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HEADQUARTERS 337TH INFANTRY

AFPO #85, U. S. Army,
27 March 1945.

CLASSIFIED
CANCELLED
BY AUTHORITY OF THE ADJUTANT GENERAL
HEADQUARTERS, U. S. ARMY
FOR THE SUPPORT OF OPERATIONS
DOWNLOADING COMMITTEE
FEBRUARY - 28 FEBRUARY

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The first day of the month found the Regiment with the 3d Battalion, 339th Infantry attached holding the same defensive line assumed on 12 January, including the Cuccoli-Farneto Ridge, the northwest slope of M. Grande (9932), and Montecalderaro (9933). The battalions extended on line from left to right: 2nd Battalion (less Company "G"), 3d Battalion, 1st Battalion (plus Company "G"). The 3d Battalion, 339th Infantry was assembled in reserve near C. del Chin (9930). The Regimental sector was relatively quiet. Ambush patrols continued to cover all avenues of approach into the front lines. The main line of resistance and outpost line of resistance continued to be occupied as during the previous period. Contact with adjacent units was maintained by two and three man patrols. Reconnaissance patrols were continuous to Di Sopra, Casetta, and Bertochi.

The enemy positions remained essentially the same as when the Regiment entered the line except that increased digging and noises across the entire sector indicated the enemy was better preparing this already held positions and constantly repairing damage caused by our artillery and mortar fire. The enemy continued to hold C. del Braglia, Albereto, Di Sopra, C. Nuova, M. Castellaro, Ca di Co, Bursano, M. Mezzano, Il Poggio, Bertochi, and Casetta.

On the night of 1-2 February, Company "L", then in reserve, relieved Company "I" in position in the 3d Battalion right sector. Immediately following this relief Company "I" relieved Company "K", then occupying the 3d Battalion left sector. Company "K" went into reserve on Hill 455.

During daylight of 2 February a similar relief was accomplished within the heavy machine gun platoons of Company "M" and the squads of the Anti-tank Platoon. These reliefs were made without incident.

On the night of 1-2 February a Company "E" combat patrol of one officer and thirty-three enlisted men found the house at Di Sopra (982330) unoccupied and made no enemy contact. This house had been occupied the previous night and was again outposted by four enemy on the night of 2-3 February. On the night of 3-4 February a combat patrol from Company "E", of one officer and twenty-four enlisted men, raided Di Sopra (982330) and found the house and two dugouts south of the house occupied. They received rifle grenade, hand grenade, machine pistol and machine gun fire from the dugouts. Light mortars, machine pistol, and machine gun fire was received from the vicinity of the house, C. Nuova, Castellaro, and the house at Albereto, and four enemy were observed running from Di Sopra to C. Nuova. The patrol withdrew and placed artillery and mortar fire on the house at Di Sopra. Then a second attack found the house unoccupied but a thorough search gave evidence that the house had been recently occupied.

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Company "F" relieved Company "E" during daylight of 4 February.

At 051500 February the 168th Infantry on the Regiment's immediate left flank launched a limited objective attack and asked for fire from this Regiment's mortars, heavy machine guns, and artillery on nemmerative targets in vicinity of M. Mezzano (9934) - M. Castellaro (9833). At 1600 our supporting fires ceased. This attack plus our supporting fires brought enemy reaction of increased artillery, self-propelled, mortar, and machine gun activity during the afternoon and night. The enemy laid down his defensive artillery, mortar, and machine gun fires across our entire sector.

The morning of 6 February a deserter of 6th Company, 577th Regiment, 305th Division came into our outpost position on Hill 425 from C. del Braglia (974332). The prisoner stated that their bunkers had been hit by our artillery the previous day and that they had received orders to dig deeper into the mountains and that new officers and non-commissioned officers are all Nazis, formerly members of the Hitler Youth.

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REPORT OF OPERATIONS - FEBRUARY (CONT'D)

At 082150 February, Company "B" was relieved by Company "I", 339th Infantry. At 092040 February, Company "C" was relieved by Company "K", 339th Infantry. Company "G" was relieved by Company "E" at 092215 February. The 1st Battalion sector command passed to the Commanding Officer of the 3d Battalion, 339th Infantry. The 1st Battalion, 337th Infantry assembled in the reserve area at C. del Chin (9930) at 2330 for rest and light training. Company "G" moved to reserve position in the 2nd Battalion sector.

Company "B" combat patrol of one officer and a rifle platoon reinforced with bazooka teams raided Casetta (0032) and found the house and positions nearby vacated. The patrol received enemy machine gun fire from the vicinity of Bertochi and positions north and east of Bertochi and C. Raggi. The positions noted on prior reconnaissance during several previous nights were unoccupied. The patrol was pinned down several times but pulled back and worked its way out of the bands of machine gun fire. When they had pulled back a short distance they called for all fires to be laid down. These support fires were accurate and timely. All men returned with one casualty slightly wounded in the head.

On the night of 11-12 February a Company "F" combat patrol of one officer and twenty-four enlisted men went to Di Sopra (982330), found the house occupied. The patrol received heavy machine gun, artillery, and mortar fire which forced the patrol to return.

On the night of 12-13 February, Company "K" relieved Company "L" and during daylight of 13 February Company "L" relieved Company "I", who then went into the reserve position.

On the night of 16-17 February, after having made a thorough reconnaissance for three previous days and nights, a Company "I" combat patrol of one officer and twelve enlisted men raided the house at Di Sopra (982330). No enemy was encountered at the first three suspected machine gun positions enroute to Di Sopra. When the patrol reached Di Sopra they found everything quiet and no enemy movement. After waiting approximately twenty minutes the patrol closed in on the building. As the patrol was within a few yards of the building three machine guns firing from both flanks, the rear of the house, machine pistols from the cover of the roofs, and 50mm mortar shells falling around the house, struck the patrol. The patrol returned the fire and requested all supporting fires to be brought down. Finally, after losing one man killed and three wounded, the patrol withdrew back to our lines at 0158. It was ascertained by the critique that the patrol killed or wounded some five enemy and that Di Sopra constituted a strong point in the enemy's outpost line of resistance. The SCR 300 radio used on the raid was dropped near the house at Di Sopra, falling into enemy hands.

On 172005 February the 85th Division ordered that effective 21 February the reserve battalion, 337th Infantry, would be placed on a two hour alert for movement to counterattack in the 362nd Infantry sector. The 1st Battalion, 339th Infantry was to establish command liaison with the 362nd Infantry to coordinate counterattack plans. If movement of reserve battalion of 337th Infantry was directed, the division reserve battalion would move to position vacated by this battalion and take over its present counterattack mission.

The night of 17-18 February a Company "K", 339th Infantry combat patrol of one officer and ten enlisted men to (00333356) engaged the enemy in a short fire fight and withdrew to reorganize. While reorganizing they picked up a deserter who approached RJ (995334) and said in English "I'm a Pollack". The prisoner was identified from the 5th Company, 4th Parachute Regiment. He stated that the paratroopers had been told that the best American "Sturm" Division was facing them. As a rule they (paratroopers) are very cocky and careless at the front but here in this sector they have been especially cautious.

During the night of 18 February a 3d Battalion ambush patrol received interference on SCR 300 radio believed to be from the SCR 300 radio lost on the previous raid to Di Sopra.

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REPORT OF OPERATIONS - FEBRUARY (CONT'D)

Relief of Company "I", 339th Infantry by Company "A", 337th Infantry and of Company "L", 339th Infantry by Company "C", 337th Infantry was completed at 182400 February. Relief of Company "K", 339th Infantry by Company "B", 337th Infantry, and Company "G", 337th Infantry by Company "F", 337th Infantry was completed and command of the sector passed to Commanding Officer, 1st Battalion, 337th Infantry at 192205 February.

At 201535 February 1st Battalion, 339th Infantry closed into the assembly area vic C. del Chin (9930) and attached to the 337th Infantry. The 3d Battalion, 339th Infantry was detached from the 337th Infantry and reverted to control of its parent unit.

At 201730 February several rounds of heavy mortar hit the 1st Battalion advance CP building vicinity of La Costa. Lieutenant Colonel August R. Schmidt, Battalion Commander, and 1st Lieutenant Dow K. Payton, S-2, were killed when the top floor of the building caved in. The total casualties were five killed and twelve wounded.

Enemy mortar and artillery fire had begun to increase daily on supply routes in the vicinity of Cuocoli, Farneto, and the M. Grande trail between La Costa and Vezzolo. Buildings along the entire front began to come under harassing fire. As a result of this increased fire all Command Posts and other installations formerly in the houses at Farneto, Montecalderaro sector, and C. del Fabbi (9730) were moved into dugouts on the reverse slopes. All positions were improved. The battalions increased harassing and counterbattery missions. Each battalion used six .50 caliber machine guns to increase harassing of enemy installations and supply trails.

On the night of 20-21 February a Company "G" combat patrol of one officer and fifteen enlisted men to house at Di Sopra (982330) met stubborn resistance. Approaching the house the patrol split into two groups; one approached from the left and one from the right (southeast). As the second group approached the house an enemy soldier ran from the well to a haystack and then automatic weapons opened up. As the group from the left approached the house the enemy fired automatic weapons and threw grenades. The patrol withdrew, reorganized, called for more artillery, and moved in from the same directions. The patrol leader's group from the east was hit by hand grenades causing three slight casualties. The group from the left was met by this same fire and pulled out again, reorganized, received more ammunition, and fired another concentration. The left group got to within 20 yards of the house before being driven off. The right group was unable to get that close. Our artillery concentration made five hits on the house. Patrol leader estimated ten men inside house and one platoon on the ridge behind the house reinforcing it. Machine gun fire came from C. Nuova, Castelletti, and from the house and ridge behind the house. Enemy medium artillery covered the approaches to the house from the east.

At 221300 February, Company "M" mortars fired fuse-quick mortars on enemy dugouts on top of Castellaro (9833). Immediately thereafter two enemy "medics" appeared with three Red Cross flags. The "medics" stood by in the open waving the two flags, one flag was stuck in the ground nearby. Then other troops appeared, began digging into the dugouts, and evacuated a total of six enemy under cover of the Red Cross flags. As the last enemy was evacuated the two "medics" picked up their flags and disappeared over the hill. Our artillery immediately opened up and prisoners of war captured later stated that more casualties resulted.

At 221300 two prisoners were captured in the rear area (9830) by Company "C", 339th Infantry from the 6th and 7th Companies, 3d Parachute Regiment. The prisoners were tough and refused to give information of a specific nature. They stated, however, their mission was to find out if our forces were building up for an attack.

Night of 23-24 February, Company "I" relieved Company "K" and during daylight of 24 February Company "K" relieved Company "L" who went into battalion reserve on Hill 455.

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REPORT OF OPERATIONS - FEBRUARY (CONT'D)

On 24 February orders were received from the 85th Division that it had been definitely established that the enemy had resorted to frequent and successful use of small infiltrating reconnaissance patrols of two to three men each, who move by night and lay up during the day behind our lines, making detailed notes of their observations. This Regiment was to maintain daylight patrols without our near areas with thorough searching of houses, draws, and prepared positions not normally occupied by our troops. Each battalion was given an area and daylight rear area patrols were put out. No enemy patrols were encountered during the remainder of the month.

From 251925 February to 251315 February, 4.5 inch rockets were in position at (977302) and fired at targets at (98703352). Sixty-three rounds were fired. With the exception of three rounds all landed on the target. This was the first time the 4.5 inch rocket had been fired on the 85th Division front. At 261800 February, 75 rounds were fired on Castellaro. The target area was well covered.

At 282100 the relief of Company "A", 337th Infantry by Company "B", 339th Infantry was completed and the relief of Company "C", 337th Infantry by Company "A", 339th Infantry completed at 2215.

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During the month of February the snow was light and gradually disappeared, thus it became necessary to better construct all dugouts and improve the camouflage of positions. White camouflage suits and white capes for mules were discarded. The weather was relatively dry with increased sunshine and visibility.

With the melting snow and narrow slippery treacherous trails an extensive road and trail improvement program was put into effect. The heretofore one-way road from the 3d Battalion Rear Distribution Point to Casalino (0231) was widened to accommodate two-way passage by Company "A", 310th Engineer Battalion. These engineers also greatly improved the supply road from (979282) to (973303).

All battalion ammunition and pioneer platoons with help from a reserve company in each battalion sector, widened the existing trails, digging stairlike steps in the hard packed snow and ground. Trails were deeply ditched on both sides, the spoil piled on the route itself, and over the spoil laid a felt and wood mat.

The enemy continued his stubborn defense of the sector. Enemy activity was light, limited primarily to long range two-man patrols, with an absence of progressive patrolling. Enemy fire on our positions consisted of long range machine gun fire, continuous mortar fire and increased artillery and self-propelled fire toward the end of the period. Flare activity remained normal across the entire front. Enemy propaganda shells landed in our area on several occasions.

Artificial moonlight was used to great advantage for improving visibility of ambush and screening patrols.

On 20 February a Ranger Platoon was organized and assembled in the tent camp at Service Company and given an intensive instruction program under 1st Lieutenant Clarence L. Guffey, Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon Leader. All members of the platoon were volunteers and specialists in patrolling.

On 12 February each battalion organized a provisional .50 caliber machine gun platoon as a part of each heavy weapons company, for use in direct support of raids, limited objective attacks and to repel enemy attacks and deliver harassing fire on enemy positions.

A Quartermaster Dogs Platoon was used for five nights on ambush patrols but was withdrawn because excellent visibility made their use impracticable.

During the month four prisoners were captured.

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REPORT OF OPERATIONS - FEBRUARY (CONT'D)

Strength of the command as the period opened was as follows: 160 officers, 5 warrant officers, and 3,291 enlisted men. At the end of the period the strength was as follows: 160 officers, 3 warrant officers, and 3,371 enlisted men.

Decorations awarded this month:

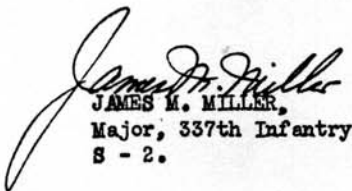
Distinguished Service Cross - Pfc Louis Gallagher (posthumously)
6 Silver Star Medals
51 Bronze Star Medals (3 posthumously, 1 missing in action)
4 Oak Leaf Clusters to Bronze Star Medals
23 Purple Hearts
9 Oak Leaf Clusters to Purple Heart
268 Combat Infantryman Badges

Our battle casualties for the month were as follows:

	<u>OFFICERS</u>	<u>ENLISTED MEN</u>
Killed in action	2	9
Wounded in action	0	39
Missing in action	0	1
	<u>2</u>	<u>49</u>

Total casualties - 51

By order of Colonel HUGHES:


JAMES M. MILLER,
Major, 337th Infantry,
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