



85-A(10a)

HEADQUARTERS 337TH INFANTRY

APO #85, U. S. Army,
28 May 1945.

REPORT OF OPERATIONS - APRIL

PERIOD 1 APRIL - 17 APRIL

The month of April opened with the Regiment in a bivouac area south of Luoca (2671) engaged in an intensive training program in preparation for the impending Spring offensive in Italy. The schedule included many hours of weapons training, range and field firing, and practice in the recently adopted battle drill for small units. Every effort was made to prepare all troops for offensive combat.

At various battalion formations awards were presented to deserving men and officers of the Regiment. Lieutenant General Lucian K. Truscott, Jr., in a ceremony on 7 April, awarded Company "F" a Presidential Citation for heroic action on M. Monzao in September 1944.

On 8 April the Regimental Ranger Platoon, formed during the period spent on the static winter line, was disbanded.

When Orders of the Day from the Theatre, Army Group, and Army Commander were received on 13 April it was evident that the day of attack was close at hand. All three orders called on Allied troops to strike boldly and aggressively in order to completely and finally crush the German armies in Italy. The hundreds of bombers that daily flew overhead on the way north also gave proof that D-Day was near.

The Regiment was placed on a six hour alert on 14 April but regular training continued. Late in the afternoon of 16 April orders were received to move the Regiment by motor to the vicinity of Sassomolare (5824) beginning at 170020 April. By midmorning this sixty mile move was completed. At 1400 instructions for the commitment of the combat team were received. The plan called for Regimental Combat Team 337 to relieve elements of the 10th Mountain Division in the newly assigned sector of the 85th Division by 180200 and to continue the attack to the north. Since time was short, trucks were requested to shuttle one battalion forward. The 1st Battalion was ordered to move to Cereglio upon receiving these trucks. The remaining organizations were to march to the same area. At 1755 the 1st Battalion was on the road, and by midnight the other two battalions were also moving forward. It was impossible, however, to complete the passage of lines by 0200 and higher headquarters was so advised.

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PERIOD 18 APRIL - 20 APRIL

The 86th Mountain Regiment with one battalion committed had taken M. Vignola (7133) and were to swing to the left and continue the attack when passed through by our forward elements. The attack order called for the 1st and 2nd Battalion to attack abreast after the completion of the relief. The 1st Battalion on the left was to effect the relief of the 1st Battalion, 86th Mountain Regiment and to capture Hills 699, 703 and 678. The 2nd Battalion on the right was to capture M. Luminasio (7434), then continue the attack to the northeast taking M. S. Andre (7837) and assisting the advance of the 338th Infantry up Highway 64. All night was spent in moving troops up to the line, coordinating plans, and issuing necessary orders. At 0900 the Commanding Officer, 337th Infantry took over control of the sector and set 0930 as the hour of attack. After a 15 minute artillery preparation the assault battalion moved forward as per schedule. Progress was fast as little resistance was met and initial objectives were taken with only sporadic fighting. By 1100 the 1st Battalion had taken Hills 699, 703, and 678, and by noon had advanced 800 yards north of M. Bonsara (7356). The 2nd Battalion had occupied M. Luminasio without firing a shot. The 3d Battalion, in reserve, moved to an assembly area near M. Vignola. During the afternoon the attack continued, hampered by rough terrain, light enemy resistance, and an exposed right flank. By late afternoon the 2nd Battalion

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REPORT OF OPERATIONS - APRIL (CONT'D)

had taken M. Torrenera (7635) and was approaching Lagune (7737) where the enemy decided to take a stand. In the meantime, the 3d Battalion had been ordered to follow the 2nd Battalion and take Lagune, and then continue the advance to the north as the 2nd Battalion turned east to take the S. Andre ridge. As darkness fell the two battalions made contact short of Lagune and arranged to assault this objective, after several attempts by Company "I" to take the knoll had failed. At 0200, Company "I" and Company "G" made a coordinated attack assisted by Company "E". The advancing infantrymen were met by intense machine gun and rifle fire and grenades from the buildings and reverse slope of the hill. The 1st Battalion after dark consolidated their position on Ca di Co (7437) and Sotto il Sasso (7537) and prepared to advance north toward Rasiglio (7539) at dawn. Prisoners taken during the day totaled 51. All forward movement had been ordered halted for the night but it was necessary to clear out Lagune in order to be in a position to continue the attack at daylight.

Orders were issued to all battalions to continue the attack at 0600. At 0340 a boundary change was received from higher headquarters which moved the entire Regimental sector to the west and put the Lagune-M. Grolla (7740) Ridge in the sector of the unit on the right. It was also ordered that troops outside the new boundaries be withdrawn by daylight and that the Regiment advance at dawn in the new zone. This necessitated the issuance of hurried instructions to the 2nd and 3d Battalions to break contact at once and move to assembly areas behind the crest of M. Torrenera. Just after the 2nd Battalion started forward down the M. S. Andre ridge was this order received and promptly put into operation. Since the 1st Battalion was the only organization in the new zone they were ordered to take the high ground in the vicinity of Rasiglio and then attack due north while the other two battalions were being moved into position to assist. At 0600 the 1st Battalion moved forward in column of companies down the ridge road toward Rasiglio. At 0735 the leading company had reached Ca del Rosso (7538) and was fired on from la Collina, 400 yards to the west. Much fire was being received from the whole Lagune ridge on the right flank. This opposition threatened to stop the advance toward Rasiglio, so Company "C" was sent to clean out the enemy at la Collina, while the other two rifle companies of the 1st Battalion moved abreast toward Rasiglio. At 1100 this objective was taken but the enemy stubbornly held at la Collina. The 12 prisoners captured stated that 70 men held these buildings. Three tanks from Company "B", 751st Tank Battalion joined the Regiment and were sent forward to support the Company "C" assault. Also a platoon of 57mm guns was placed in position for direct fire. It took several determined rushes by Company "C" troops to rout the enemy from his la Collina stronghold but by early afternoon this was accomplished. In this action Company "C" suffered light casualties but captured more prisoners.

The enemy continued to harass the only access road to Rasiglio with rifle and raking machine gun, from Lagune, di Sopra, and la Torre. In order to neutralize this fire the Antitank Company and the remainder of the tank company were sent forward attached to the 1st Battalion to go into position on the ridge road and fire at anything that fired from the west. The 2nd Battalion placed one company on the Seralunga ridge (7537) and one platoon on la Collina to secure the Regimental right flank. By late afternoon most of the fire from the parallel ridge to the right was neutralized.

At dark Companies "A" and "B" were 1200 yards beyond Rasiglio with an open right flank of over 5,000 yards. The 2nd Battalion moved to a forward assembly area. At 2230 an order for the advance to Gesso (7947) at 200600 was issued to commanders. Gesso was out of the hills and the beginning of the Po Valley. This objective was assigned to the 1st and 3d Battalions attacking abreast. The 1st Battalion with the tank and tank destroyer companies (each less one platoon) attached was to capture Casetto (7743), M. Rocca (7845), and the left portion of M. Malgotto (7945). The 3d Battalion with a platoon of tanks and tank destroyers was assigned Tignano (7743), M. Capra (7944), and the right portion of M. Malgotto. The Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon was assigned the important mission of getting to Gesso with all possible speed on the Lavino River road. With the north-south road between Loreto (7742) and Calderino (7644) as a line of departure, the advance began at 0600. Although Company "A", leading the 1st Battalion advance, ran into no opposition, the going was slow due to rough ground. By 0740 Company "A" was nearing Casetta and had taken 21 prisoners of war, but the enemy was reacting to their thrust. At the same time Company

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REPORT OF OPERATIONS - APRIL (CONT'D)

"L" reported they were approaching Tignano, a high barren hill dotted with some ten houses and a church. This proved to be a strongpoint that was to resist violently for many hours.

At 0755 the Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon had by-passed the resistance the riflemen were encountering in the hills and was within 1500 yards of Gesso. At 0825 Lieutenant Clarence L. Guffey radioed the dramatic report that he was at Gesso, the first American troops into the Po Valley.

About 65 prisoners taken by the 1st Battalion reported Casetta held by one German battalion of 170 men. As Company "A" attacked frontally, Company "B" was sent around the left flank. This scheme of maneuver worked well and at 0925 Company "B" was on M. Rocca having captured a battalion commander and 25 of his men. In order to reinforce the Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon on the final objective, Gesso, the Regimental Commander sent the 1st Battalion reserve company, Company "C", and the available tanks down the road toward Gesso.

In the meantime the 3d Battalion was making slow progress against heavy enemy fire. Company "L's" initial assault at 0830 was stopped short of the objective at 1030. At 1100 Company "K" started around the right flank assisted by a few tanks. For hours the fire fight continued as men crawled and fought their way slowly up the steep slopes of the mound shaped hill.

At noon a message from division assigned the Regiment the additional missions of seizing the high ground overlooking Casalecchio (8346), assisting II Corps to debouch from the Reno Valley, and outposting a line from Casalecchio to the Comunale Bridge (7948) over the Lavino River. The outpost mission was given to the 2nd Battalion with the Antitank Company attached. The tanks and tank destroyers were ordered forward to assist the 2nd Battalion in the accomplishment of this mission. By 1500 both Casetta and M. Rocca had been completely mopped up and Company "A" was closing on the village just west of M. Malgotto (7845). At the same time, weary Company "K" men and one tank had finally gained the crest of the Tignano ridge and the garrison of 140 including several dozen wounded surrendered. After a hasty reorganization, the advance toward M. Capra began with Company "I" leading.

As the Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon led the move to Casalecchio they encountered a small group of the enemy at Riale (8047) which was eliminated. At 1530 Company "C", now attached to the 2nd Battalion, had reached C. di Mezzo (8247) just 1200 yards short of Casalecchio. Reinforced by tanks and tank destroyers, the leading company of the 2nd Battalion after a sharp clash with enemy infantry and armor seized the town of Ceretolo (8247) and completed its clearance by 1800. But increased enemy fire from the north and northeast made movement forward of Ceretolo too costly to be worthwhile. In addition to small arms fire the enemy was using light artillery, mortars, and numerous self-propelled guns. At 1630 the 2nd Battalion reported the securing of the Comunale Bridge with one rifle company. A barrage from five artillery battalions was ordered for Casalecchio since the enemy defense seemed to hinge on the town. Our swift advance to the valley in the left valley sector had by-passed numerous enemy units in the hills between the Lavino and Reno Rivers and these were streaming to the north. The 2nd Battalion was so disposed (one company at Comunale, one company at Riale, one company at Ceretolo) as to cut off all the escape routes except Casalecchio and hundreds of prisoners were being rounded up. At 1700 the 1st Battalion (minus Company "C") reached the final objective and continued to round up enemy stragglers. At dark the 6th South African Armored Division entered Casalecchio, and the 2nd Battalion reported the completion of their assigned outpost line. By midnight the 3d Battalion was on the final objective and had set up a defensive position and the 2nd Battalion had repulsed three counterattacks. During the night the 338th Infantry passed through the forward line, the 351st Infantry (88th Infantry Division) relieved the 2nd Battalion at 0215, and both regiments continued the attack to the north. The final prisoner of war count for the day was over 600. This night the Regiment rested, the first sleep for many men in three or more days.

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REPORT OF OPERATIONS - APRIL (CONT'D)PERIOD 21 APRIL - 23 APRIL

At 0730 the next morning a warning order to prepare to follow the 338th Infantry by foot was received. The move began at 0930 with the 1st Battalion leading. The route led due north to Highway 9, then northwest to Anzola (7764). Shortly after noon all organizations had close into areas near the town and rested until 1830 when a move to an area north of Budrie (7660) was ordered.

As organizations moved into the new area, commanders were assembled at 2100 to receive instructions for the next operation. The Regiment had been ordered to pass through the forward elements of the 338th Infantry at 0700, at this time short of the Pinare River, and continue to the Po River. This necessitated a 20 mile march so the Regimental Commander made the decision to ground Antitank and Cannon Companies and use their prime movers and the available organic trucks to motorize the 2nd and 3d Battalions. These battalions were organized into task forces and reinforced with tanks, tank destroyers, engineers, 85th Reconnaissance Troop, and one platoon of self-propelled anti-aircraft artillery. The only bridge in the Regimental sector was at Camposanto (8175) and it was not known whether this bridge was yet intact. The 3d Battalion route of advance led to this bridge and the mission was to cross here if at all possible. Further to the west the 2nd Battalion had a parallel route of advance with the mission of crossing near la Palazzina (6877), abandoning trucks if necessary. All towns were to be by-passed and resistance outflanked. The 1st Battalion (minus Company "C") was to start marching by foot at 0600 prepared to exploit the first crossing effected. Company "C" was also motorized and traveled with the march command post in Regimental mobile reserve.

At 220530 April the motorized battalions moved forward and meeting no resistance rolled swiftly northward. At 0900 the 3d Battalion passed through the 3d Battalion, 338th Infantry, and a short time later was in sight of the Camposanto Bridge which had not yet been destroyed. But as the 85th Reconnaissance Troop and a platoon of Company "K" neared the site an enemy group attempted to set off the prepared demolition charges. The Germans were driven back by fire, and an engineer sergeant crawled across the span and cut the wires to the charge. Then the battle for possession of the bridge began in earnest. The remainder of Company "K" closed on the river west of the bridge and about a platoon of men managed to swim the river to gain an insecure foothold on the far shore. The enemy, however, was determined to prevent a crossing in strength and he resisted fanatically from the buildings in the town and the high levee which bordered the river. Using 40mm anti-aircraft guns to fire at ground targets, light artillery, and two Tiger tanks, the enemy made the progress of the riflemen a slow and dangerous task. Medium tanks rumbled forward but were held at bay by self-propelled guns concealed in the stone houses or roving up and down the far shores. Company "I" was then committed to the east of the bridge but ran into intense fire from machine guns and rifles. The enemy used numerous snipers to good advantage as the near bank of the river was devoid of cover. This fire fight continued to the afternoon but despite all the fire power the 3d Battalion was able to muster the enemy continued to hold.

In the left sector the 2nd Battalion rolled forward with Company "F" mounted on tanks in the lead. The first tank reached the Panare River at 1100 but found no crossing in the assigned zone. Arrangements were made to cross the entire task force over the Bomporto Bridge (6675), which had been captured intact by the 10th Mountain Division a few hours earlier. The 2nd Battalion, without regard for exposed flanks, continued to the north wiping out small pockets of resistance or rounding up bewildered enemy groups that surrendered without firing a shot. At the town of Staggia (6685) 41 prisoners were taken and in the woods just south of Villafranca (6886) 123 enemy surrendered after a one sided fight.

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REPORT OF OPERATIONS - APRIL (CONT'D)

By the middle of the afternoon it was evident that the only speedy way to capture the Camposanto Bridge was to utilize the Bomporto Bridge, some six miles to the west, and outflank the enemy still holding out opposite the 3d Battalion. Company "L" and Company "C" were loaded on trucks and with three tanks moved out on this mission. Crossing the Panaro at 1600 this force moved toward Camposanto on the north shore of the river. At Solara (7079) a group of 50 enemy were holed up and opened fire with rifles and machine guns as the riflemen approached. The ensuing fight lasted 30 minutes and forced the surrender of the German group, but cost one friendly tank knocked out by bazooka fire.

Meanwhile, the enemy confronting "I" and "K" Companies launched a bold counter-attack on the left flank in strength of 100 troops supported by tanks and anti-aircraft guns. At 1800 when Company "K's" fire plus supporting artillery and mortars stopped this enemy charge, the Germans retreated northward leaving two demolished Tiger tanks and several dead and wounded. With the bridge secure, the 3d Battalion (minus Company "L") and the 1st Battalion (minus Company "C") crossed the Panaro River and assembled just northwest of the town of Camposanto.

In the meantime the 2nd Battalion had been ordered to hold Villafranca and send a strong patrol to determine whether Marindola (6892) was defended. Company "F" and three tanks were sent on this mission. They ambushed an enemy column of nine vehicles, destroying all of them and killing or capturing the enemy personnel in the convoy.

At dark orders were received from the Division Commander: "Advance to the Po River with all possible speed." The decision was made to continue the advance all night in trucks despite fatigue and the difficulties of supply. The 2nd Battalion was ready first and they started north at 2230. The trucks to motorize the 3d Battalion arrived late so it was not until 2400 before they were on the road. The decision to continue the advance paid big dividends, for the enemy was now falling back to the Po River in confusion and these twin thrusts deep into his territory caught hundreds by surprise. At dawn Company "F" on tanks leading the 2nd Battalion ran into a German company in Casella (6594) whose commander surrendered his force without bothering to fight. At the same time the 3d Battalion had reached a point three miles northeast of Mirandola. As daylight came the enemy began to surrender in groups of fifty at a time. The movement to the north was slowed as prisoners turned themselves over to our forward troops by the hundreds. And thousands more had been by-passed and were left for reserve units following our advance to collect and evacuate. Everywhere was the evidence of the completeness of the rout. German installations by the score were taken intact - motor pools, hospitals, command posts, ordnance shops, bakeries, heavy artillery pieces, and much other equipment including horses and wagons.

At 1045 the leading elements of the 3d Battalion task force reached the bank of the Po River at Quingentole (6710). At 1230 the leading elements of the 2nd Battalion task force reached the bank of the Po River. In order to consolidate these gains the leading battalions were ordered to set up a defense line along the south bank of the Po River as follows: 2nd Battalion, from Quingentole to Brede (6112); 3d Battalion, from Quingentole to Revere (7411), then south to Chiavica (7307). Both Brede and Revere had to be mopped up before they were able to be used as part of the defense system and it took fire fights to accomplish this. Each town yielded almost a hundred prisoners.

The 1st Battalion had been on the march since 0315 and they were assigned a defense mission with a line 1,000 yards west of Poggio Rusco (7302) in order to protect an open right flank. The adjacent regiment at this time was ten miles behind our forward elements. The 85th Reconnaissance Troop covered the gap between the 3d and 1st Battalions. All day long the prisoner count continued to rise. Each battalion had collected over a thousand and evacuation became a pressing problem. Dozens of enemy vehicles and their dazed occupants were rounded up miles behind our front lines. Once in a while a German group would choose to fight it out but usually they gave themselves up. A complete hospital with a staff of 250 technicians was taken in Quistello (6206).

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REPORT OF OPERATIONS - APRIL (CONT'D)

Higher headquarters permitted the Regimental Commander to decide whether he would cross the Po River at this time. Night was fast approaching and many preparations had to be made before a successful crossing could be accomplished. In spite of the difficulties involved, it was believed that a crossing at this time would catch the enemy off guard before he had time to organize his river defense, and so the decision was made to cross as soon as possible. Feverishly, plans were made to make a crossing the next morning in the vicinity of Quingentole. Assault boats were brought forward and spotted. Wire lines to the crossing sites were laid. The Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon rowed to the north bank in rubber boats but returned after being challenged and observing activity on the far side.

At dark the enemy, trapped south of the Po, attempted to force a passage of the river near Revere, using tank and mortar support. Company "I" blocked this threat until it expended itself. With the dark also came enemy planes which bombed and strafed with negligible results.

A prisoner of war cage was established at Quistello where a majority of the 5,000 Germans taken during the day and night were held. Captured trucks were utilized to evacuate prisoners to the rear but it was after dawn of the 24th that the job was completed. Included were several full colonels and 69 other officers.

Meanwhile plans for the river crossing were completed. The 3d Battalion was to break contact, assemble near S. Lucia (6410), and at H-Hour cross on a broad front on the left beach. The 1st Battalion was ordered to make the crossing in the right sector and was assigned an assembly area east of Quingentole. The 2nd Battalion mission was to hold the south bank of the river until the bridgehead was secure, and then, as the bridgehead enlarged, to take over a portion of the sector between the two battalions. An artillery preparation of 15 minutes duration from 96 guns was ordered. It must be remembered that intelligence indicated the Po River Line to be the strongest the Germans had in Italy with elaborate defensive installations. Also it was not known whether the enemy would be able to organize his fleeing forces to put up a stand at the river. Preparations, however, were made on the assumption that the crossing would be strongly disputed. The attached and organic engineers made plans to install and operate two infantry support rafts.

PERIOD 24 APRIL - 25 APRIL

Early on the morning of 24 May the companies moved into position. After a few postponements H-Hour was finally set at 0830. At this time the mortars put down a smoke barrage on the far bank, the six artillery battalions began their preparation, and the 70 loaded assault boats pushed out from shore. At 0844 the first wave hit the far shore without receiving any retaliatory fire and riflemen were soon racing across the first phase line. At 0908 the second wave was landed safely completing the crossing of two entire infantry battalions. The bridgehead was secured without firing a round. Troops passed reinforced dugouts, well constructed emplacements, and skillfully camouflaged blockhouses - but all were unmanned. Swiftly the bridgehead was enlarged as the towns were entered and passed - Sustinente (6513), Casale (6216), Bastia (6713). At 1040 the 2nd Battalion was put across the water in the left sector. The engineers worked hard to prepare the two raft sites and by early afternoon the rafts were in operation. At 1500 fifteen amphibious cargo trucks (DUKWS) arrived at the beaches and necessary equipment was now moving across the river. The 1st Battalion ran into some spotted resistance which was quickly disposed of and a few prisoners were taken.

At 1345 the 2nd Battalion passed through the 1st Battalion and the latter swung east as flank security. By late afternoon the 2nd and 3d Battalions had organized a defense line from Nosedole (6318) to Bisarina (6815) and were patrolling to the north. Orders were to hold this line and assist the 339th Infantry to pass through. This passage of lines was completed the morning of 25 April and the rest of the day was spent in reorganization and rehabilitation. The troops were able to get some much needed sleep.

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REPORT OF OPERATIONS - APRIL (CONT'D)

PERIOD 26 APRIL - 30 APRIL

The Regiment rested for a day and a night in division reserve, and at 0600 on the morning of 26 April moved by marching to an area east of Castelbelforte (5629). A verbal message from the Commanding General at 1300 ordered an immediate move to Vigasio. The 2nd and 3d Battalions were motorized by utilizing Antitank and Cannon Companies prime movers and all useable confiscated German trucks. The 3d Battalion closed into the new area at 1515. The 2nd Battalion, however, at 1545 was ordered into the city of Verona, which had just been captured, as a protective garrison and to secure the south bank of the Adige River. The rest of the Regiment closed into the new bivouac area.

All night the 2nd Battalion patrolled the streets of Verona and at 0700 the next day this mission was cancelled and the 2nd Battalion moved to the southern outskirts of Verona (642510).

For three days 27, 28, 29 April, the Regiment remained in the same area in division reserve as the regiments in the assault slowly crossed the Adige River and advanced through the hills north of Verona. At 301450 April the combat team was alerted to move to Treviso (6376) and at 1800 began the move. After the march was underway the area was changed from Treviso to just west of Vicenza. As the period closed organizations were moving into this bivouac area.

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Prisoners of war interrogated and evacuated during the month of April was 74 officers and 4,074 enlisted men. This report, however, is incomplete and does not include several thousand of the enemy who were turned over to other divisions or who were evacuated directly to prisoner of war cages without being processed.

Strength of the command as the period opened was as follows: 174 officers, 4 warrant officers and 3,459 enlisted men. At the end of the period the strength was as follows: 179 assigned officers, 3 attached officers, 5 warrant officers, 3,334 assigned enlisted men and 7 attached enlisted men.

Decorations awarded this month:

- Distinguished Service Cross - 2nd Lt Clarence Bishop
- Sgt Robert F. Hixon
- Legion of Merit - Major James M. Miller
- 3 Silver Star Medals
- 21 Bronze Star Medals (1 posthumously)
- 1 Oak Leaf Cluster to Bronze Star Medal
- 62 Purple Hearts
- 13 Oak Leaf Clusters to Purple Heart
- 2 Second Oak Leaf Clusters to Purple Heart
- 31 Combat Infantryman Badges
- 192 Medical Badges

Our battle casualties for the month were as follows:

	<u>OFFICERS</u>	<u>ENLISTED MEN</u>
Killed in action	1	23
Wounded in action	5	85
Missing in action	0	3
	<u>6</u>	<u>111</u>

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REPORT OF OPERATIONS - APRIL (CONT'D)

Total casualties - 117

For the Regimental Commander:

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