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HEADQUARTERS 337TH INFANTRY

May 45

AFO #65, U. S. Army,
10 1945.

REPORT OF OPERATIONS - MAY

PERIOD 1 MAY - 2 MAY

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ORDER SEC ARMY
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During the rainy night of 31 April - 1 May the Combat Team with a platoon of 85th Reconnaissance Troop attached closed into an assembly area west of Vicenza (0864). The Combat Team had been detached from the 85th Infantry Division and was under II Corps control. At 010940 word was received to initiate movement to an area west of the Piave River between Cornuda (4495) and Feltre (3816) and to prepare to pass through the right flank of the 349th Infantry, attached to the 88th Infantry Division. At 1045 the leading elements of the regimental motor column began the march to the selected area near Fener (0340). The route wound through the valley just south of the Alps Mountains where disorganized German groups were trying to flee to Austria. During the afternoon the platoon of the 85th Reconnaissance Troop, leading the regimental column, was diverted by the Assistant Division Commander of the 88th Division to clean up an enemy pocket southeast of Bassano (2588). The rest of the column continued the advance, however, and by 1530 the 2nd Battalion had reached the new bivouac site. As the other organizations closed into their areas, a warning order was issued to organization commanders to be ready for movement on 2 May. During the afternoon the Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon rounded up 266 prisoners, and Partisans told tales of thousands more in the hills. At 2030 a message from the Commanding General, 88th Division ordered the regiment to advance on 2 May via Feltre (3816), Sedico (5326), and Agordo (4845) to Highway 49 and the Austrian border.

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Field Order #2 assigning missions for the advance on 2 May was issued at 2315. The 2nd Battalion was motorized and reinforced with a tank company (minus one platoon), a tank destroyer company (minus one platoon), a battery of field artillery, a platoon of 4.2 chemical mortars, and a platoon of engineers. This task force was ordered to advance north and northeast from Feltre boldly and aggressively to reach Highway 49 as quickly as possible. The 3d Battalion mission was to mop up the regimental sector, reconnoiter the mountainous area in the left of the sector, and collect and evacuate all prisoners. To assist in the accomplishment of this job the 3d Battalion was given a platoon of tanks, a platoon of tank destroyers, and a platoon of the 85th Reconnaissance Troop. The 1st Battalion was designated as regimental reserve.

During the hours of darkness the remainder of the Combat Team, with the exception of the 1st Battalion, closed into the new area. Organizations which were to be attached for the next days advance joined the battalions they were to support.

At 020600 Task Force Morgan began the move with infantrymen of Company "G" riding the tanks and tank destroyers. Initially delayed when a bulldozer blocked the road just north of Fener, the column was again rolling by 0730. The advance gathered momentum and the 2nd Battalion raced ahead as fast as the leading tanks could travel over excellent roads with no opposition. At 0910 the Commanding Officer, 2nd Battalion reported the bridge at Bribano (5120) destroyed. He was ordered to continue his advance west of the Torrente Cordevale and to seize the bridge at Mas (5530).

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REPORT OF OPERATIONS - MAY (CONT'D)

In the meantime word was received that the Combat Team was now operating under 85th Division control since 0700.

The 2nd Battalion advance was going so swiftly that it was apparent that it would be a waste of time to mop up the assigned zone. Therefore the 3d Battalion was ordered to move by motor along the axis of advance with all possible speed in order to be prepared to assist the 2nd Battalion in case real opposition was encountered.

As the 2nd Battalion swept ahead they passed through Sospirolo (5129), seized the bridge at Gron (5229) intact, and turned east towards Mas. Here the first enemy troops were sighted at 1000. The five leading tanks and the 1st Platoon of Company "G" were ordered to attack the village of Mas supported by the fire from the rest of the armor. In the resulting firefight three enemy artillery pieces were destroyed, twenty horses were killed, and 377 prisoners were captured. But most important the vital bridge at Mas was seized intact. The task force reorganized and turned north at Mas toward Agordo. From here on the road twisted through a narrow mountain gorge flanked by the Cordevale and steep cliffs. As the 2nd Battalion leading elements rounded a bend in the road just south of Peron (5432) a German supply train of about fifty assorted vehicles and horse drawn wagons was spied. The tanks immediately opened fire and literally swept the entire column of vehicles off the road. Every vehicle was destroyed and the road was cluttered with smoldering wrecks and dead horses. The enemy attempted to delay our advance by pulling a burning half-track loaded with gasoline across the road and by covering the road with intense sniper and machine gun fire. Again the 1st Platoon of Company "G" deployed to meet the resistance. Many of the enemy were killed and another 100 captured, and the other two platoons of Company "G" passed through the 1st Platoon to continue the attack. In the ensuing scrape six men were wounded and four killed by deadly enemy fire by snipers hidden in the banks overlooking the road. After the remaining Germans in the area had been routed out of their hiding places, the hasty enemy road block was bypassed and the column moved forward.

At 1200, Lieutenant Colonel Frank H. Morgan was approached by a parlementaire who stated that hostilities in Italy were to cease at 021400. He desire safe conduct through our lines in order to notify other German troops of the surrender. Since no word of the cessation of hostilities had been received from higher headquarters Lieutenant Colonel Morgan was ordered to continue his advance, and the German representative was escorted to the division command post.

As the task force moved north it came under more sniper fire from the cliffs east of the road. At 1445 the head of the column was again stopped, this time because the road ahead was clogged with halted German troops, vehicles, wagons, and horses. They jammed the road as far as the eye could see. Genlt Hoppe, Commanding General of the 278th Volksgrenadier Division, met Lieutenant Colonel Morgan and informed him that the 10th German Army Headquarters had issued orders that an armistice had been signed, effective at 1400, and that all firing would cease as of that time. Colonel O. W. Hughes went forward to deal with this new situation. He informed Genlt Hoppe that no instructions about an armistice had been received and that the only terms would be unconditional surrender - that all German troops blocking the

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REPORT OF OPERATIONS - MAY (CONT'D)

road would immediately lay down their arms and march to the rear as prisoners of war or that our tanks would open fire. Genlt Hoppe then surrendered his division, and disarmament and evacuation began. About 3,000 troops, hundreds of horse drawn wagons, and scores of motor cars were sent to the rear to Gron where Company "F" established a Prisoner of War stockade. At 1700 Genlt von Graffen, Commanding General of the 76th Panzer Corps, arrived at the march command post and asked to be taken to the division commander. He wanted to make arrangements for the surrender of his corps with an estimated eight divisions and 30,000 troops. He was also escorted to the division command post. As the surrendering troops cleared the road, Companies "G" and "E" proceeded on foot without the armor toward Agordo. At 1740 the leading riflemen encountered troops of the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division at la Stanga (5537). Both sides held their fire pending a conference between Colonel Hughes and Genmaj Polack, Commanding General of the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division. At the conference it was decided that both sides would stand fast and await orders from respective higher headquarters. It was impossible for the 2nd Battalion to use the road to the north and they were ordered to bivouac in place. American prisoners of the 76th Panzer Corps were freed and sent to their organizations.

Meanwhile the 3d Battalion had reconnoitered the Mis Valley for a possible route to Highway 49 but found several bridges destroyed. At dark the battalion was bivouacked around Mis (5231), and they were assigned the mission of guarding the prisoner bag which now totaled 4,000. The 1st Battalion had reached Giustina (4823) and were bivouacked there for the night. At 2000 a radio announcement told us the welcome news that the German armies in Italy and western Austria had surrendered unconditionally.

At 2245 division cancelled the mission of cutting Highway 49 and ordered the regiment to halt in place. The 1st Battalion was given instructions to move to an area bounded by Mas, Sedico (5320), Belluno (6129) by 030800 and establish a concentration area for enemy troops.

PERIOD 3 MAY - 31 MAY

At a conference the morning of 3 May, attended by Genlt von Graffen and his staff, Major General John B. Coulter, and Brigadier General Willems and Colonel Hughes, arrangements were made for the assembly and primary disarmament of troops of the 76th Panzer Corps. Later in the day Genlt von Graffen asked to delay movement of troops and surrender of arms on instructions from the 10th German Army which was granted.

On 4 May 2nd Battalion troops took control of 2,600 surrendered enemy troops that Partisans had been holding in Agordo (4845). The 2nd Battalion assembled near Agordo on 5 May.

During the three day period 4-6 May 6,690 prisoners in the regimental cage were evacuated to the II Corps concentration area at Bassano. Hereafter prisoners were turned over to control of the 76th Corps.

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REPORT OF OPERATIONS - MAY (CONT'D)

The regiment was assigned the additional mission of supervising the assembly and disarmament of the headquarters troops of the 76th German Corps on 7 May. On 9 May the 3d Battalion moved to the Pieve di Cadore (7461)-Calalzo (7563) area.

The remainder of the month was spent in disarming and evacuating German troops in the regimental sector. Troops of the 76th Panzer Corps were administered as Battle Groups Folack, Reinhardt, Hoppe, and Reinwald. On 15 May mass evacuation was initiated and during the next two days, 18,532 troops, and 540 enemy vehicles of the 76th Panzer Corps were escorted to Bassano. Some 1,600 troops of the 73d Corps were evacuated on 18 May.

The German ammunition assembly point at Mas exploded on 19 May killing one American soldier and wounding two and causing 20 German casualties, half of which were killed.

A total of 1,500 troops of the 73d Corps were escorted to Bassano on 21 May. On 25 May several thousand captured horses were turned over to the Army remount service and the 600 troops with the service trains were evacuated completing the moving of the 76th Panzer Corps and all enemy troops in the regimental zone.

The regiment was relieved of all military duties at 282400 when elements of the Italian Folgore Group assumed control of the zone.

Light training continued the rest of the month with emphasis on athletics and recreation. All battalions conducted solemn memorial services to honor the men who had given their lives in the Italian campaigns.

On 29 May the 3d Battalion moved to the Mis-Sospirolo area. As the month ended the 1st Battalion was in the Belluno-Sedico area, the 2nd Battalion at Agerdo, and the special companies on Lake Alleghe (4759).

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Strength of the command as the period opened was as follows: 179 assigned officers, 3 attached officers, 5 warrant officers, 3,334 assigned enlisted men and 7 attached enlisted men. At the end of the period the strength was as follows: 168 assigned officers, 1 attached officer, 5 warrant officers, 3,273 assigned enlisted men and 19 attached enlisted men.

Decorations awarded this month:

- 25 Silver Star Medals (4 posthumously)
- 124 Bronze Star Medals (4 posthumously)
- 3 Oak Leaf Clusters to Bronze Star Medals
- 86 Purple Hearts
- 35 Oak Leaf Clusters to Purple Heart
- 217 Combat Infantryman Badges
- 67 Medical Badges

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REPORT OF OPERATIONS - MAY (CONT'D)

Our battle casualties for the month were as follows:

	<u>OFFICERS</u>	<u>ENLISTED MEN</u>
Killed in action	0	4
Died of wounds	0	3
Wounded in action	2	10
Missing in action	0	0
	<u>2</u>	<u>17</u>

Total casualties - 19

For the Regimental Commander:

Henry C. Triesler, Jr.
 HENRY C. TRIESLER, JR.,
 Major, 337th Infantry,
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