble at N873176. All of company in assembly area by 1500 awaiting orders.

Company detached from 180th Infantry at 2300 and reverted to 753rd Tank Battalion control.

20 September 1943:

Company left assembly area at 1300 and arrived in Battalion assembly area at 1530.

10/26/2006 Dear, David, 123 TX 13060

RCT 179  
Operation Overlay  
1900B 18 Sept '43  
Map: Italy 1/50,000

Hutchings  
Colonel

OFFICIAL:

JOHNSON  
MAJOR  
S-3

10

**SECRET**

HEADQUARTERS  
753RD TANK BATTALION (M)

APO 162, U. S. Army  
5 December 1943

SUBJECT: Transmittal of Unit Historical Report.

TO : Commanding General, 36th Infantry Division,  
APO 36, U. S. Army.

In compliance with paragraph 10, Army Regulations 15-205 and memorandum number 56, Headquarters 36th Infantry Division, 28 November 1943 there is transmitted herewith the Unit Historical Report for month of November 1943, of this battalion.

*Joseph L. ...*  
JOSEPH L. ...  
Lt. Colonel, 753rd Tk Bn (M),  
Commanding.

1 Incl:  
Unit Historical Report, Nov., w/annexes (outgoing).

**SECRET**

ml

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HEADQUARTERS  
753RD TANK BATTALION (M)

DATE 22 NOV 1943

AFPO 464, New York, N.Y.  
1 October 1943.

~~RESTRICTED~~

SUBJECT: Operations of 753rd. Tank Battalion (M), in Salerno Campaign.

TO : The Adjutant General, U.S. Army,  
Washington, D.C..

SECTION I: Authority.

SECTION II: Operations of the battalion in diary form, for the period  
29 August to 21 of September 1943.

SECTION III: Resume.

SECTION IV: Operations of Company "C", 753rd. Tank Battalion (M), for  
period 6 September to 19 September 1943.

SECTION I: Authority.

In compliance with Paragraph 10, Army Regulation 345-105, a report on the  
operations of the 753rd. Tank Battalion (M) in the Salerno Campaign (10 Sept.-  
25 September, 1943) is hereby submitted.

SECTION II: Operations.

Operations of 753rd. Tank Battalion (M), in diary form, is attached hereto.

SECTION III: Resume.

- (A) Weather: Clear and warm for the entire campaign.
- (B) Terrain: Fairly flat and wooded. Main obstacles were canals and drainage  
ditches.
- (c) Estimated enemy casualties: Killed 150.
- (d) Estimated loss of enemy materiel: Destroyed 13 Mark IV tanks.
- (e) Our loss in men and materiel due to enemy action:
- (1) Killed: 5 EM.
  - (2) Wounded: 5 EM.
  - (3) Tanks:
    - (a) Totally destroyed: None.
    - (b) Knocked out: Three.
  - (4) Other vehicles: One half-track, M3, w/winch, w/arm.
- (f) Losses in men and materiel due to accidents:
- (1) Died: None.
  - (2) Wounded: One EM.
  - (3) Vehicles: None.

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION CANCELED  
BY AUTHORITY OF THE SECRETARY OF WAR  
BY JOSEPH W. WHITNEY, COLONEL  
DATE 16 APR 1947 CITE WD AGAD 10-16

~~DOWN~~  
~~RESTRICTED~~  
BY AUTHORITY OF TAG AS

24 JUL 46  
Date

Initials

DRP 1-753-013



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[REDACTED]

(g) Tactical employment of the battalion: Upon landing at Paestum, Italy, the battalion was given the mission of taking up a defensive position in rear of the 45th. Infantry Division front, to repel any counterattacks by the enemy. Later the battalion was placed in Fifth Army Reserve, and then VI Corps reserve.

Company "C", reinforced by one section of the Mortar Platoon, one section of the Assault Gun Platoon, one-third of Battalion Maintenance, and one-third of the Medical Detachment, was attached to the 179th. Infantry Regiment, 45th. Infantry Division, for the initial landing. This was the only company of the battalion to see action in the Salerno Campaign.

On the defensive Company "C" was used principally as mobile anti-tank guns in close support of the infantry. On the offensive tanks were used in close support of the assault infantry battalions to clean out machine gun nests, snipers, and anti-tank guns. As a result of this, thirteen enemy Mark IV tanks were destroyed.

(h) Maintenance: There were few maintenance problems during this campaign. Tanks pulled out of the line at night for major repairs were returned the following night. The two tanks knocked out by anti-tank fire were repaired and sent back to the company.

*Joseph G. Felber*  
JOSEPH G. FELBER,  
Lt. Colonel, 753rd. Tank Bn. (M),  
Commanding.

Annexes 1-5 attached.

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[REDACTED]

~~DIARY~~  
~~753RD TANK BATTALION (M)~~

SALERNO CAMPAIGN

~~RESTRICTED~~

29 August 1943

At 1800, the battalion was relieved from attachment to II Corps, and attached to the 45th. Infantry Division. Company "C" was attached to the 179th. Infantry Regiment, 45th. Inf. Div., effective 2400B 30 August 1943. Effective 010001 September 1943 the battalion was relieved from the 7th. Army, and assigned to the 5th. Army.

30 August - 5 September 1943

Disposition unchanged.

6 September 1943

Company "C", reinforced, departed from staging area at Cerda, Sicily, to join the 179th. Inf. Regt., 45th. Inf. Div., east of Termini Imerese.

7 September 1943

Disposition unchanged.

8 September 1943

The battalion, less Company "C" which sailed for the invasion of Italy this date, was notified to be ready to move on an amphibious operation with the 45th. Inf. Div. by 0001B 10 September 1943.

9 - 12 September 1943

Preparations made for operation.

13 September 1943

At 1900, the first serial of four departed from Cerda, en route to Termini Imerese to load on LSTs. At 2100, the last vehicle of the fourth serial cleared the I.P.

14 September 1943

By 0225, the battalion, less Co. "C", completed loading. At 1300, the battalion sailed from Termini Imerese.

15 September 1943

The battalion landed at Paestum, Italy, attached to the 45th. Inf. Division, at 1030. All vehicles were de-waterproofed in an area about 500 yards inshore. During this process, the beach area was bombed and strafed by several enemy planes, but damage was slight. The battalion moved into a bivouac area at 857056. At 1140, the battalion was relieved from the 45th. Inf. Div., and attached to VI Corps. At 1830, the battalion was attached to the 180th. Inf. Regt., 45th. Inf. Div., and placed in Fifth Army Reserve.

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DECLASSIFIED  
Dir. 5200.9, Sept. 27, 1958  
NMW by ~~RESTRICTED~~ date 3-11-77

~~RESTRICTED~~

~~SECRET~~  
16 September 1943

About 0530, three enemy artillery shells of unknown caliber landed in the bivouac area, injuring three men. They were E.E. Long and Burr Groff, Headquarters Company, and Harold E. Owens, "B" Company. At 0840, the Battalion moved into a new area at 867050. This was accomplished by 0930. At 2000, the battalion became a part of a combat team with the 180th. Inf. Regt., and placed on a four hour alert.

17 September 1943

At 1100, the battalion (less Co. "C"), was alerted by Fifth Army for a possible move on Albanella. It was believed the enemy was massing for a counterattack in that vicinity. The alert was called off at 1400.

18 September 1943

Disposition of the battalion still unchanged. At 1222, the battalion was relieved from the 180th. Inf., and attached to VI Corps, being placed in VI Corps Reserve.

19 September 1943

At 1500, the battalion, less Co. "C", reverted to Fifth Army control. Co. "C" was relieved from the 179th. Inf. and attached to 180th. Inf.

20 September 1943

At 192400, Company "C" reverted to Bn. control, and moved into the bivouac area at 1550.

21 September 1943

At 1130, the battalion was attached to the 36th. Inf. Div., and was ordered to remain in its present position.

~~RESTRICTED~~

DIARY  
"C" COMPANY  
753RD TANK BATTALION (M)  
SALERNO CAMPAIGN

~~RESTRICTED~~

6 September 1943:

The company had been attached to the 179th RCT during the previous week to be available to make a movement with them at a time set by Commanding General 5th Army. On this date the company, reinforced, moved from the Battalion bivouac area North of Cerda, to a serializing area west of Termini Imerese. At 2200 the company and the other vehicles of the Regimental Echelon landing team moved to the port area at Termini to await orders for the actual loading.

7 September 1943:

The 2nd platoon completed their loading last night about 2400. The 1st platoon completed their loading about 0400 this morning. The boat team to which the remainder of the company was assigned started loading on HMS LST 361 at 1130, entire ship loaded at 1400; pulled away from dock and awaited orders for our combat team to sail toward Italy.

8 September 1943:

At sea aboard HMS LST 361. Discussed various plans of action with tank commanders and officers. The 179th RCT is a floating reserve for 5th Army.

9 September 1943:

We are still aboard ship in the Salerno Bay. The assault divisions landed early this morning however we have received very little news as to how the action is progressing. Captain Davis, 179th Infantry, Commanding Officer of troops was called to a meeting aboard the flag ship and on his return informed us that we would disembark on the morning of the 10th.

10 September 1943:

The ships moved into Red Beach, we unloaded, and moved to an assembly area at N 850055. Entire company was into the area by 1400. The Regiment has been ordered to secure the high ground in the vicinity of O 0523 and prevent the enemy from making a counterattack along highway number 19. The 1st platoon was attached to the 2nd Battalion to support their advance along a route generally south of the Calore river. The remainder of the company was directed to follow the regiment (-) along the route between the rivers Sele and Calore. The company (-) was directed to move into an assembly area at N 880113 at 2300, to be prepared to cross the Calore river at day-light.

11 September 1943:

The company (-) crossed the Calore river over an Engineer prepared ford at 0645. Upon reaching the other side the company commander deemed it advisable to put the company in an assembly position until the situation in the vicinity of Persano could be more thoroughly reconitered.

- 1 -

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~~RESTRICTED~~

DECLASSIFIED  
DOD Dir. 52000, Sept. 27, 1958  
NMW by *[signature]* date 9-11-67

SECRET

[REDACTED]

DIARY  
"G" COMPANY  
753RD TANK BATTALION (M)  
SALERNO CAMPAIGN

~~RESTRICTED~~

6 September 1943:

The company had been attached to the 179th RCT during the previous week to be available to make a movement with them at a time set by Commanding General 5th Army. On this date the company, reinforced, moved from the Battalion bivouac area North of Cerda, to a serialising area west of Termini Imerese. At 2200 the company and the other vehicles of the Regimental Echelon landing team moved to the port area at Termini to await orders for the actual loading.

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The 2nd platoon completed their loading last night about 2400. The 1st platoon completed their loading about 0400 this morning. The boat team to which the remainder of the company was assigned started loading on HMS LST 361 at 1130, entire ship loaded at 1400; pulled away from dock and awaited orders for our combat team to sail toward Italy.

8 September 1943:

At sea aboard HMS LST 361. Discussed various plans of action with tank commanders and officers. The 179th RCT is a floating reserve for 5th Army.

9 September 1943:

We are still aboard ship in the Salerno Bay. The assault divisions landed early this morning however we have received very little news as to how the action is progressing. Captain Davis, 179th Infantry, Commanding Officer of troops was called to a meeting aboard the flag ship and on his return informed us that we would disembark on the morning of the 10th.

10 September 1943:

The ships moved into Red Beach, we unloaded, and moved to an assembly area at N 850055. Entire company was into the area by 1400. The Regiment has been ordered to secure the high ground in the vicinity of 0 0523 and prevent the enemy from making a counterattack along highway number 19. The 1st platoon was attached to the 2nd Battalion to support their advance along a route generally south of the Calore river. The remainder of the company was directed to follow the regiment (-) along the route between the rivers Sele and Calore. The company (-) was directed to move into an assembly area at N 880113 at 2300, to be prepared to cross the Calore river at day-light.

11 September 1943:

The company (-) crossed the Calore river over an Engineer prepared ford at 0645. Upon reaching the other side the company commander deemed it advisable to put the company in an assembly position until the situation in the vicinity of Persano could be more thoroughly reconnoitered.

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The situation was as follows: Two infantry battalions plus attachments had passed through the town prior to daylight - at approximately 0600 enemy artillery, mortar, anti-tank, and small arms fire destroyed part of the vehicles in the regimental support column and by the continued intensity of their fire prevented any movement of men or vehicles in the area just south and west of Persano.

By 0730 one battery of the 160th Field Artillery and the 645th Tank Destroyer Battalion (-) had arrived in our same general vicinity. From the information we were able to gather it appeared that our troops East of Persano were being forced to withdraw and that the enemy was attempting to secure the ford over which the regiment had crossed the river, thus cutting off the regiment from the remainder of the 5th Army.

After a conference with the Commanding Officer 645th Tank Destroyer Battalion it seemed advisable to keep both our commands in the vicinity of the river crossing to protect both it and the 155 Howitzer batteries that were on both sides of the river.

By 1100 the firing in the immediate vicinity of Persano had become intermittent and the Commanding Officer 645th Tank Destroyer Battalion and the Company Commander decided to attack with one company of Tank Destroyers with a platoon of tanks attached. The Tank Destroyers furnished a base of fire while the tanks attempted to push through. The attack was repulsed with a loss of one tank and seven destroyers. During the remainder of the afternoon a platoon of tanks ranged the woods South East of Persano in an attempt to clean out enemy machine gun and rifle emplacements.

At 1730 the company commander ordered the 3rd platoon to contact the 179th Infantry by using a route along the north bank of the Calore river. The platoon leader was unable to find a crossing over the drainage (irrigation) ditch that runs east and west about 500 yards south of Persano before dark therefore the company commander ordered that the 3rd Platoon return to the company assembly area.

A pre-dawn reconnaissance found a crossing for the company to use the next morning.

12 September 1943:

The combat elements of the company moved out at 0700 and by hugging the North bank of the Calore River managed to make contact with the 179th Infantry at 0800. No opposition was encountered. The company was attached to the 1st Battalion for an attack on Persano from the East - the company commander ordered that the 2nd and 3rd platoons advance with the infantry and support their advance by fire if necessary. The command tank moved along with the Battalion Commanding Officer - no opposition. The tanks moved on through the town and took up positions from which they could support the positions set up by the infantry.

The Regimental Commander, at a commanders meeting, ordered that the company move, by night, to an assembly position at N 842152. The remainder of the regiment is to move approximately 1800 yards north of that position and take over a defensive position from the 36th Engineers.

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The company moved out at 2000, crossed the Calore river, went west to highway 18, thence north to the designated area - completed movement at 2230.

At 2300 a messenger arrived from Regiment with orders that we leave this area and move to an area immediately southeast of GR N8491140 - movement completed 130030.

13 September 1943:

During the previous night the Regiment had occupied a defensive position generally along the line N8311146 - N847156. About noon the RCT commander requested that the line be reinforced by the tanks in order that the infantry might have better and closer anti-tank protection. The company commander ordered that the tanks move individually to defiladed positions designated by him along the line of the reserve companies of the infantry battalions. This movement was completed by 1500 and the presence of tanks almost in the front line caused a noticeable rise in the moral of the individual infantrymen.

The RCT commander called a commanders meeting for 2100 and announced that during the night of September 13-14 the line would be shifted from its present position astride highway 18 to a line N845169 - N863154 and that he desired the tanks to support the infantry as closely as possible; the company commander said that the tanks would be in position at daylight. After a personal reconnaissance the Company Commander found that the only suitable firing positions were along the MLR - the tanks were in those positions and camouflaged by daylight September 14.

14 September 1943:

The enemy attacked at 0800 with approximately a battalion of infantry and eight (8) Mark IV tanks. The attack was apparently not directed at our position as the enemy tanks were moving almost parallel to our front at a range of 600 - 1000 yards. All of the enemy tanks were "knocked out" but only seven were destroyed; in not more than five minutes. During the remainder of the action the tanks fired HE and machine guns at enemy personnel, the action lasted about one and a half (1½) hours.

For the rest of the day action directed against our forces was confined to rifle and machine gun fire from small groups of the enemy, and harrassing artillery fire.

At 1600 one of the infantry company commanders requested that some tanks be used to clean out a machine gun nest to his left front. A section of tanks was ordered out on this mission. The nest was cleaned out but as the tanks were returning to our lines one of them was fired on and hit by a concealed AT Gun. That tank was put out of action but the section leaders tank destroyed the AT Gun by fire.

There was no further tank action this date.

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15 September 1943:

The company is still in the same position. Enemy activity is confined to harrassing artillery fire.

16 September 1943:

Enemy artillery was more intense this date - two men were wounded by shell fragments - one seriously.

17 September 1943:

Enemy harrassing fire much lighter today. We believe that our own artillery and mortars have destroyed the guns that have been annoying us.

18 September 1943:

All is quiet -. The RCT commander called a commanders meeting at 2100 and ordered that the RCT move forward and occupy the positions shown on Operation Overlay 1900B 18 September 1943 (attached) and be dug in by daylight.

The tanks are to be used exactly as they are in our present position except that the 1st platoon is to come back under direct company control and the entire company is to support the 3rd Battalion. Company "B", 191st Tank Battalion (M) which had been in position to reinforce our fire along the RCT front is to support the 2nd Battalion just as we are supporting the 3rd Battalion. This change was made on the recommendation of the Company Commander Company "C".

19 September 1943:

All tanks were in position by 0630. First platoon on the right, 2nd platoon on the left, 3rd platoon in reserve. This time we are going to rotate the reserve platoon each night so as to lessen the strain on the men. This time, too, the tanks are completely hidden approximately 400-500 yards behind the MLR and each tank commander has been shown the route they will take in order to reach his firing position - they will move to these positions on order of the company commander at the first indication of an enemy attack.

No enemy activity.

About 1100 the RCT commander received orders that the Regiment is to occupy the high ground between Battipaglia and Khali. Here the terrain is unsuitable for tank employment - the company commander recommended that the tanks be kept in mobile reserve south of highway 19 with a mission of making a counterattack either to the east or west flank should the enemy attack from either direction. The recommendation was approved.

The company did not make this move as they were detached from the 179th Infantry and attached to the 180th Infantry at 1130.



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The 180th is going into an assembly position just southeast of GR 1875175 before moving up to a new position. The company commander ordered that the entire company assemble at 1873176. All of company in assembly area by 1500 awaiting orders.

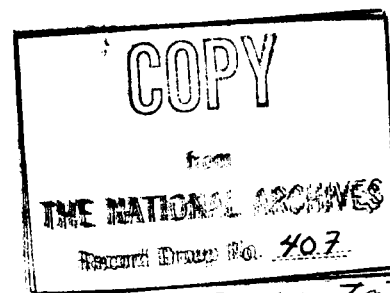
Company detached from 180th Infantry at 2300 and reverted to 753rd Tank Battalion control.

20 September 1943:

Company left assembly area at 1300 and arrived in Battalion assembly area at 1530.

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10AL:



AR 253 Operations Report

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**HEADQUARTERS  
753RD TANK BATTALION (M)**

**AFD 464, U. S. Army  
4 December 1943**

**SUBJECT: Operations in Italy, November 1943.**

**TO : Commanding General, 36th Infantry Division,  
AFD 36, U. S. Army.**

1. During the period November 1-16 inclusive this battalion, attached to 36th Infantry Division, participated in Infantry-Tank training problems in the Division assembly area north of Capua, Italy. (See overlay, annex number 1). On 17th November the Division began the relief of the 3rd Division. This battalion was ordered to relieve the 751st Tank Battalion (M) and take over its areas. Each company of the battalion occupied the positions of the respective company of the 751st Tank Battalion (M). (See disposition overlay, annex 2). Mission of the battalion was to be prepared to counterattack up highway six (6) toward Mount Lungo. One tank platoon was sent forward each day into an overwatching position east of Mignano, returning to its company area each evening.

During this period the battalion was not committed to any action, however the enemy shelled the battalion frequently throughout the period, killing three (3) enlisted men, seriously wounding three (3) enlisted men and lightly wounding two (2) officers and four (4) enlisted men. One tank received a direct hit by a high explosive shell, which temporarily disabled it. It was immediately repaired and returned to its position. Only other damage from enemy shell fire was negligible. No enemy personnel was captured nor was any enemy material destroyed by this battalion during this period.

No difficulties were presented in supplying the troops with rations and water, except rain and mud which made vehicular movement within the areas difficult. Supply was accomplished under cover of darkness. During the period seven (7) enlisted replacements were received. On 29 November 1943 Major General Fred L. Walker, Commanding General, 36th Infantry Division, at an informal ceremony at the Division Command Post, presented the Silver Star Medal to Sergeant Lyman S. Heiman, 36146947, Company "B", 753rd Tank Battalion (M) of Salisbury, Missouri, for gallantry in action near Altavilla, Italy on 11 September 1943.

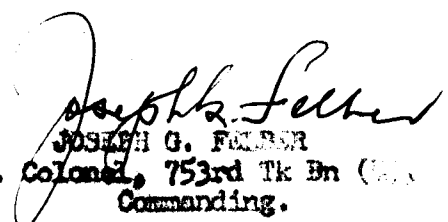
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Operations in Italy, November 1943 Cont'd.

Attached hereto are annexes as follows:

- Annex number 1. Overlay of battalion location from 1 November to 17 November 1943.
- Annex number 2. Disposition overlay, 17 November thru 30 November.
- Annex number 3. Unit journal.
- Annex number 4. Unit diary.
- Annex number 5. List of casualties by companies.
- Annex number 6. Consolidated casualty report.

  
JOSEPH G. FELDER  
Lt. Colonel, 753rd Tk Bn (M)  
Commanding.

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HEADQUARTERS  
73RD TANK BATTALION (M)  
APO 161, New York, N. Y.

BATTLE CASUALTIES FOR THE MONTH OF NOVEMBER 1943

HEADQUARTERS COMPANY

T/4	Bruce G. Leonard	35021006	LWA	22 November 1943	Weatherford, Okla.
T/5	John P. Dannew	37353817	SWA	19 November 1943	Colorado Springs, Colo.

SERVICE COMPANY

None.

'A' COMPANY

None.

'B' COMPANY

None.

'C' COMPANY

Capt	Charles L. McNeill	3504211	LWA	29 Nov 43	Wichita, Kansas
1st Lt	Edwin Burke	35042296	LWA	29 Nov 43	Dallas, Texas
S SGT	Moore McNeill	3504058	KIA	21 Nov 43	Slate Springs, Miss.
T/5	Harmon W. Moore	35045096	DOW	21 Nov 43	Bayou City, Texas
Pfc	George W. Dehrendorf	37351121	DOW	21 Nov 43	St. Louis, Mo.
T/5	Ray L. Green	35040731	SWA	19 Nov 43	Hendrix, Okla.
Sgt	Paul E. Palmer	20600124	LWA	23 Nov 43	Glen Ellyn, Ill.
T/5	Clayton A. DeForest	37353636	LWA	23 Nov 43	Fuckie, Colo.
Pvt	Harrold L. Coon	37136601	LWA	21 Nov 43	Centerville, Iowa

MEDICAL DETACHMENT

T/5	William A. Todd	31866856	SWA	19 Nov 43	Milton, Tenn.
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HEADQUARTERS  
75TH TANK BATTALION (M)  
A.P.O. #161, N.Y., N.Y.

CONSOLIDATED BATTLE CASUALTIES FOR NOVEMBER 1943

OFFICERS:

LWA                      2

ENLISTED MEN:

KIA	1
DOW	2
SUA	3
LWA	4
	<hr/>
	10

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Diary for November Cont'd.

22 November 1943

Artillery fire heavier today than usual, particularly between 1300 and 1500, and 1700 and 2100. One enlisted man, Headquarters Company, wounded. Third Platoon Company "B", relieved 2nd Platoon Company "B". One "B" Company tank disabled by enemy artillery fire.

23 November 1943

Headquarters Company moved approximately 400 yards southeast of Battalion Command Post to evade artillery fire, which was heavier than any received to date. First Platoon Company "B" relieved third platoon Company "B" in overwatching position.

24 November 1943

Third Platoon, Company "C", relieved 1st Platoon Company "B" in overwatching position. Very little activity on the front due to inclement weather. Periodic artillery fire received.

25 November 1943

First Platoon Company "C" relieved 3rd Platoon. Exceptionally light enemy artillery activity. Weather turning colder.

26 November 1943

Second Platoon Company "C", relieved 1st Platoon Company "B". Periodic artillery fire received throughout the day.

27 November 1943

Third Platoon Company "B", relieved 2nd Platoon, Company "C". Artillery fire heavier today.

28 November 1943

First Platoon Company "B" relieved 3rd Platoon Company "B". Very little activity.

29 November 1943

2nd Platoon Company "B" relieved 1st Platoon Company "B". Heavy enemy artillery fire received at 1730, lasting 5 minutes. No change in 73rd.

30 November 1943

Friendly artillery very active, especially during the morning.

- 3 -

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HEADQUARTERS  
753RD TANK BATTALION (M)

D I A R Y

1 November thru 30 November 1943

4 November 1943

At 1530, orders were received placing the battalion on a 24 hour alert for proposed move north of Capua.

5 November 1943

At 1100, Field Order number 35, 36th Infantry Division, was revoked,

6 November 1943

At 1042, Field Order number 35, (revised) was received, and preparations were made to move the 7th of November.

7 November 1943

At 1805, the battalion left Zaccaria (K072563), in route to the new bivouac area at 165813. The movement was completed at 2330.

8 November 1943

The day was spent straightening up the camp.

9 - 11 November 1943

Usual camp duties.

12 November 1943

Disposition of battalion unchanged. Company "A" participated in problems with 36th Division troops.

13 November 1943

Company "B" was attached to the 141st Infantry Regiment, 36th Division.

- 1 -

Annex number 4

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Diary for November Cont'd.

14 November 1943

Company "B" moved out at 0730 to join the 11st Infantry Regiment. At 1200 the battalion received a warning order to be prepared to move to the 3rd Infantry Division area, and to set up positions along highway 6 east of Milpaso.

15 November 1943

Reconnaissance of new area made by Battalion Commanding Officer, Headquarters Commandant and the Reconnaissance Officer. They departed at 0615. The battalion made preparations for the move, which was made by infiltrating one company at a time into the new area, the reason for this procedure being that the enemy had observation of our movements.

16 November 1943

Preparations made for move.

17 November 1943

At 1415, Company "A" departed for new area at 061101.

18 November 1943

At 0700, Company "C" left for new area at 997106. At 1800, Headquarters and Service Companies departed, and all units completed movement by 2100. Command Post at 060015.

19 November 1943

Periodic artillery barrages received by all companies. Captain McNeill, Lieutenant Smith and three enlisted men were wounded in Company "C". 2nd Platoon Company "C", moved into over watching position 300 yards north of company.

20 November 1943

Artillery fire (intermittent) received throughout the day. Two (2) enlisted men lightly wounded. Third Platoon Company "C", relieved 2nd Platoon Company "C", in overwatching position.

21 November 1943

Periodic artillery fire received. One enlisted man was killed, and two wounded. Third Platoon Company "C" was relieved by 2nd Platoon, Company "B", in overwatching.

**SECRET**

HEADQUARTERS  
753RD TANK BATTALION (M)

APC 464, U.S. Army  
5 January 1944

Subject: Operations in Italy for December 1943.

To : Commanding General,  
36th Infantry Division  
APO 36, U.S. Army

1. During the month of December 1943, this Battalion was attached to the 36th Infantry Division. The companies were placed in rear of the infantry regiments to repel armored counter attacks. While in these positions daily artillery fire was received forcing the crews to practically live in their tanks.

On December 8, the Commanding General ordered one platoon of "B" Company to move to the northeastern slope of Mt. Rotundo to fire on any enemy targets between San Pietro and Highway 6. See overlay #1). Later, December 12, the remainder of the company moved into this area, with the mission to support by direct fire an attack by "A" Company on San Pietro. This company moved in under cover of darkness. It was constantly under observation by the enemy during daylight, and received heavy shell fire for eight days, after which the company was withdrawn. During these 8 days the crews were forced to remain in their tanks 24 hours of the day. However, during this period only one light casualty was received.

On December 10, Company "A" was ordered to move from its present bivouac area to a bivouac area in the vicinity of Venafro for future operations. While in this area the company was bombed by a formation of enemy planes. Six men were killed; one officer and three men were wounded. One enlisted man died of wounds the following day. On December 15, this company made an attack on San Pietro in conjunction with the 143rd Infantry Regiment and some battalion of the 141st Infantry Regiment. Company "B" of this battalion and Company "A" of the 636th Tank Destroyer Battalion supported the attack by fire. (For a detailed report of this attack see Annex 6.)

This Battalion, with the exception of Company "C", saw very little action the remainder of the month; Company "A" spent their time reorganizing; Company "B" moved back into its old bivouac area.

At 201400, Company "C" was attached to 143rd Infantry Regiment. Their mission being a combined attack with 143rd Infantry on San Vittoria and high ground east of San Vittoria. Two platoons of the Company would attack with the infantry, and one platoon would be held in reserve. (See overlay #2) The plan was for the infantry to attack during the night and in the event they were pinned down, two tank platoons would pass through at daybreak attempting to neutralize

Operations for Dec. 1943 (cont'd)

the resistance. The infantry made an attack during the night but found that the enemy was too well implaced and the operations was called off. These two platoons remained in position to repel any counter attacks. They were relieved the night of December 31st and returned to their old bivouac area.

On December 31, this Battalion was relieved from attachment to 36th Infantry Division, and attached to Task Force Allen for future operations.

JOSEPH G. FELDER  
Lt. Colonel, 753rd Tn Bn (M)  
Commanding.

6 Annexes:

- Annex 1- Unit diary.
- Annex 2- Unit journal.
- Annex 3- Journal file.
- Annex 4- List of casualties by companies.
- Annex 5- Consolidated casualty report.
- Annex 6- Narrative of San Pietro battle with necessary overlays.

HEADQUARTERS  
753RD TANK BATTALION (M)

AFPO HQ, U.S. Army  
5 January 1944

UNIT DIARY FOR DECEMBER

1 December 1943

First platoon Company "C" relieved third platoon Company "C" in over-  
watching position.

2 December 1943

Second platoon Company "C" relieved first platoon Company "C". Enemy  
patrol reported in vicinity at 1600. Our patrol unable to make contact with it.

3 December 1943

Third platoon Company "B" relieved second platoon Company "B". Light  
artillery fire received during day. No damage.

4 December 1943

Overwatching position discontinued. Third platoon Company "B" returned  
to company area.

5 December 1943

Very light artillery fire received. No change in disposition.

6 December 1943

Field Order #10, 36th Infantry Division received at 062030. Battalion  
ordered to remain in present position.

7 December 1943

At 1500, Commanding General ordered one platoon of tanks to take up position  
on northern slope of Mt. Retondo to engage any tanks on road between Highway 6  
and San Pietro. First platoon Company "B" was detailed, with Company "B" 19th  
Engineers attached. Engineers cleared mine field and tanks went into position,  
one section on northern slope, remainder of platoon in reserve on eastern slope.

8 December 1943

At 1300, Reconnaissance Platoon went forward to reinforce tanks of 1st  
Platoon, Company "B", and to clear additional mines if necessary. One tank,  
1st Platoon, Company "B" was disabled by mine.

9 December 1943

Disposition unchanged.

ANNEX # 1

Unit Diary for Dec. (cont'd)

10 December 1943

At 0930, orders were received to move Company "A" into bivouac area south-east of Venafrò, pending future operations. Company "B" is to move into area south of Mt. Rotondo when road is finished. Company "A" moved into bivouac area at 025187 after dark. Aerial reconnaissance by A-3 made of San Pietro-Venafrò road.

11 December 1943

At 0900 Company "A" was strafed and bombed by a formation of enemy planes. Six men were killed, one officer and three men were wounded. One tank was temporarily disabled. Aerial reconnaissance of San Pietro-Venafrò road made by A-3.

12 December 1943

At 0200 Company "B" moved into position on northeast slope of Mt. Rotondo (902131).

13 December 1943

Disposition unchanged. Enemy air activity increasing; however, no damage to this unit was done today.

14 December 1943

Preparations made for the attack of Company "A" on San Pietro.

15 December 1943

Company "A" started the attack on San Pietro at 1200. Company "B" supported the attack by fire, as did Company "A", 636th Tank Destroyer Battalion. One Battalion of the 111st Infantry Regiment attacked the town from the southeast, while the 143rd Infantry Regiment followed up the attack of Company "A". Three tanks succeeded in reaching the town, but two were destroyed by enemy fire. Status of other tank unknown at present. Four tanks were disabled by mines, three threw tracks, and two turned over. The other four returned to the bivouac area at dusk. Three tank crews are missing, but no other casualties have been reported to date.

16 December 1943

Disposition unchanged. Remaining tanks of Company "A" in bivouac area  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile west of Venafrò. Company "B" in firing position on northeastern slopes of Mt. Rotondo. Company "C" is in same position, but is prepared to move out on notice.

17 December 1943

Disposition of battalion unchanged. One man, Company "A", returned from attack on San Pietro. Enemy artillery fire was exceptionally heavy in Company "B"'s area the night of 16-17 December. Two men were wounded. No damage to tanks. No enemy air activity reported this date. San Pietro taken by infantry during the afternoon.

18 December 1943

Disposition of Battalion still unchanged. Company "A" lost a total of seven tanks in the attack on San Pietro. Three men of the three tank crews missing have returned.

Unit Diary for December (cont'd)

19 December 1943

Disposition of Battalion still unchanged. No artillery fire reported to have fallen in 753rd area this date. Formation of enemy planes bombed and strafed San Pietro about 1100. Damage unknown.

20 December 1943

One squad Reconnaissance Platoon, Company Commander and platoon leaders of Company "C" departed from Battalion C.P. at 0400 to make foot reconnaissance of area for proposed operation. The detail returned at 0900, and reported terrain possible for employment of tanks. Company "C" was attached to 143rd Infantry Regiment at 1100.

21 December 1943

Second and third platoons, Company "C", moved into position immediately southeast of San Pietro during night of 20-21 December. First platoon, Company "C", moved into area 1 mile west of Venafro same night. Proposed attack postponed. Disposition of remainder of battalion unchanged.

22 December 1943

Disposition unchanged. Very little activity during day. Company "C" relieved from attachment to 143rd Infantry and attached to 141st Infantry.

23 December 1943

No Change.

24 December 1943

No Change.

25 December 1943

No Change.

26 December 1943

One platoon, Company "C" moved forward to vicinity C. Marallo. Disposition of remainder of battalion unchanged.

27 December 1943

Disposition unchanged.

28 December 1943

This battalion was attached to Combat Command "B" at 1000.

29 December 1943

Disposition of Battalion unchanged. Three members of Reconnaissance Platoon accompanied patrol of 15th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Division to Road Junction at 932163. The patrol departed at 1800 and returned at 2000 December 1943.

Unit Diary for December (cont'd)

30 December 1943

At 0130, the Battalion was attached to Task Force Allen. Company "C" ordered to move from present position to 001103. Move to be coordinated with 34th Infantry Division.

31 December 1943

Company "C" moved out at 1800, and completed movement to area at 001103 at 2100. Company "A" was ordered to move into area at H037069 at 010700 January 1944, but movement was cancelled by Task Force Allen at 1900. Disposition of remainder of battalion unchanged.



**HEADQUARTERS  
753RD TANK BATTALION (M)  
APO #164, New York, N.Y.**

**BATTLE CASUALTIES FOR MONTH OF DECEMBER 1943**

**HEADQUARTERS COMPANY**

**None.**

**"A" Company**

2nd Lt.	James A. Wilson	01012393	LMA	11 Dec 43	Dallas, Texas
Sgt	Earl A. Matheway	37101880	KIA	11 Dec 43	Tuckerman, Arkansas
Cpl	Edward J. Marisak	37129690	KIA	11 Dec 43	St. Louis, Missouri
Cpl	Erwin A. Winer	39837301	KIA	11 Dec 43	Redwood City, Calif.
T/S	Samuel A. Leftwich	37457469	KIA	11 Dec 43	Homar, Nebraska
Pfc	Raymond D. Vaidler	32292526	KIA	11 Dec 43	Berkman, New York
Pvt	Thomas R. Bennett	14017653	KIA	11 Dec 43	College Park, Ga.
S/Sgt	William Johns	38029115	DNW	12 Dec 43	Austin, Texas
T/S	Thurman L. Ledbetter	38119289	MA	11 Dec 43	Boonerville, Texas
Pfc	John R. Moore	37436230	LMA	11 Dec 43	Cedar, Iowa
Cpl	Forrell L. Purvis	37436566	LMA	15 Dec 43	Myrtle, Iowa
Sgt	Ariel McQuibber	39301450	MIA	15 Dec 43	White Salmon, Wash.
Sgt	Floyd K. Gregory	32045351	MIA	15 Dec 43	Millbrook, N.Y.
T/A	Reese R. Bean	37436759	MIA	15 Dec 43	Dallas Center, Iowa
Cpl	Clifford M. Conner	39676389	MIA	15 Dec 43	Richfield, Idaho
Cpl	Samuel T. Pittman Jr	37129928	MIA	15 Dec 43	Malden, Missouri
T/S	Francis D. Nagert	37436656	MIA	15 Dec 43	Mason City, Iowa
T/S	Robert A. Louffar	33264448	MIA	15 Dec 43	Irvin, Penna.
Pfc	Walter L. Simmons	37129935	MIA	15 Dec 43	Rives, Missouri
Pfc	George W. Kerr	37353883	MIA	15 Dec 43	Fountain, Colorado
Pfc	Ben J. Rapinson	37354115	MIA	15 Dec 43	Center, Colorado
Pvt	Edward M. Baranowski	33405959	MIA	15 Dec 43	Pittsburgh, Penna.
Pvt	Charles St. Germaine	11047563	MIA	15 Dec 43	Onset, Mass.

**"B" Company**

Pvt	J. D. (I.O.) Mix	38319168	LMA	2 Dec 43	Atoka, Oklahoma
S/Sgt	Emmette B. Smith	14003299	LMA	10 Dec 43	Steele, Alabama
Pvt	Andrew J. Hagen	36150832	LMA	15 Dec 43	Fairview, Okla.
Pvt	Raymond C. Arnold	38021057	LMA	16 Dec 43	Sand Creek, Okla.
Pfc	Robert N. Jones Jr	37353491	LMA	16 Dec 43	Pueblo, Colorado

**"C" Company**

T/S	Clayton A. DeForest	37353636	LMA	11 Nov 43	Pueblo, Colo.
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**Service Company**

**None.**

**Medical Detachment**

**None.**

**RESTRICTED**

HEADQUARTERS  
753RD TANK BATTALION (M)

AGO 464, U. S. Army  
14 December 1943

Field Order Number 6.

Scale: Map 1/50,000. Sheets: 160-II and 160-III.

1. a. See current G-2 reports 36th Infantry Division.

b. Situation overlay and Division Field Order Number 40.

2. This Battalion will attack with one company passing road bend at (O 150) at 151200 December, advancing along road into S Pietro from the east, sealing black entrances to S Pietro from the north, south and west, in conjunction with occupation of town by the 141st Infantry Regiment. It will assist attack of 143rd Infantry Regiment to capture high ground north and west of S Pietro. On Division order it will attack San Vittore or down Highway 1.

3. a. Company "A" with one section British bridge laying valentine tank destroyer and one gun squad attached, will leave present position in time to reach road bend at (O 9-150) at 151200 December, advancing along available road into S Pietro from the east. It will block entrances into S Pietro from the south, north and west in conjunction with occupation of the town by the 141st Infantry Regiment, assist attack of the 143rd Infantry Regiment to capture high ground north and west of S Pietro. It will receive direct support from Company "B", 753rd Tank Battalion and Company "A" 636 Tank Destroyer Battalion.

b. Company "B", conjunction with Company "A" 636 Tank Destroyer Battalion, from present position, support attack of Company "A" on S Pietro by firing on anti-tank guns in vicinity of S Pietro. One platoon will be assigned to fire on anti-tank targets on eastern slopes of Mount Lungo. They will be on fire at 14-15 hours and cease on rocket signal from attacking Battalion 141st Infantry. Night limit of fire (983156).

c. Company "C" from present location will be ordered to move along Highway 1, in conjunction with firing positions in vicinity of R.J. at (O 12150) to support attack by firing on targets north of Highway 1 and west of S Pietro.

d. Battalion headquarters (less one squad to Company "A") will remain in present position until further orders.

e. Battalion platoon will remain in present position until further orders.

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f. Reconnaissance platoon will remain in present position until further orders.

g. Medical Detachment teams to assigned companies.

h. Company Commanders will submit necessary plans and sketches of operation prior to attack. Captain Schwinn liaison to Company "A" 636 Tank Destroyer Battalion.

4. a. Service Company from present area will furnish Company "A" a complete refill of fuel, ammunition, and rations prior to 15 December. Will furnish Company "B" with additional 1/2 unit of fire, high explosive only. It will send one section Battalion Maintenance Platoon to Company "A" prior to daylight 15 December. Remainder of maintenance platoon be prepared to move to Company "C" assembly area on order.

5. Battalion Command Post in present location. Advance Battalion Command Post at (990145). I will be there. Company "B" Command Post at 963144. Company "C" Command Post at present location.

By order of Lt. Colonel FELHER:

FOWLER P. JOHNSTON  
Major, 753rd Tank Bn (M)  
S-2, S-3

OFFICIAL:

FOWLER P. JOHNSTON  
Major, 753rd Tank Bn (M)  
S-2, S-3.

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DISCUSSION

The nature of this action would have been entirely different had the mine not prevented Company "A" from getting into the town with sufficient force to reduce the enemy defenses. The reduction of the enemy defenses in the town would have permitted the infantry attacking from the south, to take the town with only scattered opposition. The town being in our hands, the enemy forces east of the town would have been bottled up and would have been forced to surrender and thus giving us a decisive victory.

If Company "A" been given the mission of being in direct fire support of the infantry attack coming from the east, it is believed that it would have had little chance in accomplishing this mission due to the terraces in the upper side of the road which formed, except in a few places, a natural tank barrier. Some success might have been possible from firing positions along the road but even then the nature of the terrain limited the field of fire.

LESSONS LEARNED

1. Clearance of mines from avenues of approach through defiles is essential to insure success.

2. Alternate routes should always be available in the event a tank is disabled in such a position as to block the forward movement of the remainder of the tank. Unless there are alternate routes or terrain suitable for development off the road, the assistance of tanks can not be relied upon as the disabling of one tank in a critical point, will definitely stop a tank attack.

**RESTRICTED**

Auth: 36th Inf Div  
Initials:  
Date: 13 December 1943

**RESTRICTED**

Hq 36th Inf Div  
1 mi SW PRESENZANO, ITALY  
132000 December 1943

FD 10

Scale: 1/50,000. Sheets: 160-II and 161-III

1. a. See current G-2 Reports.
- b. Overlay. Otherwise, no change.
2. a. 36th Inf Div

Atchd:

504th Para Inf RTC (Atchd 3rd Ranger Bn, Co "B" 3rd  
Chem Bn atchd)  
1st Italian Mtd Bgde  
750rd Tank Bn  
636th TD Bn  
1st Platoon 47th (C) Co. (OR)  
2nd Chem Bn

attacks on 15 and 16 December to capture MT LUNGO, S. PIETRO, SAN VITTORE  
and the high ground N and E of SAN VITTORE.

- b. The movement to occupy high ground N and E of SAN VITTORE continues progressively with the object of consolidating and holding HILLS 729 (960-180), 687 (987-187) and 954 (996-204) by daylight 15 December.
- c. The attack on MT LUNGO will begin at 151700 December, the troops to approach the objective as closely as possible during darkness and to continue the attack at daylight 16 December.
- d. The attack on S. PIETRO will be launched at 151200 December.
- e. Direction of attack on each objective as indicated on overlay (Annex No. 1).
- f. ID - line occupied by front line units.

3. a. 141st Inf Regt (less 1st Bn):

(1) With not less than one battalion, attacks in conjunction with tank attack on 15 December, seizes and holds the town of S. PIETRO. Advances from the vicinity of COLLINA MONTICELLO into S. PIETRO with, or closely following, the tanks.

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(2) Maintain contact with 143rd Inf Regt on the right.

**b. 142nd Inf Regt:**

(1) From assembly positions on north slopes of MT MAGGIORE attacks on the night of 15-16 December to seize the high ground on MT LUNGO west of coordinate line 960 by occupation of the west nose of MT LUNGO. It will protect left flank of the Division from possible German counterattack from the west.

(2) Maintain contact with 1st Mtzd Bgde on the right.

**g. 143rd Inf Regt (Atchd: Co's "C" and "D", 2nd Chem Bn):**

(1) Continues to push progressively west along ridge from Hill 1205 to occupy Hill 729 (960-180). This objective to be consolidated by daylight 15 December. Machine guns and mortars to be emplaced for direct fire onto ground between S. PIETRO and S. VITTORE by that time.

(2) Attacks in conjunction with attack of Co "A" 753rd Tank Bn at 151200 December. Capture of high ground NW of S PIETRO. Prepared to continue attack to capture S VITTORE on Division order.

(3) Maintains contact with 504th Para Inf Bn on the right.

(4) Supports the attack of Co "A", 753rd Tank Bn initially by fire.

**d. 504th Para Inf Bn (Atchd: 3rd Ranger Bn, Co "B", 83rd Chem Bn atchd):**

(1) Continue to hold Hill 950. Occupy and hold Hill 954 by daylight 15 December. Occupy and hold Hill 687 by daylight 15 December.

(2) Maintain contact with 45th Inf Div on right.

(3) Protect right flank of Division.

**e. 1st Mtzd Bgde (Italian)**

(1) Attacks after daylight morning of 16 December on Division order to capture, and hold Hill 343, and to mop up slopes of MT LUNGO east of 96 coordinate line.

(2) Be prepared on order to occupy and organize for defense west and NW slopes of MT LUNGO relieving elements of 142nd Inf Regt.

(3) Maintain contact with 141st Inf Regt on the right.

(4) Bgde Arty on 15 December support attack on S PIETRO by planned fires on NE slopes of MT LUNGO and on Hill 343. Otherwise direct support 1st Mtzd Bgde.

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**f. 753rd Tank Bn:**

- (1) Co "A" passing road bend at (009-150) at 151200 December, advances along road into S. PIETRO from the east. Blocks entrances into S. PIETRO from the south, north and west in conjunction with occupation of town by 141st Inf Regt. Assists attack of 143rd Inf Regt to capture the high ground north and west of SAN PIETRO.
- (2) Co "B" 753rd Tank Bn from present positions supports attack of Co "A" on S. PIETRO by fire on hostile AT guns near S. PIETRO and on NE slopes of MT LUNGO.
- (3) Co "C", 753rd Tank Bn from present location prepared to move along Highway 6 on Division order to firing positions in vicinity of RJ at (957-153) from which it can support the attack by firing on targets north of Highway 6 and west of S. PIETRO.

**g. 36th Div Arty (Reinforced by Groupment "D", Corps Arty):**

- (1) 27th FA Bn - direct support of 141st Inf Regt.
- (2) 132nd FA Bn, reinforced by 155th FA Bn - direct support of 142nd Inf Regt.
- (3) 133rd FA Bn, reinforced by 69th FA Bn - direct support of 143rd Inf Regt.
- (4) 131st FA Bn, reinforced by 91st FA Bn - direct support 504th Para Inf BCT.
- (5) All artillery give priority to support of 141st and 143rd Inf Regts on 15 December.

**h. 636 TD Bn:**

- (1) Guns now in position near COLLINA MONTICELLO priority of support to attack of attack of Co "A", 753rd Tank Bn by direct fire on located targets in S. PIETRO and on the high ground N and E thereof. Thereafter general support of the attacks of the 141st and 143rd Inf Regts.
- (2) Balance of battalion general support of 143rd Inf Regt, 141st Inf Regt and Co "A" 753rd Tank Bn by fire on targets north of Highway 6 and west of S. PIETRO.
- (3) Prepared to displace to firing positions along Highway 6 north of MT LUNGO on Division order.

**i. 111th Engr Bn:**

- (1) Construct bridge on Highway 6 at (922-124) during night 14-15 Dec. Open highway 6 as far as (975-140) for tank traffic north on 15 December.

**SECRET**

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- (1) Information of all movements. Priority to 143rd Inf Regt areas. Clear  
lines and areas between them. Blank when occupied.

**1. General Order:**

- (1) All units CP's on MT 1400 and MT 141. 143rd Inf Regt as soon as our troops  
begin to move forward.

**2. General Order:**

- (1) All units CP's (143rd Inf Regt "C" and "D") occupy firing positions near the  
143rd Inf Regt CP's on MT 1400 during night 14-15 December.  
Support the attack of the 141st Inf Regt by HE only on S. MT 1400  
in the night. After capture of S. MT 1400 general support of 141st  
and 143rd Inf Regts. Support the HE slopes of MT 1400 from Hill 343  
to 1400 (994-150) from 1400 to 1400 on 15 December.

**3. Reserve: 1st Bn, 141st Inf Regt:**

- (1) Supporting fires, other than harassing fires which continue as at  
present, will not begin until the actual attack is launched by  
each unit. This is to avoid loss of secrecy and surprise.
- (2) Secrecy of movement and effective concealment in forward areas to be  
stressed by all units prior to attack.
- (3) Supporting fires of mortars and artillery avoid blocking field of  
view and D guns north and east of MT 1400 with smoke.

**4. See Adj Order.**

**5. Units report displacement and location of forward CP's - no change.**

**WALKER**  
Maj Gen

**General:**

/s/ Walker  
WALKER  
G-3

**Annexes:**

Annex No. 1 - Overlay.  
Annex No. 2 - Arty Plan

**Adm 0**

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HEADQUARTERS THIRTY-SIXTH INFANTRY DIVISION ARTILLERY  
APO 36, U.S. Army

14 December 1943

ANNEX NO. 2 TO FO NO. 40

1. See FO No. 40, Headquarters 36th Infantry Division.
2. 36th Division Artillery, reinforced, supports attack.
3.
  - a. 131st FA Battalion, reinforced by 91st FA Battalion, in direct support of 504th Parachute Regiment.
  - b. 133rd FA Battalion, reinforced by 69th FA Battalion, in direct support of 142nd Infantry.
  - c. 132nd FA Battalion, reinforced by 155th FA Battalion in direct support of 142nd Infantry.
  - d. 27th FA Battalion in direct support of 141st Infantry.
  - e. Division Artillery (4 Battalions) of 1st Motorized Brigade in direct support of 1st Motorized Brigade (Italian).
  - f. Groupment D, less detachments in general support. (68th and 93rd FA Battalions).
- x.
  - (1) Direct support artillery North of Highway 6 - Fires as called for by supported infantry N of that feature.
  - (2) Corps artillery and general support artillery will maintain fires on areas shown in Tracing "A".
  - (3) Smoke will be maintained on N slopes of M. LUNGO from 1200 on 15 December until ordered to lift. No smoke to be fired east of Grid line 96 by 155th FA Battalion.
  - (4) Counterbattery fire by British in S. AMBROGIO area and positions N thereof, and by 18th and 71st FA Brigades W and N of M. LUNGO and on M. PORCHIA and M. TROCCHIA.
  - (5)
    - (a) Starting at daylight on 15 December and lasting until 1700, the Italian artillery in direct support of the 1st Motorized Brigade (Italian), will fire on four selected points on M. LUNGO. (9500-1445), (9570-1440), (9625-1380), (9415-1475).
    - (b) Commencing at 1800 and stopping at 1900, the Italian artillery will fire neutralizing fires on the same selected points fired on during the day, coordinates as given above.
  - (6) Corps artillery fires will be fired only in areas shown on tracing "A".

4. No Change.

5. No Change.

HESS  
Col

OFFICIAL:

/s/ Garner  
GARNER  
S-3

TABLE OF CONTENTS

**RESTRICTED**

1. Report of 753rd Tank Bn (M) on tank action on 15 December 1945 in the vicinity of S. Pietro.

1. Narrative
2. Index a. 1 to c. 4, 19. 36th Division
3. Index a. 5
4. Sketch 1
5. Sketch 2
6. Copy of 40 Hq. 36th Division
7. Copy of 6, Hq. 753rd Tank Bn (M)

11. Summary of our learned.

~~REDACTED~~

*Dr. 209245*

*(S)*

*936-16.2*

CLASSIFICATION CHANGED TO  
**RESTRICTED**  
 BY AUTHORITY OF THE ADJUTANT GENERAL  
 DOWNGRADING COMMITTEE 17 Jan 46

*703-692  
 94-69.2*

*JAN 7  
 3615*

HEADQUARTERS  
753RD TANK BATTALION (M)

403 NY  
CLASSIFICATION CHANGED TO

ATTACK ON SAN PIETRO, ITALY **RESTRICTED**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE ADJUTANT GENERAL

Maps: - Italy 1:25000, Sheet 161-III NW and GCS Italy 1:50000 Sheet 161-III Venafr.

DOWNGRADING COMMITTEE

**SITUATION:-** On 10 December the 36th Infantry Division held the line generally along - (See overlay number 1 copy number 11 36th Infantry Division dated 101600 to 111559).

The 143rd Infantry Regiment had been ordered to capture SAN PIETRO. By the afternoon of the 11th, it was stopped and forced to dig in along the line as shown on overlay 1. It had run into a strongly fortified German line consisting of a series of strong pill boxes adequately covered by artillery and mortar fire. The regiment had made several assaults, but was unable to penetrate the German line.

Orders were received by this headquarters to make an attack with one company in conjunction with the 143rd Infantry Regiment on 12 December and to capture SAN PIETRO.

Upon receipt of orders, a study was made of maps and aerial photographs followed by ground and aerial reconnaissance. This gave us the following information:-

**THE AREA:-** A hill mass running generally East-West with an elevation of roughly 450 meters at the jump-off point, dropping to 220 meters at the town of SAN PIETRO. The North-South slope averaged from 50 degrees at the eastern edge to approximately 20 degrees east of PIETRO. Several dry, stream beds and gullies intersected the area. The entire area north of the road to the base of Mount Samaro was made up of terraces covered with olive trees and scrub vegetation. Terraces averaged from three to seven feet high, were five to twenty feet broad, and anywhere from twenty yards to eighty yards long. The walls of these terraces were lined with rock. These terraces were so broken up by the stream beds, gullies and accidents of terrain that it was impossible to traverse crosscountry. A tank could not run from one terrace to the other in a westerly direction without engineer assistance almost all the way to about a 1000 yards east of PIETRO. It appeared to be feasible to operate cross country, if a way could be found to get off the road to PIETRO. Visibility through the brush was limited to about 25 yards. It had rained for over a week making the ground very soft.

ROADS:- One dirt road with four bridges, good for two way heavy traffic, ran east-west to the town with branch-offs of several cart and dozer trails unsuitable for the use of tanks.

AIRIAL RECONNAISSANCE:- Three flights were made by our S-3 Air over the area at a height of 600 feet. The S-3 Air found that from east to west there was a three (3) span bridge at 998159 (map 1:25000), a ten (10) foot culvert at 996159, a 15 foot culvert at 983156 and a thirty (30) foot single span bridge at 974157. The trail at 986157 (see sketch number 1) usually went to town appeared to be about three to four feet wide up the terrace from the main road until the second terrace was reached when it broadened to a 6 to 8 foot wide cart trail having a brick retaining wall on its north side. It appeared that tanks could run down this trail with one track in the road and one track on the terraces south of the road. It also appeared possible for tanks to leave the trail and operate on the terraces between the trail and the road. The terraces to the north side of the trail were too steep for tanks to climb.

Based on the above, a report was made to the Commanding General 36th Infantry Division that tanks could not be used cross country in conjunction with the attack of the 143rd Infantry Regiment. The suggestion was made to either down the road and trail shown on sketch number 1.

The commanding general directed that one company be sent to 995162 (map 1:50000) and an attempt made with engineer assistance to get tanks on the terraces in the 143rd Infantry area. One company to north side of R.R. for fire support. (See overlay number 2).

Company "A" moved to the new area the night 10th-11th. Reconnaissance was made by the company commander and engineer party of the 11th Infantry during daylight 11 December. The most accessible place on the main line, picked by the engineers, was the road bend at 995162. A route was selected from this point up to the 3rd Battalion Command Post. It was thought that if tanks were taken high enough that it might be possible to cut the main force line by moving along the terrace as far as possible, then coming down to the next one, and so on.

Work was begun by the engineers, at dusk, cutting down the main line terraces so that tanks could climb from one terrace to the other. By dawn it was complete to the 3rd Battalion. One tank started up the trail. Due to the heavy rain, the ground was soft and it was heavy going in places. This tank reached the second terrace, had to make a right turn, then a left turn to climb to the third terrace. It made three attempts to climb, without success. The ground was torn up so much by the tracks that on the third attempt the tank slipped back and threw its track. Attempts were made to fill the track, but the shelling and approach of dawn prevented the completion of the work.

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Report was made to the commanding general of the above failure. A decision was then made to attack SAN PIETRO at 12 noon December 15 by the way of the road. Nights of 10-11th Company "B" moved into its new area.

On 13 December a conference was held by the Commanding General of the 36th Infantry Division to discuss the plans of all unit commanders participating in the attack on the 15th and coordinate the liaison, the supporting fires, the time of attack, and signals to be used.

Based on our previous study, it was recommended that Company "A" proceed down the road in column to the trail junction (Point A on sketch number 1). There it would break up in two columns, the leading platoon continuing to advance down the road and the next platoon to move up the trail. The last platoon to wait at Point B (See sketch number 1) until it was determined which column had succeeded in reaching the town.

The leading platoon was to advance to point C (See sketch number 1). Here one section with the platoon leader was to turn up the trail, proceed to D and take up an overwatching position overlooking the town. It was to search the North-East slope of LUNGO for anti-tank guns. The second section was to proceed down the road to town and block its exits.

The second platoon was to proceed up the trail deploy astride the trail where terrain permitted, destroy pill boxes encountered and then take up an overwatching position at E. One section was to block exits out of town.

The remaining platoon was to move on order of company commander and to be used where needed.

Request was made for: Smoke on Mount Lungo and the high ground west of SAN PIETRO; for artillery concentrations in the SAN PIETRO area; for direct fire support from Mount Rotondo and vicinity; and for infantry assistance in taking the town and protecting our tanks from enemy ground troops.

At this point the question was brought up of road mines and the possibility of the Germans blowing the culvert and bridge within the enemy lines. If the bridges were blown and the trail was mined the tank attack would be stopped. Nothing could be done about the mines but it was believed that two British Valentine tanks specially designed for bridge laying could be obtained.

Orders were issued by the division, a copy of which is attached and marked Appendix number 1. Information was also received that two British Valentine tanks were being sent to company "A".

Orders were issued by this battalion on the 14th, a copy of which is attached and marked Appendix number 2. For disposition of battalion see overlay number 2.

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Time of attack was set at 1200 noon because for a week fog and mist had hung in the area until late in the morning. It was hoped this fog and mist would be dissipated by 1100. This would afford adequate observation for direct fire support and at the same time allow the division commander enough time to notify units of a postponement of the attack because of inclement weather.

The morning of the attack 15 December, was bright and clear. Observation remained perfect throughout the day.

The situation as it existed that morning was as follows:- The enemy occupied and defended the town of SAN PIETRO by well concealed positions between the town and the front line as shown on Sketch number 1. The entire area contained well placed and well concealed machine gun nests on terraces with supporting infantry and mortars somewhere in position north of town. The enemy artillery, mortar and machine gun fires had pinned two battalions of the 143rd Infantry to the ground. (See own front line on sketch number 1.)

One battalion of 141st Infantry was in position between Mount S. Lando and 143rd prepared to attack PIETRO in conjunction with the tank battalion 143rd. Company "B" was in position on Northern slopes of Mount S. Lando. The company of tank destroyers was in position on western slope of Mount S. Lando.

The company commander of Company "B" had assigned zones of destruction to each platoon. In conjunction with the S-3, who was coordinator of this support, each tank was assigned a certain number of houses to destroy with delayed fuzed 75mm ammunition. From past experience and through intelligence it was known that either German self-propelled anti-tank guns or tanks would be concealed in some of these houses. A rocket signal was agreed upon between the attacking infantry of the 141st and Company "B" for Company "B" to commence firing.

Corps and division artillery fired its scheduled fires. The intensity of fires increased as the time neared H-Hour when heavy concentration was directed into the SAN PIETRO area. These concentrations east of SAN PIETRO were shifted after H-Hour to the west in order to permit clear observation for direct firing of Company "B", 753rd Tank Battalion and Company "A", 636 Tank Destroyer Battalion. Mount S. Lando was snaked prior to H-Hour.

Company "A" had received the two British Valentine bridge tanks, but the day before only one of which was in operating condition. A crew was furnished from Company "C" to operate the Valentine in the attack. This crew had 24 hours to learn its operation.

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At 1100 15 December, Company "A" moved from its assembly area in the following order:-

Platoon leader, 3rd Platoon  
Platoon leader, 1st Platoon  
British tank  
Company Commander's tank  
One tank, 1st Platoon  
Two tanks, 3rd Platoon  
Two tanks, 1st Platoon  
One tank, 3rd Platoon  
One tank, 1st Platoon  
Five tanks, 2nd Platoon

It reached the road bend at (009-150) at H-Z. Prior to the move tank crews had been briefed on the entire operation. Tank crews knew that they might have to operate on either road or trail and were given detailed instructions as to their missions if separated from their platoons. The 3rd and 1st Platoons were interlaced in the column so that when the turn off point was reached at A (See sketch number 1) tank sections would be at the proper distances and be able to advance practically abreast of each other. It was estimated that this method would keep tanks in both platoons on the move during the enemy shelling and planing of mortar fires. The British tank was to stop on the east side of Bridge number 1, if it wasn't blown, and allow tanks to bypass it. On orders from the Company Commander the British Valentine was to return to the assembly area.

At 1145 Company "B", 753rd Tank Battalion and Company "A", 636th Tank Destroyer Battalion, opened fire on assigned targets. Fire was maintained until tanks reached right limit of fire (See sketch number 1) and Infantry of 141st Infantry signalled by rocket to cease fire. One platoon of Company "B" covered the northeast slope of Lungo by fire. Sporadic fire was maintained on areas and targets outside of the attack area. Company "B" caught heavy counter battery fire in its area but suffered no casualties.

At H-Hour Company "A" crossed the line of departure (road bend at (009-150)) with sixteen medium tanks and one British Valentine Treadway Bridge Tank. The road to PIETRO, cut out of the side of the mountain, was steep with numerous, winding turns. On the right side of the road the stone retaining wall of the terrace formed a tank obstacle. The left side of the road was a sheer embankment too precipitous for tanks.

The movement down the road to point A (See sketch number 2) was without incident. No enemy artillery fire was received. Undoubtedly this was due to the effective smoking of Mount Lungo.

At point A (Sketch number 2) the lead tank (Tank number 1) moved up the trail. It had a difficult time trying to move up this trail because it was too narrow for tank tracks. In its attempt to climb up, it

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from crew of the terrace retreating wall to enable the tank to finally  
roll on to the terrace. Ford was radioed back to the Company  
that the trail was impassable. Tank number 1 received instructions  
to try through the terraces to the trail that would be feasible for  
it. Tank 1 succeeded in breaking through to the trail but found it  
impossible to move on the trail. The tank returned to point A where  
it was instructed to proceed down the terraces toward PIETRO to assist the  
troops reaching the town. (See sketch number 2 for route taken by  
tank 1). It took tank number 1 three hours to reach point E. It had  
to climb over one terrace to another and at the points  
marked on sketch 2, shown by long arrows, it fired on and destroyed  
German positions. Near the edge of town it flashed and surprised five  
German soldiers. The tank fired on the group. All five were hit  
and killed. There were other enemy personnel who  
were killed. They were under fire, inflicting casualties,  
to some extent. The tank finally reached point E. By  
this time the fighting in. Tank was ordered to return to point A.

When tank no. 1 turned a trail at point A, tank no. 2  
was ordered to the bridge marked no. 1 on Sketch # 2 followed by  
troops. The tank found the bridge intact and proceeded across the  
bridge. The tank then rolled over to the right of the road east of the  
bridge. Tank no. 2 after crossing the bridge hit  
a German tank out of action. The crew remained in the tank and was  
ordered to stay in place and covering on the terraces above. The platoon  
leader of the tank and his section to assist us and proceed on the  
trail. Tank no. 2, 3, 4 and 5 passed tank no. 2 without incident. Tank no 3  
was ordered "C" and was to turn the trail to the upper trail  
see sketch 2).

The tank commander saw a destroyed German Mk IV tank in  
the line of fire. This information together with the report that the  
German tank "C" was too close for tanks to negotiate was radioed  
to the company commander. The company commander then directed the section  
to move forward on the road. If bridge at C was blown they were  
to take up a position around road bend, assist attack of  
troops and if necessary to act as a target for enemy targets on the northeastern side of  
the road.

Tank no. 1 proceeded down the trail at point A. It  
found the trail impassable, crossed it and then reaching point D it  
found the trail impassable. The tank then moved behind the driver. The  
crew observed one of the crew leave the  
tank and proceed on the trail. Crews had been instructed that if their  
trail was impassable to proceed into town and join the troops  
in the town.

Tank no. 4 fired on the bend east of the bridge at  
point A. One shell penetrated the turret  
and entered the left side. This tank burst into flames and was



# RESTRICTED

destroyed. Some crew members were able to escape from the tank.

Tank no. 5 was hit by three shells from the left front. One shell penetrated the turret and two shells entered the left side. This tank burst into flames and was destroyed. The driver and assistant driver escaped. The driver climbed to the turret to assist the tank commander and gun crew out through the turret. This driver pulled the tank commander half way through the turret when the body broke into two. He saw the gunner whose clothes were beginning to burn, move. The driver dropped the dead tank commander, grabbed the gunner and hauled him out of the tank. He was unable to get the assistant gunner because by this time the flames were coming out of the turret.

When tank no. 6 moved up to by-pass the British tank, hit a mine. Tank no. 7 tried to by-pass No 6 and hit a mine. Tank no. 8 tried to push no. 7 off the road in order to pass through and hit a mine.

Tank no. 9 tried to push no. 7 and 8 out of the road without success. It then tried to climb the terrace to the right. This failed.

Tank no. 10 - Company Commander's tank, had in the meantime acted on the radio report received from Tank no. 1 that the trail was impassible by ordering the tanks of the 3rd platoon to follow the 1st platoon.

After Tank no. 1 reported its success in moving across country on the terraces, the company commander ordered the 2nd platoon to move up the trail at A. They were to follow the tracks of tank no. 1 and carry out the mission. Tank no. 12 tried several times to climb the terrace. It turned over on its side completely blocking the trail.

The platoon leader in tank no. 12 dismounted - ran up the road to no 13, and brought tank No 13 up to the trail to try to climb the terrace at the junction. The tank threw a track.

By this time the company commander had heard over the radio what had happened to tanks no. 12 and 13. He ordered all remaining tanks to turn around and follow him. (tank no. 10).

Tank no. 11 backed up on its turn-around. It slipped off the embankment, dropped five feet off the road, and turned over on its side.

Ever since tank no. 2 hit a mine, enemy artillery and mortar shells fell in the vicinity.

Tank no. 10 in backing up the road, hit tank no. 13 and accidentally set it back on its thrown track. The company commander directed no. 13 to remain in position and cover tanks knocked out.

Tanks No. 14, 15, 16 on orders from the company commander, had backed up to the Regimental Aid Station and gone up and over the terraces to find another route through the front line. Due to the soft ground and narrow ledges on the terraces, tanks no. 14 and 15 threw their tracks.

Tank no 10 and 16 tried to find another way around 14 and 15. They moved as shown in sketch. No 10 was stopped by a ravine.

As time darkness was approaching. The company commander received orders from battalion to withdraw his operating tanks to the assembly area. He immediately ordered tank no. 1 to return, pick up the crew of no. 2. He then ordered to pick up the crew of the British tank, 6, 7 and 8 and the crew of tank no. 9. No. 9 was having trouble with its oil pressure. It was towed to the rear area for maintenance.

No. 1 then returned as shown on sketch. In coming down the hill, it unfortunately bounced off no. 12 keeping it upright until it reached the rear.

All tanks, four tanks returned to the assembly area, with British tank crew and part of the crew of the British tank. The three missing crews returned to tanks 3, 4, 5.

Crews of 2, 6, 7, 8, 11 and 12, were evacuated because of the enemy machine gun and mortar fire. None of these tanks were in a position to put down the enemy on the terraces above nor furnish any fire support for the 143rd Infantry. Tanks 3, 4, 7, and 8 were damaged to an extent requiring a major overhaul. Tanks 11 and 12 being on their side could not be used by the enemy. The British tank was boxed in by 2, 6, 7 and 8 and could not be moved. These tanks were not destroyed by us because it was believed we could salvage them the next day.

Company "B" was directed to provide protecting fires around tanks 2, 6, 7, 8, 11 and 12. The infantry on the hill south of the area was asked to protect the tanks during the next day from enemy patrols, by machine gun fire. Request was made for intermittent machine gun fires during the night.

A crew was left in tank no. 14 to provide intermittent machine gun fires on the terraces to the right of tanks 2, 6, 7 and 8.

The infantry attack, which had jumped off around 1230 from MT 10 reached the southern slopes of S. HIETRO. There its attack was stopped by heavy machine gun and mortar fire.

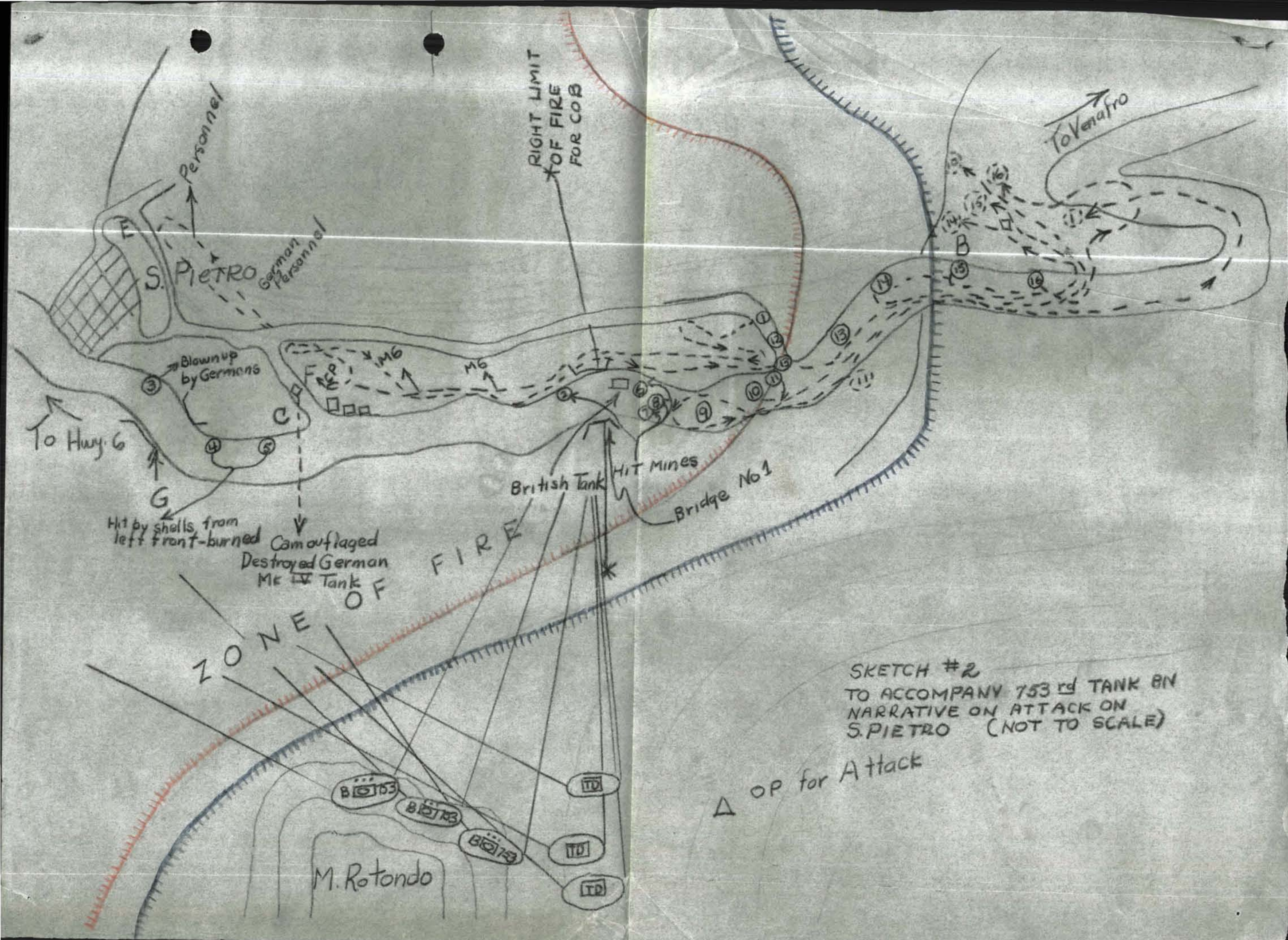
The 143rd Infantry, which had expected to attack as soon as the pressure had been relieved by the attack and infantry attack from the south of HIETRO, was unable to move.

The tank company, because of road mines and bad terrain, failed in its mission. It had anticipated road mines on the main road but hoped to succeed along the trail from "A" to the town. Had a platoon gotten up the trail and operated cross country as no. 1 did, it is believed the area could have been cleaned up and been able to assist the 141st Infantry in taking the town.

The battalion was not able to salvage its tanks until the night of the 17th when HIETRO was taken over by the 143rd Infantry. Seven tanks out of the disabled 12 were destroyed.

An inspection of the HIETRO area showed the area was heavily booby trapped and mined with all known types of enemy mines.







RESTRICTED

Right limit of fire  
for Co. B.

Eng. Tank trail to  
3rd Bn

To Venafro

3rd Pla.

S Pietro

PLAN of  
Second PLA

PLAN of  
Leading PLA

To Hwy 6

To Accompany 753<sup>rd</sup> Tank  
Bn Narrative on ATTACK  
ON S Pietro

12

Fire  
ZONE of

[Not to Scale]

△ OP for attack

Sketch No 1

C. Cannavine lle

M. Rotondo

RESTRICTED

Duplicate Copy



RESTRICTED

VENAFRO

Hwy 05

A 153

3 143

2 143

S. Pietro

To Cassino

153 ADV.

M. 2610 m

BER 6 (m) (m)

C 153

153

HO 153

16  
05

08  
97

RESTRICTED

OVERLAY NO. 2  
To Accompany 753rd Tank  
Bn Narrative on Attack  
on San Pietro

Map: Italy, 1/50,000  
Sheets 160II, 161III

C. Cannaville



