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HEADQUARTERS
314TH FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION
APO # 80, c/o Postmaster
U. S. Army

1 October 1944.

Subject: Comments of Commanding Officer covering After Action Reports for
Period 1 September 1944 to 30 September 1944.

To : The Adjutant General, Washington, D. C.

1. All recommendations of the staff section inclosed herein have been previously discussed with them before writing and are approved.

2. I would like to emphasize the especial need of one extra vehicle in Service Battery to haul gas and oil and the desirability of an extra truck in each of the other batteries for hauling supplies. All trucks are now overloaded with T/E equipment alone.

3. In regard to replacements we have found that most of them, especially officers, have spent a great deal of time in replacement depots where they received little or no training. As a result they came to us sadly lacking in knowledge. In addition, the receiving of these men in the middle of a battle when no one knew their capabilities or even their names was a problem. It is strongly recommended that each battery be allowed to carry five (5) EM over-strength as replacements and what is more important, that each battalion have attached un-assigned two (2) or three (3) extra second lieutenants who will be receiving practical experience in forward observation. They will be readily available as replacements. If their battalion suffers no losses, they can be immediately assigned to other artillery battalions in the division or even the Corps when losses occur, and they will be already "battle experienced".



D. J. MINAHAN,
Lt. Col., F. A.,
Commanding.

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HEADQUARTERS
314TH FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION
APO # 80, U. S. Army

1 October 1944

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SUBJECT: Report After Action Against Enemy During Month of September 1944.

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

Sept

SECTION I

1 September 1944

Received orders 0400 to continue march on Commercy. The route selected by the 318th Infantry Regiment was too narrow to permit the artillery to bypass them, and the column was too long to permit support of the forward elements, so this battalion traveled on a parallel route. Before reaching objective it was learned that the 4th Armored Division was already there so the 318th Combat Team went into bivouac in the Forest Domeniak de Commercy. Distance traveled 30 miles. The Battalion Commander crossed the Meuse River to confer with the Artillery Commander of the 4th Armored Division who we were to relieve 2 September.

2 September 1944

The Battalion occupied positions 2 miles Northwest of Vignot (A415225) at 1050. Distance traveled 7 miles. No missions were fired.

3 September 1944

No change.

4 September 1944

Received orders to move into rendezvous 12 miles Northwest of Nancy (238626). Closed into new area 1850. Distance traveled 20 miles.

5 - 11 September 1944

Moved to forward rendezvous at 0245 and occupied position 0730 in the Bois de-Villers (VU 730247). In direct support of 318th Combat Team in its attack on Hill 326, Forêt-de-l'avant, Garde, and the towns of Belleville and Marbach, on the West bank of the Moselle River. Battalion occupied these positions for seven days and fired a total of 2542 rounds of ammunition. Because of high ground held by the Germans on the East bank of the Moselle River, and the thick forests, our most profitable means of observation and the greatest source of fire missions were the air observation posts. The heavily wooded terrain made it necessary to have three forward observers with Infantry battalion. This battalion was never without at least one reinforcing battalion and sometimes had as high as three.

12 - 19 September 1944

Received plan for artillery preparation in support of Combat Teams 317 and 318 in crossing of Moselle River. Artillery H hour 0415, preparation lasting until 0600. There were breaks in the preparation of from one to five minutes which worked well as far as confusing the enemy. Upon the successful crossing of the Moselle River by the 317 Infantry this battalion, with the exception of

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Battery "A", displaced to a position 1.2 miles West of Dieulouard (VU755282). Distance traveled 4.5 miles. Battery "A" remained in position in direct support of a battalion of the 319th Infantry. The mission of this battalion during the period was one of General Support until the 318th Infantry made its crossing, at which time we reverted to our normal direct support roll. On the 14 September 1944 the Second Battalion, 318th Infantry was counter-attacked on Mousson Hill by German armor and Infantry. This battalion was credited with stopping the counter-attack. On the night of 14 September 1944 Mousson Hill was cut off by Germans so for the next three days all supplies were dropped to them by the liaison planes. During this eight day period the battalion fired 6154 rounds of ammunition. On 19 September 1944 this battalion reverted to direct support of 318th Combat Team, guarding the bridge head across the Moselle River between Pont-a-Mousson and Millery.

21 September 1944

The battalion displaced across the Moselle River and occupied positions just West of Leisy (VU799309), from these positions we supported the attack of the 318th Infantry on Mount St Jean.

22 - 30 September 1944

In order to render continuous support the battalion displaced to positions just North of Millery. Distance traveled 4 miles. The attack on Mount St Jean failed and the division took up defensive positions protecting the bridge-head. No change in this battalion's positions. As troops were moved to their defensive positions this battalion had various missions ranging from general support to direct support of First Battalion 317th Infantry. During the last mission mentioned the First Battalion 317th Infantry was counter-attacked at 0100, 28 September 1944, and this battalion fired mission after mission in support of its defenses, many missions being only 25 yards in front of our infantry dug in positions. At 0600 the counter-attack was repulsed with a total loss of 7 of our own troops against 125 counted German dead.

Remarks:

1. This battalion has had very good results with the 1/50,000 map, using it as a VCO chart and setting up a 1/25,000 grid sheet based on the same coordinate system as the HCO chart, however this scale map has not been available in many instances.
2. When the 1/25,000 map is available it is used by both the HCO and VCO.
3. This battalion uses the liaison plane almost exclusively for registrations. Much time is saved by this practise.
4. This battalion has found that the best time for picking up enemy batteries is the hour just before dark and the hour just after dawn. So as to have time for all missions picked up by the plane, the observer only gets an adjustment then switches to another target. Fire for effect is delivered when time permits. This also gives us a certain degree of surprise.
5. A Command Post tent per firing battery would increase efficiency at night. It is impractical for the Battery Executive, recorder, telephone operator, and battery fire direction center to work in a pup tent.

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6. Due to the high casualty rate of forward observers and forward observer equipment it is suggested that an extra complete section be added to each firing battery.

7. No missions have been fired in this battalion other than by forward observer means.

8. The Signal Corps Radio-536 has proven unsatisfactory as a means of relay between the forward observers and their 610 radio due to its limited range. A radio similar to the Infantry 300 series might be a solution to the problem.

James F. Roark
JAMES F. ROARK
Major, 314th FA Bn
S-3

SECTION II1 September to 30 September 1944

During our action near Commercy forward observers were most instrumental in gathering information. Ground observation was poor West of the Marne River because of unfavorable terrain. Our air observation posts were again effective. After the river crossing had been completed we were able to set up effective ground observation posts on the hills East of the river. A long base flash system was established but the action proceeded to the East before it could be utilized effectively.

It was not until the Moselle River line was hit that the S-2 activities were set into full motion. The action slowed down to the extent that all agencies were able to function. At the start of the operation we were limited by inadequate maps, 1/100,000 being the only ones available. Later on 1/50,000 maps were issued and the situation map was of more use since information could be reported with greater accuracy. After the bridge-head had been established we were able to set up ground observation posts on the hills East of the river. The observation was coordinated by Division Artillery, each battalion being given a sector or zone of observation. All observation posts were accurately surveyed in and were manned 24 hours a day. They operated very effectively as flash observation posts and much information was obtained from them including the location of a number of enemy batteries.

Maps of 1/20,000 scale were reproduced by the division and distributed to all echelons which increased the accuracy of all reported information. The maps were used as firing charts and proved very accurate.

The nature of the action permitted a very complete communication system with a complete wire net which facilitated the rapid dispatch of S-2 information both up and down.

All sources of information were utilized to the utmost. The IPW teams and C. A. personnel provided much useful information. For the first time we were provided with air coverage of any kind and although the first set of photos received were a month old they provided up to date terrain information. The second and third coverage gave more locations of enemy installations. The greater facilities of Corps provided a great deal of additional information which was not available before because of our rapid movement.

The forward observers and air observation posts proved to be our best source of information concerning activities of the enemy, the former working well to the front and their activities closely supervised by the liaison officers. Our air observation posts have been so effective that the presence of a liaison plane in the air will stop enemy activity in vehicular traffic on roads and enemy artillery fire. Our air observer discovered that when flying at dusk he was able to observe enemy artillery batteries who thought they were unobserved, trying to register and was able to adjust on them effectively locating them and in many cases causing their destruction, by our artillery. Since then all of the planes of Division Artillery have been ordered up during the hour after dawn and the hour before dark. Contrary to teachings our planes have ventured out over enemy territory seeking information and have drawn both small arms and anti-aircraft fire.

Counter-intelligence measures taken during this period have consisted of the required use of nets on all vehicles that are to remain parked off a road for more than 15 minutes. Howitzer positions are camouflaged by net both flat top or drape where necessary, at all times when in position. Light discipline is enforced at night to the extent that during most movements not even black out lights are used.

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Enemy air activity has been almost non-existent except for occasional lone planes at night, so our camouflage effectiveness remains untested.

Richard J. Schalliol
RICHARD J. SCHALLIOL
Captain, F.A.
S-2

SECTION III

1st September 1944 to 30 September 1944:

The functions of Supply within this organization improved during the month of September. Limitations continued to be placed on bulk materials due to reported transportation shortages. The numerous changes of positions in combat and losses of equipment occurred during such combat put a strain on the reserve facilities and material of most classifications. Failure to obtain full initial issues such as organizational, spare parts for howitzers, radio accessories, and accessories for Topographical sets for survey sections, has not afforded us much margin upon which to operate, and difficulty in obtaining replacements tends to retard complete satisfactory operations. A report is rendered by respective classifications to outline the issues and requirements.

Class I (Rations)

Issue of foodstuffs has been very regular. It has been found however, that with an issue such as the "10 in 1" that occasionally the lack of uniformity in the menu makes it impossible for the battery kitchens to prepare the same meal for all men. This requires that we issue such items to the men for their own preparation. Heating facilities not being available to all sections and lack of knowledge of food preparation by some men has proven a problem. The old type "C" rations do not appear to be palatable to the men. "B" rations with the inclusion of bread are highly acceptable. The recent change in "C" type ration is helpful. For a unit such as ours, which permits operation of kitchens, the "10 in 1", and "B" rations are preferable.

Recommendations:

The continuous issue of bread despite the type of ration, and the occasional inclusion of fresh beef or pork.

Class II (Clothing and Equipment)

Clothing: Replacement of all types of clothing has been found necessary due to normal wear and tear, and loss by enemy action. Requisitions are never completely filled and our units are continuously in need.

Equipment: Requisitions have been submitted for all shortages, and particular stress is placed upon Signal items such as, crystals, tubes, maintenance sets, RL-31, radio set replacements, and wire.

Recommendations:

All pyramidal tents have been turned over to Medical units. It is suggested that the issue of a command post tent to each battery would facilitate night work in both the firing batteries and rear echelon.

Class III (Fuel and Oil)

Releases on gasoline have not been adequate to meet our demands on occasions and there has been a limited supply of oil. One of our difficulties is the lack of a vehicle within the service unit for transportation of Class III supplies. Due to the demands for ammunition we are

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unable to make use of our train. The only available vehicle is the ration truck and it is undesirable to transport fuel in the same vehicle which hauls rations.

Class V (Ammunition)

During our first operation the A.S.P.'s were not adequately stocked and very slow in moving to the front. During September, 105 howitzer ammunition was unavailable for a period of three days due to transportation shortages. All ammunition has arrived in good condition, except fifty caliber machine gun ammunition in web belts which is not satisfactory, and jams the gun. A.S.P.'s seem to be short handed in trained enlisted personnel. They do not know where, how much, or what kind of ammunition they have.

Motor Notes

Inadequate transportation facilities within a Light Field Artillery Battalion creates a problem that becomes critical at times. All the vehicles are now overloaded and when one is disabled it becomes necessary to shuttle troops and equipment.

Recommendations:

One additional 6 x 6 $2\frac{1}{2}$ ton vehicle per battery would alleviate the above situation.

It is suggested that a four ton wrecker be added to the Table of Organization of a Light Field Artillery Battalion.

The gratuitous issue of Post Exchange items has been recieved for only two days the past three weeks. If these items could be made available more often, gratuitously or for purchase, it would be helpful insofar as morale is concerned.

William H. Hassert
WILLIAM H. HASSERT
1st Lt., 314th FA Bn,
S-4

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SECTION IV1st September 1944 to 30 September 1944:

During the month of September all administrative matters in this Battalion were handled with a minimum of delay. Contact with Division Artillery, 318th Infantry Regiment, and the Rear Echelon was made daily through message center or by the Battalion agent.

Morning reports and estimated loss reports of the Battalion were forwarded to higher echelons daily. Reports on the disposition of casualties have not been received by this battalion. If such a report were possible it would facilitate the requisition of replacements, particularly in the specialist class.

Casualties for the period were:

- 3 Officers wounded in action.
- 7 Enlisted Men wounded in action.
- 2 Enlisted Men Killed in action.
- 4 Enlisted Men Non-battle casualties.

Casualties returned to duty:

- 2 Officers.
- 3 Enlisted Men.

Replacements received during the period were:

- 3 Officers.
- 22 Enlisted Men.

The flow of replacements to the Battalion has been very satisfactory and in sufficient quantities to fill all T/O vacancies. The Battalion was paid 30th September 1944.

General Recommendations:

1. That a report on the disposition, and possible date of return, on casualties, be given each battalion.
2. That each battery be allowed to carry 5 basics over T/O so that they may be trained by the batteries as replacements.

James F. Roark
JAMES F. ROARK
Major, 314th FA Bn,
S-1