

D R A F T

SUBJECT: Citation of units.

THROUGH:

TO : Commanding General, Ninth United States Army, APO #339.

1. It is recommended that the 120th Infantry Regiment, and certain attached units be cited under the provisions of Section IV, War Department Circular No. 333, 1943. All units mentioned above participated in the same action. Attached are copies of proposed citations for units referred to above.

a. Units to be cited: 120th Infantry Regiment

743d Tank Battalion

823d Tank Destroyer Battalion

Company "G", 105th Combat Engineer Battalion

b. Except for the 743d Tank Battalion, these units have been in combat since 15 June 1944. The 743d Tank Battalion entered combat on 6 June 1944.

c. Citations previously awarded: 2nd Battalion and Company "K", and 1st and 2nd Platoons, Antitank Company, 120th Infantry Regiment, by War Department General Order Number 5, dated 8 January 1945. 743d Tank Battalion by War Department General Order Number 85, dated 3 November 1944.

d.

2. General Data:

a. The officer recommending these citations has personal knowledge of the action upon which the recommendations are based.

b. Recommendations are supported by official records.

3. Specific Data:

a. Dates of action: 16 November 1944 through 28 November 1944.

b. Location at which action took place: from area 600 yards northwest of Euchen, Germany to include the Inde River 1500 yards east of Altdorf, Germany.

c. (1) Character of terrain, of hostile observation and of enemy fire:
Generally level, bare terrain, very muddy, and containing villages an average of

1000 yards apart. Hostile observation, excellent. Enemy fire consisted of that from artillery, mortars, tanks, self-propelled guns, and small arms.

(2) Visibility, time of day and atmospheric conditions: The visibility varied from fair to excellent. Period 16 to 28 November 1944, inclusive; weather - intermittent cold rains.

(3) Location of enemy: In strong depth throughout the two zones assigned the regiment.

(4) Morale: Our forces - excellent; enemy - good.

(5) Casualties sustained: 120th Infantry Regiment, 594; 743d Tank Battalion, 37; 823d Tank Destroyer Battalion, 31; Company "G", 105th Combat Engineers, 7.

(6) Effect or result of action: The 120th Regimental Combat Team advanced ten miles despite stubborn enemy resistance and over unfavorable and muddy terrain. Although it suffered heavy casualties and fatigue, its fighting spirit never waned and it never lost its combat efficiency. The 120th Infantry Regiment accomplished most of the division's infantry task. As the result, all battalions of the other two regiments, which had suffered very heavy casualties while breaching the Siegfried line, had opportunities for recuperation and training at various times while the 120th Infantry Regiment was fighting. Therefore, the division entered the subsequent Ardennes campaign in excellent condition at a time when high combat efficiency was required.

(7) Resume: (Inclosure 1). At 1600, 16 November 1944, the 1st Battalion, 120th Infantry Regiment, with other units, began the drive from the east edge of the Siegfried line to the Roer River. Following closely behind a rolling artillery barrage, it attacked strongly fortified Euchen, Germany. The objective was reached within fifteen minutes and a half hour later was cleared of the enemy. (Inclosure 2). At 0700 the next day, the 2nd Battalion, moving through Euchen, attacked toward Neusen. It quickly seized an intermediate objective, the hamlet of Broicherhof. In order to avoid losing the momentum of their attack, the troops continued forward without waiting for the time required to arrange for artillery

support. The speed of the attack caught the enemy in Neusen and Broich off balance and unprepared; apparently he thought Broicherhof was still in German hands. Our infantrymen overran 81mm and 120mm mortar positions, capturing large quantities of ammunition. They also captured the command posts of the 8th Panzer Grenadier Regiment and one of its battalions, seizing nearly all of the regiment's command, administrative and messenger vehicles. At the same time (0700, 17 November 1944), the 3rd Battalion, also moving through Euchen, attacked Broichweiden. Advancing uphill across 2000 yards of smooth, open terrain, it quickly gained a small portion of the objective. The enemy immediately counterattacked with a company of tanks supported by infantry. This counterattack, coming so soon after the infantrymen had captured only an edge of the objective, caught them by surprise. Furthermore, because of mud and mines, friendly tanks and tank destroyers had not arrived. Despite the fact that two companies of this battalion, less than a month before, had been overrun, in fact literally steam-rollered, by bazooka-proof Tiger tanks, with resultant heavy casualties, the gallant soldiers held their ground. Materially assisted by accurate artillery fire, they stopped the counterattack with bazookas and small arms. Then came two days of the slow, laborious, house-to-house fighting necessary for clearing a large built-up area of a determined enemy. By means of courageous and tenacious pressure, the battalion captured all of the towns of Broichweiden, Horweiden and Weiden by 1045 on 19 November 1944.

All these attacks of the 16th and 17th of November were characterized by planned, audacious speed which enabled the troops to reach their objectives before the enemy had time to lay down his prepared artillery and mortar fires. Men of the three battalions ran through midrange and long range flanking machine gun fire. They overcame frontal machine gun and other small arms fires with fierce marching fire. Liberal use was made of rifle grenades against the enemy's positions. Our troops refused to let themselves be pinned down a single time. By their speed, utilization of the few folds in the ground, tactical skill, and heavy marching fire, these brave soldiers captured a series of objectives with the minimum of casualties.

attack. The From the 16th through the 19th of November 1944, the division had attacked south to join the VII Corps. Contact having been made, the division zone changed from north-south to west-east in direction. Without prior warning, the 120th Regimental Combat Team was ordered to move through the zone of the 117th Infantry Regiment and attack east. Without having had time for thorough planning, the combat team drove 8 miles to the Inde River. In this drive it captured all objectives within the division zone except one; it accomplished a mission which in each division to the right and left required the employment of all three infantry regiments.

(Inclosure 3). At 0800 on 21 November 1944, the 2nd Battalion attacked from Kinsweiler to Lurken and the key hill east of the latter town. Since the enemy's defenses faced generally west the attack, made in a northern direction, rolled up the enemy from his left (south) flank. Because the battalion was attacking ahead of the division to the right (south), this movement exposed our troops to enemy fire from outside the division zone. This exposure, having been anticipated, was avoided by speed of movement from exposed to defiladed ground. A large mine field across the route of advance, discovered during the evening preceding the attack, was a threat to essential speed; however, by working all night, supporting engineers and members of the battalion ammunition and pioneer platoon cleared gaps barely in time for the scheduled attack. Surging through the gaps and across muddy fields, the battalion closed into Lurken in less than thirty minutes, so rapidly that the enemy defenses crumbled and the Germans fled. A few minutes later, the high ground to the east which dominated the area had fallen and the entire battalion objective was in our hands. Once again speed paid dividends; the men's bravery carried them on top of the enemy before he could learn the location or direction of the attack.

At 0945 on 21 November 1944, the 1st Battalion attacked the towns of Langweiler, Laurensberg, and Obermerz. Companies "A" and "G" attacked from Lurken to Laurensberg. The movement of these two companies to the line of departure was delayed by a minefield. In order to attack on time, the men ran approximately 500 yards to the line of departure, arriving there just in time for the scheduled

attack. The enemy infantry, now alert to the attack from the south, countered with small arms fire but our troops, using intense marching fire, closed and destroyed him. Company "B" attacked at the same time from Warden to Langweiler, immediately drawing small arms fire. While advancing steadily against this fire, enemy artillery and mortar fire fell upon the company; at the same time, a friendly artillery concentration was being fired in front of the company. The officers and men, believing this friendly fire also to be hostile, dashed into and through it without hesitation. Despite many casualties, Langweiler was taken. Although costly, this action was described by the Commanding Officer, 250th Field Artillery Battalion, as the most magnificent exhibition of courage he had ever witnessed. Immediately following the capture of Langweiler, Company "C" attacked north from Laurensburg to seize Obermerz after a quick, short range fight.

The 3rd Battalion was in an assembly position 2000 yards west of Warden during the successive attacks of the 2nd and 1st Battalions, its assigned objective to be the town of Langendorf. (Inclosure 4). In order to maintain the speed of the attack, the 3rd Battalion moved through Laurensburg to its line of departure before the town was entirely clear of the enemy. Plans called for the 2nd Battalion to support the attack by direct fire from positions on the high ground east of Durken, but because of mud the weapons were not emplaced by the time the 3rd Battalion was ready for the attack. Nevertheless, the battalion moved out at 1310 without benefit of direct fire support, the leading elements entering the near edge of the town before the enemy there realized he was being attacked. When the leading elements entered the objective, moderate but unusually accurate artillery fires fell upon the battalion. The troops of the 3rd Battalion without hesitation rushed forward through these fires to reinforce the few men of the leading elements who had closed with the enemy. Subsequent fighting to capture the rest of Langendorf and Hausen, the hamlet to the north, was heavy.

Because the relentless drive of the 120th Infantry Regiment appeared to have thoroughly beaten and disorganized the enemy, the regimental commander decided that the 2nd Battalion should continue the attack to Fronhoven at once instead of

awaiting the next day as originally planned. Therefore the battalion moved from Lurken to Langendorf by a forced march across muddy fields. Suddenly heavy machine gun fire from Heusen swept the east side of Langendorf while officers and non-commissioned officers were making their reconnaissance. During a lull, the battalion formed on the line of departure for the attack which was scheduled at 1650. However, a resumption of the enemy machine gun fire and a heavy and accurate artillery concentration broke up the attack before it could be launched. A new line of departure forward of the original was selected; the battalion reorganized and moved by infiltration to this new line of departure. Again a concentration fell on the troops but they moved forward to take the final objective of the day. Bravery without hesitation saved the 2nd Battalion from excessive casualties. As the men surged forward through the heavy artillery fires, these fires suddenly increased to a fearful intensity. But because of the men's willingness to follow their leaders (the battalion and regimental commanders personally led the left and right companies respectively), they had moved out of the area covered by the devastating fire. Thus a tired battalion seized Fronhoven, its second objective of the day.

(Inclosure 5). At 0800 on 22 November 1944, the 1st Battalion attacked Erberish from Langendorf. The enemy, now surmising the direction of the attack, was able to avoid being surprised and resisted quickly with artillery, mortars, machine guns, rifles and heavily armored 88mm self-propelled guns. Three of our tanks were destroyed as they were closing with the enemy and all of the other supporting tanks were stopped by mud. The infantrymen nevertheless charged the objective, running as fast and far as the muddy plowed fields permitted. Outstanding individual and unit courage was demonstrated in this attack which was made over flat fields entirely devoid of cover and concealment. Although the machine gun fire was moderate, the mortar and artillery fires were both heavy and accurate. After the enemy self-propelled guns had destroyed the three tanks, they turned against the infantry. But the infantrymen, never hesitating, added bazooka and antitank rifle grenade fires to their marching fire, thereby causing the self-propelled guns to flee. By 1240, Erberish was captured and the new positions were consolidated.

At the same time (0800 on 22 November 1944), the 3rd Battalion attacked Lohn from Fronhoven. The unit to its right (south) was scheduled to attack Putzlohn at the same time, but this unit failed to advance. So the 3rd Battalion attacked alone, Company "I" on the left and Company "L" on the right. Heavy tank and machine gun fire from the area north of Putzlohn, which was outside the Regimental zone, struck Company "L" from the flank. This company suffered approximately 22 casualties in five minutes and was unable to advance. Two of our supporting tanks were destroyed. Company "I" received a terrific artillery barrage which was observed and unusually accurate. Despite heavy casualties, Company "I" continued its advance through the fire and reached the edge of Lohn, being able to take only about four or five houses on the west end of town. Company "K", moving through this same heavy fire, reinforced Company "I" in Lohn. The fire on the open area between Fronhoven and Lohn intensified, preventing tanks or tank destroyers from moving up to support the battalion in Lohn. All of the area except the roads, which were under flanking tank and antitank fire, was impassable to vehicles because of mud. Repeated counter-attacks by tanks and infantry were launched from within the town against the few buildings held by Companies "I" and "K". These attacks came in successive waves and were stopped each time by the gallant men of the 3rd Battalion who had only small arms, grenades and bazookas. One Mark IV tank was destroyed and many of the enemy were killed and wounded; over sixty were captured and evacuated. At 1600, another large force of enemy tanks and infantry was seen moving into the town from the east to reinforce the garrison. The regimental commander ordered the battalion to withdraw back to Fronhoven for the following reasons: a continuation of the attack against a reinforced enemy with no friendly pressure on the right would be too costly; the close proximity of the two opposing forces prevented the use of our supporting artillery; and it was desired to arrange for a coordinated attack on the next day. The withdrawal was made slowly, methodically and in good order despite continued enemy direct and indirect fires. All of our wounded were evacuated safely.

(Inclosure 6). At 0700, the following morning, 23 November 1944, the 2nd Battalion, reinforced by Company "L", attacked Lohn, this attack being

coordinated with the unit to the right (south). Furthermore, it was supported by very heavy tank, antitank, tank destroyer, and caliber .30 and .50 machine gun fires from the 1st Battalion's positions in Erberich. As the battalion formed for the attack it was hit by the heaviest artillery concentration this regiment had ever experienced. The deadly accuracy of this fire, due to the previous day's adjustment by the enemy, made it terribly destructive. Company "E", on the right, had 39 officers and men killed or wounded in 10 minutes. This constituted over 35% of the fighting strength of the company. Despite this and the continued fire, the company commander rallied his men and moved forward. He was killed by machine gun fire soon after crossing the line of departure, but his company continued to advance. Company "F", on the left, also hard hit, advanced with Company "E". Companies "G" and "L" followed. The unit on the right was not able to move forward at this time. But the fury of the 2nd Battalion's attack literally ripped the German position to shreds. The town of Lohn fell. Because intelligence indicated that the enemy had available an armored counterattacking force, the men of the reinforced 2nd Battalion worked very rapidly in preparing their new positions. Engineers had cleared mines from one road leading into Lohn; tanks and tank destroyers had followed close behind. At 1115, two companies of German infantry attacked, supported by overwatching tanks. Our troops, withholding artillery, mortar, antitank high explosive, and small arms fires until the proper time, ambushed the enemy. Few escaped. At the same time, our tanks and tank destroyers drove away the enemy's tanks.

After the capture of Lohn, the 119th Infantry Regiment (less one battalion which was attached to the 2nd Armored Division) was ordered to capture the rest of the objectives within the division zone. At 1245 on 25 November 1944, the 1st Battalion, 120th Infantry Regiment, firing every weapon at their disposal into Patter, caused the enemy to expect an assault from the southwest. Consequently, when the 3rd Battalion, 119th Infantry Regiment, attacked Patter from the northwest, they found the enemy's guns and tanks facing away from them. The town was captured with only one casualty caused by a mine. Two self-propelled guns were destroyed in this perfectly planned and executed attack.

The division paused for three days while the divisions to the north and south were drawing abreast. (Inclosure 7). During the night of 26-27 November 1944, the 3rd Battalion, 120th Infantry Regiment, infiltrated to the high ground between Pattern and Altdorf. At 1130, 27 November 1944, the 3rd Battalion, 119th Infantry, attacked Altdorf from Pattern, passing across the high ground to the north of the 3rd Battalion, 120th Infantry. The defenses of Altdorf were heavy and well manned. At least 12 machine guns with large numbers of infantry were found to be dug in on the reverse slope, 200 to 400 yards west of the town. Three 75mm antitank guns were emplaced to the southwest and several tanks and self-propelled assault guns were in the northwest edge of town. The reverse slope positions were so skillfully sited that they could not be observed until the attacking troops were within 300 yards of them. The 3rd Battalion, 119th Infantry, after several costly attempts, was forced to withdraw to the crest of the hill and dig in. Another battalion of the 119th Infantry Regiment was detached, so the tired but valiant troops of the 120th Infantry Regiment were ordered to resume the attack. The men had had little rest because of the heavy artillery and mortar fires, which continuously harassed them and caused ever mounting casualties, hour by hour. (Inclosure 8). Despite extreme fatigue, at 0430, 28 November 1944, in pitch darkness, the 1st Battalion attacked Altdorf. This attack was coordinated with the unit to the south which was attempting to capture Inden. The advance was made in eight columns without an artillery preparation. Our troops had hoped to approach within hand grenade range before being discovered. But, much to their surprise, friendly time fire on Inden illuminated them before they had arrived within effective rifle grenade range of the enemy's positions. The enemy opened with all guns. Heavy self-propelled gun fire forced the left column to move to the right; the other seven columns advanced straight ahead in face of intense small arms fire. The enemy also added heavy mortar fire but this fire fortunately fell to a flank along a natural approach which our infantrymen wisely had avoided. Having reached the reverse slope, the leading elements of these columns crawled 200 yards downhill literally under the tracers to within rifle grenade range.

The grenadiers leading the battalion fired a grenade concentration of five minutes at the enemy machine guns. This unusual attack was so surprising, accurate and effective that the unnerved enemy fled from their guns, leaving many wounded and dead behind. The two assault companies rushed through the town according to plan in order to prepare for a possible counterattack. As the reserve company was entering the main street, six bazooka-proof 88mm self-propelled guns and one half-track charged up the street with headlights on, firing cannon and machine guns at our infantrymen. Our men, reaching the ultimate in courage, stood their ground. Some taking no cover, others partial cover, these brave soldiers knocked out headlights with rifle fire and made numerous hits with bazookas and antitank grenades. The half-track was immediately destroyed but the self-propelled guns apparently were undamaged. The guns left the town, turned around and charged again. This performance was repeated three or four times while enemy infantrymen continued to fire from the houses still in their possession. Finally our troops used white phosphorous hand and rifle grenades against the guns. One crashed and burned, the others fled east across the Inde River, followed by the German infantrymen of whom many were killed while trying to ford the stream. Thus fell Altdorf, one of the most difficult objectives this division has captured.

The regiment, by 28 November 1944, had reached a dominant position from which it controlled all of the division zone west of the Roer River. The subsequent mopping up of the German company between the Inde and the Roer was a small routine task.

The tanks and tank destroyers were handicapped by mud throughout the entire action. Enemy tanks, having better flotation, were able to move across country; our armor at all times was roadbound. Every road leading to all objectives was mined. Engineers and infantry pioneers, following closely behind the assault companies, removed the mines. Each time, as soon as the road was clear, tanks, tank destroyers and antitank guns rushed in column to the objective. The enemy always brought mortar and artillery fires upon the roads and the areas where the heavy

vehicles were assembled in preparation for their dashes forward. Although the tanks and tank destroyers were able to destroy only two self-propelled guns during the action, they were of inestimable value. Their presence increased the infantrymen's confidence. Upon one occasion they drove away counterattacking enemy armor. Above all, several times they fired heavy and accurate missions in support of attacking troops.

In summary, the actions of the men of the 120th Regimental Combat Team were magnificent. These men drove 2 miles south and then turned east to destroy an enemy occupying successive, strongly prepared, well defended positions through a zone 8 miles long and $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles wide. The combat team tore to pieces the following German units: 2nd Battalion, 404th Volks Grenadier Regiment, 246th Vol Grenadier Division; 8th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, Replacement Battalion, and portions of the 1st and 2nd Battalion, 29th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, and also portions of the division engineer, reconnaissance, antitank and artillery battalions, of the 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division; and Combat Team Nohse, a provisional battalion formed from remnants. These troops were of a quality appreciatively above the man average. They were well trained and amply equipped; they apparently had an unlimited ammunition supply. They chose and prepared their positions well. They fought with will and bravery. But by great courage, tactical skill, coordination of effort and perseverance, disregarding heavy casualties, the gallant troops of the 120th Regimental Combat Team overran and destroyed the enemy between the eastern edge of Siegfried line and the Roer River.

12 Incls:

1 - 8 Maps

9 - 12 Proposed citations

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