

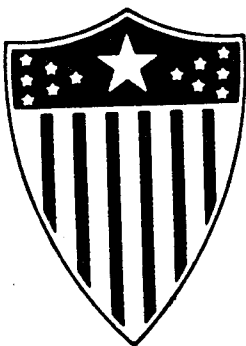
337th Opns Report MAY '44

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**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
THE ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE
WASHINGTON**

Opns Report - 337th Inf Regt - 85th Inf Div



ON LOAN FROM

DEPARTMENTAL RECORDS BRANCH, A.G.O.

HISTORICAL RECORDS SECTION

ROOM MB-920 PENTAGON

MAY 44

HEADQUARTERS 337TH INFANTRY

PERIOD 1 MAY - 5 MAY

During this period the Regiment continued its active defense of the assigned sector within the 85th Division zone. The sector was 4,300 yards in width, extending from the western edge of Minturno, through Tufo to the Ausente River. All three battalions were on line in order, from left to right, 1st, 2nd and 3rd. The 2nd Battalion had three companies covering its front; the 1st and 3rd Battalions each had a two company front, with one company in reserve behind the main line of resistance. The front line was lightly held during daylight hours but fully manned each night.

Activity was confined to patrolling, improving the position, and firing artillery at profitable targets. Each night, ambush, reconnaissance, and combat patrols were sent out by the battalions. The defense was strengthened by putting in additional wire entanglements and mines, and by digging additional reverse slope positions all along the line.

Lt. General Mark Clark, Commanding Fifth Army, visited the position on 2 May and complimented the Regiment on its general appearance.

On 3 May a patrol from 3rd Battalion, operating in daylight, captured two prisoners, the first to be taken by the Regiment. They were identified as members of the 114th Reconnaissance Battalion, which was a new outfit on the front, having gone into position the night of 2 May.

Our front line positions were subjected to enemy shelling and mortar fire daily, with negligible results. Early morning of 5 May the enemy managed to sneak into our position and carry away a Company "C" man, our first prisoner.

The Regiment received the attack order beginning the Allied offensive in Italy, and immediately began making necessary plans and preparations. Initially in Division reserve, the Regiment was assigned an assembly area in the lowland east of the Minturno Bridge over the Garigliano River. Several nights were spent in "digging in" in this area and preparing it for occupancy. The entire area was under enemy observation and all installations had to be concealed below the ground surface or in the few buildings in the area. On 5 May, Cannon Company moved to firing position in the vicinity of the crossroad north of M. Argento, where it could better support the impending attack.

PERIOD 6 MAY - 11 MAY

On the night of 5-6 May, 2nd Battalion (less Company "H") was relieved by the 1st Battalion, 351st Infantry, 88th Division, and moved to the Division rest area south of M. Masica, for exercise and reequipping. Anti-tank Company, also relieved, moved to the same rest area. Company "D" marched to the vicinity of Trmensuoli, from which place they were to support the attack of the 338th Infantry. Company "H" moved to the forward assembly area.

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The next night, the 1st Battalion (less Companies "B" and "D" moved to the rest area, their place on line taken over by elements of the 351st Infantry. Company "B" remained to continue normal patrolling in the left portion of the Regimental sector. Regimental CP and Headquarters Company moved from the quarry to the assembly area in the flatland. The sector passed to the control of the 88th Division. The 3rd Battalion remained in position, attached to the 88th Division for operations.

The 3rd Battalion (less Companies "I" and "M") on the night of 7-8 May, was relieved by the 1st Battalion, 349th Infantry, and moved to the assembly area. Company "I" remained with the 349th Infantry to continue normal patrolling in the right portion of the sector, and Company "M" joined the 339th Infantry near Tremensuoli.

During this period Regiment prepared numerous plans to further the attack or to repel enemy counterattack. The organizations of the Regiment that were in the rest area continued training and preparation for offensive combat, and the part of the Regiment that was in the assembly area remained quiet, blanketed from enemy eyes by smoke from numerous smoke generators. Company "H" moved to the rear of the 339th Infantry.

On the evening of 10 May, the 3rd Battalion (-) was attached to the 339th Infantry and marched to an assembly area in Tremensuoli in Regimental reserve. Companies "B" and "I" continued patrolling in the 88th Division sector.

At 2300 on 11 May, covered by tremendous artillery and heavy weapons support, the attack "jumped off", with the Regiment (-) in Division reserve. During the night Company "B" rejoined the 1st Battalion.

PERIOD 12 MAY - 18 MAY

Although no troops of the Regiment participated in the initial attack, it was not long before our organizations were engaged. Company "A" moved out at 0400 to bolster the 339th Infantry. This Regiment had run into bitter opposition as they attempted to take Hills 66, 69, and 79. At 0430 Company "K" moved to assist the 3rd Battalion, 339th Infantry. The company suffered heavy casualties, but managed to get a slim hold on Hill 69. Company "I" rejoined the 3rd Battalion and Companies "I" and "L", in defensive positions, were used to back up the 339th Infantry line. In the meantime, the rest of the 1st Battalion moved out to join the 339th Infantry, closing into the Tremensuoli area at 0930, sustaining some casualties on the march. The battalion was ordered to pass to the left of Company "K" on Hill 69 and to capture Hill 66. At 1100, as the commander, and Captain Hugh R. Ballantine, Company "B" Commander. The Battalion Executive Officer, Major Arnold L. Sanders, immediately assumed command. The Battalion, without its heavy weapons company, crossed the Cippo d'Aqua at 1400 and completed the capture of Hill 69 by 1500. At 1630 Hill 66 was attacked, but our troops found this hill heavily defended with reinforced bunkers, and they were forced off the hill and back to Hill 69. Another attack was organized with strong artillery support, and scheduled to begin at 1830. Every yard was bitterly contested by the Germans and after much close combat and ferreting the enemy out of dug-outs, Companies "A" and "C" took Hill 66. During the operation casualties were great from enemy mines, artillery, and automatic weapons. The hill in their hands, the 1st Battalion organized a reverse slope defense and prepared for the counterattacks they knew would come at daylight.

Evacuation of the wounded and dead, and the resupply of food, water, ammunition, and replacements was a serious problem. With the assistance of Italian

mule troops and many extra litter bearers, evacuation and resupply were accomplished.

During the night the Regimental CP moved to Tremensuoli and the 2nd Battalion (-) marched forward to an assembly area near Minturno. At dawn the enemy stormed Hill 66 in force, but was cut to pieces by 1st Battalion troops holding the hill and our artillery. During the day casualties were evacuated from the 1st Battalion area under great difficulties. The enemy continued to place harassing fire on the position. Shortly after noon the enemy aimlessly dropped bombs in the Tremensuoli area, narrowly missing the Regimental CP.

That night the troops on Hills 66 and 69 received constant artillery fire, but continued to hold, and the 1st Battalion made contact with the 338th Infantry on their right. In the morning, the enemy again attacked Hill 66, reached the crest, but was forced back by the force of our fire. At 1030 the 3rd Battalion (-Company "K") withdrew to the vicinity of Hill 103 and reorganized. Company "E" joined its battalion. At noon, the attack order for taking Hill 108 was issued to the 2nd Battalion, with H-Hour set at 1500. The 2nd Battalion moved into position and a Regimental advance CP was installed on Hill 141. On time, the battalion started its attack, with tank and artillery support, and at 1715, Companies "E" and "G" took their objective and organized the position to meet counterattack. The enemy heavily shelled the hill and the 2nd Battalion sent patrols to Castellonorato. About eighty prisoners of war were captured. Early that evening, Company "E" reached the north slope of Hill 108 and ran into the enemy in force. The company was pulled back and attacked the position in conjunction with Company "F" and one company of tanks. In the ensuing fight, Captain Fisher, Company "E" Commander, was killed in action. During the night, Company "K" was ordered off Hill 69 to Tremensuoli for the purpose of receiving new equipment and replacements. The 1st Battalion took over the positions vacated with troops amounting to company strength. A German attack against Hill 108 at dawn was thrown back by the 2nd Battalion.

The morning of 15 May, the 3rd Battalion (-) marched from their assembly area, moved up on line with the 2nd Battalion, and at 1500, launched a coordinated attack against Castellonorato in conjunction with the 2nd Battalion. Despite the fact that the objective had been bombed several times the day previous to the attack, and despite strong artillery and tank support, the Germans continued to hold on tenaciously. On the way to the objective, Company "I" overran Hill 104, objective of an adjacent regiment, and destroyed enemy resistance thereon. In this skirmish, Captain Robert, Company "I" Commander, lost his life. By dark the 2nd and 3rd Battalions had taken Castellonorato, meeting some resistance. They moved past the hill to the west, halted, and prepared to continue the attack at 180500. Company "K", having spent the day in reorganizing, rejoined the 3rd Battalion.

On 16 May, reports were received that the enemy was withdrawing all along the line and the 2nd and 3rd Battalions were ordered to push to the west. The advance CP moved to Hill 80 in the vicinity of Santa Maria. The 1st Battalion, reverted to our control and was pulled back from Hills 66 and 69. The battalion assembled near Tremensuoli and was fed a hot meal and fully equipped. All during the day, the two battalions on line continued to advance meeting some resistance, and by 1500 held a line 400 yards east of the stream Acquatraversa. Using this stream as a line of departure, the Regiment (less 1st Battalion) continued the advance to the west until 2100, when Division ordered a halt until 0450 the next morning. The 1st Battalion entrucked at 2100 and moved to Castellonorato and the Regiment was intact once more.

On 17 May, the attack progressed well and by 1030, the 2nd Battalion had taken Trivio and Maranola, and the 3rd Battalion was mopping up M. Campese. The 1st Battalion marched to an assembly area near Trivio. The 2nd and 3rd Battalions prepared to resume the advance to the west and the Regimental CP moved to Trivio. In the meantime, Corps ordered the 2nd Battalion to capture high ground to the northwest (Hills 442, 403, and 758), and ordered the 3rd Battalion to hold M. Campese and push toward Formia. At 1800, the 1st Battalion moved west with the mission of taking Hills 489 and 510 and placing a small force on Hill 906. By midnight, the 1st Battalion was on its objectives. The Battalion was then ordered to seize M. S. Maria (Hill 598) at daylight, and by 1000 was on this hill. The 1st and 3rd Battalions were ordered to hold in present position, and the 2nd Battalion withdrew from hills northwest of Maranola and assembled near the town. The Regiment (-the 1st Battalion) reverted to Division reserve. The 1st Battalion moved forward at 1930 with orders to take position along the Formia-Itri Road and to assist the 338th and 339th Infantry in the capture of M. Conca and M. Cefalo. By 0500 the 1st Battalion had reached their objective with no enemy contact.

PERIOD 19 MAY - 25 MAY

On the morning of 19 May, elements of the 339th Infantry passed through the 1st Battalion to take M. Cefalo, and the 1st Battalion reverted to Regimental control. At 1200, the 2nd Battalion was alerted as a task force to pursue the fleeing enemy. The task force, reinforced by medium tanks, tank destroyers, self propelled artillery, engineers, and reconnaissance elements, was organized, and at 1915 moved out to enter Fondi or to continue until stopped by enemy resistance. At 200240, Division changed the Battalion's mission to capture Calvo di Fondi, and at -510 the Battalion detrucked and moved through Itri. The 1st Battalion was ordered to relieve the 339th Infantry on M. Cefalo but was halted and assembled just short of the hill. The Regimental CP moved to a spacious villa in Formia and the 3rd Battalion marched to an area north of Formia. The Regiment (less the 2nd Battalion) was alerted to move as a Combat Team to the vicinity of Fondi at dawn. The march order for this move was issued to the assembled commanders.

At 0520 the march began and at 0800 the Regimental CP was temporarily set up just south of Fondi. The 2nd Battalion now on Calvo di Fondi was ordered to capture M. S. Biagio and at 1200, after sharp resistance, the town was ours, with 80 prisoners of war. In the afternoon, the 2nd Battalion was ordered to proceed to M. Copiccio. The 3rd Battalion was committed and ordered to take M. Autone, and the 1st Battalion, supported by much armor, was ordered to advance down Highway 7 and take Terracina if lightly held by the enemy. At 2000, the Regimental CP was established south of the town of Biagio. At 2100, the 2nd and 3rd Battalions, after much weary climbing, had reached their objectives, but the 1st Battalion ran into enemy fire from their right flank, and their progress was slow. During the night, the 3rd Battalion, relieved by 339th Infantry, assembled near Biagio. By 0230, the 1st Battalion was one mile from their objective and still advancing. Enemy resistance stiffened, however, as the battalion approached the outskirts of Terracina. In a defile formed by the sea on the left and S. Angelo on the right, the battalion was subjected to deadly automatic fire, and at dawn they were forced to withdraw to M. Croce. During the night, the enemy had brought up elements of a new division, the 29th Infantry Division, and had reinforced this position. At daylight German positions were discovered on the same hill with our troops and a further withdrawal was necessary. The 3rd Battalion (less Company "L")

was hurriedly dispatched to move to the assistance of the 1st Battalion. The latter had now lost two company commanders, Lt. Rosario Spina, Company "B" and Lt. Francis Moore, lost two company commanders, Lt. Rosario Spina, Company "B" and Lt. Francis Moore, Company "D" both killed. About 40 prisoners of war had been taken. A small force was sent to the mouth of a tunnel to the rear of the 1st Battalion and when about 50 prisoners were captured in the vicinity, Company "L" was ordered to wipe out the resistance. The 3rd Battalion (-) arrived in the 1st Battalion area at 1030 and was committed to the right of the 1st Battalion. The two battalions advanced inch by inch, and by dark had seized all of M. Croce and advanced several hundred yards beyond the hill. The 2nd Battalion withdrew from M. Coppicio and assembled near Biagio. The battalion, motorized, moved to the Terracina area and took over that part of the line held by the battle-weary 1st Battalion. The latter assembled behind the line in Regimental reserve. During the night, a battalion of the 338th Infantry assumed Company "L's" mission of clearing the tunnel, and the company returned to the 3rd Battalion. At 0800, in a coordinated attack, the 2nd and 3rd Battalions "jumped off" together. All day the battle raged for possession of the cemetery on the outskirts of Terracina. The enemy had a prepared fortified position and resisted our advance until over-run. He used artillery, emplaced weapons, and numerous snipers to good advantage. Rugged terrain and mud, caused by a light rain, impeded the progress of our tanks. During this period, several battalions of self propelled 105's of the 6th Field Artillery Group delivered excellent close support fires. By 1930 our troops took the cemetery and Hill 133, and by midnight the 2nd and 3rd Battalions were on the outskirts of the town. In the meantime, the 1st Battalion moved behind the other two battalions to a position on the Regimental right flank to the northwest of Terracina. All battalions sent patrols into the town and just before dawn they reported only slight resistance. At 0600, the three battalions closed in on the town. By 0945, the "bottleneck" Terracina was in our hands and the road to the Anzio beachhead was opened. The Regiment, now "Pinched out", was ordered assembled in the vicinity of Terracina (in Corps reserve) for a well deserved rest. The CP moved to a villa overlooking the town.

Our mine platoon cleared a bathing beach and the troops took their first bath in many weeks. They spent the rest of the time catching up on sleep, and repairing and cleaning equipment. Colonel O. W. Hughes, talked to the assembled officers, commanding the Regiment for a job well done.

PERIOD 26 MAY - 29 MAY

On 26 May, the Regiment was motorized, moved by shuttling to an area two miles south of Priverno, and, hampered by traffic congestion, closed in at 1850. Company "B" was detailed to guard the Division CP, and the 1st Battalion (-) set up a defense line south of Priverno to protect the Division right flank. Patrols sent into the town reported it clear of enemy. During the day all organizations remained in positions. Under cover of darkness, the Regiment moved to a rest area in the Pontine Marshes near Sabaudia, thus completing 49 days of continuous combat operations against a determined foe. The day was spent in swimming at the Regimental beach, in exchanging clothing, and in preparing for future combat.

On 29 May, General Keyes, II Corps Commander, addressed the assembled officers of the Division at our CP. He presented several decorations, congratulated us on our past achievements, and told us that in the impending operation the enemy would be stronger and more determined to hold. At 1800, the Regiment, motorized, moved to an assembly area near Cori, closing in at 2300.

PERIOD 30 MAY - 31 MAY

The next morning, the Regiment was alerted to relieve the two left battalions of the 30th Infantry, 3rd American Division. Key officers of the Regiment spent the day on the new position, reconnoitering, and making final arrangements for the relief. The Regimental CP moved to the vicinity of Valmenti. After dark the following relief was accomplished and completed by 2315:

Cannon Company relieved Cannon Company, 30th Infantry.
 Antitank Company relieved Antitank Company, 30th Infantry.
 1st Battalion (on the right) relieved the 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry.
 3rd Battalion (on the left) relieved the 3rd Battalion, 30th Infantry.
 2nd Battalion (in Regimental reserve) relieved the 3rd Battalion, 15th Infantry.

The next day minor adjustments in the line were made and the Regiment was alerted for a coordinated attack along the Division front at 1300. The 2nd Chemical Battalion (less two companies) reported and was ordered into a firing position to support the attack. A medium tank company and a tank destroyer company (both less one platoon) reported in and were attached to the assault battalions. At 1300, the attack "jumped off" and initially progressed well. At 1330, a Regimental CP was set up in an abandoned German dugout south of Larinola. By 1515, the 1st Battalion had by-passed Larinola and was receiving mortar, artillery, and small arms fire from the town to their rear. The 2nd Battalion sent a reinforced company to mop up the town of Larinola and the 3rd Battalion continued to move forward. 30 prisoners captured were from the Hermann Goering Division. Late in the afternoon, Company "E", accompanied by tank destroyers, entered the town and began cleaning out many snipers and gun positions. Company "I" was south of Castel d' Ariano and held there pending the assembling of the rest of the 3rd Battalion. The 1st Battalion had advanced 1500 yards past Larinola, was still hitting resistance, and had repelled repeated attacks by German troops armed with machine pistols who were transported in armored cars. The 2nd Battalion sent Company "G" to assist in the mopping up of Larinola, where enemy tanks had been reported. By dark Company "I" had reached the 3rd Battalion objective (Hill 891) and had assisted a battalion of the 143rd Infantry in repulsing a strong counterattack from the northwest. The 3rd Battalion sent more prisoners to the rear. During the night, the 1st and 3rd Battalions were ordered to continue the attack from present positions at 010500.

During the month, the Regiment advanced 72 miles, took every assigned objective, captured 485 prisoners of war, and caused the enemy to withdraw in our sector and to abandon much equipment.

Casualties were replaced in quick order and organizations were kept at full strength. The provisional company organized in April continued to receive and train replacements who joined their organizations each night as needed. During the period the Regiment received 51 officers and 1137 enlisted men as replacements.

The medical facilities of the Regiment received their greatest test during the three day period following the beginning of the offensive on 11 May. Initial casualties were naturally high and over 500 men were evacuated those first three days. Aid men with the front line companies did a superb job on the field, and battalion surgeons and technicians worked tirelessly for days without sleep in aid stations that were always crowded beyond capacity. Company "A", 310th Medical

Battalion collected litter cases in a most efficient manner. Prompt evacuation was made possible only by the use of additional litter bearers. Many Italian litter teams were attached to the Regiment during the operation and at one time over 300 litter bearers were at work in our sector, many of them under constant enemy fire. Collection of the dead by graves registration personnel continued day and night, and bodies, both enemy and our own, were removed from the battlefield at the earliest possible moment.

Communication within the Regiment was of the highest standard. Supplemented by additional men, wire teams kept wire in the majority of the time, often working through enemy shelling. Control was facilitated by our constant use of the SCR 300 and SCR 284. A Division radio party with an SCR193 relayed messages to and from the Division Commander.

Supply functioned well under difficult conditions and rough terrain. Troops were seldom without food, water, ammunition, or necessary equipment. Materiel that was lost or damaged through enemy action was promptly replaced. In the mountainous country, an attached Italian mule group facilitated resupply.

Close artillery support was furnished during every phase of the operation. We used to the maximum our direct support battalion, 328th Field Artillery, and called for and received reinforcing fires from Division and Corps artillery whenever needed. Company "A", 310th Engineers, by anticipating our needs, kept supply routes within the Regimental zone open at all times and constructed numerous by-passes to enemy-blown bridges.

Decorations awarded this month:

- 13 Bronze Stars.
- 34 Purple Hearts.
- 1175 Combat Infantryman Badges.

Our battle casualties for the month were as follows:

	<u>OFFICERS</u>	<u>ENLISTED MEN</u>
Killed in action	11	169
Wounded in action	44	756
Missing in action	1	44
Totals	<u>56</u>	<u>969</u>

Total Casualties 1025.

Strength of the assigned command as the period closed: 155 officers, 5 warrant officers, and 4,124 enlisted Men. Attached were 33 officers and 150 enlisted men.

For the Regimental Commander:

HENRY C. TRIESLER, JR.,
Major, 337th Infantry,
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