

AFTER ACTION REPORT

80TH INFANTRY DIVISION

FEBRUARY 1945

DINNIRCH-HALLER SECTOR

1 Feb thru 6 Feb

1 Feb found 80th Inf Div (Reinf) holding the line from the highground N of DIF ICH to HALLER. The 318th Inf held the Haller or E Sector and the 319th Inf the DITENDORF or W sector. This sector was on the left (left) of the XII Corps Z. Contact on the left of the Div was maintained with the 6th Cav Gp (Reinf) of the VIII Corps whose line ran generally N and S along the bank of the OUR River. The 317th Inf in Div Res was billeted in the vicinity of MADERN CH. A task force of the Fourth Armored Div composed of two Armored Inf Bns and their supporting troops was attached to 80th Inf Div and designated "Task Force One", and held the extreme left (W) flank of the Div Z.

During the period, active patrol in was carried on by the units in the line and by the Div Cav Recon Tr, probing the SIEGFRIED LINE defenses across the OUR and SAUER rivers. These patrols were hampered by the swift current in the two rivers and by enemy minefields on the far bank. However, valuable information was gained from these patrols which together with information from prisoners materially aided in planning the attack on the SIEGFRIED LINE.

Obstacles and demolitions were prepared throughout the Div Area by the engineers and reconnaissance of the river line was conducted by the engineers. The 166th Engr (C) Bn supported the line during this period.

The Division Artillery during the period fired one hundred and seventy-four (174) missions, principally harassing and interdiction. The fires of the 80th Inf Div Arty were reinforced by the 404th FA Gp.

The 802d TD Bn (Twd) was attached to the Div from 1 Feb to 4 Feb when it was replaced by the 811th TD Bn (SP). Both these organizations maintained the AT defenses of the Div Z and fired occasional direct and indirect fire missions on SIEGFRIED LINE positions.

The 702d Tk Bn was assembled in Div Res and conducted maintenance and training. During this period fourteen (14) of the medium tanks of the Bn were equipped with M-47 rocket launchers.

Throughout the Division individual and unit training was carried on. Rehabilitation of personnel and equipment was continuous.

The enemy facing the 80th Inf Div during this period was not aggressive and confined his activity to occasional artillery and mortar fire. Fourteen (14) prisoners were taken.

CROSSING OF OUR AND SAUER RIVER

AND

ASSAULT OF SIEGFRIED LINE

7th to 13th Feb

80th Inf Div attacked at 070200 Feb to cross the Our and Sauer Rivers and breach the Siegfried Line. The 318th and 319th Inf Regts made the initial attack. The 317th Inf remained in assembly area at Diekirch prepared to advance in the Z of either of the leading regiments. An intermittent artillery preparation began at 070120. At the same time the 5th Inf Div, also in XII Corps, attacked across the Sauer River to the E of the 80th Div.

7th Feb

At 0300 the leading Elms of the 2d Bn of the 318th Inf began crossing the Sauer River in assault boats about 500 yds N of Dillingen. The 3d Bn of the 318th remained in assembly area on the high ground above the crossing site prepared to follow the 2d Bn. The 1st Bn remained in an assembly area at Haller in regimental reserve. The 53d Armd Inf Bn of the 4th Armd Div, attached for the crossing operation to the 318th Inf, made a demonstration on the extreme right flank along the main road N from Haller to the river. This demonstration drew down a severe concentration of mortar and artillery fire.

The crossing of the 2d Bn 318th Inf was hampered by heavy enemy mortar fire but principally by the swift current of the Sauer River which made the ferrying operation extremely difficult. By noon all of F Co was across and the remainder of the Bn was crossing. During the remainder of the day the 2d Bn secured a firm bridgehead and prepared to Atk to the NE. LCo of the 3d Bn crossed and was attached to 2d Bn; but it was not until the following day that the remainder of the 3d Bn could be brought across the river. Opposition from fixed fortifications at this crossing point was not severe as the enemy had relied largely on the rugged terrain, steep cliffs and heavy woods for his defenses. Indirect fire from machine guns in pillboxes sited to fire almost directly downstream from a bend in the river was received intermittently on the crossing point and the town of DILLINGEN, where preparations were being made to construct a Class 40 bridge. A ferry was placed in operation N of DILLINGEN several times, but each time the current snapped the cable, and the ferry finally had to be abandoned.

The 319th Inf attacked across the OUR River with the 1st and 2d Bns. The 51st Armd Inf Bn of the 4th Armd Div, attached to the 319th Inf for the crossing operation, made a demonstration on the extreme left flank, advanced to the bank of the OUR River, and captured the town of BETTEL. 3d Bn of the 319th Inf remained in an assembly area at BETTENDORF.

The 1st Bn 319th Inf crossed in assault boats approximately 400 yds N of the confluence of the OUR and SAUER Rivers at WALLENDORF. B and C Companies of the 1st Bn succeeded in crossing prior to daylight as did the Bn Command Group and an assault was immediately launched against the pillboxes dominating the crossing site. The assault was successful and carried the leading Elms 1000 meters into the SIEGFRIED LINE defenses and onto the high ground overlooking WALLENDORF from the NW. Several strong pillboxes were captured or destroyed in the attack. Co A was unable to cross before daylight and was forced by heavy mortar fire to abandon its crossing during daylight.

The 317th Inf remained in DIEKIRCH in Div Res.

The 2d Bn crossing at HOESDORF succeeded in establishing a bridgehead with E and F Companies, but was forced to abandon the crossing of D Company at that site due to heavy mortar fire and loss of assault boats. The town of HOESDORF was under continuous artillery and mortar fire and it was impossible to bring forward additional equipment.

February

All attempts to place foot bridges across the OUR and SAUER Rivers had to be abandoned due to the extremely swift current and heavy enemy mortar and artillery fire.

The 80th Inf Div Arty fired two hundred and sixty-nine (269) missions in support of this attack. The 410th FA Gp reinforced the fires of the 80th Inf Div Arty.

Direct fire was placed on SIEGFRIED LINE positions by the 811th Td Bn and the 702d Tk Bn. The 633d AAA AF Bn fired 54,028 Rds of 50 Cal ammunition from the emplaced M 51 mounts on enemy personnel and positions.

8th of Feb

The 318th Inf continued to cross the SAUER River in assault boats and the greater part of the 3d Bn crossed during the day and assisted the 2d Bn in clearing the woods and the high ground overlooking the crossing site. As these two battalions expanded the bridgehead, an increasing number of fortified positions were encountered and reduced. The 1st Bn moved to the assembly area previously occupied by the 3d Bn preparatory to crossing.

The 1st Bn of the 319th continued to improve its position on the high ground NE of WALLENDORF. Co A succeeded in crossing the OUR River under cover of darkness and captured the town of WALLENDORF. The 2d Bn was unable to maneuver due to the extremely heavy enemy fire but defended and held its bridgehead with E and F Companies.

The 317th Inf Regt remained in Div Res at DIEKIRCH.

The bridging operation was held up by the extremely heavy enemy fire and the swift current in both rivers which prohibited anything lighter than a Class 40 bridge being constructed. The ferrying operation was hampered by the heavy loss of assault boats in enemy fire and to the swift current.

9th Feb

The 2d and 3d Bns of the 318th Inf continued to expand and mop-up the DILLINGEN bridgehead. By early afternoon, the 1st Bn had completed the crossing of the SAUER River and immediately attacked N through the position of the 2d Bn, and gained nearly one (1) mile through the heavy woods before halting to consolidate its positions for the night.

The 1st Bn of the 319th Inf continued to systematically reduce the strong pillboxes on the high ground overlooking WALLENDORF. The 2d Bn succeeded in crossing D Co under cover of darkness and attacked to the N at 0645 to expand their bridgehead. The 3d Bn attempted to cross on assault boats at the WALLENDORF site but were forced to abandon the attempt by the extremely heavy enemy mortar and artillery fire.

10th Feb

The 1st Bn of the 318th Inf continued their attack to the N at 0730 and seized the key high ground at the N edge of woods E of BIESDORF. The 2d Bn continued to mop up in its Z of Adv. The 3d Bn with L Co of the 317th Inf attached attacked E to clear the peninsula formed by the southward bend of the

10th Feb

river, and also outposted the DILLINGEN bridge site, where snipers continued to infiltrate and hamper bridging activities.

The 1st and 2d Bns of the 319th Inf continued to expand the bridgehead across the OUR River and to reduce enemy fortifications. The 3d Bn remained in Regtl Res.

The 317th Inf (- L Co) remained in Div Res at DIEKIRCH.

The 1st Bn 319th Inf was partially supplied during the day by Artillery Liaison Planes which flew 34 missions across the OUR River carrying 80 lbs of critical supplies per mission.

11th Feb

The 1st Bn, 318th Inf consolidated their positions and continued to mop up the wooded area. The 2d Bn attacked to the NE, captured the town of BIESDORF, and, immediately, began to move to the S to mop up SIEGFRIED LINE defenses by-passed in the attack to the N which had effected a complete penetration of the fortified zone. The 3d seized the high ground overlooking BOLLENDORF and continued to mop up the area SE of DILLINGEN.

The 319th Inf continued to reduce the defenses of the SIEGFRIED LINE in their Z with the 1st and 2d Bns, meeting determined opposition from certain critical pillboxes which were defended fanatically. The 3d Bn moved into position to cross the OUR River. Work was begun on the 11th on Class 40 bridges at both DILLINGEN and WALLENDORF, but due to enemy fire and the swift current slow progress was made.

12th Feb

The 1st Bn 318th Inf made a limited objective attack to the N securing the remainder of the key high ground S of CRUCHTEN. The 2d Bn continued their attack to the S and W reducing enemy pillboxes. At 0915 contact was made with the 319th Inf at the E end of WALLENDORF by the 2d Bn of the 318th Inf, joining the two bridgeheads of the 80th Inf Div. At 0430, the 2d Bn of the 317th Inf, attached to the 318th Inf, took over the position of the 3d Bn of the 318th Inf on the high ground N of BOLLENDORF. The 3d Bn 318th Inf then moved N taking up positions on the right of the 1st Bn of the 318th Inf. Contact was also made with Elms of the 5th Div in the Vic of BOLLENDORF, linking the two XII Corps bridgeheads.

The 319th Inf continued to reduce the fortifications of the SIEGFRIED LINE in their Z and the 2d Bn crossed the OUR River and at 0711 attacked through the positions of the 1st Bn to seize the remainder of the high ground N of WALLENDORF.

The 317th Inf (-) remained in Div Res. A Class 40 Treadway bridge was completed across the OUR River at WALLENDORF at 0700.

13th Feb

2d Bn 317th Inf reverted to control of 317th Inf and the remainder of the Regt moved into position to cross the SAUER River and press the attack to the N.

The 318th Inf completed mopping up enemy resistance in their position of

13th Feb

the bridgehead and the 1st Bn relieved in its Z by the 3d Bn went into Regtl Res.

The 319th Inf continued to mop up pillboxes in their Z and to expand their bridgehead to the N and E. The town of AMELLINGEN was captured at 1130 and the 2d Bn, after capturing the town, reduced the resistance in pillboxes surrounding the town.

A Class 40 treadway bridge was opened at DILLINGEN and Bailey bridges were under construction at both DILLINGEN and VALLENDORF.

By the 13th Feb, a firm bridgehead had been established across the OUR and SAUER Rivers and two bridges were in operation. All organized resistance from defenses of the SIEGFRIED LINE in the 80th Inf Div Z had been smashed and the 80th Inf Div was prepared to push the attack to the E. Over 800 prisoners were taken during the seven days of this operation. The 80th Inf Div Arty fired one thousand and seventy-five (1075) missions in Spt of the Atk. The 702d Tk Bn, 811th TD Bn (SP) and the 633d A/A AW Bn, all supported the attack with direct and indirect fire under control of the 80th Inf Div Arty. It is interesting to note that this successful attack through the Siegfried Line was accomplished by the Infantry without the support of tanks or tank destroyers in their primary role.

SAUER-OUR BRIDGEHEAD

14th thru 17th Feb

During the period of the 14th - 17th Feb the 80th Inf Div (Reinf) expanded and improved its position in the Sauer-Our bridgehead. The task of reducing resistance in pillboxes of the Siegfried Line isolated or by-passed was continued and the Div regrouped to Atk to the N and E from the Bridgehead.

14th Feb

The 1st Bn 317th Inf moved to an assembly area in Vic of Bollendorf. The 2d Bn moved N and seized and occupied two hills dominating the road leading N from Bollendorf. The 3d Bn remained in Diekirch in Div Res.

The 1st and 2d Bns of 318th Inf continued to occupy and improve its positions on the high ground S of Cruchten. The 3d Bn launched a limited objective attack at 1700 to seize the NE portion of the high ground overlooking Cruchten.

The 319th Inf reduced pillboxes in its Z and mopped up isolated pockets of enemy.

15th Feb

There was no change in the disposition of the 1st and 2d Bns of the 317th Inf. The 3d Bn was released from Div Res and at 0700 moved by motor to an assembly area N of Bollendorf.

The 3d Bn of 318th Inf mopped up the high ground which had been the objective of its attack the previous evening. The 1st and 2d Bns continued to occupy and

15th Feb

improve their positions.

The 1st and 2d Bns of the 319th Inf occupied positions on the high ground N of Vallendorf. The 3d Bn attacked isolated pillboxes which continued to offer resistance.

16th Feb

The 2d Bn of the 317th Inf continued to patrol to the N and seize the high ground E of Bourback which was determined to be only lightly held by the enemy. The 1st and 3d Bns remained in position.

The 1st and 2d Bns of the 318th Inf continued to occupy their positions. The 3d Bn reduced two pillboxes which were still held by the enemy on the forward slope of the high ground occupied by the 3d Bn. Small groups of enemy infiltrating the 3d Bn position were destroyed.

319th Inf continued to occupy positions on the highground N of Vallendorf and attacked the pillboxes on the NE slope overlooking Niedersagen where the enemy continued to resist.

17th Feb

2d Bn of 317th Inf continued to work its way northward and seized the high ground overlooking Nusbaum. The 1st and 3d Bns continued to occupy reserve positions N of Bollendorf.

The 318th Inf continued to occupy and improve its positions.

The 2d Bn 319th Inf relieved 3d Bn in its positions overlooking Niedersagen and 3d Bn moved to an assembly area in Vic of Vallendorf. The 1st Bn continued to occupy its positions on the high ground N of Vallendorf.

During this period the 80th Inf Div Arty fired three hundred and ninety-seven (397) missions. Three hundred and thirty-three prisoners were taken.

ATTACK FROM SAUER-OUR BRIDGEHEAD

TO

PRUM R

18th thru 28 Feb

At 0600 18th Feb the 80th Inf Div (Reinf) attacked N and E from its bridgehead across the Sauer and Our Rivers.

18th Feb

The 2d Bn 317th Inf attacked N supported by fire by the 3d Bn and reached the high ground S of Nusbaum; scattered enemy resistance in the woods was mopped up and the town of Stockigt was captured. The 3d Bn moved out during the night to join in the attack with the 2d Bn. The 1st Bn remained in Regt Res.

The 2d Bn 318th Inf attacked N and seized the high ground W of Cruchten. The 3d Bn captured Cruchten and immediately pressed the Atk N towards Hammerdingen where increased resistance and strong AF defenses were encountered. The 1st Bn moved to an assembly area at Biesdorf.

The 319th Inf continue to occupy defensive positions. The 51st Armd Inf Bn was relieved from attachment to the 319th Inf Regt and the 80th Cav Rcn Tr was attached to the 319th Inf. The 80th Cav Rcn Tr relieved the 51st Armd Inf Bn in its defensive positions on the W bank of the OUR River in the Vic of BETTEL.

19th Feb

At 0530 the 2d Bn resumed its attack to the N and captured NUSSBAUM and FRUHLINGHOHL. The 3d Bn attacking on the right flank of the 2d Bn cleared the woods W of ROHEBACH and reached the ENZ River. The 1st Bn remained in Regtl pos.

1st Bn 318th Inf passed through 3d Bn at 0245 and seized HOMERDINGEN while 2d Bn swung to the E of HOMERDINGEN to seize the high ground N of the town. The 3d remained in CRUCHTIN in Regtl pos.

At 0800 the 2d Bn 319th Inf attacked N passing thru the left (V) flank of the 2d Bn 318th Inf to seize the high-ground NE of NIEDERBACHEN and then turned SE and captured the town from the rear. The 1st Bn mopped up the valley between NIEDERBACHEN and WALLENDORF. The 3d Bn and the 80th Rcn Tr continued to occupy defensive positions containing the SIEGFRIED LINE positions which continued to offer resistance. The attack of the 2d Bn carried the 319th Inf behind these positions and effected a complete penetration of the SIEGFRIED LINE in 319th Regimental Z of Adv.

20 Feb

The 317th Inf continued their attack against stiffening resistance. The 2d Bn seized the high-ground N of NUSSBAUM overlooking the ENZ R and consolidated their positions. The 3d Bn effected a crossing of the ENZ R and seized the town of METTEN with Co I while the remainder of the Bn stormed the high-ground which protected the enemy's exits from METTENDORF and the Atk was halted until the 1st Bn could be brought forward.

The 1st and 2d Bns 318th Inf continued the attack to the N meeting strong resistance from enemy self propelled guns and dug in infantry but succeeded in advancing into position to attack the high-ground S of METTENDORF, the largest town and key road center in the area. The 3d Bn moved from CRUCHTIN N to protect the left (V) flank of the Regt.

The 319th Inf exploiting its position in the rear of the SIEGFRIED LINE attacked SE with the 1st Bn and seized OEFINGEN and the high-ground extending from the town SE to the OUR R., isolating an occupied portion of the SIEGFRIED LINE, two and one half (2½) miles in length.

The 3d Bn was relieved in its position, containing the occupied sector of the SIEGFRIED LINE, by the 53d Armd Inf Bn and moved N to capture the high-ground V of HUTTINGEN. The 53d Armd Inf Bn of the 4th Armd Div was attached to the 319th Inf for the operation.

21st Feb

The 1st and 3d Bns of the 317th Inf launched a coordinated attack against the high-ground V of NIEHL, but made only slight gains against increasing resistance. The 2d Bn continued to occupy the high-ground N of NUSSBAUM and mopped up the forward slopes down to the ENZ R.

The 1st Bn of the 318th Inf in a night attack gained tactical surprise on the enemy and seized and held the high-ground S of METTENDORF bringing the town under direct fire. The 2d Bn captured HUTTINGEN and the 3d Bn attacked the town of NIEDERBACHEN.

21st Feb

The 319th Inf during the night and early morning seized the town of ROTH on the OUR R completing the encirclement of the isolated SIEGFRIED LINE positions. The 2d and 3d Bns attacked N seizing the towns of KORPERICH and LAHA. The 53d Armd Inf Bn was given the task of mopping up the isolated SIEGFRIED LINE positions.

The 80th Cav Rcn Tr was relieved from its mission of occupying defensive positions on the E bank of the OUR R and moved to an assembly area at AMELTINGEN.

CCB of the 4th Armd Div was attached to the 80th Inf Div at 1012 and began its movement to an assembly area in the Vic of GEICHLINGEN.

22d Feb

The 317th Inf consolidated its positions and mopped up isolated pockets of enemy resistance.

The 1st Bn of the 318th Inf mopped up and improved their positions on the high-ground S of METTENDORF. The 2d and 3d Bns continued to attack to the N and met stiff resistance in the woods S of SINSFELT and OBERGECKLER.

The 319th Inf continued the attack to the E with the 2d and 3d Bns and captured GEICHLINGEN. The 1st Bn was relieved by the 53d Armd Inf, who had completed the task of mopping up the SIEGFRIED LINE positions from AMELTINGEN to ROTH. 1st Bn went into Regtl Res. The 53d Armd Inf Bn passed to the control of CCB of the 4th Armd Div.

23d Feb

The 1st Bn 317th Inf was relieved by Elms of the 5th Inf Div and moved to NUSSBAUM in Regtl Res. The 1st and 2d Bns continued to occupy and improve their positions on the ENZ R.

The 318th Inf mopped up isolated pockets of enemy in the woods surrounding their positions.

The 319th Inf protected the left flank of the Div and continued to Atk to the E and N. The town of OBERGECKLER was cleared of enemy by the 2d Bn.

CCB of the 4th Armd Div closed into the assembly area at GEICHLINGEN during the afternoon prepared to pass thru the 319th Inf.

24th Feb

The 319th Inf continued to occupy and improve their positions and patrolled aggressively towards METTENDORF.

The 318th Inf mopped up the woods S of SINSFELT and occupied the high-ground S of METTENDORF. The 2d Bn 318th Inf seized the high-ground N of OBERGECKLER and at 0800 established contact with leading Elms of the 6th Armd Div of the VIII Corps attacking S from PRUM.

CCB of the 4th Armd Div attacked thru the 319th Inf and captured the town of SINSFELT and the bridge across the ENZ R was taken intact. At 2400 CCB was released from attachment to the 80th Inf Div and passed to the control of the 4th Armd Div.

25th Feb

During early morning Elms of B Co 317th Inf entered METTENDORF and cleared the N half of the town before being relieved by the 2d Bn of the 318th Inf. At 1000 the 1st Bn moved out to relieve Elms of CCB of the 4th Armd Div at BELLINGEN. The 2d and 3d Bns continued to contain the enemy on the high-ground W of NIEHL.

318th Inf occupied the high-ground in the Vic of METTENDORF and mopped up the town.

1st and 2d Bns 319th Inf followed the advance of the 4th Armd Div mopping up by-passed pockets of resistance and expanding the penetration of the armor. The 3d Bn remained in Regtl Res.

26th Feb

317th Inf advanced rapidly in their Z following the attack of the 4th Armd Div and reached the W bank of the PRUM R. All resistance on the W bank of the R was reduced and the town of OBERWEISS was occupied.

318th Inf remained in Vic of METTENDORF in Div Res.

319th Inf attacked to the N and E and captured the towns of PHILLIPSLEIER and MAUEL on the W bank of the PRUM R.

27th Feb

317th Inf crossed PRUM R and attacked to the N capturing ISSENSDORF and VOOSBUSCH to protect L (N) flank of the XII Corps. The 1st Bn repulsed a counter-attack inflicting severe casualties on the enemy.

318th Inf remained in Vic of METTENDORF in Div Res.

319th Inf occupied and mopped up the W bank of the PRUM R from MAUEL to HANL.

28th Feb

The 317th Inf continued to push to the N protecting the left flank of the Div and XII Corps. The 1st Bn captured the towns of LISSEN and NIDDERLEIER.

The 318th Inf remained in Div Res at METTENDORF.

The 319th Inf now out of contact with the enemy went into assembly areas in the Vic of OUTSCHEID.

During the period 18 Feb thru 28 Feb the 80th Inf Div advanced from the OHR - SEUER bridgehead to the PRUM R. Enemy reinforcements rushed down from the E to try and establish a line behind the shattered SIEGFRIED LINE defenses were destroyed, two thousand seven hundred and twenty-two (2722) prisoners being taken during the period. The 4th Armd Div was passed thru the 80th Inf Div to start its dash to the RHINE R.

The 80th Inf Div Arty fired a total of one thousand one hundred and seventy-eight (1178) missions in Spt of the Atk. The 702d Tk Bn supported the Atk of the infantry regiments and supplemented the fire of the Arty with rocket launchers. The 811th TD Bn (SP) maintained AT defenses and supported the attack with direct and indirect fire. The 633d AAA AW (Mbl) Bn maintained AA defenses and supported the attack with M-51 mounts employed in the ground role.

28th Feb

The task of the 305th Engr C Bn during this period was made doubly difficult due to the great number of enemy obstacles which had to be disposed of and the poor quality and limited road net which made constant road maintenance necessary.

SUMMARY

During the month of February the 80th Inf Div successfully assaulted and destroyed the SIEGFRIED LINE defenses in its zone of advance. The attack against the SIEGFRIED LINE was made across the OUR and SAUER Rivers which were at flood stage during the entire period during which our troops were assaulting the fortified positions. The enemy formations defending the line and those rushed down from the N to try and reestablish a line were destroyed, over three thousand prisoners being taken during the period. The gap created in the enemy lines by the 80th Inf Div was exploited by the 4th Arm Div on the historic dash to the RHINE.

A. G. ELEGAR,
Lt Col, GSC,
AC of S, G-3.